



WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

After the 2026 FIFA World Cup, many visitors and tourists who were here for the games left with a very positive and hospitable impression of Americans. Apparently, before experiencing our country first-hand, some had a very different expectation. In the past, we have all heard of the stereotypical “ugly American:” rude, impatient, pushy and demanding. While that can unfortunately describe some, it is not the true picture of who we are as a nation. That was confirmed in the many positive stories coming out from the World Cup. Impressions. They are important. What do people think when they look at you? What kind of impression do we make as Catholics? I’m sure each of us can think of circumstances when we formed a negative opinion about someone because of their behavior or speech. Actions and words are important. They reflect what kind of person someone is and effects how they are perceived. Applying this to us as people of faith, a word that comes to mind is ambassador. While that word is mostly used to speak of someone who formally represents one country to another, it has other applications. In broader terms, it simply implies being a representative. That’s exactly what St. Paul means when he speaks about us as being ambassadors for Christ. This is World Mission Sunday. In part, that means a second envelope to support the missions, specifically through the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. More importantly, it is a reminder of the Church’s call to be missionary in spirit. As followers of Christ, we are all called to be evangelists, ambassadors, in other words, representatives of the Faith. That vocation challenges us to reach out to all corners of the world. However, we are also called to be witnesses right here in our own back yard. This goes back to the previous questions: What do people think when they look at us? What kind of impression do we make as Catholics? Am I a positive advertisement for my Faith? After experiencing our country during the World Cup, people left with a good impression. How about when people come to our parish, attend Mass, or participate in one of our events?

There’s an old joke that perfectly illustrates this point. ‘Murphy is stopped at a red light with a car in front of him and a car behind him. When the light changes, the person in front of him doesn’t move. Murphy becomes not just impatient, but furious. He leans on his horn, rolls down the window and lets out a string of obscenities. Suddenly, he sees flashing lights and hears a siren. It turns out the vehicle behind him is a police car! The officer gets out of his patrol car and comes up to Murphy. “License and registration,” he commands. As Murphy takes them out, he then says, “Is there a problem? What did I do?” The police officer doesn’t say anything and takes the information back to his patrol car. After a moment, he returns and hands Murphy his license and registration. “Sorry, sir,” he says. “You can go.” “What did I do?” Murphy asks. The officer responds: “Well, I saw your bumper stickers: HONK IF YOU LOVE JESUS; FOLLOW ME TO CHURCH; MY BOSS IS A JEWISH CARPENTER. With all your honking and cursing, I thought the car was stolen!”

Of course, missionary work is more than that, but it does begin with how we act and treat people in the ordinary moments of life. Ask yourself, what kind of an ambassador am I?

“So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us.” (2 Corinthians 5:20)