Last Sunday, I was in a hotel room in Bethesda, MD, watching the fourth quarter of the 2018 Super Bowl and the postgame celebrations. It was a great game, a close one till the end with the Philadelphia Eagles, as you know, the 2018 Champions of the National Football League. After the game, in the postgame sea of emotion, the winners were asked to comment on the victory. I was surprised and impressed by the remarks of the Eagles head coach and his players. The head coach began his remarks by saying that he can only give the praise to his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The MVP quarterback, Nick Foles, began his remarks by saying, “All glory to God.” Zac Ertz, the all-pro Eagles tight end, a committed Christian, said, “Our number one goal is to make disciples (of Christ) . . . Football is just a platform that we have to draw people to Jesus.” The team knelt together after the game and prayed the Lord’s Prayer together (sadly, ESPN removed the prayer from its recording of the game and the celebration). I read, too, that several of the players meet three times weekly to “do a Bible study”, which means to pray with and discuss God’s Word. This Bible study group includes the two quarterbacks and two of the tight ends, a linebacker and a safety. Other players drop in and join them from time to time.

The Eagles’ example can inspire us. The mission of Jesus was to make disciples. On the day of the Ascension, Jesus formally passed that mission on to the Church. The mission of Jesus is now our mission and responsibility. He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them everything that I have taught you and know that I am with you always until the end of the world!”

We become disciples by committing to become students of Jesus our Lord and by praying together with the Bible, the living Word of God, by meeting regularly, by offering the Mass together and by praying on our own, too. During this coming year, we will introduce “Bible study groups” in our parish in order to help us to grow as disciples and help make disciples for Christ.

It is counter cultural in the USA to speak aloud about Jesus and our faith. The Eagles coach and players are acting against the current as they witness to their faith and they are inspiring us to do the same. Normally, I find it difficult to applaud the Philadelphia Eagles, being a rabid Giants fan. But, today, I have to say, “Fly, Eagles, fly.” I thank the Eagles for their witness!

THE COMMUNAL LIFE
 In the Acts of the Apostles, St. Luke tells us in Acts 2:42 that there were four essential components to the life of the infant Church. These were the study of teachings of the Apostles (the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament), the Mass (the Breaking of the Bread), the communal life (the social life of the community), and prayer. We continue to try to make all four parts of the life of the Church realities in our parish family life here at St. Lawrence the Martyr. In recent weeks, we have been making an extra effort to provide opportunities for the “communal life.” I want to thank those who gave us these social opportunities through the Family Mass socials, the Pancake Breakfast, and the Appreciation Supper. Many thanks and blessings to those who made these events possible and enjoyable. Our next social will be the Fish Fry/Fundraiser on Friday, March 2. The fish fry will be both a parish social and a chance to raise funds for Arlene McDonald and for our Haiti communities. I hope you will join us on March 2.

DIOCESAN CHARISMATIC PRAYER MEETING
The next Diocesan Prayer meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 12, at 7:30 pm in the great hall (gymnasium) at St. Paul Inside the Walls in Madison, NJ. These monthly prayer meetings offer us the opportunity to praise God together in prayer and song, to hear lessons and testimonies about “Life in the Spirit”, to intercede for each other in prayer, share “Glory Stories” about God’s action in our lives, and to enjoy fellowship with other Catholics who are enthusiastic about life in the Spirit. All are welcome to come and grow in the new life in the Holy Spirit!

Father Nick