

EVANGELIZATION: THE ESSENTIAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH

“The task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. Evangelizing is, in fact, the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize... *She begins by being evangelized herself...* Having been sent and evangelized, the Church herself sends out evangelizers. She puts on their lips the saving Word, she explains to them the message of which she herself is the depositary, she gives them the mandate which she herself has received and she sends them out to preach. To preach *not their own selves or their personal ideas*, but a Gospel of which neither she nor they are the absolute masters and owners, *to dispose of it as they wish*, but a Gospel of which they are the ministers, in order to pass it on with complete fidelity.”

~ (Pope Paul VI, [EVANGELII NUNTIANDI](#), 1975).

DEFINITION OF EVANGELIZATION

“To evangelize is to bear witness, in a simple and direct way, to God revealed by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit” ([EVANGELII NUNTIANDI](#), #26).

PHILOSOPHY

Approach evangelization as a *lifestyle*, rather than as a *program*. Create evangelizers *rather than* new evangelization techniques. Root evangelization in interior conversion through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

THREE PRIMARY GOALS OF EVANGELIZATION

In "[GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES](#)," *A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, the U.S. Bishops state that evangelization means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself.

GOAL I: CONVERSION WITHIN THE INDIVIDUAL

To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.

The enthusiastic embrace of Catholicism is the way to grow in intimate love of Jesus Christ, to be personally converted to him, and to follow him as faithful disciples. All authentic evangelization, in fact, everything we do as Christians, flows from this personal relationship with Jesus, which is a response of a person in faith to the **kerygma**, the proclamation of Christ's saving love. Everything flows from this personal turning to Jesus and the decision to pattern one's life on him. It follows that the first objective in implementing Goal One is to foster an experience of conversion and renewal in the heart of every believer.

This Goal One calls Catholics to continue to hear the Good News at ever-deeper levels. The call to holiness, given to every Catholic through Baptism, consecrates each one to God and to the service of the kingdom.

The strategy of this goal is to so deepen the sense of Scripture and sacrament that Catholics will pray more fully and, with a greater understanding of Christ's call, live as disciples at home, at work, and in today's many cultural settings. It seeks a greater openness to physical, mental, and cultural diversity among Catholics.

GOAL I OBJECTIVES

To foster an experience of conversion and renewal in the heart of every believer, leading to a more active living of Catholic life.

To foster an experience of conversion and renewal in every parish.

To foster an appreciation of God's Word in the lives of all Catholics.

To make the evangelizing dimension of the Sunday Eucharist more explicit.

To foster an appreciation of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and all of the Sacraments, the sacred signs of our Catholic life.

To foster a greater appreciation of the power of God's Word in our worship.

To foster an even deeper sense of prayer among our Catholic people.

To foster a renewed understanding of faith among Catholics.

To foster a sense of discipleship among Catholic adults and children.

To foster active and personal religious experience through participation in small-group and other communal experiences in which the Good News is shared, experienced, and applied to daily life.

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To foster a sense of the domestic Church within households in which families, individuals and groups reside.

To promote and develop a spirituality for the workplace.

To foster greater appreciation of cultural and ethnic spirituality.

Clearly, unless we continue to be evangelized *ourselves* (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 15) with renewed enthusiasm for our faith and our Church, we cannot evangelize others. Priority must be given to continued and renewed faith formation in faith as the basis of our deepening personal relationship with Jesus.

GOAL II: CONVERSION TO THE CHURCH COMMUNITY

To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith.

<http://www.goodshepherddet.com/goals-and-objectives>

Catholic evangelization never considers Jesus apart from the Church. Pope Paul VI insists that there is a “profound link between Christ, the Church, and evangelization” ([EVANGELII NUNTIANDI](#), #16). Catholics believe they embrace the fullness of the Incarnation when they embrace Jesus in the most intimate communion with His body, the Church. Goal Two offers the following challenge to Catholics across the country: To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so that they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith.

Only a Church renewed in spirit can pursue so grand a purpose. The Church is an evangelizer, but she begins by being evangelized herself. There is a great need to work at becoming **more welcoming**, less anonymous, more active in seeking new members and reconciling old ones. Welcome, acceptance, the invitation to conversion and renewal, reconciliation and peace, beginning with worship, must characterize the whole tenor of the parishes.

This Goal Two means that we are to invite effectively every person to come to know the Good News of Jesus proclaimed by the Catholic Church. It means not only that people are invited but also that an essential welcoming spirit is present in Catholic homes and in all our Catholic institutions.

GOAL II OBJECTIVES

To make every Catholic institution, especially our parishes, more welcoming.

To help every Catholic feel comfortable about sharing his or her faith and inviting people to discover Christ in our Catholic family of believers.

To develop within families and households the capacity to share the Gospel.

To equip and empower our active Catholic members to exercise their baptismal call to evangelize.

To use special times in parish and family life to invite people to faith.

To cultivate an active core of the baptized to serve as ministers of evangelization in their parishes, dioceses, neighborhoods, workplaces and homes.

To effectively invite people to our Church.

To design programs of outreach for those who have ceased being active in the Church.

To design programs that reach out in particular ways to those who do not participate in a church community or who seek the fullness of faith.

To foster the cultural diversity of the Church.

To deepen ecumenical involvement.

The strategy behind this goal is to create a more welcoming attitude toward others in our parishes so that people feel at home, to create an attitude of sharing faith and develop greater skills to do this, and to undertake activities to invite others to know the Catholic people better.

GOAL III: CONVERSION OF SOCIETY

To foster gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.

Goal Three addresses evangelization's impact on culture and society: To foster Gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.

Catholics must affirm what is good in American culture, not unduly emphasizing the negative. Today, the Church stands among the most ardent defenders of immigrants, refugees, the elderly, the unborn, and the poor and the marginalized in general. Evangelization aims to build on this foundation to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth.

Catholic evangelization is a counter-cultural activity that confronts disrespect for life, injustices, prejudices, divisions, loss of the sense of the transcendent, and many other ills in modern America. Nevertheless, the evangelization of culture remains a fundamental goal.

This goal follows upon the other two: The appreciation of our faith and its spread should lead to the transformation of our society. The pursuit of this goal, however, must accompany the pursuit of the other two because evangelization is not possible without powerful signs of justice and peace, as the Gospel shapes the framework of our lives.

GOAL III OBJECTIVES

To involve parishes and local service groups in the needs of their neighborhood.

To foster the importance of the family.

To develop groups to explore issues of the workplace and lay spirituality.

To encourage Catholic witness in the arts and in the American intellectual community.

To involve every Catholic, on different levels, in areas of public policy.

To involve the Catholic Church, on every level, in the media.

To involve Catholics, at every level, in questions of economic systems.

This goal means supporting those cultural elements in our land that reflect Catholic values and challenging those that reject it. Catholics, who today are involved in every level of modern life in the United States, have to address our society as a system and also in particular situations. This goal requires the strategy of strengthening our everyday involvement with those in need, of reflecting on the workplace and media, and of encouraging Catholic involvement in areas of public policy as a way of having greater impact on society's values.

YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES

Each of us is called to a personal relationship with our God who loves us.

Each of us needs to listen to God's Word as it is written in the Scriptures.

Each of us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, must make a decision to surrender to God's love and to commit ourselves to follow Christ, but we are mandated to know His Word *so that we know Him*. Each of us needs the support of a faith community to experience God's love and empower us to go out to others.

[Mark 4:1-9 \(The Parable of the Sower\)](#)

On another occasion, He (Jesus) began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around Him so that He got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on land. And He taught them at length in parables and, in the course of His instruction, He said to them, "Hear this! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain. And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." He added, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear."

[Matthew 28:19-20 \(The Great Commission\)](#)

"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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age."

[Romans 10:14-17 \(Where Faith Comes From\)](#)

But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring [the] good news!"

But not everyone has heeded the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what was heard from us?" Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through *the word of Christ*.

[Mark 4:10-20 \(The Purpose of the Parables\)](#)

And when He (Jesus) was alone, those present along with the Twelve questioned Him about the parables. He answered them, "The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables, so that 'they may look and see but not perceive, and hear and listen but not understand, in order that they may not be converted and be forgiven.'"

Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables? The sower sows the word. These are the ones on the path where the word is sown. As soon as they hear, Satan *comes at once* and takes away the word sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground who, when they hear the word, receive it at once with joy. But they have no root; they last only for a time. Then when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Those sown among thorns are another sort. They are the people who hear the word, but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. But those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

[Revelation 22:17-19 \(Living Water for All to Drink\)](#)

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." Let the hearer say, "Come." Let the one who thirsts come forward, and the one who wants it receive the gift of life-giving water. I warn everyone who hears the prophetic words in this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words in this prophetic book, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city described in this book.

PRAYER FOR EVANGELIZATION

God of Word and Spirit, speak your life-giving truth, deepen our faith and quicken our enthusiasm for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Free us to communicate the faith we profess.

As disciples of Jesus Christ, strengthen us to be people of hospitality. May we invite others to the Good News of salvation by the witness of our lives. May we extend welcome to those who journeyed from our midst. May we heal the hurts of alienation and offer a place of belonging to those in search of community.

Renewed by conversion to gospel values, may we cast the fire of your Word and Spirit into our homes, our neighborhoods, our places of work and our world.

May our nations and cultures be transformed by the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ, the Good News of Truth and Life now, always and forever.

We ask this in the name of your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen!