

## EVANGELIZATION—THE ESSENTIAL MISSION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Essential Mission of the Catholic Church, exhorted by Jesus Christ as well as countless [Holy Fathers](#) throughout the ages, is to spread the Gospel to the ends of the Earth. This is job Numero Uno for all Christians.

In order for our words to be credible, our actions must mirror them. As today's society is chock full of God skeptics who are ever watchful of His followers, it is imperative that we "walk the talk" by being "doers of the Word and not hearers only" ([James 1:22](#)). We cannot walk the Earth with despair written on our foreheads or gossip in every clime and place if our hope is to convert others to follow Christ. For example, German philosopher and cultural critic Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was quoted as saying, "I might believe in the Redeemer if His followers looked more redeemed."

Simply put, we're supposed to be *different*.

Jesus, after preaching His Father's Message and healing wounded bodies and souls for 3 years, saved His earthly best for last. He gave all of humankind a task. Before His Ascension to the right hand of the Father, He gave one final command to every one of us when he exhorted in [Matthew 28:19-20](#), "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." This same message is also proclaimed in the Holy Gospels according to [Mark 16:15](#), [Luke 24:46-47](#) and [John 20:21](#). In many Christian circles, the aforementioned Holy Scriptures are commonly referred to as "The Great Commission."

### HOW DO WE EVANGELIZE OTHERS?

So, how do we evangelize others? That is, how do we tell others about this Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, and what He offers them? Pope Paul VI, in his 1975 apostolic exhortation, [Evangelii Nuntiandi](#), laid it out clearly:

*"We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is, in fact, the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists to evangelize."* Here's the lynchpin. The Holy Father went on to say, *"The Church is an evangelizer," but "she begins by being evangelized herself."*

In other words, we can't evangelize anyone else until we, ourselves, are evangelized. We cannot share with others what we do not possess ourselves. We can't give what we don't have.

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So, we've established that our Mission- handed down by Christ Himself- is to spread His Good News, to evangelize. We've also outlined that, in order to effectively and credibly accomplish this, we must first be evangelized ourselves. How do we do that? That's where faith comes in.

### **WHAT IS FAITH? WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?**

Before we attempt to convert others, we ourselves must have a deep faith in God. But, what exactly is faith? Where does it come from? If we look inward to the Holy Scriptures, [Romans 10:17](#) tells us, "Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ." Hence, faith comes from hearing and embracing the Good News, which is found in the Holy Scriptures.

To examine [Romans 10:17](#), how do we hear (or read) the word of Christ, so that we can first be built up ourselves and then freely and joyfully share it with others? For starters, while attending Mass, we normally hear three different readings from the Holy Scriptures. The first reading is from the Old Testament while the second reading is from the New Testament. Lastly, the Gospel of our Lord is taken from one of the four Gospels ([Matthew](#), [Mark](#), [Luke](#), [John](#)) found at the beginning of the New Testament.

### **A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST**

The Mass readings offer much spiritual enrichment, but those same Holy Scriptures that we hear there are wooing each of us to go *deeper into and with Christ*. In addition to regularly attending Mass- so as to develop and enhance a personal relationship with Jesus Christ- we need to spend quality time with Him outside of Church. If we spent less than an hour each week with someone, how well would we really know them? How well would they really know us?

Perhaps becoming more familiarized with the infallible Holy Scriptures outside of Church would energize our faith, as multiple studies disclose that less than 25% of U. S. adult Catholics attend Mass on a weekly basis. Thinking again of the Nietzsche quote from the beginning of this document, these figures cannot be enticing for *potential converts* to join the Church, when they read that regular members themselves rarely attend. We must take action to stop this internal bleeding, but it must be accomplished soul by soul.

A Holy Spirit-filled manner in which to become more intimately yoked with what Jesus did, said, experienced and directed us to do—and therefore, the benchmark on how to live our daily lives- is by diving into the [Holy Bible](#). With 73 books, it can include- among many other responsibilities- being led by the Holy Spirit to bring someone to Christ ([Acts 8:26-40](#)). After praying for a teachable spirit and allowing God to supernaturally direct our thoughts ([John 16:13](#)), our minds can be opened to the Scriptures ([Luke 24:45](#)) and we can be transformed. The treasured counsel offered therein- from Genesis to Revelation and everything in between- forms in us a new person, continuously reborn in Christ

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(ongoing conversion). We learn to lean on Christ for strength ([Colossians 1:29](#)) for ALL things, so that we begin to instinctively know how to handle the thorny situations of everyday life that used to baffle us when we walked in our own strength ([2 Corinthians 12:9-10](#)).

### WHAT WE BELIEVE

The 3 pillars of the Catholic Church are Sacred Scripture, Apostolic Tradition and The Living Magisterium. Although the Church does not embrace Sola Scriptura (the Bible alone), it is incumbent upon us to become intimately familiar with the Word so that we may come to live it and walk it out. Many of the Church Fathers and Saints that our faith holds in very high regard have exhorted how critical it is to embrace and understand the Holy Scriptures. A few quotes that begin the page 4 outline that importance:

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“Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.”

~ St. Jerome (347-420)

“If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself.”

~ St. Augustine (354-430)

“The Holy Bible is like a mirror before our mind's eye. In it we see our inner face. From the Scriptures we can learn our spiritual deformities and beauties. And there too we discover the progress we are making and how far we are from perfection.”

“Learn the heart of God from the word of God.”

~ St. Gregory the Great (540-604), Pope– Gregory I (590-604)

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### “BUT I'M NOT A GOOD SPEAKER”

In His Great Commission directive (not a suggestion or request), notice that Jesus did not say, “Only those of you who feel like it or those of you who think you are good speakers should make disciples of all nations.” The great Moses was not a good speaker and this is one of the excuses ([Exodus 4:10](#)) he tried to give God on Mount Sinai when God hand picked Moses to lead His people out of bondage. Rather than trust in God's divinely appointed choice (in that He had chosen perfectly), Moses' re-

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sponse was full of human shortcomings, fear and anxiety as he stammered that he was personally incapable of leading the Israelites out of Egypt.

[Exodus 4](#) continues on and shows us that God responded by challenging Moses, reminding him of Who made his mouth and gave him the gift of speech. But that exhortation wasn't only for Moses. It's for all of us- yesterday, today and until Jesus splits the eastern sky and comes back in glory. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we can courageously go forward with our Mission, knowing that we're not alone, as Jesus promised He's always with us. His perfect way dictates that He's never lied to us, so we must trust in Him on this one as well - beyond the songs we sing at Mass and the prayers we pray to begin and end committee meetings.

As [Exodus 4:14](#) shares with us, God gave a resistant Moses his brother, Aaron, to help him on the noble journey for which he was hand selected.

Likewise, God gives us our brothers and sisters in the LORD to accompany us, so that we may encourage one another in our Faith walk to bring others to the Banquet Table. Iron sharpens iron ([Proverbs 27:17](#))!

### **ARE WE FOLLOWING GOD'S WAY or OUR OWN WAY?**

God made each one of us in His own likeness. He knows, way better than we do, what we are capable of accomplishing. He gave us everything we need in order to get to Heaven. Yet, rather than embracing our Lord's assurance that He will be with us always as we go about advancing His Kingdom here on Earth- our whole purpose for being here- some of us place our own fears or opinions (roadblocks) in the path of what we are really here to do:

*"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, (Cf. 2 Cor 4:5; Saint Augustine Sermo XLVI, De Pastoribus: ccl XLI, pp. 529-530) 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."*

~ [Evangelii Nuntiandi](#), 15.

If we are not painstaking about our own ongoing conversion, we risk falling prey to an enemy who is very real and "comes to steal, slaughter and destroy" ([John 10:10](#)). The Holy Scriptures warn us to be vigilant in seeking the truth ([John 14:6](#)) so that we avoid embracing false doctrines that do not exhort the Word of God:

*"I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry."*

~ [2 Timothy 4:1-5](#)

## **COUNT ON IT & COUNT IT PURE JOY: WE ARE GOING TO BE HATED BECAUSE OF HIS NAME**

When evangelizing, are we going to be rebuked at times? Yes- doors will be closed on us, telephone calls will be disconnected and people will walk away from us in mid-sentence.

Are we going to be scorned by others, to include our friends? We can count on it- and count it pure joy ([James 1:2-4](#), [1 Peter 1:4:13-16](#), [1 Peter 1:6-7](#))! Are we going to be rejected for speaking the Truth of Christ, even though the Good News is a path to eternal salvation? Absolutely, but when we remember that Jesus was rejected by His own people for doing the very same thing, we ask: Why should we be any different ([Matthew 13:54-58](#), [Mark 6:1-6](#), [Luke 4:16-30](#))?

As we journey through the Holy Scriptures, we find that we're not here on Earth to be comfortable. We come to realize that our mission mandate is not to collect as many material things as possible being dying or climbing the promotion ladder at work as fast as we can before we die. There are no U-Hauls behind hearses so that we can take our possessions with us and Jesus doesn't care what our occupation here on Earth is, as long as it Honors Him. Jesus tells us we're supposed to carry our Cross daily. Our main purpose for being here is to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to the four corners of the Earth and to be servants to one another as we do it.

But, here's the Good News. If we lean on Him, our fear of man will dissipate, [as we're doing things in His power](#)- which can never be outdone. The first command of the Risen Christ was ["do not be afraid."](#)

## **HOLDING CLOSE TO OUR FIRST LOVE**

The apostle John, in [Revelation 2:2-5](#), shares what God revealed to him: *"I know your works, your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot tolerate the wicked; you have tested those who call themselves apostles but are not, and discovered that they are impostors. Moreover, you have endurance and have suffered for my name, and you have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first. Realize how far you have fallen. Repent, and do the works you did at first. Otherwise, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent."*

The revelation shows God's appreciation for our works, deeds and standing in the gap for Him while in the midst of false teachers and such. However, He then states that we have *"lost the love you had at*

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*first.*" Does this mean that we're not following God as we were when we first invited Him in to our lives? Remember that time? Many of us, after receiving Jesus Christ into our hearts, were so overcome with joy that we wanted to share it with everyone we came in contact with- regardless of where we were.

For example, as a new Christian, perhaps we had seen an elderly woman at the supermarket who was stooped over and moving slowly. Maybe we stopped and prayed with her, that God would give her strength to complete her task and return home safely to get some rest....are we still doing those things? Are we still **excited** about growing closer to Jesus and serving in His Vineyard on a daily basis? Do we still embrace that first love John wrote about in the same manner we did when we first allowed Jesus into our hearts? Like any personal relationship - our marriage, friendships, etc- our personal relationship with Christ needs constant nurturing and cultivation to keep us fresh and on the Vine....

### **OUR PRAYER**

A prayer is for [our Church Website](#) to be used as a spiritual resource that helps Catholics enrich themselves more deeply in their Faith, so that we feel more comfortable freely sharing it with others- to EVANGELIZE. When this takes place, God moves in a big way and starts opening doors for us to walk through.

### **DO IT WITH ZEAL & ENTHUSIASM: EVERYDAY SHOULD BE PENTECOST!**

Whether you are just starting out on your faith journey with Jesus Christ (a very exciting time!) or you have a long standing and deep, abiding personal relationship with Him, our main objective is to help others spiritually advance the Kingdom of God here on Earth, one soul at a time, and to do it with the LOVE, TRUTH and GRACE of Jesus Christ.

We are grateful you stopped by to see us and hope you come back soon. If you think this website is a worthy learning tool, please share [our Church Website](#) with your family, friends, prospective converts and your Church/Vicariate/Archdiocese. If you'd like to report a website error or share a link/teaching resource for us to add to the website, please send it to [goodshepherddet@sbcglobal.net](mailto:goodshepherddet@sbcglobal.net).

May our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, richly bless you and may His face shine down upon you this day and until He comes again in Glory! Amen!