



PARISH EVANGELIZATION WHERE TO BEGIN?

A GUIDE FOR STARTING AND MAINTAINING A FRUITFUL
MINISTRY OF EVANGELIZATION IN YOUR PARISH



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“The first word, the true initiative, the true activity comes from God and only by inserting ourselves in to the divine initiative, only by begging this divine initiative, will we too be able to become — with him and in him — evangelizers”

~Pope Benedict XVI

What follows is an outline of the general stages in the development of a strong and fruitful evangelization ministry. These phases may overlap, ebb and flow, and are ultimately dependent upon the more fundamental necessity of a parish’s commitment to follow the Lord on a path of continual purification, conversion and sanctification.



Stage 1: Discern the call

- ▣ Spend time with your pastor learning what his vision is for evangelization in your parish.
- ▣ Spend time reflecting on the Church’s teachings on evangelization.
- ▣ Spend ample time in prayer discerning the Lord’s will for your evangelization ministry in light of your pastor’s vision, your own vocation and the Church’s teachings.

Stage 2: Gather your team

- ▣ Pray about who of the members of your parish would serve well on an evangelization team, receiving input from your pastor and other parish leaders.
 - *The spiritual health of your team is essential to the fruitfulness of your work. Evangelization team members should be living as faithful and exemplary Catholics, exercising a regular prayer life, practicing regular Confession and Mass and following the teachings of the Church.*
- ▣ A good team will be a mix of people, representing the many dimensions of your parish, ideally:
 - members of other parish committees
 - “new” people who have not regularly served on parish committees
 - young and old, married, single, consecrated, multi-cultural
- ▣ Gather a team of intercessors who will serve the work of evangelization in your parish through the offering of prayer and sacrifice.
 - For information about how to start an Intercessory Prayer Partnership, see the New Evangelization website.





Stage 3: Discernment and Formation as a Team

- Spend many months, even a year or more, meeting as a team to pray together and develop a spirit of unity, asking the Lord to show your team His plan for evangelization in your parish.
- Attend evangelization and adult faith formation programs individually and as a team to mature in Christian discipleship.
- Seek advice from “resource” parishes who have an established evangelization ministry.
- Read and discuss the Church’s teachings on evangelization, especially: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Paul VI), *Redemptoris Missio*, *Novo Millennio Inuente* (John Paul II).
- Here are just a few of the many transformative adult faith formation organizations that your team/parish can draw from:



Stage 4: Stir Up the Flame in your Parish Community

- Work with the priests, deacons, religious and lay leaders of your parish to begin to cultivate an evangelizing spirit in your parish.
 - *This will require intentionally molding the parish culture through homilies, bulletin articles, posters, etc...to communicate to the parish that the “business as usual” mentality must be replaced with a commitment to transformation and continual conversion in Christ.*
- Create opportunities for the members of your parish to encounter the living Christ more deeply through the sacraments, Scripture, and a mature prayer life. Offer retreats, formation programs, small group discussions and other transformational experiences that root your parish community deeply in the person of Jesus Christ and that help them develop strong community bonds.

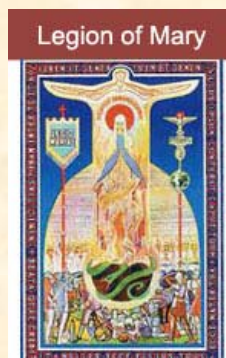


- Work with parish ministry leaders to infuse all parish ministries with an evangelizing spirit. Cultivate in the entire parish a sense that evangelization is the very reason for the parish’s existence, not just the responsibility of a few people.
- You pastor might consider publicly commissioning your evangelization team at Mass so that the entire parish community is aware of your parish’s plans and commitment to evangelization.



Stage 5: Outreach

- If your team has prayerfully devoted time to each of these stages, you will begin to have a sense of the specific ways that the Lord wishes you to begin reaching out to inactive Catholics and those who do not profess any religious faith.
- There are many programs available to help you with your outreach. There are also many groups who can come to parishes to help get outreach started. Here are only a few examples:



Keep in Mind:

- Take time for each of these stages. Patience is a key virtue in this process. Avoid looking for a “quick fix” solution.
- Steep this process and the ministry itself in constant prayer. Our work bears fruit in proportion to its rootedness in Jesus Christ.
- Infuse each meeting and presentation with the call to conversion in Christ.
- Effective evangelization is the fruit of personal intimacy with Jesus Christ and communion in his Church. No program or technique can serve as a substitute for this foundation.

“Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things on the condition that you believe much more in His love than in your own weakness.”

~Blessed Mother Teresa

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