

Evangelization 101

We are so glad you've joined us for Evangelization 101! These workshops are designed to help you understand some of the basic principles important for evangelization. By no means will this be an exhaustive training. Rather, we hope to send you forth today with three things - conviction, courage and confidence.

Conviction

We believe that the truths of the Gospel make a difference in the lives of those that we are called to reach. We are convicted that we are each called to participate in the work of evangelization.

Courage

Taking the first step to evangelize requires a leap of faith. When we have a conviction that Jesus matters, we need to be willing to take that leap.

Confidence

By practicing some of the basic skills, like giving our own testimony to people that we have never met, we will gain confidence. We will know even though we may not get it perfect every time, we can do it. Ultimately, our confidence is in the Holy Spirit to be the agent of conversion.

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NOTES

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PREPARING YOUR WITNESS

“Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence”

- 1 Peter 3:15

1. *Begin by reflecting on details of life before your full commitment to God. Consider the following questions. How did you know you were not where you should be? What was missing? How did you know your life wasn't what it could or should be? What was your faith life like? What was life in general like for you?*

2. *Next think about what happened to cause you to move toward conversion. Consider the following questions. Was there a specific event or course of events that led you to desire change? What was happening in your life that led to the conversion?*

3. *Finally reflect on your life after your conversion to God. Consider the following questions. What changes were made? How has your life improved? How has life in those around you changed? How have your priorities changed?*

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The Kerygma

At the end of mass, one of the dismissals that we are given says "Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord". If someone asked you to articulate "what is the Gospel message" - what would you say?

As Catholics, we need to be ready to share with others not only how God has moved in our own lives (our testimony), but also the story of how God has moved in the world throughout all of human history - how His plan for the redemption of the world came about.

You might hear this called the Kerygma the core Gospel message.

What is Kerygma?

In the ancient Greek/Roman world, an important announcement would be made from the king through a herald, or a "Keryx". The herald would travel throughout the empire, and this announcement would be proclaimed exactly as the king/ruler had mandated- this message would be called a "Kerygma". The word Kerygma literally means "to proclaim".

Pope John Paul II, talked about Kerygma this way:

"The kerygma is the initial ardent proclamation by which a person is one day overwhelmed and brought to the decision to entrust himself to Jesus Christ by faith."

-Catechesi Tradendae 25

Think about that for a moment. While knowing our faith is important, before we spend a lot of time learning more about our faith it's important that we are first "overwhelmed" by the faith. Why is this important? Because once we have been overwhelmed, once we have been evangelized, we can't help but share that faith with others.

"the person who has been evangelized goes on to evangelize others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelization: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn."

- Evangelization in the Modern World 24

Have you had this experience of being overwhelmed in your faith life? Do any particular moments come to mind?

Another way we can define Kerygma is the proclamation of the "Core Gospel Message". This can be articulated a number of different ways, but it's important that it remains at the center of all our ministries at the Church. It's important that as Catholics we have a deep understanding of this message and how to express it.

We can even see the Kerygma in the first paragraph of the Catechism of the Catholic Church:

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness, freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. For this reason, at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the Church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life.

- Catechism of The Catholic Church, 1

Creation

We are all created by God for relationship with him. We are meant for heaven.

"God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness, freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life."
- Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1

Sin

We broke our relationship with God through original sin and sin remains in the world and in our lives today.

"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"

"the wages of sin is death"

Romans 3:23

Romans 6:23

Redemption

Christ came to redeem us from our sin - something that we could not do on our own.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Conversion

While Christ died for us, we must respond to God's offer of redemption. We must change our lives to put Jesus at the center. We are all called to conversion.

"Interior repentance is a radical reorientation of our whole life, a return, a conversion to God with all our heart, an end of sin, a turning away from evil, with repugnance toward the evil actions we have committed."

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1431

Immersion

We must conform our lives with the message of Jesus Christ through his Church. The Church offers us the sacraments as opportunities for grace to help us live this call that we couldn't live on our own. The tradition of the Church handed down through generations is a guide from those who walked this path before us.

"The Church is both the means and the goal of God's plan"

- Catechism of the Catholic Church, 778

Thresholds of Conversion

*These thresholds of conversion represent stages that people often go through on their journey to faith. While they don't always occur in a consistent way, understanding the stages and helping identify where individuals are can help us better understand the needs of those on the path to faith. By helping shape our understanding of those we are seeking to reach, we can become more effective evangelists and witnesses of the Gospel in our everyday life. These thresholds of conversion are taken from the book *Forming Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell.*

Initial Trust

A person is able to trust or has a positive association with Jesus Christ, the Church, a Christian believer, or something identifiably Christian. Trust is not the same as active personal faith. Without some kind of bridge of trust in place, people will not move closer to God.

If someone does not yet have trust (we might call this a pre-trust phase) we should work to provide easily accessible, low commitment opportunities on the parish grounds, such as fish fries, parish picnics, etc... It is critical to have a warm and hospitable presence at these events that intentionally targets non-church members. It is also important to recognize that people who are in a pre-trust phase will likely not willingly enter our parish grounds, so we should be intentional about how to build relationships with them off parish property. We must go and meet them where they are.

Spiritual Curiosity

A person finds himself intrigued by or desiring to know more about Jesus, his life, and his teachings or some aspect of the Christian faith. This curiosity can range from mere awareness of a new possibility to something quite intense. Nevertheless, a person at the threshold of curiosity is not yet open to personal change. Curiosity is still essentially passive, but it is more than mere trust.

In order to help someone move from the trust phase into the spiritual curiosity phase we can be in the habit of speaking about Jesus regularly, telling stories about our own experiences of faith, be a visible witness of charity and mercy in day to day life and ask people questions about their lives (not necessarily about their faith) that might cause deeper reflection.

Spiritual Openness

A person acknowledges to him or herself and to God that he or she is open to the possibility of personal and spiritual change. This is one of the most difficult transitions for a postmodern nonbeliever. Openness is not a commitment to change. People who are open are simply admitting they are open to the possibility of change. Many people who attend mass each week, but are not engaged in other activities of the church are likely in a phase of spiritual openness.

In order to help someone move from the Spiritual Curiosity phase into the Spiritual Openness phase we should provide safe opportunities to express their curiosity and answer their questions. These should likely be done in the context of a relationship rather than a formal program or by being able to ask questions anonymously. We may also consider trying to spark questions in them by giving prompts of food for thought on some of the big questions in life – Who am I? Why do I exist? Is God real? Am I lovable by God?

Spiritual Seeking

The person moves from being essentially passive to actively seeking to know the God who is calling him or her. It is, if you will, “dating with a purpose” but not yet marriage. Seekers are asking, “Are you the one to whom I will give myself?” At this stage, the seeker is engaged in an urgent spiritual quest, seeking to know whether he or she can commit to Christ in his Church.

In order to help someone move from the Spiritual Openness phase into the Spiritual Seeking phase we should be intentional in our relational accompaniment of them. We should look for opportunities to build deeper relationships where questions can be asked comfortably. We should create environments, and programs, that seek to answer questions individuals may have. We should talk frequently about the story of Jesus, both in our parish programs and in personal conversations. We should continue to share our life experiences and continue to ask questions about their life experiences and where they may see God fitting into them.

Intentional Discipleship

This is the decision to “drop one’s nets,” to make a conscious commitment to follow Jesus in the midst of his Church as an obedient disciple and to reorder one’s life accordingly.

In order to help someone move from the Spiritual Seeking phase into the Intentional Discipleship phase we should be willing to answer any questions the seeker might have. We must provide lived examples of how living intentional discipleship of Christ is different than just being a fan of Christ or the Church. These individuals should be told the story of Jesus (Kerygma) and asked to respond to the great question of Jesus in Matthew 16 – Who do you say that I am? We should foster experiences (like retreats) that provide opportunities for the individual to respond. We should also commit to intentional intercessory prayer and sacrifice for these individuals.



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Faith sharing tips

“Everyone that acknowledges me before others, I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father.”

-Matthew 10:32

Pray

- Talk and listen to God, with the emphasis on listening.
- Listen in silence, every day.
- “Prayer is a relationship. If you are not listening to God, to whom are you listening?” Judy Sauer

Discern Your Gifts

- When we align our thoughts and actions with God’s plan for us, God fills us with supernatural Joy. Joy that is infused by God!
- When we align our thoughts and actions with God’s plan for us, we are taking part in God’s salvation plan.
- People are attracted to joyful people.
- Discern what your gifts are and use them in the way God intended!
- Join the “right” parish ministry and use your charisms to help build His kingdom on earth. This is the best way to evangelize.
- Take a Spiritual Gifts Inventory or Living Your Strengths

Share Your Faith Story

- Everyone has a beautiful, wonderful story to share.
- No one knows your faith story, your relationship with God better than you.
- This is the “strength” behind your story – your experience, your relationship with God.
- “The truth is like a lion; you don’t have to defend it. Let it loose; it will defend itself.” St. Augustine
- Develop a 5 minute version and a 30 second version of your testimony

Start With Those People Closest to You

- Start with people you know.
- Start with those people in your “circle of influence” – family and friends.
- Just think what would happen if regular church-goers invited just one more person to go to Mass each week.

Personally Invite People to Participate

- Don't assume people do not want to participate; many times people are simply waiting to be asked!
- Our role as Catholics, as parish ministry leaders is to bring people to Jesus.
- 71% of the time you ask, people will say “yes”.

Learn the Catholic Faith

- Join a prayer group or faith formation group with people that know more than you.
- Read Scripture daily.
- Use “faith-sharing” at parish ministry meetings – show people how to do it.

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