

## Living as Missionary Disciples – A Resource for Evangelization

### Written By

- Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, USCCB in 2017

### Introduction

- “The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.”
- We are called to be missionary disciples who know and live the faith and confidently share the Gospel.
- Pope Francis’ call to move our church and parishes from *maintenance* to *mission*.
- The focus must be outward directed, not on the parish as it is, but on how the parish can better and more fruitfully lead, minister and engage people to the call to witness and discipleship.
- Depends on pastoral leaders:
  - Ongoing conversion and daily personal encounter with Christ.
  - Allowing the Holy Spirit to inspire.
  - Lead all ministries toward witness and discipleship.
- Effective leadership focused on missionary discipleship:
  - Discern the state and life of the parish (maintenance, self-preservation, mission or evangelization).
  - Reevaluate parish ministries, programs and activities to assess effectiveness in missionary discipleship.
  - Evaluate how human and financial resources are prioritized and managed.
  - Integrate evangelization principles into existing pastoral plans.
  - Identify the rich inventory of pastoral and theological resources.
  - Employ resources in multiple areas.

### Theological Summary of the New Evangelization

- Evangelization:
  - The Church’s *ad gentes* (“to the world”) mission given to her by Christ is the proclamation of the Good News to those who do not know him.
  - “Propose anew” the Good News to all of the Christian faithful, especially those absent from the Lord’s table.
  - Pope Francis (Evangelii Gaudium):
    - 1) “The primary reason for evangelizing is the love of Jesus, which we have received, the experience of salvation, which urges us to even greater love of him.”
    - 2) “The proclamation (kerygma) of the life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and of the Kingdom of God is at the core of evangelization.”
    - 3) “To evangelize, one who bears witness to God’s Revelation in Jesus through the Holy Spirit by living a life imbued with Christian virtues, by proclaiming unceasingly that salvation is offered to all people through the Pascal Mystery of Christ, and by preaching hope in God’s love for us.”
- Who Is Called to Evangelize?
  - All are called, frequent participation in sacraments, proclaim with word and a life transfigured by God’s presence.
- What is the New Evangelization?
  - Not new in content, but in “ardor, methods and expression”; new in its inner thrust and in its methods.
  - “A new chapter of evangelization full of fervor, joy, generosity, courage, boundless love and attraction.”
- Renewal and Conversion
  - Invites the baptized to renew their own faith in a way that leads to the evangelization of others.
  - The New Evangelization is geared toward others through the work of the Holy Spirit.
  - The New Evangelization is done through the witness by the baptized in their everyday life lived in faith and charity. We cannot give what we don’t have. Cultivating a life of faith is essential to helping others do so.
- A Deeper Encounter with Christ: Formation for Discipleship
  - 1) Encounter – the purpose of Evangelization is to lead people to encounter Christ.
    - + Evangelizers need to have had a personal encounter experience to share with others.
    - + An “encounter” can take many forms in which the Holy Spirit leads: prayer, sacraments, adoration, Scripture, works of mercy, the Eucharist, acts of charity, service, retreats, talks, bible study, reflections.
    - + Encounter constantly renewed through personal testimony, proclamation of kerygma and missionary action.
    - + Without the kerygma (the message of salvation of the paschal mystery), the other aspects are sterile.
    - + A moment of conversion (metanoia) that reorients a person’s life to Jesus.
    - + First impulse after encounter is to share with others.
    - + Faith involves a profound change of mind and heart.
    - + Conversion is not a one-time event, but a series of events over a lifetime.

+ Encounter Jesus within the Family – our first community and most basic way God gathers and forms us to act in the world. The family is the domestic church. In family we learn to pray and seek God’s will for us:

- # The Church is a family of families.
- # Sacrament of Marriage – marriage is the plan of God.
- # Parents are the first educators of their children.
- # Society is built on the foundation of healthy families.

+ Encounter Jesus in and Through the Church – the Church is universal – diverse, international and multicultural, consists of both clergy and laity. Evangelization is rooted in the parish.

+ Encounter Jesus in Others – how often do we reach out to missing brothers and sisters and invite them to Mass?

- 2) Accompany – the response to this encounter with Christ needs accompaniment.
  - + We most live explicit lives of discipleship.
  - + Missionary outreach is at the heart of discipleship.
  - + You cannot live discipleship alone, we need others to model and accompany us as we grow.
- 3) Community – evangelization invites people to the Body of Christ, which is the Catholic Church.
  - + Our hearts are transformed by the Holy Spirit to enter into communion with the Holy Trinity.
  - + When liturgy celebrated well, the community is strengthened, a door for evangelization.
- 4) Send – evangelization leads disciples to accept God’s desire to send them on mission.
  - + Mission is inseparable from discipleship.
  - + As missionary disciples we take our encounter with Jesus out into the world.
  - + Evangelizations does not always require formal education or lengthy training.
  - + The Mass is the essential to nourish and form missionary disciples.

#### Developing a Pastoral Plan for Missionary Discipleship

- 1) Planning for Ministry Is Permeated with Prayer
  - Each parish has unique charisms and manifests the Holy Spirit in different ways.
  - Parish leadership interacts on a regular basis to pray, reflect and discern to foster a missionary discipleship culture.
  - Prayer before, during and after is critical. Without prayer our efforts are fruitless.
  - Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.
- 2) Effective Planning for Ministry is Focused on Fruitfulness
  - Focus on bearing fruit throughout the discipleship process; prune what is ineffective.
  - Pruning allows new growth to begin.
  - Discern what will be fruitful; align programs and ministries to achieve desired result, be flexible.
- 3) Effective Planning for Ministry Requires Leaders
  - Not just managers and administrators, but spiritual leaders with planning skills.
  - Grounded in personal, pastoral and spiritual formation:
    - + Pastoral – Inspire others through vision, personal witness and commitment
    - + Spiritual – Kerygma is the foundation, know it and proclaim it; daily prayer, Mass and sacraments
    - + Human Formation – put other’s first, show empathy, active listening skills, collaborate, sustain relationships
    - + Intellectual Formation – study Scripture, the Catechism and important Church documents; business administration, sociology, leadership, technology
    - + Interculturally Competent – multicultural parishes
- 4) Effective Planning Is Rooted in the Teachings of Our Faith and Supported by Foundational Pastoral Practices
  - Based in the Church’s teaching and tradition.
- 5) Effective Planning for Ministry Engages and Inspires People Through a Culture of Encounter and Accompaniment, Building Strong and Trusting Relationships
  - Engaging others through Christian witness of everyday life.
  - Creating an atmosphere of invitation, hospitality and trust.
  - Building collaborative relationships, teamwork and commitment.
  - Welcoming and embracing ethnically diverse communities.
  - Engagement and current pastoral practice.
- 6) Planning for Ministry Requires Intentional Stewardship
  - Managing, supervising and developing people.
  - Sound business practices and ethical standards.