

Go and Make Disciples

Written By

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Scripture

- "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 19:28)
- "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!" (Luke 12:49)

Introduction

- A plan and strategy of evangelization is needed because the fire of Jesus burns even today.
- We all have, and are, stories of faith, for through the Spirit, the Gospel of Jesus Christ takes hold of us in the proclamation of his Word.
- We understand evangelization in the light of these stories; namely, how we have been changed by the power of Christ's word and sacraments and how we have an essential role in sharing the faith through our daily lives as believers.
- Evangelization is what we are all about.
- Evangelization is the essential mission of the Church.
- We turn in prayer to the Holy Spirit that we may receive the guidance needed to set hearts on fire.

What is Evangelization?

- 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.
- Evangelization must be connected to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Conversion - the change in our lives that comes through the power of the Holy Spirit. Unless we undergo conversion, we have not truly accepted the Gospel.
- Conversion occurs many ways: suddenly, gradually, RCIA, through relationships, Catholic schools and religious education, retreats, missions, etc.
- If our faith is alive, it will be aroused again and again as we mature as disciples.
- If faith is not transforming each heart and life, it is dead.
- The Gospel speaks to us individually and to society, it transforms human existence.
- The fruits of evangelization are changed lives and a changed world – holiness, justice, spirituality and peace.
- People will freely accept the "good news."
- A different vision of what life is about – an intimate relationship with God.
- We do not see a world of blind forces ruled by chance.
- We do not view life's purpose as the gathering of power & riches, but as a gracious invitation to live for God & others in love.
- Inwardly we are called to continually receive the Gospel, our ongoing conversion.
- Outwardly evangelization addresses those who have not heard the Gospel or who, having heard it, stopped practicing.
- Three objectives of the mission:
 - 1) To proclaim the Gospel to all people
 - 2) To help bring about the reconversion of those who have received the Gospel but live it nominally
 - 3) To deepen the lives of the believers
- Evangelization root meaning is "good news."

Why We Evangelize?

- So that the salvation of Christ Jesus, which transforms our human lives even now, will bring as many possible to the promised life of unending happiness in heaven.
- The Lord gave us a message that is unique. All faiths are not merely different version of the same thing.
- The Church believes that God has established Christ as the one mediator and that she herself has been established as the universal sacrament of salvation.
- St. John Paul II – "Two truths together, namely, the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all humankind and the necessity of the Church for salvation."
- The Lord gave us another reason – our love for every person.

How Evangelization Happens?

- The Spirit, the first gift of the risen Christ to this people, gives us both the ability to receive the Gospel of Jesus and in response, the power to proclaim it.
- Without the Holy Spirit, evangelization cannot occur.
- People evangelize each other by the simple lives of faith they lead.
- Two elements at work:
 - 1) Witness – simple living of the faith
 - 2) Sharing – spreading the Good News of Jesus in an explicit way
- Invite people to the riches the Catholic Church can bring into their lives.
- Ecumenical movement – deeper communication and dialogue with other Christian communities.
- People of non-Christian religions also have the right to hear the Gospel, but not as a cover of proselytizing.

Goals

- 1) To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for the faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.
 - Unless we continue to be evangelized, with renewed enthusiasm, we cannot evangelize.
 - Many Catholics tend to keep their faith to themselves or manifest it only around other Catholics.
 - No reason to be shy about the heritage of our Catholic faith.
 - A call to an enthusiasm for all that God has given us in our Catholic faith and fostering ongoing conversion.
- 2) To invite all people in the U.S., 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.
- 3) To foster gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.
 - Our country can be faulted for its materialism, sexism, racism, consumerism, individualism and selfishness.

Why Issue the Plan Now?

- In 1983 Pope John Paul II called for the “new evangelization” – the lay people to be involved in evangelization.
- We have all received this Spirit. This is not a spirit of timidity or fear, but a bold spirit of life, truth, joy and grace.

Goals and Strategies

- Mary is the true model of discipleship and evangelization.
- The ministry of evangelization does not consist in following a recipe but letting the Spirit open our hearts to God’s Word so that we can live and proclaim God’s Word to others.
- Without prayer, the Good News of Jesus Christ cannot be understood, spread or accepted.
- These goals must bear upon everyday life.
- These goals assume that an evangelizing spirit will touch every dimension of Catholic parish life. Welcome, acceptance, the invitation to conversion and renewal must characterize the whole tenor of parishes.
- A collaborative effort between the clergy and laity.
- Carried out in the midst of a culture that will make them difficult to receive.

Presentation of the Goals

- 1) 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:
 - To foster and experience of conversion and renewal in the heart of every believer, leading to a more active living of the Catholic faith.
 - 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 Sunday Eucharist more explicit.
 - To foster an appreciation of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist and of all 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 the faith among Catholics.
 - To foster a sense of discipleship among Catholic adults and children.
 - To foster active and personal religious experience through participation in the small-group and other communal experiences in which the Good News is shared, experienced, and applied to daily life.
 - To foster a sense of domestic church within the households in which families, individuals and groups reside.
 - To promote and develop a spirituality of the workplace.
 - To foster greater appreciation of cultural and ethnic spirituality.
- 2) To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural backgrounds, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith:
- 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 cultural diversity within the unity of the Church.
 - To deepen the ecumenical involvement.
- 3) 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.
- To involve parishes and local service groups in the needs of their neighborhood.
 - To foster the importance of 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 the questions of economic systems.