

How to evangelize effectively

Objective: "Preach the Gospel at all times, when necessary use words" is a quote often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, however, how do we live it out in our day to day lives??

Song Suggestion: God Has Chosen Me

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Mt 28:18-20

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

1 Pt 3:15-16

Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence.

Catechism 849

The missionary mandate. "Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be 'the universal sacrament of salvation,' the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men"

Catechism 850

The origin and purpose of mission. The Lord's missionary mandate is ultimately grounded in the eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity: "The Church on earth is by her nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, she has as her origin the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit." The ultimate purpose of mission is none other than to make men share in the communion between the Father and the Son in their Spirit of love.

Catechism 851

Missionary motivation. It is from God's love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, "for the love of Christ urges us on." Indeed, God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; that is, God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth. Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth. Because she believes in God's universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary.

Catechism 852

Missionary paths. The Holy Spirit is the protagonist, "the principal agent of the whole of the Church's mission." It is he who leads the Church on her missionary paths. "This mission continues and, in the course of history, unfolds the mission of Christ, who was sent to evangelize the poor; so the Church, urged on by the Spirit of Christ, must walk the road Christ himself walked, a way of poverty and obedience, of service and self-sacrifice even to death, a death from which he emerged victorious by his resurrection." So it is that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians."

Saint:

St. Paul tirelessly preached the gospel through out the world. He endured many hardships along the way, but remained faithful to his missionary calling. He is a patron saint for missions and evangelists.

https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint_id=91

Vignette:

Mark got together with his high school buddies that he had not seen in years for a round of golf. After golf, then told stories from the glory days. They went to a Catholic high school, however, Mark was the only one practicing the faith. When they asked him how he could still be Catholic after all bad things that have been happening, he did not have a good answer. While Mark loved the Church, he was not comfortable talking about it, and that bothered him. He wanted to learn how to become an effective evangelist for the next time the opportunity presented itself.

There are five circles of Evangelization:

- Self - Before we can evangelize the faith, we must know the faith. Spend time in prayer and study in order to deepen your appreciation of the beauty of the faith. You need to have a personal relationship with Christ that naturally flows through your thoughts, words and actions. Others will be attracted to you because your peace, joy and happiness. However, remember that you are not alone – allow the Holy Spirit to do its work as well. Sometimes, we just plant the seed – the Holy Spirit takes it from there, and we may never see the fruits of our work.
- Family – There is a reason why God has placed them in your life – we are called to help each other get to heaven
- Parish – Encourage others to deepen their faith. Get involved in parish activities
- Community – How many people did you interact with in the past week. Whether it is at home, work, grocery store, sporting event....many folks cross our path every week. View these everyday encounters as a foundation for evangelization
- World -Others beyond your community. Save this circle for last, as the other four are probably more than enough.

When approaching someone, remember:

- Find common ground. Invite, don't debate.
- Ask questions.....instead of making your point, draw it out of them by asking questions that naturally leads them to the point you are trying to make
- Listen more than you talk.
- When you respond, use their own language
- Share your story

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

1. What resources (websites, books, podcast etc...) do you find most helpful in deepening your understanding of the faith?
2. What is your own faith story??? Who are what happened in your life that made you take your faith more seriously???
3. Has anyone ever evangelized to you?? Have you tried with others??? Describe the experience
4. If someone asked you, "Why are you Catholic?" or "Why should I become Catholic?", how would you respond? What would you say if you had 30 seconds to respond?? How would your answer change if you have 5 minutes???

5. Within your circle of influence, which 3-5 folks would you be comfortable sharing your faith story???
6. Invite that person to lunch/golf/pickleball/drink and share your faith story. Allow them to share their story as well.
7. What is the best way for you to non-verbally share your faith?? Does your demeanor spur others to feel that you have something special they would like to have as well?
8. How does your daily life speak of the value you place on your relationship with Christ?

Step It Up!:

- Create a Prayer List of people in need, or perhaps you feel would be receptive to have a discussion on faith. Don't approach them, rather – pray for them for two weeks. Afterwards, allow the Holy Spirit to guide your next steps in deciding who to approach.
- Many folks carry a First Aid Kit in their car, do the same with an Evangelization Kit. Keep a myriad of religious books, CD's, Saint cards/medals, sacramentals in your car – in addition to being a friendly reminder, you'll be surprised how many times it will come in handy.
- When wishing someone happy birthday, look up the saint of that day and share that as well. Let your speech be sincere, concrete, and gentle.
- Pray over meals in a restaurant
- Put a religious statue in your front yard
- Make a conscious effort to evangelize by listening to others when they talk about or ask questions about religious beliefs. Follow up individually by asking them if they would like to talk about religious beliefs at some time convenient for them.
- Make a prayer list of people who you think might be open to a discussion about faith issues. Pray for them and for the right time to approach them to hear what they would like to discuss about "God or faith issues".
- Who would most likely be comfortable hearing your faith story? Ask them about their faith life. If appropriate, share why your faith is important to you.

Resources:

- The Five Circles of Evangelization: <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/the-five-circles-of-evangelization>
- How Evangelization happens – Go and make disciples: <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/evangelization/go-and-make-disciples/how-evangelization-happens-go-and-make-disciples.cfm>
- The Joy of the Gospel – Apostolic Exhortation by Pope Francis: http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

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