

Principles for Parish Evangelization

Office of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries

Archdiocese of Denver

Introduction

Every renewal of the Church essentially consists in an increase of fidelity to her own calling. ¹

Amid a sea of competing programs and ministry initiatives which promise “renewal” for the Church, the Church herself has already clarified the source of renewal: “*increase fidelity to her calling*”. What is “the Church’s calling” or to put it in other words, “What is the Church’s vocation, her purpose?” Why did Jesus institute the Church, and why does the Church incarnate herself in local parishes?

A simple survey of regular Sunday mass goers would reveal the profound identity crisis we are currently suffering around this central question. Though confusion may exist in our local communities about “the purpose of our parish”, the Church is not confused about the “purpose”, our “calling”, our “vocation”.

Evangelization is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the church, her deepest identity. ²

Renewal of the Church, especially her local incarnational expression (the parish), will only come about through an “increased fidelity” to this calling: evangelization. St John Paul II challenged us thirty years ago to “commit all our energies to a new evangelization and the mission *ad gentes*”³. All our energies. Not “some” of our energy, not what’s “left over” after we prepare for and provide the sacraments; **all** our energies. Individually and collectively as a community we can all humbly admit we have yet to answer this call. We are all invited, today, to renew this commitment and invoke the Holy Spirit to guide, strengthen, and support us in this work.

This “new evangelization” is not new in content, but in “its zeal, its method, and its expressions”⁴. As the Holy Spirit continues to inspire individuals and parishes with a new zeal to evangelize, a lack of clarity on “how” to evangelize becomes a regular stumbling block. The purpose of this document is to explore a robust answer to the “how”, to explore “new methods” of evangelization rooted in the local parish.

It’s our conviction that for a parish to live out its primary vocation, to evangelize, two distinct but intrinsically linked goals need to be pursued:

1. **Parishioners equipped** to evangelize

In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. ⁵

2. **Pastoral ministry restructured** to support the work of evangelization

Renewal does not only concern individuals, but the entire Church. ⁶

... abandon the complacent attitude that says: ‘We have always done it this way.’ I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. ⁷

¹ *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 6 (1964).

² *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 14 (1975).

³ *Redemptoris Missio*, 3 (1990).

⁴ Pope John Paul II, *Address to the XIX Assembly of CELAM*, Port-au-Prince, Haiti (9 March 1983), n. 3.

⁵ *Evangelii Gaudium*, 28 (2013).

⁶ *Ibid*, 26.

⁷ *Ibid*, 33.

This document does not offer a program.

The intention of this document is to support our collective ongoing efforts to put on an “apostolic mindset.” It aims to assist us in thinking about what it means to equip our people to evangelize and how to restructure our parish ministry to reflect the parish’s primary vocation, evangelization.

Many of our parishes intuit some aspects of the work of evangelization, for example:

- *the need to build bridges of trust with those outside the community*
- *the importance of offering programs that explicitly share the kerygma*
- *the need to move beyond simply telling parishioners they should evangelize to offering training for them in how to do it*

However, very few parishes have a cohesive vision or strategy which addresses both the need to equip individual parishioners and meaningfully restructures their ministry offerings to focus on evangelization. This is not an indictment. In fact, it’s courageous and inspiring to see the efforts many parishes have made in evangelization considering the reality that our leaders (both clergy and lay) are rarely given any training in how to evangelize.

Our desire is to paint a picture of what a cohesive vision for evangelization could look like at a parish.

This document is organized broadly in two sections. The first section addresses equipping individual parishioners to evangelize. The second section focuses on principles for restructuring pastoral ministry to support and promote evangelization. In both, our intention is to propose a framework for seeing these tasks and principles for pursuing them. As often as possible we provide examples of resources and programs that exist which support various aspects of a cohesive strategy to evangelize. We have not found a program that covers all aspects of parish evangelization, so our work will necessarily involve making use of multiple complementary programs/resources to form a holistic approach.

Finally, at the end of this document we encourage you to consider forming an “evangelization taskforce” which can help your pastoral leadership not only discern but carry out a cohesive strategy for evangelization.

As you’ll discover, the work of discerning, creating, and most importantly implementing an evangelization strategy at your parish will require a significant investment of your time and resources. This helps explain why St John Paul II challenged us to commit all our energies to this work. Only allocating limited or periodic resources and attention to this work will not only result in little fruit, but could, more seriously, lead our people towards a defeated and hopeless attitude towards the future of our communities.

Let us thank God for the immense privilege it is to be invited to participate in the mission of the Son, who came to “seek and save the lost” (Lk 19:10). Our sincere prayer is that this document will act as a catalyst for serious conversations around your parish’s efforts to evangelize and offer practical guidance on how to transform your parish into a center for missionary activity.

Visual Diagram

One indispensable tool we'd like to share with you at the start of this document is a visual diagram created by Catholic Christian Outreach⁸. Colloquially referred to as the "hourglass", this diagram visually represents the journey an individual takes from being "lost" to an initial conversion and then to full maturity as a missionary disciple. They've incorporated the "Thresholds of Conversion", first discovered by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp and shared in their book *"I Once Was Lost,"* then made popular in Catholic circles by Sherry Weddell in her book *"Forming Intentional Disciples"*. The top half of this diagram is CCO's unique contribution, showing the growth in holiness and mission as simultaneous and interconnected realities, "two sides of the same coin"⁹.



⁸ Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO), founded in 1988, is an apostolate in Canada that trains and sends missionary teams to university campuses. Recently they've begun to work with dioceses and parishes to share what they've learned through evangelizing secular university students over the past 30 years.

⁹ Benedict XVI, *Homily at Brindisi*, June 15, 2008.

To summarize: the bottom triangle of the hourglass shows the journey of an unconverted person from “lost” to an initial conversion. The upper triangle of the diagram shows the process of maturing as a missionary disciple after someone has had an initial conversion. Finally, the words in the far-left column describe the primary activity of “the accompanier” at each stage (ie: when accompanying someone who has crossed the threshold of trust but not curiosity, the primary activity of someone accompanying this person is to “witness” to them).

A word on initial conversion...

As initial conversion is the goal of evangelization, it is essential we understand it and communicate this clearly to our people.

*Conversion means accepting, by a **personal decision**, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple.¹⁰*

Conversion involves the whole person. As Joseph Ratzinger put it:

Faith is not merely intellectual, or merely volitional, or merely emotional activity- it is all of these things together. It is an act of the whole self, of the whole person in his concentrated unity.¹¹

Conversion touches the intellect, will, and emotions of the person who has encountered the love of Christ and responds with faith.

How does this understanding impact our personal and communal efforts to evangelize? Unity and alignment around this clear goal of evangelization helps protect against isolating one aspect of conversion. For example, we may be tempted to be concerned solely with an intellectual conversion or solely with others having an emotional experience of God’s love. We must be careful not to produce only intellectual acolytes of the Christian religion or a discipleship based solely on feelings.

This may also help explain the context of the “new evangelization” which implies that there are people in our communities who are validly “sacramentalized” but have yet to experience an initial conversion. It is possible that some of our people have begun the process of conversion but that it has yet to touch “the whole person”. Knowing the scope of initial conversion helps us to understand what may be missing from their experience and how to best accompany them.

How will I know if the person I’m accompanying has experienced an initial conversion? You may look for signs like this:

Intellect - They understand and believe in the kerygma that has been proclaimed to them.

Will - They choose to repent and submit their life under Jesus’ lordship and live as his disciple.

Emotions - They have experienced God’s personal and unconditional love for them.

¹⁰ *Redemptoris Missio*, 46.

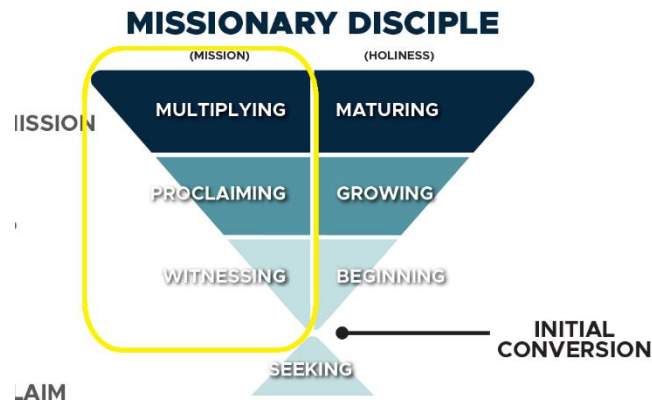
¹¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Gospel Catechesis and Catechism: Sidelights on the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 25.

Part One

Parishioners Equipped to Evangelize

- 06 What does an equipped parishioner look like?
- 08 How are we going to equip parishioners?
- 10 Maturing in our missional identity: Witness
- 11 Maturing in our missional identity: Proclaim
- 12 Maturing in our missional identity: Multiply

Although each person's journey begins on the "bottom half" of the hourglass diagram, the first section of this document will zoom in on the top left section: growth in our missionary identity. This section of the diagram provides a visual outline for our "equipping" of parishioners (see image below for reference).



Importantly, growth in holiness and mission are interconnected and interdependent realities. You cannot grow in your missionary identity without simultaneously growing in holiness. Similarly, you cannot grow in holiness, which involves imitating Jesus, without participating in His mission to seek and save the lost (your imitation would be lacking a foundational aspect). However, this document will not touch on growth in holiness, as there are a vast multitude of resources dedicated to that aspect of growth as a disciple. This document, specifically the first section, will focus in on how to understand and shepherd growth in the "missionary" aspect of our missionary discipleship

What Does an Equipped Parishioner Look Like?

An equipped parishioner has experienced an initial conversion and is abiding in a personal relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You cannot accompany another person to an initial conversion if you yourself have not experienced one. “I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Our evangelizing activity cannot bear fruit unless it comes from a life rooted in prayer.

An equipped parishioner possesses a *heart for the lost* and a desire to bring souls to Christ.

Love must be the motivation for our evangelization. As St Paul VI wrote, “the work of evangelization presupposes in the evangelizer an ever-increasing love for those whom he is evangelizing”¹². People can never be our “projects”, and we aren’t evangelizing to “prove ourselves” to God. An equipped parishioner evangelizes without being judgmental, argumentative, condescending, or belittling.

An equipped parishioner understands what “evangelization” means and what it entails.

Most of us hold misconceptions around what “evangelization” entails. These must be addressed, and the goal of evangelization must be made clear: to take the initiative to share Christ, motivated by love, in the power of the Holy Spirit, leaving the results to God. An equipped parishioner understands that effective evangelization is personal and invitational. They aren’t attempting to convince others to join a religion, they are introducing others to the person of Jesus, who is alive, and inviting them to convert and become his disciples.

An equipped parishioner knows the thresholds of conversion and can identify where another person is on their journey of faith.

An equipped parishioner is familiar with the “thresholds of conversion”, the roadmap that leads from “lost” to an initial conversion. They can identify, with the help of the Holy Spirit, where another person is on this roadmap so that their accompaniment and support is meeting the actual needs/context of the other person in order to help them first reach an initial conversion and then become missionary disciples.

An equipped parishioner is trained in the basic skills needed to evangelize and help others evangelize.

An equipped parishioner can build trust with those he evangelizes. They know how to initiate spiritual conversations and share their testimony. They can proclaim the gospel (kerygma) to another person and are confident at inviting another person to make a commitment of faith. (see *pages on Witness and Proclaim for a detailed breakdown of these skills*).

¹² *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 79 (1975).

An equipped parishioner knows how their gifts fit into the work of evangelization.

Every Catholic has been given specific charisms by God which are both a sign of their unique role in the mission and provide the ability to bear fruit in this work. An equipped parishioner has discerned their charisms and knows how to use them both for the good of the community and in their individual efforts to evangelize.

An equipped parishioner is supported in a community of other missionary disciples.

A catholic in the mission field is never alone, and the Bible supports this! Pope John Paul II noted in a homily¹³ that the unity of disciples is critical for effectively promoting faith in Christ because it serves as a powerful witness of the Body of Christ. All missionary disciples need to be in a community where they can share both the burdens and joys of living out the faith, find support in their efforts to evangelize, and grow in holiness through experiences of prayer and communal life.

An equipped parishioner knows they are called to share both the message and the mission of evangelization.

Equipped Catholics look to share both the message of salvation and the mission to “make disciples” with others. They are able to identify and invest in other potential missionary disciples/leaders. They know how to equip them with basic skills to evangelize and invest in supporting them in their efforts to evangelize.

¹³ John Paul II, *Mass at Campal Grounds in Goa*, February 6, 1986, n. 7.

How are We Going to Equip Them?

We must equip wholistically, taking into account the entire person.

It can be helpful to think of equipping in three categories: attitudes, skills, and knowledge (A.S.K.). It's not enough to simply know the right things about evangelization, we must know "how" to do it. Moreover, if we know how to evangelize but lack the necessary dispositions or attitudes, we won't engage in evangelization, regardless of how well we may be trained. This is what we mean when we state that equipping must be wholistic. Synonyms to these categories could be: head (knowledge), heart (attitude), and hands (skills). Do they have what they need to know in their heads, are their hearts in the right place and do their hands know what to do to evangelize?

We help develop each of these categories in a specific way.

Knowledge is imparted to an individual through *teaching*.

Attitude – How do you help someone develop an attitude they don't currently have? You must *inspire* it. This is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit, literally "to breathe into" (*inspirare*); however, we can cooperate by facilitating times of intentional prayer and giving inspiring talks on evangelization.

Skills are imparted to an individual through *apprenticing*. This implies showing them what to do, allowing them to try the skill with assistance, and then giving them an opportunity to do the skill with feedback. There will be a certain amount of teaching involved, but teaching can only go so far. Like a coach helping a young person grow in the skill of shooting a free throw, we eventually must move beyond the white board and help them to actually practice shooting the ball.

Equipping has a natural trajectory.

The first disciples gradually matured in their ability to participate in the mission of evangelization.

Initially, they are only able to **witness** to their own experience. Andrew finds his brother, Peter, and witnesses to his experience of meeting Jesus (John 1:41). The woman at the well witnesses to her village about her encounter with Jesus (John 4). Neither are capable of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom yet, but their witness bears immense fruit.

Eventually, through the help of the Holy Spirit, they grow and are able to **proclaim** the gospel to others. Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost and proclaims the gospel to thousands who convert (Acts 2). Philip proclaims the gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch and leads him to conversion (Acts 8).

Finally, the disciples become able to **multiply**, raising up others who will pass on both the message of the gospel and the mission to evangelize to even more people. Paul tells Timothy, "what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well" (2 Timothy 2:2).

This same trajectory of maturing in the ability to participate in the mission of evangelization holds true today.

We must equip using the method of Intentional Accompaniment.

Intentional Accompaniment is the most fruitful and effective way to equip others to evangelize. Though portions of this equipping can happen in a large group setting, it's important to acknowledge that much of the equipping will happen in small group or one-on-one settings.

You can give a lecture on the aspects of an effective testimony, but how will you know whether each person understands and is able to put into practice what is taught? Only through intentionally accompanying each person.

You can have an intentional night of prayer, cultivating a deeper reliance on the Holy Spirit in your parishioners. But when, weeks later, a parishioner is struggling to know *how* to rely on the Holy Spirit in a particular evangelization circumstance how will they be supported? Only through intentional accompaniment.

Intentional Accompaniment is more than the focus on the individual person. It involves selecting and making use of appropriate programs to help them grow. It's powered and sustained by an ongoing relationship with the Holy Spirit. Forming a network of intentional accompaniment in your parish will ensure that wholistic equipping and ongoing support is available to your parishioners. It's not feasible to go into detail around all aspects of how to build a network of intentional accompaniment in this document. We strongly encourage you to read *"Intentional Accompaniment"* by Michael Hall for a comprehensive overview of this method of ministry.

Maturing in our Missional Identity: **Witness**

Guiding Question: “How are we equipping our people to build trust and create curiosity with those who are lost?”

An effective witness can build trust and cultivate curiosity.
“ASK” that support this evangelizing work:

Attitudes

- **“Heart for the Lost”**
 - *Empathy for the sinner*
 - *Non-judgmental*
 - *Charity/love for the other person*
- **Genuine Interest/Curiosity**
 - *Belief there is goodness to find in the other person’s life*
 - *Willing to spend time listening*
 - *Curious about the other, asking open-ended questions with no agenda*
- **Conviction that the good news is good news**
 - *Sober but hopeful acknowledgement that the other is in need of rescue*
 - *Conviction that my story (testimony) is worth sharing and can be effective*
 - *Hope – Jesus has something to offer them and belief that I could see them experience God’s love and salvation*

Knowledge

- **Thresholds of Conversion**
 - Basic understanding of the entire road to conversion
 - Deeper understanding of Lost, Trust, and Curiosity thresholds
- **The elements of an effective testimony**
- **Intentional Accompaniment**
 - Make no assumptions, find out through genuine loving interest
 - First step is to discover where someone is on their spiritual journey

Skills

- **Initiating spiritual conversations**
- **Sharing an effective testimony**
- **“Prophetic Listening”**
 - How to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the middle of a conversation to become aware of the spiritual state of the other person and hear where He is leading them

Resources/Programs which may help develop the above A.S.K:

- “Activate” by Catholic Christian Outreach
- Evangelization Workshops hosted by the Archdiocese
- “Intentional Accompaniment” - Michael Hall
- “Mission Ready Friendship” – Jason Simon

Maturing in our Missional Identity: **Proclaim**

Guiding Question: “How are we equipping our people to *help the lost* become open to change, sincerely consider the invitation to discipleship, and make a clear, direct, and personal decision of faith?”

An effective proclaimer can help someone become open to change, to seriously consider Christ’s invitation, and make a direct, clear, personal decision of faith.

“ASK” that support this evangelizing work:

Attitudes

- **Confidence in the power of the kerygma**
 - *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.” Romans 1:16*
 - *Conviction that the gospel is the answer to the questions of the human heart*
- **Perseverance**
 - *Patience with the process of conversion*
 - *Holy persistence in the midst of obstacles*
- **Humility**
 - *Willing to be honest and appropriately transparent about your own journey of faith*
 - *Conviction that “God gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:6) and only the Holy Spirit moves a heart to conversion, not us*
 - *Holy surrender of the outcome to God, not being discouraged if the lost do not convert*

Knowledge

- **Thresholds of Conversion**
 - Deeper understanding of Openness and Seeking thresholds
 - Clear understanding of initial conversion
- **The kerygma**
 - The content of the primary proclamation of the gospel
- **Common barriers/obstacles to faith**
 - Examples: Fear of change, fear of commitment

Skills

- **Proclaiming the kerygma**
- **Making a clear, direct, personal invitation to faith**
- **How to navigate obstacles/barriers to faith**

Resources/Programs which may help develop the above A.S.K:

- The Rescue project/*Rescued* book
- Ultimate relationship booklet
- *Discovery* faith study
- *“I Once Was Lost”* Don Everts and Doug Schaupp

Maturing in our Missional Identity: **Multiply**

Guiding Question: “How are we forming leaders to be able to equip others with the attitudes, skills and knowledge they need to evangelize?”

Spiritual Multiplication means sharing both the message and the mission of evangelization with others. We want those we evangelize to go on to evangelize others in response to Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples”. A spiritual multiplier can equip others to be missionary disciples.

Attitudes

- **“Second Generation Mindset”**
 - Asking about, praying for, and helping those being equipped to focus on the person/people they are evangelizing
 - Modeling a “heart for the lost” and the “urgency to evangelize” to those being equipped
- **Great Expectations**
 - “He is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine” Eph 3:20
 - Expect the Holy Spirit to give gifts, strengthen those being equipped, and bring those being evangelized to conversion
- **Conviction that everyone is called to evangelize**
 - Evangelization is not an arena of experts, but a universal call to all Catholics
- **“Reach the many through the few”**
 - Conviction that investing in the few has the power to reach many through the principle of spiritual multiplication

Knowledge

- **1-2-3-4 model of intentional accompaniment** (as found in “*Intentional Accompaniment*”)
- **What are the essential A.S.K. of a witness/proclaimer** (see pages 10 - 11 for reference)

Skills

- **How to discern/identify areas of growth in others (ASK) and the appropriate means of equipping them**
- **How to apprentice another person in evangelization skills**
- **How to form a network of intentional accompaniment to support each person being equipped**

Resources/Programs

- CCO Intentional Accompaniment Model
- “Intentional Accompaniment” by Michael Hall
- “Foundations for Discipleship” by Curtis Martin & Edward Sri

Part Two

Restructuring Pastoral Ministry to Support and Prioritize Evangelization

- 14 Introduction
- 15 Supporting the Thresholds of Conversion
- 21 Going in Search of the Lost
- 23 Evangelization Task Force: Leadership for the Mission

Introduction

This section will outline what it could look like to restructure pastoral ministry to support and prioritize evangelization. Before continuing, it's important to understand why this is such a critical step towards transforming our parishes into centers of missionary activity.

Imagine we are wildly successful at equipping our parishioners to evangelize. One of the strongest and most natural inclinations our "parishioner evangelists" will have is to invite those they are evangelizing to the parish community. But what do they invite them to? The Mass is not always an appropriate or effective first touch point for the unconverted. The OCIA program? The OCIA itself states that an initial conversion is a pre-requisite to begin the Catechumenate. Does our parish have anything else our parishioners can invite an unconverted friend to?

As visually represented in the hourglass diagram, the unconverted generally move towards an initial conversion by progressing through "thresholds". At each of these thresholds, the needs of our "lost" friends are different and our approach to walking with them is different. There's no "silver bullet" program, retreat, initiative, or event that can effectively reach all these thresholds at once. We will have to be creative in discerning and offering a diverse range of events, programs, retreat, etc. that are strategically crafted to meet the needs of specific "thresholds" on the way to conversion. For a deeper look at the concept of the "thresholds of conversion" we highly recommend you read "I Once Was Lost" by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp.

The second half of this document invites you to consider how your parish could ensure that, no matter what threshold someone is currently at on their way to conversion, your parish has something that will support them.

Imagine how powerful it will be when your parishioners are not only individually equipped to evangelize but are supported by intentionally crafted opportunities at their parish to assist them in evangelizing their family members, friends, or neighbors.

Also included in this section is a brief but important challenge to "go in search of the lost". We need to get our house in order to receive the lost when they come to us (through God's promptings apart from a connection to the parish or more likely through the invitation of a parishioner). However, we can't be satisfied with being prepared to *receive* the lost if they come. We have to *go out* and seek them.

Finally, we conclude the document focusing on a practical first step: forming an evangelization task force. We believe the first step in the journey towards an evangelizing parish is gathering a group of committed individuals to work with the pastor to discern and lead the transformation.

Threshold One: Building Trust

*"When trust has not been established, lostness feels like wise skepticism and right thinking. If Christians are fanatical and narrow-minded, keeping one's distance seems like the smartest posture to take towards us. Until this framework of distrust is shifted, growth is nearly impossible."*¹⁴

Guiding Question: "How can our parish build a bridge of trust with the people in our boundaries?"

It's likely that if no bridge of trust currently exists, the parish will struggle to get unconverted individuals to come to events on campus. Most of the parish led initiatives to build trust will likely focus on off campus activities, following Jesus' example of going in search of the lost. Occasional parish wide events that are open to the public/neighborhood could also be good opportunities for building trust with neighbors.

Parish Goals for Trust:

- Bring about a positive association in the surrounding neighborhood(s) with the parish
- Go out and introduce the parish to the community
- Demonstrate that the parish seeks to serve the community

Examples of Possible Parish Implementation:

- Corporal/Spiritual Works of Mercy (not an exhaustive list)
 - Organizing volunteers to offer a yard clean-up for the neighborhood
 - Organizing a Thanksgiving food drive for those who need it in the neighborhood
 - Invite parishioners to offer professional services *pro bono* or for reduced rates for those in need in the area (mechanic, electrician, etc.)
 - Place cards on cars parked in the neighborhood offering prayers from the parish
 - Offering communal holiday celebrations for those who aren't able to travel or have no local community (Christmas, Thanksgiving, 4th of July, etc.)
- Regular community mingling (ie: Coffee & doughnuts after mass) which allows visitors or neighbors to meet in a low commitment environment
- Support Groups (suicide loss, spouse loss, AA, deliverance ministry, etc.)
- Examine current ministries that regularly engage with new or non-parishioners (baptism prep, marriage prep, funeral ministry, etc.) and discern how to use them as more intentional opportunities to build trust between individuals and the parish.

¹⁴ Don Everts and Doug Schaupp, *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 32.

Threshold Two: Stoking Curiosity

*"To go from being complacent about spiritual things to being intrigued is a natural process. This move from complacent to curious isn't easy (complacency is easier of course), but it taps into a desire and need that is wired into all people. Before crossing this threshold, our lost friends may seem apathetic to us, but to them it might feel more like contentment."*¹⁵

Guiding Question: "How can our parish create curiosity in people about the person of Jesus and His Church?"

Curiosity can begin very subtly, first with an initial awareness of the Christian worldview and perspective. As curiosity deepens it generally moves towards "engagement"; what we typically consider curiosity. This is when someone begins asking questions about our faith (though they may be reluctant to share their perspective at this point). Finally, curiosity's most intense expression is what you may call "exchange". At this stage the other person is very willing to share their perspective and worldview alongside asking questions about ours.

Parish Goals for those without "Awareness" of Jesus or a Christian worldview:

- Expose individuals to the realities of our parish community
- Share about the person of Jesus to combat misconceptions around who He is
- Provide spaces for parishioners to share their testimony during outreach or community events (fish fry, parish festival, etc.)

Parish Goals for inviting "Engagement" in spiritual conversations:

- Introduce people to Catholics on a smaller scale in a more intimate setting
- Encourage questions to stoke and multiply curiosity

Parish Goals for creating "Exchange":

- Hold space for a seeker to exchange ideas with a disciple around their worldviews

Examples of Possible Parish Implementation:

Component 1: Awareness

- Corpus Christi neighborhood procession
- Oktoberfest outreach event
- Parish Picnic weekend
- Meet & Greet
- Approachable tie-ins to Holy Days and Feasts of the parish
- Intentional "Free stuff" (saint cards, prayer cards, etc.)

Component 2: Engagement

- Inquire by the Fire evenings of fellowship and questions
- Theology on Tap/Pints with a Priest
- Group viewing of The Chosen at the parish

Component 3: Exchange

- "The Search" or "Alpha" with discussion groups
- "The Sanctuary Course" (faith and mental health) with discussion groups
- Marriage workshops and retreats (i.e. Communio)
- "What is Prayer?" nights (very, very basic introductions)
- Healing Ministry nights

¹⁵ Ibid, 51-52.

Threshold Three: Moving Towards Openness

*"...before actively seeking God and considering becoming a follower of Jesus, they had to become open to change in their life. And becoming open to change is much harder than it may seem on the surface... there's a pretty big difference between just being curious and being open to change..."*¹⁶

*"A person acknowledges to themselves and to God that they are open to the possibility of personal and spiritual change. Openness is not a commitment to change ... simply admitting they are open to the possibility of change."*¹⁷

Guiding Questions: "How can the parish challenge people to explore the practical implications that their curiosity has on their life?"

"How is the parish creating safe places for the lost to 'try on' change and examine their worldview?"

Parish Goals for Openness:

- Support seekers explore different parts of the faith with patience and encouragement
- Challenge seekers who need a push to change things in their life a little at a time
- Connect the dots for a seeker who is struggling to see the connection between their life and what they have become curious about
- Offer a listening ear to the struggles that often arise with the openness threshold

Examples of Potential Parish Implementation:

Component 1: Journey Groups

The purpose of the small group would be to encourage and provide opportunities for people at this stage to "try on change" together with the support of an equipped Catholic

- Go to a Mass together to experience it
- Give up a vice and hold each other accountable
- Learn how to pray together
- Volunteer serving the poor together
- Attend a healing ministry/healing service together
- Etc.

Component 2: Support Individual Intentional Accompaniment

- Regular intercession for those who are curious about the faith but struggle to become open to change in their life
- Provide ongoing support to those who are walking with individuals at this stage in the journey (training on how to help people overcome barriers/fear of change, etc.

¹⁶ Ibid, 68.

¹⁷ Sherry A. Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2012), 130.

Threshold Four: Intentionally Seeking

"There is a subtle but important difference between someone who is sort of meandering toward God and someone who is purposefully seeking out and exploring Jesus. When someone is truly seeking, there is an urgency and purpose to their searching. They feel almost as if it is a quest they are on, and they lean into it with a rather determined posture. Even they feel that the time is ripe: the want answers to their questions, they want to come to some conclusions. So they live and ask questions and pray and talk with others to help them resolve the issue."¹⁸

Guiding Question: "How can the parish challenge seekers to consider the invitation of Jesus to a life of discipleship?"

"How can the parish create a space to answer questions in an environment specifically for those intentionally seeking?"

Parish Goals around helping individuals begin to intentionally seek Jesus:

- Regularly provide programs, preaching, and opportunities where the kerygma is proclaimed
- Engage in apologetics (answering serious questions) in a personal and helpful way
 - i.e.: ATTIC method (*I Once Was Lost*, 91-92)
- Invite seekers into a deeper experience and exposure to the community
- Invite seekers to engage in the prayer, worship, and mission of the community

Examples of Potential Parish Implementation:

Component 1: Proclaiming the Kerygma

- Offer a kerygmatic retreat once a semester
- Plan a yearly preaching series which focuses on sharing the kerygma
- Offer the Rescue Project on a regular rotating schedule

Component 2: Apologetics—answering serious questions

- Create a resource page on your parish's website which addresses difficult or FAQs about the faith
- Offer an "answering the hard questions" night or group

Component 3: Intentional Accompaniment

- Offer "accompaniers" that are able to walk with the seeker on a 1-on-1 basis
- Similar role to OCIA sponsors, and individuals may overlap as a sponsor

¹⁸ *I Once Was Lost*, 86.

Inviting an Initial Conversion

*"When accompanying another person on their spiritual journey, we need to ask this question: has this person ever given a free, mature "yes" to the offer of a relationship with God through Christ?... Because this choice is important, we must simply never assume that someone has made it. Doing so would mean failing to serve and evangelize the Catholics who come to Mass regularly, but who may never have made a clear choice to become disciples of Christ."*¹⁹

Guiding Question: How can our parish provide an opportunity for all its members to make a clear, direct, and personal commitment to Christ?

How is our parish making a clear, direct, and personal invitation to those considering becoming a disciple of Jesus and joining his Church?

Parish Goals for calling individuals to an initial conversion:

- Never assume someone has been given the opportunity to make a clear and mature "yes" to the invitation of Jesus
- Invite individuals to make a clear, total, and direct commitment to Christ in a way that involves the whole person (intellect, will, and emotions).
- Create a space for these commitments to be memorable and defining (retreat, liturgical settings, etc.)

Examples of Parish Implementation:

- Homilies that are particularly focused on the kerygma end with a clear, direct, personal invitation to conversion
- Talks and retreats are offered which center on an invitation to make a clear, direct, personal commitment of faith
- Programs are hosted which present the kerygma and invite a clear, direct, personal commitment of faith
- Other para liturgical events (Eucharistic Adoration, prayer meetings, praise and worship nights, etc.) are offered which include a clear, direct, personal invitation to conversion

Recommended Programs/Resources

- **"Discovery"** - Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO)
- **"The Rescue Project"** - Acts XXIX
- **"The Ultimate Relationship"** - Catholic Christian Outreach (pamphlet)

¹⁹ André Regnier, *Clear and Simple: How to Have Conversations that Lead to Conversion* (Ottawa: Catholic Christian Outreach, 2014), 15-16.

*"...a truly open-ended, pressure-free process...isn't as helpful here at threshold five (initial conversion). Letting people just slide casually and vaguely across the line sounds very postmodern-sensitive, but with such a laissez-faire approach we keep people from knowing that there is even a line to cross."*²⁰

Where to Next:

- For the unbaptized
 - OCIA; beginning with the Rite of Entrance
- For validly baptized non-Catholics
 - If uncatechized; OCIA, optionally beginning with Rite of Welcoming
 - If catechized; meet with OCIA director or priest, then full reception into the Catholic Church through profession of faith and reception of Confirmation and First Holy Communion as soon as they are ready
- For Catholics who are missing sacraments
 - Re-Commitment Weekend
 - Adult Faith Formation leading to the remaining Sacraments of Initiation
 - If necessary, marriage preparation leading to convalidation
- For fully initiated Catholics:
 - Re-Commitment Weekend

²⁰ *I Once Was Lost*, 107.

Seeking the Lost

Given that the mission of the parish is both to evangelize its members (*ad intra*) as well as those within the parish boundaries (*ad gentes*), it is imperative to find ways to restructure the different ministries of the parish in order to *go out* and reach the lost. There are a number of creative ways to do this, but we encourage discernment, taking into consideration the nature and reality of the parish as well as its geographical location. **Some guiding questions to do this could be:**

- *How can the parish reach the lost people living within the parish boundaries? What would be most effective for the parish to do?*
- *Where are lost people congregating in the neighborhood/parish boundaries? What can the parish do to reach them?*
- *Are there any particular cultural, ethnic, demographical considerations we should take into accounts when thinking about reaching the lost in the parish boundaries?*

Below are some examples of what a parish could do in order to “go out” and reach the lost:

- A. Divide geographical parish boundaries into a reasonable number of parts (depending on size of geographical area and volunteer) and create the same number of teams to take charge of a particular geographical area.
 - a. Create teams of intercessory prayer to join each “evangelist” team to intercede for people living in that particular geographical area.
 - b. Another option could be to offer up the Mass intentions for a particular geographical area each week, and continually alternate and invite parishioners to intercede for all those living within parish boundaries or the area they live in if they are within those boundaries.
- B. Send out a “care” teams to geographical areas to do acts of service in order to “till the soil” and build trust.
 - a. Such services can be yard work, plow snow, clean backyard or storage, etc.
- C. Create events specifically catered to the lost living in the neighborhood with the purpose of building trust and creating curiosity, then send out missionaries to invite them to the events.
- D. Send equipped groups of disciples to door knock 1-2 weeks before a special event with the intention of getting to know the people in that area and invite them to parish events: Christmas events, Christmas Mass, New Years (Solemnity of Mary), Ash Wednesday, Lenten events, the Triduum, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi procession, parish feast or picnic, Oktoberfest, speaker series, or other such events.
 - a. Teach and provide leaders with resources that could be offered while doing this. For example, printed out “link cards” with relevant videos pertaining to particular questions people might have, such as what we believe as Catholics, the Church, the pope, Mary, the problem of evil, suffering, etc.

- b. Train leaders to pray with people on the spot and to capture their information when appropriate.
 - c. Create “Follow up Team” to support evangelists follow up with people whose information was captured.
 - d. The apostolate “SENT Evangelization” is a good resource for this.
- E. Break down geographical areas into smaller, reasonable parts where local “missional communities” can be built. This would be a place where those in the neighborhood can come together to meet other people, pray, or learn more about the Catholic Faith within their own neighborhood.
- F. Create an “missionary outpost” where the lost can be encountered and reached out to. This can be as simple as setting up a table at a local festival or event or as significant as renting out a strategic location where lost people congregate.

Evangelization Task Force: Overview

"If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. They eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you,' nor again to the feet, 'I do not need you.' " - 1 Corinthians 12:19-21

In order to be able to offer events and opportunities for Evangelization within the parish, three types of groups could be utilized. These groups may have overlap, but they are largely based on the discernment with the leader as to where a "best fit" is. The following is an overview of the teams:

Community Bridging & Outreach Team

The Community Bridging & Outreach Team is made up of individuals who are on fire about bringing new people into the parish community. This group needs to be made up of approachable, non-judgmental people who see the best in others. They aren't afraid to engage with those that they do not know, and they have a contagious quality about them that gets others excited about Jesus. They will be planning and executing community outreach events and leading evenings of inquiry, engagement, and exchange with those who are curious about the faith. It would especially be helpful for these individuals to be able to capitalize on events already happening at the parish, such as fish fries and parish picnics!

Engagement & Accompaniment Team

The Engagement & Accompaniment Team is passionate about spiritual conversation with others. Many of these individuals would look similar to those who would be excellent sponsors for OCIA. These individuals could lead Journey Groups and bible studies for those who are approaching an initial conversion. They have a passion for walking with others, have patience and encouraging attitudes to those who are open to dipping a toe into the faith, and can lead them to seek Christ intentionally, culminating in an initial conversion.

Spirituality & Prayer Team

The Spirituality & Prayer Team is the spiritual backbone of any ministry. These individuals have a deep prayer life and are constantly interceding for the individuals on the Evangelization Task Force as well as those they are evangelizing. They will play a crucial part in any kerygmatic retreats being offered as well as offering prayer nights around reconciliation, healing, and encounter.

In addition to these three teams, it would be necessary for there to be regular training on Relational Evangelization for parishioners so that they can keep inviting others in.

For all members of the Evangelization Task Force, it is expected that they:

- Have experienced an initial conversion and have a consistent and mature prayer life
- Understand the Thresholds of Conversion
- Maintain consistency in their practice of the faith
- Possess a zeal for the work of Evangelization and bringing others to Christ

Community Bridging & Outreach Team

The Community Bridging & Outreach Team is made up of individuals who are on fire about bringing new people into the parish community. This group needs to be made up of approachable, non-judgmental people who see the best in others. They aren't afraid to engage with those that they do not know, and they have a contagious quality about them that gets others excited about Jesus. They will be planning and executing community outreach events and leading evenings of inquiry, engagement, and exchange with those who are curious about the faith. It would especially be helpful for these individuals to be able to capitalize on events already happening at the parish, such as fish fries and parish picnics!

Team Tasks:

- Plan and execute outreach projects for the parish to be involved in
- Coordinate with other parish ministries for outreach events
- Introduce themselves to newcomers at events and during neighborhood walks
- Connect newcomers to individuals in the parish with similar hobbies and interests
- Lead discussion groups at events/programs which include that element

Team Goals:

- Reach the surrounding community within the territorial parish bounds
- Help in establishing a bridge of trust between the community and the parish
- Involve the parish in the work of evangelization and corporal/spiritual works of mercy

Qualities of a Team Member:

- Outgoing, Warm, and Approachable
- Passion and concern for lost souls
- Naturally see the best in people and avoid defensiveness and judgement
- Creative at coming up with ways to engage the community
- Involved/connected in the wider community as well as in the parish

Possible Charisms of a Team Member:

- Evangelism
- Leadership
- Service
- Missionary
- Prophecy
- Hospitality

Engagement & Accompaniment Team

The Engagement & Accompaniment Team is passionate about spiritual conversation with others. Many of these individuals would look similar to those who would be excellent sponsors for OCIA. These individuals will be leading Journey Groups and Bible Studies for those who are new to the faith. They have a passion for walking with others and have patience and encouraging attitudes to those who are open to dipping a toe into the faith, leading them to seek Christ in an urgent manner.

Team Tasks:

- Lead Journey Groups for individuals who are open to start making changes in their lives
- Lead Bible Studies for those who are deeply seeking the faith
- Intentionally accompany individuals one-on-one within the groups
- Checking in on seekers and holding them accountable where necessary/appropriate
- Interceding for those they are walking with

Team Goals:

- Continue to stoke the flame of curiosity in seekers who desire to grapple with the faith
- Support seekers exploring different parts of the faith with patience and encouragement
- Challenge seekers who need a push to change things in their life a little at a time
- Connect the dots for a seeker that is struggling to integrate the realities of the Church in their life
- Offer a listening ear to the struggles that often arise with the openness threshold

Qualities of a Team Member:

- Mature in the faith
- Passionate about getting to know people deeply
- Good conversationalist
- Strong relationship with the Holy Spirit, confident in partnering with Him in conversations

(note: these team members would look similar to those who would be good sponsors!)

Possible Charisms of a Team Member:

- Missionary
- Extraordinary faith
- Knowledge*
- Wisdom*
- Teaching
- Hospitality*
- Pastoring

Spirituality & Prayer Team

The Spirituality & Prayer Team is the spiritual backbone of any ministry. These individuals have a deep prayer life and are constantly interceding for the individuals on the Evangelization Task Force as well as those they are evangelizing. They will play a crucial part in any kerygmatic retreats being offered as well as offering prayer nights around reconciliation, healing, and encounter.

Team Tasks:

- Pray for other team members by name as well as those who are being walked with
- Praying for specific parish outreach events
- Coordinate prayer opportunity events for healing, reconciliation, etc.
- Play a part in organizing the spiritual components of kerygmatic retreats

Team Goals:

- To intercede for parish outreach and mission, especially those in parish boundaries
- To provide opportunities for the parish body to deepen their prayer lives

Qualities of a Team Member:

- Consistent, mature life of prayer
- Deeply cares about the work of evangelization
- Knowledgeable about different prayer events that could be hosted

Possible Charisms of a Team Member:

- Intercessory Prayer
- Healing
- Extraordinary Faith
- Mercy
- Prophecy
- Encouragement
- Voluntary Poverty

Helpful Resources for the Evangelization Task Force*

For an Understanding of the Thresholds and Evangelization as a whole:

I Once Was Lost by Don Everts and Dough Schaupp (InterVarsity Press, 2009)

Forming Intentional Disciples by Sherry Weddell (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012)

Intentional Accompaniment by Michael Hall (Catholic Christian Outreach, 2021)

For Trust, Spiritual Conversations, and Community Outreach:

Clear & Simple by Andre Regnier (Catholic Christian Outreach, 2018)

The Power of Place: Choosing Stability in a Rootless Age by Daniel Groethe (Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2021)

The Art of Neighboring by Jay Pathak & Dave Runyon (Baker Books, 2012)

For Curiosity:

Mere Christianity by CS Lewis (HarperOne, 1952)

For Openness:

Divine Blessing by Timothy P. O'Malley (Liturgical Press, 2019)

The Catholic Catalogue by Melissa Musick and Anna Keating (Image Publishing, 2016)

For Seeking:

Rescued by Fr John Riccardo (The Word Among Us Press, 2020)

Handbook of Catholic Apologetics by Peter Kreeft and Ronald K. Tacelli (Ignatius Press, 2016)

For Prayer Ministry Throughout Evangelization:

Be Healed by Dr Bob Schuchts (Ave Maria Press, 2014)

Be Transformed: The Healing Power of the Sacraments by Dr Bob Schuchts (Ave Maria Press, 2017)

Be Restored: Healing Our Sexual Wounds through Jesus' Merciful Love by Dr Bob Schuchts (Ave Maria Press, 2021)

Unleashing the Power of Intercessory Prayer by Joseph Hollcraft (Sophia Institute Press, 2020)

True Conversion Stories to Inspire:

A Case for Christ by Lee Strobel (Zondervan Publishing, 1998)

A Severe Mercy by Sheldon Vanauken (HarperCollins Publishers, 1977)

Confessions by Saint Augustine (Crown Publishing Group, 1960)

The Long Loneliness by Dorothy Day (HarperCollins Publishers, 1952)

**This is not an exhaustive list.*