

# E101

A Practical Introduction to Evangelization for Parish Leaders and Volunteers



Archdiocese of Washington

# The Commissioning of the Disciples

Matthew 28:16-20

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power 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 behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.”



# About E101

## What is E101?

E101 is a practical workshop on evangelization for parish leaders and volunteers. Through this two-hour workshop, participants will learn the Catholic vision of evangelization and fundamental skills for sharing their faith and inviting others to encounter Jesus Christ.

E101 is for parish leaders and volunteers, including clergy, staff, pastoral and finance councils, ministry leaders, and others.

## The Goals of E101

Through this workshop, you will:

1. Learn the Catholic vision of evangelization
2. Recall the basics of the great story of Jesus
3. Reflect on how God is working in your life
4. Develop your 1-min faith story
5. Discern when, where, and with whom to share your faith

## Workshop Schedule

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Duration</u>	<u>Time</u>
Opening Prayer and Introduction to the New Evangelization	5 minutes	0:00 - 0:05
What is Evangelization? Evangelization as Witness	10 minutes	0:05 - 0:15
Why We Evangelize: Our Catholic Identity	10 minutes	0:15 - 0:25
How Do We Evangelize? Knowing and Sharing the Story of God in Our Life	20 minutes	0:25 - 0:45
Intro to the Kerygma	20 minutes	0:45 - 1:05
<i>Break</i>	<i>10 minutes</i>	<i>1:05 - 1:15</i>
Sharing the Story of Jesus in My Life	20 minutes	1:15 - 1:35
Who, When, and Where Do We Evangelize?	20 minutes	1:35 - 1:55
Through the Holy Spirit	5 minutes	1:55 - 2:00

# Opening Prayer

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10: 13-15)

*Heavenly Father,*

*Pour forth your Holy Spirit to inspire me with these words from Holy Scripture.*

*Stir in my soul the desire to renew my faith and deepen my relationship with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ so that I might truly believe in and live the Good News.*

*Open my heart to hear the Gospel and grant me the confidence to proclaim the Good News to others.*

*Pour out your Spirit, so that I might be strengthened to go forth and witness to the Gospel in my everyday life through my words and actions.*

*In moments of hesitation, remind me:  
If not me, then who will proclaim the Gospel?  
If not now, then when will the Gospel be proclaimed?  
If not the truth of the Gospel, then what shall I proclaim?*

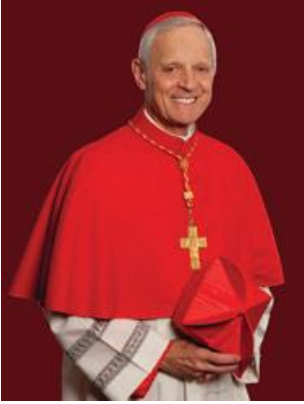
*God, our Father, I pray that through the Holy Spirit I might hear the call of the New Evangelization to deepen my faith, grow in confidence to proclaim the Gospel and boldly witness to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*

*Amen.*





# Introduction to the New Evangelization



*What is the New Evangelization? We have heard that term now consistently for many years beginning all the way with Pope, now Saint, John Paul II, then Benedict XVI, and now our Holy Father Pope Francis. What is the New Evangelization? To start with, we have to realize it is not a new Gospel. The Gospel remains the same: the story of Jesus and his love, his message, and what he means for us. What is new about it is the energy we bring to it -- the **ardor** -- but also the **method**. We have to find new ways of spreading that Gospel. Finally, it is new in its **expression**. You and I have to find the words today that tell that story, the story of God's love for us, of Jesus coming and dying and rising and sending God's Spirit for us.*

*For me, there are three component parts to the New Evangelization. First, a **personal deepening of our faith**. Each one of us, if we are going to be a part of the New Evangelization, we have to deepen our own faith. Not just intellectually by reading more -- though we should -- but in our hearts, affectively, in prayer, in opening ourselves to the love of God. Then, knowing more deeply our faith, we need to be confident, **confident in its truth**. We need to stand firm in these words of Everlasting Life that we know who we are and what Jesus has done for us. And then the third and final element of the New Evangelization is the **desire to share the Good News**. Not only do we renew our faith, not only are we confident in it, but we wish to share it with everybody and every situation in which we find ourselves. This is the New Evangelization, and to that we are all called.*

-- Cardinal Wuerl, "What is the New Evangelization? | The New Evangelization Today"

(<https://youtu.be/MohnUvjN3gw>)



# What is Evangelization? Evangelization as Witness

## The Essential Mission of the Church is to Evangelize

*The Church, of which we are members, exists to evangelize, to invite people to an encounter with Jesus. This is her nature -- this is 'her deepest identity.'*

-- Cardinal Wuerl, *Being Catholic Today*, p. 3

The Catholic Church does many things: pray, teach, minister to the sick, etc. yet each of these tasks point toward a common goal: helping others to encounter and come to know Jesus Christ. This is what it means to evangelize. This is the essential mission of the Church. As members of the Church, the Body of Christ, that means evangelization is our mission, as well.

However, the word “evangelization” has some associations that can trip us up. Perhaps we think that evangelization is something only priests and “church professionals” can do. Or perhaps we feel inadequate without a theology degree or advanced training. Or maybe we conjure up less-than-appealing images of shouting televangelists on late night TV. None of these ideas reflect the Catholic vision of evangelization.

- ***What are some associations you have with the word “evangelization”?***

## The Core of Evangelization is Personal Witness

- ***Pair up with your neighbor and share: What is your favorite book or movie? Why do you like it so much? Why might your neighbor find it interesting, too?***

When we are sharing a favorite book or movie with someone, we say: “I really like this, and I think you will, too. You should check it out!” Or when introducing two friends: “You and Tom have a lot in common. I think you two would get along.” Yet interestingly, we’re more comfortable connecting two people or inviting someone to experience a favorite movie than we are inviting someone to experience a relationship with God!

Bearing witness to our faith is natural, though we may not think of it as evangelization. Consider the last time you had a conversation with a friend about your faith, or answered a question about the Church from a coworker, or volunteered your time or talents for someone in need. In each of those cases, you were a witness to your faith.

***To evangelize is first of all to bear witness***, in a simple and direct way, to God revealed by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit, to bear witness that in His Son God has loved the world - that in His Incarnate Word He has given being to all things and has called men to eternal life.

-- Saint Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 26

The core of evangelization is personal witness, sharing the God that we know and love with others and inviting them to know him, too. Evangelizing through personal witness also means you don’t need any special training or a theology degree before you can talk with other people about God. Witnessing is about sharing what you know and have experienced. It is about sharing the story of God working in your life and connecting your story to the Great Story of God in Salvation History.

# The Goal of Evangelization is to Help People to Encounter Jesus

The goal of evangelization is to help others to encounter Jesus Christ, experience his love, and live differently as his disciple. We know that when someone falls in love they can't help but live differently. Falling in love with Jesus will lead others to "a new horizon and a decisive direction" -- to live differently as a follower of Jesus Christ (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, 1).

You cannot make someone fall in love. Evangelization is not a matter of us changing others, but creating opportunities for the Holy Spirit to work through us and in another person by what we say and do.

## Evangelization is a Process, Not a Moment

Our faith journey and need for conversion is the process of a lifetime. Most people look back on their lives and can see small steps that have helped them along the path of faith. All of us, even those who have experienced intense moments of conversion, are called to continue to grow and develop on their journey of faith.

*The Lord's missionary mandate includes a call to growth in faith: 'Teach them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Mt 28:20). Hence it is clear that the first proclamation also calls for ongoing formation and maturation.*

*Evangelization aims at a process of growth which entails taking seriously each person and God's plan for his or her life. All of us need to grow in Christ. Evangelization should stimulate a desire for this growth, so that each of us can say wholeheartedly: 'It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me' (Gal 2:20).*

-- Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 160



We are a people in process. We are not evangelized in a past-tense way. It is important that those who are evangelizers also recognize that they are still in the process of being evangelized and remain constantly open to a renewed encounter with Jesus Christ.

## Some Things Evangelization is Not

Evangelization is not...

- A one-time moment
- Proselytization (i.e. judgmental speech and demands of conversion)
- Expecting immediate results. Instead, we plant seeds and trust the Holy Spirit to work in ways we sometimes cannot see.
- About me! Evangelization is a selfless act of love not a place for pride or ego.
- Arguments or purely apologetics. Rather, it is an invitation to a personal encounter with God.
- Passing judgement. Instead, evangelization humbly respects the dignity of the other person and invites them as an equal to share in what we have found.

# Why We Evangelize: Our Catholic Identity

## We Evangelize By Virtue of Our Baptism and Catholic Identity

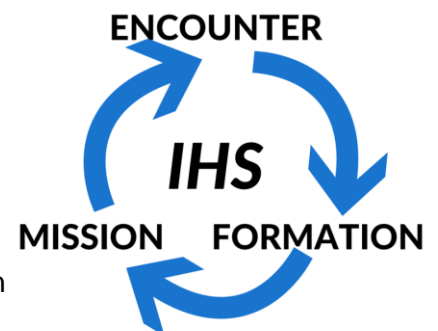
Many Catholics are hesitant to evangelize because we can feel inadequate or hypocritical, that we don't know enough or aren't "good enough" Christians, struggling with sin and brokenness. Yet as Pope Francis notes,

***All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization... Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love. Every Christian is a missionary to the extent that he or she has encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus: we no longer say that we are "disciples" and "missionaries", but rather that we are always "missionary disciples".***

-- Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120

Our baptism gives each of us the right and the responsibility to evangelize. This is true regardless of our level of instruction in the faith and regardless of our role in the Church or in our parish. What does this mean? You don't need a theology degree or advanced training to be able to evangelize. You don't need to be a priest or a deacon or on parish staff or in professional ministry or on the parish council or the evangelization committee or have any title whatsoever in order to evangelize. The only title that matters is Christian. Your baptismal identity as a Catholic Christian who has "truly experienced God's saving love" is all the permission and formation you need to share that love with others.

The implication here is that we evangelize because we have been evangelized. After all, we cannot share what we do not have! We are all here because we have "encountered the love of God in Christ Jesus." These encounters change us, prompting us to want to know and follow Christ. We respond to this desire by seeking formation in the Christian Life, asking and learning who this Jesus is and how we live as his disciples in the Church. Finally, the overflowing love we encounter in Christ and the formation we receive through his Church naturally impel us to live out that essential mission of the Church, helping others to know their own encounters with Christ.



- ***Do you know your baptism date?***
- ***What of your faith do you need to learn more about to help you evangelize?***

## Christ Calls All of Us to Evangelize

*The call to be authentically Catholic is traced all the way back to the Acts of the Apostles where Jesus, in his final instruction before his ascension into heaven, tells them, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes down on you, and you will be my witnesses...' (Acts 1:8). After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, it was precisely as witnesses to all that Jesus said and did that others began to tell the story. Peter proclaimed, 'God raised this Jesus; of this we are all witnesses' (Acts 2:32).*

-- Cardinal Wuerl, *Being Catholic Today*, p. 30



Christ told his Apostles to witness to the love they encountered in him. The Church exists today because those who have encountered the love of Jesus Christ continue to give witness, from those first Apostles to us today, sharing the stories and teachings and their own encounters with Christ from person to person, generation to generation.

## The World is in Need of the Good News of Jesus

*'What does the Church bring to society?' ... **The Church brings what it has always brought: an invitation to faith, an encounter with Christ, and a way of living inspired by the Gospel.** We are called to share this Good News with others and let them know of the beauty of life in Christ. There is no greater, more perfect gift that we can give to others.*

-- Cardinal Wuerl, *Being Catholic Today*, 28

Our society struggles under the confusions of consumerism, individualism, and skepticism. "An aggressive secularism and relativism assert a new morality," yet in the midst of this confusion, "Christian belief is grounded in an authentic humanism of truth in love which sees every human being as possessing inherent dignity and invaluable worth" (Cardinal Wuerl, *Being Catholic Today*, 24). We offer this faith to the world because we believe it will continue to have an impact on our society, just as it has for the last two thousand years. We believe the world needs the Good News of Jesus.

## You Have a Story of Faith to Share with the World

*We know this is true of you as well: you have received the Spirit of Christ Jesus, which brings salvation and hope; your lives are a witness of faith. Whether you were baptized as a child or joined the Church as an adult, **you have a story of faith.** ... 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, and Jesus touches us in the celebration of his sacraments. When this genuinely happens, we are set ablaze by his love. **We can understand evangelization in light of these stories of faith: namely, how we have been changed by the power of Christ's word and sacraments and how we have an essential role in sharing that faith through our daily lives as believers.** Looked at this way, evangelization is what we are all about! Being involved in the story of salvation is what faith is all about! Evangelization is the essential mission of the Church.*

-- USCCB, *Go and Make Disciples*, 6-8

You have a story of faith to share with the world. We will reflect on our stories in the next section.



# How Do We Evangelize? Knowing and Sharing the Story of God in Our Life

The core of evangelization is sharing personal witness, the story of God in our lives. Sharing the story of God starts with knowing the story of how God has been working in our own lives. Taking specific time to reflect on our story of faith gives us the confidence to share it from the heart in a variety of settings.

## Personal Reflection: Knowing My Faith Story

When did you first start to believe in God? Who or what opened you to this awareness and belief? What was your predominant image of God at that time? Reflect on this experience, the setting, the people involved, your impressions and reactions, how old you were, etc.

Reflect on the significant events and milestones in your life. Consider things like: baptism, first communion, confirmation, graduation, moving to new places, getting married, ordination, the birth of a child, losing loved ones, changing jobs, and other significant life events. In what ways was God present in these experiences? Were you aware of his presence during these times? Looking back, what patterns do you see of God's presence in your life?

In what period in your life did you feel closest to God? Why?

In what period in your life did you feel most distant from God? Why? What helped you return to your faith?

How has the Catholic Church and the community of believers shaped and impacted your journey of faith, positively or negatively? What traditions, prayers, rituals, Sacraments, or sacramentals have been most important to you? Why?

What has the last year of your faith life been like? How do you see God present in your life throughout the past year and today? Do you feel close to him?

What are the predominant images of God in your life right now? How do you see and relate to God? Is God a strong and/or consoling parent, a judge, a teacher, a divine therapist, a healer, a disinterested clockmaker, a savior, a police officer, a friend, a...? What mental imagery of God do you use in prayer?

As you reflect on your relationship with God, do you consider yourself an intentional disciple of Jesus Christ? If so, when did you make a commitment to live as His disciple? Was it a distinct moment of conversion or an evolving process or both?

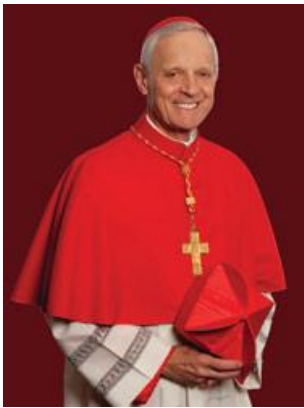
What are 3-4 core job descriptions of being a disciple of Jesus Christ? In what ways do live out or practice these in your life? What is special, important, meaningful, or challenging to you about your choice to be his disciple?

## Intro to the Kerygma

*The vital core of the new evangelization must be a **clear and unequivocal proclamation of the person of Jesus Christ**, that is, the preaching of his name, his teaching, his life, his promises and the Kingdom, which he has gained for us by his Paschal Mystery.*

-- Pope St. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America*, 66

Kerygma is a Greek word meaning “preaching” or “proclamation.” The kerygma is the Great Story of Jesus, the concise and simple explanation of Jesus as the Savior of the World. It is an “initial proclamation” that introduces people to Jesus and lays the foundation for relationship with him and a deeper knowledge of faith. Familiarity with sharing the kerygma will be helpful to the evangelizer in answering questions like “Who is Jesus?” and “Why should he matter to me?”



*Our Holy Father Pope Francis once said to us, “The faith is not that difficult, don’t make it so complicated.” In the Synod on the New Evangelization, our Holy Father Pope Benedict reminded us **what we need to share is the core and heart of the faith**. The kerygma, it’s called. Inviting others to listen, hear, experience, and live the very heart of the faith. And what is that? What constitutes this kerygma? The very simple message: Jesus died, rose from the dead for our salvation, and pours out the Holy Spirit on us so that we live a whole new spiritual life. **The kerygma is basically the telling of the story of salvation, of redemption, in its simplest and most important elements.** God so loves us he created us, brought us into being, and then so loved us that he sent his Son to redeem us after we messed the whole thing up with the Fall and our sins.*

*And Jesus, to show his love for us, died on the cross, rose again from the dead, and invites us to share in the mystery of redemption by pouring out the Holy Spirit. This gift -- the Spirit -- we receive in baptism and we receive in confirmation. Every time we receive the Eucharist, the Spirit is constantly filling us. If you want to know the kerygma and the very core of the faith, just turn to the Creed -- the Apostles Creed in the shorter form or the Nicene Creed in the longer form. It tells us everything we need to know about our faith.*

-- Cardinal Wuerl, “Kerygma | The New Evangelization Today”

(<https://youtu.be/ZhOVbAWVz8M>)

## Kerygma Examples

*In addition to the Creed and the other examples shared by Cardinal Wuerl, consider these two presentations of the kerygma. Then, answer the reflection questions at the end of the section.*



### Example Kerygma #1: The Five Act Drama

*This kerygma is a good summary of how we as Christians see the human condition and the story of salvation, from Creation through the life of Jesus to present day.<sup>1</sup>*

**Act 1: Creation** – God made the world and everything in it and found it good. We are meant to be in right relationship with Creation, with each other, and with God.

**Act 2: The Fall** – Something went wrong. Through a prideful and fearful grasp at divinity, we caused brokenness and division in the world.

**Act 3: God Forms a Special People** – God forms a special people to share the light of God with all nations and to draw all people back into righteousness and harmony. God creates a covenant with Israel and gives them His law by which they should live and leaders to guide them. However they fail again and again to live up to their identity and purpose. They did not fulfill their mission to re-gather all people to God.

**Act 4: God Becomes Man** – “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (John 3:16). God sends his only Son Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the law. What was lost in the Fall is now restored in Jesus. God becomes man so that man can become God. How? By conquering the darkness of the world on the Cross.

**Act 5: The Emergence of the Church** – The Holy Spirit at Pentecost makes the Apostles into Christ’s mystical body, the means by which Christ’s salvation will be carried to all people. As baptized Christians, we participate in this act. It is integral to our baptismal call and is how we participate in the Great Story.

### Example Kerygma #2: The Ultimate Relationship

*This kerygma is presented in a relational and invitational way.<sup>2</sup>*

1. We are created for relationship
2. Our relationship is broken
3. Our broken relationship can be restored
4. Jesus restores our relationship
5. We can experience this restored relationship
6. Jesus desires to be at the center of your life
7. Would you like to invite Jesus to be at the center of your life?
8. Seal that commitment through Reconciliation.



### Other Examples: Short Witnesses to the Basics of the Faith

- “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
- “Christ has died. Christ is Risen. Christ will come again.” (Memorial Acclamation)
- “Jesus died, rose from the dead for our salvation, and pours out the Holy Spirit on us so that we live a whole new spiritual life.” (Cardinal Wuerl)

### Your Turn

- ***Practice sharing one of the examples above with your neighbor. Take a moment to review them, then close your workbooks and tell each other the basic story of the faith.***

<sup>1</sup> “The Five Act Drama” homily by Fr. Robert Barron, July 16, 2006. Available online at <http://www.worndonfire.org/resources/homily/the-five-act-drama/725/>.

<sup>2</sup> “The Ultimate Relationship”, Catholic Christian Outreach Canada Inc., Available online at [www.coo.ca](http://www.coo.ca).



# Sharing the Story of Jesus in My Life

*Answer each question with one word or one sentence. Then, put the answers into paragraph form in a way that helps convey your testimony of faith. (N.B. you do not need to use the answers to every question).*

1. We are each created to live in relationship with God and others. Growing up, I would describe my relationship with God as\_\_\_\_\_. The times when I felt close and connected to God were...

2. We do not always experience that close of relationship with God. We see examples from our lives and from across the world of brokenness that comes from being distant from God. A time that I drifted or distanced myself from God was when...

3. Yet I know that nothing can separate us from the love of God and that God sent Jesus Christ to restore our relationship with him. Even when I have turned away from God He always forgives me and welcomes me back. An experience or person that helped me to turn back to God was...

4. Like any relationship, my relationship with God needs ongoing renewal and growth. I continue to commit and grow in my relationship with Jesus by...

5. One thing I love about being Catholic is...

6. I continue to grow in my relationship with Jesus through the Sacrament of \_\_\_\_\_. It helps me to grow in my faith by...

7. If I didn't have a relationship with Jesus my life would be different because...

8. When I meet someone who is exploring their faith, one thing about my own faith story that is important for me to share is that...

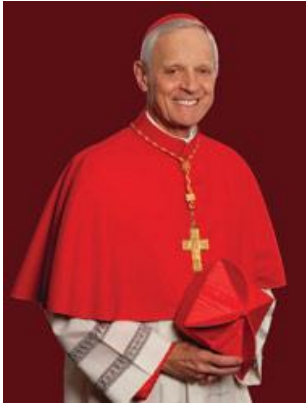
## My One-Minute Faith Story

*Distill your reflection and answers into a concise paragraph in a way that helps convey your testimony of faith and ties it to the kerygma in one minute or less. Focus on conveying why you believe in Jesus Christ and why you invite others to follow him as well. (N.B. you do not need to use the answers to every question).*

***Pair up with your neighbor and practice sharing your one minute faith story. Once you have both shared your stories, give each other helpful feedback.***



# Who, When, and Where Do We Evangelize?



*When we talk about the New Evangelization -- that is, the effort to share the story of Jesus but to do so in a new, fresh way -- where do we find the people who we are supposed to be evangelizing? To whom do we bring this Good News that Jesus is God's Son, that Jesus died for us, rose from the dead, and that we are blessed to be adopted children?*

*At the time of the discussion of the New Evangelization in the Synod of 2012, our Holy Father said to us that there are really three basic areas of the New Evangelization. These are the focal points of evangelizing. First of all, sharing the story of our faith with people who may have never ever heard it. These would be people -- we may know them in our neighborhood, we may know them as people who simply don't know anything at all about our Catholic faith. And then there is the practice that is an act of the New Evangelization of simply sharing the faith with members of our own family. It's some of the simple catechetical things that form a normal part of life: helping a youngster make the Sign of the*

*Cross, learn his or her prayers. All of this is a part of the New Evangelization.*

*But where it really comes into focus is when we start inviting back to the practice of the faith those who have drifted away. We all know those people who should be with us and who maybe will join us if they are invited. We live in this culture, this world, where so many have simply walked away, drifted away. Our task is to invite them back. These are all the actions of the New Evangelization - to reach out and invite back to the embrace of our Lord.*

-- Cardinal Wuerl, "To Whom Are We Sent? | The New Evangelization Today"  
(<https://youtu.be/RBm6y44ypSE>)

## Discerning Who

***The first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."***

-- Saint Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41

The beginning of our evangelization comes from the way we live our lives every day. From this starting place we then rely on discernment to guide our active evangelization efforts. Discernment is a combination of prayer and action. It involves asking God, "What is your will for me in this situation?", actively listening through prayer, and acting in response to that prayer and in full faith the Lord will guide you. Practice this discernment in planned ways and with others in your community, such as before an organized effort or through workshops such as this one. Yet also remember to practice spontaneous discernment, pausing in your encounters with others to pray, "Lord, help me invite this person to encounter you."

As Cardinal Wuerl notes, we will find ourselves sharing the good news in three kinds of situations. By discerning when you are in these different situations, you can adapt how you share the story of our faith and experience greater fruitfulness in your evangelization.

## 1: The Non-Evangelized

The first situation he mentions is “sharing the story of our faith with people who have never ever heard it” and who do not know Jesus. Being able to first proclaim Christ’s love to someone is a blessed opportunity!

***Who are people in your life with whom you could share the story of Jesus?***

\_\_\_\_\_

## 2: The Evangelized

The second is sharing and deepening the faith of those who are already evangelized, who already know Jesus and are growing as his disciples.

***Who are people in your life with whom you can walk on their journey of discipleship?***

\_\_\_\_\_

## 3: The Inactive

The third is “inviting back to the practice of the faith those who have drifted away,” reintroducing them to the Lord and encouraging them to reconsider his role in their life.

***Who are people in your life whom you feel called to invite back to an encounter with Jesus?***

\_\_\_\_\_

- ***Keep these people you identified in mind as we turn to the next section.***



## When and Where: Accompanying on the Journey

*The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other (cf. Ex 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.*

-- Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 169-170

The people we seek to evangelize are at different stages of their spiritual journeys, so to be effective we must encounter them where they are and invite them to take the next step. We accompany each person on their spiritual journey. Though each person's journey of conversion is unique, we can recognize and respond to common elements along the way, sometimes referred to as thresholds. The following description of these thresholds is quoted from the book *Forming Intentional Disciples* by Sherry Weddell.<sup>3</sup>

1. **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 an active personal faith. Without some kind of bridge of trust in place, people will not move closer to God.
2. **Spiritual curiosity:** A person finds himself intrigued by or desiring to know more about Jesus, his life, and his teachings or some aspect of 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.
3. **Spiritual openness:** A person acknowledges to himself 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 that they are open to the possibility of change.
4. **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.
5. **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.

- **How does an understanding of these different stages of a spiritual journey help us?**

These thresholds help us recognize that our interactions will be different with someone who only has minimal trust in the Gospel or the Church than with someone who is actively seeking to know God and determine whether he or she believes. For example, we may serve as a bridge of trust for someone who is ambivalent to or even against our faith through our friendship, charity, kindness, and integrity of word and deed. Whereas for a person who is actively seeking to know more and decide whether to believe, our accompaniment will more explicitly involve conversations on scripture, faith, and the Christian Life, and the encouragement to at some point “drop their nets” (cf. Christ's calling of Peter in Luke 5:4-11) and choose whether to be a follower of Christ.

- **With your neighbor, discuss one of the people you identified on the previous page. Where is that person in their spiritual journey? What do you think they need?**
- **Homework:** Circle three names on the previous page. What do they need? Reach out to them!

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<sup>3</sup> Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*, 129-130. The language of conversion thresholds was initially presented by Don Everts and Doug Schaupp in their book *I Once Was Lost: What Postmodern Skeptics Taught Us About Their Path to Jesus*



# Through the Holy Spirit

Finally, in all of our evangelizing efforts we must turn to the Holy Spirit. It is only through the Holy Spirit that we are able to share the Good News and only through the Holy Spirit that the hearts of others will open to God.

As this training comes to a close, we reflect on the fundamental role of the Holy Spirit in evangelization and entrust ourselves to the Spirit's power and guidance.

***Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit. ... Techniques of evangelization are good, but even the most advanced ones could not replace the gentle action of the Spirit. The most perfect preparation of the evangelizer has no effect without the Holy Spirit. ...***

***... [W]e exhort all evangelizers, whoever they may be, to pray without ceasing to the Holy Spirit with faith and fervor and to let themselves prudently be guided by Him as the decisive inspirer of their plans, their initiatives and their evangelizing activity.***

***-- Saint Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, 75***

***Turn to your neighbor and share the people you identified and plan to share your faith with. As we pray the closing prayer as a group, ask the Holy Spirit to intercede for each other's intentions.***



## Closing Prayer

*Gracious and merciful God, we pray that through the Holy Spirit all Catholics may hear the call of the New Evangelization and seek a deeper relationship with your Son, Jesus.*

*We pray that the New Evangelization will renew the Church, inspiring all Catholics to “go forth and make disciples of all nations” and transform society through the power of the Gospel.*

*We pray for all members of the Church, that we heed the words of Christ —“do not be afraid”— and strengthened by the Holy Spirit’s gift of courage, give witness to the Gospel and share our faith with others.*



*We pray that we may become like the father of the prodigal son — filled with compassion for our missing brothers and sisters— and run to embrace them upon their return.*

*We pray that all people yearning to know Christ and the Church may encounter him through the faithful who witness to his love in their lives.*

*Loving God, our Father, strengthen us to become witnesses to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

From *Disciples Called to Witness*, USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis

## Appendix: Three -- Twelve -- Seventy Two -- The World

Christ commissioned us to go and make disciples of *all nations*, so the short answer to “Who do we evangelize?” is “Everyone!” However, we recognize that we each have various circles of relationships that can help guide who we invite to encounter Christ and live as his disciple. Jesus shows us how to do this through the examples of how he engaged the Three, the Twelve, the Seventy Two, and the World.<sup>4</sup>

- **The Three:** Jesus most closely and intimately mentored three people, Peter, James, and John, sharing his life with them and investing deeply in their journeys of discipleship. (Cf. Mark 9:2)
- **The Twelve:** Jesus called each member of this small group personally and spent time forming them and explaining his teachings in depth. (Cf. Matthew 10:5)
- **The Seventy Two:** Jesus engaged this larger group of followers by inviting them to participate in his mission and sending them out ahead of him. (Cf. Luke 10:1)
- **The World:** Jesus taught great crowds, proclaiming the Kingdom of God in ways that connected with their experiences and challenged them to reflect on God’s presence in their lives. (Cf. Luke 14:25)

**Who Are My Three?** Identify the three people in your life who you are called to mentor in faith and invite into deeper encounter with Christ. These are people with whom you probably already have a relationship.

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**Who Are My Twelve?** Identify the small groups of people that you belong to, such as a church group, sports team, close neighborhood friends, etc. How can you share your faith with people in these groups and encourage them to take the next step in their journey of faith?

**Who Are My Seventy Two?** Who is in the broader circle of people you come into regular contact with? Consider friend groups, neighbors, co-workers, and other social groups you are a part of. Look for opportunities to share the story of God in your life, and invite others to talk with you about their experiences of God in their lives. How can you help these people to encounter Christ through your word and example?

**Who Is In My World?** What are the public platforms through which you can intentionally make your faith visible and be a sign of God’s love to others? Consider public witness, social media, service and works of mercy, and other opportunities to evangelize culture.

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<sup>4</sup> The Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas has produced resources related to this concept which may be useful in parish evangelization strategy and personal mission, available at <http://www.archkck.org/evangelization>.