



Living the Gospel: Engaging Small Communities in Social Action

How-tos

1. How to help people see that social action is connected with faith
 - Help people grasp that acts of social justice and works of charity, part of the mission of small communities, flow from God's love for all humanity and are also part of our call to evangelize.
 - This is described in Goal III of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' document, *Go and Make Disciples*:

Goal I: *To bring about such an enthusiasm for their faith in Catholics that, in living it out, they share it freely with others.*¹

Goal II: *To invite everyone to hear Jesus' message of salvation, whatever might be their social or cultural backgrounds, in order that they may join us in the Catholic faith.*²

Goal III: *To promote values of the gospel—dignity of the human person, importance of family, common good—so that our society will continue to be transformed by Christ's saving power.*³
 - Make available for ministry groups the booklet *Text, Study Guide, and Implementation Process* for *Go and Make Disciples*⁴ and organize a discussion series on the connection between faith and social action as well as the implementation process suggested in the booklet.

2. How to awaken compassion for global and universal needs
 - Distancing ourselves from social and universal needs is a normal part of life in an impersonal society. Although we cannot reach out to every passerby in daily life, we can bring everyone into God's presence through prayer and reflection on Scripture and, whenever possible, engage in some social action. For concrete and practical helps to carry out this prayer, personal and small group reflection, and action, see: [PrayerTime, Cycle A: Faith-Sharing Reflections on the Sunday Gospels](#) published by RENEW International.
 - Help people watch for needs and issues that strike a personal chord in their lives or seem to emerge often in their families, parishes, and civic communities. Then help individuals and groups sort through these needs and prayerfully apply the Social Inquiry Method to at least one of them.
 - Respond to justice zealots who are easily caught up in anger. Help them share their own personal responses to a particular call in the area of social justice.

3. How to help small communities reflect on action responses and outreach efforts
 - As a leader, listen to each person's account of his or her outreach commitment from previous small community gatherings, and ask everyone to talk about how action responses were implemented and what further areas of outreach are needed.
 - Allow time to decide on an area of outreach. No two small communities will respond in exactly the same manner in an area of outreach. Some may focus more on individual outreach; others may do more outreach together as a community.
 - Keep a balance between the five elements of small community gatherings: faith sharing, learning, mutual support, a sense of mission, and prayer.
 - Provide group participants with background material for the particular social need they are pursuing.

¹ U.S. Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992), p. 7.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Susan W. Blum, Ed.D., *Text, Study Guide, and Implementation Process for Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States* (South Holland, IL: National Council of Catholic Evangelization, 1993); www.catholic evangelization.org