



Go and Make Disciples: A Vision and a Plan

Core Community Meeting

Aim

To provide an opportunity—through prayer, reflection, presentation of information and sharing—to:

- Understand more deeply the call to evangelization, which is a primary mission of the Church
- Grasp further the three interrelated goals of the U.S. Catholic Bishops in their document, *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*
- Appreciate that small Christian communities are key environments for these goals to be realized and lived out

Leader's Instructions:

If you want to use a song, choose a hymn about evangelization that is familiar to your community.

In advance of the meeting, ask someone to be prepared to read the Scripture passage. After the Leader's Reflection, allow a few minutes of silence before moving on to the Faith-Sharing Questions.

NOTE: The materials from this meeting can be used by other parish ministries to introduce them to *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*.

Opening Prayer

Core Meeting Handout

Leader: You knew us before we were born, and welcomed us at birth. You gave us each a name, a face, a message for the world around us.

All: Come, Holy Spirit. Breathe your life into us.

Leader: You helped us grow as children and cared about us as teenagers. You are always beside us as we search for who we are and what you ask of us.

All: Come, Holy Spirit. Breathe your life into us.

Leader: You shape and bless us through vocations, careers, and the members of our households and families. You call us to echo your presence and be instruments of your love in daily life.

All: Come, Holy Spirit. Breathe your life into us. Fill our hearts and minds. Grant us the gifts we need to follow and proclaim Jesus. Shape us. Recreate us. Amen.

Song (optional)

“Gather Together” (*Renewing for the 21st Century* Volume 2. Fr. Michael Semana. Oregon Catholic Press, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213; <http://www.ocp.org>; e-mail: liturgy@ocp.org; phone: 1-800-LITURGY)

Leader: God our Father, you embrace us in your love. Make us a people whose hearts are full of praise. Help us share our joy freely so that others may experience the fullness of your joy. Through the presence of your Holy Spirit, make our communities holy, our outreach sincere, and our evangelization fruitful. We ask this in the name of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Conclude with the Sign of the Cross.

“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Reading John 14: 15–21

Leader’s Reflection

In John’s Gospel, Jesus promised to send his Holy Spirit as an advocate, a teacher, and a counselor who will always be at our side. After the resurrection, Jesus would remain with us through the Holy Spirit. Jesus would no longer be limited by the confines of time and space. At the feast of Pentecost, Jesus was faithful to his promise and sent the Spirit to the frightened apostles. The Holy Spirit empowered them to proclaim the gospel with a new enthusiasm and an abiding inner strength. Newly formed in the Spirit, they opened their hearts to the world. They invited others to hear the gospel message, to join them in community, and to be transformed.

“[H]e has been raised” (Matthew 28:6). This was the first proclamation, the first shout of enthusiastic joy, when the women who had come to weep at the tomb discovered the empty grave. And, if Christ is still alive, then he continues to do new things that we too will be able to recognize. He also continues to give his Spirit, lifting us from the edge of suffering and giving us joyful bursts of exuberant faith, setting our hearts ablaze with the love and awe of God. The ability to evangelize, to declare the Good News, finds its roots in our relationship with God. It is the fruit of struggling hearts that have been transformed by the touch of God. Evangelization is possible as we face what dampens our faith and watch for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Like the apostles at Pentecost and the women at the tomb, when our hearts are touched by the power of the Holy Spirit, by the realization that the gospel message is real, we are compelled to share our joy. This is the transformation that moves from the inside out, the process that starts in the human heart and leads to God’s reign in the world.

Pope Paul VI provides a definition of evangelization when he states, “evangelization means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new.”¹ This Good News has a power that becomes evident and enlivens even the silent witness of a Christian way of life. It begins with the acceptance of the Good News within us that becomes “like a burning fire.” As the Holy Spirit teaches and consoles us, our lives are transformed. The goal of evangelization is a change of heart and joy-filled lives, for Christ tells us in John’s Gospel: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Evangelization is like lighting a candle and setting hearts ablaze with Christ’s love.

Imagine that you have been transported back to the time of the Resurrection. You have joined the women on their dusty walk to the empty tomb on the outskirts of town. Maybe you are carrying jars of fresh oil or drinking water. What is your reaction to the empty tomb? Is it confusion or hope? How do you feel and what are your thoughts? If you were to run and tell others what you have seen, what would you say?

Leader's Instructions:

Allow a few moments of silence for prayerful reflection. Then invite people back to the present and to the subject at hand, sharing the gospel. Ask them to consider the Faith-Sharing Questions, to be found on the **Core Meeting Handout**.

Faith-Sharing Questions

1. Recall a time when I was so surprised or filled with joy that I felt compelled to share it with everyone I met. What was that time or event like for me?
2. What does the word *evangelization* mean for me? What challenges does the call to evangelize include? Share an example of evangelizing others through word and an example of evangelization through actions (including acts of doing justice).
3. Consider the U.S. Catholic Bishops' three interrelated goals for evangelization listed at the bottom of the **Core Meeting Handout**. Which one am I most comfortable in considering? How might I move forward on the most challenging of the three?
4. Why and in what ways are small Christian communities key environments for these three goals to be realized and lived out?

Business Meeting Agenda

1. Review previous meeting's minutes and agenda items.
2. Possible agenda items to introduce evangelization to the wider parish:
 - Develop a resource team willing to offer this introductory material to ministry groups in the parish, or offer it to them in a written format.
 - Offer a guest speaker and evening of reflection on evangelization.
 - Add, to the parish library, books and tapes on evangelization and sharing our faith. Purchase a booklet for each of the ministry heads in the parish (for example, *Everyday Evangelizing for Everyday Catholics*, an attractive trifold that presents practical ways to evangelize in all situations—the home, parish, workplace. Available online: <http://www.renewintl.org/Resources/Pages/everyday.html>)
 - Add a parish Web site link to one or more Web sites on evangelization.
 - Consult with RENEW International regarding the presentation of this topic in the parish. (Contact Mike Fabian at SCCServices@renewintl.org, or 908-769-5400)
 - Consider downloading the RENEW International workshop "Go and Make Disciples: A Vision and a Plan" at www.ParishLife.com.
 - Brainstorm additional ways to assist the parish in this area.
 - Carry out a survey on evangelization, designed to measure awareness and common perceptions of what evangelization is. Put the survey into the parish Sunday bulletin, or organize a telephone survey team. Approach parish ministries to complete the survey.
 - Place small articles into the parish bulletin, with excerpts from the Church's documents on evangelization. Feature short conversion stories in the bulletin, relating these to evangelization.
- **Note:** If a decision is made to introduce this topic, the following steps will be helpful in implementing the decision:
 - a. How are we going to go about introducing the topic? Who will be invited?
 - b. Who will take responsibility for recruiting the necessary volunteers?
 - c. Should we consult RENEW International to help us organize a workshop and run it? (Contact Mike Fabian at SCCServices@renewintl.org, or 908-769-5400)

3. Assign tasks to individual members or groups.
4. Other action items to be discussed as part of normal business of the Parish Core Community.

Closing Prayer

Leader: God, You ask us to live in love and
You have enkindled the fire of your love in our hearts.
May we not be satisfied until that love enkindles the whole earth.
Enliven us with your Spirit. Continue your work in us.
May your Holy Spirit bring love where there is still hatred,
Pardon where there is still injury,
Faith where there is still doubt,
Hope where there is still despair,
Light where there is still darkness, and
Joy where there is still sadness.

Leader: We bring before you the needs of our loved ones, and those to whom we are linked in prayer. For ... we pray to the Lord...

Response: Lord hear our prayer.

All: Our Father...

¹ On *Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii nuntiandi)*, (December 8, 1975), Paul VI, 18.



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3. Consider the U.S. Catholic Bishops' three interrelated goals for evangelization listed below. Which one am I most comfortable in considering? How might I move forward on the most challenging of the three?
4. Why and in what ways are small Christian communities key environments for these three goals to be realized and lived out?

Three Goals from *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*

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.*

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- 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, 1993), p. 7.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 8.