



Go and Make Disciples: A Vision and a Plan

What the Small Communities Need to Know

1. Parish and small Christian communities are encouraged to grow in their understanding, awareness, and appreciation of:
 - their call to evangelization, which is a primary mission of the Church
 - three interrelated goals of evangelization cited by the U.S. Catholic Bishops in their document, *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*
 - small Christian communities as key environments for these goals to be realized and lived out
2. Evangelization is not something extra in the Catholic community. It is the primary mission of the Church, affecting all that we do. It has been at the heart of the Church since its inception on the Feast of Pentecost, when Peter first spoke about Jesus and invited people to become disciples and members of the early Church.
3. Evangelization is a natural result of genuine discipleship. When God touches our hearts, we are moved to share. In doing so, we become examples of faith, inviting others into deeper communion with Jesus Christ. The examples we offer do not have to be perfect, just simple steps on our common journey toward God. It is good to realize that our small community gatherings provide opportunities to evangelize one another. Each of us needs continual inspiration and hope from our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. We do this when we share our faith together, when we affirm and challenge one another to ongoing conversion, prayer, and attention to God's Word in Scripture.
4. Evangelization happens in three **settings**: small group, one-to-one, and large group. It is a personal activity that reflects God's presence and love in all these settings. Our small community gatherings are places for small group evangelization. Family rituals and prayer can be another example. One-to-one evangelization is an offshoot of the relationships we have with others and our openness to let God be a part of these relationships. An example of this kind of evangelization is inviting a friend to join our small community. When we gather in large groups or liturgical settings, then a third kind of evangelization takes place that strengthens and echoes what has happened in the other two settings.
5. The U.S. Catholic Bishops remind us there are three **goals** within the mission of evangelization and that all three are complementary. They should all be going on at once in our lives and in our parish.

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

We do this as we share our faith experiences and insights about God in our small communities, and even in our day-to-day lives. Participation in small communities frees and enables small community members to go out into their daily lives and share their faith.

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

Some of the ways we do this are by bringing others to Church, by praying with others, and by displaying religious items in our homes. Small Christian communities provide an environment that encourages and supports this invitation. Inviting others is generally facilitated when people are able to share a rich communal and conversion experience, and have a warm, welcoming, informal community to invite others into.

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

We do this through our action responses and by taking civic and political responsibilities in our neighborhoods and towns. True small Christian communities go beyond action responses and support an integrated spirituality with gospel values being promoted in all phases of everyday life. Participating in small communities leads to the root causes of injustice being addressed by participants committed to living out gospel values.

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.*