



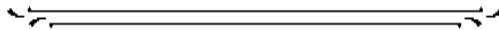
Diocese of Allentown Embarking on Parish Evangelization

How do we Begin the Process?

A guide to assist parishes in beginning an evangelization effort by engaging and forming the Catholics in the pew and reaching out to those that have left the Church.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?’”
—Acts 1:8-11

“Christ commands us to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. We are to proclaim His Good News to all people, everywhere and at all times. How often do we reach out to our missing brothers and sisters by inviting them to join us at Mass or by asking why they no longer feel welcomed at Church? Did you know through our baptism, we are called to proclaim the Good News to all people, everywhere and at all times.” USCCB, *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization.*



Have we forgotten?

The following is a process that a parish may undertake in establishing a parish evangelization effort. What follows are steps to engage the parish community and to encourage parishioners to create a “culture that is ripe for evangelization.” These steps may overlap and flow and ultimately depend on the parish’s commitment to participate in the Church’s mission, “Go, therefore and make disciples of all Nations”

Step1: Parish Discernment

- If a parish has a parish council, spend time together learning what the pastor’s vision is for the parish. Know the demographics of the parish.
- Study documents on evangelization and pray together as a group in order to discern our Lord’s direction for the parish. Where is our Lord leading you?

Step 2: Evangelization Steering Committee – (10 – 12 people)

The Steering Committee members should be carefully selected and formed and embody a sense of welcome. They need not be theologians but they should have a deep love for Christ and His Church and have a mature prayer life.

- Discuss with your pastor, priests and parish leaders who might serve well in this role. The following are criteria to assist in the selection process.
 - Faithful Catholic; those that have had a lifetime commitment to the faith and those that have returned to the active practice of the faith
 - Regular attendance at Mass and Confession
 - Exercising a regular prayer life
 - Follows the teachings of the Church
 - Willingness to attend catechetical formation programs and retreats offered by the diocese or parish

- Ability to empathize and listen
- The team should be a mix of people who make up the many dimensions of your parish.
- Various ages – young/old
 - Single, Married, Widowed
 - Multicultural
 - Consecrated Religious
 - Members of other parish committees and those that have never served
- Intercessory Prayer – Solicit Prayer Warriors
- Prayer is essential throughout the entire process. Ask various groups within your parish community to commit a time for prayer and sacrifice so that God will enlighten and bless the efforts of the evangelization process. Some of these groups may be.
 - Legion of Mary
 - Knights of Columbus
 - Serra International
 - Parish School – Prayer Teams
 - Religious Sisters of the Parish
 - Small Parish Prayer Groups
 - Bible Study Groups
 - Cursillo Teams
- Team Formation
- The Evangelization Team should be formed in what the Church teaches about evangelization and what it means to be a disciple of Christ.
- Meet as a team to pray and study the various documents on evangelization, e.g., Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization, USCCB; John Paul II’s encyclical, Redemptoris Missio; Apostolic letter, Novo Millennio Inuente; Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi
 - Seek out faith formation opportunities individually and as a team to mature in Christian discipleship
 - Seek advice from other parishes that have an established evangelization ministry to find out what worked, what didn’t.

Step 3: Parish Formation – Getting the Parish Ready

An evangelizing spirit must be rooted and permeate through the entire parish. “It is in the parish that one becomes engaged with the Church community, learns how to become a disciple of Christ, is nurtured by Scripture, is nourished by the Sacraments, and ultimately becomes an evangelizer. Successful evangelization and catechetical initiatives must be focused on the parish and parish life. It is the responsibility of the parish community and leadership to ensure that the faith it teaches, preaches and celebrates is

alive and that it is a true sign for all who come in contact with it that this truly is the living Body of Christ. “ NDC

The idea is that you transform the parish mindset that “business as routine” is no longer what we’re about. An evangelizing spirit begins to develop and take shape. A spirit of welcome and hospitality should also permeate every aspect of parish life.

Develop a kick-off weekend with weeks to follow to inform the parish community of the parish’s evangelization efforts. This can be accomplished through homilies, pulpit talks, bulletin articles and inserts. Place posters in visible areas, etc.

➤ Welcome/Hospitality

- This is especially an important piece to becoming an evangelizing parish. People too often say they do not feel welcomed or part of the parish. The entire parish community must foster a spirit of hospitality and welcome. This goes beyond targeted “welcome back” programs. There are key opportunities where a parish can display a welcoming embrace: couples who seek the Sacrament of Matrimony, parents who have children in parish based religious education programs or Catholic School, parents presenting their child for Baptism, people who are seeking during the RCIA process, people who seek assistance from parish social ministry services, people seeking to join the parish. The following are other opportunities a parish may consider:
 - Accessibility of worship and inclusion in all aspects of parish life especially those with intellectual or physical disabilities. Do we have seating to accommodate wheelchairs at Mass? Are meetings held in an accessible place?
 - Parish based support groups or targeted outreach for those who tend to drift away from the Church: separated, divorced or widowed.
 - Parish based groups or targeted outreach for young adults, new parents, newly married.
 - The use of multiple languages when culturally diverse groups exist in a parish.
 - Foster a liturgical environment that invites, spiritually fulfills, and welcomes the full and active participation of the parish.
 - Encouraging words of welcome from the pastor and priests when Catholics attend liturgical events such as weddings, funerals, Christmas, Easter, quinceañeras.
 - Post names of new members who have joined the Parish in the bulletin or on a bulletin board in the gathering area to welcome them.

➤ Formation of Ministry Leaders and those who Serve

- The Evangelization Team meets with the people who lead and serve in the various ministries of the parish. Each ministry offered should be assessed to ensure that it has an evangelizing spirit.
- Encourage those involved in ministries to also participate in faith formation and prayer opportunities so they too grow in mature Christian discipleship.

Each of these members should be growing in their relationship with Christ. We must continually renew our faith so we can share it with others.

➤ **Forming the Catholics in the Pew - Discipleship**

- The everyday Catholic in the pew must also be formed in their faith in order to evangelize others. They too have a role and must be rooted in the evangelization effort of the parish. As *Disciples Called to Witness* states, “Before we can reach out to our brothers and sisters who are absent we must be formed ourselves. We look to Christ as our teacher to create a culture of witness.” It is in the everyday moments of our life lived with faith, hope and Christian charity that we witness to others.
- Active participation in the Liturgy, opportunities for prayer and devotion within the parish are the basis of forming a Catholic culture. It is especially in prayer that we develop a relationship with Christ. The following are some suggestions that a parish may consider:
 - Formation programs
 - Retreats or Days of Reflection
 - Small group discussions which build community
 - Scripture study
 - Eucharistic Adoration, Lectio Divina, Rosary, Parish Consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus or Immaculate Heart of Mary

Step 4: Direct Parish Outreach

"It is not enough simply to open the door in welcome...but we must go out through that door to seek and meet the people...beginning with those who are farthest away, with those who do not usually go to church.... Go and search for them."

Pope Francis, July 31, 2013

When you feel the Parish is ready to proceed, there are several initiatives that can be implemented to reach out to those Catholics who are non-practicing . The following are a few suggestions to consider, including organizations that specialize in this type of outreach ministry.

➤ **Home Visits**

This initiative is to reach out to every registered household for the purpose of re-connecting to in-active Catholics, conducting pastoral visits and updating parish records. Special attention to those with children in Religious Education classes should be given. Past statistics have proven that a personal invitation is what it took for many to return to the Church. See *Parish Home Visitation Guide* for detailed information on how to implement this initiative.

A packet of information that includes a list of parish services, organizations, activities, a bulletin, etc., with descriptions that reveal how the parish addresses the needs that in-active Catholics perceive themselves



to have, e.g., how the parish helps people who are hurting or searching for acceptance could be provided at the visit.

➤ **Phone Outreach**

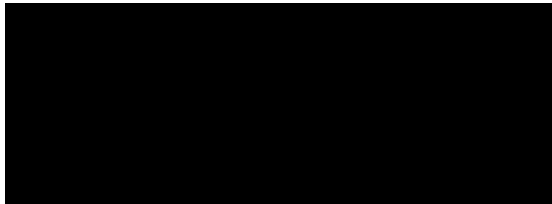


This initiative is to reach out to every registered household for the purpose of re-connecting to in-active Catholics and updating parish records. *See Parish Guide to Phone Visitation Outreach* for detailed information on how to implement this initiative.

➤ **Organizations and materials that can assist the parish:**

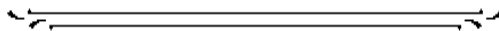
Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate

As Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate, this group visits families for person-to-person evangelization/catechesis, strengthen weak and broken homes and seek out stray Catholics to bring them back to the Church. Visit their website to find out more information or click the photo. www.parishvisitorsisters.org



Legion of Mary

The Legion of Mary is one of the largest voluntary lay organizations. Some of its apostolic works include door-to-door evangelization.



Catholics Reaching Out

Catholics Reaching Out helps Catholics invite in-active Catholics to consider returning to the Church. The starter kit includes 50 *We Miss You* invitations, 50 *Parishioner Guides*, one *Parish Manual*, a *Display Poster* with attachable pocket, and an order form to purchase additional materials. Price: \$59.95 for Starter Kit.

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