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**The Following is Information Provided**

**for**

**Diocese of the Midwest Urban Parish Summit**

**An Invited Talk**

# WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION?

- ❖ Bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ into every situation.
- ❖ The proclamation of the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, both being the work of the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ Evangelization is not a recipe or a program. It's a **WAY OF LIFE**.
- ❖ It's letting the Holy Spirit open our hearts to God's word so we can live and proclaim it to others.
- ❖ It's loving people into the kingdom.
- ❖ "It means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity, and through its' influence, transforming humanity from within and making it new." (*Evangelization in the Modern World*)
- ❖ It is a complex process made up of varied elements – the renewal of humanity, witness, explicit proclamation, inner adherence, entry into the community, acceptance of signs, apostolic initiative.
- ❖ It is inviting people into a loving and personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which is then nurtured by a loving and caring Catholic faith community.
- ❖ It is the process of extending oneself in order to nurture the spiritual well being of another person. (Scott Peck)
- ❖ The Good News addresses human persons in their complex wholeness; spiritual and moral, economic and political, cultural and social. It deals with all aspects of life: human growth and development, family life, community, society, liberation, etc. (speaks of **MOVEMENT – DOING** something).
- ❖ Acceptance of the Gospel and **CONVERSION** go hand in hand.
- ❖ "It is only through the good news of Jesus Christ that the hungers of people's hearts are satisfied." (*In Support of Catechetical Ministry*)
- ❖ Evangelization is the essential **MISSION** of the **CHURCH**. It is about transformation that is twofold:
  - Individual hearts – coming to know that Jesus Christ is Lord.
  - The World – building a more human world; building structures of justice and peace.
- ❖ Evangelization always starts with human experience, ordinary everyday life. Jesus started here.
- ❖ Evangelization happens when the word of Jesus speaks to people's hearts and minds through our actions and words, even our very presence.
- ❖ Evangelizing has three prongs: 1) deepening the faith of the active Catholic;
- ❖ 2) inviting and welcoming baptized members who are alienated and separated from the church; 3) inviting the new members.
- ❖ The ingredients of evangelization are **LOVE** of God, neighbor, and self; **INVITATION** to personal relationship with Jesus; **ON-GOING CONVERSION**; active **EXTENSION** of ourselves and community; **NURTURING** of **SPIRITUAL GROWTH** in the context of a **FAITH COMMUNITY, MINISTRY OF LOVING SERVICE**.
- ❖ It is the **ENERGIZING CORE** of all ministry.

## THE CHURCH IN AMERICA

The parish is a privileged place where the faithful concretely experience the Church. Today in America as elsewhere in the world the parish is facing certain difficulties fulfilling its mission.

The parish needs to be constantly renewed on the basis of the principle that the parish must continue to be above all a Eucharistic community. This principle implies that parishes are called to be

- ❖ welcoming and fraternal places of Christian initiation, of education in and celebration of the faith,
- ❖ open to the full range of charisms, services and ministries,
- ❖ organized in a communal and responsible way,
- ❖ capable of utilizing existing movements of the apostolate,
- ❖ attentive to the cultural diversity of people,
- ❖ open to pastoral projects which go beyond the individual parish, and alert to the world in which they live...

The parish thus renewed can be a source of great hope.

- ❖ It can gather people in community,
- ❖ assist family life,
- ❖ overcome the sense of anonymity,
- ❖ welcome people and help them to be involved in their neighborhood and in society.

In this way, every parish...can promote a more person centered evangelization and better cooperate with other social, educational, and community work.

—*The Church in America*  
Pope John Paul II  
Pauline Books & Media, 1999

# AN EVANGELIZING PARISH – SOME STRATEGIES

## A parish of Hospitality

- ❖ Social after liturgies
- ❖ Welcome Sunday
- ❖ Welcome teams who visit newcomers in area, provide info about parish
- ❖ Greeters at church entrances
- ❖ Visits to hospitalized, sick and homebound
- ❖ Home visit programs: parents of pre-schoolers, PSR and parish school students, newly married, bereaved, etc.
- ❖ Consolation ministry
- ❖ Acknowledgement of college students home on break
- ❖ Events that invite parishioners to bring a friend, neighbor or relative who is inactive to liturgy

## Small Church Communities

Programs for welcoming inactive, separated or alienated Catholics

Social Outreach

Quality worship

Parish day school and religious instruction

Meeting needs of divorced, separated, widowed, unemployed, single parents, incarcerated and children of and visiting the imprisoned

Offering spiritual and educational programs for neighborhood

RCIA – is everyone in the parish fully initiated?

Sacramental preparation

Information sessions, inquiry sessions for those interested in becoming members of catholic faith

Community building

Renewal programs

Parish mission

Attracting the unchurched

Needs of single adults

Youth ministry

Adult formation classes

Efforts to eradicate isms: racism, sexism, consumerism, discrimination and prejudice

Be a welcoming, inviting presence in the wider community

Use of media

# THE ROLE OF THE PARISH

Evangelization is the essential mission of the church.

Evangelization is **NOT** a program. It **IS A WAY OF LIFE**.

Evangelization is the **ENERGIZING CORE** of all ministry.

Evangelization is **EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY**.

**HOSPITALITY** is the **HALLMARK** of the evangelizer.

Many of us have been sacramentalized, but not catechized or evangelized.

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Know your parish – its **STRENGTHS** and **CHALLENGES**.

Know your **NEEDS** and those of the wider community.

Be **REALISTIC** about goals and expectations.

Know your **RESOURCES**: human, financial, material.

**AFFIRM** and **ENCOURAGE** evangelization efforts already taking place.

**BUILD** on the **STRENGTHS** of your parish.

Some questions to ask:

- ❖ How do existing ministries, committees, organizations already evangelize?
- ❖ What needs are currently not being addressed?
- ❖ What strategies are needed?
- ❖ How might we become a more evangelizing parish?
- ❖ How can we widen the space of our tent? Who can we include in whatever is taking place in the parish?

# CREATING A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PARISH

## PROPERTIES WELL MAINTAINED:

- ❖ Do they convey a sense of pride and care?
- ❖ Mowed grass, hedges trimmed, flowerbeds weeded.
- ❖ Sidewalks and stairs swept, cracks repaired on a regular basis
- ❖ Well lit
- ❖ Entrance and exit signs
- ❖ Sufficient parking for handicapped, well marked

## FACILITIES:

- ❖ Are entrance doors obvious? (church, offices, school, meeting hall, etc) Or does one have to tour the grounds to find it?
- ❖ Directional signs for offices, rest rooms, space for various functions
- ❖ Clean and neat environment
- ❖ Handicap accessibility: ramps, hearing devices, large print, etc

## SIGNAGE:

- ❖ Design
- ❖ Strategically located, not hidden by poles, bushes, etc
- ❖ Does it carry useful, significant information or merely state our existence? (Mass times missing)—times of services, phone number, pastor
- ❖ Well lighted
- ❖ Size of letters able to be read from street, positioned correctly, size and color match
- ❖ Does it invite: “The church of \_\_\_\_\_ invites you to join us.” “All are welcome.”
- ❖ Special event signs
- ❖ Road signs indicating church is nearby

## PRINTED MATERIALS:

- ❖ Letterheads, brochures, forms, leaflets, business cards, newsletters, bulletins and order of worship—neat and simple
- ❖ Avoid use of abbreviations for group names or activities.
- ❖ Use full name and phone number for contact persons.

## GREETERS:

- ❖ Delivers the message that our church is a welcoming place
- ❖ Names tags
- ❖ Perception to recognize newcomer/visitor (Body language, unfamiliar face, etc.)
- ❖ The more personal the approach, the more effective is the welcoming.
- ❖ Train them. Evaluate periodically. Adjust what's not working. Ask for feedback.

## NEW MEMBERS:

How do we orient, educate and incorporate new members and meet their spiritual and personal needs?

- ❖ New Member welcome committee
- ❖ Information packet or brochure: Staff phone numbers, educational/catechetical programs, activities and organizations, outreach, schedule of services...
- ❖ Orientation of new members, families

- ❖ Sponsor/host family or persons: companion for a reasonable period of time, keep regular contact, assist in needs
- ❖ Welcome event: semi-annual potluck, Sunday brunch, tour
- ❖ Photographs displayed on bulletin boards
- ❖ Welcome them in parish bulletin, acknowledge at liturgy
- ❖ Welcome letter from pastor and staff, welcome phone call or home visit by staff member or hospitality committee
- ❖ Registration: Include with intake information if there are any special needs—language issues, homebound, sacramental preparation needed
- ❖ Have a special prayer, blessing or ritual for new members at Liturgy
- ❖ Interests/skills inventory with follow-up
- ❖ Give new parishioners complementary tickets to fish fry, pancake breakfast, picnic, etc.
- ❖ CONFIDENTIALITY from registration or interviews
- ❖ Good tracking
- ❖ Variations on any of the above

**NEIGHBORHOOD:**

- ❖ Letters to new residents, welcoming them, inviting them (real estate transfers in newspaper; personal visit)
- ❖ Neighborhood garden open to all who want to participate
- ❖ Neighbors welcome neighbors
- ❖ Brochures given to local real estate agents, hotels, motels
- ❖ Ad in local newspaper

**OTHER:**

- ❖ Consider opportunities for awareness of cultural diversity.
- ❖ Awareness of opportunities to reach out to those who are hurt, alienated and inactive
- ❖ Sensitivity to those who may feel abandoned due to illness, divorce, incarceration of family member, etc
- ❖ Recognize college students who return to parish during holidays and summer break.
- ❖ Mailings to sick and shut-ins.
- ❖ Schedule special blessings for various groups and occasions: expectant mothers, parents, grandparents, couples preparing for marriage, volunteers, senior citizens, etc.
- ❖ Use of inclusive language
- ❖ Mother's day prayer breakfast—invite all from neighborhood to bring their mother
- ❖ Prayer ministry
- ❖ Book of intentions
- ❖ Welcome cards in pews
- ❖ Display brochures at all public events the parish/congregation sponsors
- ❖ Attractive church racks for books and brochures, welcoming and informative literature
- ❖ Guest book for visitors
- ❖ A way to recognize recently deceased—photo on bulletin board, names inscribed in a “book of the dead”

**OUTREACH:** Awareness and response to global and local needs/issues

Diocese of Cleveland – Office of Evangelization  
 Sr. Margaret Mach, SC, Director

## WELCOMING IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

*God is love. God gives His love to each one of us. As God loves us, He calls us to love one another. This Divine Love flows through the heart of the faithful steward to love others. –The Pillars of Parish Stewardship*

### Background

When hospitality permeates the whole of parish life, the parish becomes a welcoming community. Hospitality will then naturally extend to those beyond parish boundaries through social action and reaching out to those who feel alienated, marginal and unwelcome. Ultimately, hospitality and mutual respect are catalysts for the conversion and transformation of our culture and global society.

Parishes can develop strategies for extending a welcome to new neighbors within the parish boundaries, whether they are Catholic or not. What a wonderful expression of hospitality this can be for those who have been uprooted from the familiar and find themselves in a new geographic location that is unfamiliar. With every move, the connection between the family and a believing community grows more precarious. Sociologists and statisticians rank “moving to another town” as one of the major reasons people are not involved in a church today.

### Welcoming Strategies

Listed below are a variety of ways to welcome newcomers into your community:

- Neighborhood Watch
  - Before launching this strategy, consider providing formation to your parishioners to help them understand the important role they play in welcoming.
  - Request parishioners to watch when someone is buying or selling a house or vacating or renting an apartment.
  - Provide welcome packets that parishioners can obtain at the back of church or from the parish office. With these packets they can approach new residents with a note of welcome and begin forming a relationship with them. The packet serves as a means or reason to visit a new neighbor, to welcome the neighbor in the name of the parish, to let them know, whatever their religious background, they are welcome at the parish. They can be invited to “come and see.”

## Welcoming Strategies, continued:

- Items for the packet may include
  - general brochure about the parish
  - information about the school or religious education program
  - booklet about the city or neighborhood
  - list of convenience and/or emergency numbers
  - listing of local churches and synagogues
  - recent parish bulletin and/or newsletter
  - a simple gift or memento (See “Welcome Gift” section of this manual for ideas)
- Provide parish brochures to local real estate agents, hotels, motels, other public places such as doctors’ offices, and at public events
- Run an ad periodically in the local newspaper
- Send a “welcome post card” from the parish. Addresses can be obtained by accessing public records of property taxes

## Other Strategies of Hospitality

In addition to welcoming newcomers, longstanding neighbors can be made to feel welcome by taking some of the following steps:

- Maintain a neighborhood garden, open to all who want to participate
- Hold an Open House in the neighborhood, providing refreshments
- Distribute an item such as those listed below to target neighborhoods, as a gift of hospitality from the parish:
  - seed packets in the spring
  - magnet with basic parish information
  - tickets to a pancake breakfast or family movie night in the school gym
- Extend open invitations to the community for special worship events that can be designed with an ecumenical flavor such as:
  - Advent or Lent service
  - prayer for peace
  - prayer service to recognize a community event or time of need

## **Welcoming Strategies, continued:**

### **Results of these Efforts**

Efforts of welcoming and hospitality will do the following:

- Give Catholic families moving into the neighborhood a point of reference for the parish
- Give witness that the parish is concerned and cares about people in the neighborhood
- Allow people who are making transitions to ask questions and begin a conversation with representatives of the parish
- Instill and deepen a welcoming dimension for the parish

Extracted from:

***All Are Welcome: A Manual for Parish Hospitality***

Diocese of Cleveland

Office of Evangelization

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