



PARISH EVANGELIZATION

Where to Begin?

A GUIDE FOR STARTING AND MAINTAINING A FRUITFUL
MINISTRY OF EVANGELIZATION IN YOUR PARISH



OFFICE FOR THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

Parish Evangelization: Where to Begin?

“The first word, the true initiative, the true activity comes from God and only by inserting ourselves in to the divine initiative, only by begging this divine initiative, will we too be able to become — with him and in him — evangelizers”

~Pope Benedict XVI

What follows is an outline of the general stages in the development of a strong and fruitful evangelization ministry. These stages may overlap, ebb and flow, and are ultimately dependent upon one thing: a commitment by each person on your team to a regular prayer life, regular reception of the sacraments, and steady growth in a life of conversion and personal friendship with Jesus Christ in the heart of the Catholic Church.

For more information or support throughout this process, please contact:

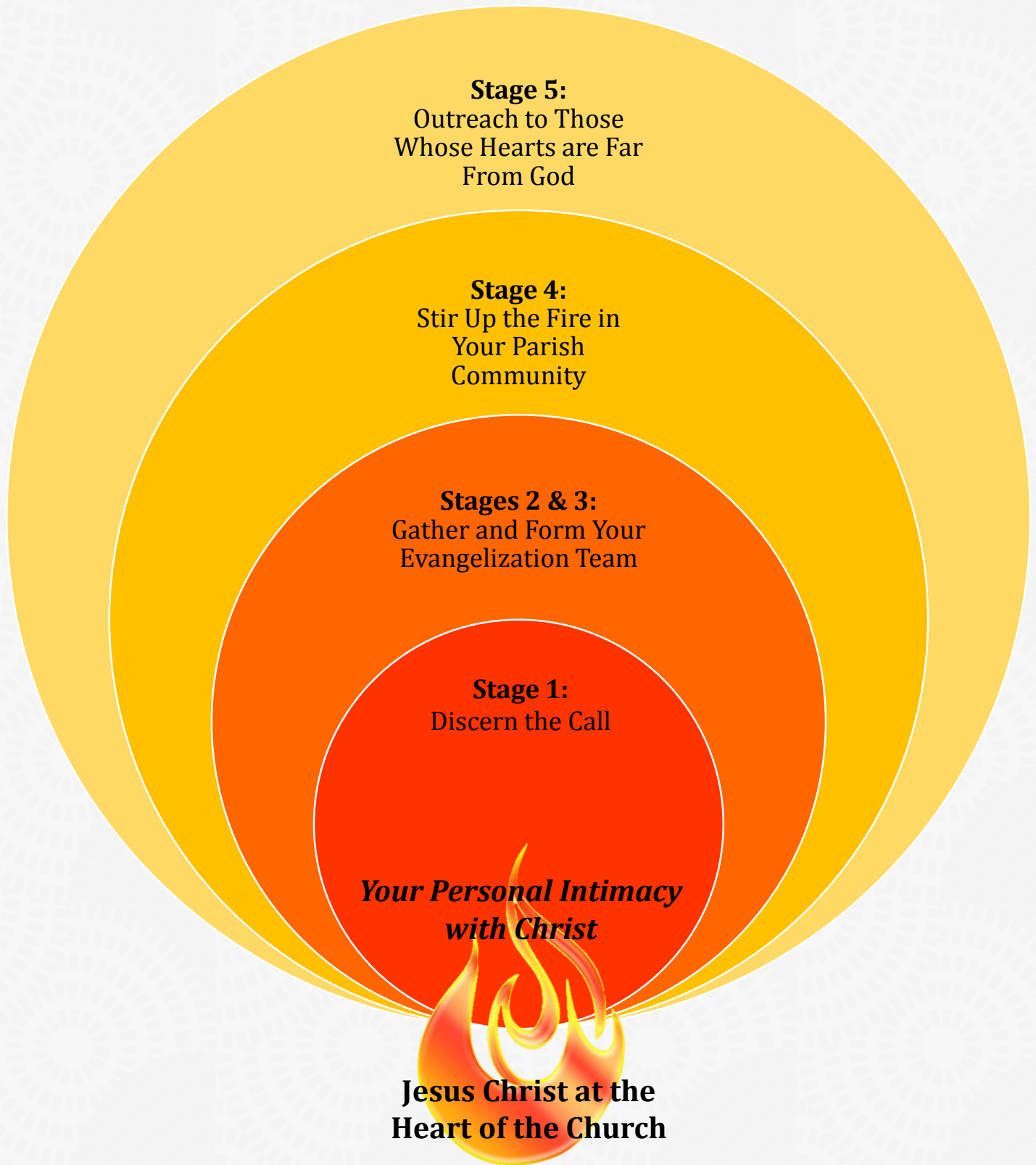
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Remember! It is Jesus Himself who is the primary mover in all evangelization efforts. Your personal friendship with Him is what will fuel your ministry and provide you the light and direction you need. The same is true for each of your team members. This relationship with Christ is the furnace that heats your entire ministry. If this furnace of love goes cold, even the best plans in the world will not bear fruit.

What is the New Evangelization?

In 1983, Pope John Paul II first coined the term “new evangelization.” The new evangelization is a moment in the Church’s 2000-year-old mission of bringing Jesus Christ to the world. This mission of evangelization is “new” because the Church recognizes that the human race has entered a *new* time in history. Modern men and women live in a culture that is dramatically different from the traditionally Christian culture we have enjoyed in the West for centuries. Seeing this, the Church recognizes the need to enter a new period of engagement with the world, to learn how to bring Christ to this new situation in history. The Church, holding within herself the truth that God became man, suffered, died and rose from the dead in order to bring the human person to his final fulfillment and happiness in God, realizes that she must forge new ways of bringing this perennial truth to the men and women of today. The new evangelization is not a call to bring a new *truth*, as if we are changing what we believe. Rather, it is a call to share the unchanging truth of Jesus Christ with “new ardor, new methods and new expression,” so that Jesus Christ and his supreme love can be accessed by all.

Stage 1: Discern the call

- Spend time with your pastor learning what his vision is for evangelization in your parish.
- Spend time studying the Church’s teachings on evangelization.
- Spend ample time in prayer discerning the Lord’s will for your evangelization ministry in light of your pastor’s vision, your own vocation and the Church’s teachings.

Stage 2: Gather your team

- Pray about who of the members of your parish would serve well on an evangelization team, asking the Holy Spirit to show you, and receiving input from your pastor and other parish leaders.
- *Who should be on your team?*
 - The spiritual health of your team is essential to the fruitfulness of your work. Evangelization team members should be living as faithful and exemplary Catholics, exercising a regular prayer life, practicing regular Confession and Mass and following the teachings of the Church.
 - A good team will be a mix of people, representing the many dimensions of your parish, ideally:
 - members of other parish committees
 - “new” people who have not regularly served on parish committees
 - young and old, married, single, consecrated, and representatives of the different cultures that make up your parish
- Gather a team of intercessors who will serve the work of evangelization in your parish through the offering of prayer and sacrifice.
 - Your sick or homebound parishioners are a rich source of prayer and sacrifice for your ministry. Ask them to serve in this way!
 - Other potential intercessors include: Rosary group, Eucharistic adorers, Charismatic prayer groups, Catholics in your local nursing home, etc...
 - For information and materials for starting an Intercessory Prayer Partnership, visit phillyevang.org/ipp.

Stage 3: Discernment, Prayer, and Formation as a Team

- Spend many months, even a year or more, meeting as a team to pray together, asking the Lord to transform each member of the team and show you His plan for evangelization in your parish. Consider consecrating yourselves and your ministry to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary.
- Seek out formation in mature Christian discipleship so that each team member is rooted in a personal relationship with Jesus through regular prayer and the sacraments. Examples of ministries that do this well are:
 - *Evangelical Catholic* (evangelicalcatholic.org)
 - *Parish Missionary Disciples* (Catholic Leadership Institute)
 - *Catholic Christian Outreach* (cco.ca)
 - *ChristLife Evangelization Ministry* (christlife.org)
 - *FOCUS* (Fellowship of Catholic University Students)
- Study and discuss the Church's vision for the new evangelization. Here are some foundational texts you might consider:
 - *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI
 - *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope St. John Paul II
 - *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis
 - *Disciples Called to Witness*, USCCB
- Here are some other great ways to form your team in the fundamentals of evangelization:
 - *Forming Intentional Disciples*, Sherry Weddell, book and study guide by Our Sunday Visitor
 - *Relit: The Heart of Evangelization*, Ministry23, video series (relittraining.com)

Stage 4: Stir Up the Flame in your Parish Community

- Work with the priests, deacons, religious and lay leaders of your parish to begin to cultivate an evangelizing spirit in your parish.
 - *This will require intentionally molding the parish culture through homilies, evangelization events and speakers, bulletin articles, the Universal Prayer, posters, videos etc...to communicate to the parish that the "business as usual" mentality must be replaced with a commitment to respond to the mission of evangelization*
- Create opportunities for the members of your parish to encounter the living Christ more deeply through the sacraments, Scripture, and a mature prayer life. Offer retreats, formation programs, small group discussions and other transformational experiences that root your parish community deeply in the person of Jesus Christ and that help them develop strong community bonds.
- Infuse every meeting at the parish with prayer and the call to conversion in Christ.
- Work with parish ministry leaders to infuse all parish ministries with an evangelizing spirit.
 - *The Office for the New Evangelization offers an Introduction to the New Evangelization presentation that can be used as a workshop for parish ministry leaders and/or staff. To learn more about this presentation, visit phillyevang.org/teams.*
- You pastor might consider publicly commissioning your evangelization team at Mass so that the entire parish community is aware of your parish's plans and commitment to evangelization.

Stage 5: Outreach

- If your team has prayerfully devoted time to each of these stages, the impulse to begin outreach to people who are far from God will begin to grow and take shape. You will begin to have a sense of the specific ways that the Lord wishes you to begin reaching out.
- There are many tools available to help you with your outreach. There are also many groups who can come to parishes to help get outreach started. Here are only a few examples:
 - Introducing people to Jesus Christ:
 - *Evangelical Catholic evangelizing small groups* (evangelicalcatholic.org)
 - *Discovering Christ course* (christlife.org)
 - *Christ Renews His Parish retreats* (dynamiccatholic.com/crhp)
 - *FOCUS Crux Bible Study* (focusoncampus.org/content/the-crux)
 - *Catholic Christian Outreach Discovery series* (cco.ca)
 - Door-to-door home visitation:
 - *Parish Visitors of Mary Immaculate* (parishvisitorsisters.org)
 - *Legion of Mary*
 - Street evangelization: *St. Paul Street Evangelization* (streetevangelization.com)
 - For a longer list of evangelization ministries and resources available, visit phillyevang.org.

Keep in Mind...

- ❖ Take time for each of these stages. Patience is an essential virtue in this process. Avoid looking for a “quick fix” solution.
- ❖ Steep this process and the ministry itself in constant prayer. Effective evangelization is the fruit of personal intimacy with Jesus Christ and communion in his Church. No program or technique can serve as a substitute for this foundation.

“Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things on the condition that you believe much more in His love than in your own weakness.”

~St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta



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