



Evangelization 101:

Overflow

“The apostle is a chalice full to the brim with the life of Jesus,
and his overflow pours itself out upon souls.”

~*Soul of the Apostolate*

The Church’s basic definition of evangelization is as follows: the communication of the Good News of Jesus Christ to others. And this is true! However, in a world saturated by incessant communication, we can sometimes take a superficial view of what we mean by “communicating the Gospel.” We can make the mistake of thinking that evangelization means simply that we need to talk about Jesus more. And while it most certainly *does* involve talking about Him more, evangelization doesn’t begin here.

In the mind of the Church, the “communication of the Gospel” has its reference point first in our own communication with Jesus himself. It is not first an *outward* movement, but an *inward* one. Only when we are in regular and consistent communication (read, “*communion*”) with Jesus through prayer are we capable of communicating Him to other people. It is not enough for us to know a lot about our Catholic Faith and then explain it to others. Deeper and more important is the relationship of intimacy that we have with the person of Jesus Christ. As this relationship with Him grows in us, we become “filled with Christ” to the point that it begins to overflow within us because it can’t be contained. *Evangelization is that overflow.*

Understood in this way, evangelization is the most natural thing in the world. It is simply the welling up and spilling over of our own abiding friendship with the person of Jesus Christ.

As baptized Catholics, we have the inescapable call to labor with Christ for the salvation of souls. No one is exempt from this mission. But our first task is not to look outward, it is to look inward. We must ask ourselves, “How is my prayer life? Do I experience intimacy with Jesus Christ on a regular basis?” In a highly action-oriented world, we can sometimes think that these questions about prayer are minor, that they are “nice” but don’t really impact our ability to do good works for God. But, in fact, the answer to these questions directly determines whether or not we will actually be serving God at all in our actions. The great spiritual masters tell us: we are only fruitful in proportion to the intensity of our prayer life.

So, if we want to bring people back to the Faith and help them find God, our very first task is to do the hard work of developing a regular and consistent spiritual life and to root out those things that are preventing it. It is very easy to talk about God and it is very easy to enact initiatives that use all the right discipleship language. But it is a whole other thing to do the necessary interior work in our souls to truly commune with Jesus in such a way that His life within us overflows to others. In the words of the great spiritual writer, Fr. Jean-Baptist Chautard, O.C.S.O.,

But as for Satan, he, on the contrary, does not hesitate to encourage a purely superficial success, if he can by this success prevent the apostle from making progress in the interior life: so clearly does his rage guess what it is Our Lord values most highly. To get rid of a diamond, he is quite willing to allow us a few sapphires. (Soul of the Apostolate)

~Meghan Cokeley, Director, Office for the New Evangelization, Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Suggested resources to help you grow in your spiritual life:

- [Discerning Hearts podcasts](#)
- [The Avila Institute](#)
- [SpiritualDirection.com](#)