

ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA



*Office for the New Evangelization*

Archdiocese of Philadelphia

MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP

# *Where to Begin?*

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

*“The first word, the true initiative, the true activity comes from God, and only by inserting ourselves into 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

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# Welcome!

What follows is an outline of the general stages in the development of a strong and fruitful evangelization ministry, which serves in your parish as a furnace for the formation of missionary disciples. These stages may overlap, ebb and flow, and are ultimately dependent upon one thing: a commitment by each leader 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 us:**

Meghan Cokeley  
Director, Office for the New Evangelization  
215-587-5630 · [mcokeley@archphila.org](mailto:mcokeley@archphila.org)

Paola Herrera  
Associate Director, Office for the New Evangelization  
215-320-8065 · [pherrera@archphila.org](mailto:pherrera@archphila.org)

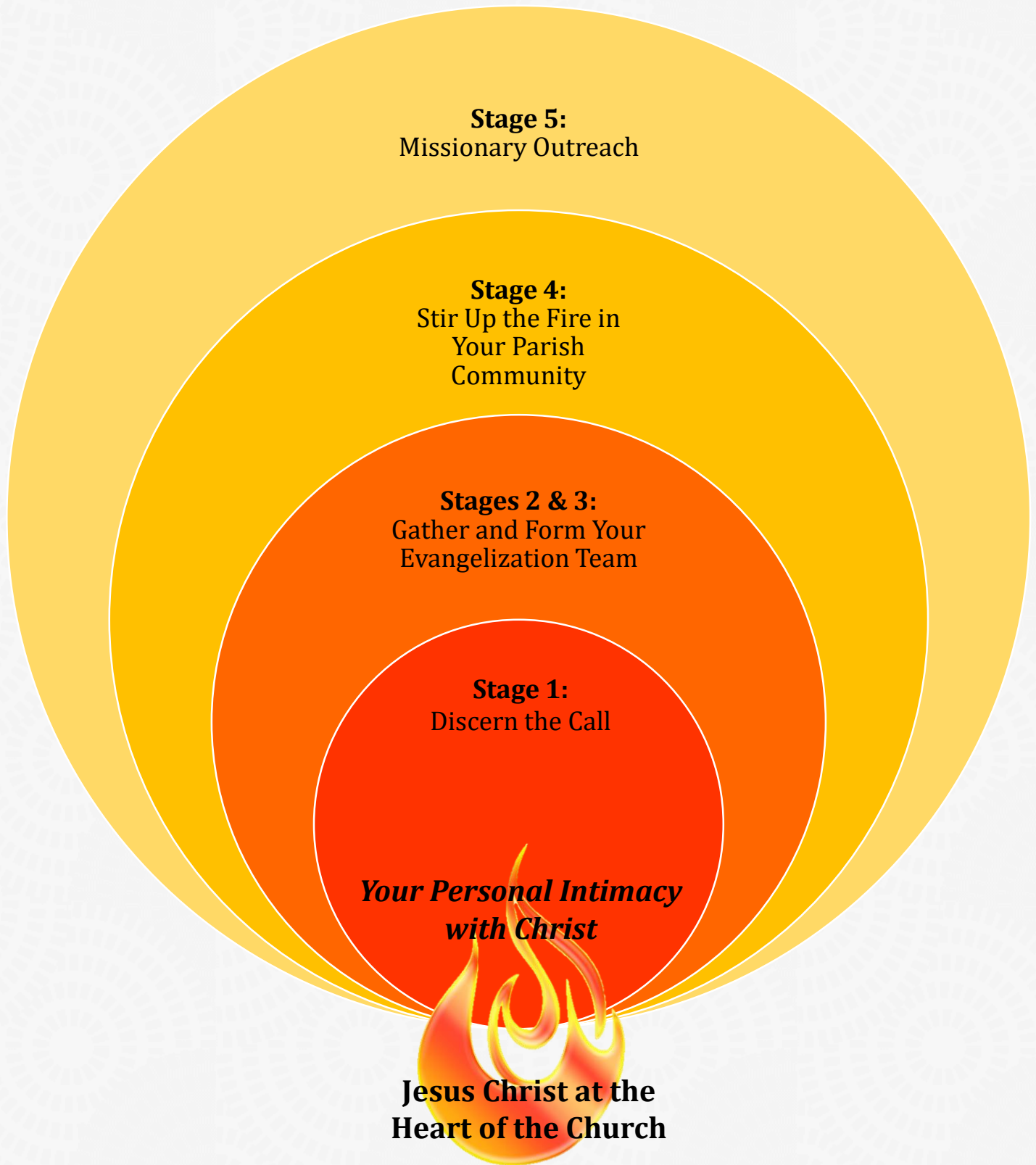
Gina Mesko  
CCO Discipleship Coordinator, Office for the New Evangelization  
484-410-5756 · [gmesko@archphila.org](mailto:gmesko@archphila.org)

Website: [phillyevang.org](http://phillyevang.org)

*"The Church today ought to take a giant step forward in her evangelization effort, and enter into a new stage of history in her missionary dynamism.*

*–Pope St. John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* 35*

# *Begin at the Center and Move Outward*



**The Center, Jesus Christ at the Heart of the Church:** 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.



# Missionary Disciples and 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, given to her by Jesus Christ, to “go, make disciples.” We call this moment “new” because the Church recognizes that the human race has entered a *new* time in history. We live in a world that is dramatically different from the traditionally Christian culture we have enjoyed in the West for centuries. In response, the Church, and each parish, must discern ways to bring the perennial truth of the Gospel to the men and women of today. To do this, every parish needs to build a critical mass of “missionary disciples,” that is, Catholics who are on fire with love for Jesus Christ, mature in their discipleship and equipped to go out on mission to draw others into the transformative love of Jesus that awaits them in the heart of the Church. It is ever more urgent that the parish *becomes a center for the formation of missionary disciples*, offering parishioners a path by which they can fall in love with Jesus, learn to follow him and develop skills for seeking out the lost. The stages below are meant to serve as a guide to help you launch a movement like this in your community.

## 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 missionary discipleship and evangelization. For a list of important Church teachings, visit [phillyevang.org/resources](http://phillyevang.org/resources).
- Spend ample time in prayer discerning the Lord’s will for you and this 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. The best evangelization ministries in the country recommend that you use the acronym F.A.C.T. for the qualities to look for in a team member:
    - **Faithful:** goes to Mass and Confession regularly, has a steady prayer life, believes in and strives to live the teachings of the Church
    - **Available:** has time to give to this ministry
    - **Contagious:** joyful in their faith and relates well with others
    - **Teachable:** has a docile heart, is willing to learn new things and take correction
  - A good team will be a mix of people, representing the many dimensions of your parish: members of other parish committees, “new” people who have not regularly served in parish ministry, young and old, married, single, consecrated, and representatives of the different cultures and languages groups that make up your parish
- **Establish your prayer support:** 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](http://phillyevang.org/ipp).

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

- Ask team members to watch the video “What Should Parish Evangelization Look Like?” hosted by the Office for the New Evangelization. This video can be found at [phillyevang.org/disciples](http://phillyevang.org/disciples).
- 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. Additionally, seek out formation in the skills of a missionary disciple. A list of ministries and resources to help you do this can be found at [phillyevang.org/disciples](http://phillyevang.org/disciples).
- Study and discuss the Church’s vision for the missionary discipleship and evangelization. Here are some foundational texts to consider: *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI ; *Redemptoris Missio*, Pope St. John Paul II ; *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis; *Disciples Called to Witness*, USCCB

### Stage 4: Stir Up the Flame in your Parish Community

- **Saturate the parish culture:** Work with the priests, deacons, religious and lay leaders of your parish to begin to generate a culture of missionary discipleship in your parish.
  - This will require intentionally molding the parish mindset through homilies, events and speakers, bulletin articles, the Universal Prayer, posters, videos, etc...to communicate to the parish that each person is called to become a missionary disciple.
  - 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 this mission.
  - Work with parish ministry leaders to infuse all parish ministries with the mindset of missionary discipleship. *The Office for the New Evangelization offers a workshop called “Ignite Your Ministry” that can assist you with this. For more information, contact us.*
- **Offer parishioners opportunities for growth in their missionary discipleship:**
  - **Deepening in Discipleship:** 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 and that help them develop strong community bonds.
  - **Growing in Mission:** Offer parishioners opportunities to learn and practice the skills of missionary discipleship such as: sharing your personal testimony, sharing the kerygma, how to listen and understand another person’s spiritual journey, one-on-one accompaniment, how to pray with someone, etc...
  - Resources that can help you offer these opportunities can be found at: [phillyevang.org/disciples](http://phillyevang.org/disciples).

*“Evangelization is the grace and vocation proper to the Church.  
She exists in order to evangelize.”*

-Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

## Stage 5: Missionary Outreach

- If your team has prayerfully devoted time to each of these stages, the impulse to begin outreach to the peripheries 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 missionary outreach. There are also many groups who can come to your parish to help you get started. A full list of available ministries can be found at [phillyevang.org/disciples](http://phillyevang.org/disciples).

### Keep in Mind...

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Take time for each of these stages. Patience is an important virtue in this process. Avoid looking for a “quick fix” solution.
- ❖ “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. Teresa of Calcutta
- ❖ We are here to support you in this process!

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215-587-5630 · [mcokeley@archphila.org](mailto:mcokeley@archphila.org)

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484-410-5756 · [gmesko@archphila.org](mailto:gmesko@archphila.org)

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*“I dream of a ‘missionary option,’ that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world...”*

-Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 27