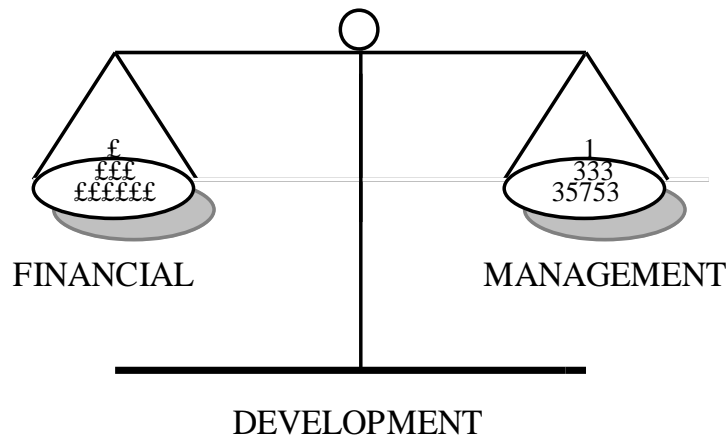


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EVANGELISATION BRINGING CHRIST TO OTHERS



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EVANGELISATION

BRINGING CHRIST TO OTHERS

THE CALL

Every baptised Christian has a duty to bring others into a fuller understanding of the Gospel and into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not an optional extra and it should be a joyful experience. This paper looks at some of the reasons to share the Goodnews of Jesus Christ and looks at practical ways of doing it.

Jesus

Tom Forrest the Catholic Priest who first suggested to the Pope that the 1990's should be the decade of Evangelisation observed that the word "go" appears 1514 times in the Bible; 233 times in the New Testament.

Matthew 10:6 "Go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel..."

Matthew 28: 19 "Go ... make disciples of all nations"

The Catechism

"To teach in order to lead others to faith is the task of every preacher and of each believer" (St. Thomas Aquinas quoted in The Catechism of the Catholic Church 904).

Pope Paul VI

"The essential mission of the Church is to evangelise all people" (Evangelisation in the Modern World 14).

Pope John Paul II

"Sometimes even Catholics have lost or have never had the chance to experience Christ personally, not as a mere value but as the Living Lord" (1993).

Cardinal Hume

I'm very conscious that there are many baptised Catholics who no longer practise their faith, who may even feel rejected by the Church. I wish to say to those who are distanced from the Church "come back" and to the rest of us "make them welcome".

Cardinal Ratzinger

Everyone needs the Gospel.....we are obliged to look for new ways of bringing the Gospel to all.

WE NEED TO APPROACH THEM

In ACTS 8:26-40 Philip runs up in response to God's command and he asks "Do you understand what you are reading?" The reply is "How could I, unless I have someone to guide me?" So he urged Philip to get in and sit by his side. In EZEKIEL 33:1-9 The Watchman is told to warn the people of danger. If he fails to do so "I will hold the watchman responsible for his death." Says the Lord.

Some people may walk in and ask to join the Church, thanks be to God; but the majority need to be invited and to do that we have to go to them.

WE MUST CONSIDER THEIR SITUATION

WHERE ARE THEY?

Physically so we can go to them at the Pub, Supermarket, Workplace, etc. We can't just sit in the church bemoaning the fact that no-one else is joining us. We go to Church to receive the Sacraments precisely to give us the strength to go out and preach the Good News. Jesus went to people, we must do the same.

Spiritually so we can speak their language and be understood. "Are you saved?" is not a good opening line. Nor is "Do you know God loves you?" or "Why don't you go to Church?" "Have you ever been to a Church?" might be safest.

WHEN TO APPROACH?

For formal invitations you will know what times and places are likely to be attractive. However, we all lead such busy lives that you may have to "fit in" with their needs. There are times to talk to people about God: Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, Work and Family occasions, etc. But if you always wait for the right moment you will miss out. Be prepared to be guided by the Holy Spirit and let people know you are a committed Catholic so they can approach you.

Seek out opportunities and be prepared to lead conversations. "I went to a really lovely Mass on Sunday" or "I am looking forward to Easter Sunday Mass" can provoke a question and you need to be prepared to follow up. Have a 30 second testimony ready for the unexpected occasion. Michelle Moran's Pass it on Book or Video will give you some ideas.

YOU MAY NEED OTHERS TO HELP

Do not be surprised by an overwhelming response. One lady spoke after Mass and asked if anyone wanted to do an Alpha course. She was intending to run it in her house. She got 60 people and had to hire the local school hall.

In LUKE 5:7 the nets were so full that they had to ask others to "come and help".

In EXODUS 18 Moses was told "You can't do it all yourself".

God has already decided to use us "His unworthy servants". He may want us to involve others for our benefit, for theirs and for the good of His Kingdom.

YOU NEED TO CONSIDER OBJECTIVES

- Is it to get people interested?
- To get them to talk to you?
- To get them to join a Course or a House Group?
- To get them to rediscover the Sacraments?

Don't over plan and make it artificial but do make sure you have considered what to do next. Set sensible goals and learn as you go.

WE WILL FAIL.....(SOMETIMES)

The Parable of the Sower shows that it is not all a success. Even Jesus was rejected at times. But the same Parable shows the possibilities available. As Mother Teresa said "We are called to be faithful, not successful."

You may never know what the seed you have planted may sprout into or when. The Gideons have numerous testimonies of people who have had God enter their lives from just finding a Bible in their hotel bedroom. Very often God uses what we consider failure to bring about triumph. Consider the Cross! It did not look good at Calvary.

Beware of "the temptation of impatience, the temptation of immediately finding the great success, in finding large numbers.....the parable of the mustard seed is relevant.....In the history of Salvation it is always Good Friday and Easter Sunday at the same time." (Cardinal Ratzinger).

At some stage evangelisation involves talking to people. Consider some of the following categories of those no longer "practising". Feel free to add your own:

- Spouses of churchgoers – Men, Women
- Parents of Children at Catholic Schools – Primary, Secondary
- Submarine Catholics - who only appear at Christmas and Easter
- Submarine Catholics - who only appear for Hatches, Matches, and Despatches
- Work Colleagues
- Friends
- Neighbours
- Teenagers/Students
- Newcomers to your area
- Relations of people you know
- Unknown Catholics
- "Chance" acquaintances

For the chosen group consider:

How they could be approached? Who could approach them? What would the objective be?

DEALING WITH RESPONSES

In many circumstances the response will depend on:

The Question and The way it is put

Market researchers will frequently deliberately ensure their first question will elicit the answer yes e.g. Do you eat food? Do you work near here?

Our approach must be guided by a clear understanding of our objectives. You and your team need to consider what the ideal outcome is from your activity. Is it:

A better understanding of the Love of God

More people at Mass

More involvement in Church Social activities

Attendance at Church Talks

Attendance at Bible Study/Prayer Groups

Or a stage on the way to one of these? Consider how you will monitor “success”.

We must be guided by the Holy Spirit but that does not absolve us from the need to plan. If we want to build a tower should we not plan how to do it? (Luke 14:28)

There are basically three types of responses to an approach:

Positive Yes...

Negative No...

Maybe Well...

None of them are likely to be one word so we need to be prepared to listen. You cannot plan to use only standard responses because people are rarely standard.

Sometimes the response will be positive We need to know how to follow it up, who to involve and how to ensure a welcome. The seventy-two returned with joy (Luke 10:17).

Sometimes the response will be negative We must be prepared to let “rich young men” go (Matthew 19:22) and to “shake the dust off our feet” if we are rebuffed (Luke 10:11).

Sometimes the maybe carries impediments some real, some not. We the Church (the Body of Christ) may have done things in the past which have repelled rather than attracted.

Some areas require further consideration. You may feel confident to deal with some objections “I can’t go to Mass, I never did my Confirmation” or “I can’t go Mass because I haven’t been for 10 years” can be dealt with lovingly and practically. Others may be beyond your knowledge.

In the work of reaching out to others it is inevitable that we will be asked questions we cannot answer and faced with situations we cannot deal with. In many situations the truth “I don’t know” may be all we can say as we silently pray for God to provide an answer. In some circumstances we may be able to say “I don’t know..... but I’ll pray about it”.

In reaching out to those who have become distanced from the Church, there may be more that can be done – but we may not be the people to do it. Bishop Patrick O'Donoghue has a helpful definition of an area where we may be best advised to refer people to others. “Those who find themselves in a situation where they feel unable to bring some aspect of their life into line with what they understand to be the teaching of the Church”.

To create an exhaustive list of possible situations is neither possible nor desirable. Our role is to love and not to judge. God is Holy, Just and Loving and we cannot say what is right for any individual. If it were that easy we would not need the Church. It is precisely because each generation has its own issues to face (slavery, abortion, genetic manipulation, etc.) that Christ instituted His Church to be an authority on Earth. Our role when faced with people in this category is:

1. To Listen

We may not agree with what they say – but as God’s children we all have our unique circumstances (“There but for the grace of God go I”.)

1. To consider who could help

The Parish Priest may be the appropriate person.... “Would you like me to ask the Parish Priest for you. Would you like me to come with you to see him? etc.

There may be some other obvious person or group... “Did you know there is an Association for Separated and Divorced Catholics?”... “Did you know that x in the Parish is in the same situation and is happy to tell you how they coped”...etc.

2. To Pray

In all cases prayer is essential. “Would you like me to pray for you?” can be a powerful Christian witness of our belief in an all-powerful, all loving God. Even if it seems inappropriate to say so we still have an obligation to pray for each other.

3. To Welcome and Walk with them

“Sharing their pain” may not be possible but all are welcome at Mass and even if they cannot receive Holy Communion with us, they can receive Christ through Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Even though you may refer the person to someone else you must not forget them. Welcome them back.

Remember that people often give responses which hide the true problem. “I can’t get to church because I haven’t got a car” may be a real reason or it may be hiding a fear of “going to Church”. Many people in today’s society are simply afraid of going into God’s House. We need not only to meet the obvious need... provide a lift... but also to meet the hidden need and go into Church with them. Whatever the response you receive your response must be prayer – of thankfulness, of sorrow or for guidance.

WELCOMING PEOPLE

Consider the following question: “Would you like to come to Mass with me?” When a group of 30 committed parish workers were asked to consider the likely response to that question from someone who had not been to Mass for some time the majority felt the answer would be “No”. We need to plan our questions in the light of our objectives. Every parish and every person is different. What is most likely to get the answer Yes in your area?

Content

We are having a coffee morning, party, meeting for a drink, would you like to come?

We are having a remembrance service, would you like to come?

We are having a bible study meeting? A talk onGod's Love/ Advent/Lent/wedding preparation/your child's Holy Communion/Confirmation, would you like to come?

We are having a carol service, would you like to come?

Would you like to learn more about the Catholic/Christian faith, we are showing a video?

Venue

We are having a prayer meeting, would you like to come to the Church?

Parish Hall? my house? the pub?

Consider the people you want to approach.

Where should you invite them? What should the content be?

What is the appropriate balance between prayer, praise, faith sharing, bible study, social?

Should this balance change over time? What will attract them?

ACCOMPANYING RETURNERS

“They will not come back if the Church is the same as when they left it..... that is why they left.” The “Church” is the Body of Christ – not the buildings or the clergy but all of us – involved or just in waiting. The Church is one Body and the hand and the eye do not fight. In fact the hand will sacrifice itself to protect the eye (Imagine a stone thrown at your head).

We may have to change our thoughts, our words and our deeds to welcome people back. We are all prodigal sons because we have all sinned. But unfortunately we are also too often the absent mother or the jealous elder brother. We need to be prepared to sacrifice the fatted calf and our years of what seems like unrewarded toil and unreservedly welcome our fellow Christians. However, we must also be like the forgiving father and be sensitive to the feelings of the elder brother in others.

We are not called to change the Gospel message even if we change the packaging (Inculturation as the General Directory of Catechesis puts it). We must remain faithful to the teaching authority of the Church. We must consider the sensitivities of those already involved in the church. Love is the key message. We should try to strike a balance between the need to change and the need to stay the same. To quote a biology textbook “any organism where the internal rate of change is slower than the rate of change in the environment, is doomed to die”. The Catholic Church has changed, particularly since Vatican II and it will continue to change. Our task, like that of any other generation is to do what we can in today's culture. Paragraph 25 of the General Directory of Catechesis states:

“In considering today’s religious situation, the Church is also obliged to take into account the extent to which Christians “have been shaped by the climate of secularism and ethical relativism” A prime category requiring examination is that of the “many people who have been baptised but lead lives entirely divorced from Christianity”. This in fact constitutes a mass of “non-practising Christians” even though in many hearts religious feeling has not been completely lost. Re-awakening these to the faith is a real challenge for the Church. Then there are “the simple people” who express themselves, at times with sincere religious feeling and deep-rooted “popular devotion”. They possess a certain faith, “but know little even of its fundamental principles”. There are, moreover, numerous other Christians, often highly educated, whose religious formation amounts solely to that which they received in childhood. These also need to re-examine and develop their faith “from a different standpoint”.”

We need to consider what in our Church life is integral to our faith and what is not. To do so we need to ask for and listen to, our Mother Church through its Bishops and Priests. Change though essential can be disastrous if too fast. We must ask for discernment and wisdom to carry out the necessary work.

CHANGE

In Catholic Parishes the Parish Priest has ultimate responsibility for the pastoral care of the whole parish. Since any change may have impacts which are not beneficial to all it is **ESSENTIAL** that all proposed changes be discussed with the Parish Priest who has the responsibility for approving them or rejecting them. Parishioners have a duty to help the Parish Priest by identifying benefits and risks and may also be involved in implementation but they must always act within the authority of the Church. To do otherwise is divisive.

Jesus prayed for Unity. We must act in love to ensure we do not cause division, even if we have to sacrifice our own wishes for the good of others. In order to welcome back those who have become distanced it may be useful to consider changes or activities which will make us, as the Church, more welcoming.

Consider simple activities e.g. having a list of Parish contact names, phone numbers and Mass times to give the newcomers, and concentrate on areas which are unlikely to be divisive. As the Catholic Church we embrace everyone and although, being human, we will never satisfy everyone, we can at least be mindful of their needs.

Do not forget to organise Prayer Support. In particular involve the elderly or the Housebound in this area. Tell them what you are doing and ask for their prayers. Print prayer cards to remind people. **AND DON'T FORGET TO PRAY YOURSELF** as individuals, as a team and as a Parish. “Speaking about God and speaking with God must always go together.” (Cardinal Ratzinger)

For your Parish consider how you could make people feel welcome or remove things which are less welcoming. List at least three things – note the potential benefits and the risks and any costs including time.

ACTION PLANNING

Action planning is a Business Activity and there is no reason why the workers in God's Kingdom should not use business techniques. To fail to do so would be burying our talent.

Set your objectives

These should be:

- | | | |
|------------|---|---|
| Specific | - | In few words |
| Measurable | - | Use numbers and check against them |
| Achievable | - | Today one phone call (tomorrow the World) |
| Relevant | - | Inputs or Outputs? |
| Timely | - | Set dates |

You will need to involve others. You are failing in your task if you do not. All Christians are part of Christ's Body and we therefore must ensure that all parts get the opportunity for exercising their gifts. Recent Church pronouncements are very clear that for too long the Church has been like a football match (22,000 people desperately in need of exercise, watching 22 people who are desperately in need of a rest) even if Christifideles Laici does not put it in quite those terms.

Write the objectives down.

Consider Your needs and Constraints

Why What is our objective? Is what we are planning helping or hindering achievement?

Who - What people need to be involved – Moses had to be told to delegate (Exodus 13:18). Your role may be organisation, prayer, pastor, teacher or evangeliser – we all have different gifts (1 Corinthians 12).

What -What exactly are we planning?

When Are our timescales feasible?

Where Do we need venues? Are they available? Book now

How Then becomes obvious.

Do not forget to pray, nor that God is capable of more than we can imagine. At times we will need to do no more than what Jesus tells us. He said "Come" and Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the stormy waters (Matthew 14:29)

However, Jesus never said it would be easy and we must be prepared for difficulties, distractions and criticisms from both friends and foes. The Good News is that in most countries, but not all, we are unlikely to be imprisoned, flogged or crucified.

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He has worked as a Financial Controller and Company Secretary in the Finance industry and as a Director of Finance and Administration in the Computer Services industry. Since 1990 he has conducted management development programmes for over forty major organisations including Arla Foods, Blue Circle, BP, CSC Computer Sciences, Conoco, Ernst & Young, Lloyds Bowmaker, Royal Mail, Unilever and Zeneca. He also runs programmes for the Leadership Foundation and the management teams at a number of Universities. International training experience includes work in Belgium and Holland for CSC, in Denmark, Kenya and the Czech Republic for Unilever, in Holland and the US for Zeneca, in Dubai for Al Atheer, in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia for Cable & Wireless.

He specialises in programmes in financial management for both tactical and strategic decision making. In addition he has run courses in acquisition evaluation (The Economist, Eversheds, Blue Circle and Hays Chemicals) and in post-acquisition management (Unilever). All training is specifically tailored to the needs of the organisation with the emphasis on practical applications to enhance profitability and cashflow. He has developed material for delivery by in-house personnel (Royal Mail, Lloyds Bowmaker and Conoco), computer based training packages (The Post Office, Unilever and BP), and post course reinforcement self-study workbooks (CSC and Zeneca). He has also produced a training video on Cashflow Management.

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In addition to his Diaconal work in the Church, he has held a number of voluntary positions including University, College and School Governor, Hospice Treasurer and Trustee of various charitable institutions. He continues to provide ad hoc commercial advice to several other charitable organisations. He has been married for over 35 years and has one daughter and three granddaughters.

This series of papers is designed to help managers by providing a basic understanding of key financial concepts to assist them in their work. It is provided at no cost since this knowledge is a Gift from God and thus to be shared (Matthew 10:8).