

Missio Nostra "OUR MISSION"

LIVING OUT
THE GREAT COMMISSION
OF JESUS CHRIST



Diocesan Guide for Evangelization
Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman, III
Bishop of Biloxi



VOCATION AND DISCIPLESHIP PRAYER

*Loving Father,
Your Son, Jesus Christ the High Priest,
has told us that the harvest is great
but the laborers are few.
We ask you now to send more laborers
into your vineyard.*

*Please touch with your Holy Spirit
the hearts of all those you are calling
to live a life of service in your church
as Priests, Deacons, Consecrated men and women,
dedicated married couples and
committed singles persons.*

*Help us all to follow Christ faithfully
and to answer the call to holiness and discipleship.
We ask this through your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
God forever and ever. Amen*





CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF BILOXI

*A welcoming family of GOD seeking to live faithfully,
love generously, and share the good news of Jesus Christ.*





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May 13, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Jesus established the Catholic Church to evangelize, and he commissions us to make disciples of all nations, to baptize them, to teach all he commands us, and to trust that he is with us always. Living out this Great Commission of Jesus is both personal and communal. Each of us is called personally not only to witness to our faith but also to accompany others in faith. Each of our parishes, families, schools, and ministries have the same mission, and it should be fostered each time the community comes together.

We as a Church have deep beliefs, traditions, and awe-inspiring rituals that have spanned the centuries. Part of the challenge for us as modern-day Catholics is how to reveal to the world our faith in and love of Jesus Christ and his presence with us. The secular culture not only discourages but is often hostile to those of faith. Our tradition of “wordless witness” is no longer effective in today’s world. The current culture in our parishes, families, schools, and ministries needs to shift to be effective in following the Great Commission of Jesus.

Many do not know how to share our faith with others. Each of us must begin by growing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Everyone, beginning with the leadership of our communities, needs to be trained to be disciple-makers who embrace the clear mission of Jesus to foster discipleship, accompaniment, and to form disciple-makers.

I believe our parishes, families, schools, and ministries can make this shift from maintenance to answering the Great Commission of Jesus. It will mean that we all, individually and as a Church, commit ourselves to this mission. The following pastoral message gives the groundwork for how we will make this shift together. Pope Saint Paul VI, Pope Saint





John Paul II, Pope Benedict, and Pope Francis, have all called us to follow Jesus' Great Commission. It is time for us to heed the call and "*make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28:19b-20a).

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Louis F. Kihneman, III
Bishop of Biloxi







THE GREAT COMMISSION OF JESUS

In the Diocese of Biloxi, we are focusing on following the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in Matthew's Gospel:

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, the worshiped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (28:16-20).

A "commission" is a responsibility that has been handed over and entrusted to us. **The reason we exist as a Church is to evangelize.** Embracing anew the Great Commission of Jesus needs to be a priority for each and every one of us in the Diocese of Biloxi. To evangelize is to welcome people into a relationship with God that will transform them completely inside and out. A disciple is someone who has had an encounter with Jesus Christ and has made a personal and conscious decision to give his or her entire life to God. Discipleship is choosing to make the eternal life of your neighbor, friend, family member, or stranger your mission. It is bringing people to God for the promise of salvation. We do this because we love God and we love our neighbor as Jesus instructed. If you love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, you will wholeheartedly desire to share that love with your neighbor. This is discipleship and evangelization. When asked which is the greatest Commandment, Jesus replied:

You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments (Matthew 22:37-40).

Pope Saint Paul VI, Pope Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict and Pope Francis have all taught and emphasized the responsibility and mission





each of us have as Catholics to follow the Great Commission of Jesus. Pope Saint Paul VI states,

[Evangelization] is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is, in fact, the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. **Thus it is the whole Church that receives the mission to evangelize, and the work of each individual member is important for the whole** (EN 14, 15).

In his encyclical *Mission of the Redeemer* Pope Saint John Paul II states,

Above all, there is a new awareness *that missionary activity is a matter for all Christians*, for all dioceses and parishes, Church institutions and associations. **No believer in Christ, no institution of the Church can avoid this supreme duty: to proclaim Christ to all peoples** (MR 2, 3). . . . [E]ntire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church, and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a “new evangelization” or a “re-evangelization” (33).

Pope Saint John Paul II also told a group of bishops at their ad limina meeting,

The new evangelization begins with the clear and emphatic proclamation of the gospel, which is addressed to everyone. At the same time, it is necessary to awaken in believers a full relationship with Christ, the only Savior. **Effective evangelization can only develop from a personal relationship with Jesus** (ALG 5).

Evangelization is the subject of Pope Francis’s first Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*. He states,

In virtue of their baptism, all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples (cf. Mt 28:19). All the baptized, whatever their position in the Church or their level of instruction in the faith, are agents of evangelization, and it would





be insufficient to envisage a plan of evangelization to be carried out by professionals while the rest of the faithful would simply be passive recipients. The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. **Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization** (EG 120).

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) plan, *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, states

[E]vangelization is what we are all about! Being involved in the story of salvation is what faith is all about! Evangelization is the essential mission of the Church. [W]e need to bring the Gospel of Jesus, in its fullness, to all the people of our land.

[E]vangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself. At its essence are the proclamation of salvation in Jesus Christ and the response of a person in faith, which are both works of the Spirit of God (8-10).

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. As a parish, family, school, or ministry, are we forming disciples?
2. As a parish, family, school, or ministry, are we baptizing all nations?
3. As a parish, family, school, or ministry, are we teaching all he commanded?
4. Do you believe He is with us always until the end of the age? Are you sharing his message?
5. What are some things your parish, family, school, or ministry is doing or could do to respond to the Great Commission of Jesus?
6. What are some things you personally are doing or could do to respond to the great commission of Jesus to evangelize and form disciples?





JESUS' CALL TO FAITH AND WITNESS

When Jesus called the Disciples to himself, he asked them specifically to follow him.

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him (Matthew 4:18-22).

Over the centuries, the Church has taken to heart the call of Jesus for us to be fishers of men. We have lived it out through teaching, preaching, and sanctifying. The call from Jesus to be fishers of men is true today. The kind of faith that Jesus calls us to is one of deep trust, but also of a wondrous power.



He said to them, "Because of your little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).

Jesus calls us into a deep love relationship, and we are called to bring others to him. As Catholic Christians, we are to be a people of prayer who are in an active relationship with God. We are also called to be a people of the Word of God, who read the Word of God daily, and who take the Word to heart so that it is expressed in our daily lives – the Word that is Jesus Christ.

We are called to proclaim Christ, the one anointed by God, to the world. Our Baptism calls us to live a life that witnesses to the Gospel, and we must also be able to explain and justify our faith in an explicit way. Saint Peter said:





Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear ... (1Peter 3:15-16a).

We as a Church have deep beliefs, traditions, and awe-inspiring rituals that have spanned the centuries. Part of the challenge for us as modern-day Catholics is how to reveal to the world our faith in and love of Jesus Christ and His presence with us. As individual Catholics, we tend to be quiet about the faith, concerned that we may make others feel awkward. We must be able to share the knowledge of Jesus Christ giving his life for us and the joy of experiencing his resurrection with those we meet. Without this kind of witness, those around us and the world will not have the opportunity to experience Jesus alive in us. As Catholic Christians, we celebrate and live the Sacraments of the Church, which are meant to be key moments of the faith, hope, and love of Jesus Christ that we share. Through the Sacraments, we open ourselves to the presence of God and his wondrous love for us in the outpouring of his Holy Spirit. Each of these sacramental moments helps us take to heart the words of St. John's Gospel:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life (John 3:16).

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How would you describe your relationship with Jesus up to this point in your life?
2. What are some events that have affected your relationship with Jesus in a positive way?
3. What are some events that have affected your relationship with Jesus in a negative way?
4. What are some things your parish, school, family, or ministry, is doing or could do to encourage or enable members to encounter Jesus and build a personal relationship?
5. How can we witness Jesus?





THE NEED FOR A SHIFT IN OUR PARISHES, FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND MINISTRIES

The shifts in culture of the past 10-20 years make it difficult to evangelize. Our inward view of ourselves and our faith tradition of “wordless witness” do not fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus and are not effective in a society where communications have become so prolific that we have become a voice in a very large crowd of voices. Today, the secular culture not only fails to support religious practice, but it is often hostile to religious practice. It is harder to make an impact with the younger generation. Although it may seem a cliché, there is truth in the phrase “our youth are our future.”

We struggle when we try to fit people into programs rather than having programs fit the mission of making disciples. We end up with a program that people feel they can get through or graduate from, rather than a lifelong mission to living as a disciple of Jesus. This might also be true for the way that we approach people who are preparing to receive the Sacraments. It is the reason why many of our young people leave the Church after receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation: They have the mistaken idea that they have graduated from Faith, when the reverse is actually true.



We must adapt as a Church to get the message of Jesus Christ, the Good News, out, and we must be intentional in making disciples, especially in our families. Our parishes, schools, and ministries need to support parents and families in their growth and development as disciples of Jesus. We can no longer depend on the evangelization of our children happening automatically. If we were to ask ourselves, as our children receive the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation, how many of them we would consider to be missionary disciples, our answer might be very few. The number of young people who leave the Church either during high school or right after graduation is staggering and sobering. It is critical for us to enable our parishes, families, schools, and ministries to move from maintenance to mission — by forming





intentional or missionary disciples who are themselves disciple-makers. There was a time when more than 50% of young people who wandered from Church after Confirmation returned when they married and started a family. This is generally no longer true. Over 85% of our youth leave the Church, and 75% of those who enter the Church through the RCIA process leave the Church after five years.

In many ways, we, as the Catholic Church, need to be trained on how to witness to our faith. In truth, most of us never learned how to tell our faith story in a way that invites others. We also have not learned how to accompany others in the Faith or how to communicate our love for Jesus Christ and his Church. We cannot lead others to Jesus until we ourselves have entered into a relationship with him, the foundation of which is prayer. Many Catholics do not realize that we can and should have a deep personal relationship with our Lord, which we can strengthen through Scripture and prayer. Every one of us, regardless of vocation, role in life, or ministry, is called to holiness and to growth in the Catholic faith. We cannot evangelize others unless we have been evangelized, and we cannot accompany others effectively unless we ourselves are disciples (SWJ 28). Once again, repeating Pope Saint John Paul II, “Effective evangelization can only develop from a personal relationship with Jesus” (ALG 5).

So that every Catholic may embrace a life of mission, the cultural paradigms in many of our parishes, families, schools, and ministries need to be transformed. The real goal for renewing parish, family, school, and ministry culture is bigger than we realize. It should extend to creating a cycle of fruitfulness that begins in our parishes, families, schools, and ministries and spreads beyond to the local community and to the whole world. The call to a culture of discipleship is much bigger than plugging people into ministries and promoting volunteerism. It means allowing space to invite in the Holy Spirit to use a person’s particular gifts and vision, giving them opportunities to feel the impetus, the push, of the Holy Spirit to go out and proclaim the Good News. (MM 115)

The question is, “Are we being effective, considering all the cultural and communication changes that have taken place?” This is why we need each of our parishes, schools, and ministries to take to heart the Great Commission of Jesus to make disciples, baptize all nations, teach





all he commanded us, and celebrate that he is with us always. To make disciples, we begin with people, not programs. Let's say someone who wants to pray better, live better, and serve better has decided to follow Jesus and is hungry to grow. When we are not there to support healthy growth, one of three things happens: Growth becomes unhealthy, growth stalls, or the budding disciple finds someplace else to grow. (MM 108)

Examining our process is necessary. Simply put, “Are our parishes, families, schools, and ministries making disciples as we teach, preach, and sanctify?” In other words, “Are we simply in ‘maintenance’ mode — maintaining what we have, or are we in ‘mission’ mode — evangelizing and fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ?”

In the past, we have focused on membership and enrollment numbers and offertory collections as benchmarks for success in our parishes and schools. The kind of cultural shift we are talking about for parishes, families, schools, ministries, and institutions is that we are “*Made for Mission*.” We must rethink “how we are” and how we are forming parishioners, as well as our school faculty, staff, and students, for discipleship. According to Tim Glemkowski in his book, *Made for Mission*, there are four categories that describe the health of a parish which can also apply to our schools and ministries:

1. Dying
 2. Declining
 3. Swelling
 4. Growing or Healthy
- (MM 34)

If we are not evangelizing and forming disciples, we are in decline, even if we are maintaining our “numbers.” If the younger generation is no longer present, we are in decline. If you consider your parish to be dying or declining, the challenge is, instead of giving in to discouragement, find the people where they are and love them. It really is a time to reach out to individuals and bring them to Jesus. Reaching out to our neighbor in the love of Jesus. Following this commandment and a desire for revitalization is the only hope that dying and declining parishes have available.





Swelling parishes can seem to be growing, but we must take note of from where people are coming. Are they new members of the faith growing in discipleship, or are they perhaps from neighboring parishes looking for a new place to worship? Growth in numbers becomes a substitute for growth in discipleship.

Growing, healthy parishes and schools form disciples, and members live the mission of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. In these parishes and schools everyone understands there is a clear vision and mission to form disciples of both those inside and outside their walls, and everyone understands how that happens in their own lives using their unique gifts. (MM 39)

Jesus calls each of us to be his modern-day disciples, which means we come to know him, love him, serve him, witness to him, and make



disciples in his name. Yes, we need to place things in the hands of Jesus, but as St. Teresa of Avila said, *“Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours, yours are the eyes with which he looks with compassion on this world.”*

To know Jesus, to love Jesus, to serve Jesus, and to witness to Jesus means that we must share the love of Jesus with others so that the longing of the others’ hearts can also be satisfied in his love. This is paramount to our purpose as Catholic Christians. It is time to examine ourselves as members of the Church. Called to be modern-day disciples of Jesus, we need to take a hard look at our relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church, and ask ourselves honestly — *How am I living my relationship with Jesus Christ, and how am I imaging that relationship to the world? Can others recognize Christ through my life and actions? Am I making disciples by what I am doing and how I am living? Am I sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and bringing others to him as his disciples?*

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are some shifts in culture over the past 10 – 20 years that make it difficult to evangelize?





2. Why is it difficult to make a cultural shift?
3. What are the reasons a shift in parish, family, school, and ministry cultures is necessary?
4. How do we make a shift in culture?
5. How is building disciples more than promoting volunteerism?
6. What are some of the reasons you think many Catholics tend to keep quiet about their faith?
7. If you are personally quiet about your faith, what are some things you can do to begin sharing your faith with others?
8. How does our parish, family, school, or ministry support the healthy growth of faith in a budding disciple?
9. Is our parish, school, or ministry healthy? Swelling? Declining? Dying? Explain.
10. Are we in maintenance mode or are we fulfilling our mission?

MEETING PEOPLE "WHERE THEY ARE"

Since the Second Vatican Council, a real effort has been made to renew the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). We have discovered over time that it really is a process for a person to form a lifelong love relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church and to become his disciple. Oftentimes, we have brought people to the Sacraments of Initiation and have either not followed-up with their faith formation or have not invited them to enter into discipleship ministry. There is a real need for us to look at how we approach the RCIA and all faith formation. We have made an effort to fit people who enter RCIA within the curriculum. What is proving to be much more effective is the development of a faith formation plan for each person. This means meeting each person where they are in their faith formation and taking a serious account of where they have been. The persons themselves need to voice when they would like to enter their faith formation, and, with our help, form a plan for how they will arrive at discipleship. Given the need for each person to experience a complete Liturgical Year in the Church and for the RCIA process to be most effective, it should be a year-round process. Prayer, worship, parish life, and Sunday Mass become the real curriculum. (SLG)





Jesus gives an example of loving someone “where they are” when he speaks with the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s Well:

The woman said to him, “Sir, I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking with you.” At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, “What are you looking for?” or “Why are you talking with her?”

The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, “Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?” They went out of the town and came to him. Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me everything I have done.” When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, “We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world” (John 4:19-30, 39-42).

Jesus shares his word and his love with the Samaritan woman, and through conversation, he reveals himself. This sharing the word and love of Jesus is also a call to conversion and repentance of sin.





The key here is to artfully combine both the invitation to conversion while meeting someone where they are Without compassionate awareness of where someone is, the message of repentance becomes shrill and preachy, unable to actually transform hearts. At the same time, if we never invite people to turn away from their sin and give their hearts to Christ, we run the risk of not fulfilling our call to spread the Gospel (MM 51-52).

We have come to believe in God's love: in these words the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction (DCE 1).

The Samaritan woman believes — so much so that she repents, goes to town, and brings others to Jesus. We the Church are called to be Christ to the world—we bring the one anointed by God to the world. As a Church and as individuals, are we available and open to meeting our brothers and sisters in Christ “where they are”? Are we open to making disciples? Are we open to walking with them, accompanying them, loving them, having compassion for them, caring for them, and bringing them to Christ as we are commissioned through our Baptism?

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How does our parish, school, or ministry approach Faith Formation?
2. How does Jesus share his Good News with the woman at the well?
3. How does the Samaritan woman share the Good News with others?
4. What are the reasons it is important to combine the invitation to conversion with meeting someone where they are?
5. Whose story have you listened to? Are you able to share your story of faith?
6. When did you first encounter Jesus? Who enabled this encounter?
7. Have you prayed for the Holy Spirit to move you to help someone else encounter Jesus?





OUR SUNDAY LITURGY AND WORSHIP AS EVANGELIZATION

Our Sunday Liturgies, our Masses, and other forms of worship, are an encounter with Jesus Christ and are critical to the life of our faith and to our community of faith. They should communicate our values as the Body of Christ and should lead people into falling in love with the Eucharist, Jesus. When we celebrate the Most Holy Eucharist, we bring to the Altar of Sacrifice ourselves, our families, our ministries, and our prayers; but Jesus is also asking us to bring our neighbor. There are key areas that need our particular attention: our spirit of welcome and hospitality; the proclamation of the Word and the preaching; our music; how we communicate; and the nature and purpose of the Holy Eucharist — the Body and Blood of Christ. Jesus' spirit of welcoming and hospitality was profound and serves as a powerful example and invitation to us as a Church.

Sometimes it seems as if it's all we can do to get ourselves and our families to church. And while that is a part of his call to us, Jesus really wants us to make disciples. Therefore, we need to bring others to him, to Christ. Jesus personally loved each of the people around him and all those he encountered. He invites us to do the same as we gather in prayer and in worship.

Again, [amen,] I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matthew 18:19-20).

Our prayer together needs to be our guiding light. Our expression of faith through worship and the sacraments needs to be part of a vibrant community that clearly proclaims the love of Jesus Christ to the world. Moreover, while we touch Heaven and are touched by Heaven when we come together for prayer and worship, Jesus wants us to share this experience with everyone we meet.





“This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice in it and be glad.”

(Psalm 118:24) Imagine a parish in which the joy of the Lord is truly present—from the moment you pull into the parking lot to the moment you drive out. A spirit of welcome pervades the parish from the parking lot to the Sanctuary and everyone is greeted and accompanied. The spirit of prayer is palpable and the singing is invitational. The spirit of welcome draws everyone into prayer and celebration of the Eucharist—everyone young, old, guests, and first-timers. The music and singing draws everyone into the service and allows the love of Jesus Christ to be present. The celebrant joyfully leads the community in prayer, and, with the expectation that the miracle of the Word will take place among the faithful, the readings of the day are proclaimed, and a well-prepared homily is shared.

Together, we proclaim our common belief through the Profession of Faith. We place our gifts on the Altar and lift them up to our loving God. Gathered around the Altar, we raise our minds, bodies, and spirits to the Lord as we personally enter into the sacrifice of the Mass. We offer the sign that Jesus gave us of bread and wine, celebrating the promise that he gave us.



Take this all of you, and eat of it, for this is my Body, which will be given up for you. Take this, all of you, and drink from it. For this is the chalice of my Blood, the Blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins ... (RM).

As the priest prays the Eucharistic Prayer, which is taken from Matthew 26:26-28, our hearts are joined to the Crucified and Risen Lord who is present on the Altar in the form of his Body and Blood, and he is also in our midst. It truly is a moment in which Heaven is present to us and we are present to Heaven. We are united with the Communion of Saints and glimpse what it means to eat his Body and drink his Blood and share eternal life. This is who we are as Catholics. We need to shout it from the rooftops.

We then pray for the Church, and we pray as Jesus taught us with his Prayer, which is our prayer to Our Father. One of the great signs of the





celebration together is that Jesus gives us the peace of Heaven, and this is the same peace we offer to one another. To receive his Body and his Blood personally or in Spiritual Communion is a deep expression of who we are, what we celebrate and how we are to live as a Eucharistic people together, giving thanks for the blessings God has bestowed on us and his presence in our lives.

The Mass — the celebration of the Eucharist — is meant to be such an encounter with Jesus Christ and his Church that not only do we want to share his love, but we cannot help but share it. This is discipleship. This is the call of Jesus Christ to be his disciples and to make disciples. As the celebration of the Mass concludes, we receive God's blessings to go forth and make disciples. It is not something we are meant to leave behind in the church or forget about on our drive home. In fact, one thing we can do as we drive home is to discuss what touched us in the Mass, the readings, homily, singing, and how we are being called to live our faith.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Are we living our faith at home, at work, and within our communities?
2. If we want our Sunday liturgy and worship to be an evangelizing event, what are some key areas to pay attention to?
3. What are some things that can be done in our parish, school, or ministry to improve the spirit of welcome and hospitality, especially when celebrating the Liturgy?
4. As a parish, family, school, or ministry, how are we calling members to live the faith and witness at home, at work, and in our communities?
5. What are some things we could do following the Sunday Liturgy to make sure we are living our faith at home?

ANANIAS – ACCOMPANIMENT IN FAITH

One of the questions that Jesus, the great judge, will ask us is who have we accompanied in Faith and what kind of example have we been as followers of Christ. It is critical that we as a Church and as individuals commit ourselves to bringing people to Jesus Christ. We do this by following the example of Jesus' accompaniment. Jesus taught the disciples





and apostles, and he accompanied them for three years. These apostles and disciples have given us a powerful example of what it means to make disciples and baptize all nations.

What does accompaniment look like? The story of Ananias in the Acts of the Apostles is an excellent example of accompaniment.

There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, and [in a vision] he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay [his] hands on him, that he may regain his sight." But Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name." So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit." Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength (Acts 9:10-19).

Ananias is called by our Lord to accompany Saul in his conversion. Through the help of Ananias, and Saul's own curiosity, Saul recognizes God's hand in his life. When the scales fall from Saul's eyes, he is able to truly see and begin to seek the Lord. He learns from Ananias what it means to know and serve Jesus with a loving heart. With the accompaniment of Ananias and the faith community, Saul is able to witness to Jesus with total abandon. We know Saul as St. Paul — a true disciple-maker, a missionary disciple. We are blessed to have his letters preserved for us in Holy Scripture so that we too, like St. Paul, may hear and answer the call of Jesus to make disciples and accompany others.





Just as St. Paul needed Ananias to accompany him in his relationship with Jesus Christ, each person who approaches the Church needs a companion to help him or her encounter Jesus Christ and his love. Pope Francis states, “The Church will have to initiate everyone — priests, religious and laity — into this ‘art of accompaniment’” (EG 169).

Companionship, also called accompaniment, is important to the faith formation of everyone — our children, youth, adults, and families; and it is central to parish and Catholic school life and ministry. Who are we accompanying in faith right now? Have we invited anyone recently to join us in Sunday worship? During the Mass, are we conscious of those we need to accompany? Are we willing to go the extra mile for someone we are accompanying?

How do you accompany someone in faith? First listen, then share your story, and walk with them in their faith journey. Ananias was open to the call from God to meet Saul where Saul was, to step out in faith, and to minister to him — literally helping Saul to see and recognize his need for conversion, thus helping Saul come to know Christ in his life. Ananias encourages Saul to trust God and to be open to the invitation that Jesus was giving Saul to come to know him.

To build relationships with individuals, all of us in accompaniment need to be aware of the movements of the heart, mind, and spirit, as well as the deep wounds that an individual may have. Enabling people to encounter God in truth, beauty, and goodness is what attracts the human heart and is where we begin to encounter God. Once a person has encountered God in this way, an invitation to conversion is possible. In the conversion process, evangelization involves the preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ. The person receives the Gospel message (summed up in the four essential movements below) and hears the invitation to give his or her whole life to Christ:

- God loves you and has a plan for your life.
- Sin separates us from God.
- Jesus in his life, death, and resurrection saved us from sin.
- By turning away from sin and toward God and his Son, we can live a new life as sons and daughters of the Father.





This is the *Kerygma*, and this is the basic gospel message that we are called as disciples to speak. (MM 102-103)

It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain ... (John 15:16a).

There are two moments that change the life of every disciple. The first is the initial conversion where we become disciples of Jesus, and the second is the conversion to missionary discipleship. Many stop with growing



their own faith and prayer life. This is not a bad thing in itself, but it is incomplete and does not take into account the Great Commission of Jesus. “*Discipleship and mission* are like the two sides of a single coin: when the disciple is in love with Christ, he cannot stop proclaiming to the world that only in him do we find salvation” (AAC 2). This conversion process is called journeying through the thresholds of Faith.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How do you think you would have reacted if you had been Ananias?
2. How do we accompany someone in faith?
3. What are some things a person has to experience or develop before they are ready for an invitation to conversion?
4. What are some things we could do in our parishes, schools, families, and ministries to arouse curiosity and build trust with people who do not have faith?
5. How are we accompanying new Catholics?
6. How are we accompanying Catholic families who still need to grow in their relationship with Christ to reach discipleship and to become disciple-makers?
7. Are we preaching and teaching the kerygma?
8. Who are you or your family accompanying?

THRESHOLDS OF CONVERSION AND FAITH:

In every person's faith life, we move through and between thresholds of conversion. Where we are in the thresholds described by Sherry Weddell in her book *Forming Intentional Disciples* says much of where we are in





our faith journey with Jesus. We can use these thresholds for ourselves as well as for those we are accompanying.

1. Initial trust: A person can trust or has a positive association with Jesus Christ, the Church, a Christian believer, or something identifiably Christian. Trust is not the same as active personal faith. Without some kind of bridge of trust in place, people will not move closer to God (pre-evangelization).

2. Spiritual curiosity: A person finds himself or herself intrigued by or desiring to know more about Jesus, his life, and his teachings or some aspect of the Christian faith. This curiosity can range from mere awareness of a new possibility to something quite intense. Nevertheless, a person at the threshold of curiosity is not yet open to personal change. Curiosity is still essentially passive, but it is more than mere trust.

3. Spiritual openness: A person acknowledges to himself or herself and to God that he or she is open to the possibility of personal and spiritual change. This is one of the most difficult transitions for a postmodern nonbeliever. Openness is not a commitment to change. People who are open are simply admitting they are open to the possibility of change. If someone is on the verge of openness, it can be helpful to talk about your own struggles and how you look to God to enable you to change. Ask questions that raise the issue of personal change. Use their own words to point out how God is at work in their life to this point. Encourage them to ask God for a sign. Ask if you can pray for them to be open to God. Ask them to pray for openness to God.

4. Spiritual seeking: The person moves from being essentially passive to actively seeking to know the God who is calling him or her. It is, if you will, “dating with a purpose” but not yet marriage. Seekers are asking, “Are you the one to whom I will give myself?” At this stage, the seeker is engaged in an urgent spiritual quest, seeking to know whether he or she can commit to Christ and his Church. It can be a time of letting go, asking forgiveness, and finding reconciliation and peace.

5. Intentional discipleship: The person moves from being passive to being an active disciple of Jesus; they are coming to know Jesus





personally and experiencing his love and wanting very much to serve Jesus; they are open and willing to witness to Jesus and become disciple-makers. This is the decision to “drop one’s nets,” to make a conscious commitment to follow Christ in the midst of his Church as an obedient disciple and to reorder one’s life accordingly (129-130).

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why is it important to recognize the Thresholds of Conversion?
2. What process does the parish, school, or ministry provide for people to move through the thresholds?
3. Which of the five thresholds of conversion are you currently at?
4. Describe an experience that helped you to move through one or more of the five thresholds of conversion.
5. Are you walking with anyone through the Thresholds of Conversion and Faith?

THE EVANGELIZATION PROCESS

In his book *Made for Mission*, Tim Glemkowski simplifies the evangelization process into four steps taken directly from the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) process:

1. Pre-evangelization
2. Evangelization
(*Conversion*)
3. Discipleship
4. Apostolate

While all our parishes use the RCIA process for those wishing to enter the Church and receive her sacraments, the first two steps that lead to the moment of conversion — Pre-evangelization and Evangelization — are often not addressed, or they are treated as an afterthought (MM 81-82). If the Mass is the first and only point of contact for people who are of no faith or who are inquiring about the Faith, then we are throwing people into the deep end before they can swim. The Mass is the pinnacle of our Christian life. However, there absolutely needs to be a way to invite





people and accompany them in a way that is simpler and allows for personal contact. Pre-evangelization and Evangelization lead to Conversion and the conscious decision to be a disciple. Everything after Conversion — Discipleship and Apostolate — leads to expanding into full Christian maturity. We must walk intentionally with individuals through the whole process.

PARISHES, FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, MINISTRIES – MADE FOR MISSION

The shift from maintenance to mission in our parishes, families, schools, and ministries and creating a culture of active discipleship can be realized by doing fewer things, but doing them really, really well. Below are four strategic goals that can focus efforts into achievable steps — are we doing these in our parishes, families, schools, and ministries?

1. Our vision is clear: We are introducing parishioners and non-parishioners to a life-changing relationship with Jesus Christ.

2. We have a clear path to discipleship: We are equipped and formed to help others grow into the fullness of mature Catholic Christians and missionary Discipleship.

3. Our leaders are well-formed, empowered, and sent to bear fruit: Our leaders are fruitful both inside our parishes, schools, ministries, and institutions, and to the larger community in their day-to-day lives. We are forming and empowering our leaders.

4. Nothing operates in maintenance mode: Everything we do is aligned to the mission to form disciples who can themselves make disciples. We are forming disciples (MM 27).

"Before we build an evangelizing parish, [family, school or ministry] we have to lay our vision before God and make sure that it is a God-given one" (MM 131).

A CLEAR VISION AND MISSION

Our first battle is how our people see and understand our purpose. We need to craft a clear picture in our people's minds of our mission, which has been provided by our Founder in his Great Commission. It is not





about dragging people. It is about casting a clear vision based on God's own vision, communicating that vision, and letting the vision lead the way in decision-making. As leadership, we must first allow the Lord to shape our hearts in the Great Commission of Jesus. Invite the Holy Spirit through intercessory prayer to lead the renewal, allowing the Lord to increase the faith of your people and your own faith as well.

Once a clear vision is cast, it must be shared. It is natural for people to resist change. Start with the “why”—to follow the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and the fact that the Church exists to evangelize. Help others understand by spending time communicating a simple and clear vision. It requires time, intentionality, strategy, and a lot of prayer. For a parish, school, or ministry to move into “mission mode,” there needs to be a clear vision and mission that is understood and accepted by all members of our parishes, families, schools, and ministries. It is critical that the leadership of each be committed to the Great Commission of Jesus and that there be a commitment to making disciples as the primary mission of each parish, family, school, and ministry in our diocese.

Making disciples is hard; creating lasting culture change is hard. It is a lot easier to remain in maintenance mode than to align what we are doing with the Great Commission of Jesus. Yet, we belong to God. He established the Church to evangelize and to form disciples.

A CLEAR PATH TO DISCIPLESHIP

In discerning how our parish, families, schools, and ministries are being called to form disciples, we need to focus on key areas. A clear, simple

Go Make Disciples.

Matthew 28: 18-20

path to discipleship should include a few things, done very well, that will intentionally accompany people through the entire process of growth into mature discipleship. We must begin with people and process, not programs. Everyone will not move through the process in the same





way, but the parish, family, school, or ministry needs a purposeful and overall simplified approach to the full process of evangelization. Fostering inquiry, companionship, and initial conversion are important. The opportunity to invite and accompany non-disciples in a way that is simple and allows for personal contact that facilitates evangelization in a comfortable environment where the Gospel message can be shared is an absolute necessity.

It should be abundantly clear to each leader and each member of our parishes, families, schools, and ministries how we accomplish this mission of forming missionary disciples. Many of our ministries, organizations, and activities are particularly good and do a lot of good work. We need to look at these to see how they can begin making disciples of Jesus. Sometimes it will mean a shift in focus that, along with the good work, includes a serious commitment to making disciples and disciple-makers. Focusing on fewer ministries that are impactful may be more fruitful. Having too many programs and ministries can prevent us from determining whether these programs are reaching our objective and bearing fruit. Everything should have purpose; each ministry should fulfill a clear objective of forming disciples. That does not mean that the only goal of every ministry or program is to form disciples, but rather each should fulfill a strategic objective within the discipleship pathway.

In other words, each initiative should be part of a strategy to help people move to the next stage in their relationship with God, such as:

1. To build trust with those who are not religious
2. To provide occasions for people to encounter Jesus personally
3. To mature those who have had a conversion moment into full discipleship
4. To send disciples on a mission

Building a clear path to discipleship can mean saying, “No.” People may not understand why their ministry or program is not a priority. Be gentle when possible, listen, and then try to explain the “why” so that they can see the bigger picture. Not everyone will get it, but if you have too many programs that are not about the clear path to discipleship, you will have a difficult time getting people to commit to the programs that do serve the clear path. People only have so much time. If they are getting involved,





they want it to matter. If they are faced with too many choices, many will choose to do nothing.

STRONG, WELL-FORMED, FRUITFUL LEADERSHIP

And what you heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will have the ability to teach others as well (2 Timothy 2:2).

The pastor and principal have critical roles in leadership. As the spiritual Father of a parish and affiliated schools, a pastor is the chief shepherd who leads the flock to Christ. Parishes, families, schools, and ministries need to faithfully pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the clergy (*especially our pastors*), principals, and lay ministers to hear and heed the Great Commission of Jesus to go make disciples. A senior leadership team of a few committed individuals, working with the pastor, helps to oversee the strategy for the parish and school renewal efforts and helps evaluate the fruitfulness of those efforts. Every leader attempting renewal needs a team to help form a clear vision. A senior leadership team is critical to affecting a cultural shift in a parish or school.

For cultural change to be sustained, there needs to be a core group of torchbearers. They will carry the light of renewal through the long and difficult process. This group of leaders can be a mix of key staff, dedicated parishioners, and disciples that can catch fire for the renewal effort. It is necessary for the pastor and the senior leadership team to identify couples, families, and singles who can be the torchbearers going forward, capable of leading small groups and ministries and articulating the vision to others in the parish. We need to spend a lot of time up front, bringing the core group together and teaching them to lead. The renewal process for making disciples generally involves a retreat where everyone is mentored one on one. **Leaders who are well-formed, empowered, and equipped to be successful are essential.** Jesus spent three years with the Twelve and other disciples teaching them to carry on his mission. We know from the Gospel accounts that Jesus sent a lot of them in small groups. He knew the long-term fruitfulness of depending on others to carry His vision and mission. The cultural change we are trying to affect needs to operate out of a similar paradigm.





We must continue to invest in and develop leaders. One of the best things we can do with the core group of torchbearers is to mobilize them to accompany others in the context of small groups and with one-on-one engagement. Generally, this can happen through prayer groups, Bible study, and faith sharing in which a real effort is made to make friends and build community. From these efforts, disciples are formed. We cannot work as though we will always be there to continue in our roles. If this were true, the fruitfulness of our work ends when we do. If you engage disciples who are capable of evangelizing and forming new disciples, an unstoppable movement will be started that will radically transform parish and school culture over time. It begins by following the prompting of the Holy Spirit and reaching out to one or two people at a time. If we are faithful, the Lord will multiply and bless our efforts exponentially.

Jesus practiced the process of spiritual multiplication and guided others into a transformative relationship with God. We are called to walk with others in their journey to Jesus and especially in moments of conversion and encounters with the Holy Spirit.

Small Group Ministry: There is no

“one size fits all” approach to the mission of forming disciples.

Individuals and faith communities are not all the same. How we build and foster discipleship should be a call to holiness that includes human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral aspects. It is not possible for the clergy to do it all. Small group ministry led by well-formed

disciples can provide a place for people to grow in discipleship and a place where community can be experienced. The group will come to rely on one another in their walk with Jesus and allow the members to grow as disciples. It is not so much about Bible study, although that is especially important, but rather about the group of people who grow together in holiness and discipleship. Small groups foster accountability, prayer, study and motivation, and encouragement for growth.





For small group ministry to bear fruit, it must include an atmosphere where participants are secure enough to be vulnerable and expose their woundedness with one another. This kind of trust is critical for a ministry to be successful. Interior healing and the call to freedom are critical to the action and function of small groups. We, as parish, family, school, and ministry leaders, must first approach Christ to heal our own woundedness and bring others to Christ to heal their wounds. Our Lord instructed his disciples when he sent them out to evangelize in towns to *“cure the sick in it and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand for you’”* (Luke 10:9). Witness happens after healing. Our faith teaches us that areas of brokenness exist *“so that the works of God might be made visible through him”* (John 9:3). As we let God heal us and those around us, we are set free to go and heal others as a result of the healing we have received (MM 114).

ALIGNMENT – CRAFTING A PARISH AND SCHOOL PATHWAY

Frequently, in parishes and schools our different ministries are segmented. Rather than creating another separate ministry of our parish or school, we instead should look at each ministry through the lens of discipleship and evangelization. As we form our vision, develop a clear path to discipleship, and mobilize leaders, we also need to ensure that everything we do aligns with this vision of discipleship and evangelization.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the four steps of Evangelization?
2. Where does Conversion happen within these steps?
3. Does our parish, family, school, or ministry provide opportunities for pre-evangelization?

Parishes, Families, Schools, Ministries – Made for Mission

1. Considering all of the cultural and communication changes that have taken place, are our parishes, families, schools, and ministries effective evangelizers?
2. Is your parish, school, ministry, or family making disciples? In what ways?
3. Does our parish, family, school, or ministry need to make a shift in order to form disciples and disciple-makers?





A Clear Vision and Mission

1. Does our parish, school, or ministry have a clear vision and mission?
2. If not, what changes need to take place to foster a clear vision and mission?
3. How can our clear vision and mission be communicated?

A Clear Path to Discipleship

1. Does our parish, family, school, or ministry have a clear path to discipleship?
2. If not, what needs to be done to make sure that it does have a clear path to discipleship?
3. How do we communicate our clear path to discipleship?
4. What does it mean when we say that building a clear path to discipleship can mean saying “no”?

To Mobilize Leaders in the Parish, Family, School, and Ministries

1. Why is it important for parishes, schools, and ministries to have a leadership team?
2. How will we form a leadership team? What is our plan?
3. How do we train and support strong leadership team members empowered to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus?

Small Group Ministry

1. What are the reasons we say there is no “one size fits all” approach to the mission of forming disciples?
2. How are small groups important to the mission of forming disciples?
3. What are some things that are important if we want small group ministry to bear fruit?

Alignment Activity

Follow the prompts below to start praying as a team about how you can build a discipleship pathway in your parish, school or ministry. These questions are based on the process through which L'Alto Catholic Institute takes individual parishes in Parish Partnership.

Reflect:

1. Are there pre-evangelization outreaches currently practiced that can be built up and used in our discipleship pathway?





2. Do we need to create a new pre-evangelization step?

Decide:

1. Our key pre-evangelization outreaches: (list)
2. Our preferred methods of moving non-disciples from pre-evangelization to provide an opportunity for them to encounter Jesus personally: (list)
3. The opportunity to hear the Gospel preached and an invitation to individuals to give their lives to Christ will be accomplished by doing the following: (list)

Reflect:

1. Are there any small groups in our parish, school or ministry that could be strengthened to help members grow in relationship with Christ and used in our pathway? What are those groups?
2. Do we need to create a new or different process for small groups?

Decide:

1. Our prioritized process: (name/describe)

Reflect:

1. Are there any opportunities within our parish, school, ministry, community or pathway that can be used in sending people on mission?
2. How will we prioritize the pathway as an opportunity for newly-formed missionary disciples to serve? What other outreaches will we promote?

Decide:

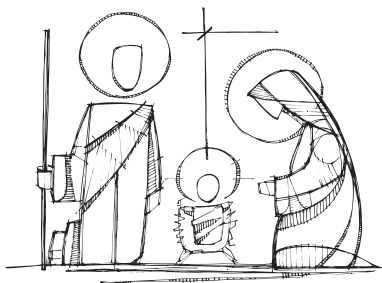
1. We will use the following formation to teach disciples to become missionary: (list)
2. We will prioritize the following apostolic opportunities: (list)
(MM 117-120)





NEW EVANGELIZATION AND FAMILIES: THE DOMESTIC CHURCH

Within the family is where our children should first learn about the love of Jesus Christ. It is where we come to know Jesus, love Jesus, serve Jesus, and witness Jesus to one another. Parents have a primary responsibility to share their faith in God and the love of Jesus Christ with their children. The New Evangelization calls all families



to live the Great Commission of Jesus; thus part of the focus of our families should be becoming disciples and making disciples; this includes hearing the exhortation to baptize all nations, teaching all that Jesus has commanded, and witnessing Jesus who is with us until the end of time. It also includes proclaiming as a family the *kerygma* — the life, Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. Our parishes and schools will be forming partnerships with our families to help parents and our children in growing in discipleship and Faith Formation.

It is in the Second Vatican Council's Constitution *Lumen Gentium* that the family is referred to as the "Domestic Church" or "*Ecclesia domestica*." Through the virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony, spouses help each other attain holiness in their married life and in the raising of children.

In [the family] parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state (LG 11).

In the USCCB document, *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization*, families are described as the first place where one experiences and is formed in the faith. Through the example of parents, grandparents, siblings, and extended family members we witness how to live as Christians.





It is vital that multiple generations, including grandparents, are engaged with the faith formation of younger family members. It is through the family that one journeying back to the faith can be awakened to, affirmed in, and encouraged by the love and mercy of Christ (13).

It is within the security of the family that “one learns endurance and the joy of work, fraternal love, generous - even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life” (CCC 1657).

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why do we refer to the family as domestic church?
2. Who is primarily responsible for the Faith Formation of children?
3. How can our family live the Great Commission of Jesus?
4. How can we live the teachings of Jesus so that we grow as disciples and help our children become disciples?
5. How can we live as a domestic church in our homes?
6. What are some ways to participate in family prayer?
7. What are some ways to talk to very young children about God?
8. How can our parishes, schools, and ministries, help families become disciples and enable our children to grow as disciples?
9. What are some ways to help children connect to Mass?

A SHIFT IN SACRAMENTAL PREPARATION

The sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. [T]he visible rites by which the sacraments are celebrated signify and make present the graces proper to each sacrament.

They bear fruit in those who receive them with the required dispositions. *The Holy Spirit prepares the faithful for the sacraments by the Word of God and the faith which welcomes that word in well-disposed hearts. Thus the sacraments strengthen faith and express it. The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and*





*ecclesial. For every one of the faithful [o]n the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus; for the Church, on the other, it is an increase in charity and in her **mission of witness** (CCC 1131, 1133, 1134).*

In sacramental preparation and afterward, we must re-imagine how we prepare individuals so that they may form a spiritual disposition open to God's graces received in the Sacraments. We must provide opportunities for each of our children, youth, adults, and families to experience Jesus and invite God to touch their minds, their bodies, and their spirits to seek conversion and to hear the call to follow Jesus. Sacramental preparation must truly be an evangelizing process that begins with accompaniment. Who will be Ananias to our children, youth, adults, and families as they prepare to receive the sacraments and the graces afforded? What is the best process or plan for faith development for each individual and family?

Our children and youth in Faith Formation should have a clear path to discipleship, especially those preparing to receive the Sacraments of Initiation: Baptism, Holy Communion, and Confirmation. The graces of the Sacraments are real. Are we fostering these graces in ways that are making disciples, or are we simply "checking off a sacramental box"? To make disciples, there has to be a real shift from maintenance to mission in our parishes, families, schools, and ministries. If we continue simply "checking boxes" and have no real faith formation process and no real accompaniment, then we are still in maintenance mode. Given the diversity of our life experiences, these pathways to discipleship also need to be diverse in order to allow a faith formation plan for each individual, especially for those seeking the Sacraments of the Church.

Imagine the impact if each of our children, youth, and adults who are presented for the Sacraments of Initiation has a faith formation plan and a disciple and/or a faith support group to accompany them. Imagine that each is personally accompanied in faith and in a relationship that enables the person to grow in faith, face the areas of weakness or sin, and seek the living God hand in hand with a disciple. Imagine also our newly Confirmed youth formed and prepared to accompany younger budding disciples in their path to discipleship. If this were true for each of our





parishes, families, schools, and ministries, imagine the Church we would have!

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What needs to shift in sacramental preparation to enable the making of disciples?
2. How might the graces made present by a sacrament not bear fruit in everyone who receives the sacrament?
3. What does it mean to say that in sacramental preparation we need to be sure we are not simply “checking off a sacramental box”?
4. How will we accompany those preparing to receive the sacraments to enable growth and movement through the thresholds of conversion and faith?

A PARTNERSHIP OF FAMILIES, SCHOOLS, AND PARISHES IN EVANGELIZATION



Often our parishes, schools, and ministries can seem like silos that do not connect or communicate with each other. It is critical for the family, parish, school, and ministries to work in concert to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus. It is especially important that parishes and families that are not part of our Catholic schools work together to establish a faith formation plan for each member of the family. A real

partnership is essential in conjunction with a personal relationship with a parish disciple or disciple family (accompaniment). Too often families are not invited to a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. How are we interacting with families? Are we providing opportunities for our families, adults, youth, and children, to experience the love of Jesus Christ — to encounter him, to follow him, to become disciples and disciple-makers?





Imagine parishes and schools working together with families regarding the faith formation of their children with a faith formation plan and accompaniment over a period of years. Imagine parents working with priests and teachers to empower each young person to encounter Jesus Christ and grow in his or her faith. Such efforts would enable us to respond to each individual and family and would provide opportunities for our parishes and schools to minister to them and call them to discipleship!

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What does it mean to say that oftentimes our parishes, schools, and ministries can seem like silos?
2. Is our parish, family, school, or ministry providing families, adults, youth, and children opportunities to experience the love of Jesus Christ, to encounter Him, to follow Him, to become disciples and disciple-makers?
3. How can our parish, family, school, or ministry work with families to build a faith formation plan toward discipleship?
4. What needs to change in order to enable partnerships of families, parishes, and schools in evangelization and disciple making?





EVANGELIZATION MINISTRY

Deacon Richard Smith, Director

PRE-EVANGELIZATION

Addressing Pre-evangelization and Evangelization in our parishes, families, schools, and ministries must be part of our evangelization process. Many are not ready to hear the Kerygma for a multitude of reasons. This is why Pre-evangelization is important. The influence of peers and secular society, false impressions of the Church, recent scandals, a person's own woundedness, spiritual and emotional maturity, formation, and religious background, can be obstacles to a person's journey in faith and barriers to evangelization. The below are some methods of pre-evangelization:

- **Four Prayer Forms:** Lectio Divina, Imaginative, Intercessory, and Visio Divina. (biloxidiocese.org/prayer-forms)
- **Alpha:** is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith, typically run over eleven weeks. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation. Alpha is run around the globe, and everyone is welcome. (alphausa.org)
- **Awakening Faith:** is a small group process that helps inactive Catholics return to the Church. The group meets once a week for six weeks of conversation and socializing. The meetings foster reflection, prayer, and honest sharing in a setting of hospitality and acceptance. (pemdc.org/programs/awakening-faith)
- **Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA):** is a process of study, exploration, faith-sharing, and faith formation for seekers and inquirers who are non-baptized adults that desire to be fully initiated into the Roman Catholic Church and/or baptized adult Christians who desire full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Parishioners are often encouraged to attend to have a deeper understanding of our Faith. All are welcome! (**contact Office of Faith Formation or your local parish**)
- **Arise:** is a weekend retreat meant for anyone wanting to learn more about the Catholic Faith. Arise is sponsored by the Cursillo Movement of South Mississippi. Arise is primarily for these groups of persons who would like to receive additional information about





the Catholic Faith in a short period of time (one weekend):

- Non-Catholic spouses of practicing Catholics
- Catholics who have been away from the Church for a while
- Those without a current church/religion who are “searching” for a new or more meaningful Faith experience
- Those taking instruction in the Catholic Faith (www.biloxicursillo.org/index.php/events/arise)

EVANGELIZATION

When people are open to hear the Kerygma, the Good News of Jesus can be shared! The response to this encounter with Christ needs accompaniment. The below opportunities for conversion work really well:

- **The 99:** “is an evangelization video-based parish mission designed to spark a renewal with your parish walls and beyond.” (ascensionpress.com/collections/the-99)
- **Cursillo:** The Cursillo Movement begins with a three-day retreat. Throughout the weekend the participants pray together, attend daily Mass and have an opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. By the end of the weekend, candidates have a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and a better understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit. Candidates are called continue to the weekend experience when returning to routines and to spread the Word of God. (www.biloxicursillo.org)
- **ACTS:** An ACTS weekend is designed to help the retreatants enter into a new or deeper relationship with our Lord and fellow parishioners. The retreat facilitates the attainment of a new or deeper relationship with the Lord through: Adoration, Community, Theology, and Service. (www.actsmissions.org/bring-acts-to-my-parish)
- **Christ Life:** Covers all areas of evangelization, from pre-evangelization to active discipleship. Three part process equips Catholics for the essential work of evangelization: Discovering Christ, Following Christ, Sharing Christ. “Our ministry partners with parishes, priests, clergy, religious and lay leaders who are seeking to answer the Church’s call for the New Evangelization through a proven method of parish evangelization and outreach.” (christlife.org)





DISCIPLESHIP

To become a disciple, one must pick up his or her cross and become a lifelong student of Jesus Christ. A disciple must be ready to accompany others and witness to the Kerygma.

- **Diocese of Biloxi Discipleship Formation Intensive:** A small group of Catholic leaders that meet once a week to learn to pray, to be formed, and held accountable to growing in their pastoral skills as missionary disciples. Also prepares oneself to go out and witness. (contact Office of Evangelization)

- **Ananias Training:** Ananias training is a 17-hour process structured in five sessions, designed to form parishioners with no previous training in “the art of spiritual accompaniment.” The training will use Scripture reflections, video, and facilitated discussions to form “Ananias Companions.” The goal of Ananias Training is to form a people equipped to accompany one another within the Church, as well as to those in the world, within the context of one’s own charisms and personal vocation. (contact Office of Evangelization)

- **Divine Renovation:** In addition to the Divine Renovation book series, Divine Renovation USA provides parishes across the United States with hands-on support in their journey from maintenance to mission. “We provide parishes with resources and a community of pastors and lay leaders all driven by that same desire to bring people to Jesus Christ.” (divinerenovation.org/usa)

- **Called & Gifted:** This encounter is designed to help Christians discern their personal charisms or spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit. Gifts of the Holy Spirit are given to all Christians to represent Christ and to be a channel of God’s goodness for people. Whether extraordinary or ordinary, all charisms should be exercised in the service of God. This process helps you discover where you are gifted in order to develop your gifts and discover ways to grow these gifts in service to others. (contact Office of Evangelization)

- **Discipleship Quads:** are groups of four people who journey together as disciples through weekly gatherings of fellowship, ongoing conversion, and learning. This 12-month path of accompaniment fosters growth through prayer, accountability, and authentic relationships. (steubenvilleconferences.com/discipleship-quads) — This small group





ministry is established and growing at Most Holy Trinity Parish, Pass Christian, and St. Elizabeth Seton Parish, Ocean Springs.

APOSTOLATE

Evangelization testifies to the transformative power of the Gospel and the mission of the Church to sanctify society, hand the faith on to future generations, strengthen the faith of Church members, and renew the faith of those who have slipped away from the Church. The faithful become agents of evangelization through living witness, ministry, and commitment to the Gospel. This witness is essential for reaching others in today's modern world.

There are a multitude of ways to minister to others. The Called and Gifted workshop might be a good place to start to discern the particular gifts of the Holy Spirit that you have received. Discerning your Charisms may help you direct your particular gifts for ministry. Many of these ministries exist at the diocesan level and many exist within parishes, but they need to grow or shift to encompass our clear mission to form disciples and disciple-makers. If this transition is underway, they are listed as "Emerging." Those listed as "Envisioned" should grow with the shift in our parishes, families, schools, and ministries to forming disciples and disciple-makers. This list is not comprehensive and will grow and change.

EXISTING AND EMERGING

- New Wine
- Permanent Diaconate Program
- Vocation Days
- Catholic Charities of South Mississippi
- de l'Epee Ministry to the Deaf and Disabled Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Prison Ministry
- Ananias Discipleship Companions and Disciple Makers
- SEARCH Team Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Religious Education Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Fellowship of Catholic University Students
- Personal Faith Formation Guides and Discipleship Companions
- Catechist Discipleship Companions for Faith Formation Programs





- Family to Family Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- RCIA Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Youth Ministry Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Discipleship Quads
- St. Vincent de Paul Ministry Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Knights of Columbus Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Knights of Peter Claver Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- All parish organizations and Ministries Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers (i.e.: Altar Society, Ladies Auxiliary, Rosary groups, Bible Study, Prayer groups, etc.)
- Parish Leadership Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Catholic School Leadership Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Priesthood and Religious Vocation Ananias Companions
- Marriage and Family Life Ananias Companions
- Pro Life Family Ananias Companions
- Retreat Leadership Team Ananias Companions (Alpha, Search, Arise, Cursillo, ACTS, etc.)

ENVISIONED:

- Small Group Leaders Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Baptism Preparation Ananias Family Companions
- Confirmation Preparation Ananias Companions
- Individual Student to Student Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Grief Team Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Addiction Support Group Sponsors and Ananias Companions and Disciple Makers
- Renew
- Missionary Field Work Ananias Companions





FAMILY LIFE AS EVANGELIZATION

Office of Marriage and Family Life, Deacon James Gunkel, Director

It is the call of the Domestic Church to live the Gospel of Jesus in a day-to-day experience with includes the proclamation of the life, passion, death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ.

Begin Evangelization for Children at Home: What our children see and experience at home teaches them what matters most to us. Kim Cameron-Smith in her excellent book for Catholic parents, *Discipleship Parenting, Planting the Seeds of Faith*, states that the primary responsibility of parents is to evangelize their children. “The DRE and the faith-formation program are there to support us in evangelizing our kids, not to replace us. With all the tasks that keep us busy as parents, it’s easy to forget that faith formation is our most important duty to our children” (14). Where can parents begin evangelizing? At home!

Sacred spaces and sacred art: Creating a sacred space in our home that includes a family altar with a Bible that is open and read; articles of Faith, such as a crucifix, rosaries, and candles; icons and images of the Blessed Mother and the Saints; and religious literature can all show the importance of living our faith daily. These reminders can be real calls to our families to grow in faith and should extend throughout our homes. Beauty ignites a young child’s gift of wonder, and children are particularly responsive and sensitive to the beauty of our natural, created world. Sacred art and music can enable our children to grow in the history and tradition of the Church, and having beautiful images of our faith in our homes is an easy way to share our love of God. Many books are available that capture the beauty of worldwide cathedrals, basilicas, shrines, and other sacred spaces. Virtual tours are available of many of these locations (DP 174-180).

Virtual tours of the Vatican can be found at:

www.museivaticani.va/content/museivaticani/en.html

Observe special sacred times at home: Family prayer is an essential part of family life and critical to developing children as disciples of Jesus. Choose a particular time of day or day of the week dedicated to the





reading of the Word or practicing special devotions. Prayer before meals and bedtime is a good place to start. Have family moments of faith that are playful and joyful and allow a child's imagination to be celebrated. It can be a time of introducing our heroes of faith through Bible stories and the stories of the saints, particularly our patron saints. Telling our family story and celebrating important religious dates — a child's Baptism date, anniversary of First Communion — can engage children of all ages and draw them to a love of Jesus. Pope Saint John Paul II daily prayed a prayer to the Holy Spirit, a prayer taught to him as a boy by his father. Praying a simple form of the Divine Office or Liturgy of the Hours as a family is a celebration of the ancient prayer of the Church (DP 180-190). Four forms of prayer are highlighted at the end of this document www.biloxidiocese.org/prayer-forms, and Our Sunday Visitor has excellent family prayer resources: teachingcatholickids.com/category/prayer.

Talk to children about God: Very young children understand love. They want to be physically close and important to us. We keep them close. We talk to them and show them how wonderful it is to be a child of God and how special they are to us and to God. A young child's expression of faith should not be squashed. They find it easy to believe in God. Even with toddlers, we can begin wondering aloud with them about God's creation. Mary is easily introduced as the mommy of Jesus. A Nativity scene that a child can play with gives an opportunity to share the story of Jesus's birth, Mary and Joseph, the shepherds, and the Wise Men's visit.

When children reach school age, they are more capable of learning about Church teaching and reflecting on it. They are ready to learn about the Sacraments, the Trinity, and faith. Children look to their parents for cues about God. Early attention to family faith forms a foundation for this age. The stories and family prayer traditions during early childhood become a source for intellectual and moral formation. They may begin to compare Gospel accounts of the same story. They may notice discrepancies in what they find in a science book vs what they read in the Bible (DP). There are a multitude of books and resources for school age children. Many can be found in our Diocesan Resource Center. You can check out what is available to borrow at: biloxidiocese.org/resource-center. Many parishes belong to FORMED formed.org, which is a great resource for families and individuals. It is a subscription service of the Augustine





Institute that “provides the very best Catholic content from more than 60 organizations to help parishes, families and individuals explore their faith anywhere. Supporting thousands of movies, children’s programs, eBooks, audio, parish programs and studies direct to your browser, mobile or connected device.” Check with your parish office to see if you are already a member. Individuals can also subscribe.

Teen years can be a good time to introduce Catholic apologetics. Most teenagers want to belong and to be connected. Peer-oriented teens may be drawn leave their own church to join the faith group of a friend. Family remains the most influential source of faith identity, and belonging to a parish and the larger Church faith community can enrich that identity. When the family remains a secure base, and children feel cherished and accepted, other groups can be a healthy part of faith development. It is imperative that we walk with children when natural doubts emerge rather than making them feel guilty. Do not be afraid to reach out to your pastor or youth leader for help with difficult faith questions. Doubt is part of our faith journey and can be particularly unsettling for teens. Our role is to help them know how to handle doubts, questions, and conflicts respectfully and with integrity. When we let our children be honest about their doubts, they can move on to more mature stages of spiritual growth (DP 190-195).

Connecting young children to Mass: The Mass is a celebration of thanksgiving for God’s generosity in our daily lives and an opportunity for us to bring to God the joys and sorrows we experience as a family. What do little ones need to know to fall in love with the Body and Blood of Christ? What do they need to realize they are not alone, but that during Mass they join a community of faith and a community of Saints in communion with Heaven?

Mass provides special moments to help little ones face losses and learn about gratitude. Living a Eucharistic life leads to communion and intimacy with Christ. We go to Mass to offer the best of ourselves to God and not necessarily to be entertained. Even so, it can be hard for adults to focus at Mass, and it is understandable that children may also struggle to pay attention. Using a children’s missal can be helpful. No matter the age, gentle guidance can help a child in appreciating, respecting, and loving





the Mass. Encourage children to pay attention to what is happening on the Altar, especially during the Consecration. Perhaps hold up young children so they can see what is happening, and whisper in their ears how special the moment. Afterward, discuss the Mass with children and listen to what they have to share or to ask. Only God offers perfect acceptance, but within a Eucharistic family, children can be themselves, share their joys, reveal their wounds, admit their mourning, and know that they still will be cherished and loved (DP 195-202).

The Domestic Church: Domestic Church is a ministry formed in Poland to strengthen marriage and families that is expanding in the United States. It is for married couples and families. Couples meet once a month to share and pray together as they progress in the following areas: daily individual prayer, daily Scripture study, daily couple prayer, daily family prayer, rule of life, and yearly retreat. “The movement provides formation, using the Church’s spiritual tradition and official teachings, for how to pray, how to use Scripture in prayer, and how to grow in a real relationship with God, our spouses, and our children in light of our Baptism” (www.domesticchurchfamilies.com).

TOOLS FOR BUILDING A DOMESTIC CHURCH FROM THE USCCB

- Begin praying as a family and reading from Scripture daily, certainly before meals, but also first thing in the morning or before bed. Find a time that works for your family. Use the liturgy of the Church as a model for prayer and try to include heartfelt unstructured prayer as well.
- Pray a Family Rosary (each member leads a decade, and everyone shares intentions).
- Have a crucifix in a prominent place in the home, and in every bedroom.
- Make the Sacraments a regular celebration—take the whole family to Confession and Mass!
- Begin family traditions based on the seasons celebrated in the liturgical calendar.
- Make your vacation a holy pilgrimage by visiting the shrines and saints of our land and the world.
- Make worshipping God a priority. Never miss Mass, even while





traveling — go to: www.MassTimes.org to find a church near you!

- Teach stewardship and charity to your children, through word and example.
- Demonstrate love for your spouse, your children, your neighbors, and the world. Remind children that they are loved by God and have been given gifts to serve others.
- Talk freely about the presence of God in the joys and sorrows of your life.
- Welcome into your home and support priests, brothers, sisters, deacons, and lay ministers in the Church.
- Participate in the lay ministries and activities of your parish community.
- Allow your children to observe you in private prayer. Encourage your children to pray daily on their own, to listen for God's call, and if heard, to respond.
- For more ideas on how to build your home as a Domestic Church, go to: www.domestic-church.com or visit The Family Fully Alive www.kofc.org/en/what-we-do/faitn-in-action-programs/family/family-fully-alive.html, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.





FAITH FORMATION AS EVANGELIZATION

Leo Trahan, Director of Faith Formation

ALIGNING FAITH FORMATION WITH A MORE EVANGELIZING VISION

As we answer the call of Jesus in the Great Commission it is very important to closely examine the key components of faith formation in our parishes. Tim Glemkowski reminds us of a key concept that should guide our examination and planning:

When we are trying to reform any aspect of parish life and ministry, we must first ask what the thing is so that we can rearticulate the truth of what it is in light of mission. Authentic renewal never changes the core of what something is but does make sure that it prioritizes mission (MM 136).

It is important to mention again that there is no one approach that will work in every parish.

Each parish is unique, with a rich history and pastoral context that changes the tactics that might work at ground level. A “one size fits all” approach to parish renewal simply cannot work... (MM 25).

It is also important to mention again that this realignment requires a paradigm shift in parish culture, and that cultural change is difficult and does not happen quickly.

The key element is time... Cultural change, because it involves the transformation of minds and hearts is not the work of a moment. This kind of transformation is difficult. To effect such a change will take not a week, or even a year or two, but will be the work of the next ten years. This is the inherent difficulty in parish renewal. There is no way around this problem, and any attempts at “short cuts” will only lead to false starts (MM 46).





As parishes approach the task of crafting their own unique strategy of realigning faith formation, there are some common concepts to consider.

The Purpose of Catechesis: There was a time in the history of our Church when evangelization was considered to be a moment in the catechetical process. Our last three popes and our bishops have taught that a shift has occurred. Now catechesis is seen as a moment in the evangelization process. Glemkowski adds that “evangelization is a moment in the conversion process” (MM 102).

Because of this role in evangelization and conversion, catechesis cannot be simply the communication of knowledge. Instead catechesis must also facilitate conversion and accompanying of those being catechized on their discipleship journey. The key to an evangelizing catechesis is to “combine the invitation to conversion with meeting someone where they are” (MM 51).

Many of those presenting themselves for catechesis have not experienced conversion and do not have a personal relationship with Jesus. For these individuals a period of pre-evangelization is necessary.

Pre-evangelization needs to utilize truth, beauty, and goodness in order to prepare people for discipleship. These three attributes of God attract the human heart. They all interrelate and intersect, and each is an indispensable need of the human heart and a motivator for our restless hearts to come to finally possess absolute Truth, Beauty, and Goodness in heaven. Pre-evangelization is meant to walk with individuals through the various, complex movements of the mind and heart that lead to the choice to become a disciple (MM 99).

Knowledge and understanding of the Kerygma (the Great Story of Jesus) is an essential part of the conversion process. *In The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)*, Pope Francis calls the Kerygma the “first proclamation.”





On the lips of the catechist the first proclamation must ring out over and over: “Jesus Christ loves you; he gave his life to save you; and now he is living at your side ever to enlighten, strengthen, and free you.” This first proclamation is called “first” not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one we must hear over and over again, in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment (EG 164).

Without a personal relationship with Jesus a person will never be able to cross the threshold of discipleship. Therefore, this is the starting point of the discipleship journey and all forms of catechesis should always stress the importance of this relationship. It is difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to believe in the possibility of this type of relationship if they have not heard the stories of individuals who actually have this type of relationship with Jesus. For this reason, all forms of catechesis should “normalize the sharing of our stories... here’s what God’s done in my life” (MM 105).

Those Who Catechize: As a catechist, you are a living witness of the Faith. Your relationship with God, the Church, and the sacraments should animate your natural gifts and talents as you teach. This is what will bring about lasting fruit in your catechesis (EC, back cover).

The foundation of catechesis is the formation of those who catechize. In forming and training catechists, it should be noted that those who catechize should demonstrate these qualities:

- A personal relationship with Jesus
- Knowledge and love of the Catholic faith
- Knowledge of, and the ability to articulate, the Kerygma
- The ability to create an atmosphere of welcoming and hospitality
- The ability and willingness to share with others the story of how God has acted in his or her life





ALIGNING SPECIFIC FORMS OF FAITH FORMATION

Religious Education: Every parish provides some form of religious education for their children. Despite dedicated catechists, however, the religious education models used by parishes seem to be failing.

The Catholic Church is losing more of her young people than any other religion right now, according to a recent study from St. Mary Press. The typical age of those who leave the Faith is 13. In fact, as of 2015, 13 percent of all young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 in the United States are former Catholics. The desire of parishes to reach young people remains an important one, but we have yet to adopt a model that really works. (MM 142)

In *Made for Mission* Tim Glemkowski offers some possible solutions:

Many (parishes) are finding more success by moving to a family faith formation model. A model can only go so far, however; it is how you implement it, so good questions to ask would be:

1. What does religious education look like currently in our parish?
2. What is working well?
3. What hasn't worked well?
4. How are we building community for parents in our religious education program?
5. How are we actively helping parents in our religious education program encounter Jesus personally?
6. In what ways are we currently trying to reach parents/entire families who are not yet disciples? (MM 144).

Sacramental Preparation: Through the Sacraments of the Church, God offers us numerous graces, but these graces do not “work” all by themselves like magic. In order for the graces particular to each sacrament to be effective, the person receiving the sacrament has to have the proper disposition.

The sacraments can only bear fruit in our lives if we let them. The all-powerful God of the universe sets up a plan for our salvation that runs directly through the seven sacraments and





they can only “work” fully in our lives when we say yes. Where the objective grace of the sacrament encounters the obstacles of unbelief and lack of openness, the grace is not subjectively effective (MM 137).

Turning our sacramental preparation into an evangelizing process can serve to help the parish renewal process as well as help those who receive the sacraments more fully benefit from the graces they receive.

As we look at the sacramental preparation programs through the lenses of evangelization and forming missionary disciples, here are some good questions to ask:

1. What could we do transform our sacramental preparation programs into evangelization processes with the goal of forming intentional disciples?
2. What are some ways we could accompany families and/or individuals as they prepare for the sacraments?
3. What unique considerations might we have for these individuals (preparing for the sacraments) as we try to win, build, and send them? (MM 140).

RCIA: Earlier it was mentioned that 75% of those who enter the Church through RCIA end up leaving the Church after 5 years. Most of our RCIA programs do a good job of catechizing, but many need to do more to make the process (especially inquiry) more pre-evangelistic and evangelistic in nature.

Earlier in this guide (The RCIA process as a Model of Evangelization) it was noted that the goal of the RCIA process is “meeting people where they are in their faith formation and taking a serious account of where they have been.” Achieving this goal requires a change in the way we structure the precatechumenate or inquiry period. In *Seek the Living God*, Nick Wagner gives us a glimpse of what this restructuring will require:

Someone told me recently the precatechumenate in their parish is one session. One parish I was in had a ten-session





precatechumenate program that required a textbook. If you Google “precatechumenate” you can find precatechumenate “lesson plans.” You can also find YouTube videos that seem intended for inquirers to watch as the core element of their precatechumenate process. All of these are misunderstandings of this first period of the RCIA process. If you turn to the “Outline for Christian Initiation of Adults (just before paragraph 36 of the RCIA), we see there that the precatechumenate “is a time of no fixed duration or structure.” Furthermore, RCIA 36 says the Precatechumenate is a time for evangelization (SLG 13-14).

Wagner envisions an RCIA process that is built around five questions that form the core of an individual faith formation plan:

1. Where have you been?
2. Where are you now?
3. Where do you want to get to?
4. How are you going to get to where you want to go?
5. How will you know when you have arrived?

A missionary disciple-making RCIA begins by first leading the RCIA team through these five questions to enable them to then accompany enquirers as they walk through the process and create and implement their own faith formation plan.

In addition, Tim Glemkowski offers a list of things that have helped to achieve the goal of forming missionary disciples through RCIA:

- Instituting a year-round catechumenate
- Providing a more fully developed mystagogy that includes substantial spiritual formation
- Building personal relationships between parishioners and candidates/catechumens through mentoring relationships and involvement in small groups with people outside of RCIA
- Bringing in programs like Alpha or Christ Life as a key piece of the inquiry process
- Holding an evangelizing retreat (MM 141)





As we look at our RCIA programs through the lenses of evangelization and forming missionary disciples, here are some good questions to ask:

1. How could our WIN step (discussed earlier) be a part of the evangelization and precatechumenate phase?
2. What additional formation/support may we need to provide specifically to those pursuing RCIA?
3. What would it look like to integrate our BUILD step (discussed earlier) into the evangelization and precatechumenate phase?
4. What additional formation might we need to have for those in RCIA in the BUILD step?
5. How could we provide formation for sponsors (and all those involved in RCIA) to help them in their own journey as disciples, as well as how they can share that vision with the catechumens?
6. What special consideration may we need for those who have just received sacraments at Easter? How could we teach a reliance on the Holy Spirit? (MM 142).

A final key concept to consider is the importance of language. Helping people view the RCIA through the lenses of evangelization and forming missionary disciples will require changing the way we talk about the process. Wagner provides us with some examples of the language change:

I don't use the language of academia or business to describe this process. So instead of constructing a learning contract, we are developing a faith formation plan. Instead of talking about competencies, we talk about gifts. Instead of talking about learning, we talk about developing or strengthening our gifts. In this faith formation model, there are no teachers, consultants, or counselors. Instead, our team consists of catechists, mentors, sponsors, and companions. Also, there are no students. We encounter seekers or enquirers. In the precatechumenate there are no classes. We have meetings, sessions, dinner, or coffee (SLG 23).





CATHOLIC EDUCATION AS EVANGELIZATION

Dr. Rhonda P. Clark, Superintendent of Catholic Schools

The “Vision for Catholic Schools” calls us to share our journey of faith as followers of Jesus Christ, through making disciples, serving each other and the wider community, and living our faith in partnership with our families, our schools, and our parishes. The four pillars of Catholic schools are written in “The Mission of Catholic Schools.”

- **Discipleship:** To form disciples and disciple-makers through faith formation, accompaniment, and personal faith commitment
- **Faith Formation:** To nurture discipleship that leads to transformation and growth on both the personal and collective level and to share and grow by celebrating our faith in prayer and reflection, encouraging and caring for each other and all those we serve, and acting with truth and compassion
- **Service:** To foster positive relationships with our schools, communities, and parishes to maintain and enhance quality support
- **Academic Excellence:** To respond to challenges, pursue continuous improvement, nurture a love of learning that will last a lifetime, and strive for academic growth in all subject areas

The “Core Values of the Diocese of Biloxi Catholic Schools” emphasizes that living and growing in the faith is the most important reason for the Catholic schools. The faith formation that a student receives in Catholic schools will go with him or her throughout his or her life.

LIVING FAITH

- We answer the call to make disciples, baptize all nations, and to teach all that Jesus has commanded us.
- We believe the Holy Spirit inspires all that we do.
- We recognize the true presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.
- We believe in the continuous growth of discipleship.
- We embrace the Gospel of Jesus Christ and encourage a personal





relationship with God the Father.

- We acknowledge the diversity of others.

ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY

- We teach how to accompany someone in faith.
- We lead through example and are accountable for our actions.
- We believe and promote our Catholic values.
- We affirm good judgment and trustworthy behavior.

PROMOTING TEAMWORK

- We foster small groups for accompaniment in discipleship.
- We communicate honestly, openly, and consistently.
- We work together to achieve common goals with all members of our school and parish communities.

ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

- We make disciples and disciple-makers.
- We respond to challenges and pursue continuous improvement.
- We believe high expectations lead to higher performance that, in turn, empowers the individual and strengthens society.
- We believe that all persons have intrinsic value and each person can contribute something of worth to society. Each child is unique, and our Catholic schools help unlock the distinct interests and talents of each child.
- We believe that excellence is a cooperative partnership with schools, families, parishes, communities, and churches.

INSPIRING LEADERSHIP

- We prepare discipleship leaders and disciple-makers.
- We prepare students for leadership and service in the Church and society.
- We celebrate integrity and seek fair choices.
- We believe Catholic schools are a mission of the Church and, as such, share in the responsibility of being Christ to the world.
- We believe it is each individual's responsibility to respect oneself as Christ teaches, respect others in a Christ-like manner, and strive to be a disciple of Christ by witnessing to others and being a leader in the church.





The Catholic schools of the Diocese of Biloxi work with the parish on the faith formation and faith journey of the student, faculty, staff, and their families. The partnership between the students, teachers, families, and parish is vital to the mission of forming intentional disciples of Jesus Christ. Our Catholic schools recognize the importance of a strong pastoral relationship with the parish.

Each student in our Catholic schools will have a faith formation plan that is part of the parish plan. This plan will follow each student throughout his or her school journey. Each plan will be as unique as the student completing it. The first part of the plan will be the curriculum for that school year. The second part of the plan will be the goals for the student, family, and parish regarding their faith formation journey. Goals are powerful tools that can focus efforts in a specific direction. Teachers and pastors will work with the student and the family to write the goals and discuss them during parent conferences throughout the year. These goals should be written with the assistance of the pastor (or a representative from the parish) and should outline how the student and the family will participate in the life and ministry of the parish and in their personal journey toward becoming a disciple and a disciple-maker. Each student should have a faith companion as they walk through the journey of faith. The goals should include attendance at Mass, parish functions, and age-appropriate faith formation training. Incorporating students' interests and passions into these goals will be beneficial to their success. Students will be able to take ownership of their goals and experience success in reaching them.

Our Catholic schools working with our parish communities will adapt the WIN-BUILD-SEND approach as outlined by Tim Glemkowski in *Made for Mission* pages 95-120.

Our Catholic schools and parishes exist to form disciples and disciple-makers of Jesus Christ. The vision and mission of Catholic schools and parishes are focused on that goal. Everything that happens in the classroom, athletics, extracurricular activities, or in any part of the Catholic school and parish program must be geared toward that end. Families who choose Catholic education enter a partnership with the parish and the school to form disciples and disciple-makers of Jesus





Christ. In the Catholic schools and parishes, we desire to share the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. We prepare our students to selflessly serve the community and the church and to passionately share the life-changing message of Jesus. Our most important charge is to form disciples and disciple-makers. This mission is what makes Catholic education distinctive from other types of schools.





YOUTH MINISTRY AS EVANGELIZATION

Ray Lacy, Director of Youth Ministry

OFFICE OF YOUTH MINISTRY DISCIPLESHIP ROAD MAP

Cast a vision: Share your vision of your youth ministry program with your parish. This happens at the pulpit but also by creating marketing pieces (banner and logo branding, bulletin inserts etc.) to announce and engage your youth ministry program beyond just Sunday. Will your youth ministry program be catechetical for middle school/high school (which replaces the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine [CCD]) or will you continue with your current Religious Education program and add a youth group as another activity?

- **Life Teen** is a program that can be utilized as a catechetical model or simply a more structured faith-building approach to a youth group.
- **Formed.org** has youth programs including Y Disciple that can be incorporated into youth nights with parishes using traditional or non-traditional catechetical models for religious education. Utilizing Formed.org in your parish overall also allows you to have a resource connected to other ministries in your parish, including parents at home. Whether you choose a traditional or non-traditional catechetical model, a clear vision should be planned and designed to form youth on the path to discipleship.

Craft a clear path to discipleship: While we need to provide a roadmap to discipleship for our youth, we also need to ensure we are creating a roadmap for our youth ministers, volunteers, and parents as well. Invite/create your leadership team and provide consistent formation and community within the group. Alpha, The 99, and Ananias Training are programs that walk with your leadership team and volunteers.

Mobilize Leaders: Share the vision of the parish youth program with your leadership team. Determine a reasonable kick-off date and work with your leaders to host Q&A sessions with your parish community leading up to and after your kick-off to give your parish, parents, and





youth the opportunities to ask questions with those who will be involved in the ministry. Make sure the focus is always geared toward the ways that all involved (priest, youth minister, volunteers, and parents) will be leading the kids closer to a personal walk with Jesus Christ. This means lesson planning and formation of the team called to do the work.

Align Everything: Whether using the traditional or non-traditional catechetical model, we need to intentionally invite our teens and parents into discipleship. Engaging a parent discipleship team can help empower those teen and parents to invite other parents into relationship and how to best encounter Jesus more personally for themselves and in their homes. Every person in the parish involved, whether a participant, volunteer, or leader, should have a clear understanding of the purpose and vision on how being involved is setting them on the path to deeper discipleship with Christ.

We have also created a PowerPoint explaining the roadmaps and the language used that we invite you to look over. biloxidiocese.org/ym-discipleship-roadmap





ADVANCING THE MISSION OF STEWARDSHIP

David Wyrwich, Director of Stewardship and Development

OUR JOURNEY INTO DISCIPLESHIP

What do you think about when you hear certain words? It's a natural human instinct to react to words that we hear based on our understanding of the words and our past experiences with those words. We have all seen the psychological word test where we say the word that first comes to mind when we hear a certain word. Say "cat," say "dog," say "island," say "ocean," and so on. What do you think about when you hear words like "Stewardship" and "Discipleship"? Many people would respond with "money" for "Stewardship" and almost any word in the English language besides "Catholic" for "Discipleship." Why do we react this way to words that are used so often throughout Scripture and used by Jesus himself in his parables of teaching so often? It is all based on our own past life experiences.

Let's start our journey by casting a clear vision: Jesus taught his disciples many things while he was among them. His teachings culminate in one succinct and direct command before he ascends to the Father, and we find that command in Matthew 28:18-20, where the Lord charges them, and us, by saying,

All power on heaven and earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.

Thirty-three years of life, three years of ministering and teaching his disciples, betrayal by his friends, an unjust trial, a horrid torture, a humiliating and excruciatingly painful death, a secret burial, and the resurrection all culminate in this command that he gives to us... "Go therefore and make disciples!" The Lord gives us this command and in doing so invites us, more accurately "voluntells" us, into ministry with him. What is that ministry? It is to do the will of the Father. What is the





will of the Father? It is to bring the kingdom of heaven to the world. This is our vision as missionary disciples — to bring God’s kingdom to the world. Everything we do in our lives must be seen and done in reference to this charge of the Lord. We are called by the Lord himself to help him, to cooperate with his will, to bring salvation to the world. This is our vision to begin our journey and to keep before us as we move deeper into discipleship with Jesus.

Let’s put our vision into action by creating a way, a clear path, to discipleship: Teachings on stewardship, or being a steward, are found in the Bible from the Book of Genesis all the way through the New Testament. What is stewardship, and why is it often a point of teaching of the Lord? Merriam-Webster defines the word stewardship as follows: “the conducting, supervising, or managing of something especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care.”

If you said the word “stewardship” to 100 people, do you know what 99 of those people will instantly think? You got it....MONEY! Why? Because we have become accustomed to associating money with stewardship, especially in the Church! If your parish has a “stewardship campaign” is it focused on raising up stewards? Probably not, it is more likely associated with raising the offertory or money for a project.

Go back and reread that part of the definition of the word “stewardship” that begins with “especially.” Now think of your life in relationship to that phrase. The Lord’s teaching on stewardship as part of our discipleship in him is centered on love: his love for us, our love for him, and our love for each other, our brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus (Matt 22:37-40). Was not Jesus’ life a life of service and love? Was not the greatest act of love in the history of the world the giving of his life for ours in fulfillment of his Father’s will? Of course it was, and that is what we are called to do — to live our lives as good stewards of the gifts and graces of God.

If our only gift from God were money, then our instinct to think of money when we hear the word “stewardship” would be right on the money...no pun intended. However, as disciples, we know that EVERYTHING we have is a gift from Almighty God. The air we breathe? Yes, he created it and gives it to us. The food we eat? Yes, all his doing.





The talents and skills we have to produce work and an income to live in the world? Again, yes, it all comes from him. Our moms, dads, sons, daughters, cousins, nephews, nieces, and all our in-laws? Yes, a gift from him. What about our priests, deacons, sisters, and the laity that always “gets it done” at the parish and for the Church? Yes, all gifts from God, given in love to us, so that we can more fully participate in his will to bring salvation not only to ourselves but also to others.

God gives us these gifts, literally everything we have, possess, and know, freely and out of love for us. God only asks us to use them for good and to help bring his Kingdom to the world. By our Baptism we become adopted children of the Most High God. By receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus at Mass we publicly profess our “communion” with the teachings of Christ and his Church. By professing our belief in Jesus, we also incur the responsibility he gave to his disciples to “Go, therefore, and make disciples...”

With a vision of cooperation with God to bring salvation to the world, our clear path to that vision is to lead a life of stewardship, giving of ourselves to Christ and His Mystical Body, the Church, we are now ready to charge forward...but how?

“Follow me!” (motto of the United States Army Infantry School):

Whenever something needs to be done, we need leaders to help us get it done. Leadership manifests itself in many forms. It is not always the General Patton type of personality, standing tall in a perfect uniform commanding respect and barking orders to eager troops. Leadership can often be disguised in hard work, thankless jobs, and the quiet behind-the-scenes actions of people. Have you ever noticed that your parish is decorated beautifully for Christmas and Easter Masses? Do you think elves and bunnies do that decorating? No, but leaders do. Have you ever gone to a Bible study at your parish with all the chairs, tables, food, and drink ready for your arrival? Who does that? Leaders do! Have you seen our brothers and sisters receiving help in the form of food, water, and shelter after a storm or some type of disaster? Who collects, organizes and distributes all that stuff? Leaders do! “Leadership” is another one of those words that conjures up images of fearless men and women standing before an unwinnable situation and somehow finding the way to win.





Yes, those are types of leaders, but they are not as common as you think. The real leaders in our lives are the people who care for us, who love us, who nurture us, both physically and spiritually. They are our family, our religious sisters, deacons, priests, and bishops. In living a life of true Catholic stewardship we are all called to be leaders in some way. We are leaders when we are faithful in prayer. We are leaders when we are faithful in participating in the life and mission of the parish, especially in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, our single greatest gift that God has offered to us freely. We are leaders when we live our lives in accordance with the teachings of Christ and the Church, and when we actively invite our family, friends, and even strangers into that life of grace and holiness. This is a simple way to cooperate with the will of God to make disciples. Will it always be easy? Of course not. In every relationship there is a cost and a reward. The conditions set for being a disciple of Jesus are set clearly in Matthew 16:24-28:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father's glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct. Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

The price of leadership in being a disciple is extremely high in terms of *this* world, but the rewards are eternally awesome! Will you be a leader for the cause of Christ the Lord?

Alignment ... it's not just for your car!: Have you ever been a part of a team tasked with a job or a project? You get together, discuss what is needed, gather supplies and then strike off on your own to start working to add your own individual piece to the puzzle. Have you ever gotten to the end, and had several great pieces that just didn't fit together in the big puzzle picture? That's where the importance of alignment of purpose and action come into the scene.





As leaders, (and we are all called to be leaders for Christ, right?) we all have our idea of how things should go. That idea must be aligned with the bigger picture, in this case the vision, pathway, and leadership that Christ calls us to in our lives. To change our own hearts, our families, our communities, the Church, we need not “swing for the fence” in an attempt to hit the grand slam home run for salvation. What we do need is to be disciplined (there’s that word “disciple” hiding in plain view) in our own thoughts and actions and to be constantly moving the ball forward a few yards every day in our own lives. When we do this, we begin to grow a little bit more in discipleship each day. When we begin to grow daily, we begin to witness to those around us in our daily lives: our family, friends, fellow parishioners, and colleagues. A popular phrase is “a crowd attracts a crowd.” Test it yourself some time by trying to walk past something a crowd has gathered around. You just can’t help but give it a peek and watch what everyone else is watching. This is a great model to use in drawing people to a more stewardship-centered life. Get 100 people working at your parish, school or ministry on a Saturday and watch how many people drive up to see what all the hubbub’s about.

The more we begin to live our lives grounded in the fact that all we have belongs to him and it’s just on loan to us while we are here, the more we will value these gifts and use them to draw ourselves and those around us to the one who calls us into a life of stewardship, Jesus the Lord.





THE COMMUNICATION OF EVANGELIZATION

Terrance Dickson, Director of Communications

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).

Effective evangelization requires a robust communications plan. When Jesus gave his apostles the Great Commission, they did not have the luxury of cell phones, email, social media and the plethora of communications resources we currently enjoy, not to mention automobiles. Instead, they traveled on foot (or on a donkey, horse or some other kind of four-legged creature) from city to city and town to town, proclaiming the Good News of Christ and performing miracles in his name. Imagine if all the wonderful technology we have today was available then. Peter and Paul could have announced their travel itineraries on Facebook and Twitter to attract more followers. Surely the videos of these miraculous healings would have gone viral, and those who witnessed these events would be calling or texting their friends to share what they just observed. However, the Apostles were not so fortunate to have the wealth of technological resources that make our lives so much simpler.

Every parish and ministry should take advantage of these resources to create a communications plan designed to make disciples and disciple-makers. Additionally, every parish and ministry should have a person or team, appointed by the pastor whose sole responsibility is communications. Beyond the Sunday experience—the hour or so when we have parishioners within the four walls of the church — how do we keep them engaged in the life of the parish? How do we keep them focused on the ultimate goal of making disciples and disciple-makers? That is the vision: communications as a form of evangelization and disciple-making.





Communications can be informative as well as formative. So, rather than thinking about communications as putting an announcement about Tuesday night BINGO in the parish bulletin, let's focus on how we can communicate in a way that serves our goal of making disciples and disciple-makers. Assuming each parish has an evangelization team, it's imperative that the communications and evangelization teams work in tandem to come up with ways to reach out to parishioners.

The following is a list of valuable resources:

- **Parish Bulletin:** In the majority of parishes, the parish bulletin is the bridge between the parish and its parishioners. It's the place to go for information about upcoming events, or to learn how much was received in last week's collections, as examples. However, the bulletin can also be used as a tool for evangelization and catechesis. For example, each week, for a period of five weeks, parishes can highlight one of the Five Thresholds of Conversion. Similar ideas highlighting the different forms of prayer, publishing profiles of saints or even having parishioners share their stories. (Be sure to make your bulletin available online and via email to reach the sick and shut-in).
- **In-person talks:** During the Mass, but not in place of or during the homily, have people share their stories about their relationship with Christ or highlight a specific ministry. Give attendees the opportunity to get involved in the life of the parish community.
- Small Group sharing is another excellent way to communicate.
- **Email/phone database:** Use a program (such as Flocknote) to send parishioners weekly or even daily messages to stay connected. Even a birthday shout-out to a parishioner goes a long way to establishing a feeling of being welcomed.
- Create a Parish App.
- Connect through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
- Create a parish YouTube or Vimeo channel.
- Utilize the diocesan newspaper, the Gulf Pine Catholic.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How are you enabling evangelization through communications within your parish?





2. Whom do you want to reach?
3. Why are you communicating with them?
4. How will you reach them?
5. What will be the content of your message?





SUMMARY

Jesus established the Catholic Church to evangelize, and he gives us his Great Commission in Matthew's gospel to make disciples of all nations, to baptize them, to teach all he commands us, and to trust that he is with us always. The reason we exist as a Church is to evangelize. To evangelize is to welcome people into a personal relationship with God that will transform them completely inside and out. Living out the Great Commission of Jesus is both personal and communal. Each of us is called personally not only to witness to our faith but also to accompany others in faith. Each of our parishes, schools, and ministries have the same mission, and it should be fostered each time the community comes together.

To answer the Great Commission of Jesus, our parishes, families, schools, and ministries will need to shift from a maintenance orientation to one of mission. This means we need to train our people, starting with leadership, on how to be companions in faith (how to accompany others in faith). This begins with listening to others and telling our story of faith. All of our ministries, organizations, and activities need to have disciple making as a goal. If an activity does not contribute to forming disciples, it needs to be examined to see if it can transition so that it does fulfill the mission of forming disciples or if the activity needs to continue.

In order to make the shift in our parishes, schools, and ministries, each needs to have a clear, concise vision, which is known by all members. There also needs to be a process for people to move through the Thresholds of Conversion and Faith, and they need to be accompanied in that movement of faith. Small groups have proven to be very effective in enabling people to grow in discipleship. The leaders of our communities need to be trained disciple-makers who embrace the clear vision of fostering discipleship, accompaniment (Ananias training), and forming disciple-makers. In truth, everything in our parishes, schools, and ministries needs to be aligned with the vision of Jesus, which is his Great Commission.

Forming partnerships within our families, parishes, schools, and ministries will enable us to have a Faith Formation Plan for each child,





youth, adult, RCIA participant, and family. Partnerships will ensure accompaniment and enable small group Faith Formation, thus providing the kind of support each person needs to move through the Thresholds of Faith—to become disciples and disciple-makers.

To make the shift in our parishes, schools, and ministries, from maintenance to answering the Great Commission of Jesus will mean we are all, as a Church, committed to accompaniment, individually, in small groups, and in faith communities. My prayer is that we will be able to hear the words of Jesus to make disciples, baptize all nations, teach what he commanded us, and to trust that he is with us always, to the end of the age.





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Special Thanks

to the Knights of Columbus for their generous support in underwriting the publication of this evangelization guide.

Thanks also to the many people who contributed their time and talents to bring the guide to fruition.



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