

SIXTH SESSION

The Path of Evangelization (continued)

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Luke 12:2-9: Courage Under Persecution

There is nothing concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the darkness will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed on the housetops. I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body but after that can do no more. I shall show you whom to fear. Be afraid of the one who after killing has the power to cast into Gehenna; yes, I tell you, be afraid of that one. Are not five sparrows sold for two small coins? Yet not one of them has escaped the notice of God. Even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows. I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others the Son of Man will acknowledge before the angels of God. But whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God.



A: The Sixth Step: Invitation Into the Cell

In [this phase], the evangelizer invites the evangelized to entrust himself to God, proposes that he become part of his own Cell [and] facilitates that introduction (Statutes, Ch. II, Art 7).

The “invitation” of this step of the evangelization process is actually two-fold:

1. Invite the friend to begin to entrust his or her life to the Lord, making, in a few words, a first act of faith in Jesus.
2. Invite the friend to enter the evangelization Cell, to continue the path of faith, which will make him or her go “from evangelized to evangelizer.”

Only through **invitation** can we be sure that our “net” – this simple instrument of relational evangelization through which we welcome, little by little, our brother or sisters into the boat of the Church – has been closed. It is the most delicate moment of the entire evangelization process but offers a participation in the joy of God (cf. Lk 15:7), which eventually becomes the joy of the entire parish community

INVITATION TO TRUST IN THE LORD

It is one thing to reply to the questions of a brother or sister and to explain the truths of faith in a way that removes doubts and difficulties. It is quite another thing to move that person to trust in the living God. In the former step, we remain mainly in the realm of the intellect. In the present step, we move into the realm of the heart. Of course, as we noted above, it is important to remove intellectual obstacles to faith, but intellectual assent can never itself substitute for the entrustment of the heart. It is only through trust that we move into the realm of *relationship*. Sherry Weddell explains:

“Former Catholics and nonbelievers of every stripe ... can be completely unprepared for the surprise of meeting [Jesus]. The threshold of curiosity is a perfect time to explore the possibility that a personal God exists and that you can have a relationship with that God. It is essential that we help people wrestle with this first, most crucial issue of a personal God. *Those who don't believe in a personal God and the possibility of a relationship with that God will never be able to move beyond the threshold of curiosity.*”¹⁰¹

Here Weddell is simply echoing the now famous words of Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical letter, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love). Since Pope Francis has said that he never tires of repeating these words, we will repeat them again here: "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."¹⁰²

Therefore, in our accompaniment of our brothers and sisters whom we are trying to evangelize, there comes a moment when we invite them to entrust the guidance of their lives to one of the three divine persons, according to the indication "Entrust your work to the Lord and your plans will succeed" (Prv 16:3). Only in that way will our brothers and sisters experience that "nothing is impossible for those who entrust themselves to God and place all their confidence in Him."¹⁰³

In the vision of PECS, the step of trust leads progressively to:

- conversion of heart,
- belief in the Gospel, and
- living the community life (*Statutes*, Ch. II, Art. 13).

St. Paul VI describes the progression of trust in this way:

"In fact the proclamation only reaches full development when it is listened to, accepted and assimilated, and when it arouses a genuine adherence in the one who has thus received it. An adherence to the truths which the Lord in His mercy has revealed; still more, an adherence to a program of life - a life henceforth transformed - which He proposes. In a word, adherence to the kingdom, that is to say, to the "new world," to the new state of things, to the new manner of being, of living, of living in community, which the Gospel inaugurates. **Such an adherence, which cannot remain abstract and unincarnated, reveals itself concretely by a visible entry into a community of believers.** Thus those whose life has been transformed enter a community which is itself a sign of transformation, a sign of newness of life: it is the Church, the visible sacrament of salvation."¹⁰⁴

INVITATION INTO THE CELL

As we can see in the above passage from *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, trust is the doorway to “adherence” to the person of Jesus who is also “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6) but this new life only truly becomes embodied when the person enters a *community of believers*. This is what is now proposed in the sixth step of the evangelization process of PECS. When the evangelized friend begins to open his or her heart to the love of God, he or she sees that entrusting one’s life to Jesus leads to abundant life (cf. Jn 10:10). This is the most opportune moment to introduce him or her to our evangelization Cell. Our proposal will be very simple – something like this:



“You know, I’m in a group that meets every two weeks at the home of one of our group members. There’s an environment of friendship and trust, with some prayer and sharing, all aimed at drawing closer to the Lord. You’d be welcome you to join us. It might be something new and unfamiliar for you, but if you want to participate in these meetings, I will be very happy to accompany you.”

If the person says yes, it will be the entrance of a long-awaited brother or sister. At this time, it does not yet make sense to speak of the invitee’s belonging to the parish of which the Cell is a part. The important aspect is the movement of the distant person towards a lived faith, which will represent the true encounter with Christ (cf. *Statutes*, Ch. II, Art. 14).

Some concrete points about introducing a new brother or sister into the Cell:

- A newcomer, from the first visit, should feel welcomed, desired and loved. If this were not the case, one of the most delicate and important moments of the evangelization process would collapse.
- It is essential that the person feels welcomed in a climate of freedom. As lively as the hope may be that the newcomer will integrate into the Cell, he or she cannot be required to commit from the first visit to the Cell.
- A person may be allowed to visit the Cell two or three times without seeking commitment. The person that perseveres will be able to commit himself or herself as a faithful member in the spirit of Parish Evangelization Cells.

- d. It is necessary, of course, to notify the leader in advance of the new member's introduction into the Cell, so that the admission is on a precise date, at a time when the circumstances are the most favorable, and the Cell itself is ready for such a reception and can prepare for it in prayer.

AND IN CASE OF FAILURE?

Every time you think you have failed in evangelization – if, for example, the invitation into the Cell is not accepted – present the situation to God in the prayer of adoration, letting the Lord enlighten you and draw near, above all, to the heart of that person, praying for him or her. The person of faith remains peaceful in what appears to be defeat and turns then to prayer and intercession. In general, the Lord blesses us with some visible “first fruits” of our evangelization efforts, but he wants us to continue evangelizing, even when we don't see the fruits right away. Keep the faith and keep sowing, recalling the truth of the proverb: “‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work” (Jn 4:37-38).

B: The Seventh Step: Life in the Cell

“No matter how many institutions we sustain or how much activity goes on in our parish or diocese, if new intentional disciples are not regularly emerging in our midst, our ministry is not bearing its essential fruit.”¹⁰⁵

In session three, we got a glimpse of what life in a Cell looks like by going to the heart of the matter: the weekly Cell meeting. At the same time, an examination of the seven fruits of Cell life helped us to see that the Cell cannot be reduced to a weekly meeting, but rather is a living community – a family within a family – that helps its members to:

- 1. GROW IN INTIMACY WITH THE LORD**
- 2. GROW IN LOVE OF ONE ANOTHER**
- 3. SHARE JESUS WITH OTHERS**
- 4. SERVE IN THE MYSTICAL BODY OF THE CHURCH**
- 5. GIVE AND RECEIVE SUPPORT**
- 6. DEVELOP NEW LEADERS FOR FUTURE CELLS**
- 7. DEEPEN OUR IDENTITY AS CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS**

If we were to summarize these seven fruits of Cell life in a single word, it would be *discipleship*.

DISCIPLESHIP: THE ESSENTIAL FRUIT OF THE CELL

Indeed, what Weddell says about our parishes and dioceses above may be said even more truly about Cells: If intentional disciples are not emerging from them, then they are not producing their most essential fruit. We have noted again and again in this Manual how the entire PECS vision for small groups is rooted in the Great Commission:

"Go, therefore, and *make disciples* of all nations ..." (Mt 28:19, emphasis added).

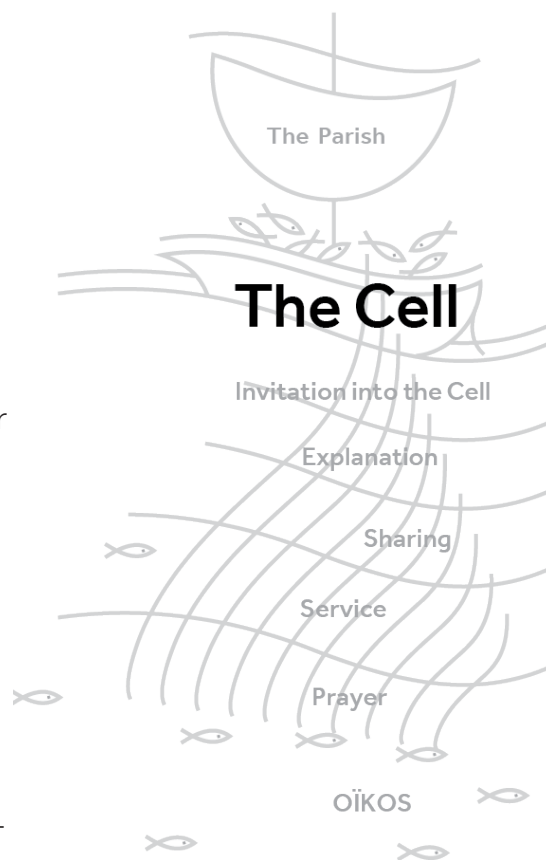
We want to underscore here how making disciples of Jesus is the *substance* of the Great Commission and is, therefore, the substance of Cell life. In fact, we can say that **the success of a Cell group depends on the degree of discipleship-making which takes place in the group**. We must remember, moreover, that entrance into the Cell itself does not mean one has reached mature discipleship. The Cell leader must continue to cultivate missionary discipleship in the members of the group. The Cell helps each new group member pass from being "among the baptized" to being a disciple of Jesus Christ, through personal and community growth. It is a journey that requires time and patience, but which will transform the life of the new member in the following ways:

- the person will accept Jesus as Lord of his or her life,
- the person will have a lifestyle consistent with the Gospel proclamation, and
- the person will go from being evangelized to becoming an effective evangelizer.

WHO IS A DISCIPLE OF JESUS?

Before fulfilling the Great Commission of making disciples, one must know what a disciple looks like.

a) The disciple is an apprentice, **someone who wants to learn**. A disciple is one who follows someone else's teaching, adopting the master's ideas and attitudes. The Christian disciple is someone who wants to put himself or herself in the school of Jesus Christ and is willing to be educated.



"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble of heart,; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light" (Mt 11:28-30).

b) The disciple is also a **follower**. A disciple follows where the master leads. To do this, the disciple must be available, without fear of sacrifices, and persevere on the path.

Whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. (Mt 10, :38)

Jesus is the only Master. He is "the way, and the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6).

As for you, do not be called "Rabbi." You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your Father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called "Masters"; you have but one master, the Messiah. (Mt 23:8-10).

c) The disciple is called to **dwel with the master** and – as with Jesus, who was an itinerant teacher – to remain always with him, in any place and in any situation, even to the foot of the cross.

- To be a disciple of Jesus Christ is to be in continual transformation. It therefore does not mean "to have arrived." The process begins with conversion and continues throughout our lives.
- To be a disciple does not only consist in adhering to intellectual truths, but in deeply sharing a way of seeing and living: faith; abandonment to the love of the Father; compassion for the poor, the sick and sinners; the certainty of the Kingdom of God; the Beatitudes; the prospect of the cross and the resurrection; the mission of salvation for all people; and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

d) The disciple is **subject to the authority** of Christ and of the Church.

- As Jesus is subject to the Father, so must we be subject to Jesus Christ. " Jesus answered and said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, a son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his father doing; for what he does, his son will do also." (Jn 5:19).
- The disciple recognizes the authority of the apostolic office. "Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me" (Lk 10:16).

e) The disciple **has the confidence** of his master:

- "I no longer call you slaves ... I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father" (Jn 15:15).
- The relationship of trust and intimacy created by Jesus with his disciples goes even beyond family bonds. "[For] whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother" (Mk 3:35).

f) The disciple, like Jesus, **seeks not to be served but to serve**.

- Each member of the Cell is in relation with the ecclesial body or the parish through the service accomplished in the Cell and in the community, through the exercise of the member's gifts and charisms, and through the member's participation in the Eucharist in the great assembly. The Body grows in charity through the participation of all the members. In the Christian community, everyone is a living stone that serves to build the spiritual temple. This is what we discover in the first letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-27).
- These members are all of us, and the Body will only be able to live effectively if each member assumes – with humility, perseverance and love – his or her own service, which draws its origin from a "particular gift" of the Holy Spirit. ALL have received their own gift, a "charisma" for the building up of the Body and for the common good.
- The Second Vatican Council instructs us:

"The laity are gathered together in the People of God and make up the Body of Christ under one head. Whoever they are they are called upon, as living members, to expend all their energy for the growth of the Church and its continuous sanctification, since this very energy is a gift of the Creator and a blessing of the Redeemer. The lay apostolate, however, is a participation in the salvific mission of the Church itself. Through their baptism and confirmation all are commissioned to that apostolate by the Lord Himself."¹⁰⁶

Everyone has a task that no one else can do. If a member is missing, something essential is missing from the Church.

g) The disciple is **called to become “apostle,”** which means “sent.” Intentional discipleship is necessarily “missionary” discipleship.

- Pope Francis is reminding us today that intentional discipleship is necessarily *missionary* discipleship. The Cell will carry out its proper task when the evangelized becomes, in turn, an evangelizer. In fact, after entering the Cell, the evangelized initiates a new phase of his or her own journey of faith. Until this moment, the evangelized had walked the path of conversion personally accompanied by the evangelizer; now, he or she will continue the path undertaken in communion with other Cell members, towards full integration into the parish.
- The evangelized cannot pitch their tent on Mount Tabor, but rather they must come down and get involved in the ministry. This service is not for a reward, but in order to give themselves out of love for the Cell members and for the one who called him or her (cf. Mt 17:1-8).
- The disciple of Jesus seeks to be guided by the Holy Spirit. This is the power the first disciples experienced and that which continues to strengthen those who ask for it in faith, to make evangelization more effective. “But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

WHAT CAN DESTROY THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISCIPLE AND MASTER?

- **Shame:** It is succumbing to our embarrassment and doubt in our God-given mission, lacking courage to bear witness to our faith to those with whom we interact in our everyday lives.

God can accomplish this salvation in whomsoever He wishes by ways which He alone knows. And yet, if His Son came, it was precisely in order to reveal to us, by His word and by His life, the ordinary paths of salvation. And He has commanded us to transmit this revelation to others with His own authority. It would be useful if every Christian and every evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God's mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame - what St. Paul called “blushing for the Gospel” - or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it?¹⁰⁷

- **Fear:** We are conditioned by the opinion of others (what the fiancé, the husband, the wife, etc. says). " Nevertheless, many, even among the authorities, believed in him, but because of the Pharisees they did not acknowledge it openly in order not to be expelled from the synagogue. For they preferred human praise to the glory of God" (Jn 12:42-43).



Small Group Discussion Questions

Share a time when you took that "leap of faith" and entrusted an aspect of your life to the Lord. Why does the invitation to "entrust oneself to the Lord" necessarily precede full invitation into the Cell?

Examine one of the seven attributes of a disciple, found on pages 117-120. Give an example of how you've seen this particular attribute awaken in your own life, or in the lives of those around you. Which of these seven seem easiest to attain? Which might be more difficult?

C: The Eighth Step: Integration into the Parish

The other sacraments, as well as with every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are tied together with the Eucharist and are directed toward it. The Most Blessed Eucharist contains the entire spiritual boon of the Church, that is, Christ himself, our Pasch and Living Bread ... In this light, the Eucharist shows itself as the source and apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel.”¹⁰⁸

Many Catholics are familiar with the Second Vatican Council's teaching that the Eucharist is the source and the summit of the Christian life.¹⁰⁹ Fewer Catholics are aware that the same Council taught that the Eucharist is also the “source and apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel.”¹¹⁰

THE EUCHARIST AS THE SOURCE AND SUMMIT OF CELL EVANGELIZATION

If indeed “every work of the apostolate [is] directed toward [the Eucharist],” then we would expect to find the Eucharist at the end of the PECS path of evangelization. And this is indeed what we find. “The Cell can be defined as ‘a small mediator community between the evangelized and the wider Eucharistic community: the parish’” (*Statutes*, Ch. II, Art. 15).

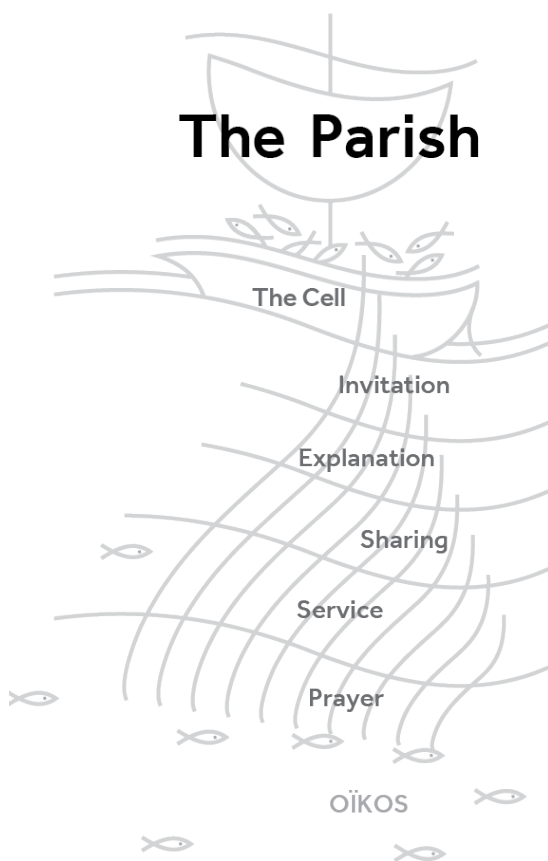
THE CELL AND THE PARISH BODY: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ‘LIGAMENTS’

The Church is the body of Christ. The apostle Paul does not hesitate to use this expression to speak to us about the mystery of the Church in its union with Christ. The word “body” is more than an image or metaphor. It signifies a spiritual, ecclesial reality. So too the “evangelization Cell” integrated into the parish community uses a biological metaphor to express an ecclesial reality.

Just like the biological cell in its relationship to the body, the evangelization Cell will grow and multiply to the extent that it is vitally integrated into the ecclesial body of the parish. Saint Paul, while exploring the image of the Church as a body, did not neglect to expound upon its dynamic of growth. If we evoke the most profound and complex passage in the New Testament to speak of the growing Church, we will be able to better understand why it is important for the Cell to be united with the ecclesial body:

"Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love," (Eph 4:15-16).

The growth of the ecclesial body and the development of the Cells that compose it, therefore, need ligaments. In the Parish Evangelization Cells System, and in coherence with these biblical foundations of the growing Church, it appears essential to maintain real links or ligaments between each Cell and the ecclesial body represented, in this case, the parish. Each Cell member is in relationship with the ecclesial body of the parish through the service the member performs in the Cell and in the community. The body is built and grows in charity through the participation of all members. We then speak of three levels of relationships:



1. **The members:** Each person forges links of service, sharing and brotherhood with other members of the Cells and the community.

2. **The Cell leader:** He or she keeps the Cell members in communion with one another and with the Cell leadership of the parish (e.g., pastor and coordinator).

3. **The pastor:** As a representative of Christ-Head vis-à-vis Christ-Body, he watches over the network of leaders (the structure) in communion with the entire parish, through two particular responsibilities:

- Maintaining the vision of evangelization – of growth and multiplication– at each level of the system,
- Nourishing and training all members and leaders so that they reach full maturity in Christian life.

In this session, we are therefore talking about the "ligaments" essential to the growth and multiplication of parish Cells

THE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE: A UNIFYING FACTOR AT THE SERVICE OF GROWTH

The growth of the Church, described in the Acts of the Apostles, obviously involves its structuring into ministries, in well-defined forms. The deacons are chosen, and, as the Church grows, ways are sought to maintain links, to visit new communities, to organize evangelization, etc.

In the ecclesial body, the Spirit, who is the primary actor in the growth of the Church, does not act outside the structures, but, on the contrary, expresses itself through them. The ecclesial structure, like a body that cannot stand without a skeleton, is essential in such a complex organism, in order to:

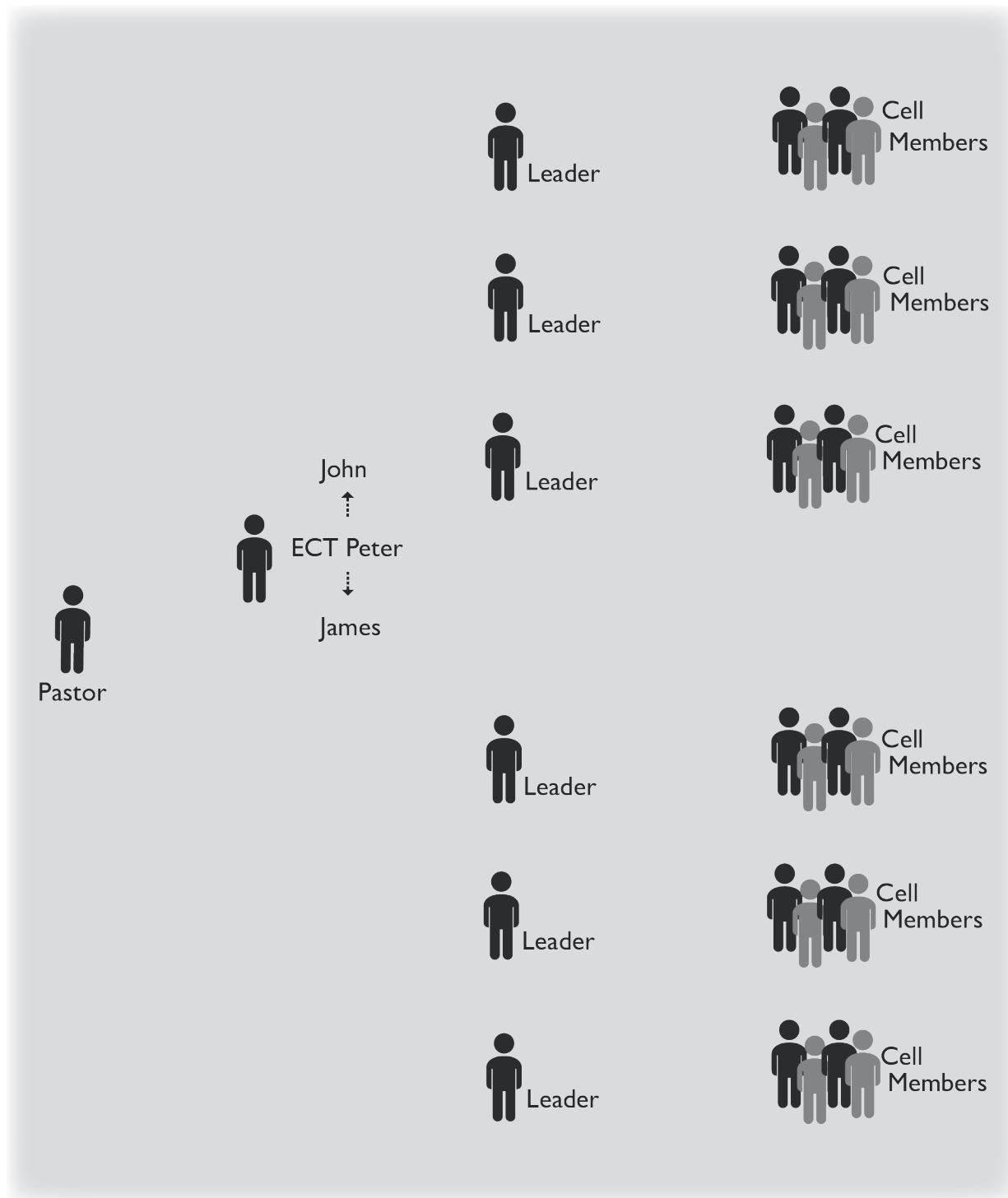
- promote organic and capillary work (that is to say, work which affects the entire body and reaches its extremities),
- check the work accomplished,
- correct a malfunction,
- support one another in difficulty,
- positively motivate, and
- give glory to God for each success of his work.

Through it, all believers can recognize themselves more easily as having “one heart and mind” (Acts 4:32). They can perceive the vitality of the Body of Christ and bring to fruition the gifts of God.

Likewise, each Parish Evangelization Cells System needs a structure to achieve its own objective. This structure must plan for growth by anticipating it, in order to be ready to develop in the future. It is interesting, in this regard, to read, in the book of Exodus, the episode of Moses on the institution of the judges (cf. Ex 18:13-27).

THE INITIAL STRUCTURE

The initial structure of PECS could have this configuration:



- The Cell member is accompanied by the leader.
- Each leader is accompanied by the pastor and the coordinator.
- When the number of Cells is very large, it is appropriate to add an additional level: the "area." A area leader is responsible for three to five Cell leaders. Each area leader is accompanied by the pastor and the coordinator.

The Role of the Executive Cell Team in Parishes

The Executive Cell Team is composed of the parish priest, who is the president, and by those he appoints: notably "Peter" (the co-responsible leader), "James" (who coordinates communications and perhaps logistics) and "John" (who ensures that efforts are grounded in prayer), as well as any Area Leaders (as the Cells begin to split).

The Executive Cell Team:

1. Through prayer makes the effort to discern the Lord's will for each situation and need as it relates to small groups in the parish;
2. Studies and proposes the most appropriate pastoral directions, keeping in mind Archdiocesan priorities;
3. Collaborates with Cell leaders on the subjects of the teachings;
4. Plans future training courses for new Cell leaders;
5. Adapts the development of the structure to support the growth of PECS in the parish;
6. (Perhaps) Organizes spiritual retreats and training meetings for all the levels of PECS in the parish.

The Executive Cell Team gathers (ideally) every week. The meeting begins with a time of prayer and adoration, which expresses the participants' desire to entrust each situation to the Lord.

The reciprocity of the structure allows the parish priest not only to be continuously informed on the spiritual and human growth of each single member of PECS in his parish, but also to establish a relationship between their different experiences, once the Cells begin to grow and produce fruit.

Regarding the communion between the different members within a structure, the Word of God reminds us:

"For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them," (Rom 12:3-6).

WHO IS THE CELL LEADER?

The leader of the evangelization Cell is a lay Christian, mature in the faith, who has received from the pastor of the community the mission of taking care of the members who are already in the Cell and of those who will be invited into. After the pastor of the community, the leader is the key person in this method.

What Are the Conditions for Being a Cell Leader?

- The leader has responded to a call from the Lord.
- He or she has received from the pastor the mission of guiding a Cell.
- The leader shares the pastor's goals and dreams.

What Are the Responsibilities of a Cell Leader?

- The leader is the first evangelizer and, at the same time, a teacher of evangelizers. If a Cell leader carries out this evangelistic service with passion, the whole Cell group will be passionately evangelistic.
- He or she accompanies the growth of its members according to the seven fruits of Cell life by valuing the gifts and charisms of each member.
- The leader ensures the harmonious growth of the whole Cell.
- He or she is a mentor of emerging leaders, aspiring to growth.
- The leader recognizes the charisms present in Cell members, entrusting them with services within the Cell, and discerns the co-leaders.
- He or she is a point of reference, an example and a model for the members of the Cell.
- The leader participates in the life of the parish.
- He or she has a team spirit.
- The leader adheres to the vision of the Cells and cooperates with the members of the structure to which it is subordinate.

Who Can Lead a Cell?

A Cell leader does not need to possess every gift under the sun. If an abundance of gifts were required, then just a few of us would be able to take on this task. Greater awareness of the role of charisms in Catholic life, however, has shed light upon one gift that we might say is the foundation of any small group: the charism of pastoring. Sherry Weddell, author of *The Catholic Charism Handbook*, describes it in these terms:

In addition to the hierarchical *office* of pastor, there is the *charism of pastoring*, a charism that the Holy Spirit distributes to both lay people and priests, women and men, and which may be powerfully exercised without clerical status. *The charism of pastoring* enables Christians to effectively nurture the inter-relationships and the spiritual growth of a group of Christians. Many effective lay pastoral associates and leaders of small Christian communities, Bible studies, and prayer groups have this charism ... Discerning and nurturing the giftedness of the considerable number of lay Catholics with the *charism of pastoring* will enable parishes to effectively nurture the spiritual growth of the average person in our increasingly large congregations.¹¹¹

How does one know if they have a charism of pastoring? Weddell summarizes,

Catholics with the charism of pastoring have an intense sense of what God will do when the Christian community is gathered together to pray or study or share faith. **They are the geniuses of small groups.** If small Christian communities don't exist when someone with this charism shows up, he or she will start them. The last thing that new disciples need is to feel isolated and alone within their parish. **People with the charism of pastoring know that we were meant to find God and that we were meant to find him together.**¹¹²

In addition to paying attention to signs of the charism of pastoring, we might look for the *following traits* in those who aspire to lead a small group:

Love of Jesus. An indispensable condition for the Cell leader to effectively witness his or her love for Jesus "is that he firstly needs to be in love with Him. This love for Jesus must be fed and constantly renewed in prayer, in listening to the Word, in the Sacraments celebrated within the parish and, in particular, Eucharistic Adoration" (*Statutes*, Ch. 1, Art. 6, Par. 2).

Love of Souls. If evangelization were not the most salient feature of a leader's life, the Cell would be nothing more than a social group. The Cell leader's spirituality must therefore be oriented "to know Jesus, to learn how to proclaim Him [and] to grow in faith. At the same time, through the love of God that has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, it is mandatory for the evangelizer to take an attitude of full acceptance of the 'neighbor'" (*Statutes*, Art. 4, Par. 2).

A Coherent Walk with God. A leader must never forget the words of the Beloved Apostle, "Whoever claims to abide in [God], ought to live just as [Christ] lived" (1 Jn 2:6). We must always keep in mind that those who are now in our care will become like us.

Capacity to Carry Out the Ministry. This capacity is normally tested during the period when a brother or sister is the co-leader or has some other responsibility within the Cell. The Bible puts us on guard against bestowing authority on any person who has not undergone some kind of a test.

Commitment to Leadership Training. No one should be authorized to lead a Cell without having previously attended a training program for leaders and without the authority of the pastor. Cell leaders, in fact, are invested with a great deal of spiritual responsibility, and therefore, should be committed to ongoing discipleship formation and Cell leader formation.

Participation in Parish Life. Every leader, besides intensely living the pastoral activities of the parish, should promote such a commitment for members of his Cell. This commitment includes stewardship of treasure to the parish.

Perseverance. Nothing is more satisfying or frustrating than carrying out relational ministry. The cost in time and weariness will be high, while growth may be gradual. Without God's call, one could be tempted quit this mission. But if the person relies on God as his or her guide and has the heart to follow through, he or she will be able to bear God's will to be the Cell leader.

How Is a Cell Leader Formed?

A Cell member may use the following formation process:

- Live, as a Cell member, the meetings with fidelity, and by expressing one's own gifts and charisms.
- Attend, at the suggestion of the current Cell leader, the "Small Group Leader Formation" course. He or she will become an expert in the Manual, studying it and praying with it.
- Exercise, for a certain time, the role of co-leader.
- Accept, in obedience, the call of the Lord and that of his or her pastor to become a guide of a Cell.
- Above all, lead – in an attitude of service and love – the Cell itself, which is the most important and significant place of formation.

WHO IS THE CO-LEADER?

The Cell leader is never alone. The co-leader is the brother or sister chosen jointly by the Cell leader (and the division leader, if applicable) with the approval of the pastor. He or she must, above all, have taken the Small Group Leader Formation course. The co-leader's tasks will be as follows:

- Practice leading Cell meetings at the request of the leader.
- Prepare to guide a new Cell with a desire to multiply the Cell to which it belongs.
- Possibly replace the Cell leader when he or she is absent.
- Fulfill, according to the instructions of the leader, new, increasingly important missions within the Cell (accompanying the progress of some young members of the Cell, for example).

THE CELL 'NUCLEUS'

Most Cells begin with a core group of individuals who are church members or regular attendees of church. This core group, including the leaders, could be as few as four people. The nucleus will consist chiefly of people who live in the same geographical area and its members will agree to:

- attend the group regularly,
- take a responsibility within the group,
- invite *oikos* members to the group, and
- commit to ongoing leadership formation.

THE 'RECIPE' OF THE EVANGELIZATION CELL

What are the ingredients of the "success" of an evangelizing Cell? Here is a "recipe" for almost guaranteed effectiveness.

START with a few people who share the Lord's desire.

ADD a few other ardent Christians, plus other people who want to meet Jesus or get to know him better.

ADD a good dose of prayer and another of personal commitment, through humble, free and selfless service.

MIX it all with a balanced and interesting sharing of your faith experience.

ADD a teaspoon of common sense.

DROP a pinch of humor.

SKIM OFF all the professional or religious jargon and excess emotionality.

SEASON with a generous welcome, interest in people and love.

REJECT all superiority and gossip.

LET the Holy Spirit set hearts on fire to praise the Lord Jesus Christ.



SERVICE IN THE PARISH

Active participation in the life of the local church will materialize by assuming a ministry or in service to the parish community (*Statutes*, Ch. II, Art. 15). We will recall that this “service” is one of the seven fruits of Cell life.

- As we have already seen, the first “service” is Eucharistic adoration, the principle and foundation of this process of evangelization;
- Secondly, in order to exercise his or her own charisms, each Cell member will be able to serve his or her community as part of a missionary parish: one that prays, loves and evangelizes.

Pope Benedict XVI affirms that “[t]he Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility:

- of proclaiming the word of God (*kerygma-martyria*),
- celebrating the sacraments (*leitourgia*), and
- exercising the ministry of charity (*diakonia*).

“These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.”¹¹³



Small Group Discussion Questions

In your own words, define the “charism of pastoring” that is so common in leaders of small groups. Speak about a time you might have felt the movement of this charism in your own life, or in the life of someone close to you.

What other “charisms,” gifts or talents can you imagine in the people who make up the Cell “nucleus”? Do you find you have one or more of these gifts?

D: Preparing for next time

Read and pray with Session 7. Video: www.archspm.org/session6 (Available 10/19/23)

Read and pray with any amount of Deus Caritas Est:

https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html

End Notes, Session 6:

¹⁰¹Weddell, Sherry. *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2012; 144; emphasis added.

¹⁰²Benedict XVI. *Deus Caritas Est*. 2005, 1.

¹⁰³Benedict XVI. "Address at Prayer Vigil with Young People." September 1, 2007.

¹⁰⁴Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. 1975, 23; emphasis added.

¹⁰⁵Weddell, Sherry. *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2012; 89.

¹⁰⁶Second Vatican Council. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 33.

¹⁰⁷Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. 1975, 80.

¹⁰⁸Second Vatican Council. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 5.

¹⁰⁹Second Vatican Council. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 11.

¹¹⁰Second Vatican Council. Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 5.

¹¹¹Weddell, Sherry. *The Catholic Spiritual Gifts Inventory: Helping Catholics Succeed at a Primary Discipline of the Christian Life*. Siena Institute Press, 1998.

¹¹²Weddell, Sherry. *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*. Our Sunday Visitor, 2012; 235; emphasis added.

¹¹³Benedict XVI. *Deus Caritas Est*. 2005, 25.