

## Everyday Evangelization in the Parish Office

Evangelization happens outside the parish and inside the parish walls, including the parish office. The process aims at transforming hearts (internal change) and the world (external change) by transforming the world one person at a time. Very often, parish teams are uncomfortable with the idea that they should be evangelizing one another and growing as disciples, but evangelization has to be part of our DNA as a parish. Don't expect your parishioners to do what your team is unwilling to do!

There are many ways that Catholics can evangelize. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Pope Paul VI writes that evangelization includes the following:

- catechesis
- preaching
- liturgy
- sacraments
- popular piety
- witness of the Christian life
- mass media
- personal contact

You might be wondering where to start with evangelization efforts in your parish office.

Here are ten simple "Everyday Evangelization" ideas for you to consider as a parish team.

1. Develop a love for Scripture and sacred reading as a parish team. Set aside a few moments every day to reflect and meditate on the Word of God together. It does not have to be a lengthy amount of time to "power your hours" together as a team to renew the parish.
2. Practice the art of discernment by actively calling upon and inviting the Holy Spirit into your meetings and gatherings.
3. Invoke a culture of intercessory prayer in the parish office by gathering regularly for prayer and inviting people to share what they would like to receive prayer for. Pray as a team to cultivate an awareness of how God is at work in the parish so that you can recognize those moments in your life and share them with others.
4. Share personal stories of how God is moving through your lives and regularly share those stories as a team.
5. Share stories of how the parishioners are living out their faith and how the parish staff might best support them.
6. Strive to attend Mass together as a team regularly or by designating a specific Mass once a week or month that the team is invited to celebrate together.
7. Hold in prayer someone on the parish team with whom you have a difficult relationship. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the grace to view this relationship in a more loving light and to recognize moments of opportunity to grow this relationship.

8. Offer words of encouragement to those who are struggling, either personally or in their ministry. Make it a point to presume goodwill about your teammates and to give them the benefit of the doubt.
9. Choose a specific corporal or spiritual work of mercy to carry out together regularly as a team.
10. Celebrate special moments together such as the parish feast day or days important to team members such as St. Patrick's Day, baptismal anniversaries, birthdays, or the birth of a child.

## Growing as an "Everyday Evangelizing Parish Team"

Choosing from the ten suggestions above, have each person put a check mark next to the three that the parish team carries out regularly. Compare notes. List the top three that are most consistent across the team on a board so that everyone can see them.

Circle three areas that the parish team needs to work on. Compare your notes and note the top three that the parish team identifies as needing attention. Choose the ones that the team will work on together.

## Back to Basics: Encountering Jesus

This printable resource can be used as a springboard for a parish team to come together and refocus their work on the core gospel message. It can be used for a series of staff meetings, a retreat, or an in-service varying in length and depth. It includes suggested Scripture readings, images, music, reflection questions, and prayer. Depending on where the parish team is in their journey of discipleship, you might focus on one of the movements or go through the experience all at one time. You can choose to substitute other images, music, reflection questions, or Scriptures as necessary. The kerygma, the core gospel message, is designed to move people through areas of opportunity and resistance in their own lives. This experience of the kerygma is one way to experience the gospel, but it is not the only way. Search out other ways to break open the kerygma as a parish team.

This experience is valuable for all staff, regardless of their ministry. There is often a tendency in parishes to think that those who have more formal theological backgrounds are further ahead in their journeys of discipleship. The great value in focusing on a back-to-basics approach is that it reinforces that we all need to grow as disciples and that no one person ever “arrives” or “graduates” as a disciple. People might say, “But I know all of this already” or “We covered this in our theology class” when this topic arises. There may be a fear of trying new things, a misunderstanding that this is not a Catholic approach, or confidence that we already cover this material in our parishes. While the lives of those who minister in parishes is punctuated by faith conversations regularly, we have to be even more careful to ensure that we do not become desensitized to discipleship or to where others are in their own journeys. Because those in ministry center their lives on what they do, there is an inoculation factor to be aware of.

A few pointers might ensure the success of this approach.

1. Read Chapter 2 together as a parish team. Allow people to read it alone and then come together to discuss and share. Appoint one person to facilitate the conversation so that all feel comfortable, respected, and heard.
2. Adapt this experience to accommodate the needs and cultural reality of the participants, such as choosing more appropriate music or imagery.
3. Ensure that the staff can choose their preferred format and how they will undergo the experience together. They may choose to go through the experience over a series of staff meetings or have someone else facilitate it at a retreat center. Incorporate great hospitality into this experience.
4. Some parishes have coupled this experience with Mass, adoration, or confession and sometimes all three. If you choose to do so, be sure to allow ample time for the experience.
5. Avoid discussion after the Scripture readings, saving questions, comments, and thoughts for either the end of each movement or the end of the experience.
6. Don't be afraid to allow a lot of time for silence as people work through areas of resistance in their own lives.
7. Some people experience God speaking as words through this experience; others feel a sense of peace or renewed hope; and some experience emotion. Tears are common during this experience, so plan accordingly.
8. It is important to process the kerygma, but give people a break between the actual experience and their talking about it. Encourage people after the experience to get up, get a snack, and come back after thirty to forty-five minutes to share their thoughts.

## Preparing the Team to receive the *Kerygma*

For some, this may be their first time hearing this message, or it may be a message that they know well and have heard many times. Regardless of where people are in this process, prayerfully invite people to enter this experience with an open heart.

Invite people to focus on the images in each movement of the kerygma in addition to the music and words. Ask people to practice deep listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit throughout the experience and to be attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Emphasize that people will have time for reflection during which, in the silence of their hearts, they may encounter obstacles or feel points of resistance. Encourage the team not to be afraid to confront these obstacles. God already knows them, and until we acknowledge their presence, we cannot get past them.

## Processing the Kerygma

It is important for a team to debrief on their personal experience rather than talk only about how to incorporate the gospel more concretely into the life of the parish.

Take some time as a team to reflect on the following questions and to share as people feel comfortable to do so:

1. What movement of the experience was the most comfortable and familiar? Why?
2. What movement was the most difficult? Why?
3. Share one new insight that came to you during this experience.
4. What image, phrase, or word stood out most to you?
5. What could we do differently as a result of this experience?
6. What area of ministry could incorporate a more kerygmatic approach?
7. How might we introduce our parishioners to the gospel in a new way?

## Movement 1: God is love and has created me for relationship with him.

- Scripture: Genesis 1:27–31
- Image: *The Moment of Creation* by Michelangelo
- Music Suggestions: “Our God Reigns,” “How Great Thou Art”
- Prayer: The Our Father

## Suggested Reflection

Remember a day when you were flooded with happiness: the day you graduated, the day you got your first job, the day you fell in love, the day you got married, the day you held your first child. Then remember the day when you realized that none of this was enough—the day you realized that you wanted more from life. We are made to love and be loved. We hunger for acceptance, we hunger for genuine relationship, and we hunger for a love that is eternal. This desire for God is written on our hearts. Only in God do we find the love and happiness we are all searching for. We are created by God, for God: “Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O God.”

## Reflection Questions

- Do you struggle with belief in God? If not, why not? If yes, why do you struggle with believing in God?
- When you think about love, what do you hunger for most? Who in your life has given you an experience of unconditional love?

## Movement 2: I have broken my relationship with God by my sin.

- Scripture: John 1:7–9
- Image: *The Prodigal Son* by Rembrandt
- Music Suggestions: “Come Back to Me,” “Lord Have Mercy,” “Kyrie”
- Prayer: The *Confiteor*

## Suggested Reflection

When you are in a relationship with someone and you continually hurt that person, your relationship becomes broken. Refusing to admit any wrongdoing and refusing to apologize can break relationships seemingly beyond repair. Our relationship with God is broken because of sin. A sin is any choice that goes against God’s love. Sin is how we say no to God. Sin damages our relationships with God and other people, leaving a trail of destruction and sorrow in its wake. And yet, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to give back to you—to us—an even more beautiful life, an eternal life.

## Reflection Questions

- What name can you give to the restlessness in your heart? What ache or hurt do you want to be free of?
- What is the one thing that you want to let go of in order to be truly happy?

## Movement 3: Jesus restores my relationship with God through his life, death, and resurrection.

- Scripture: Acts 2:22–24, 32–3
- Image: Any image of Jesus on the cross
- Music Suggestions: “Were You There?”
- Prayer: The Apostles’ Creed

## Suggested Reflection

Broken, beaten, spit upon, despised, taunted, battered, whipped, tortured, mocked, crucified. Died. Buried and rose again. All to bring you to new life. Jesus died so that you may live. He wants your whole heart—not just a small piece but all of you. He loves you and wants to be in an intimate and close relationship with you.

## Reflection Questions

- Place yourself at the scene of Christ’s death. What are you seeing?
- What are you hearing? Who is standing beside you? What are you feeling as you watch Jesus die in front of you?

## **Movement 4: Jesus invites me to trust him, to turn from sin, and to give my life to him.**

- Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:1–14
- Image: An image of Jesus with the disciples or with other people. An image of an outstretched hand works beautifully also.
- Music Suggestions: “Hosea,” “Suscipe”
- Prayer: The Suscipe of St. Ignatius of Loyola

### **Suggested Reflection**

What have you heard people say about Jesus? Is he a good guy? A prophet? A teacher? God? Regardless of what others say, go right to the source. What did Jesus say about himself? He tells us, “I am the Savior. I am your Savior.” So, imagine that one day, while you are out walking, you stumble into quicksand. At first you try to pull yourself out, but the more you struggle, the faster and deeper you sink. What do you need right at that moment? You need someone to save you! You need a person to grab you by the hand and pull you out of the quicksand. God’s answer to your struggle in quicksand is Jesus Christ. Jesus, as our Lord and Savior, intervenes for each one of us to save us from the quicksand we call sin. He died for you and lives for you. He wants you to place your trust in him, to place yourself in his hands.

### **Reflection Questions**

Have I handed over my entire life to Jesus? What areas of my life have I handed over? What have I not handed over? Why? What does my life look like today since I handed over my life?

## **Movement 5: Jesus has poured the Holy Spirit into my heart to bring me to new life in his Church and sends his Church on mission so that others can experience new life.**

- Scripture: Acts 2:1–21
- Image: Images of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost
- Music Suggestions: “Come, Holy Spirit,” “Holy Spirit, You Are Welcome Here”
- Prayer: Prayer to the Holy Spirit

### **Suggested Reflection**

The Holy Spirit remains with us and gives us the gifts of faith, hope, and love that make it possible for us to live as disciples. One cannot believe in Jesus Christ without sharing in his Spirit. The Holy Spirit reveals to us who Jesus is. For no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit. In that love we are called to proclaim the Good News to all creation, making disciples everywhere.

### **Reflection Questions**

- When I pray, which member of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) do I pray to?
- How do I share the Good News with others?
- In what ways do I have a sense that the Holy Spirit is calling me to share my story and share in the Church’s mission?

## The 10 Ds of Discipleship for a Parish Team

Parish teams that help their parishioners grow as disciples will find this process life-giving and life-changing. Programs and events previously thought to be important will no longer be considered crucial and the intensive work that emphasizes people over programs will start to bear fruit. In this regard, slow and steady wins the race. Helping our parishioners understand the significance of their baptism is critical to our mission.

Baptism imparts us with the grace necessary to share the gospel, and there are some keys that help us grow as disciples and form others into disciples. These actions are not to be understood as happening in a linear progression; they may happen concurrently and at different intensities according to the pace that the Holy Spirit wills. What are these key actions? Below are what I call my 10 “D” keys of discipleship.

- 1. Desire.** We began our journey as a disciple in baptism, but we must continually affirm our desire to grow in relationship with Jesus and his body, the Church. Without this desire, we can become disconnected and apathetic.  
Questions: How do we as a parish team spark the desire to become and grow as disciples in the parish?
- 2. Discern.** Being a disciple means that we must make the time to reflect on our lives. Just as Jesus went away to pray and discern whom to choose as his disciples, we must also discern what it means to be a disciple. Discernment and prayer are at the heart of the disciple’s life.  
Questions: How do we introduce the practice of discernment to our parishioners? Who guides them in this discernment?
- 3. Decision.** At some point in our lives, we recognize more fully that we need to set aside those distractions and habits that lead us away from Christ. This decision, or series of decisions, to say no to the things of the world and yes to Jesus Christ is at the heart of our ongoing conversion.  
Questions: How do we help our parishioners decide to follow Jesus Christ? How do we help our parishioners strengthen their relationship with the Church?
- 4. Discipline.** Saying yes to Christ involves personal sacrifice and discipline. Time is the currency of discipleship; if we want to grow as disciples, we must be disciplined in spending time with Christ and learning from him.  
Question: In what ways are we disciplined—or not disciplined—in our intention for, approach to, and implementation of discipleship efforts?
- 5. Dwelling in the Word.** The Word of God holds the power to form and transform us. God speaks to us in his Word. A disciple cannot grow and be nourished apart from the Word of God. Dwelling in the Word of God is essential for growth in the Christian life.  
Questions: What are some ways that we encourage people to be nourished by the Word of God? Does Scripture form the core of our small-group faith-sharing efforts?
- 6. Dependence on the Holy Spirit.** All the good that we do in life depends on the action or animation of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who awakens in us the desire to follow Jesus and to grow in holiness; the Holy Spirit shines through us. We must become more dependent on listening to the promptings and “nudgings” of the Holy Spirit.  
Questions: How do we as a parish team cultivate a reliance on the power of the Holy Spirit? How often do we speak of the Holy Spirit?

- 7. Denial.** Saying yes to God means saying no to the habits, beliefs, and practices that pull us away from him. Denial of self so that we can carry the cross helps us to develop reliance on God and resilience for the journey ahead. Jesus reminds us that “if any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

Questions: Do we speak of denial and sin to our parishioners? If so, how do we communicate this message? How is this received?

- 8. Dedication.** Being a friend and follower of Jesus involves daily dedication to living a virtuous and moral life. Dedication involves sacrificing our time and ourselves to give to others and to work with God in redeeming the world.

Questions: What sacrifices do we see our parishioners making to grow in discipleship? In what areas are they most dedicated? What areas need more prayer and work?

- 9. Deliberation.** Intentionality is necessary for the disciple. Like all practices, growth in discipleship is the result of small daily actions that help us conform ourselves even more to Christ. This is not happenstance; takes time and effort to plan and center our lives around our relationship with Christ. In the words of John, “he must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

Questions: How intentional are we in forming disciples? What is one specific change we can make to be more deliberate in our approach?

- 10. Do.** Discipleship is not a program but a process, a way of life. The entire discipleship process is an apprenticeship in faith, in the living out of the Christian life. We must move from being hearers of the Word to “doers.” We are nourished to be doers by Jesus’ very body and blood. He urges us to “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

Questions: Do we as a parish team “do” too little or too much? What areas of parish life do we need to reassess so that we can be doers of the Word and not doers of the world?



## Prayer: Our Daily Bread

Often at the parish, we can fall into a spiritual rut, especially when it comes to prayer. Many times, we have our own personal journey of prayer as ministers and forget that it is also important that we grow as a parish team in and through prayer together. As you go through the following list of common Catholic prayer practices, put a check mark in the appropriate box for those that are a regular part of parish life and your parish team. Have everyone fill out this chart individually and compare notes at a staff gathering. Decide on two or three prayer practices that the parish team will incorporate to grow in prayer together.

Habits of Prayer	Part of Our Parish Life	Not Part of Our Parish Life	Part of Our Parish Team	Not Part of Our Parish Team	Practices That We Would Like to Add
Morning Prayer					
Mealtime Prayer					
Daily Scripture Reading					
Lectio Divina					
Adoration					
Daily Mass					
Contemplative Prayer					
The Spiritual Exercises					
Examination of Conscience					
Corporal Works of Mercy					
Spiritual Works of Mercy					
Liturgy of the Hours					
Novenas					
Pilgrimages					

What are the top two or three prayer experiences that the parish is strong in?

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What areas could the parish team grow in?

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What is one concrete action that the parish team will undertake to strengthen the prayer life of the team?

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How will the responsibility for this action be shared by the team?

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*When evangelizers rise from prayer, their hearts are more open; freed of self-absorption, they are desirous of doing good and sharing their lives with others.*

*Evangelii Gaudium #282*

## Sunday Culture Assessment

Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Mass Time: \_\_\_\_ am/pm

Parish: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

*Reminder: Form should be completed as soon as possible after the liturgy.*

*Rating Scale:*

Strongly Agree		Neither Agree nor Disagree		Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

### Prior to the Mass

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. It was easy to find the parish website online including Mass times and parish location.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The parish website was updated, current, and visually appealing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The entrances to the church were clearly marked.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Parking was accessible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. I was welcomed by

### During Mass

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I was welcomed by word and eye contact at the door or in the gathering space of the church.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I was welcomed by word and eye contact entering the church or in the pews.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. People made room for me in the pew, either moving over or making it easy for me to pass them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The assembly was welcomed at the start of the Mass.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. It was easy to find the music in the proper hymnals, based on easy-to-understand church markings or the instructions given.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Music ministers were well prepared and assisted the assembly in participating in the music.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. The celebrant, deacon, and others associated with the liturgy were engaged throughout the Mass.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The lectors truly proclaimed the readings, emphasizing some of the words or phrases in ways that enhanced the meaning of the reading and my understanding of it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The community of parishioners did not seem tired or bored but awake and energized throughout the Mass.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. The homily was delivered in a way that connected with the people present.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. At the sign of peace, I felt sincerely welcomed or greeted.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. If something out of the ordinary happened during Mass (e.g., baby crying, cell phone ringing), the celebrant and/or the community seemed accepting and warm toward the person/people associated with the distraction.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 18. At the dismissal, I heard a distinct, inviting call for the community of parishioners to go forth and live out our Christian life in the wider community.

## Following Mass

- \_\_\_\_\_ 19. The liturgical environment was clean and free of clutter/not distracting from the Mass.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 20. I was offered a parish bulletin or other parish materials after the Mass.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 21. People were not in a hurry to leave the sanctuary after Mass, to rush to their cars, and/or to rush out of the parking lot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 22. After Mass, there was an opportunity for me to meet other people: coffee and donuts, etc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 23. I easily found brochures or other material within the church to help me learn more about the parish and/or about the Catholic faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 24. I was invited to return to the parish.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 25. Overall, I felt welcomed at this Mass and part of the assembly.

I would return for Mass again at this church: \_\_\_\_\_ yes    \_\_\_\_\_ no

Why?

## Our Story of Faith



When ***My Story*** encounters ***God's Story*** and becomes ***Our Story***, we begin to see our lives within the grand story of Salvation History.

Tom McGrath

Using the template entitled “My Story of Faith,” each member of the parish team works through his or her story of faith, completing the worksheet.

At a designated time, such as at a parish team retreat or over a series of staff meetings, each staff member will share part of his or her story of faith until everyone has had a chance to do so. Parish team members do not have to share their entire story but only what they feel called to share and are comfortable with sharing.

After a person has shared his or her story, every person on the parish team should take the opportunity to offer a word of encouragement, an insight, or a question for the person who has shared his or her story. Conclude each person's story sharing with a prayer of gratitude such as the following:

- *Good and gracious God, you have called us each by name to serve your people as the team of X (insert name of parish here).*
- *We are grateful that you have given us the opportunity to share part of our story with one another so that we can continue to grow in friendship with you and one another.*
- *Strengthen our witness so that we can be a true reflection of your merciful and loving presence. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.*

## Discern, Purify, Reform

“Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way.” I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities.”

*Evangelii Gaudium, #33*

A well-thought-out process and vision are necessary for disciple making, yet parish teams often overlook preparation for a process of pastoral planning. Consider pastoral planning preparation as kindling for the fire. This process is both spiritual and practical. A simple way to look at the preparation for pastoral planning is through the lens of something I call “the rule of three and three.” This methodology employs three pathways to becoming a disciple-making ministry coupled with three focusing questions as follows.

**Discernment.** Before you undertake any evaluation of your current ministries, view the preparation in terms of a process of discernment, and imbue this time with ample prayer. Objectively assess the parish and your ministry. Take time to pray about where the Lord is leading the parish and ministry while reflecting on the needs of the people you serve. As a team, call on the power of the Holy Spirit to lead, guide, and strengthen you for the journey ahead. Consider the following questions:

- Do we believe that the Lord wants growth and abundance for our ministries and parish?
- Do we have a “we have always done it this way” mentality or a scarcity mentality at our parish? If so, why?
- Is our parish in maintenance mode or mission mode?
- Do we step out in boldness and creativity in rethinking our goals, structures, styles, and methods of evangelization? Why? Why not?
- In terms of change, what are our greatest fears?

**Purification.** Identify successes, weaknesses, and opportunities that are available to you. Identify areas for pruning so that new life can occur. Not everything we do bears fruit, so we must take the time to distill the essential elements of our approach. Examine what is outdated or no longer working. Take the time to grieve, give thanks for all that was, and look at options for the future. Consider the following questions:

- What steps could we undertake that would be bold and creative?
- When we consider the staff, activities, committees, groups, and events at our parish, what things indicate a complacent mentality?
- What steps are involved in moving people from being consumers of religion to being active disciples?
- What ministries or processes could be pruned at this time?

**Reform.** Simplify and streamline your life and your ministry to focus on making disciples of Jesus Christ. Abandon or reform programs and processes that are not in total alignment with this goal.

- What ministries have the potential to be developed as centers of missionary outreach?
- What ministries need to be retired or paused at this time?
- What next steps would move us from maintenance into mission?
- Who are the strongest disciples or potential disciples at the parish?

After your conversation, use the chart that accompanies this section to continue to prepare for your pastoral visioning and goal setting.

## Pastoral Planning Preparation

We are doing many things to warm hearts, but we need to look at them in a realistic and healthy way. Jesus tells us to go and make disciples, not bingo players or picnickers! And yet, we sometimes spend more time planning for events and setting up tables and chairs than making disciples. Over time, this causes our baptismal fire to die down. Every activity should have the goal of leading people to encounter Christ. If you are spending time on activities that do not introduce people to Christ, then you need to stop doing them.

Have each person on the parish team sort every parish ministry, group, and program according to the following chart. Have one person compile them into one list and begin to talk about next steps.

Stop or Pause	Start	Keep

## Next Steps

**Decide on a few key initiatives and priorities.** These should be centered on the essential.

**Work to find alignment.** This is especially important so that all parish staff can see themselves in the process and have input.

**Use the *start*, *stop*, and *keep* model often.** Refine existing parish efforts and continue to align for growth.

**Look at the data.** At this point, an objective look at your parish data is essential in figuring out the critical next steps. This can be daunting for a parish, but it is a useful step in strategizing for possibilities and opportunities. Your data should be available from your diocesan office or recorded at the parish.

**Keep your plan simple and streamlined.** At every parish meeting, revisit the goals and how they are being lived out in each person's ministry.

**Share successes and failures with honesty and humility.** Encourage one another and do not neglect to "meet together as is the habit of some but encouraging one another" (Hebrews 10:25).

## Who, Why, What, and How: Our Parish Focus

This template takes your parish team through a process of who, what, why, and how for your parish so that all can align around a single unified mission and a vision with shared values. It sets forth a “who” and “why” for the work of discipleship in the parish. It creates awareness of who we are, why we exist, what is important to the parish, and how well various options align with the parish’s values. This statement creates consistency and intentionality in disciple making by aligning the parish team and parishioners around a common pursuit.

### Planning Template

	Components	Pastoral Statement
WHY	We advance our vision to. . .	Overall parish vision:
WHY	We believe in. . . ( <i>core beliefs or values</i> )	Why do we exist as a community of faith? What are our core values?
WHY	By emphasizing our patron saint, our strengths, and gifts	What is unique about our parish? How do the patron saint of our parish and the respective charisms become part of who we are?
WHO	by serving and forming. . .	Whom are we serving currently? Whom should we be serving?
WHAT	. . .in seeking to ( <i>parish goal[s] and supporting planning objectives</i> )	What do we hope to accomplish through our pastoral plan focused on missionary discipleship?
WHAT	Through our. . . ( <i>ministrie, programs, activities, or responsibilities</i> )	What is our primary pathway for forming people in faith? What are our strengths?
HOW	Our parish goal(s) and planning objectives are. . .	Goals:  Objectives:



## A Disciple-Making Approach to Leadership

To review: A disciple-making approach to leadership in the Church incorporates the ten attributes below. Spend some time together as a team talking through the ten attributes and share your thoughts.

### 1. Cultivate a deep reliance on God in prayer.

As a team, do we cultivate a culture of intentional intercessory prayer in the parish? Yes/no.

How might we cultivate a more prayerful approach to our ministries?

Do we pray together? Why? Why not?

### 2. Preach disciple-making homilies that focus on basic proclamation and missional sending.

Do the homilies connect with our parishioners? How do we know this?

What could we emphasize more in our homilies? What could we emphasize less in our homilies?

How is feedback provided about the homilies?

### 3. Foster a culture of hope, healing, and hospitality.

Would others regard our community as hospitable and welcoming?

How do we incorporate healing into all our efforts?

How do we inspire hope in our parishioners?

### 4. Invest in a few key disciples and spend ample time with them.

Who are our key disciples in the parish?

Who has unrealized potential?

What is our parish team strategy for accompanying and forming disciples?

### 5. Make small faith-sharing studies central to your disciple-making approach.

How might we continue to grow our small faith-sharing groups at the parish?

What curriculum or methodologies do we rely on most?

What small faith-sharing studies are key to our growth?

### 6. Make provisions for accompaniment throughout the formation process.

What is the current situation regarding how we accompany our parishioners?

What are our best avenues of accompaniment?

How might we reimagine accompaniment not as an option but as an essential part of our discipleship process?

**7. Pray with, celebrate with, and worship with one another as parish leaders.**

How do we celebrate individual and team successes?

What does our communal prayer life look like?

How can we continue to grow in praying and worshipping together?

**8. Provide ample opportunities for encounter and conversion.**

What are our strongest efforts to help people encounter the Lord?

What holds us back in providing more opportunities for genuine encounter and conversion?

What is one thing that we can do differently to facilitate encounter and conversion?

**9. Cultivate and share stories of faith.**

Do we as a parish team share our stories of faith?

Do we encourage our parishioners to share their stories of faith? How?

What could we do better in this regard?

**10. Read and discuss disciple-making books and articles as a parish team.**

Do we read shared materials together?

What books would we like to read together?

How often will we incorporate reading and discussing of disciple-making materials into our parish meetings?

## Small-Group Discipleship

If we would consider our parish committees as small groups in need of evangelization and intentional spiritual formation, then the parish paradigm would shift dramatically from maintenance to mission. If your parish has eighty of its members on committees and in leadership groups at the parish, and if these people would grow in faith together, imagine the change that this would affect in the parish! The following templates will help the parish team figure out a strategy for small-group support of existing and new committees or groups in the parish.

Name of Parish Committee or Group	Number of Members	Name of Those on Multiple Committees or Groups	Overall Stage of Discipleship for Group: • Beginning • Growing • Intermediate • Mature	Leaders or Potential Leaders in Group

## Process for Discipling Specific Committees (*not meant to be exhaustive*):

Committee Name:	Lead Staff Mentor:	Supplemental Team Support:
Provision for Prayer: (How is prayer incorporated into formation?)	Intercessory Prayer: (Who will keep the team in prayer?)	Ongoing Prayer Format:
Small-Group Faith Formation Process:	Program Used:	Format (once a week, twice a month, etc.):
Scripture Component:	Retreat Experience (once a year, twice a year, etc.):	Catechesis Component:
Incorporation of Story and Witness:	Provision for Accompaniment of Members at Different Stages of Faith:	Evaluation and Feedback:

Many of our parish committees are separated by their area of interest (worship, catechesis, welcoming), but there is tremendous value in bringing all these groups together occasionally to focus on the best ways to foster a culture of intentional discipleship in the parish. What is our plan for helping our parish committees and groups grow in faith? How can we accompany them on their journeys?

## The Parish That Started with Jesus

Most Blessed Sacrament parish in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, successfully applied the three vital questions—What do you need to STOP doing, START doing, and KEEP doing?—to refocus their efforts as follows.

### What did they stop doing?

Settling for good enough

Protecting lowercase-t traditions

Wasting time on things that didn't produce disciples

Leading with rules and set timelines

### What did they start doing?

Intentionally praying for the parish, the staff, and the parishioners.

Asking why

Focusing on adults

Welcoming all

### What did they keep doing?

Emphasizing a missionary vision and mission

Praying frequently

**For Reflection:** What gives you the greatest hope from Most Blessed Sacrament parish's approach? What is one transferable idea that you could implement from Most Blessed Sacrament parish's experience? How will you implement this idea?

What is your timeline? Who is responsible for implementing this idea? How will follow-up be conducted?

## Parish Challenge

Picture the following scenario:

It is June 25, a beautiful, sunny Thursday afternoon. The parish team has half an hour left until the office closes. It has been a slow day and a slow week where not one non-registered parishioner has stopped by the parish office.

A young man named John walks in. “I am really excited about the Catholic faith,” he says to the first person he meets. “I am hoping that someone here is able to talk with me more about Catholicism and help me become a better person.”

### Assess

How would your parish typically approach this scenario?

As a result of the new insights gleaned throughout this book, how should this scenario unfold?

Who would meet with John currently? Who should meet with John in an ideal situation?

What does the process (not program) of walking with John look like at your parish?

How might the current process need to be tweaked or changed as a result of this scenario?

What “on-ramps” for John do you have at your parish?

### Debrief

One of the most common responses to the scenario above is to ask John if he is Catholic. If he is Catholic, we normally would tell him about all the events that will take place in the fall because all our small groups are on a break during the summer. That is, if we have any small groups to invite him to. We may invite him to something social such as a parish picnic. Rarely do we take the time to sit down with John and ask him about his story, with questions such as the following:

- What excites you the most about your faith at this time?
- What is it about our community that you’re drawn to?
- What do you need from us at this time?

If John admits that he is not Catholic, we may invite him to come back the third week in October when our RCIA program begins. This is a missed opportunity for us at the parish.

Rare is the parish that will have an “on-ramp” for John that meets year-round by which he can continue growing in faith. That must change if we are to meet people where they are.

### Respond

Taking the scenario of John above, apply the thinking in this chapter to the following processes:

- Marriage preparation
- Engaged couples ministry
- Baptism preparation

What concrete steps can you undertake to ensure that the focus is on the readiness of the individual/family?

Write down one concrete action that the parish will undertake to ensure that they will move from a programmatic and staid educational model of catechesis to a readiness model that focuses on process and care for the needs of the person.

## Discipleship Review

### 1. We are disciples of a person.

The name of that person is Jesus. Stay close to the person of Jesus.

How do I stay close to the person of Jesus each day?

### 2. We are not teaching a subject but introducing people to a way of life.

Make friends with people and share life with them.

Outside of the parish, what civic organizations or community activities am I involved in where I can be close to people?

### 3. Disciples make disciples.

Programs, events, and opportunities do not make disciples; we do.

Do I rely more on programs and events in disciple making than on the person of Jesus and my relationship with him? If so, how can I change that?

### 4. You can lead others only as far as you have gone yourself as a disciple.

If you are a beginning disciple, you will lead others to where you are. If you are a missionary disciple, you will be able to help people move through the stages of discipleship from beginning to growing and, finally, to maturing discipleship just as you were helped.

What stage of discipleship do I believe I'm in? What stage of discipleship would I like to grow into?

### 5. You never "graduate" from being a disciple.

As we deepen and grow in our relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church, we never stop growing—we never graduate from discipleship. When we look at the horizon, it seems far away but is always just beyond our reach. Part of our growth as children of God means continually growing in friendship with God our Father.

How do you avoid a "graduation" mentality when it comes to your faith? How do you help others see that discipleship continues to grow and evolve the closer we move toward Jesus Christ?