



The Gospel Challenge

Two thousand years ago, Jesus came to live among us. He looked at the brokenness around him: poverty, fear, materialism, selfishness, discrimination. Everyone – whether lowly or powerful – was shackled by something.

He told us, *you don't have to live like this! There is a better way to live! Follow me*, he said, *and I will show you how. When you surrender your whole life to God, God will set you free. And when you live differently, the whole world changes... into God's Kingdom.*

Then he said, *tell everyone this Good News!*

Do we believe it?

The Catholic Church says this is its mission – its purpose and reason for being – to change the world into the Kingdom by the way we live and to tell everyone this Good News. It calls this mission *evangelization*, and says it is the job of every Christian.

We start in **conversion**, committing to Jesus and following him as disciples. We **witness**, living all aspects of our lives by the counter-cultural values of the Gospel. And we tell people why we live this way, **sharing** our faith with others.

Living a life of discipleship is not easy! The mission of parish communities is to prepare and support their members for this challenging mission in the world.

An enormous gap exists between the Church's vision of the [laity] and the lived experience of most lay men and women. Over and over again in our workshops, life-long Catholics across North America and Oceania have asked, "How come I never heard this before?" They have never heard, much less grasped, the significance of their identity and their mission in the body of Christ... Yet, when Catholics do realize that the Church teaches they are apostles in their own right, "sent ones" who literally stand in the place of Christ in the world, the effect is positively electric. As one woman in a workshop phrased so beautifully, "I used to think that I was not worthy to kiss the sandals of Jesus. Now you're telling me that I'm to put them on and walk like they fit—that I stand in his place with my daughter, at work, with my friends. This is revolutionary!"

Sherry Anne Weddell, Catherine of Siena Institute



The church is not
an agency to be served,
but a workforce to be deployed.
- Oscar Feucht, *Everyone a Minister*



The church must be a catapult that hurls Christ-bearers into every distant corner of human society... we must close the gaps between our Sunday faith and our weekday world... and between what the church proclaims as the role of Christian lay persons in the world and what the church does to support that role.

Frederick K. Wentz

The church does not exist to be served, but to provide and equip servants. As someone once said, "It is to be a launching pad, not a hangar."

Marlene Wilson



...congregations don't realize how serious the problem is. Therefore, they might think, "Oh, we do this pretty well. We tell everybody they are Christians all day, 24 hours a day. What else do they need to know?"

Well, you need to know a lot more than that.

How are you a Christian 24 hours a day? For a lot of folks, trying to find God at the workplace in certain situations is tough sledding. You know, things are not always clear; they're very ambiguous. And where is God in this mess I'm in, or in this decision to fire this person, or in this family difficulty of mine? ...one of the problems is admitting that there is a problem. The church has kind of glossed over its inadequacy.

Al Roberts



Conversion

The first part of evangelization is the **process of conversion** (*metanoia*), a change of heart, mind, and way of living: being reborn in Christ.

Commitment to discipleship – In conversion we choose to become an *intentional* disciple, surrendering our lives to God, following Jesus, and taking on the work of evangelization.

Personal relationship with God – We believe in a personal God who calls us by name and cares about us as individuals. Discipleship requires a living relationship with God, sustained through prayer.

Commitment to the Church – We cannot be disciples in isolation, but only within the supportive community of the Church.

Ongoing process – This is not a one-time event, but an continuous, life-long process in which Christ continues to invite us to be more like him.

This is crucial: we must be converted—and we must continue to be converted! We must let the Holy Spirit change our lives! We must respond to Jesus Christ. And we must be open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit who will continue to convert us as we follow Christ. If our faith is alive, it will be aroused again and again as we mature as disciples.

Go And Make Disciples, U.S. Bishops

Christian faith requires conversion; it changes who we are, what we do and how we think. The Gospel offers "good news" and guidance not just for our spiritual lives, but for all the commitments and duties which make up our lives. Living our faith in the ordinary tasks of everyday life is an essential part of what it means to be holy today.

Everyday Christianity, U.S. Bishops

Witness

The second part of evangelization is living a **life of Christian witness**: living the Gospel and helping change the world into the Kingdom of God by our daily actions, whether we mention our faith in the process or not.

A way of life – The gospel is not merely an influence on our lives or a part of our lives, but an entire world view and way of living. It is intimately connected to our work, talents, relationships, parenting, money, consumption, time, possessions, and more...

The Kingdom – Jesus calls us to help bring about God's Kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven" by our daily witness.

Good news – *Gospel* means "good news," and it is a better, more fulfilling way to live our lives. It leads us to heaven, but it also sets us free from everything that holds us bound in this lifetime!

Mature disciples make a conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to themselves. Beginning in conversion, change of mind and heart, this commitment is expressed not in a single action, nor even in a number of actions over a period of time, but in an entire way of life. It means committing one's very self to the Lord.

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response, U.S. Bishops

Above all the Gospel must be proclaimed by witness. Take a Christian or a handful of Christians who, in the midst of their own community, show their capacity for understanding and acceptance, their sharing of life and destiny with other people, their solidarity with the efforts of all for whatever is noble and good. Let us suppose that, in addition, they radiate in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values, and their hope in some-thing that is not seen and that one would not dare to imagine.... Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the Good News and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelization.... All Christians are called to this witness, and in this way they can be real evangelizers.

Evangelization in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI

One of the great challenges for Christians is as old as our faith... How do we connect worship on Sunday to work on Monday? How is the Gospel proclaimed not only in the pulpits of our parishes, but also in the everyday lives of Catholic people? How does the Church gathered on the Sabbath act as the People of God scattered and active every day of the week? How can we best carry the values of our faith into family life, the marketplace and the public square? How do we love our neighbor, pursue peace and seek justice in everyday choices and commitments?

Everyday Christianity, U.S. Bishops

Sharing

People notice when we live differently, and for the third part of evangelization we must be prepared to **explicitly share our faith** and invite others to "come and see" Christ and the Church for themselves.

Identifying as Catholic – Simply mentioning to friends and acquaintances that you are Catholic opens up opportunities for them to ask you more.

Invitation – Find opportunities to invite people to parish experiences, whether Mass or a workshop.

Inactive Catholics – We particularly want to reach out to Catholics who have drifted away from the faith. They are our friends, relatives, and acquaintances, and they may be waiting for an invitation or nudge to return

Respect – We must fully respect those with whom we share our faith, and never pressure or manipulate in the process.

Gift of faith – Don't be so concerned about imposing that you miss an opportunity to offer the gift of your faith to someone who is yearning for it.

...even the finest witness will prove ineffective in the long run if it is not explained, justified - what Peter called always having "your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have" - and made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus. The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life.

Evangelization in the Modern World, Pope Paul VI

[We ask] Catholics to reach out to those who do not belong to a faith community and to invite them to consider the power of the Gospel of Jesus, which the riches of the Catholic Church can bring into their lives. Perhaps this may seem the most difficult of all the tasks evangelization asks of us. Yet if we have once seen the joy of those received into the Church at Easter, if we have ever experienced the growth of those going through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, if we have ever seen someone thrilled with the Gospel for the first time in his or her life, we know that this is, in truth, one of the sweetest gifts of the Spirit.

Go And Make Disciples, U.S. Bishops

The Role of the Parish

Catholic parishes share in the mission of the whole Church to evangelize, through conversion, witness, and sharing. The parish primarily does this by forming, equipping, and supporting its parishioners in becoming and living as intentional disciples in the world.

All about mission – The parish is challenged to focus on the mission to the world and become a true evangelizing community, rather than being internally focused on parish maintenance.

Formation – The parish forms its members, inviting them to ongoing conversion by bringing them to Jesus and teaching the Gospel.

Daily life – Formation needs to include practical application and tools for daily life, and not just stay abstract.

Seeking seekers – The parish needs to be welcoming and provide good opportunities for people to experience the parish for the first time.

Parishes are essential sources of support and encouragement for Christian discipleship. At their best, parishes help believers prepare and go forth to live the Gospel in everything we do. The Sunday liturgy sends us forth to renew the earth and build up God's kingdom of justice and peace. We encourage our pastors and preachers to listen to their parishioners on the challenges of their daily lives and help bring the insight of the Gospel and the principles of Catholic teaching to these experiences. We affirm prayer and worship which help believers apply the Gospel to everyday situations.

Everyday Christianity, U.S. Bishops

In much the same way that being an evangelizing community is not primarily something a parish does but something a parish is, being a community that fosters adult faith is not primarily specific programs that a parish offers but the understanding of lifelong learning that permeates the entire faith community.

Toward an Adult Church, Jane E. Regan

...the Church wisely and repeatedly insists that adult faith formation is "essential to who we are and what we do as Church" and must be "situated not at the periphery of the Church's educational mission but at its center." Yet despite the consistency and clarity of this message, the Catholic community has not yet fully heard and embraced it.

Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us, U.S. Bishops

*Learn more at GospelLiving.org:
Helping parishes equip disciples to change the world*

*Christ has no hands now but yours...
Yours are the hands with which he blesses the world...*

This Labor Day weekend we recognize and celebrate how we serve God through our occupations

"The ordinary work of people on their jobs, with their families and in their neighborhoods is as much a part of the function of the church as is Sunday Mass or Tuesday evening Bible study. This daily fidelity to work sustains and improves the human community, and thus advances the kingdom of God."

William Droel and Gregory Pierce

Identify Your Occupation

Your occupation is whatever **primarily occupies your time** at this point in your life, paid or unpaid. You are called to **ministry** in your current occupation, whatever it is.

Many have **traditional jobs**. Others are **homemakers** and/or **parents**. **Seeking a job** is an occupation. Being a **child** and/or **student** is an occupation itself (not just preparing for one). Those who are **retired** have different occupations: as gardeners, travelers, grandparents, book readers, community volunteers, and many more.

You don't have to have an especially "noble" job to serve God through your occupation. Through our work, we can find meaning, serve others, and make the world a better place.

Wear Your Occupation

When you come to Mass this Labor Day weekend, wear whatever you would in your occupation (especially if it identifies it). Don't worry if your occupation is not obvious from your clothing: we will have name tags you can write it on. Feel free to wear hats or jackets if you use one on your job. You can wear something with the name of your employer or school.

Bring a Symbol

At the Presentation of the Gifts, you are invited to place a symbol of your occupation on a table in front of the altar. We offer to God the work of our hands, which we use to bring about the Kingdom. Please claim your symbol from the table right after Mass.

St. Augustine Catholic Community
400 Alcatraz Avenue, Oakland CA · staugustineoakland.com
Saturday Vigil – Aug. 31, 2013 – 5:00pm
Sunday Eucharist – Sep. 1, 2013 – 8:00am and 10:30am

