

7 Principles for Parish Evangelization

Outlined by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*
(The Joy of the Gospel)



Department of New Evangelization

Diocese of Green Bay

“The Church which ‘goes forth’ is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice.”

Pope Francis

(Evangelii Gaudium #24)

Introduction:

In the document “Evangelii Gaudium” (The Joy of the Gospel) Pope Francis outlines for us what it means to be a truly missionary community that goes out and serves the people of God, evangelizing through the witness of hope and love rooted in Christ. This booklet, outlines seven principles of an evangelizing community and are taken from paragraphs 24-33 of Evangelii Gaudium. A quote from Pope Francis is outlined, with questions for your reflection followed by a Scripture and a prayer. This document is a means for your parish to reflect upon its evangelizing efforts and how they might be strengthened.

Blessings on your parish and your ministries,

Julianne Stanz

Director of New Evangelization

An evangelizing community...

...knows that the Lord has taken the first step in the evangelization process.

... is a supportive action-oriented community that patiently responds to people’s real needs.

...bears fruit.

... is marked by deep joy and rejoicing.

...is marked by flexibility and frequent contact with its members.

...fosters a Spirit-filled environment where members are trained to be evangelizers.

...is bold and creative in assessing how it operates and conducts itself.

Evangelizing communities know that the Lord has taken the first step in the evangelization process.

“An evangelizing community knows that the Lord has taken the initiative, he has loved us first (cf. *1 Jn* 4:19), and therefore we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast. Such a community has an endless desire to show mercy, the fruit of its own experience of the power of the Father’s infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. The Lord gets involved and he involves his own, as he kneels to wash their feet.



He tells his disciples: ‘You will be blessed if you do this’ (*Jn* 13:17).” (EG#24)

Questions for Prayerful Reflection:

- How do we as a parish community show that we believe that the Lord has taken the initiative in loving us?
- Are we a community of mercy? How is this expressed?
- How can we kneel before the people we serve and become truly involved in their lives?

Pray the Word:

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:42-45

Pray It Forward

Loving Father,

Through the mystery of the incarnation we know that you have taken the first step in loving us. It is only in recognizing and embracing this gift that we can move forward, boldly take the initiative, go out to others, seek those who have fallen away, stand at the crossroads and welcome the outcast.

Help us to be a community that radiates the mercy of the Father’s infinite mercy. Let us try a little harder to take the first step and to become involved in the lives of those around us. As Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, help us to kneel before your people in humility and love. We ask this through Christ, our Lord, Amen.

Principle 2

An evangelizing community is a supportive, action-oriented community that patiently responds to people's real needs.



“An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. An evangelizing community is also supportive, standing by people at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. It is familiar with patient expectation and apostolic endurance. Evangelization consists mostly of patience and disregard for constraints of time.” (EG#24)

Questions for Prayerful Reflection:

- In what ways are we involved in people’s lives?
- Are these the “typical” moments where the Church has always been present (marriage, baptism, funerals) or other moments (for example, when a family experiences a miscarriage, when a young person gets their driving license, when a young person graduates from school or college, when one of our parishioners becomes terminally ill)?
- How do we truly embrace the suffering of our parishioners?
- How do we support our parishioners who are immigrants, struggling with pornography addiction, gambling or substance abuse of any kind for example?
- In what ways are we patient with persons who are lonely, angry and difficult?

Pray the Word:

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Matthew 11:28-30

Pray It Forward

Loving Father,

Help us as a parish to be truly involved by word and deed in people’s daily lives; to bridge distances and to embrace human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Guide us as we seek to be truly supportive of our parishioners standing by them at every step of the way, no matter how difficult or lengthy this may prove to be. Help us to be patient and to disregard any time constraints that we may impose upon this process. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Principle 3

An evangelizing community bears fruit.

“Faithful to the Lord’s gift, it also bears fruit. An evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants her to be fruitful. It cares for the grain and does not grow impatient at the weeds. The sower, when he sees weeds sprouting among the grain does not grumble or overreact. He or she finds a way to let the word take flesh in a particular situation and bear fruits of new life, however imperfect or incomplete these may appear.” (EG#24)



Questions for Prayerful Reflection:

- When we consider the groups or committees active in our parishes are they growing?
- What are the fruits of their labor?
- Is our parish community growing?
- Where are the weeds in our parish life?
- How do we address them?
- What are the fruits of new life in our parish?

Pray the Word:

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:4-5

Pray It Forward

Loving Father,

Help us to bear fruit in our efforts to faithfully evangelize and disciple all those who we come into contact with. As we sow Gospel seeds in our ministries remind us of the need to be patient when we see weeds sprouting up in our efforts. Help us to avoid the tendency to grumble, overreact or seek perfection. Instead, uplift us as we remember that the word takes flesh in every situation and bears the fruits of new life, however imperfect or incomplete these may appear. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

Principle 4

An evangelizing community is marked by deep joy and rejoicing.



“Finally an evangelizing community is filled with joy; it knows how to rejoice always. It celebrates at every small victory, every step forward in the work of evangelization. Evangelization with joy becomes beauty in the liturgy, as part of our daily concern to spread goodness. The Church evangelizes and is herself evangelized through the beauty of the liturgy, which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving.” (EG#24)

Questions for Reflection:

- Would an outside consider our community joyful?
- How do we celebrate the small victories of our parish leadership and of our parish in general?
- Is the liturgy at the heart of our parish life?
- Is the time of our liturgies accessible and appropriate for those whom we hope to invite to be a part of our parish?
- How is our liturgy beautiful? In what ways could this be strengthened?

Pray the Word:

Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

Pray It Forward

Loving Father,

Fill us with true joy so that we may rejoice at every small victory and every step forward in the work of evangelization. As part of our daily concern to spread goodness, may every liturgical celebration be filled with beauty which is both a celebration of the task of evangelization and the source of her renewed self-giving. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.

Principle 5

An evangelizing community is marked by flexibility and frequent contact with its members.

“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. It continues to be ‘the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.’ This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed cluster made up of a chosen few.” (EG #28)



Questions for Reflection:

- Would those not currently attending Church but registered at one time at our parish consider us to be inflexible, out of touch, or self-absorbed?
- What checks and balances are in place to ensure that our parish strives to continually welcome all to our parish?
- Do the same people make up all of our committees/councils? In what ways is this a problem? How can this be solved?

Pray the Word:

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Galatians 3:26-29

Pray It Forward

Loving Father,

May our parish be a home for those longing for peace and a resting place for those who are hurting, suffering or broken in any way. May we always seek to be a place of openness, warmth and flexibility and dwell in the homes and hearts of Your sons and daughters. Help us to reach out as never before where the catch you have waiting lies for us. Move us into deeper waters so that we can let down our nets and gather Your people. We ask this through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Principle 6

An evangelizing community fosters a Spirit-filled environment where members are trained to be evangelizers.



“The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach. We must

admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.” (EG#28)

Questions for Prayerful Reflection:

- Do we have a plan for evangelization in our parish?
- What steps are involved in moving people from complacency and being consumers of religion to being active disciples?
- Is our parish a center of constant missionary outreach?
- What ministries have the potential to be developed as centers of missionary outreach?
- Is our parish in maintenance mode or mission mode?
- What one step could we undertake that would move us from maintenance to mission?

Pray the Word:

Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

Acts 4:32-33

Pray It Forward

Loving Father,

Uplift our parish, as we strive to be an oasis of God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration. In all of our activities Father, we ask you to help us to encourage and trains our members to be evangelizers. Help us to be a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach of living communion. We ask this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Principle 7

An evangelizing community is bold and creative in assessing how it operates and conducts itself.

“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.” (EG#33)



Questions for Prayerful Reflection:

- Do we have a “we have always done it this way” mentality at our parish?
- When we consider the staff, the activities, committees, groups and events at our parish what things are indicative of a complacent mentality?
- Do we step out in boldness and creativity in rethinking our goals, structures, styles and methods of evangelization?
- What three steps could we undertake that would be bold and creative?

Pray the Word:

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.” And he who sat upon the throne said, “Behold, I make all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.” And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the fountain of the water of life without payment.”

Revelation 21:3-6

Pray It Forward

Loving Father,

Help us to uncover and to abandon any complacent attitudes that we may have so that we may step forward with vitality and creativity in serving Your people. Inspire us to be bold in rethinking our goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization. Give us the necessary strength and patience to do what is needed and set aside what does not bear fruit. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord.

Amen.



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