

Charlotte/Greece/Hilton Parishes Evangelization Initiative

May 25, 2023

Notes

Present: **Holy Cross/Our Mother of Sorrows:** John Owens, **St. John the Evangelist:** Marianne Katz, Dominick Zarcone, **St. Lawrence:** Kathy Edsall, **St. Leo the Great:** Joan Rohr, **St. Mark:** Carolyn DelVecchio, **Facilitator/link to the Pastoral Planning Task Force:** Karen Rinefierd

Excused: **St. Charles Borromeo:** Rose Marie Lombard, **St. Lawrence:** Patricia Urbinelli

Opening prayer: Prayer to the Holy Spirit, faithsharing

Discussion to begin focusing our approach/target audience(s)

- What is our objective—bringing people into active participation in our parishes or helping people to have a relationship with Jesus Christ and God the Father through the Holy Spirit with church participation being secondary?
- Do we need something that is measurable?
- Should our focus be based on groups or individuals? Nothing is off the table.
- Sometimes it seems that we have excessive concern with filling the pews. We hope to have people have a first-time experience of God or deepen their relationship with God and trust that God is guiding them. Our goal is not to proselytize. If someone has found a different faith community where they find God, our job is to share with them and bless them. There is a difference if they have no faith community or are disenfranchised.
- Dialogue/conversation with baptized Catholics who now participate in a different ecclesial group can be an expression of genuine ecumenism. Yet, because we believe Christ Jesus has entrusted to his Catholic Church the fullness of grace and truth, shouldn't/couldn't the Catholic Church be the best forum for encountering-experiencing-expressing faith in Jesus and how does the Church (us) best facilitate those Christ-centered experiences?
- There are lots of different scenarios where we can meet people—e.g., when they present their child for baptism, when they come to one of our parishes for a funeral.
- We want to bring people into a relationship with God.
- Holy Cross has been struggling with this question over the past year. The parish has committed to study and work with the book "Divine Renovation." They will begin with a survey to learn what people are looking for to see how to help them become more engaged parishioners. They are interested in getting more people into their seats. How to strengthen people who are not involved beyond weekly Mass?
- I am convinced that people at my parish have deep faith, but they do not know how to talk to others about their faith.
- It could be a roleplaying opportunity to share how/when/where we encountered and experienced Jesus and how/when/where we express faith in our Savior Lord.
- Perhaps our first target audience for evangelization could be ourselves, our committee's members.
- We see many coming to weddings, funerals, First Eucharist, etc. who are unfamiliar with the Mass.
- St. Leo's called 60 people who had pulled back during Covid to see how they were, mention some upcoming events, and give them confidence to come back. This activity did help.

- If people are going to stay home and livestream Mass (for whatever reason), how can we elevate the experience for them?
- Our bottom line should be not to take offense if someone doesn't want to join the Catholic Church.
- Much evangelization is one on one. How can we help people to do that without judging or criticizing? We could use role playing to demonstrate do's and don'ts.
- Programs we are aware of or have experienced to evangelize those in the pews and prepare them to share their faith with others: the 99 evangelization mission series, Catholic Alpha, ChristLife.
- The 7-parish shared website group is talking about creating portals on a new website to share opportunities at our parishes where those from the other parishes could participate—e.g., evangelization, bible study, bereavement ministry, faith formation.
- There has been organic sharing of ministries and staff among two or more of our parishes—e.g., faith formation, finance, Knights of Columbus, sponsoring a bereavement group.
- Some of our parishes have shared a Lenten retreat in the past. This year the 7-parishes shared a Lenten series on the Eucharist.
- Maybe there could be a Lenten or Advent calendar listing all the parishes' activities.
- Discussion of various ways our parishes communicate with parishioners. Beyond bulletins, websites, and social media, Holy Cross and Our Mother of Sorrows send emails to their people multiple times per week through Flocknotes and other parishes have regular email blasts.
- We need to begin by evangelizing those already active, because some people who do ministries for a long time forget why it is important. I think we need to re-energize people so that ministry looks joyful to do.
- We have opportunities to engage people after baptism and at funerals.
- Many of our people are sacramentalized but not evangelized.
- Cursillo's method of evangelization is "make a friend, be a friend, bring that friend to Christ."

Joan distributed copies of the brochure used in the welcome packet St. Leo's parishioners hand delivered to the homes of newcomers to the Hilton-Parma area and a copy of the front of a recent parish bulletin.

One value of this evangelization group will be sharing best practices and ideas from each of our seven parishes.

Homework:

- At the next meeting be prepared to share what your parish is doing in any area related to evangelization.
- Bring a sample bulletin and any relevant materials being used by your parish.

Next meeting: Thursday, June 29, 6:30 pm, at St. Charles Borromeo