

Forming Intentional Disciples **Study Guide**



**Office for Catechesis
Diocese of Springfield in Illinois**

Chapter One: God Has No Grandchildren

Summary: Numerous studies show a rapid decline in Catholic identity among those who were born into the faith. This decline takes two very different forms: Catholics interested in deepening their connection to God or whose needs are not being met at their Catholic parish may turn to a Protestant community; those who disagree with specific Church teachings may drift away and become “nones.” Both changes typically occur by late adolescence or early adulthood. The Church must evangelize its members and assist them in establishing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ if it is to call them to discipleship.

Outline of Chapter

1. *Climate Change*
2. *Living in the Land of “None”*
3. *Who’s At Mass?*
4. *Ebb and Flow*
5. *Going Somewhere and Going Nowhere*
6. *Track A: Becoming Protestant*
7. *Track B: Becoming a “None”*
8. *Young Adults and Religious Change*
9. *When What Worked Before Doesn’t Work Anymore*
10. *Won’t the Sacraments Bring Them Back?*
11. *Religious Change: It’s Not Just for Anglos*
12. *Multitudes in the Valley of Decision*
13. *It’s All About Relationship*

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think is meant by the phrase “God has no grandchildren?”
2. 70% of Americans who were raised Catholic no longer attend Mass once a month. Do you know anyone who fits that description? Do you know how they would describe their reasons for no longer attending Mass?
3. What stereotypes do you have about Catholics who join evangelical communities?
4. Catholics who left to join a Protestant community were most likely to state that they left because their spiritual needs were no longer being met. What needs do you think they are talking about?
5. Sherry suggests that, counter to our assumption that people at Mass are Catholic, many religiously unaffiliated people come in and out of our churches on a regular basis. Do you think this is a reasonable suggestion? Does your parish have a way of identifying and reaching out to such “nones?”
6. In the past the Church could rely on the ambient culture to reinforce her teachings and encourage participation in religious activities. Does your parish encourage “intentional Catholicism,” or does it rely on “cultural Catholicism?”

Additional Resources

Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei*, “The Light of Faith” (2013): <http://bit.ly/TheLightOfFaith>

Fr. Robert Barron, “Why Catholics Leave the Church: A Commentary”: <http://bit.ly/WhyCatholicsLeave>

William J. Byron and Charles Zech, “Why They Left” (*America Magazine*, April 30, 2012): <http://bit.ly/WhyTheyLeft>

“Robin of Berkeley’s” Christmas Eve Story (original no longer available online; archived version available): <http://bit.ly/RobinChristmas>

Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Your Alive* (B&H Books, 2014)

George Weigel, *Evangelical Catholicism: Deep Reform in the 21st Century Church* (Basic Books, 2013)

“Here lies the fundamental challenge that we face: to show the church’s capacity to promote and form disciples and missionaries who respond to the calling received and to communicate everywhere, in an outpouring of gratitude and joy, the gift of the encounter with Jesus Christ. We have no other treasure but that.”

- Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean; Concluding Document, General Conference V (2007)

Chapter Two: We Don't Know What Normal Is

Summary: Faith is not transmitted through identification with the Catholic Church; rather, authentic Catholic identity is fostered by a living experience of discipleship. This involves three “spiritual journeys”: the personal, interior journey of a lived relationship with Christ; the ecclesial journey of reception into the Church through baptism, confirmation, and holy communion; and the journey of active practice. Too often we assume that completion of the second two journeys implies the first; this is a false assumption. Because of individual and institutional silence regarding a personal relationship with Jesus Christ many Catholics are not even aware that the first journey is possible. This had led to an impoverished understanding of discipleship.

Outline of Chapter

1. *Transmitting the Faith: The Lineamenta*
2. *Three Spiritual Journeys*
3. *The Culture of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”*
4. *It Is Normal*
5. *What Is Discipleship?*
6. *Examining Our Paradigm*

Questions for Discussion

1. In her talks with parish leaders around the country, Sherry identifies that about 5% of parishioners are intentional disciples of Jesus Christ. Does this number surprise you? Why or why not?
2. What percentage of parishioners in your parish would you estimate are intentional disciples of Jesus Christ?
3. Sherry discusses the three “spiritual journeys” that lead to true discipleship. How would you assess your own progress on these journeys?
4. Have you ever heard a priest or parish leader talk about their personal relationship with Jesus? If so, what was your reaction? If not, why do you think they’ve never discussed it?
5. How would you assess yourself for each of Sherry’s “normals”? (See Appendix I for a self-assessment tool.)
6. How would you put the Christian kerygma in your own words?
7. Who in your life would you describe as an intentional disciple?

Additional Resources

Synod of Bishops, *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith – Linementa* document:

<http://bit.ly/NELinementa>

Pope Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei* (For the Indiction of the Year of Faith):

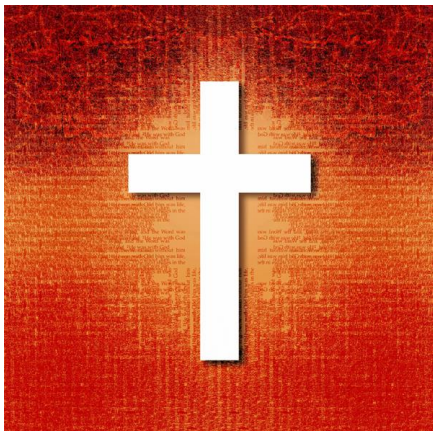
<http://bit.ly/DoorOfFaith>

Fr. Robert Barron, “What Faith Is and What Faith Isn’t”: <http://bit.ly/WhatFaithIs>

Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan, *Doers of the Word: Putting Your Faith Into Practice* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2009)

Matthew Kelly, *Four Signs of a Dynamic Catholic: How Engaging 1% of Catholics Could Change the World* (Beacon Publishing, 2012)

Elizabeth Scalia, *Strange Gods: Unmasking the Idols in Everyday Life* (Ave Maria Press, 2013)



“By letting the love of God, received in the Eucharist, flow through us in our care for others, we provide a light for others to see. When we leave the church after having received Holy Communion, we go to a world that is full of darkness. We encounter people who are struggling with the crosses of life in the forms of physical suffering, emotional anguish, or spiritual desolation. They can be tempted to follow the example of Judas and give in to despair. We have the opportunity to bring them the light of Christ and so encourage them to have hope in the midst of their trials and to trust in faith that the God who loves them has not abandoned them.”

- Bishop Thomas John Paprocki, *Ars celebrandi et adorandi* (2014)

Chapter Three: The Fruit of Discipleship

Summary: Discipleship is central to healthy parish life and healthy parishes make discipleship a priority. Too often parishes set low expectations for the life of discipleship. Pastors must recognize their role in fostering the common priesthood of all the baptized, including helping the faithful discern their charisms and promoting the lay apostolate. Only then will true collaboration be possible between the ordained and the laity.

Outline of Chapter

1. *A Remarkable Parish*
2. *Discipleship is Central*
3. *The Experience of Sacred Heart Parish*
4. *Cultivating Discipleship*
5. *Pastoral Governance*
6. *Participation of the Laity*
7. *The Heart of Vocation*
8. *Discerning Charisms*

Questions for Discussion

1. Reflect on the story of Christ the King parish in Ann Arbor, Michigan (pp. 71-75). Have you ever been to a parish like this? How would you identify a parish with a strong sense of mature discipleship?
2. Does your parish have high expectations for parishioners and their growth as disciples?
3. Sherry states that “The presence of a significant number of disciples changes everything” in a parish. How could we cultivate more disciples in our parishes? What resources or gifts would be needed? What challenges would you anticipate?
4. In his blog post referenced in the book, Fr. Gregory Jensen writes

[W]hat typically happens is that we ask people who haven't yet repented... to take on work meant for apostles. Not only do we entrust philanthropic work to those who are not yet disciples of Christ, we also ask them to undertake evangelism and catechesis and serve on parish council. We might also bless them to attend seminary and ordained them to the diaconate or priesthood.

How does repentance fit into your understanding of discipleship? Do you hear the call to repentance preached on a regular basis?

5. How would your parish change if discernment of gifts was an integral part of each parishioner's formation?
6. Review the list of charisms in Appendix II. Are you aware of a charism at work in your life? Has anyone ever affirmed a particular gift in you?

Additional Resources

Bob Horning, “1 Parish, 15 Seminarians”
(*National Catholic Register*, June 26, 2007):
<http://bit.ly/OneParish>

Fr. Gregory Jensen, “Repentance and Discipleship”:
<http://bit.ly/RepentanceDiscipleship>

Called and Gifted Charism Discernment Program
(Catherine of Siena Institute):
<http://bit.ly/CalledAndGifted>

Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican Council II (1964):
<http://bit.ly/LumenGentium>

Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness* (Harper & Row, 1952)

Eric Sammons, *Holiness for Everyone: The Practical Spirituality of St. Josemaría Escrivá* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2012)



“There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.”

- 1 Corinthians 12: 4-11

Chapter Four: Grace and the Great Quest

Summary: The absence of communal fruit that God desires in our communities is a tragedy. In the Catholic Church we have been too concerned about the *validity* of sacraments, neglecting the proper disposition needed in a person to fruitfully receive the graces of the sacraments. Personal faith is necessary for this fruitful reception – the sacraments themselves cannot make up for it; neither can the Church make up for a defect in personal disposition. Cooperating with God’s grace is a lifelong process that only begins at baptism. Parishes must cultivate a spiritual culture that encourages honest conversation about our personal disposition and faith.

Outline of Chapter

1. *Grace and Disposition*
2. *Intention Matters*
3. *“The Sacrament Will Take Care of It”*
4. *“The Church Will Provide”*
5. *Cooperating Grace*
6. *Source and Summit*
7. *With Fear and Trembling Stand*
8. *Seeking Revival*

Questions for Discussion

1. Sherry makes the distinction between a validly administered sacrament and the active reception of a sacrament that bears fruit in the believer’s life. How would you describe this difference to a friend?
2. Many Catholics act as if the external performance of a sacrament is enough to effect grace without a personal disposition to grace (c.f. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* no. 2111). Is this an attitude you have encountered? After reading this chapter, how would you address this attitude?
3. What does the Church mean by *virtus fidei* and *actus fidei*?
4. Given the fact that adults receiving a sacrament must possess some measure of Christian faith, do you think it is possible that there are Catholic adults receiving invalid sacraments on a regular basis? How should parishes approach this challenge?
5. Look at the list of eight spiritual indicators from the Council of Trent (pp. 110-111). Can you identify each of these in your life? Give specific examples.
6. How have you cooperated with grace in your life? How have you put up impediments to grace?
7. How can parishes “seek revival” and encourage parishioners to cooperate with graces that may not have already born fruit in their lives?

Additional Resources

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults
Chapter Fourteen: “The Celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ”

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: “In the Act of Faith We Respond to God’s Loving Revelation” (pp. 36-43)

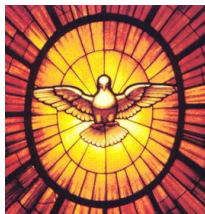
Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, “Charity in Truth” (2009): <http://bit.ly/CaritasInVeritate>

Fr. Robert Barron, “What Faith Is and What Faith Isn’t”: http://youtu.be/m_4PSgFjtvI

Kathleen Hughes, *Saying Amen: A Mystagogy of Sacrament* (Liturgy Training Publications, 1999)

Joe Paprocki and D. Todd Williamson, *Great is the Mystery: Encountering the Formational Power of Liturgy* (Liturgy Training Publications, 2013)

Fr. James Mallon, “Rooted in Christ, Trusting in the Spirit: Building for Parish Renewal in 2012 and Beyond...” (audio presentation; 2011): <http://bit.ly/MallonAudio>



“The Lord is not impressed by numbers, but by the presence of faith, the broken and contrite heart, the meek, the humble and those who thirst after righteousness. The saints will endure and shine like the stars, the innumerable children of Abraham.”

- James M. Kushiner

Chapter Five: Thresholds of Conversion: Can I Trust You?

Summary: Before catechesis can take root people must be evangelized. By interviewing people with strong conversion experiences five “thresholds” of Christian discipleship have been identified. These thresholds will be experienced differently by different people and will look different to people “inside” the Church and those “outside.” The first threshold is trust: a felt trust for someone or something associated with Christianity. Most practicing Catholics are at the level of trust, although this doesn’t necessarily mean trust in the Church or even in God. We most love those we evangelize in order to establish healthy, trusting relationships.

Outline of Chapter

1. *The Five Thresholds of Conversion*
2. *Inside and Outside*
3. *It’s a Mystery*
4. *The First Threshold: Trust*
5. *Trust Can Be Complicated*
6. *We Will Never Evangelize What We Do Not Love*

Questions for Discussion

1. The *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* describes evangelization this way: “faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed and Jesus Christ whom he has sent for the salvation of all.” (no. 36) Where have you heard this message proclaimed?
2. What trusted relationships in your life brought you to the faith and/or kept you there?
3. Have you ever found yourself being asked questions about Jesus or the Catholic faith from someone who trusted you? How did you respond?
4. Sherry exhorts us to “never accept a label in place of a story.” What does this mean? What labels have you accepted for other people regarding their faith?
5. Sherry points out that the object of active Catholics’ trust can be complicated. Why might someone stay active in the Church without experiencing trust in God or the Church? Do you know anyone like that?
6. What do you think Cardinal George meant when he said “We will never evangelize what we do not love?”

Additional Resources

Fr. Robert Barron, “On Intentional Discipleship”: <http://bit.ly/BarronThresholds>

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, nos. 36-40, 42.

USCCB, “Go and Make Disciples: A Pastoral Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States”:

<http://bit.ly/GoAndMakeDisciples>

Allen F. Wright, *Jesus the Evangelist: A Gospel Guide to the New Evangelization* (Franciscan Media, 2013)



“The work of evangelization presupposes in the evangelizer an ever increasing love for those whom he is evangelizing. That model evangelizer, the Apostle Paul, wrote these words to the Thessalonians, and they are a program for us all: ‘With such yearning love we chose to impart to you not only the gospel of God but our very selves, so dear had you become to us’” What is this love? It is much more than that of a teacher; it is the love of a father; and again, it is the love of a mother. It is this love that the Lord expects from every preacher of the Gospel, from every builder of the Church. A sign of love will be the concern to give the truth and to bring people into unity. Another sign of love will be a devotion to the proclamation of Jesus Christ, without reservation or turning back.”

- Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*
 (“On Evangelization in the Modern World”) no. 79

Chapter Six: The Second Threshold: Curiosity

Summary: Once trust has been established, curiosity is the next threshold to be crossed. Specifically, we must talk about Jesus Christ in order to arouse curiosity about him. Curiosity first involves *awareness* of greater possibilities; then *engagement* with those possibilities; and then the *exchange* of ideas and questions. Jesus aroused curiosity in his listeners by answer questions with more questions, drawing the hearer deeper into his teaching. Curiosity is distinct from seeking, in that the former is largely passive while the latter involves an active search. Christians are called to live in such a way as to arouse curiosity in others. Evangelization programs that leave people at the curiosity threshold fail to address the real questions of discipleship and will not be effective in their goals.

Outline of Chapter

1. About Jesus Hardly At All
2. The Pedagogy of Curiosity
3. Jesus: Master of the “Q and Q”
4. Curiosity Is Not Seeking
5. Living Curiously
6. Helping Catholics Come Home

Questions for Discussion

1. How often do you use the name of Jesus Christ?
2. Do you think it is possible to be too “Christocentric” in our work? Do we tend to treat Jesus Christ as just another “topic” within the Church?
3. Review Sherry’s “pedagogy of curiosity” (p. 145). Can you identify these stages as you explored something you were curious about?
4. How can we cultivate Jesus’ “Q and Q” style in our lives?
5. Who in your life might be curious about Jesus? How can you engage and cultivate that curiosity?
6. How can we make our parishes more welcoming places so that our evangelization efforts can be more effective in reaching others?

Additional Resources

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”; 2013):

<http://bit.ly/TheJoyOfTheGospel>

Fr. Barron, “Effective Evangelization”:

<http://bit.ly/EffectiveEvangelization>

Fr Gregory Jensen, “About Jesus Hardly at All”:

<http://bit.ly/AboutJesusHardly>

“Catholics come home... But just for a visit?”:

<http://bit.ly/CCHVisit>



“We cannot forget that evangelization is first and foremost about preaching the Gospel to those who do not know Jesus Christ or who have always rejected him. Many of them are quietly seeking God, led by a yearning to see his face, even in countries of ancient Christian tradition. All of them have a right to receive the Gospel. Christians have the duty to proclaim the Gospel without excluding anyone. Instead of seeming to impose new obligations, they should appear as people who wish to share their joy, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet. It is not by proselytizing that the Church grows, but ‘by attraction’.”

- Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”) no. 15

Chapter Seven: The Third Threshold: Openness

Summary: The movement from curiosity to openness is the most difficult because it requires a positive choice and the lowering of defenses. Openness can often be triggered by major life changes and may involve some “backsliding” into curiosity. Reaching the threshold of openness may trigger unease and discomfort in others; care must be taken to support those who find themselves open to greater spiritual growth lest they leave the community to find that support elsewhere. Openness can be fostered through a variety of strategies. One way parishes can help foster openness in today’s society is through Eucharistic Adoration, which helps the nondevout directly experience the supernatural dimension of the Christian life.

Outline of Chapter

1. Don’t Jump the Gun
2. Fostering Openness
3. God With Us

Questions for Discussion

1. Sherry describes the movement from curiosity to openness as the hardest in the thresholds of conversion. Why do you think that is?
2. What times in your life can you identify as times of openness to God?
3. Do you know anyone who has reached the threshold of openness and been discouraged by a lack of support by friends, family, or their parish?
4. How can our parishes become places where openness is encouraged and supported? What can you do to support someone at this threshold?
5. Look at Sherry’s suggestions for fostering openness (pp. 162-163). Which of these would you be comfortable practicing?
6. Sherry suggests parishes encourage Eucharistic Adoration for the non-devout as a means of fostering openness. What spiritual practices have helped you remain open to God?

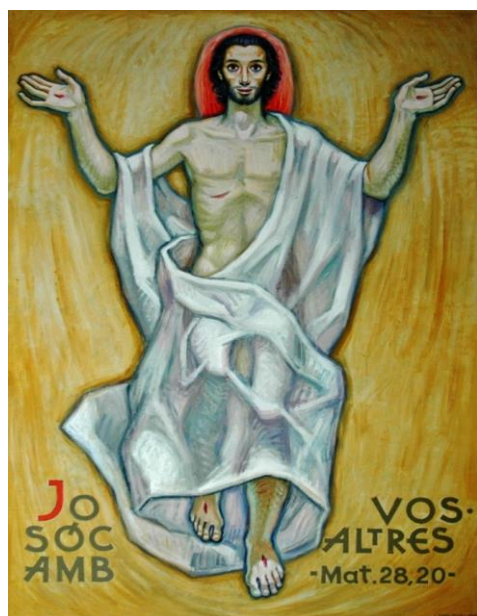
Additional Resources

Fr. Barron, “Why do we believe in God?”:
<http://bit.ly/WhyWeBelieve>

Fr. Barron, “The Calling of the Disciples”:
<http://bit.ly/CallOfTheDisciples>

Joe Paprocki, *Under the Influence: The Transforming Experience of Encountering Christ* (Loyola Press, 2014)

Frank P. DeSiano, CSP, *The Evangelizing Catholic: A Practical Handbook for Reaching Out* (Paulist Press, 1998)



“If we let Christ enter fully into our lives, if we open ourselves totally to him, are we not afraid that He might take something away from us? Are we not perhaps afraid to give up something significant, something unique, something that makes life so beautiful? Do we not then risk ending up diminished and deprived of our freedom?... No! If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed. Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation. And so, today, with great strength and great conviction, on the basis of long personal experience of life, I say to you, dear young people: Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life.”

- Pope Benedict XVI, Inaugural Homily

Chapter Eight: Thresholds of Conversion: Seeking and Intentional Discipleship

Summary: The most important task for those at the threshold of seeking is the help them focus on Jesus Christ and the kerygmatic message. Dealing with doctrinal issues is a secondary concern that can be dealt with in catechesis and mystagogy. While concern about a “me and Jesus” mentality is common, in practice it is the Church that is proposing Jesus Christ and thus the message (if consistently proclaimed) is heard in the context of the Christian community.

The thresholds of seeking and intentional discipleship are both *active* stages of faith and the point at which real life change begins. Seekers are actively “trying out” a relationship with Jesus Christ – not just a generic spirituality. They begin to realize the discipleship has real demands and costs which they have not yet made a firm commitment to. Moving someone from openness to seeking may require challenging them about these demands, especially by inviting them to engage in the works for mercy, try different prayer types, and confront the reality of sin in their lives.

Intentional discipleship involves actively “dropping your nets” and following Christ. This may involve overcoming spiritual attack and pushback from friends and family. Seekers from Christian backgrounds often move through these thresholds very quickly, aided by the liturgical life of the Church.

Outline of Chapter

1. Heading Into “The Zone”
2. Seeking: “Dating with a Purpose”
3. Seekers Seek Jesus
4. Moving From Openness to Seeking
5. Sin Matters
6. Intentional Discipleship
7. Becoming a Disciple From a Christian Background
8. When a Leader Isn’t Yet a Disciple

Questions for Discussion

1. In the article cited by Sherry, John L. Allen says
In comparison with other religious groups in America, the Catholic church's struggles aren't really with pastoral care, but missionary muscle... The data do not reflect widespread dissatisfaction in the pews, at least to any greater extent than other religious bodies face. Instead, they reveal a problem with getting people into the pews in the first place.

Does this reflect your experience in your parish?
2. How does your parish help people who are actively seeking Jesus Christ?
3. Would you feel comfortable inviting a seeker to experience the demands and challenges of true discipleship?
4. Have you made an intentional decision to drop your nets and follow Jesus Christ? If so, when did you make that decision? If not, what is keeping you from making that decision?
5. What sacrifices or challenges have you experienced in your spiritual journey? How have you overcome them? How could you help someone else encountering similar experiences?

Additional Resources

John L. Allen, “In America's religious marketplace, the real Catholic problem is new sales” (*National Catholic Reporter*, February 11, 2011): <http://bit.ly/RealCatholicProblem>

Fr. Satish Joseph, “Discipleship”:
<http://bit.ly/SJosephDiscipleship>

Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality* (Doubleday, 1999)

Thomas Dubay, S.M., *Deep Conversion, Deep Prayer* (Ignatius Press, 2006)



“And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ, so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming. 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.”

- Ephesians 4:11-16

Chapter Nine: Break the Silence

Summary: Parishes can intentionally work to create climates where personal growth in discipleship is fostered and encouraged. One useful question: “How can we double the number of disciples in our parish in five years?” Accomplishing this takes four steps: Breaking the silence about a personal, lived relationship with Jesus Christ; Offering multiple, overlapping opportunities for people to encounter Jesus; Expecting and planning for personal conversion; and laying the foundation through prayer. Silence takes many different forms in parishes. Because conversion and discipleship are not “normal,” many people walk in and out of our churches without the opportunity to respond to the kerygma. This silence must be deliberately broken by engaging in threshold conversation: asking about people’s lived relationships with God and listening to their stories. Asking these questions brings to the surface people’s questions, struggles, and felt needs which can then be addressed directly.

Outline of Chapter

1. The Double-in-Five Challenge
2. Four Steps to Doubling-in-Five
3. Break the Silence!
4. Do Ask: The Threshold Conversation
5. The ABC’s of a Threshold Conversation

Questions for Discussion

1. How realistic do you think the “Double-in-Five” challenge is? What would need to happen in your parish to make it feasible?
2. Review the four steps of the “Double-in-Five” challenge (p. 188). Which do you think would be the hardest to implement? Which do you think would be the easiest? Why?
3. How have you seen silence at work in your parish?
4. Have you ever asked someone about their relationship with God? How did that conversation go? If not, why?
5. Who in your life would you be comfortable having a threshold conversation with?
6. If someone asked you about your relationship with God, how would you respond?

Additional Resources

Fr. Barron, “Who Is Jesus”:

<http://bit.ly/BarronWhoIsJesus>

Colleen Vermeulen, “Parishes ‘Grappling With Culture, Conflict, and Identity’ Instead of Evangelization?”:

<http://bit.ly/ParishesGrappling>

Edmund Mitchell, “The New Evangelization Must Be Good Cheese”:

<http://bit.ly/GoodCheese>

Russell Shaw, *Catholic Laity in the Mission of the Church* (Chartwell Press, 2014)



“The question is undoubtedly a delicate one. Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addresses, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life. But on the other hand, evangelization risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it.”

- Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*
 (“On Evangelization in the Modern World”) no. 63

Chapter Ten: Do Tell: The Great Story of Jesus

Summary: The purpose of evangelization is to awaken and instill in people a specific faith in Jesus Christ. Our personal witness can illumine certain aspects of the story of Jesus Christ, but it cannot replace that story. Unfortunately many people today do not know even the basic elements of the story of salvation. Others may be mistaken about the facts of Jesus' story or mistake the story of the Church for the story of Christ. We cannot presume knowledge of the story of salvation or that people know its meaning for their lives. At the same time a person's knowledge of the story does not necessarily mean the presence of an active faith, and an active faith may precede a full knowledge of Jesus' story.

Recounting the story of salvation for a specific audience means asking what elements they need and hear and in what order. One way to tell the story of salvation is in nine themes: the Kingdom; Jesus, the face of the kingdom; Jesus, the Kingdom in word and deed; Jesus embraces the cross; Resurrection, Ascension, new life, adoption, and the Kingdom; Jesus asks me to follow him; personal sin and forgiveness; dropping the net; the life of discipleship.

Outline of Chapter

1. The Story and Spiritual Development
2. Tailoring the Great Story to Our Audience
3. The Great Story of Jesus in Nine Acts

Questions for Discussion

1. Sherry states that "If we don't evangelize our own, someone else will." Is your parish evangelizing its own? What do you think that would look like?
2. If you were asked to recount the story of salvation in three minutes or less, what would you say?
3. What aspects of the Great Story does your personal witness illuminate?
4. How can we be sure that, in evangelizing others, we are respecting their religious and spiritual situation?
5. How would you evangelize someone who knows the Great Story but lacks personal faith?
6. Review the nine acts of the Great Story (p. 207ff). Is there any act you have questions about or don't fully understand? How could you learn more about it?

Additional Resources

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults
Chapter Two: "God Comes to Meet Us"

Mark Hart & Derek Natzke, *Salvation History Bible Saga*: <http://bit.ly/BibleSaga>

Colleen Reiss Vermeulen, "Unpacking the Problem of Substituting the Church for Jesus": <http://bit.ly/Church4Jesus>

Ascension Press, *Great Adventure Catholic Bible Study*: <http://bit.ly/GreatAdventureSeries>

Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth* (Doubleday, 2007)

Frank DeSiano, CSP, and Kenneth Boyack, CSP, *Discovering My Experience of God: Awareness and Witness, Revised Edition* (Paulist Press, 2009)



“The eternal Father, by a free and hidden plan of His own wisdom and goodness, created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life. Fallen in Adam, God the Father did not leave men to themselves, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view of Christ, the Redeemer "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature". All the elect, before time began, the Father "foreknew and pre-destined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren". He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ.

Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era of time the Church was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest. At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion, when, as is read in the Fathers, all the just, from Adam and "from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect," will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church.”

- Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) no. 2

Chapter Eleven: Personally Encountering Jesus in His Church

Summary: Evangelizing parishes offer multiple, overlapping opportunities for people to encounter Jesus Christ. There is no single silver bullet; a variety of paths must be available so that people can find their way to Jesus. Parishes can start by asking how their existing programs are helping people to meet and establish a relationship with Jesus. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) is a cornerstone of these efforts since it is through the RCIA that adults are baptized into Jesus Christ and his Church. Many parishes have had success using evangelization retreat programs to “funnel” people into other evangelizing activities. Charism discernment helps disciples to know how to use their gifts for the benefit of others.

Outline of Chapter

1. Using What God Has Given
2. Parish-based Evangelization Processes
3. The Evangelizing RCIA
4. Using the Thresholds in Parish Evangelization
5. Charisms as Aids on the Journey to Intentional Discipleship

Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think it means to “encounter Jesus in his Church?”
2. Think of the people you would describe as intentional disciples in your parish. What seems to have encouraged their development as disciples? Do they share any common experiences such as a retreat or community service?
3. What opportunities for encountering Jesus Christ does your parish offer? How would people find out about these opportunities?
4. What missed opportunities exist in your parish? What thresholds aren’t being addressed? How could you make existing programs and events more evangelizing?
5. Is your parish’s RCIA process evangelizing? How so? If not, how could you make it more evangelizing?
6. Are there any charisms that your parish is not currently tapping into? How could you invite people with their charisms to use their gifts for the work of the Church?

Additional Resources

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults
Chapter Two: “My Souls Longs for You, O God”

Fr. Robert Barron, “Proclaiming Christ to a Secular Culture”: <http://bit.ly/BarronDAEC2012>

LifeTeen, “Do’s and Don’ts of Evangelization”:
<http://bit.ly/EvangelizationDosDonts>

Pope Francis, *The Church of Mercy* (Loyola Press, 2014)

Joe Paprocki, *Under the Influence of Jesus: The Transforming Experience of Encountering Christ* (Loyola Press, 2014)

Meeting Christ in Prayer: An 8-Week Life-Enriching Experience Based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius (Loyola Press, 2008)



“The Church is the depositary of the Good News to be proclaimed. The promises of the New Alliance in Jesus Christ, the teaching of the Lord and the apostles, the Word of life, the sources of grace and of God's loving kindness, the path of salvation - all these things have been entrusted to her. It is the content of the Gospel, and therefore of evangelization, that she preserves as a precious living heritage, not in order to keep it hidden but to communicate it.”

- Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*
 (“On Evangelization in the Modern World”) no. 15

Chapter Twelve: Expect Conversion

Summary: The lack of a “culture of discipleship” means that many Catholics do not expect conversion to happen in their midst. Evangelizing parishes must be prepared for the Holy Spirit to work in strange and unexpected ways; that is, we must expect and plan for conversion and the fruits of conversion. Priorities may include prayer; identifying the unbelieving and the unchurched; sharing the Gospel; identifying how and where to evangelize; forming and equipping disciples; transforming society through the Works of Mercy; and identifying available parish resources. Our parish communities must be formed so as to support and encourage the disciples that emerge from within them. This starts with intentional and sustained intercessory prayer so that a variety of leaders – both official and unofficial – may be identified.

Outline of Chapter

1. Kingdom Priorities
2. The Power of Christian Community
3. Lay the Spiritual Foundation of Prayer
4. Mission, Community, and the Leadville Effect
5. The Weight of Glory

Questions for Discussion

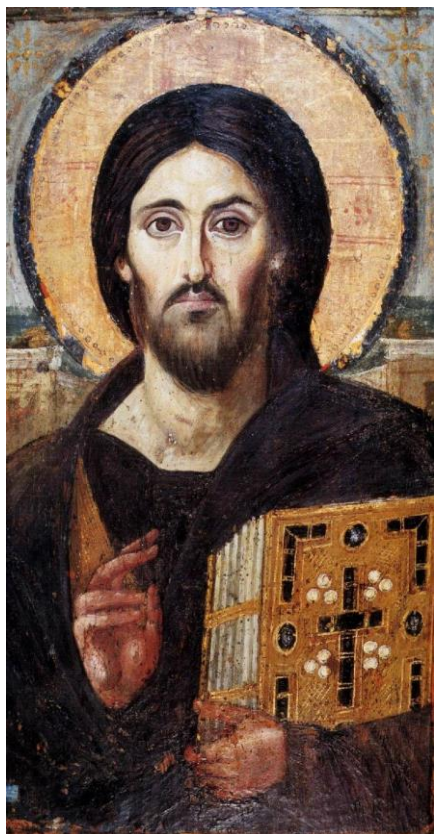
1. Is conversion ever talked about in your parish? What resources does your parish have for those who are experiencing a deep conversion?
2. How is your parish prepared for the Holy Spirit to work in the community? Does your parish handle change well? Or is change a struggle?
3. Review Sherry’s list of seven key elements (pp. 240-245). How would you rate your parish on each of these elements?
4. What “excuses and resistance to the Good News” (p. 247) are present in your community?
5. What is one step you are willing to take to become an advocate for intentional discipleship in your parish?
6. Studies show that one of the most effective ways to keep young people involved in their faith communities is through Christian service. What sustained, ongoing service opportunities are available to young people in your parish? How are they encouraged to reflect on these experiences and connect them to their relationship with Jesus Christ?

Additional Resources

Fr. Robert Barron, “The Holy Spirit in the Life of the Church”: <http://bit.ly/HolySpiritAndChurch>

Fr. Michael White and Tom Corcoran, *Rebuilt: Awakening the Faithful, Reaching the Lost, Making Church Matter* (Ave Maria Press, 2013)

Mark P. Shea, *The Work of Mercy: Being the Hands and Heart of Christ* (Servant Books, 2011)



“I dream of a ‘missionary option’, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented, to make ordinary pastoral activity on every level more inclusive and open, to inspire in pastoral workers a constant desire to go forth and in this way to elicit a positive response from all those whom Jesus summons to friendship with himself. As John Paul II once said to the Bishops of Oceania: ‘All renewal in the Church must have mission as its goal if it is not to fall prey to a kind of ecclesial introversion’.”

- Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (“The Joy of the Gospel”) no. 27

Appendix I: Assessment: The Norms of Discipleship

For each “norm of discipleship” identified by Sherry Weddell, identify how true the norm is for your Christian life:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
not true somewhat true very true

It is normal for lay Catholics to have a living, growing love relationship with God.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

It is normal for lay Catholics to be excited Christian activists.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

It is normal for lay Catholics to be knowledgeable about their faith, the Scriptures, the doctrinal and moral teachings of the Church, and the history of the Church.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

It is normal for lay Catholics to know what their charisms of service are and to be using them effectively in fulfillment of their vocation or call in life.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

It is normal for lay Catholics to know that they have a vocation/mission in life (primarily in the secular world) given to them by God. It is normal for lay Catholics to be actively engaged in discerning and living this vocation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

It is normal for lay Catholics to have the fellowship of other committed lay Catholics available to them, to encourage, nurture, and discern as they attempt to follow Jesus.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

It is normal for the local parish to function consciously as a house of formation for lay Catholics, which enables and empowers lay Catholics to do #1-6 above.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Notes

Appendix II: Charism Discernment

A charism is a spiritual gift granted by the Holy Spirit that gives a Christian special empowerment to bring God's redeeming love into the world.

Charisms bear three marks that allow us to recognize them with confidence:

1. An unmistakable inner experience of peace, energy and joy when you are using the gift
2. Unusually effective and successful results in what you're trying to accomplish
3. Other people's direct or indirect recognition of the gift's presence

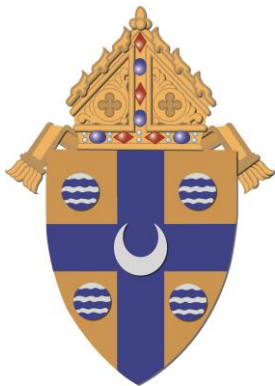
Charisms

- Cannot be inherited from our parents.
- Are supernaturally empowered.
- Are profoundly and directly connected with our relationship with God, often experienced as a form of prayer, and grow in power and purity as our relationship with God grows
- Are directly and immediately dependent upon grace – while natural talents are retained regardless of one's relationship with God.
- Can be used for God's purposes and to serve others, not to meet our own needs or for evil.
- Natural talents can be used not only for our own benefit but for evil or for purposes that do not have God's redeeming work at the center.

The Catherine of Siena Institute (www.siena.org) has identified the following charisms:

- Administration
- Craftsmanship
- Encouragement
- Faith
- Healing
- Hospitality
- Knowledge
- Mercy
- Music
- Prophecy
- Teaching
- Writing
- Celibacy
- Discernment of Spirits
- Evangelism
- Giving
- Helps
- Intercessory Prayer
- Leadership
- Missionary
- Pastoring
- Service
- Voluntary Poverty
- Wisdom

Notes



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