

Facing the Challenges in Parish and Arch/Diocesan Evangelization

Parishes, dioceses and archdioceses face some daunting challenges in their evangelization efforts. Some of these are people's personal difficulties. Others are more broad pastoral obstacles. Several are tackled head-on by the document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note On Some Aspects Of Evangelization* (December 3, 2007), while others are addressed in a recent book by Steven Boguslawski, OP, and Ralph Martin, *The New Evangelization: Overcoming the Obstacles* (Paulist Press, 2008). Pope Benedict XVI constantly reminds us of the urgent need for Catholic evangelization to become more effective, "People don't know God, they don't know Christ. A new paganism is present, and it is not enough to maintain the community of believers, although this is important... I believe that together we must find new ways of bringing the Gospel to today's world by preaching Christ anew and by establishing the faith." ("To the German Bishops," *L'Osservatore Romano*, Spanish Edition, August 26, 2005)

Individual Activity (5 mins.)

Below is a list of some challenges or obstacles to evangelization that we may face at parish, diocesan, or archdiocesan levels.

A. What are the **three most difficult** challenges or obstacles below that you encounter? (Circle the number of each of these statements.)

B. Cross out any statement below **that is a not** an obstacle or challenge that you face.

1. We do not believe in the value or need for evangelization.
2. We do not know how-to evangelize or have a way to get the skills training to do it effectively.
3. We have experienced failure and discouragement in trying to evangelize in the past, so we stopped trying.
4. We are afraid of the cost that evangelization will require (i.e. our opinions, time, possessions, and money).
5. We restrict ourselves to dealing only with present issues in our church, not with planning for future evangelization.
6. We use the same evangelization programs and methods that worked 10, 20, or 30 years ago, whether they are working today or not.
7. We don't need new people in our church. We are comfortable the way we are.
8. We are afraid that if we evangelize, God will send us people that look, talk, live, and smell differently than we do.

9. We don't have the time to deal with all the problems that new people will bring to the church.
10. We only want people in our church who come every Sunday and give generously to support the work we do.
11. Our bishop, pastors and staffs are stretched too thin trying to maintain the Church. We don't want to overburden them with the work of evangelizing.
12. We are too weak, sinful, poor, angry, depressed, emotionally deprived or ill to evangelize others.
13. If only we push ourselves to work harder, longer, better, and smarter, we will succeed in Catholic evangelization.
14. Our church leaders don't want to change the ways we approach ministry and evangelization or delegate these to others with new ideas.
15. All our resources (time, money, personnel, and buildings) are already used up with other important ministries for God.
16. We don't need any more training, study or prayer for evangelization. We are doing fine.
17. We lack living relationships with God the Father, through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.
18. Another obstacle or challenge that we face is... (Please be specific):

Reflection Questions for Small Group Sharing—4 or 5 people (25-40 mins.)

1. What surprised you in this list of challenges or obstacles to Catholic evangelization? Why?
2. What are the **three most difficult** challenges or obstacles to evangelization that you face at the parish, diocesan, or archdiocesan levels (from list above)? Why?
3. To whom might you go locally to discuss these challenges or obstacles and how to overcome them?
4. What two or three of the statements above did you cross out because **they are not** challenges or obstacles that you face to evangelization? Why?