



THE YEAR OF FAITH PARISH WORKSHOP

GO AND ANNOUNCE THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD

THE CALL IS FOR ALL

Every baptised Christian has a duty to bring others into a fuller understanding of the Gospel and into a more personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not an optional extra and it should be a joyful experience.

As **C S Lewis** put it: "The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs". (Beyond Personality in 1944)

Jesus said "Go ... make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19)

The Catechism "To teach in order to lead others to faith is the task of every preacher and of each believer" (St. Thomas Aquinas quoted in The Catechism of the Catholic Church 904).

Pope Paul VI "The essential mission of the Church is to evangelise all people.....The person who has been evangelised goes on to evangelise others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelisation: it is **unthinkable** that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and **proclaims** it in his turn." (Evangelisation in the Modern World 14 and 24).

Pope John Paul II "Look to the future with commitment to a New Evangelisation, one that is new in its ardour, new in its methods, and new in its means of expression." (1983).

Pope Benedict XVI "It is the love of Christ that fills our hearts and impels us to evangelise." (Apostolic Letter on the Year of Faith 2011)

The Year of Faith Pastoral Recommendations finish with these words: "All of the faithful, called to renew the gift of faith, should try to **communicate** their own experience of faith and charity to their brothers and sisters of other religions, with those who do not believe, and with those who are just indifferent. In this way, it is hoped that the **entire Christian people** will begin a kind of **mission toward those with whom they live and work**, knowing that they have welcomed the news of salvation which is meant for every man."

EZEKIEL 33:1-9 The Watchman is told to warn the people of danger. If he fails to do so, the Lord says "I will hold the watchman responsible for his death."

TODAY'S WORLD NEEDS TO HEAR THE MESSAGE OF ETERNAL LIFE FROM US.
You have a unique role in this world, that of being you.
You may be the only Gospel people read.

EVANGELISATION INCLUDES PERSONAL ACTION

We are the Church in the world, we meet people, they are our brothers and sisters. How can we equip ourselves to be ready to open their eyes to the Good News? We are called to go out to the whole world i.e. everyone but "we do not know everyone". So let us start with those we do "know". God equips you, the Church, for Service and Ministry. One of God's most precious gifts to you is those people you meet.

BE ALERT FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SHOW LOVE AND SHARE THE GOOD NEWS

"The true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers.....or to the faithful." (CCC 905)

"Be on your guard, stay awake, you never know when the time will come." (Mark 14:33)

"This is my commandment; that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12)

"It is by your love for one another that all will recognise you as my disciples." (John 13:35)

Showing love to others is what we are called to do all day every day.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

A review of the Gospels gives an indication of some aspects of Jesus' approach to daily life. He quoted scripture. He prayed. He did what His Father told him to do. He went out and met people. He didn't seek undue praise, stand on ceremony, shirk dirty tasks.

"You call me Master and Lord and rightly; so I am. If I then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you must wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you." (John 13:13-15)

Our "attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped....." (Philippians 2:6)

"So let us learn how to serve and in our lives enthrone Him. Each other's needs to prefer, for it is Christ we're serving. This is our God. The Servant King" (Kendrick).

"Go down in the city, go into the street and let's give the message to the people we meet." (from Colours of Day Sue McClellan et al)

1. We must be seen.
2. We must be seen to be "good" (show love).
3. We must be seen to be Christians.

Little things matter. Signs get noticed. Salt needs to be salty. Light shines best in the darkness. Our task is to lead people to Jesus because they see him reflected in our faces.

WHO DO YOU MEET?

Who will you meet today?

Spend some time thinking of all the people your life will impact on.

Don't ignore the casual encounters or communication by phone, post e-mail.

HOW CAN YOU BE MORE CHRIST-LIKE TO THEM?

In what you do or don't do. In what you say or don't say.

Do they know you are a Christian?

EVANGELISATION IS A PROCESS

Which of you wishing to construct a tower does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if there is enough for its completion? (Luke 14:28)

The Catechism (para. 905) defines evangelisation as “the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life” saying "Lay people fulfil their prophetic mission by evangelisation."

We proclaim Christ by Word when we tell others about our Lord Jesus Christ and what he has done for us. We show them how his teaching, his life, his death and resurrection and his promise of eternal life have made a real difference in our lives. Through our words we introduce them to the Church, that is our family and we show them how the Sacraments help us. By hearing our testimony people’s lives are transformed.

We proclaim Christ by the testimony of our life when we walk alongside others in their troubles or help them in their times of need. Whenever we do these things in Jesus’ name it will inspire them to ask “Why do they do this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that motivates them?”

Sometimes we can influence people’s lives through “God-inspired” conversations or encounters. When we talk about or show God’s love to others it may inspire them to begin to think about who they are, what they believe and what is important in their lives. In this questioning they open themselves up to God, who is the real evangeliser. We just help by pushing open the door of faith a little to let God in to change their hearts and minds. Every day, whenever and whoever we meet we may find opportunities to evangelise by word and the testimony of life.

When working together with others we need to agree what to do and how to do it.

Consider what activities could be done and for each one consider how easy it is and its likely impact. Go for the high impact easy activities first.

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|--------------------------|----------------------|------|
| LOW | | |
| EFFORT NEEDED | | |
| HIGH | | |
| | LOW | HIGH |
| | EFFECTIVENESS | |

Having decided, consider Why, What, Who, Where and When to help identify How to do it.

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| W | W | W | W | W |
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OW (5 seagulls on a rugby post)

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Pray Before for the opportunity....."Lord lead me into opportunities to do your will". It makes a change from the more commonly used "Lead us not into temptation."

Pray During for wisdom and guidance.

Pray After in thanksgiving and as a way of continuing your request for the blessing of people. Sometimes prayer is all that is needed and all that is possible and you do not have to tell the person you are praying for.....but

Prayer is not a surrogate for action. Jesus prayed, spoke and did ...normally in that order. St Benedict said "To work is to pray". See James 2:14-26 which finishes "As a body without a spirit is dead, so is faith without deeds."

EVANGELISATION INVOLVES APPROACHING OTHERS

At some stage evangelisation involves talking to people. In ACTS 8:26-40 Philip runs up to the Ethiopian in response to God's command and he asks "Do you understand what you are reading?" The reply is "How could I, unless I have someone to guide me?" So he urged Philip to get in and sit by his side. Some people may walk in and ask to join the Church, thanks be to God; but the majority need to be invited and to do that **we have to go to them.** Jesus said in Matthew 10:6 "Go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel..." Fellow Catholics who do not regularly go to Church may be more ready to hear the Gospel, since the seeds have already been sown.

APPROACHING THE DISTANCED

Consider some of the following categories of those no longer "practising". Feel free to add your own:

1. Spouses of churchgoers – Men, Women
2. Parents of Children at Catholic Schools – Primary, Secondary
3. Submarine Catholics - Christmas and Easter
4. Submarine Catholics - Hatches, Matches, Despatches
5. Work Colleagues
6. Friends
7. Neighbours
8. Teenagers/Students
9. Newcomers to the area
10. Relations of people you know
11. Unknown Catholics
12. "Chance" acquaintances

For the chosen group consider:

How they could be approached?

Who could approach them?

What would the objective be?

EVANGELISATION - DEALING WITH RESPONSES

Responses depend on: The Question and The way it is put. Market researchers will frequently deliberately ensure their first question will elicit the answer yes e.g. Do you eat food? Do you work near here? There are basically three types of responses to an approach:

Positive Yes.....
Negative No.....
Maybe Well.....

None of them are likely to be one word so we need to be prepared to listen. You cannot plan to use only standard responses because people are rarely standard.

Sometimes the response will be positive. We need to know how to follow it up, who to involve and how to ensure a welcome. The seventy-two returned with joy (Luke 10:17).

Sometimes the response will be negative. We must be prepared to let “rich young men” go (Matthew 19:22) and to “shake the dust off our feet” if we are rebuffed (Luke 10:11).

Sometimes the maybe carries impediments some real, some not. We the Church (the Body of Christ) may have done things in the past which have repelled rather than attracted.

Some areas require further consideration. You may feel confident to deal with some objections “I can’t go to Mass, I never did my Confirmation” or “I can’t go Mass because I haven’t been for 10 years” can be dealt with lovingly and practically. Others may be beyond you. In the work of reaching out to others it is inevitable that we will be asked questions we cannot answer and faced with situations we cannot deal with. In many situations the truth “I don’t know” may be all we can say as we silently pray for God to provide an answer. In some circumstances we may be able to say “I don’t know..... but I’ll pray about it”.

People may give responses which hide the true problem. “I can’t get to church because I haven’t got a car” may be real or it may be hiding a fear of “going to Church”. Many people in today’s society are simply afraid of going into God’s House. We need not only to meet the obvious need... provide a lift... but also to meet the hidden need and go into Church with them. Whatever the response you receive your response must be prayer – thankfulness, of sorrow or for guidance.

In reaching out to those who have become distanced from the Church, there may be more that can be done – but we may not be the people to do it. There are “Those who find themselves in a situation where they feel unable to bring some aspect of their life into line with what they understand to be the teaching of the Church”. To create an exhaustive list of possible situations is neither possible nor desirable. Our role is to love and not to judge. Our role when faced with people in this category is:

1. To Listen - We may not agree with what they say – but as God’s children we all have our unique circumstances (“There but for the grace of God go I”.)

2. To Consider who could help - The Parish Priest may be the appropriate person..... “Would you like me to ask the Parish Priest for you? Would you like me to come with you to see him? etc. There may be some other obvious person or group... “Did you know there is an Association for Separated and Divorced Catholics?”... “Did you know that x in the Parish is in the same situation and is happy to tell you how they coped”...etc.

3. To Pray - In all cases prayer is essential. “Would you like me to pray for you?” can be a powerful Christian witness of our belief in an all-powerful, all loving God. Even if it seems inappropriate to say so we still have an obligation to pray for each other.

4. To Welcome and Walk with them

“Sharing their pain” may not be possible but all are welcome at Mass and even if they cannot receive Holy Communion with us, they can receive Christ through Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Even though you may refer the person to someone else you must not forget them. Welcome them back.

ACCOMPANYING RETURNERS

“They may not come back if the Church is the same as when they left it...if that is why they left.” The “Church” is the Body of Christ – not the buildings or the clergy but all of us – involved or just in waiting. The Church is one Body and the hand and the eye do not fight. In fact the hand will sacrifice itself to protect the eye (Imagine a stone thrown at your head).

We may have to change our thoughts, our words and our deeds to welcome people back. We are all prodigal sons because we have all sinned. But unfortunately we are also too often the absent mother or the jealous elder brother. We need to be prepared to sacrifice the fatted calf and our years of what seems like unrewarded toil and unreservedly welcome our fellow Christians. However, we must also be like the forgiving father and be sensitive to the feelings of the elder brother in others.

CHANGE

In Catholic Parishes the Parish Priest has ultimate responsibility for the pastoral care of the whole parish. Since any change may have impacts which are not beneficial to all it is ESSENTIAL that all proposed changes be discussed with the Parish Priest who has the responsibility for approving them or rejecting them. Parishioners have a duty to help the Parish Priest by identifying benefits and risks and may also be involved in implementation but they must always act within the authority of the Church. To do otherwise is divisive.

Jesus prayed for Unity. We must act in love to ensure we do not cause division, even if we have to sacrifice our own wishes for the good of others. In order to welcome back those who have become distanced it may be useful to consider changes or activities which will make us, as the Church, more welcoming.

Consider simple activities e.g. having a list of Parish contact names, phone numbers and Mass times to give the newcomers, and concentrate on areas which are unlikely to be divisive. As the Catholic Church we embrace everyone and although, being human, we will never satisfy everyone, we can at least be mindful of their needs.

Do not forget to organise Prayer Support. In particular involve the youth groups, the elderly and the housebound in this area. Tell them what you are doing and ask for their prayers. Print prayer cards to remind people. AND DON'T FORGET TO PRAY YOURSELF as individuals, as a team and as a Parish. “Speaking about God and speaking with God must always go together.” (Cardinal Ratzinger)

For your Parish consider how you could make people feel welcome or remove things which are less welcoming. List at least three things – note the potential benefits and the risks and any costs including time.

A REFLECTION Luke 5:1-11

Jesus was standing one day by the Lake of Gennesaret, with the crowd pressing round him listening to the word of God, when he caught sight of two boats at the water's edge. The fishermen had got out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats - it was Simon's - and asked him to put out a little from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.

When he had finished speaking he said to Simon, 'Put out into deep water and pay out your nets for a catch.' Simon replied, 'Master, we worked hard all night long and caught nothing, but if you say so, I will pay out the nets.' And when they had done this they netted such a huge number of fish that their nets began to tear, so they signalled to their companions in the other boat to come and help them; when these came, they filled both boats to sinking point.

When Simon Peter saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus saying, 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man.' For he and all his companions were completely awestruck at the catch they had made; so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. But Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on it is people you will be catching.' Then, bringing their boats back to land they left everything and followed him.

EVANGELISATION IS A GROUP ACTIVITY

Working with others makes evangelisation more effective. It blesses them to be involved. All Christians are part of Christ's Body and we therefore must ensure that all parts get the opportunity for exercising their gifts. Recent Church pronouncements are very clear that for too long the Church has been like a football match (22,000 people desperately in need of exercise, watching 22 people who are desperately in need of a rest) even if Christifideles Laici does not put it in quite those terms. That is why every Parish should have an Evangelisation Group - a team whose main purpose is to "announce the Good News that Christ loves us, died to save us and has risen again (The Creed says it all).

God may want us to involve others for our benefit, for theirs and for the good of His Kingdom. We are the Body of Christ. Every part of the Body needs exercise. People will thrive in our parishes if they believe they are valued. We demonstrate our love for each member of our parish by involving them. If we do not involve people – they will leave. Just as if you do not exercise your legs they will lose their strength. We not only do them a disservice but we run the risk of being accused of failing to use our talents (i.e. those people with whom we have been entrusted to work, live and worship). Jesus involved others!

Pray for guidance. Ensure your evangelisation team is representative of the Parish. The more varied the team the greater chance of them being able to relate to others. Jesus' disciples included all sorts of people - men/women rich/poor, old/young. Catholic means universal. Like the disciples the one thing they must do in common is "pray together" (Acts)

EVANGELISATION INVOLVES WELCOMING PEOPLE

Consider the following question: “Would you like to come to Mass with me?”

When a group of 30 committed parish workers were asked to consider the likely response to that question from someone who had not been to Mass for some time the majority felt the answer would be “No”. We need to plan our questions in the light of our objectives. Every parish and every person is different. What is most likely to get the answer Yes in your area?

Consider what you are inviting them to (Content)

We are having a coffee morning, party, meeting for a drink, would you like to come?

We are having a remembrance service, would you like to come?

We are having a bible study meeting? A talk onGod's Love/ Advent/Lent/wedding preparation/your child's Holy Communion/Confirmation, would you like to come?

We are having a carol service, would you like to come?

Would you like to learn more about the Catholic/Christian faith, we are showing a video?

Consider where you are inviting them (Venue)

We are having a prayer meeting, would you like to come to the Church?

Parish Hall? my house? the pub? the coffee shop?

Consider the people you want to approach. Where should you invite them? What should the content be? What is the appropriate balance between prayer, praise, faith sharing, bible study, social? Should this balance change over time? What will attract them? What will keep them?

WHEN TO APPROACH?

For formal invitations you will know what times and places are likely to be attractive.

However, we all lead such busy lives that you may have to "fit in" with their needs.

There are times to talk to people about God: - Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, Work and Family occasions, etc. But if you always wait for the right moment you will miss out. Be prepared to be guided by the Holy Spirit and let people know you are a committed Catholic so they can approach you. Seek out opportunities and be prepared to lead conversations. “I went to a really lovely Mass on Sunday” or “I am looking forward to Easter Sunday Mass” can provoke a question and you need to be prepared to follow up. Have a 30 second testimony ready for the unexpected occasion. Michelle Moran's Pass it on Book or Video will give you some ideas. (see Catholic Evangelisation Services at www.faithcafe.org)

YOU NEED TO CONSIDER THE OBJECTIVES

Is it to get people interested? To get them to take a leaflet away? To get them to talk to you? To get them to join a Course or a Prayer Group? To get them to rediscover the Sacraments - especially to come to Mass? To give them a better understanding of the Love of God? Or a stage on the way to one of these? The team need to consider what the ideal outcome is from your activity. Don't over plan and make it artificial but do make sure you have considered what to do next. Set sensible goals and learn as you go.

YOU WILL WANT OTHERS TO HELP

Do not underestimate how God can work in others. One lady spoke after Mass and asked if anyone wanted to do an Alpha course. She was intending to run it in her house. She got 60 people and had to hire the local school hall. Many of the helpers found that the very act of helping transformed their lives - whether it was putting out the chairs, providing food, washing up, helping with transport, or sitting at home praying for the course. In particular you will want prayer support from the parish. Ask the Housebound, the Youth Group, the Rosary Group, etc to pray for your work.

EVANGELISATION - GO TO PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE

Physically so we can go to them at the Pub, Supermarket, Workplace, School gate, etc. We can't just sit in the church bemoaning the fact that no-one else is joining us. We go to Church to receive the Sacraments precisely to give us the strength to go out and preach the Good News. Jesus went to people, we must do the same.

Spiritually so we can speak their language and be understood. "Are you saved?" is not a good opening line. Nor is "Do you know God loves you?" or "Why don't you go to Church?" "Have you ever been to a Church?" might be safest.

Most people are genuinely interested rather than opposed to religion.

WE WILL FAIL.....(SOMETIMES)

Do not forget to pray, nor that God is capable of more than we can imagine. At times we will need to do no more than what Jesus tells us. He said "Come" and Peter stepped out of the boat and walked on the stormy waters (Matthew 14:29) However, Jesus never said it would be easy and we must be prepared for difficulties, distractions and criticisms from both friends and foes. The Good News is that in most countries, but not all, we are unlikely to be imprisoned, flogged or crucified.

The Parable of the Sower shows that it is not all a success. Even Jesus was rejected at times. But the same Parable shows the possibilities available. As Mother Teresa said "We are called to be faithful, not successful." You may never know what the seed you have planted may sprout into or when. The Gideons have numerous testimonies of people who have had God enter their lives from just finding a Bible in their hotel bedroom. Very often God uses what we consider failure to bring about triumph. Consider the Cross! It did not look good at Calvary. Beware of "the temptation of impatience, the temptation of immediately finding the great success, in finding large numbers....the parable of the mustard seed is relevant.....In the history of Salvation it is always Good Friday and Easter Sunday at the same time." (Cardinal Ratzinger Address to Catechists and Teachers of Religion 12 December 2000)

BE PREPARED

WWJD What would Jesus do? We need to know him to love him to serve him. Read about Jesus and "ponder it in your heart" as Our Lady did. Be prepared to act on God's prompting: Phillip ran up to the Chariot of the Ethiopian Treasurer. Read *Pass it On* by Michelle Moran of the Sion Community, (also available on video or audio from Catholic Evangelisation Services). This gives ideas about how to tell your story and spread the Good News. Look at the Catholic Voices website for help with difficult areas. www.catholicvoices.org.uk

PRACTICE

What would you say if:

1. Someone asks: "What did you do on Sunday?"
2. Someone asks: "What do you go to Mass for?"
3. Someone asks: "Why are you so happy?"
4. Someone asks: "Why do you have a picture of Jesus on the wall?"
5. Someone asks: "Why do you pray?"
6. Someone asks: "What's going on at your church?"

RESOURCES

There are many resources available to help in the work of evangelisation. Do not be afraid to design your own invitations and welcome back cards. Someone in your parish would be delighted to design and produce them for you - ask them!

A list of potential ways of reaching out to those outside the church is available from YOFworkshops@finmandev.com. This is being added to, as new ideas are shared.

For the Year of Faith in Birmingham Diocese go to www.catholic-today.co.uk/year-of-faith
For the Year of Faith generally go to the Maryvale website www.catholic-year-of-faith.com

COURSES AVAILABLE FOR PARISHES TO RUN

There are resources available from Catholic Evangelisation Services which has a number of video based courses suitable for use to explain various aspects of the Faith. These vary from being very simple in approach for those on the fringes of the Church e.g. those for parents bring children to the Sacraments of Baptism, First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion; to courses to help ordinary parishioners deepen their Faith e.g. the retreats given by the Preacher to the Papal Household Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa - Drink from the Wells of the Church and Life in Christ. Some are aimed at Youth and those preparing for Confirmation. Look at the trailers on www.faithcafe.org.

For details of the very successful Alpha video based course for use to reach out to churchgoers and non- churchgoers alike go to www.run.alpha.org/catholic-context. This has proved extremely successful at awakening faith in "lukewarm" Catholics

And a website that people interested in the Catholic faith generally can be referred to is www.catholicfaith.org.uk or to www.catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Featured/Year-of-Faith.

GETTING STARTED

GET TOGETHER WITH OTHERS WHO WISH TO EVANGELISE

PRAY TOGETHER FOR GUIDANCE, COURAGE, PATIENCE AND INSPIRATION

CONSIDER YOUR PARISH STRENGTHS - Where are the people you wish to reach out to, and how can you best approach them? It is often easiest to aim for people already connected with the church or school.

DECIDE WHAT TO DO consider objectives and the resources available - people and time

ASK OTHERS TO PRAY FOR YOU - Especially existing Parish groups

CONSIDER PEOPLE IN THE PARISH AND ASK THEM TO HELP both with telling others and organising things.

Evangelisation includes:

Personal testimony - telling people what God/Your Faith/the Church has done for you.

Personal witness - influencing others by the way we live our lives.

Social action - helping the poor and the marginalised in Jesus' name.

Being welcoming - in our Church and our communities

Communication - about Scripture, the Saints, the Church via all media, especially new.

Go and Announce the Gospel of the Lord.