



Ten Tips for sharing your faith

“Evangelization” is a scary word for many Catholics, conjuring up images of Bible-toting door-knockers, wild-eyed preachers, and overly-friendly co-workers. Faced with these examples, most of us simply say, “Catholics don’t evangelize.” Yet, evangelization is at the heart of being Catholic. As the documents of Vatican Council II say, “The principal duty of both men and women is to bear witness to Christ.” Here are some suggestions on how ordinary people can share their faith in ordinary ways.

1 Rethink “evangelization”.

Our Catholic understanding of God, grace and salvation differs from that of some other churches. We believe God is not just interested in getting our souls into heaven after we die. God loves the *whole* person—not just the soul! Jesus shows us the way to live here on earth; he gives us the Holy Spirit to transform our lives, values, words, actions, and relationships, so that we live the “fullness of life” (Jn. 10:10).

With this understanding, evangelization is not merely saving souls. Nor is it about getting a person to say a certain prayer, go through a seminar, or join a church. Evangelization is not about preaching or teaching; **it’s about sharing with others what we ourselves have experienced—the life-changing love of God.** It is about bringing people into deeper relationship with Jesus Christ whose life, death and resurrection reveal God’s love for each of us.

2 It’s about relationships.

If evangelization is about bringing people into a deeper relationship with Jesus, then the best way to do that is *through* relationship. The way people experience the love of God is through *our* love, care, and concern. This, in fact, is how Jesus did it. He invited people to follow him so they could come to know him and his way of living. Now, as his body on earth, we do the same. Through our relationships with others, they see and hear and experience the good news of Jesus. We don’t need to learn any special techniques to evangelize; we just need to be sincere about building authentic, healthy relationships.

3 Start close to home.

We don’t need to go out looking for people to evangelize! We are already in relationship with dozens of people—family, friends, coworkers, fellow students, neighbors and associates—with whom God is calling us to share our faith. Some may know little or nothing about God; some may be active Catholics. But God wants a deeper relationship with *all* of them, and invites you to be one way God does that. In turn, God may be using some of them to bring *you* into a deeper relationship with him! Start thinking about the people God has placed in your life, and how God might use *your* relationship with them to deepen *their* relationship with God.

4 Watch for key moments.

We all have times when we are more open than others. These may be times of loss, stress, failure, illness or financial need, when we realize that we need help. Or perhaps they are times of great joy, success, excitement or love, when we experience something beyond ourselves. Watch for times like these in the lives of the people around you. Be ready to share good news.

5 Share the good news.

The Gospel, or “good news”, isn’t complicated: God’s love, revealed in Jesus Christ, frees us from the power of sin, and through the Holy Spirit, empowers us to live fully as daughters and sons of God. Get to know the basic points of the Gospel message so that you can share it in your own words when the opportunity presents itself.

6 Share your own story.

Maybe the best way to share the good news is to tell your own story. How is your life different because of God’s love and grace in your life? What difference does your faith make? Spend some time reflecting on this. In what specific ways have you experienced “salvation”? In other words, when has the saving power of God’s love brought you freedom, hope, or meaning? This is the good news of the Gospel written in your life! How would you tell your family, friends or coworkers about that?

The Good News the basic message of the Gospel

- God loves us and wants to be in relationship with us; God desires our well-being, the fullness of life.
- Our human condition and sin prevent us from living the fullness of life that God desires for us.
- Jesus redeems us from sin; he shows us what perfect love God has for us, *and* how we can live.
- God offers us the Holy Spirit to bring us into relationship with God and to empower us to live as Jesus did.
- We open ourselves to the Holy Spirit through the sacraments of initiation.
- We are sustained in our relationship with God by our participation in the Body of Christ, the church.

7 Invite them to church.

While our personal stories can be a powerful example of God’s love, the church community offers an infinitely richer experience. The church’s diversity, unity and universality bring a fuller understanding of the God who is infinitely more than any one of us. By bringing others into contact with the church, we connect them with the instrument of God’s grace that sustains us. They will also have access to the rich tradition of teaching, prayer, and the sacraments.

8 Share some Catholic resources.

There are lots of good resources to help people learn more about our Catholic faith. There are books of Catholic prayers, booklets of daily reflections, and Catholic newspapers and magazines. Share a book or pamphlet that you’ve found helpful, or ask one of the parish staff to suggest something.

9 Let go of your expectations.

People are funny—they rarely do what we expect them to! So try to avoid having expectation about how your family member or friend or coworker will respond to you. Their relationship with God and the way they live out their faith will be different from yours, and that’s a healthy thing.

10 Trust in the Holy Spirit.

When all is said and done, it’s not up to you. Evangelization is the work of the Holy Spirit; our calling is to be ready and willing to bear witness to God’s love. Trust in the Holy Spirit—especially when you don’t see any outward signs or results. We don’t always see what is going on. Like the seed in Jesus’ parable that grows underground and only eventually shows forth its fruit (Mark 4:26), so too the seed of God’s Word that has been planted in their heart may take awhile to bear fruit. Trust that the Holy Spirit is at work in ways that you may not see. And be grateful for God’s gentle, loving, mysterious ways of working in and through you!