

**Christian Churches Together  
Revised Evangelism Exercise  
Catholic Family  
January 13, 2009**

**1. What are essential elements of evangelism in each CCT family?**

The term *evangelization* has a very rich meaning. In the broad sense, it sums up the Church's entire mission: her whole life consists in accomplishing the *traditio Evangelii*, the proclamation and handing on of the Gospel, which is "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom 1:16) and which, in the final essence, is identified with Jesus Christ himself. (cf. 1 Cor 1:24). Understood in this way, evangelization is aimed at all of humanity. To evangelize is not limited to teaching a doctrine, but to proclaim Jesus Christ by one's words and actions, that is, to make oneself an instrument of his presence and action in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Roman Catholic evangelization and the use of the term evangelization were renewed in 1975 after a Synod on Evangelization called by Pope Paul VI. "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church. It is a task and mission which the vast and profound changes of present-day society make all the more urgent. Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize."<sup>2</sup>

"Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit."<sup>3</sup> This is a core belief in the church's ability to proclaim and witness to the Word in our times.

**2. What are the primary means of evangelism for each family?**

The means of evangelization today are multifaceted in that "they vary according to the different circumstances of time, place and culture, and because they thereby present a certain challenge to our capacity for discovery and adaptation."<sup>4</sup> In addition to the public preaching of the Gospel there are other means that have a fundamental importance:<sup>5</sup>

- **The witness of life** – Disciples must first be witnesses of an authentic Christian life. Our lives are transformed by a personal encounter with the Risen Lord and they must give witness to that reality that they are given over to God with limitless zeal.
- **A living preaching** – Disciples, must preach the Word. If it is not preached, how is it to be heard? "And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?"<sup>6</sup> We must utilize all the modern means at our disposal in proclaiming the Word.
- **Liturgy of the Word** – Disciples must seize the many situations that life presents to us to share the Word. "In fact, there are innumerable events in life and human situations which offer the opportunity for a discreet but incisive statement of what the Lord has to say in this or that particular circumstance."<sup>7</sup>
- **Catechetics** – Disciples need an ongoing systematic catechesis on the fundamental teachings of Jesus, the living content of the truth which God wishes to convey to us and which the church has sought to express from its inception.
- **Utilization of the mass media** – Disciples must utilize the mass media of our time in proclaiming the Word, catechesis and nurturing the faith life of one who is called to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..."<sup>8</sup>
- **Personal Contact** – Disciples are in relationship with other people in society and this provides many opportunities for one to share their own personal experience and relationship with Christ.

- **The Sacraments** – Disciples have unique opportunities in their lives to experience grace-filled moments. These living expressions are found in the “seven sacraments and in the admirable radiation of grace and holiness which they possess.”<sup>9</sup>
- **Popular piety** – Disciples have unique religious expressions drawn from their culture. When these expressions of faith are oriented in evangelization they can be rich in value for themselves and others.

Adaptation to the signs of the times is critical for effective evangelization. Pope Paul VI said in 1975, “the methods must be adapted to the age, culture and aptitude of the persons concerned; they must seek always to fix in the memory, intelligence and heart the essential truths that must impregnate all of life.”<sup>10</sup> In 1983, Pope John Paul II said, “Evangelization...can and should be new in its ardor, its methods and its expression. It must be heralded with new energy and in a style and language adapted to the people of our day.”<sup>11</sup> Pope Benedict XVI reminds us “The church is, by its nature, missionary; its primary task is evangelization....At the beginning of the third millennium, the Church feels with renewed strength that Christ’s missionary mandate is more pressing than ever.”<sup>12</sup>

### 3. What questions does your family want to put to the other families regarding evangelism?

- As CCT families, is our truly ecumenical relationship helping or impeding our ability to evangelize as individual families?
  - In light of our growing ecumenical relationship in CCT, how can each of our families be faithful to our individual mission without appearing competitive?
  - In leading individuals to Christ, do I see communion in the Eucharist as the ultimate expression of gospel faith and unity?
  - Is targeting disenfranchised or marginalized constituencies in other families appropriate for members of CCT?
  - Within neighborhoods, is it possible to do evangelization in an ecumenical way among members of CCT?
  - Can there be a commitment to speak in positive ways among all families within CCT?
  - If there was an agreed upon statement of *Principles for Evangelism* among CCT members, would we review these regularly and hold one another accountable?
  - Is there a way for CCT families to address the growing number of mixed religious traditions within homes in a unified way in the spirit of CCT?
- How can we distinguish between proselytizing vs. witness?
  - Is it possible to come up with a “code of conduct” that we could hold in common with regard to evangelization?
  - Are there common ways for us to approach mixed religion marriages in our families?
  - Are there common ways for us to approach interfaith marriages in our families?
  - What is the relationship between evangelization and culture?

<sup>1</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Notes on some Aspects of Evangelization*, Vatican City, 3 December 2007

<sup>2</sup> Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi-On Evangelization in the Modern World*, USCCB, Washington, DC, 8 December 1975, #14

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, #75

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, #40

<sup>5</sup> cf. Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi-On Evangelization in the Modern World*, USCCB, Washington, DC, 8 December 1975, #40-48

<sup>6</sup> Romans 10:14

<sup>7</sup> Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi-On Evangelization in the Modern World*, USCCB, Washington, DC, 8 December 1975, #43

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>9</sup> Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi-On Evangelization in the Modern World*, USCCB, Washington, DC, 8 December 1975, #47

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, #44

<sup>11</sup> Pope John Paul II, address to CELAM (Episcopal Council of Latin American), 9 March 1983, English translation in *Origins* 12, March 24, 1983, p.661.

<sup>12</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, address on the occasion of his first visit as Pope outside Vatican City to the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls.