



Evangelization in the Catholic School

**Go out to all the world
and tell the Good News**
Mark 16:15

THIS BOOKLET IS PUBLISHED BY
THE DIVISION OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

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^{xv} *Go and Make Disciples*, p.8.

^{xvi} John Paul II, *Ecclesia in America* (1999). #26.

^{xvii} As indicated in the 1999 NCEA Assessment of Religious Education (ACRE); results for Baltimore Archdiocesan Catholic Schools.

^{xviii} *Go and Make Disciples*, p. 19.

^{xix} EN 57.

^{xx} *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*. Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, 53.

^{xxi} Institute for Peace and Justice, 4144 Lindell Blvd. Room 408, St. Louis, MI.

^{xxii} Contact Kathleen Carlisle, CRS Education Manager, at 410-624-2220, ext. 3227.

^{xxiii} Contact Media Resource Center: 1-800-528-6822; E-mail at mediarch@archbalt.org. Suggestions include *Catholic Connections to Media Literacy* (#6452); *Beyond Blame Series* (#6324); *Renewing the Mind of the Media* (#6169); *Media and Politics* (#7344).

^{xxiv} *Go and Make Disciples*, p. 6.

^{xxv} EN 75.

^{xxvi} John 10:10.

Endnotes

- ⁱ Paul VI, *On Evangelization in the Modern World* (1975).
- ⁱⁱ Galatians 2:20.
- ⁱⁱⁱ *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization, National Conference of Catholic Bishops*, (1993)..p. 13.
- ^{iv} *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Washington, DC. USCC Office of Publishing and Promotion Services. (1994) #26.
- ^v *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation in the United States*. CF. *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community* .(Washington, DC., USCC Office of Publishing and Promotion Services 1992.) #6.
- ^{vi} *Go and Make Disciples*, p. 22.
- ^{vii} CCC 1324.
- ^{viii} Resources for preparing children's liturgies include *The Directory for Masses with Children*, (ISEL, 1973); *Children's Daily Prayer*, written by Elizabeth Jeep and published annually by LTP.
- ^{ix} "...religious instruction in schools sows the dynamic seed of the Gospel and seeks to keep in touch with the other elements of the student's knowledge and education; thus the Gospel will impregnate the mentality of the students in the field of their learning, and the harmonization of their culture will be achieved in the light of faith." *General Directory for Catechesis* #73.
- ^x John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae*, #6.
- ^{xi} EN 41.
- ^{xii} *In the case of students who are believers, religious instruction assists them to understand better the Christian message, by relating it to the great existential concerns common to all religions and to every human being, to the various visions of life particularly evident in culture and to those major moral questions which confront humanity... Those students who are searching, or who have religious doubts, can also find in religious instruction the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is.. In the case of students who are non-believers, religious instruction assumes the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel...* GDC #75.
- ^{xiii} *Go and Make Disciples*, p. 8.
- ^{xiv} Gerding, Susan, Ed.D & DeSiano, Frank, CSP. *Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples: Evangelizing Power in the Parish* (Mahwah, NJ.; Paulist Press, 1999), p. 36.

Evangelization in the Catholic School

Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States (p.2)

Evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself.

Lay Ministers, Lay Disciples: Evangelizing Power in the Parish
(Gerding, Susan, Ed.D & DeSiano, Frank, CSP.(Mahwah, NJ.; Paulist Press, 1999).p.30

If a ministry is not an evangelizing ministry, then the essence of the ministry itself must be questioned and challenged, redefined and transformed. Evangelization is not just an item on the agenda of any parish or any ministry; evangelization **is** the agenda. It becomes the way for Christ to say that he continues loving us today.

Pope John Paul II, Ecclesia in America (18)

Although every ministry in a parish is an evangelizing ministry, Catholic schools have a unique opportunity and a grave responsibility to evangelize. One of the reasons for the Church's influence on the Christian formation of Americans is her vast presence in the field of education...the large number of Catholic schools makes possible a wide-ranging evangelizing effort, as long as there is a clear will to impart a truly Christian education.

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Conclusion

Evangelization occurs when people are so ablaze with the fire of God's love that they cannot help but witness to and share their faith with others. Evangelization happens by the way we live God's love in our daily life; by the love, example and support people give each other; and by the ways parents pass faith on to their children. The Catholic school is, in essence, an evangelizing ministry, guided by the Holy Spirit, and faithful to the continuing mission of Jesus Christ, *I came that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

Questions for Further Reflection

The objectives and strategies listed in this document are by no means exhaustive, but can serve as a start for further thought. Looking back on this document, consider:

- What are some of the ways in which our school is already successful in its efforts to evangelize?
- What objectives or strategies in this document were new or challenging?
- What other strategies came to mind as we read this document?
- What are some other ways that we can meet the goals outlined above?
- How can we encourage our faculty to do this?
- What more can we do to make faith come alive for our students?
- How can we draw our families deeper into this journey of faith?

I. Introduction

Jesus Christ was the first and greatest evangelizer. Through his life, his sacrifice and his parables Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God and liberating salvation. The essential mission of the Church today is the same as it was for the first 2,000 years, to proclaim the Good News, to bring the message of salvation and the Kingdom into every facet of human life and to transform our culture through the power and love of Jesus.

Many of us grew up in a church that defined evangelization as the art of “making new Catholics”. Today the Church sees evangelization as a call to conversion in Christ. Conversion is not a once in a lifetime event, but a series of dyings and risings, through which we strive to proclaim, “It is no longer I, but Christ lives in me.” Each Catholic, by virtue of his/her baptism shares in the evangelizing ministry of the Church.

- The evangelizing Catholic challenges those who are baptized and catechized in the Catholic faith to grow in their knowledge, understanding and practice of their baptismal calling.
- Secondly, the evangelizing Catholic reaches out to those baptized Catholics who are alienated from the Church, and welcomes them back for reconciliation with the Catholic Church.
- Thirdly, the evangelizing Catholic seeks those who have no church affiliation and invites them to “come and see.”

Evangelization in its holistic meaning is a summons

- to deepen our own faith,
- to call our faculties, students and families to a deeper conversion to Jesus Christ,
- to reach out to inactive or non-participating Catholics,
- to invite those seeking a faith community to explore the richness of the Catholic tradition, and
- to transform our culture in Christ.

II. Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to support Catholic schools in their evangelizing role. *Go and Make Disciples* is the plan of the United States bishops for evangelization. We look at its three goals from the perspective of the Catholic school. Then we offer some objectives and strategies to realize these goals; this is not an exhaustive list, rather a start. We challenge each school to set its own objectives for evangelization and to strategize to bring about their accomplishment.

- ❑ Schedule meetings, workshops, special events with sensitivity to family concerns.
- ❑ Provide baby-sitting for school events.
- ❑ Invite speakers from the community to address students on justice and peace issues.
- ❑ Sponsor annual opportunities for outreach to the poor, lonely, and ill of the community.

Goal III Objectives for Teachers

- The children understand their baptismal call to discipleship.
- Students learn at appropriate levels the richness of the social teachings of the Church.
- The curriculum includes critical appraisals of media and the culture.
- Students are taught the importance of citizens to be knowledgeable and involved in political and civic issues.

Goal III Strategies for Teachers

- ❑ Contact the *Institute for Peace and Justice* for information on materials for educating for Peace and Justice.
- ❑ Promote greater understanding of cultural and economic issues through programs such as *Food Fast*, sponsored by Catholic Relief Services and *Come and See*, sponsored by Columban Missions.
- ❑ Be familiar with resources for media literacy available through The Archdiocese of Baltimore Media Resource Center.

GOAL III *To foster gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.”*

Conversion fosters a new life, in which there is no separation between faith and works in our daily response to the universal call to holiness. In order to speak of conversion, the gap between faith and life must be bridged. Where this gap exists, Christians are such only in name.

Only 11% of Catholic school children in the Archdiocese of Baltimore believe that “Jesus asks a lot of me.” Goal III is all about teaching our children that our mission as baptized Christians is to transform our society in Christ Jesus, indeed, does ask a lot of us – to carry gospel values into our homes, our workplaces, our school yards and into our adult lives.

Pope John Paul II writes in *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, ‘*Faith which does not become culture is not received fully, not assimilated entirely, not lived faithfully.*’

Goal III Objectives for Principals

- The principal realizes that discipleship calls the school to be involved in the needs of the neighborhood and community.
- The principal seeks to support and affirm family life.
- The principal sees a priority in educating for justice and peace.

Goal III Strategies for Principals

- Set-up an outreach committee of faculty and parents to investigate the needs of the local community and explore ways the school community can become involved in meeting a need.

GOAL I *To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.*

This goal reminds us that every baptized Catholic is called to holiness. Faith is a gift from God and calls forth from us a response, discipleship. To become a true disciple of Jesus is a life long process, which we know as conversion. This ongoing conversion of deepening faith is nourished by prayer, reading of scripture, learning more about the Catholic teachings, sharing our faith stories with others, leading a sacramental life and reaching out to others in service and justice. The Church challenges Catholic schools to foster a climate of conversion among faculty, staff, students and families.

Goal I Objectives for Principals

- The principal of a Catholic school is the faith leader of that community of believers. In *Go and Make Disciples*, the bishops point out that, *Schools and hospitals, (are) often the only face of the Church some people see... Ways in which people can be invited to know Jesus and the Church through these institutions should be constantly explored and reviewed.*
- The principal views the school community through the lens of evangelization and communicates the vision of an evangelizing school to faculty, staff, students and families.
- The principal strives to build a faith community with the following characteristics:
 - + An evangelizing school is welcoming. Everyone in the school sees himself/herself as a “Christ bearer”.
 - + An evangelizing school has a distinct Catholic atmosphere.
The environment makes a clear statement that this is a Catholic faith setting.
 - + Prayer permeates an evangelizing school. Prayer is not limited to the morning announcements.

- + Liturgy is appropriate and vibrant in an evangelizing school.

The school recognizes itself as a Eucharistic community which gathers in faith and is sent forth to proclaim the “Good News” of Jesus Christ.

- + Faculty, staff, students and families exemplify moral teachings by the way they relate to and respect one another.
- + The school acknowledges and acts upon the truth that its responsibility reaches beyond its door to the community and to the larger world.

Goal I Strategies for Principals

- ❑ Provide for on-going instruction in the Catholic faith through in-service, workshops and conferences, and encourage participation in diocesan sponsored catechist training and formation.
- ❑ Schedule days of reflection, incorporating prayer and reflective sharing in meetings of faculty and staff.
- ❑ Gather regularly to pray for each other and for the needs of the school.
- ❑ Encourage formation of scripture sharing or faith sharing groups among the staff. These groups could meet throughout the academic year or during Advent and Lent.
- ❑ Challenge faculty to grow in their understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist as the “source and summit of the Christian life.”
- ❑ Provide a Catholic physical environment in your school; display good religious art.
- ❑ Recognize and celebrate liturgical Feast Days with the same, or more enthusiasm and attention as secular holidays.
- ❑ Involve students in the planning and celebration of joy-filled liturgies that speak to the heart; teach the children to sing with gusto appealing liturgical music.

Goal II Objective for Teachers

Many of the objectives listed for teachers under Goal I also apply here The Catholic school teacher is called to continually deepen his/her faith, so that he/she becomes a natural, living witness to faith

- While remaining deeply respectful of those who belong to other faiths, the teacher freely shares the transforming message of Christ through words and lived example.
- The teacher encourages students and their families on the journey of Christian discipleship.
- Teachers are educated in the principles and goals of adult faith formation.
- Teachers insure that the non-Catholic student finds a hospitable and welcoming environment in which to grow and learn.
- Teachers help children understand that there is one baptism and by it, we are claimed for Christ.
- Teachers instill in students an appreciation for the gifts and heritage of different faith traditions.

Goal II Strategies for Teachers

- ❑ Participate in archdiocesan and parish sponsored adult faith formation classes.
- ❑ Know the religious preference and background of your students and their parents.
- ❑ Reverence and celebrate the stories of everyone’s baptism.
- ❑ Invite students of other faith traditions to share their stories and traditions.
- ❑ Find appropriate opportunities throughout the year to share parts of your faith journey with your students.

- ❑ Offer simple rules and procedures to all students and family on being hospitable to guests and visitors. They could be as simple as “Be welcoming and courteous to every guest,” or as specific as instruction on how to hold the door for someone.
- ❑ Be aware of the various groups represented by the families in your school and develop plans to reach out appropriately and sensitively to each. These groups may include:
 - families where one parent is not Catholic or Christian;
 - single parent homes,
 - Catholic families who are not actively practicing their faith or are not members of a faith community;
 - families that are struggling with serious illness, employment or financial needs;
 - families of cultural and ethnic diversity.
- ❑ Invite a member of the parish staff to in-service faculty concerning parish resources such as *ReMembering Church* or *Landings* that is available for those Catholics who have been away from the Church and may wish to return to full participation.
- ❑ Schedule a faculty in-service on the RCIA process.
- ❑ Use the school newsletter to share the “Good News”; include aspects of the religion course of study.
- ❑ Provide workshops to inspire parents to be the primary religious educators of their children.

For example,

 - Guide young families in forming young children in faith, creating family traditions; being media literate and aware;
 - Help parents of preadolescent and young adolescent children understand their children’s moral and faith development;
 - Raise awareness of social justice issues and how families can respond to the needs of the community.

- ❑ Encourage daily classroom prayer of different types – meditative, guided imagery, intercessory, spontaneous, etc.
- ❑ Provide bibles in each classroom and incorporate bible study in lessons; ensuring that children learn how to use bibles.
- ❑ Insure that religious instruction in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigor as other disciplines.
- ❑ Invite families to participate in school liturgies; for example, inviting families with military members to participate in a Veteran’s Day Mass, with a reception afterward.
- ❑ Insist on integration of the religion course of study with other academic areas.
- ❑ Support a parent prayer group that meets to pray for the needs of the school and the school families.

Goal I Objectives for Teachers

- Teachers realize that their first responsibility is to be attentive to their own relationship with Jesus Christ. *Every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Jesus...What assiduous study of the word of God transmitted by the Church’s Magisterium, what profound familiarity with Christ and with the Father, what a spirit of prayer, what detachment from self must a catechist have in order that he can say: “My teaching is not mine!*
- Teachers understand and put into practice the counsel of Pope Paul VI when he said...*(People) listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if (they) do listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.*
- Teachers see their vocation as expressed by Mother Teresa of Calcutta, *You have been taught by those who have given their whole lives to Christ. By their example, they have kindled the light of Christ in your lives.*

The time has come for you to likewise kindle the same light of Christ in the lives of those around you.

- The evangelizing Catholic school teacher sees each student as a child of God and seeks to foster each child's spiritual growth.
- In every religion class, the teacher attempts to connect faith with life.
- The teacher attempts to relate the moral, ethical or spiritual ramifications to each area of study.
- Realizing that catechetical instruction is always about formation and transformation, as well as information, the teacher acknowledges the varying levels of faith in students.
- The teacher proclaims her/his own faith by words and actions and seeks to bring others to Christ by the witness of her/his life.
- The evangelizing teacher reaches out to families to engage them in the religious formation of their children.
- The evangelizing teacher is aware of non Catholic parents and makes them welcome in what can seem an alien environment.

Goal I Strategies for Teachers

- Set aside time each day for personal prayer and spiritual reading.
- Pray with your students.
- Set up a prayer space in each learning center.
- Pray for each of your students by name each day.
- Use the "Family" or "At Home" pages of your religion text as class assignments.
- Involve families in religion curriculum by giving children assignments that promote family discussion of faith and moral life.
- Explain to non-Catholic parents the purpose and meaning of liturgical year or sacramental celebrations in which the Catholic students are participating. Invite them to participate in appropriate ways.
- Use the current religion course of study as part of planning each subject area – "planned integration."

GOAL II *To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith*

Goal II Objectives for Principals

- All who come in to the school feel welcome. Each student and visitor is treated with respect and caring concern.
- All in the school community are so excited about their Catholic faith and their relationship with Jesus Christ that they want to pass it on
- Teachers, especially those who do not belong to the parish where they teach, are familiar with the resources available in the parish.
- Teachers have a basic understanding of the RCIA process.

Goal II Strategies for Principals

- Make your school reception area an obvious place of welcome. Provide places to sit for those waiting,
- Make sure the person sitting at the reception desk or answering the phone is able to put people first. Often it is the school secretary or receptionist who is the first person one encounters when entering a school building or calling on the telephone. Whether it is a fifth grader arriving late for the third time in a week, a first grader who forgot her lunch, a publisher representative, or a family moving into the area, the secretary/receptionist sets the tone for all who approach school offices. *Subtle tones of voice say, on the one hand, "We are here to serve you," or on the other hand, "We are very busy and you have just intruded on our work." ...A receptionist can communicate openness to the caller or visitor, or the receptionist can send out vibrations that say, "We don't want to be bothered."*