

*How to Share  
Your Faith  
with  
Anyone*



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*How to Share  
Your Faith  
with  
Anyone*

*A Practical Manual for  
Catholic Evangelization*

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## *DEDICATION*

In gratitude for the many graces that I have received through my baptism, through the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, and through the protection of my guardian angel.

I hope this book will help you to fall in love with God. As St. Augustine says: “To fall in love with God is the greatest of romances; to seek Him the greatest adventure; to find Him the greatest human achievement.”

I pray that this book will reach many souls so that everyone can treasure the beauty of our Faith and find the desire to share the Gospel.



*“The New Evangelization that can make the twenty-first century a springtime of the Gospel is a task for the entire People of God, but will depend in a decisive way on the lay faithful being fully aware of their baptismal vocation and their responsibility for bringing the Good News of Jesus Christ to their culture and society.”*

—Pope St. John Paul II, 1998



# CONTENTS

Foreword by Scott Hahn..... 11

Introduction by Matthew Arnold

“A Life of Evangelization” ..... 15

## Part One: What Is Evangelization?

1. Evangelization: It’s Not Just for Protestants ..... 35

2. What Is Evangelization? ..... 39

3. Why Don’t Catholics Evangelize? ..... 43

4. Preparing for One-on-One Evangelization ..... 47

## Part Two: How to Evangelize

5. The Eight Laws of Effectively Sharing the Faith  
with Anyone..... 53

6. Jesus: The Perfect Evangelist..... 59

7. Planting Seeds for Jesus..... 65

8. The Ten Commandments of Evangelization .... 71

9. The Heart of Evangelization ..... 87

10. How to Share Your Personal Testimony..... 93

### Part Three: The Evangelist’s Spiritual Game Plan

11. The Power of Prayer .....	105
12. Will Power .....	113
13. The Secret of Evangelization: Living in the Presence of God.....	119
14. Your Spiritual Game Plan.....	131
15. Evangelization “in the Margins” .....	137
Favorite Prayers and Reflections .....	149
Bibliography .....	157

## PART ONE

### WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION?



*EVANGELIZATION:  
IT'S NOT JUST FOR PROTESTANTS*

*God has created me to do him some definite service; he has committed some work to me which he has not committed to another. I have my mission.*

—Blessed John Henry Cardinal Newman

I think most people associate evangelization with Fundamentalist Christians and pseudo-Christian groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses. But according to the teaching of Vatican II, it is the main duty of Catholic men and women to "bear witness to Christ" in our lives and in our works. In our homes, on the job, in our social groups or professional circles, we must show forth "the new man created according to God in justice and true holiness." The Gospel of Jesus Christ must be proclaimed by what we say and do. This is evangelization.

Now, I did not make this up. This is the official teaching of the Second Vatican Council. But if you are like 99 percent of Catholics, you have probably never read the documents

of Vatican II. That is why I am “preaching to the choir” in this book—because, in plain language, lay Catholics need to know that we are on the earth precisely to sanctify secular society. We have a duty to give our families, our friends, and our neighbors—and that means everybody—the Good News of Jesus Christ.

In the 1960s Pope Paul VI taught that the “pressing need to evangelize the multitudes” through mass media is no excuse to abandon one-on-one evangelization. Our gift of faith is an inheritance from God that is meant to be shared with a lost and hurting society. But the late pontiff also reminds us that one-on-one evangelization is never an “isolated act” because evangelization is a “deeply ecclesial” activity. Therefore individual Catholic communities have the task of learning the essence of the Gospel message and sharing it.

What Pope Paul VI was telling us is that there is no place for “Lone Ranger-ism” in the work of evangelization. Simply put, “Jesus and me” Christianity is absolutely alien to Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition. As lay Catholics—even when we evangelize as individuals—we really evangelize through, with, and in the Church.

Evangelization is a mandate for all the lay faithful, but it must take place in communion with our pastors—the priests and bishops Jesus gives to his Church—and with the Magisterium (the Church’s official teaching office of the Pope and the bishops under him). Likewise, the growth of the Church is the “consolation of the Holy Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the “soul of the Church” and the main source of all Catholic ministry.

There is a profound link between Christ, the Church, and evangelization. It is vital that your local parish reflect and express true unity with Holy Mother Church, because the more your local church is attached to the universal Church—especially in being faithful to the Magisterium—the “more it will be truly evangelizing.” Union between the local Church and the universal Church is essential because all Catholic Christians need to be on the same page; centered on the Holy Eucharist, devoted to Mary, faithful to our Holy Father, the Pope, and sharing the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Faith.

## **Light from the Word**

### **Evangelization is a duty**

“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel.” (1 Cor 9:16)

### **Have confidence**

“Do not be afraid; just have faith.” (Mk 5:36)

### **Evangelization must be done “through and with” the Church**

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1 Pt 2:9, RSV)

“To bring to light [for all] what is the plan of the mystery hidden from ages past in God . . . so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church.” (Eph 3:9–10)

**Union with priests and bishops is crucial**

“Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account.”

(Heb 13:17, RSV)

## WHAT IS EVANGELIZATION?

The word *evangelization* comes from the Greek word *euangelion*. It originally came into English as *gospel*, which literally means “good news.” To evangelize simply means to share the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ. This is the first and most fundamental element of evangelization.

So here is the next logical question: What is the Good News? The Good News is the answer to the deep questions of life: Why are we here? Is this world all there is? What is the meaning and purpose of life?

God created human beings in order that we might have a personal relationship with him now and forever. But most do not enjoy this relationship because it has been broken by sin: the sin of our first parents—which we all inherit when we come into this world—and the sins we have personally committed in what we have done and in what we have failed to do. Some of the consequences of sin are fear, loneliness, emptiness, and guilt—but the worst consequence is eternal separation from God. There is nothing that human beings can do to bridge the gap between God and man caused by sin. That is the bad news.

But the Good News is that through the Paschal Mystery—the life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ—salvation from sin is available to everyone as a gift of God’s grace and mercy. The sacrifice of the sinless God-Man on the Cross was one of atonement and satisfaction for our sins. In other words, Jesus paid a debt he did not owe because we owed a debt we could not pay.

If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator. If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist. If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But our greatest need was forgiveness of sins, so God sent us a Savior. Jesus Christ is the source and summit of our life. (Venerable Fulton J. Sheen)

Through Christ, eternity has entered human life. Now, human life is called to make the journey with Christ from time to eternity. To this end, Jesus founded a Church that mediates his grace and mercy to the world through the Sacraments that he instituted.

## **Light from the Word**

### **Sin is the problem, and Jesus is the solution**

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom 6:23)

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16)

## **Only Jesus can heal our broken relationship with God**

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (Jn 14:6)

“There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved.” (Acts 4:12, RSV)

## **Jesus founded a Church to continue his saving mission**

“And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.” (Mt 16:18)

“Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me. And whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me.” (Lk 10:16)

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Mt 28:19–20)



## *WHY DON'T CATHOLICS EVANGELIZE?*

I hope it is clear beyond the shadow of a doubt that all Catholics—and that means you—have been given a mandate by Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church to share their Catholic Faith with others. So why don't more Catholics evangelize? I suspect the main reason is fear. You can have a conversation about religious leaders such as Buddha or Muhammad without fear, but not about Jesus. Why? Because Jesus claimed to be God, and this makes people uncomfortable; sometimes even hostile. We live in a pluralistic and secular society in which Jesus's exclusive claim, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6) is considered intolerant.

Yet, in our modern secular culture, the media (radio, TV, movies, the Internet) daily heap ridicule on Christians in general and on the Catholic Church in particular. This is a not-so-subtle form of genuine intolerance and, dare I say it, persecution. Let's face it: if the kinds of things that are regularly said about Catholics were directed at any other religion or group, those remarks would be roundly

condemned as downright bigoted; yet anti-Catholicism gets a free pass. This might be hypocrisy, but that's the current reality. Since no one likes to be mocked, fear of ridicule is one reason Catholics don't evangelize. Also, some Catholics fear that sharing the Gospel may get them branded a fundamentalist or a religious fanatic and cause them to lose the respect of their friends.

Another fear that keeps some Catholics from evangelizing is that of being humiliated because they are unable to explain adequately the doctrines of the Church. These Catholics fear that they do not know the Scriptures as well as their Bible-quoting counterparts or that they cannot make a logical, reasoned defense that will satisfy an unbeliever. Simply put, they are afraid that their answers will not be good enough. For some this is only the fear of embarrassment and strained relations; for others it is the fear that their less-than-perfect efforts at evangelization may turn people off altogether.

Still other Catholics are simply apathetic. "I have my religion, and I'm happy with it. That's good enough for me. I don't need to push it on anybody else." Considering the mandate of Scripture and the Church outlined in the previous chapters, this is the weakest excuse of all.

What lay Catholics need to remember is that what we are sharing really is Good News and the world needs to hear it. Many lost and broken people long to hear the Gospel and don't even know it. And many non-Catholic Christians are amazed to learn that Catholicism is actually much more biblical than their Evangelical Protestant or Fundamentalist denomination.

Also, most opportunities for evangelization are only a matter of “planting seeds,” as our Lord told us in the parable of the sower (cf. Mt 13:1–23; Mk 4:3–20; Lk 8:4–18). In the following chapters you will find the information you need to overcome anxieties about evangelizing and, I hope, be inspired to move beyond fear or apathy and to share your Catholic Faith with a hurting world that acts as if God does not exist.



*PREPARING FOR  
ONE-ON-ONE EVANGELIZATION*

*The whole Church is missionary and the work of evangelization [is] the fundamental task of the people of God.*

—Vatican II, *Decree on the Missionary  
Activity of the Church*

The late Father John Hardon, S.J., was a holy priest, a great Catholic evangelist, and the founder of the Marian Catechists. He once said to me, “Terry, I can honestly tell you that the future of the Church in our country depends heavily on the zeal of lay Catholics like you.” The fact is, all the baptized, not just clergy and religious, are enlisted to evangelize. We are on a mission from God and his missionary Church. The Vatican II *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* (no. 2) puts it this way:

In the Church, there is diversity of services but unity of purpose. Christ conferred on the apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity, too, share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own role to play in the mission

of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world. They exercise a genuine apostolate by their activity on behalf of bringing the gospel and holiness to men, and on behalf of penetrating and perfecting the temporal sphere of things through the spirit of the gospel. In this way, their temporal activity can openly bear witness to Christ and promote the salvation of men. Since it is proper to the layman's state in life for him to spend his days in the midst of the world and of secular transactions, he is called by God to burn with the spirit of Christ and to exercise his apostolate in the world as a kind of leaven.

All of us are called to be missionaries, first in our homes, and then in the secular world of work, school, social groups, and so forth. Although I do not belong to Opus Dei, I love its spirituality of laypeople finding their mission in the ordinary activities of life.

I share with you here what I have shared again and again with Catholics all over the country, on radio and in person: The key to sharing your faith is living always in the presence of God. In the first place this means living a sacramental life of frequent Communion and regular Confession. You must also have an active prayer life. Being aware of God's presence in your life means you will always be asking, "Lord, what do YOU want me to do in this situation?" And I must tell you that living in the presence of God is essential in order to practice virtue and to keep away from sin.

The Catholic Church needs laypeople who want to live in the presence of God, who know the truths of the Faith, and who are willing and able to share them with others. I often tell the story of a five-year-old boy I met at a conference. He

tugged on my pants leg and asked, “Hey, mister, do you know who made you?”

“Yes.”

“Who?”

I answered, “God made me.”

“That’s right,” he beamed, “and God made me, too!”

This little fellow had just learned the answer to his first catechism question and was already sharing it with others! The point is the 99 percent of the Church that is laypeople all need to be like that little boy: ready, willing, and able to share our Faith.

But where do you begin? There are many avenues of evangelization—for example, CDs, pamphlets, websites, and Catholic radio—but there is no substitute for personal contact. One-on-one evangelization is very powerful. The Lord will give you opportunities to evangelize according to your state in life. They could be at home, in the workplace, on the soccer field, or in line at the grocery store. Do not forsake these opportunities!

Now, you might think, “But, Terry, I don’t know what to say!” That is why you are reading this book! You can become an effective evangelist with the help of the Holy Spirit and with proper preparation.

The *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* (no. 28) teaches that training is necessary for effective evangelization. This training includes both your continual spiritual and doctrinal progress and the development of your ability to adapt your faith-sharing to various circumstances. Jesus himself was able to talk to friends, adversaries, common people, government

officials, and religious leaders alike. And as you read the Gospels you will discover that he evangelized not only in synagogues and in the Temple, but anywhere the opportunity arose: in a fishing boat, at a dinner party, on a hillside, beside a well, and so on. He showed us the way, and now he calls us to follow his example.

## **Light from the Word**

### **We are called to mission**

“We are ambassadors for Christ.” (2 Cor 5:20)

### **Unity is crucial**

“[There will be] one Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Eph 4:5)

“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity.” (Ps 133:1, RSV)

### **Preparation is necessary**

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” (2 Tm 2:15, RSV)

### **Follow the example of Jesus**

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.” (Mt 11:29a)

“If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.” (Lk 9:23)

PART TWO

HOW TO EVANGELIZE