

St. Louis Church Inviting the Flock Home Why Evangelize?

The very first words of Pope St. Paul VI in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN) are, “There is no doubt that the effort to proclaim the Gospel to the people of today, who are buoyed up by hope but at the same time often oppressed by fear and distress, **is a service rendered** to the Christian community and also to the whole of humanity” (1, emphasis added. December 8, 1975. https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html).

Paul VI also speaks of our Church’s **duty** to be “the **messenger** of the Good News of Jesus Christ” (2, emphasis added). He later writes, “the Church too sees before her an immense multitude of people who **need** the Gospel and have a **right** to it” (EN, 57, emphasis added).

Pope St. Paul VI then presents the purpose (mission) of our Church, saying, “**She exists in order to evangelize**” (EN,14, emphasis added). He continues as he provides a biblical foundation for our duty to evangelize (EN, cf. 5-6):

1. Jesus says, “*But he said to them, “To the other towns also **I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this purpose I have been sent**” (Luke 4:43).*
2. From St. Paul’s letters:
 - a. “*If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!*” (1 Corinthians 9:16).
 - b. Cf. Romans 10:14 – “*But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?*”

We should also recall Jesus’ words from [Matthew 28:19-20](#), “*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.*”

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) published, **Go and Make Disciples** (Washington, DC. 2002, <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/evangelization/go-and-make-disciples>). In this document they put forth three goals for evangelization that remain relevant today and suitable for our goals:

1. “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” (46)
2. “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.” (53).

3. “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” (56).

In summary, we need to help people grow in a *personal relationship with Jesus* as the one who saves us from our sins and liberates us from the evil one (see EN, 9). This is lifelong process of ongoing conversion. We are called to share the truth that sets us free ([see John 8:32](#)).