

Appendix 3

How to Share Faith with Your Neighbors and Community

- 1. Pray.** This is the beginning of all evangelization. Without prayer our efforts will not bear fruit. Pray daily for an increase in our love for people since that should be our primary motivation. Pray daily for wisdom to know how and when to evangelize. Pray daily for the grace and power of the Holy Spirit so that you may have the courage to speak. Pray daily for any friends and neighbors who have fallen away from the faith or left the Church.
- 2. Witness to the Gospel by your life.** Be sure to constantly nourish your own spiritual growth so that your everyday life will naturally witness to Christ. Regular prayer, scripture reading, retreats, the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist will help your own ongoing personal conversion. Remember, we cannot give what we don't have!
- 3. Build relationships of trust and care.** Friendship is the key to effective evangelization. This can be done in a number of ways. First, practice hospitality, always being welcoming and warm toward others. For example, if someone new moves into the neighborhood, be the first to invite them over for dinner or a social event. Invite neighbors who do not have family nearby and thus are alone for dinner during the holiday season. Host a baby shower for a neighbor who is expecting. Second, listen and find out what their interests are. Ask them about their children, their work, hobbies, what they love, care about, hope for and need. Develop mutual interests and avoid critical or judgmental attitudes/words. It is only by first developing relationships of care and trust with others that they will be open to hearing our story of faith. Always encourage, affirm and celebrate their life.
- 4. Do not be afraid to introduce some language or words of faith in your conversations.** Simple phrases like "God bless you", "God willing", "Thank God", "I am praying that....", "At Mass last Sunday..." indicate in a nonthreatening way that faith in God is important in your life. There are also silent witnesses such as wearing a crucifix, placing a bible at a visible place in your home, hanging a sacred medal or rosary in your car, putting a bible quote as the screen saver on your computer at work, etc.

Appendix 3

5. **Know how to verbalize what God means to you and how He has worked in your life.** Take the time to write out your testimony and commit it to memory so that when the opportunity arises you will share your story. Remember people are far more interested in personal stories than in intellectual arguments, debates, or dogmatic statements.
6. **Be willing to admit when we don't have the answers** or when we have done something wrong and be the first to offer an apology. People are not expecting perfection from us but rather truth and authenticity. It is often when people see that we are like them in our struggles and doubts that they begin to open their lives.
7. **Be familiar with the outreach ministries offered by the parish** and be willing to invite parishioners, family, friends and neighbors. Accompany them to the events. Bible studies, parish retreats, parish missions etc, are excellent opportunities to evangelize. If the person has not made all their Sacraments of Initiation, invite them to consider joining RCIA. Follow up with them afterwards.
8. **Learn, more deeply, the Catholic faith** by reading the Catechism, Sacred Scripture and good spiritual books. Attend the catechetical programs offered by the parish as often as possible so that you grow in your knowledge and are ready to answer questions about the faith and the Church without fear. Try to anticipate objections that will be raised and think about your answers in advance.
9. **Look for ways to evangelize** and be open to discuss the faith when opportunities arise. Know the basic Kerygma (core Gospel message) and be able to present it simply in a clear, concise manner. Always be polite, respectful and humble in your approach, never overbearing or aggressive.
10. **Don't overwhelm people with church jargon or theological language.** Also be mindful of where the person is at with what you have already shared. The entire story of salvation history does not have to be told in one meeting. Simply share the truths that you know and have

Appendix 3

experienced and be patient. The seed you plant today may not be harvested until much later and by someone else.