

The History of the Catholic Church

Resources: Prayer Services

You and the New Evangelization

Use this complete prayer service with Chapter 10, Section 1 or 2 of The History of the Catholic Church. You may also choose to use only individual parts of the prayer service.

Needs:

- copies as needed or projection
- a prayer journal, or sheets of blank notebook paper and pens
- an internet connection and computer cued to play “Soul on Fire” by Third Day
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7lv9oMjv_o

Prayer Introduction

One of the recurring themes in the writings of Pope John Paul II is a desire to renew the way in which the Church and Catholics spread the Good News of Jesus. Pope John Paul II called this initiative the New Evangelization. The call of the New Evangelization is to present the faith as “ever ancient, ever new,” to people who have perhaps experienced the faith, but need to be reintroduced to Jesus. John Paul II emphasized that each baptized person has a critical role in being an evangelizer, not just those called to consecrated and ministerial life. One of the cornerstones of the New Evangelization is developing a personal relationship with Christ. Pope Benedict XVI said about this, “Christian faith is not only a matter of believing that certain things are true, but above all a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” Pope Francis has re-echoed his predecessors by saying,

Let the risen Jesus enter your life, welcome him as a friend, with trust: he is life! If up till now you have kept him at a distance, step forward. He will receive you with open arms. If you have been indifferent, take a risk: you won't be disappointed. If following him seems difficult, don't be afraid, trust him, be confident that he is close to you, he is with you and he will give you the peace you are looking for and the strength to live as he would have you do.

Today you will join in praying for your role in the New Evangelization by reflecting on how God has been active in your life, and praying for moments to witness to this.

Opening Prayer

Leader: (Begin with the Sign of the Cross.) Let us pray together for hearts committed to Christ and desiring to be modern day apostles.

All: Lord, when you called Abraham, he responded, “Ready”
When you called Isaiah, he answered, “Here I am Lord.”
When the angel Gabriel called out to Mary, she responded,
“I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done to me according to your word.”
Lord, I hear you calling my name.
I hear you entrusting me with the task of building your kingdom.
Like those holy men and women who have gone before me, I give you my ‘yes’!
I will go anywhere you want me to go.
I will do anything you want me to do.
I will say anything you want me to say.
Holy Spirit I welcome you and ask you to guide me.
Form in me an apostle’s heart filled with love for Christ and zeal for souls.
I will commit myself with courage and generosity to the New Evangelization.
I will build brick-by-brick, the city of God inside the city of man. Amen.

Leader: (Have students sit and get comfortable. Read through the following reflection questions slowly so students have time to ponder and write.) Now, I am going to read through a series of reflection questions for you to ponder and answer. These questions are meant to help you reflect on how God is at work in your life, and how you can fulfill the call of your baptism to tell others about Jesus and what he has done for you. I am going to read through this reflection slowly, giving you time to think and answer the questions in your own words. If you don’t have enough time to finish during this time of prayer, you can take this with you to finish later.

At the top of your paper, please write, “My Personal Plan for Evangelizing”.

1. How is God at work in your life? This might seem like a broad question, but God IS at work in your life. Write down the blessings he had put in your path (family, food, school, talents, friendships, etc.) What do you have to be thankful for that is a gift from God? Now think, how has God been at work in your life? Can you see instances where he cared for you or helped work a difficult situation out? How have you encountered the person of Jesus in a personal way? In prayer, the sacraments, or in other people? Describe these

encounters with Jesus and what you felt in your heart. How did that encounter(s) change you? What difference does a relationship with Jesus make in your life?

To share Jesus you must first have encountered him yourself. Perhaps you are in need of an encounter with Jesus. If this is your experience, write down a simple prayer asking God to give you the opportunity to begin a relationship with him.

2. Pick a person in your life that needs to know the Lord more. It could be a friend, an acquaintance, a family member, or someone with whom you work. Write down that person's name and spend a few moments asking the Lord to come into their life in a real way. Now, make a plan for how you will continue to pray for that person each day. Perhaps you will pray a Hail Mary each morning before leaving for school asking Mary to be with that person. Or you might make a short visit to the chapel after a practice for that person. Write down your plan for how you will intercede for that person in prayer.

3. Pray for yourself and for God to provide an opportunity for you to evangelize. This is perhaps the part of the New Evangelization that makes us most nervous. Pope John Paul II tells us it is not enough to have a relationship with Christ and to pray for others. A Christian's mission is to help bring others to Christ. Reflect in the quiet of your heart on this prayer by St. Teresa of Avila:

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
yours are the hands, with which he blesses the entire world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
yours are the eyes, and you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

Ask Jesus to put into your next few days an opportunity to share what God is doing in your life with someone (perhaps the person you have committed to praying for in question two). Ask the Lord to help you be aware of this opportunity and to have the fortitude to share. Remember, you are sharing about what God has done in your life, so

do not be concerned about knowing the subtleties of theology or intricate Apologetics. Jesus has given you all the gifts you need to share about him.

Closing Prayer

Leader: As we close our time of reflection, we are going to end by listening to the song *Soul on Fire* by Third Day. I encourage you to take this personal plan for evangelizing and return to it over the next few days. God wants to do great things in you. As Pope John Paul II said, “Be not afraid! Open wide the doors to Christ!”

(Play “Soul on Fire” by Third Day https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i7lv9oMjv_o)