

How Can We Evangelize? (Adapted from Bishop Robert Barron)

Mk 5:18-20

As [Jesus] was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed pleaded to remain with him. But he would not permit him but told him instead, “Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you.” Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.

- Wow! What a charge we have received from Jesus! “Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord ... has done for you.” So how do we do it? Here are the steps:
1. Whatever is true, good and beautiful is of God, but only one of these catches our eye – the beautiful. So, **lead with the beautiful** (what is attractive like architecture, art, outreach, music, etc.) => good (how to act in a better way – are you disillusioned with the world? Are you feeling guilt, remorse, anxiety, etc.) => true (what we are to think and believe based on God’s Revelation). Beauty peaks our curiosity: what is behind it, what drove the person to do it, or what does it led me to? Example: I was attracted to the beauty of ice skating and it motivated me to learn to skate, play hockey and practice the rules of the game.
 2. **Don’t dumb down the Gospel message.** Nobody wants to give their life to something slightly more than the world has to offer. We want something out of this world – we want God! Like St. Augustine, many have sampled the pleasures and vices of this world and long to be fulfilled. When Augustine was open, God called and he responded by reading Scripture and getting baptized. Also, we must push the idea that we are lifelong learners of the faith. After five years of seminary I hardly scratched the surface of 2,000 years of collective Church knowledge and Divine guidance. If we stop learning in high school, we will later have adult-sized problems with a juvenile understanding of the faith. And when the two don’t pair well, we cast the faith to the side. Challenges ought to be a call to go deeper, or a reminder to have never stopped learning to begin with. A valuable part of evangelization is continued educational opportunities.
 3. **Be passionate about the faith.** The Gospel means “Good News,” yet we act as if we are bored stiff or that it might offend if we proclaimed the message beyond the doors of the church. If a guy with a bad hair dew and too tight of jeans on an infomercial can get excited about the latest rotisserie oven, non-stick pan, or liquid rubber in a can called Flex Seal, then surely we could crank it up a notch with our excitement about the death and Resurrection of Jesus, how His presence continues in the Church and the gift of Himself in the Eucharist. There has to be a certain fire within to create a glow without. And “*when the shepherd’s on fire, the sheep feel the heat,*” said Fr. Mark Toups.

4. **Be able to tell our great story.** Can we summarize our story of salvation from Adam and Eve, to Abraham, Moses, David, the Exiles, and the need for Christ to come and take on our flesh, then draw us into union with himself through the Eucharist? Do we know the Easter proclamation that Jesus not only loved us until death, but rose from the dead, walked among us for 40 days until the Ascension and then sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to give birth to his new presence, the Church? The bible is our book, we must know it before our final exam.
5. **Jesus did not come to squash our fun.** Rather, St. Irenaeus said the glory of God is a human fully alive. He also said that God doesn't need us. How is that good news? It means God is not here to compete with us nor manipulate the world. Whatever God offers only serves to enhance and elevate us. The Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary not to dominate nor destroy, but to add divine life to her life.
6. **Every soul hungers for God.** St. Augustine wrote, "*Our hearts are restless for you O' Lord until they rest in you.*" Even St. John of Cross pointed out the folly of backfilling the infinitely deep cavern of our soul with the finite things of the world. Jesus started with people's misery and offered something more. Our misery includes the disillusionment of consumerism, the blah of secularism, the loneliness of a me-centered society, and the weight of unrepented sin. Ask the person you are reaching out to if they want more, because our God has what is currently missing in our life.
7. **Share the contagious joy of being a friend of Jesus Christ.** St. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, "*Behold the Lamb of God!*" Two of his disciples immediately started to follow Jesus out of curiosity that quickly turned into the joy of a relationship. Andrew was one of these two disciples who joyfully ran off to find his brother, Peter, and proclaimed, "*We have found the Messiah.*" Evangelization, as Bishop John likes to say, is no harder than being a friend of Jesus, making a friend, and introducing your friend to Jesus.
- To sum up, John 3:16 says that Jesus didn't come to condemn the world but to save it. To save the world means to evangelize it first. At his Ascension, Jesus said, "*You will be my witnesses ... to the ends of the earth.*" The bishop's plan for evangelization involves each of us because being a friend of Jesus always involves making new friends for Jesus.