

SCRIPTURAL PASSAGES ON EVANGELIZATION

Matthew 4:19; 9:37, 38; 10:5-33; 28:19, 20

Luke 8:5-15; 15:4-10

Acts 2:40, 41

Ephesians 4:11-16

1 Peter 4:10,11

1 Corinthians 4:1

2 Corinthians 6:1

FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

- ✧ How might you share your faith with others in your family? At work? In your neighborhood? In your parish community?
- ✧ Make a list of those persons whom you know to have no religious affiliation. How might you encourage them to become active in the Christian community?
- ✧ Assess your personal level of commitment to Christ and His Church. What must you do to strengthen your commitment?
- ✧ How open to evangelization is your parish? How might you help your parish share the Gospel with the lost, the searching, the discouraged, and the wider community?

What is evangelization? What does it require of us individually and as members of the Christian community?

Evangelization is an unfamiliar word to many Orthodox Christians. Some have not even heard of this word until recent years, while there are others who do not think it has anything to do with Orthodox Christianity.

Evangelization is the sharing with others, in word and deed, of the Gospel, or Good News, of Jesus Christ, the first and greatest evangelizer.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM



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A VARIETY OF IMAGES

Over the years the word evangelization has taken on many different connotations, some of them negative.

For some people, evangelization evokes images of overly persistent individuals ringing doorbells or preaching on busy downtown street corners. “Does this mean that we have to start visiting people in their homes to get them to convert to Orthodoxy?” is a question many Orthodox Christians raise.

Many feel that Orthodox Christians should not evangelize, since others should not be pressured into converting. It is a mistake to equate evangelizing with proselytizing. Evangelization is much broader than proselytism. It offers, instead, an effective and productive means for fulfilling Jesus Christ’s command to “make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19).

Evangelization is the act of sharing the Good News with all who would receive it. Evangelization seeks to bring the strength of the Gospel message into the hearts of all and to renew humankind. It is this interior transformation, this renewal of all through baptism and through a life lived in

accordance with the Gospel, that evangelization aims to bring about. Thus, we evangelize when we convert or transform the consciences, activities, lives, and concrete circumstances of people throughout the world to Jesus Christ.

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?

We should begin our mission as evangelizers within the Church community. *While we are called to evangelize others, we begin by being evangelized ourselves.* We are in constant need of being evangelized, of asking ourselves whether the Gospel is effectively proclaimed in our lives and in our parishes. Are we responding to God’s presence with the acceptance that expresses itself through conversion? If either element is missing—proclamation or conversion—we are not evangelizing ourselves and thus we cannot evangelize others.

So, in order to evangelize we must continue to preach what Jesus first proclaimed two thousand years ago:

... the Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel (Mk 1:15).

CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST!

The Kingdom of God remains a key experience in evangelization. Although its fulfillment is still to come, the Kingdom has already begun here on earth wherever the power of evil, which manifests itself in so many ways, is overcome. It is present where people do what the Father asks of them:

None of those who cry out, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the Kingdom of God, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven (Mt 7:21).

The Kingdom of God is a matter of justice, peace, and the joy that is given by the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17).

Conversion means a change of heart, a complete transformation of one’s life, and a turning towards God that results from the proclamation of the Gospel. It presents an ongoing challenge that expresses itself in commitment to a new way of life and, ultimately, to discipleship.