

PREFACE

“But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him from their sight. While they were looking intently at the sky as he was going, suddenly two men dressed in white garments stood beside them. They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?’”

—Acts 1:8-11

Christ commands us to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. We are to proclaim his Good News to all people, everywhere and at all times. After Christ promises the disciples that the Holy Spirit will come upon them, he ascends into heaven. The disciples, rather than heeding Christ’s command to be his witnesses, stare “intently at the sky.” It takes “two men dressed in white garments” asking, “Men of Galilee, why are you . . . looking at the sky?” for the disciples to begin to realize the meaning of Christ’s command (Acts 1:10-11).

How often do we fail to realize that we are called to be Christ’s witnesses to the world? Do we realize that our Baptism, Confirmation, and reception of the Eucharist bestow on us the grace we need to be disciples? Are we like the disciples staring at the sky rather than inviting those around us to experience Christ’s love and mercy through the Church? How often do we reach out to our missing brothers and sisters by inviting them to join us at Mass or by asking why they no longer feel welcomed at the Lord’s Table? The answers to these questions underlie the evangelizing mission of the Church, especially in the call of the New Evangelization.

The New Evangelization seeks to invite modern man and culture into a relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church. The New Evangelization strives to engage our culture and to help us draw our inspiration from the Gospel. The New Evangelization calls all Catholics first to be evangelized and then in turn to evangelize. While it is directed to all people, the New Evangelization focuses specifically on those Christian communities that have Catholic roots but have “lost a living sense of the faith, or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church.”¹

The Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis seeks to take up the call of the New Evangelization with this online resource. Diocesan bishops, eparchs, pastors, diocesan and parish staff, and indeed all Catholics will find this resource helpful in the creation of outreach efforts aimed at inviting and welcoming Catholics back to the Lord’s Table. This resource discusses

- The call of the New Evangelization within our cultural context (Part I)
- The theological foundations of the New Evangelization (Part II)
- The importance of evangelization and personal conversion, or *metanoia* (Part III)
- Ideas on how to create a “culture of witness” (Part IV)
- Key Components of outreach programs for diocesan and parish-based evangelization programs (Part V)

1 John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB], 1991), no. 33. (Also available online at [www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0219/ INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/edocs/ENG0219/INDEX.HTM).)