

So in no particular order "15 Suggestions for Becoming an *Effective* Evangelist". This list comes from watching other people evangelize - and noticing what works well - and - what *doesn't* work well. OK – so here we go.

SUGGESTION #1: WE NEED TO START WITH OURSELVES We all need to strive to grow in *personal* holiness. We cannot share what we ourselves do not have. Sounds pretty obvious - but I think it's a good starting place - since our nature is to spend all our time looking at - *others*. I merely suggest that if we are to be *effective* - we need to start by looking at *ourselves* - first. There's a great quote out there and it goes like this..."The essence of evangelization is one beggar showing another beggar - where the bread is". Think about it. One can only be effective at doing that - if - in a matter of speaking – if we have tasted the bread ourselves and been nourished by it. Then - and only then - will we be effective in leading others to it.

SUGGESTION #2: ONLY IN HUMILITY This is a really important one because I've seen lots of examples where this wasn't the case - and rather than a wonderful sense of sharing - it just brought a sense of resentment. When we share Christ with another – we must stand on level ground and share freely. As Christ has told us "freely have you received - freely shall you give". Effective evangelization is *sharing* - that's the word.

SUGGESTION #3: UNDERSELL As an extension of suggestion #2 we're not out to convince anyone of anything. However that being said - as it is written in 1 Peter "...Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your *hope*, but do it with gentleness and reverence..."

SUGGESTION #4: COERSION NEVER BRINGS LONG TERM FAITH This is kind of an extension of suggestion #3 but its worthy of treating by itself. How does the expression go? You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. You can catechize someone, drag them to Church and make them sit in the front pew and fill their bookshelves with Bibles - but you can't *make them* fall in love with Christ. Actually - that's good to know because accordingly - you cannot *fail* at evangelization. The only way we fail – so to speak – is by not trying.

SUGGESTION #5: WE COME TO JESUS IN DIFFERENT WAYS - AND THAT'S OK Believe it or not - not everyone is exactly like you. As such, not everyone will come

to deeper faith in Christ the same way that you may have. Don't evangelize by leading someone along your footsteps on *your* path. Evangelize by walking with them - as they discover *their* path.

SUGGESTION #6: SPEAKING OF INVITING....INVITE! Everyone loves an invitation ...that is, as long as they are not under pressure to respond. A key component of evangelization is inviting people - and more so - *personal* invitation - which means you talk with them directly. After all, that's the way Jesus did it - it worked then and it still works now. An invitation carries so much more than just "show up here at this time and do whatever". An invitation is an extension of friendship. It's an affirmation of a person's worthiness to be included. It opens the doorway to relationship. And it directly addresses the greatest poverty that humanity faces - which is loneliness. It can take away a person's fear of the unknown by reassuring them that they need not go alone - but will be supported and accompanied.

SUGGESTION #7: ...AND KEEP INVITING! Persistence really pays off - just be careful to be sure that your invitations don't meander into the realm of coercion or badgering - because that can be annoying. If someone says no - let them off the hook - immediately - don't pressure them or try to make them feel badly about declining. But assuming you can navigate those waters successfully...persistence *does* pay off. You may invite someone to go to Mass with you 41 times and they may say "no" every time. Then on the 42nd time - for whatever reason - they just might say "yes". You never know.

SUGGESTION #8: THEOLOGICAL DEBATES ARE USUALLY A BAD WAY TO EVANGELIZE In general - debates set people in *opposition*. This of course doesn't mean that you can't and shouldn't explain the *why* in regards to certain Church teachings but simply present it as such - without feeling compelled to convince whom you are sharing with. The truth in and of itself is compelling - just share it and then let it be. Leave the convincing part to the work of the Holy Spirit.

SUGGESTION #9: BE RESPECTFUL OF A PERSONS FEELINGS Sometimes those who have left the Church carry some past hurts. Whether justified or perceived - it doesn't really matter - because it's what the person feels and we can't tell other people how they should feel. It's usually ineffective to try to dissuade them. Meet them where

they are. You don't need to take sides or rationalize or render a judgment - just simply acknowledge that people are entitled to feel like they do. This simple approach can change *everything* and can open the door to allow healing to occur.

SUGGESTION #10: NO JUDGEMENT The things that a person believes are very close to their heart. Maybe they are very much out of sync with Church teachings. For example in your conversation maybe they've made it very clear that they are pro-choice. Now that is so problematic in terms of Church teachings that the tendency is to rush immediately to judgment. That will help nothing. People need time to become aligned with Church teachings - no matter how crafty your debate and explanations might be.

SUGGESTION #11: JOY ATTRACTS PEOPLE Joy is a fruit of the spirit. There's a saying that goes "if you missed the joy...you missed the message". Joy is a manifestation of the conversion experience - of coming to life *in Christ*. As such - a *dour* disposition...gloomy, stern, harsh, severe, cheerless - is an excellent way to - *not* - be an effective evangelist. Since evangelization is all about sharing - most people are not looking to share a gloomy, stern, harsh, severe, and cheerless outlook on life. On the other hand - Joy - can be a compelling witness for people - especially when one is able to remain joyful even when all hell is otherwise breaking loose in their lives. That is a seemingly great contradiction that attracts peoples curiosity - they wonder - how than be? Well joy is possible - despite what may be going on in our lives - when we really come to believe that we are loved by God. It brings a sense of well-being and security that cannot be diminished by that which is transient. Joy attracts people - and when they ask for a reason for your joy - that's when you give them Jesus!

SUGGESTION #12: BE GENTLE Gentleness is a fruit of the spirit. The opposite of gentleness could be aggressiveness - and usually when people sense aggressiveness they put their guard up and take a defensive posture. A gentle demeanor shows people that your intention is to be a person who helps and supports - a person who accepts them for who they are. Evangelization is not something that you do "to" people - but rather its walking with them and sharing with them. And when you do so - do so with a gentle spirit.

SUGGESTION #13: DON'T PAINT AN UNREALISTIC PICTURE We should not promise that a relationship with Jesus Christ will solve all ones problems and erase

hardships and struggles. Just love Jesus and everything will be just fine. That is simply not reality. Jesus never promised that - and neither should we. The mortality rate for Christians is - you guessed it - 100%. Same as it is for atheists. Tragedies, hardships, struggles, conflicts, dissapointments and frustrations are *all* part of the Christian life. So in relationship with Christ - life doesn't change - *you* change.

SUGGESTION #14: ASK OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS An open-ended question is designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer using a person's own knowledge and/or feelings. If you look for the opportunities you will see that now and then people just throw something out there in conversation to see what your reaction will be. So watch and listen for opportunities - there are plenty - and when someone throws something out there in regards to their faith life - seize the opportunity. Ask an open ended question and then be a good listener.

SUGGESTION #15: BE PREPARED TO WITNESS Few things are more compelling than a personal witness. Catechesis is great - but what people really want and need is to hear the proclamation of the faith - *in the context of everyday life*. Here's the simple question on which we should all base our personal witness: has being in relationship with Jesus Christ changed your life in a good way? If so - *how*? If you've never really thought through that before - then it's a good idea to do so - so you can be *ready* should the opportunity arise.

So there you go – 15 suggestions to become – perhaps - a more effective evangelist. Lets all put them to work as we “Walk with One”. And let us all remember in order to stay alive in the Spirit - we must both breathe in and breathe out - so that God's grace and blessings flow *through* us. And let us pray that Eucharistic Revival will indeed bring a “New Pentecost” – a fresh outpouring of God's Spirit – so that all of us – through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit – may fall deeper in love with our Lord Jesus Christ – truly present in the Eucharist - to the glory of God our Father in Heaven. Amen.