

Response of Catholic Christian Outreach

to the *Lineamenta* of the

Synod of Bishops for
The New Evangelization for the
Transmission of the Christian Faith



Catholic Christian Outreach is a university student movement dedicated to evangelization. We challenge young adults to live in the fullness of the Catholic faith with a special emphasis on building leaders for the renewal of the world.

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Executive Summary

The content and questions presented by the *Lineamenta* of the Synod of Bishops for the New Evangelization are both challenging and thought provoking. The movement of Catholic Christian Outreach welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion by sharing from our experience in the New Evangelization.

We suggest four areas of consideration for success in the New Evangelization.

1. Make No Assumptions - Since the message of the cross is of vital importance we should not assume that people have been evangelized already, even those in our parishes.
2. Frequent Proclamation of the Kerygma – We should invite people to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Kerygma clearly and simply.
3. Form Catholics in Their Missionary Identity - Evangelization is not complete until those who are evangelized are evangelizing others.
4. Materials and Methods Matter – Simple, transferable evangelistic tools allow people to bring Christ to others in a clear and repeatable way.

Make No Assumptions - Evangelization is an urgent task motivated by concern for the eternal destiny of each human being. We should not assume that church-attending Catholics know Jesus in a personal way; that they acknowledge his divinity, or; that they understand how to personally appropriate the salvation he offers through his passion, death and resurrection. In the words of Blessed John Paul II, there are masses of people attending church on Sundays that do not know Jesus “well enough”.¹ Making assumptions could lead to the unfavourable situation where we encourage our people to evangelize without recognizing their primary need to be evangelized first.

Frequent Proclamation of the Kerygma – Proclamation of the kerygma has conversion as its aim. The message of who Jesus Christ is and what he has done for us must be proclaimed in a way that allows people to repent, respond, and make a decision to follow him. We have seen great fruit in sharing the kerygma in four points: (1) We have been created for a relationship with God; (2) Sin has separated each one of us from God, (3) Jesus alone restores our relationship by his passion, death and resurrection, and, (4) Repentance and choosing Christ brings us eternal salvation.

Form Catholics in Their Missionary Identity - Catholics should be formed in the missionary identity they have been given through baptism. Embracing our missionary role as individual Catholics is a natural response to our faith. In coming to know Christ, we desire that he be made known to others as well. When people embrace this call with openness, faith is strengthened and mission becomes a source of life, not a task to be accomplished.

Materials and Methods Matter - In our experience, training people to give a personal testimony, share the kerygma and invite a person into a relationship with Jesus have helped individuals know how to effectively assist people in overcoming their anxieties in evangelization. Simple transferable materials also allow for multiplication to happen so that evangelizers can form other evangelizers. Parishes would benefit from integrating evangelization formation into every aspect of catechetical and community life, while at the same time providing parishioners with practical opportunities to grow in evangelization, both in the parish and without.

Introduction

The movement of Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO), an organization of lay faithful, has been blessed to see the fruits of the new evangelization. While our primary mission is to Catholic university students in Canada, through various special mission projects we have also worked in parishes across Canada and with people in Uganda, China, Australia, Europe, the USA, the Philippines and St. Lucia. Our comments find their origin in the challenges and successes of our movement over the past twenty-three years; we trust they will be constructive for the Church and the synod.

We propose four important considerations for the New Evangelization:

1. Make No Assumptions - Since the message of the cross is of vital importance we should not assume that people have been evangelized already, even those in our parishes.
2. Frequent Proclamation of the Kerygma – We should invite people to a personal encounter with Jesus Christ by proclaiming the Kerygma clearly and simply.
3. Form Catholics in Their Missionary Identity - Evangelization is not complete until those who are evangelized are evangelizing others.
4. Materials and Methods Matter – Simple, transferable evangelistic tools allow people to bring Christ to others in a clear and repeatable way.

1. Make No Assumptions

We cannot assume that baptized or even practicing Catholics understand and believe the saving message of the Gospel.

“We cannot selfishly keep for ourselves the words of eternal life, which we received in our personally encountering Jesus Christ. They are destined for each and every person. Each person today, whether he knows it or not, needs this proclamation.”²

The words of Blessed John Paul II, there are many people who “do not know Christ, or do not know him well enough”³ continue to be the present reality found among many baptized Catholics who have wandered from the Church, as well as those who are regularly practicing and involved with a parish. Confusion about the person of Jesus Christ, in his divinity and the salvation he brings us by his death and resurrection, is the challenge at the centre of evangelization. We can make no assumptions that those who are baptized, educated in Catholic schools, or regularly attend a parish have encountered Jesus Christ in a personal way.

For example, in our outreach to hundreds of Canadian Catholic students in Teacher's College, we have seen that the vast majority of them do not even know or believe that Jesus is God⁴ and yet they are preparing to teach in Catholic schools.

When we assume that someone has already encountered the person of Jesus Christ because they are baptized and regularly attend Mass, we take a great risk that could have eternal consequences for their lives. It is an equally urgent matter when people walk away from the Church or stop believing in the faith; we cannot assume they will find their way back. This awareness of the consequences, in contrast to making assumptions, will stir up a sense of urgency in our people to proclaim Jesus as Saviour to everyone.

2. Frequent Proclamation of the Kerygma

Catholics should be invited often to a personal experience of repentance and conversion.

“Consequently, the goal of the transmission of the faith is the realization of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, in the Spirit, thereby leading to an experiencing of his Father and our Father.”⁵

Knowing that people are universally seeking a personal encounter with God, the new evangelization should propose the Gospel to them in a way they can understand and respond to, trusting that the Holy Spirit will work in their heart.

The fundamental proclamation of the Gospel focuses on the following four points:

1. We have been created for a relationship with God; he loves us intimately, individually and unconditionally.
2. Sin has separated each one of us from God, causing death and eternal separation from him.
3. Jesus Christ alone, as God and man, can atone for our sins and bring us salvation through his death and resurrection.
4. Repenting of our sin and making a free and conscious decision to choose Jesus as our Lord and Saviour enables us to experience eternal salvation and the fullness of life in relationship with him.

After hearing the Gospel explained in this way, one young man shared:

I heard God speak to my heart, "Here is the relationship I want with you. I have created you for it". Now I understood the friendship for which I was created — a true friendship, intimate, infinitely close and deep. I was always looking for this! I realized that my sins break this relationship but Jesus restores it to me! In hearing Jesus say, "Do you want this relationship with me? Do you want me to restore you? To be your Savior? To be the centre of your life?" I answered, "Yes!" Immediately, I felt immense relief and the love of God. I felt a great renewal; it was like I met God for the first time, for real. God was a real person!

Gabriel Lindor, *Philosophy Student*
Dominican College — Ottawa, Ontario

An authentic encounter with Jesus Christ leads to conversion and repentance. To surrender one's life to Christ, one must sincerely acknowledge his sin, repent, and have a desire to change his life, living a new life in Christ, otherwise little change may occur. It is the Holy Spirit who enables one to choose and live this authentically.

Proclamation should elicit a response: "The proclamation of the Word of God has Christian conversion as its aim...Conversion means accepting, by a personal decision, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple."⁶ CCO accomplishes this by inviting students to consciously place Jesus at the centre of their life by inviting him into their heart, saying "yes", or "I do" to his call of love. We challenge them to place their sins, fears, and questions in his hands. By making a decision to be in relationship with him, they give him permission to move in their life.

The following testimony of one young Catholic woman illustrates the impact of her decision to

choose Christ while in Eucharistic Adoration at CCO's annual conference.⁷

During a talk, I realized that Jesus, who had given up everything for me, was waiting for me to choose *him*. Everyone who desired to respond "yes" to the Lord's call and place God at the center of their life was invited to come to the front by the Bishop. I had a strong desire to say, "yes" to Jesus' call but I hesitated to stand up. Jesus was the one who gave his life for me; I felt I could not remain inactive. He was asking me not to fear, but to have confidence in him.

I got up and went to the front. At that very moment I felt at peace; I was like a child the Lord had taken into his arms. Then the Holy Spirit gave me the strength to go to the sacrament of reconciliation. It was essential for me to go to confession since Jesus was calling me again to let go of everything that was keeping me from being close to him.

Marie-Chantal Couillard, *Mathematics Student*
Université Laval — Québec City, Québec

Marie-Chantal's story is the story of thousands of Catholic students across Canada and in other parts of the world who, after hearing the Gospel presented as outlined above and by making a conscious decision to repent and follow the Lord Jesus, are experiencing the fullness of a relationship with him in the Church and the sacraments for the first time.

Again we must not assume that our people have encountered Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This fundamental proclamation of the Gospel message is easily presented and should be proclaimed often and in a variety of contexts: personal conversations, small group Bible studies and prayer groups, talks, retreats, through parish ministries like Sacramental Preparation and RCIA, in homilies, Eucharistic Adoration reflections, conferences and missions.

3. Form Catholics in Their Missionary Identity

Every baptized Catholic must know that, as individuals and as a Church, being missionary is who we are.

"Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize."⁸

"The Council emphasized the Church's 'missionary nature,' basing it in a dynamic way on the Trinitarian mission itself. The missionary thrust therefore belongs to the very nature of the Christian life."⁹

Nothing other than a personal conversion and relationship with the Saviour can, or should, properly motivate an individual to mission. The Catholic who has encountered Christ must, as a member of the Church, come to realize his missionary call to personally share Jesus with others.

The reality is that very few Catholics are aware and are living out of this missionary nature. For this reason Blessed John Paul II wrote, "a radical conversion in thinking is required in order to become missionary, and this holds true both for individuals and entire communities."¹⁰

There must be a serious and focused effort to remind and form people in their missionary nature. The call to be missionary is not something to *do*, but rather someone to *be*. As a charism of our

movement we emphasize mission, and we see it lived out with understanding, purpose, and vitality. We have seen among our students that when they learn about their missionary identity and embrace it, it is ignited and lived out as part of their spirituality, not as a task. It is attractive to them; they see it not as a burden, but as something that brings them life.

One student who took part in CCO's summer mission project, *Impact Canada*¹¹, shared how he has experienced a radical conversion in thinking about his role in mission:

I now see that I am missionary by nature. It is not just for the summer or while I am involved with CCO that I am called to share my faith. For the rest of my life I have the privilege and responsibility to live out of my missionary nature. I am also very excited that once I get married, we will be missionary family.

Josh Jalbert, *Kinesiology Student*
University of Saskatchewan — Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

As people are able to understand and embrace their missionary nature, they desire to proclaim the Good News of salvation. Sara and Ben Francis, a young married couple, have taken their responsibility to be missionary seriously:

The heart for evangelization that God cultivated in us with the help of CCO over the years is a foundational charism of our marriage and family. At a parish level we do small group faith studies and host outreach events at our house. We hope to bring Christ to our peers through the witness of our married vocation, family life and continued involvement in our church.

Sara & Ben Francis, *Journalist and Engineer*
CCO Alumni — Calgary, Alberta

Just as living out our missionary identity brings life to individuals, mission and proclamation also bring tremendous opportunity for renewal to a parish.

After listening to a talk by Bishop Gérald Lacroix in June 2010, I became convinced that to renew parish life, we needed to re-discover the urgency of evangelization and our missionary identity as baptized Catholics. We began small group studies to evangelize and to send out leaders. For those that involved themselves, there was excitement and a high level of commitment.

However, since Catholics have largely lost our missionary identity and almost never think of sharing their faith in Jesus with their friends, neighbours, co-workers, I believe it requires constant reminders through the preaching of the priest, and through committed lay people who share this vision of the Church for the new evangelization.

Rev. Tim McCauley, *Parish Priest*
Archdiocese of Ottawa — Ottawa, Ontario

4. Materials and Methods Matter

Each person who knows Christ must have the tools to share him with others in a clear, transferable way.

“We also witness the generosity of the Holy Spirit in the newness and vitality which groups and

*ecclesial movements have contributed to this task of transmitting the faith. At the same time, each of them is called upon to make sure that these fruits become more widespread and to lend their efforts to those forms of catechesis and transmission of the faith which may have lost their original enthusiasm.*¹²

Although encountering Christ leads to a desire to share him with others, not everyone feels they have this ability or know how to evangelize. Simple tools and materials bring a vocabulary to a person's experience, enabling them to be an active participant in the new evangelization. Each baptized Catholic must be able to clearly explain who Jesus is and what he has done for us in a way that is transferable, so that another person can imitate and do the same.

Evangelization tools must communicate the message of salvation in a simple, clear, and repeatable way that can be put into practice in any context. In our experience, common tools that have been the most effective include:

- Familiarity with the Gospel message of salvation (the four points of the kerygma mentioned earlier): knowing why we need to be saved and how to talk about Jesus as our Saviour is essential to practically invite someone into a relationship with him.¹³
- The ability to share one's personal testimony of relationship with Christ in a clear, succinct way; training people to share their testimony in about three minutes provides them with a tool that is easily adaptable to a variety of conversations and situations.¹⁴
- Knowing how to invite another person to conversion¹⁵: leading them in the words of choosing a relationship with Jesus Christ by surrendering their life to him.

Along with these specific tools, Catholics desiring to grow in evangelization must have on-going opportunities to practice the proclamation of the Gospel message. When shared in a simple and clear way, the call to conversion can be integrated into one-on-one conversations with parishioners, friends, and family members, whether they are practicing or not. Some parishes have organized events that reach out through personal invitations to those who are registered in the parish but do not attend Mass, or to people who live in the neighbourhood of the Church.¹⁶ Activities such as these reach out to those estranged from the Church while giving parishioners the opportunity to use the evangelistic tools they have learned.

Formation in evangelization and the proclamation of the Gospel must be integrated into parish life at all levels. Ministries, formation sessions, and homilies should include the call to conversion in concrete, accessible terms. Parish ministries can be used as a platform to communicate in a clear way the message of salvation while providing people with an opportunity to respond. In addition to the catechetical or community goals of a parish, any program can be used to evangelize when the mindset of inviting people to know Christ and providing them with opportunities to choose him is the foundation.

When people are trained to evangelize, given concrete tools, and opportunities to use them, they quickly internalize the Gospel message of salvation and they are empowered to continue the work of evangelization beyond their current sphere of influence:

My greatest hope is to go into the school and proclaim who Jesus is and make him relevant in everyday life. I want to equip my colleagues so they too can proclaim the Gospel in a relatable way. My desire is that we will raise up our students to be a confident and faithful generation that knows who Jesus is, why he is important and who will fight to make him known in the world.

Jennea Grison, *Teacher's College Graduate*
University of Ottawa — Ottawa, Ontario

When evangelization is integrated through training, tools, and lived out, the Holy Spirit brings courage and new life as he did in the early Church.¹⁷

Conclusion

"I see the dawning of a new missionary age, which will become a radiant day bearing an abundant harvest, if all Christians, and missionaries and young churches in particular, respond with generosity and holiness to the calls and challenges of our time."¹⁸

These words from Blessed John Paul II have inspired us in our work in the new evangelization. We look forward with great joy and hope to what the Church will say through the Synod. As a movement we sit in docile readiness and anticipation of how the Synod will engage the entire Church anew in the mission of evangelization. We are at the service of the Church and ready to assist in whatever ways we can.

We are grateful for the *Lineamenta* and the boldness and clarity in which the Church is carrying out the proclamation of salvation. Our prayers are with the Synod at this significant moment in the Church, which will undoubtedly produce much fruit. May each baptized Catholic become more deeply who we have been called to be. For, "if you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze."¹⁹



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End-Notes

¹ Pope John Paul II, Message to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of the IV World Youth Day (Santiago de Compostela, August 1989), Paragraph 2.

² Lineamenta, Paragraph 25, Conclusion

³ Pope John Paul II, Message to the Youth of the World on the Occasion of the IV World Youth Day (Santiago de Compostela, August 1989), Paragraph 2.

⁴ From 2005-2011, over one thousand prospective teachers from three university campuses across Canada have met in groups from 12-80 people to participate in CCO's six week faith study course which explore the basics of the Catholic faith. When asked the question, "Do you believe that Jesus is God?" the vast majority of these future Catholic teachers do not believe or are unsure of how to answer.

⁵ Lineamenta, Paragraph 11, Chapter II

⁶ Pope John Paul II, Mission of the Redeemer, (1990) Paragraph 46.

⁷ Rise Up! is CCO's national conference which focuses on conversion and living out the missionary call of the Church. Every year approximately 500 young adults from over seventy universities from every province in Canada gather for five days of talks, workshops, praise and worship, prayer and the sacraments.

⁸ Pope Paul VI, Evangelization in the Modern World, (1975) Paragraph 14.

⁹ Pope John Paul II, Mission of the Redeemer, (1990) Paragraph 1.

¹⁰ Pope John Paul II, Mission of the Redeemer, (1990) Paragraph 49.

¹¹ CCO's summer mission project, IMPACT, focuses on parish outreach. Each summer, around 60 students from across Canada come to one city for a summer of formation in evangelization and mission and parish outreach.

¹² Lineamenta, Paragraph 15, Chapter II

¹³ The Ultimate Relationship booklet and the Discovery faith study are two resources developed by CCO that describe in a clear way the message of salvation through the person of Jesus Christ. These resources are simple to use and are very beneficial for training purposes. See <http://www.ccoCanada.ca/en/resources/ultimate-relationship.aspx>

¹⁴ Courageous Catholic is a program CCO has developed as part of the Impact project (see endnote 16) to provide parishioners with formation and practical training in evangelization both at the parish level and in their everyday lives.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ CCO's summer mission project, IMPACT, focuses on parish outreach. The current summer mission in Ottawa has seen a strong response from one parish outreach where students went door-to-door to invite people to the local parish Mass followed by a social event. Where typically fifty people attend the Sunday morning Mass, there were one hundred eighty who came after answering their door and receiving an invitation.

¹⁷ Lineamenta, Paragraph 24, Conclusion

¹⁸ Pope John Paul II, Mission of the Redeemer, (1990) Paragraph 92.

¹⁹ Catherine of Siena, (cf. *Letter 368*).