

# Process of Evangelization and Discipleship Diagram Info Packet



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## Table of Contents

<b>Rationale</b> .....	4
<b>General Overview</b> .....	5
A Few Caveats .....	7
<b>Stages or “Thresholds” of Discipleship</b> .....	8
Pre-Trust .....	8
Trust .....	9
Curiosity .....	10
Openness .....	11
Active Seeking.....	12
Decision Point #1: First Conversion .....	13
Beginning Disciple .....	14
Growing Disciple .....	16
Decision Point #2: Commissioning.....	17
Missionary Disciple .....	18
<b>Stages of Evangelization and Catechesis</b> .....	20
Pre-evangelization .....	20
First Proclamation.....	20
Initiatory Catechesis.....	21
Perfective Catechesis .....	21
Missionary Initiation .....	21
Kerygmatic Catechesis .....	22
Prayer and Accompaniment through All Stages.....	22
<b>Contact Us</b> .....	23

## Rationale

The central goal of the Beacons process is to move our parishes, schools, and our entire Archdiocese from maintenance to mission. A parish in maintenance, for example, is only concerned with continuing the programs and ministries that have always been offered at the parish. However, a parish on mission is:

- mindful of how effectively those programs and ministries create disciples
- keen to adapt these offerings and even eliminate them for the sake of this mission
- willing to create new opportunities to encounter Jesus and experience conversion.

A parish on mission welcomes people no matter where they are in their journey of faith, meets their needs where they are in their journey, and is a catalyst for progression along that journey.

It takes a great deal of interior and exterior change to become this kind of parish. For our purposes here, we are interested in greater knowledge:

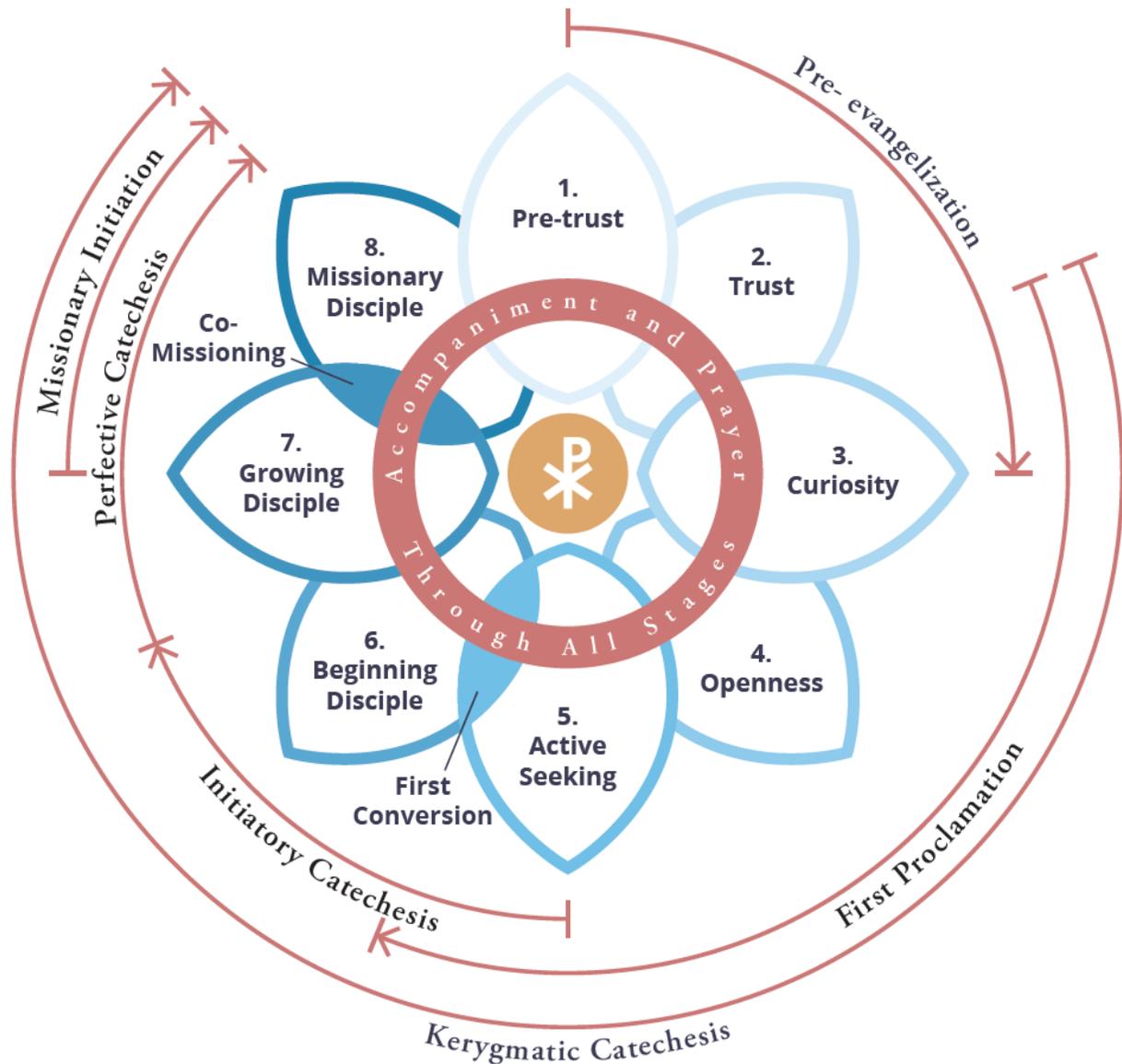
- of the evangelization and discipleship process
- of the people we are serving
- of their unique spiritual and formational needs
- of the initiatives we might undertake to meet those needs, facilitate advancement, and walk with them along the way.

We can't create disciples without that knowledge. We can't become parishes and schools on mission without that knowledge. This is why we've created the Process of Evangelization and Discipleship Diagram. This is a tool for ministry staff and core volunteer leaders in parishes and schools that we hope will empower them to be more intentional about how they serve people so that parishes and schools can create disciples and be on mission.

Proceed to the next page for a general overview of the diagram, and a closer look at each stage of the discipleship path and the accompanying interventions of the Church.

## General Overview

Here is the Process of Evangelization and Discipleship Diagram:



We are calling what is illustrated here the “Process of Evangelization and Discipleship” because two processes are being illustrated at once:

1. the “process of evangelization,” which refers to the stages of evangelization and catechesis provided by the Church (cf. DC 31-37, 66-74; GDC 47-49, 60-76)
2. the “process of discipleship,” which refers to the journey of the individual from Pre-Trust to Missionary Discipleship. It is a process of *discipleship* because discipleship is the

end goal: “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*.” (RM 46) This spiritual journey could also be called “the journey of faith,” (DC 62, 192, 224, etc.) “the discipleship path,” (a colloquial phrase) or “the process of conversion.” (DC 35, 190; GDC 89, 194)

Here are the key features of the diagram, with a short explanation of each one:

- The central image is a **flower**. A flower evokes life, growth, and stages of development, so it’s an apt metaphor for conversion.
- The flower is arranged in a **circle** to represent the continuity and movement of the life of conversion, which is on-going and never-ending!
- The **petals** on the flower represent the stages or “thresholds” of conversion that a person typically progresses through on the journey from Pre-Trust to Missionary Discipleship.
- The **numbers** on each petal indicate where a person typically begins on the diagram and the order in which one typically progresses from beginning to end.
- The gradual darkening of the **blue** color of each petal indicates a deepening and an increasing intensity of one’s relationship with and commitment to Jesus and to a life transformed by Him.
- There are also two points where the overlap of the petals is darkened. These represent **decision points**, critical moments on the journey when a person makes a life-changing decision in relation to his identity as a disciple.
- Anything colored **red** represents the stages of catechesis and initiative by the Church towards the people we are serving, befriending, and ministering to.
- A **red circle** moves through all the petals and binds them together. This represents the accompaniment and prayer that should be present all along the journey and that are a fundamental catalyst for progression and growth in Christ.
- **Red arrows** along the perimeter of the flower represent the stages of evangelization and catechesis offered by the Church in order to meet the needs of people on the journey of faith and facilitate progression along this journey. As a shape, arrows also indicate movement and progression.
- In the **center** of the flower, in gold, is the Chi-Rho, a symbol that represents Jesus. He is the center of conversion, discipleship, evangelization, catechesis, and all things. As the *Directory for Catechesis* says, “Communion with Christ is the center of the Christian life, and as a result the center of catechetical action.” (75)

## A Few Caveats

The beginning and end points of the initiatives of the Church (the sections indicated with red arrows) are not hard boundaries. As we read in the “Preface” to the *Directory for Catechesis*, “Catechesis . . . is an arduous task that does not allow for rigid distinctions between the various phases involved in the catechetical process.” We are trying to provide a general sense of when it is typically appropriate to initiate and conclude the various moments in the process of evangelization and catechesis.

We think this can be very helpful for people in parish and school ministry. But, we can’t forget that the best indicator of what is needed from the Church at any point in the journey of faith is the person in front of you and the movement of the Holy Spirit. In other words, you shouldn’t avoid proclaiming the Gospel just because “we’re focusing on pre-evangelization this year.” If a person is asking for some basic catechesis on a particular teaching, you shouldn’t deny them that just because they’re not in Active Seeking yet. Let the person you are serving and your discernment of the Spirit be your guide.

Also, just because you’ve discerned that a person has progressed to a new stage, that doesn’t mean that they no longer have the needs of the previous stages, or that you are necessarily done with the initiatives of previous stages. You’re not done building trust once a person has moved into Openness. You’re not done proclaiming the Gospel once she has experienced her First Conversion. The arrows indicate when it’s generally good to prioritize certain initiatives, but ideally, they would all be on-going within the parish and school so that we can be meeting the needs of people wherever they are, even if they are farther along than our intended audience. Trust is always a need. Good teaching is always a need. The Gospel is certainly always a need.

Finally, remember that conversion is messy. Ministry is messy. People don’t always proceed to missionary discipleship in an orderly fashion. They advance quickly, and then slow down. They stop. They go back. They skip stages. They get stuck. Sometimes they abandon the journey altogether. So, don’t take this diagram to mean that everyone will or should experience conversion in exactly the same way. Through the experience of many people in ministry over a span of many years, a certain picture has emerged of what conversion tends to look like. But there are few hard and fast rules.

Next, we will take a closer look at each petal and arrow of the diagram.

## Stages or “Thresholds” of Discipleship

The labeling and explanation of the following stages of discipleship are heavily informed by the work of Sherry Weddell (especially in her book *Forming Intentional Disciples*); FOCUS, in their Win, Build, Send model; and the Discipleship Baseball Diamond from Evangelical Catholic.

### Pre-Trust

“Trust,” in this context, is defined as a positive association with Jesus, a follower of Jesus, or with something Christian. Trust exists as a bridge between you and the person you are befriending and serving.

Someone in the Pre-Trust stage either has no associations with anything Christian, or all of their associations are negative. This is where people from modern, secular, industrialized settings typically begin. This is also the stage that many previously-trusting persons are thrust into by scandal and abuse in the Church.

Since they do not have bridges of positive association in place, they will most likely not be found on your parish grounds. And, as long they are in Pre-Trust, they will also not have any reason to listen to or take seriously anything you have to say about Jesus, faith, or spiritual things. At this point on their journey, you have not earned the right to be heard.

#### **Someone in the Pre-Trust stage needs:**

- to be cared for
- to be loved and respected
- to be heard and listened to
- to be supported in their daily struggles.

#### **What we can do to meet those needs:**

- Provide safe, non-committal ways for them to get to know you or your parish.
- Be hospitable, welcoming, and friendly to all people.
- Listen, and give them an opportunity to be heard.
- Respond to the urgent needs of people.
- Go to them – as in, *off your parish grounds* – instead of expecting them to come to you.

#### **What we can do to facilitate progression to the next stage:**

- Build bridges of positive association with something Christian.

- Provide good, authentic friendship.
- Meet them where they are with corporal and spiritual works of mercy.
- Help them (by listening to their story) to discover positive associations that they had forgotten or did not realize existed.
- Make Eucharistic Adoration easily accessible.

## Trust

Someone in the Trust stage has at least one positive association with Jesus, a follower of Jesus, or something Christian. This could be the crucifix that hung on the living room wall when the person was a child, the parish festival down the street that always offers the best barbecue, or the friendly Catholic who works in the next cubicle. A positive association opens a person's mind to the prospect of further positive associations with Christian things. The more positive associations a person has, the more apt they are to step closer toward Christianity.

### **Someone in the Trust stage needs:**

- everything they needed before: to be cared for, loved, heard, and supported
- more bridges of trust.

### **What we can do to meet those needs:**

- Provide everything you provided before, since the interventions that created the first bridge of trust will work to create further bridges as well.
- Discover in who or what are they trusting.
- Affirm and strengthen the bridges that already exist.

### **What we can do to facilitate progression to the next stage:**

- Arouse curiosity about Jesus.
- Talk about Jesus.
- Tell stories from the life of Jesus and from your own experiences with Jesus.
- Create an awareness that there are more possibilities in life than what they have imagined or experienced.
- Ask a lot of questions.
- Live curiously, be a sign of contradiction.
- Make Eucharistic Adoration easily accessible.

## Curiosity

Someone in the Curiosity stage is intrigued by or has had his interest piqued regarding something Christian. He is aware that there are other, possibly better or more fulfilling ways to live and believe, other than the way in which he is currently living and believing. He is aware ... but he is not yet ready or even open to change.

He might nurture this curiosity by doing a quick Google search or posing questions to a trusted Christian friend. Sometimes, these questions will come across as offensive or antagonistic. He doesn't usually mean to offend; he just has significant "-isms" to overcome (e.g., cynicism, antagonism, pessimism, relativism, etc.).

The search for answers during this stage is generally surface-level and private. He's not ready to out himself as someone who is on any kind of public, spiritual quest.

As this person approaches Openness, he might "try on" change to see what it feels like (e.g., by attending one weekday Mass and sitting in the back, or by watching EWTN when no one else is around).

### **Someone in Curiosity needs:**

- a safe, non-threatening way to express curiosity without overreaction or pressure
- answers that meet, but don't exceed, the depth of their questions
- low-pressure, low-demand experiences of Christianity.

### **What we can do to meet those needs:**

- Provide multiple ways for people to submit questions.
- Provide knowledgeable, pastorally-sensitive people who can answer these questions.
- Anticipate what these basic questions might be whenever we promote various programs and initiatives, and really any time we communicate who we are to the outside world.
- Try to avoid vocabulary and acronyms that the un-initiated would not understand.
- Provide basic Christian friendship.

### **What we can do to facilitate progression to the next stage:**

- Explore the possibility that a personal God exists and that one can have a personal relationship with Him – this is *necessary* in order to move into Openness..
- Introduce the idea of personal and spiritual change.
- Start exposing them to the great Story of Jesus (the kerygma).

- Calmly and patiently address any cynicism, antagonism, fears, and other internal and external pressures that are barriers to Openness.
- Serve people through major life events (unemployment, divorce, death in the family, marriage, graduating high school, having children, etc.), which can often be the occasion for someone to move into Openness.
- Be a genuine friend.
- Challenge this person appropriately to take the next step.
  - See Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, pg. 162-163 for advice on how to do this.
- Capitalize on the fact that, in our culture, openness is a good thing.
- Provide multiple levels of enduring intercession for this person.
- Make Eucharistic Adoration easily accessible.

## Openness

Someone in the Openness stage has come to a place in their journey where they are able to admit to God and to themselves that they are open to the possibility of personal and spiritual change. They are not committed or ready to change, they are simply open to the possibility. In other words, they no longer reject it outright. Conversion is a potential option now.

This is the hardest stage to move into because it requires lowering one's defenses and overcoming many internal and external pressures. Someone in this stage may actually go back and forth between wanting change and being opposed to change. Sometimes they are excited, other times they feel vulnerable and afraid.

At this point, they have moved beyond most people in our parishes, which means that without some real intentional outreach, they may begin to feel that their spiritual needs are not being met. They may even leave the Catholic church for another church that they think will better meet those needs.

### **Someone in the Openness stage needs:**

- acknowledgement and affirmation of the difficult progress they have made
- people in their life who understand what they are going through
- intentional accompaniment (while accompaniment is important at every stage, it is especially vital here).

### **What we can do to meet those needs:**

- Give them hope that their spiritual needs can and will be met through the Church.

- Start talking openly about discipleship and relationship with God.
- Walk with them, either personally or via an intentional small group.

**What we can do to facilitate progression to the next stage:**

- Start exposing them to the great Story of Jesus (the kerygma).
- Gently challenge their neutrality on the question of repentance and following Jesus.
- Talk about your own experiences with asking God to help you change, God enabling you to do so, and what that was like for you.
- Invite them to experiment with the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

## Active Seeking

Someone in the Active Seeking stage is now on an overt, spiritual quest. Their journey and their search for answers is no longer passive, superficial, or private. They are no longer speculating about interesting questions with no stake in the outcome. They feel an intense sense of urgency to resolve the final barriers and burning questions that stand in the way of the decision to go “all in” for Jesus in the midst of His Church.

They are now in “The Zone” (FID, pg. 171-172), the place of active wrestling with and serious contemplation of the following of Jesus. They are certain that a personal relationship with Jesus is possible, and this is what they are seeking. Note that this is *with Jesus*, not just “God” or a “Higher Power.” They are counting the cost of what it will take to follow *Jesus of Nazareth* as His disciple: What demands will discipleship make on my priorities, time, money, relationships, etc? Am I willing to accept those demands?

Their questions are also similar to the questions of those who “date with a purpose”: Is this person the One? Should I give my life to this One?

Someone in this stage is now comfortable spending a lot of time with Christians. This person is also beginning to pray seriously, becoming aware of personal sin, and feeling the need for personal repentance.

**Someone in the Active Seeking stage needs:**

- an intelligent Catholic who can make a significant investment of time to answer difficult questions patiently
- examples of what discipleship looks like
- a way to acknowledge and make sense of their sin and their false “-isms.”

### **What we can do to meet those needs:**

- Help them explore the vast diversity of prayer within the Catholic tradition.
- Encourage them to attend Mass, Adoration, and prayer/fellowship groups.
- Introduce them to other disciples so that they can hear their journeys and experience Christian community.
- Pray with them.
- Accept that they require a significant investment of time and make that investment.
- Provide a spiritual retreat experience where they can safely wrestle with sins, with their woundedness, with their false beliefs.

### **What we can do to facilitate progression to the first Decision Point:**

- Help this person focus on the person of Jesus and the central challenges of the kerygma, leaving other doctrinal issues for later.
  - These will come and will be resolved in due time.
- Be real – share your struggles but also your victories in your walk with Jesus.
- Model what it means to seek after Jesus *and* what it means to be a disciple.
- Help them see what they have to offer us, how we are enriched by their presence and would be further enriched by their greater commitment to our community.
- Challenge them: “Are you ready to make a commitment?” “What is keeping you from going ‘all in’ for Jesus?”
- Provide sustained intercessory prayer.

### **Decision Point #1: First Conversion**

This is the first Decision Point on the path of discipleship. Of course, a person makes many decisions every day that impact his relationship with Jesus, but this one marks the critical moment when a person says, “I believe in Jesus. I want a personal relationship with Him. I repent of my sin. I’m ready to live according to Jesus’ will for me.” This is the decision to follow Jesus in the midst of His Church. Even life-long Catholics can experience a first conversion. It is the kind of turning point in life that one never forgets.

This is called “First Conversion” to avoid implying that conversion only happens at this moment in the journey. Conversion does not only happen once, when we become disciples of Jesus. Instead, there is also the “Second Conversion”, which is the on-going process of overcoming sin, excelling in virtue and works of charity, and growing in holiness. This first decision marks the beginning of a lifetime of decisions to grow closer to Jesus.

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church explains:

**1427** [ . . . ] Baptism is the principal place for the first and fundamental conversion. It is by faith in the Gospel and by Baptism (cf. Acts 2:38) that one renounces evil and gains salvation, that is, the forgiveness of all sins and the gift of new life.

**1428** Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, "clasping sinners to her bosom, [is] at once holy and always in need of purification, [and] follows constantly the path of penance and renewal." (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 8, para. 3)[. . .]

Once the First Conversion has occurred, the person on the journey becomes a Beginning Disciple.

## Beginning Disciple

A Beginning Disciple is someone who is new to the life of discipleship. He has decided for Jesus, but now what? He may feel "on fire," excited about Jesus, and ready to proclaim Him, but he either isn't sure how or he goes about it in less-than-fruitful ways.

Often times, the Beginning Disciple has learned a great deal up to this point, but his learning was not systematic, nor did it organically develop. As a result, there are gaps and holes in his knowledge. He can sound like an expert in one area of the faith but know almost nothing about another area.

A Beginning Disciple might also have doubts or concerns about certain Catholic teachings or practices. He has decided for Jesus, but the ramifications of this for his *Catholic* faith still need to be worked out and realized.

The Beginning Disciple is also aware of his sin and is ready to live differently, but he may not have all the tools necessary to do this. For example, he may need help forming a daily prayer routine. He may not know distinctly Catholic ways of praying, such as the Rosary, a novena, or a Divine Mercy chaplet. He may need someone to accompany him to Confession or to Eucharistic Adoration, until he gets the hang of it.

He will participate in ministries and catechetical programs at the parish, but he typically feels like he has more to learn and experience before he can take a leadership role in these endeavors.

Finally, he wants to meet new people, especially Catholics his age who love their faith, but he's not sure how. He's looking for his "place" in the Church. Related to this, he's also wondering what his role in the Church might be and how God is calling (and has equipped him) to serve.

#### **Someone in the Beginning Disciple stage needs:**

- someone who or something that can fill in the gaps in a non-judgmental manner
- a basic, catechetical presentation of the Catholic faith, especially of Catholic distinctives and difficult teachings (if he hasn't received this already)
- opportunities to get to know and to witness the example of a community of Catholics (ideally among the same peer group) who are dedicated to their faith
- opportunities to pray and to live out the faith in liturgy and service
- a mentor who can guide him and answer his questions
- a way to discern his gifts and his unique calling to serve the Church.

#### **What we can do to meet these needs:**

- Be ready and available to answer questions.
- Provide talks, bible studies, videos, books, articles, etc. on important topics.
- Make the Sacraments amply and readily available (if he's already Catholic).
- Initiate them into the life of the parish via small groups, ministries, social clubs, etc.
- Provide new and old ways to pray, both at the parish and privately.
- Provide opportunities to learn more about and grow in the moral life (e.g., NFP classes, the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, studies on the third pillar of the *Catechism*, etc.).
- Invite them into ministries and opportunities to serve the community.
- Find someone who could naturally and seamlessly step into a mentorship role.
- Host regular Called & Gifted workshops and other ways for him to discern his gifts and his unique calling and vocation.

#### **What we can do to facilitate progression to the next stage:**

- Pique their interest, share your excitement about the deeper things, the great mysteries of our faith.
- Use our unique vocabulary, don't be afraid to go there.
- Invite, encourage, and provide opportunities for them to use their gifts.
- Introduce the idea of sharing what they're learning with others.
- Pray intensely for them.

## Growing Disciple

The Growing Disciple is someone who feels ready to take the next step. He's ready for something more. This pertains both to his knowledge and his spirituality.

As to his knowledge, he's read the introductory books that most people read. He knows the basic outline of the Bible. He's familiar with the Catechism. He's ready now to dive into the mysteries of the faith. For example, he may want to know more about the history of the Church. He may have a new interest in the early Church Fathers and their writings.

Regarding his spirituality, he's ready for the deeper commitment that more involved ways of praying, overcoming sin, and increasing in holiness may require. For example, he may decide to abstain from meat on every Friday, instead of just the Fridays of Lent. He may choose one day a week to fast. He may begin praying novenas or foster a devotion to the "First Fridays" or "First Saturdays" of the month as days of reparation. He may begin going to Mass during the week as well as on Sunday, and going to Confession more regularly. He might sign up for a Holy Hour.

He is ready to go deeper, and he's going there. But, at this stage, his focus is still on his own personal journey of faith. This is okay, he needs to establish this good foundation for mission. He may want to proclaim the Gospel or share his faith with others, but he's not sure how. A certain amount of fear and uncertainty may be present here, especially if he has never been accompanied himself or witnessed missionary discipleship.

Whereas a Beginning Disciple may be reluctant to take on positions of leadership in a parish, a Growing Disciple is ready to do so.

Undue zeal is an issue to address with people in this stage. Sometimes a Growing Disciple can have trouble understanding and can even be impatient with people who aren't as faithful or as knowledgeable as they are. These are the people who might drown a teaspoon of a question with a gallon of an answer. These are the people who can sometimes come across as judgmental to people from pre-discipleship thresholds.

### **Someone in the Growing Disciple stage needs:**

- opportunities to experiment with his gifts and charisms
- opportunities to share what he is learning, what he is excited about
- a variety of ways to go deeper in prayer and study
- a missionary disciple who can initiate him into these ways and answer his questions
- to see what missionary discipleship looks like.

### **What we can do to meet those needs:**

- Create discernment small groups where they can discern their charisms alongside others who are also discerning.
- Invite them to positions of leadership in the parish.
- Provide rich, devotional, prayer experiences in the parish.
- Provide resources to continue this devotional life in the home.
  - For example: how to create a sacred space in the home, how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, how to pray the Rosary with family, etc.
- Get 1-on-1 with them.
- Give them opportunities to get 1-on-1 with others.

### **What we can do to facilitate progression to the next stage:**

- Provide opportunities for them to use their charisms, since the use of a charism orients one towards the other.
- Provide resources and training on mission practices. For example:
  - How to initiate a faith conversation with a stranger
  - How to evangelize in public places
  - How to proclaim the Gospel
  - How to tell your conversion story
  - How to respond to basic arguments against Catholicism
  - What to say/do when you see a poor/homeless person
  - How to pray with and over someone
  - How to be welcoming and hospitable
  - How to accompany someone
  - How to create disciples and send them on mission.
- Have them shadow a St. Paul Street Evangelization street team.
- Be “on mission” around them!
- Challenge *them* to be “on mission.”
- Tell them stories of your own experiences with heeding the promptings of the Lord.
- Lean into their baptismal identity and calling.
- Pray intensely for them.

### **Decision Point #2: Commissioning**

This is the second Decision Point on the path of discipleship. It is both a commissioning (a sending forth) and a co-missioning (a “being on mission with” the Church and the Holy Spirit).

Eventually, a Growing Disciple realizes that his focus and energy can no longer be just on his own growth and progression as a disciple. He comes to realize that with his Baptism comes both the call to evangelize and the gifts necessary to evangelize in his own way. Even more than this, he realizes that this call is something he can no longer ignore. “Necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor 9:16).

There are few processes or rites in the Church for commissioning a disciple in any formal kind of way. Confirmation can be one, although it is extremely difficult, since Confirmation takes place on a fixed date and the Holy Spirit doesn’t always work according to our timelines. The RCIA process can be one. Institution into the Ministry of the Catechist can be one. Perhaps the parish could create other ways to formally commission disciples. Typically, though, the decision takes place interiorly. The Growing Disciple just decides, “I’m going to listen to the prompting on my heart. I’m going to be a witness. I can’t keep my faith to myself anymore.”

His experience is that of the prophet Jeremiah:

“If I say, ‘I will not mention him or speak any more in his name,’ there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in and I cannot.”  
(Jer 20:9)

Once a person decides to live his faith radically, boldly, and in service to the other, then that person becomes a Missionary Disciple.

## Missionary Disciple

A Missionary Disciple is a disciple who is “on mission.” His focus is not primarily so much on himself as it is on the soul of the other – and when his focus *is* on himself, it is so that he can better serve the other. That could be friends and family, but also neighbors, co-workers, parishioners, and even complete strangers. He has learned some basic strategies for reaching out to others, sharing his faith, and proclaiming the Gospel, and he is eager to learn even more ways to do this.

He prays regularly, but he is also open to praying with and over other people. He knows Jesus, and especially how Jesus has changed his life, and he’s eager to tell that story. He wants to help people, answer their questions, make them feel welcome, and be a guide to them. He may even have a handful of people that he is intentionally walking with, praying with, sharing his life with. He checks in on them every now and then to see how they’re doing, and he makes himself available if they need to talk.

He is involved in the parish, but his missionary activity is not confined to the parish. In his work, in his family time, even when he's going about the mundane activities of daily life, he is radiating Christ or at least striving to. He knows what his gifts are and he is eager to use them.

He's obviously not perfect. He's still working to overcome sin. He doesn't seize every moment. He doesn't always make the right decisions. But he loves Jesus, he loves his neighbor, he's trying his best, and he wants to help other people to try their best, too.

### **Someone in the Missionary Discipleship stage needs:**

- us to get out of the way!
- to be heard in the parish
- to be in positions of leadership
- opportunities to mentor others
  - specifically, to disciple others and send them on mission
- to use their gifts and charisms
- to be around other missionary disciples.

### **What we can do to meet those needs:**

- Be a resource and a support, not an impediment .
  - In other words, don't squash their efforts at living out their personal apostolate with bureaucracy, heavy-handedness, short-sightedness, or pettiness.
- Put them at the forefront of any new ministry endeavors.
- Invite them to be on the Leadership Team, the Evangelization Team, the Parish Council, and other important committees.
- Invite them to be sponsors and godparents.
- Pair them with new candidates and catechumens, or with Catholics in earlier thresholds.
- Invite them to lead evangelizing small groups.

### **What we can do to equip and sustain missionary disciples:**

- Create a Discipleship Plan so that there can be many more Missionary Disciples.
- Give them breaks, take them on spiritual retreats, pour into them so that they don't burn out.
- Continue to train them in other ways to be "on mission" (Unbound, Amazing Parish, Ananias Training, Stephen Ministry, Encounter School, Evangelical Catholic's "Mission Groups," Alpha, etc.).
- Love them, show them how much you appreciate everything they do.

## Stages of Evangelization and Catechesis

The stages of evangelization and catechesis, illustrated by the arrows and the inner circle on the diagram, are the interventions of the Church that meet the needs of people where they are and facilitate progression to the next stage of conversion discipleship.

The following labels for each intervention and the accompanying explanations are greatly informed by the catechetical and evangelistic documents of the Church, particularly:

- *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community* (“ACCC”)
- *Catechesi Tradendae* (“CT”)
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (“CCC”)
- *Directory for Catechesis* (“DC”)
- *Evangelii Gaudium* (“EG”)
- *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (“EN”)
- *General Directory for Catechesis* (“GDC”)
- *Redemptoris Missio* (“RM”).

### Pre-evangelization

Pre-evangelization “stimulates an interest in the faith” (ACCC 68). It is “an initial and still incomplete stage” of evangelization (EN 51) that is aimed at “disposing people to hear the Christian message” (John Paul II, Address to the Bishops of Japan). This stage “demands on the part of the evangelizer certain attitudes which foster openness to the message: approachability, readiness for dialogue, patience, a warmth and welcome which is non-judgmental.” (EG 165) Pre-evangelization builds bridges of trust that prepare the way for the proclamation of the Gospel.

### First Proclamation

Also called the “initial” (CT 18-19, 21, 25), “primary” (GDC 51, 60-62), or “missionary proclamation” (GDC 26, 75, 222, 276-277), it is the proclamation of the Gospel, the saving message of who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

According to Pope Francis, “This first proclamation is called ‘first’ not because it exists at the beginning and can then be forgotten or replaced by other more important things. It is first in a qualitative sense because it is the principal proclamation, the one which we must hear again and again in different ways, the one which we must announce one way or another throughout the process of catechesis, at every level and moment.” (EG 164)

## Initiatory Catechesis

“Initiatory catechesis lays the basis for the Christian life of the followers of Jesus.” (GDC 69)

“Being comprehensive and systematic, [it] cannot be reduced to the circumstantial or the occasional. As it is formation for the Christian life it comprises but surpasses mere instruction. Being essential, it looks to what is ‘common’ for the Christian, without entering into disputed questions nor transforming itself into a form of theological investigation. Finally, being initiatory, it incorporates into the community, which lives, celebrates and bears witness to the faith. It fulfils, at once, initiatory, educational and instructional functions.” (GDC 68)

“This stage corresponds to the period of the catechuminate and to that of purification and illumination in the catechumenal program [the RCIA process].” (DC 34) It is the catechesis appropriate for Beginning Disciples (or at least those in Active Seeking).

## Perfective Catechesis

Perfective catechesis is “a systematic deepening of the Christian message by means of theological instruction, so as truly to educate in the faith, encourage growth in understanding of it and to equip the Christian for giving the reason for his hope in the present world.” (GDC 71). In this stage, “The baptized, ... assisted by multiple forms of ongoing education in the faith, seek to realize the desire of Christ: ‘Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.’” (GDC 56d)

This type of catechesis assists the Growing Disciple in his desire to delve deeper into the mysteries of the faith, the life of prayer, and the Christian community. The *Directory for Catechesis* calls this stage “pastoral action” (35). It corresponds with the Mystagogy stage of the RCIA process.

## Missionary Initiation

Missionary Initiation is one of the “other fundamental tasks of catechesis” (GDC 86).

“This seeks to equip the disciples of Jesus to be present as Christians in society through their professional, cultural and social lives. It also prepares them to lend their cooperation to the different ecclesial services, according to their proper vocation. This task of evangelization originates, for the lay faithful, in the sacraments of Christian initiation and in the secular character of their vocation.” (ibid.)

Catechesis in this stage “forms believers for mission, accompanying them in the maturation of attitudes of faith and making them aware that they are *missionary disciples*, called to participate actively in the proclamation of the Gospel and to make the Kingdom of God present in the world” (DC 50). When it is done well, “Christians will be eager to bear witness to their faith, to hand it on to their children, to make it known to others, and to serve the human community in every way.” (CT 24)

This stage in the Church’s catechetical activity should compel a Growing Disciple to the second Decision Point (“Commissioning”) and to becoming a Missionary Disciple.

### Kerygmatic Catechesis

The word *kerygma* comes from the Greek word for “proclamation.” It is “simultaneously an act of proclamation and the content of the proclamation itself, which unveils the Gospel and makes it present.” (DC 58)

The urgency of this proclamation “brings into focus the need for a catechesis that in a consistent way can be called kerygmatic” (DC 57.). It “can therefore no longer be considered simply the first stage of faith, preliminary to catechesis, but rather the essential dimension of every moment of catechesis.” (ibid.)

Since the Gospel has permanent relevance in the lives of all people, as soon as catechesis becomes appropriate along the discipleship path, this catechesis should be kerygmatic.

### Prayer and Accompaniment through All Stages

No matter where a person is along the discipleship path, there are two constants in our ministry to them: prayer and accompaniment.

Teaching people how to pray is one of the primary tasks of catechesis (cf. DC 79, 86-87). But, not only is prayer something we are constantly teaching, modeling, and making available for people to experience, but it is also something we constantly do for the people we serve. We pray for them always (and with them and over them as they are ready), and we ensure that other people are praying for them, too.

We also pray about and pray for our ministry efforts. In prayer, we discern if a particular initiative is what God wants. We pray that it will bear fruit. Within the context of prayer, we discern the initiative's strengths and weaknesses. “When catechesis is permeated by a climate of prayer, the assimilation of the entire Christian life reaches its summit.” (GDC 85)

As for accompaniment, it is vital to the task of creating disciples:

“The present understanding of the formative dynamics of the person requires that intimate communion with Christ, already indicated in the existing Magisterium as the ultimate end of the catechetical initiative, should not only be identified as a goal but also brought about through a process of accompaniment.” (DC 3)

“The Church feels the duty of forming its catechists in the art of personal accompaniment, both by proposing to them the experience of being accompanied in order to grow in discipleship, and by enabling them and sending them to accompany their brothers.” (DC 135c)

In other words, evangelization moves at the speed of relationship.

This is why an inner ring of prayer and accompaniment connects all the stages or “thresholds” of the discipleship path.

## Contact Us

For more information on the Process of Evangelization and Discipleship Diagram and how to implement it in your ministry context, please contact one of the following teams:

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**“Go and make disciples” (Mt 28:19)**

