

## Parish Evangelization Teams (P.E.T.s)

In 1992, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops published ***Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States***. In it, our Bishops call us to implement three evangelization goals (*suggesting various objectives and strategies for each*):

**GOAL ONE:** To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others.

**GOAL TWO:** To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith.

**GOAL THREE:** To foster Gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ.

**The three goals of *Go and Make Disciples (GMD)* can be stated succinctly as:**

- Believe fully – the renewal of faith among practicing Catholics
- Share freely – the communicating of faith through sharing and invitation to others
- Transform continually – renewing the world through Gospel values

**Who will implement each of these goals?**

- *Believe fully* – Parishes often have liturgy and education committees to help implement this goal.
- *Transform continually* – Parishes often have social justice outreach committees to implement this goal.

But... who will implement the second goal - helping parishioners to share freely their faith by inviting others, especially the unchurched and inactive Catholics to Christ in His Church?

- *Share freely* - The Parish Evangelization Team! This group of committed Catholics helps the entire parish community implement Goal II and coordinates efforts with other committees and groups to implement the entire Plan.

**Who Should Be on the Parish Evangelization Team (P.E.T.)?**

- People who are evangelized: filled with God and the Gospel
- People who are practicing, praying, committed Catholics
- People who are open to new ways of doing things
- People who are able to work with people who have doubts
- People who understand inactives and unchurched people
- People who are good listeners, articulate, have “people skills”
- People who are non-judgmental and flexible
- People who are not overly-committed

**How Big Should the P.E.T. Be?**

- There should be about 6-8 people present at the meetings; often, where experience shows that people are not faithful in attending meetings, the team should be big enough to ensure that 6-8 are always present.
- Therefore, perhaps it is wise to invite 8-12 committed parishioners to be members of the P.E.T. (Parish Evangelization Team.)

**Selecting People for the P.E.T.:**

1. Invite people personally after checking with staff and parish personnel. Do not simply put out a general announcement (*which can be done later, when inviting parishioners to help implement various evangelization outreach strategies.*)
2. Make an effort to identify and invite “new blood”, instead of asking overly-committed people.
3. Don't turn the P.E.T. into another already existing group with a specific spirituality or mission (charismatic group, Legion of Mary group, ACTS team, etc.), but rather be sure to have diverse forms of piety, spirituality and evangelization styles represented.

**How Often Should The P.E.T. Meet?**

- **FORMATION PERIOD:** at least every other week. This is a time when people study basic documents and come to a common understanding of the purpose and mission of the Team. Though this phase should not continue for an indefinite period, it should last at least several weeks or months.
- **ACTION PERIOD:** at least once a month. During this time, the Team, in coordination with the parish staff and other committees, designs outreach activities which make sense for the parish, given its pastoral situation.

**Pastoral Process**

- Use the Plan (GMD) to assess the parish's strengths and weaknesses and to begin to sketch a pastoral outreach.
- Do all in a context of hope and prayer, humility and love.
- Begin the outreach with S.M.A.R.T. goals and activities: Specific. Measurable. Action-oriented. Reasonable. Timely.
- Fine-tune activities as you review and evaluate.

**The Parish Context**

- Parish Evangelization Teams should not be isolated, but should work in tandem with the parish staff and pastoral council.
- Parish Evangelization Teams would benefit from having an assigned liaison person to the parish staff (e.g., staff person.)
- Parish Evangelization Teams should report to the pastor (or parish staff liaison) and to the pastoral council.