Faith Reaching Out
EVANGELIZATION
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EVANGELIZATION

BISHOP’S DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE:

The Church’s responsibility to respond to the needs of particular communities in the diocese

—how will the parish and diocese reach out to minority communities, for example, Black, Spanish, Native American, Asian?

—how will the parish and diocese evangelize the unchurched?

—how will the parish and diocese seek out inactive Catholics?

In a multi-cultural society it is important for the Church to be active and present in every community. The Church must build up the Body of Christ by welcoming and supporting members of every culture and heritage. Those outside of the Church community, or who have left the community, must also be welcomed and given special concern.

The following areas need to be addressed:

1. How do the diocese and parishes reach out to minority communities in the diocese? What unique needs do these communities have in the Church? What should be the future action of the diocese and parishes in this matter?

2. How should the diocese and parishes go about evangelizing the unchurched in our local community? What plan of action should be followed?

3. How should the diocese and parish reach out to inactive Catholics in our local community? What plan of action should be followed?
EVANGELIZATION
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND ON THE ISSUE

Jesus began his public ministry by stating His mission as that of proclaiming the Good News in Word and deed (cf. Luke 4:16-21). So, too, the mission of the Apostles was to preach and act on behalf of the Gospel (cf. Luke 9:2). Paul VI laid claim to evangelization as, "...the essential mission of the Church" (Evan. Nun. #14). He said that evangelization "...is a complex process made up of varied elements...(which) may appear to be contradictory (but are, in fact,) mutually enriching" (Evan. Nun. #24). He also said that evangelization is a process carried out, "...with a total respect for the free options which it presents without coercion or dishonorable or unworthy pressure" (Evan. Nun. #80).

There are more than 50 million active Catholics in the United States. Between the Fifth Diocesan Assembly in 1979 and today, the estimated number of inactive Catholics nationally has risen from 12 to 15 million and the number of unchurched people from 61 to 90 million. For the past 20 years, the number of Black Catholics in the United States has remained constant at approximately one million, or 2 percent of the Catholic population. While no national or Diocesan data on the number of Catholics was available for other racial/ethnic groups, we do know that a large number of these people live within the boundaries of the Diocese. There are approximately 21,000 people of Spanish descent, 12,000 Native Americans, 8,000 Asian Americans, and 1,300 other racial/ethnic group members in our boundaries. These racial/ethnic group members, Catholic or not, make up one percent of the residents of the Diocese.

In-migration (as opposed to increase in infant Baptisms and conversions) has made the Catholic Church the fastest growing Christian denomination in North Carolina. In 1980 there were about 50,000 Catholics in the Diocese of Charlotte (1.5% of the population) and, of these, about 1,400 were Blacks (almost 3% of the Catholic population). Based on limited data, the Commission on Evangelization estimates that there are 30,000 to 40,000 inactive Catholics in the Diocese of Charlotte. These inactive Catholics are a portion of the estimated one and a quarter million residents of the Diocese who are unchurched.

The 1979 Diocesan Assembly focused on Evangelization. Its analysis of the situation then was not too different from that of this Commission now. However, little seems to have been accomplished between 1979 and 1986 with respect to evangelization. Perhaps this has been due to a lack of response to what was then a mere whisper of the Holy Spirit, although the presentations then by Frs. Wilbur Thomas, Ken Boyack, and George Kloster were clear and strong and remain applicable today. Perhaps little has been accomplished because no one person or office was given responsibility for implementation of the evangelization goals, objectives, and techniques of evangelization. These goals, objectives, and techniques were vaguely built into and dispersed through the various established commissions.

Regardless of the failure to fully implement the thrust indicated in 1979, this commission, through the Lenten Parish meetings found, on the one hand, that: 1) Approximately 2/3 of the parishes do offer some kind of education programs about the Faith for general interest or to potential converts, 2) 85% engage in social service/outreach programs, 3) 50-75% have "greeters", ushers, or welcome/visitation committees, 4) the majority of parish leaders feel that racial discrimination is less in their parishes than in the larger community, and 5) two-thirds felt that evangelization should receive high priority attention at both diocesan, vicariate, and parish levels.

On the other hand, the Commission found that:

1) Approximately 75% of the parishes
offer no educational programs about other racial, ethnic, or religious groups, the unchurched or inactive Catholics, or minorities, 2) Over 75% of parishes offer no special liturgies for the unchurched, inactive Catholics, or minorities, 3) Most individuals feel spiritually unprepared to share the faith, 4) They feel inadequate in their knowledge of the Faith, especially since Vatican II, 5) They feel embarrassed and do not seem to know the techniques or methods of sharing the Faith, 6) They exhibited little need to learn about other racial, cultural, or religious groups, and 7) They seemed confused about the relationship between preaching the word and serving the poor, and simple witness through Christian living.

The goals set forth below are based on analysis of data and information made available to the Commission, especially the results of the Parish Lenten meetings. The following principles will be used as guides in achieving these goals:

1. Proclamation through Word and deed must be kept in a dynamic balance lest evangelization become mere verbal witnessing or “do goodism”.
2. Evangelization must proceed from a strong Post-Vatican II Catholic Christian identity and theology on the part of persons and organizations and with due respect for the popular religion of the Catholic people.
3. Evangelization must be carried out within a context of deep love and respect for others in ecumenical dialogue.
4. Self-evangelization and spiritual renewal must be kept in dynamic relationship with proclamation to others.
5. Direct and immediate responsibility for evangelization should be lodged in clearly identified persons and organizations at the diocesan and parish levels but this should not mean that these persons and groups should conduct all renewal, educational, communication efforts, etc.
6. Whatever programs, methods, and techniques are designed or imported into the diocese must be practical and suited to our diocese and parishes (e.g., our rural character, scattered minority populations, many small parishes, etc.)
7. Emphasis must be placed on integrating parish-based efforts with those of special ministries such as Cursillo, Marriage Encounter, etc.
8. In the development of any program of evangelization, special attention must be given to nurturing Catholic youth and to preventing attrition especially among “special populations” such as youth, the poor, racial, cultural, and ethnic minorities, widowed, divorced, etc.
9. Wherever possible these goals, especially Goals II, III, and IV, should be carried out through an effort coordinated with other appropriate parish diocesan commissions, offices and programs. However, it is the responsibility of the Evangelization Office and Parish Evangelization Commission ultimately to see to it that significant and sufficient emphasis is given to evangelization in renewal, educational, and outreach programs designed or offered to meet these goals.
10. Programs and activities sponsored by the Evangelization Commissions to reach out to inactive Catholics, the unchurched and minority groups are to be coordinated with, and insofar as feasible integrated with, the catechetical, liturgical and other components of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).
I A. THE DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE WILL ESTABLISH AN OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION WHICH WILL PROVIDE LEADERSHIP, DIRECTION, COORDINATION, AND SUPPORT TO PARISHES, VICARIATES, AND OTHER DIOCESAN OFFICES, COMMISSIONS, AND PROGRAMS FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF INACTIVE CATHOLICS, THE UNCHURCHED, AND MINORITY PEOPLES.

ACTION PLAN

A. Secure a director and advisory committee representative of the diverse racial, cultural and geographical groups in the diocese.

B. Gather and analyze data about the current situation of the unchurched, inactive Catholics, and minority communities as well as provide leadership in long range planning for evangelization within the diocese.

C. Coordinate with appropriate Commissions or Diocesan offices to insure that programs of spiritual renewal, education and services in support of evangelization are conducted.

D. Secure or design and offer appropriate workshops and materials to parishes and Vicariates on the nature of evangelization, on strategies and tactics of evangelizing and provide information specific to the groups being evangelized or served.

E. Insure that all efforts at evangelization throughout the diocese are carried out, with a sensitivity to the ecumenical spirit of the church.

II AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DIOCESAN OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION, EVERY PARISH WILL HAVE AN ESTABLISHED COMMITTEE OF INTERESTED, KNOWLEDGEABLE, AND COMMITTED PARISHIONERS THAT WILL DIRECT, SUPPORT, AND COORDINATE THE EVANGELIZATION EFFORTS OF THE PARISH COMMUNITY FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF INACTIVE CATHOLICS, THE UNCHURCHED, AND MINORITY PEOPLES.

ACTION PLAN

A. Pastors, or their representatives, with the help of the Diocesan Office on Evangelization will provide training on the nature of evangelization, on strategies and tactics of evangelizing, and provide information specific to the groups being evangelized or served.

B. Develop close coordination with parish commissions and organizations to facilitate their participation in or offering programs for spiritual renewal, education, and outreach in support of evangelization efforts.

C. Involve the parishioners in specific evangelization activities as specified in an evangelization plan based on Goals II, III, IV and V.

AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PARISH COMMISSION, EVERY PARISH WILL HAVE A THREE-YEAR PLAN OR SCHEDULE FOR, AND ACTUALLY BE ENGAGED IN, CONTINUOUS EFFORTS AT INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNAL SPIRITUAL CONVERSION/RENEWAL DESIGNED ESPECIALLY TO MOTIVATE AND ENERGIZE PEOPLE TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS.

ACTION PLAN

A. Discern and identify those programs and organizations which can best assist in
spiritual development in support of evangelization efforts.

B. Coordinate a plan or schedule with the Spiritual Life Commission to insure availability of spiritual renewal to all in the parish especially as it relates to evangelization.

III EVERY PARISH, ALONE OR IN CONCERT WITH OTHER PARISHES IN ITS VICARIATE OR DIOCESAN OFFICE, WILL BE OFFERING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS DESIGNED ESPECIALLY TO ENHANCE EVANGELIZATION EFFORTS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS ON AT LEAST, A THREE-YEAR ROTATING BASIS:

+ KNOWLEDGE OF POST-VATICAN II CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY AND PRACTICAL MEANS OF EFFECTIVELY SHARING THE FAITH WITH OTHERS AND MINIMIZING ATTRITION OF CATHOLICS.

+ KNOWLEDGE OF SOCIAL GROUPINGS IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY, SUCH AS: RACIAL MINORITIES, ETHNIC MINORITIES, RURAL AND APPALACHIAN PEOPLE OR OTHER CULTURAL GROUPS.

+ KNOWLEDGE OF OTHER RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WHICH ARE DOMINANT AND THOSE CHARACTERISTIC OF THE POOR AND MINORITY COMMUNITIES IN THE PARISH/ VICARIATE/DIOCESE.

ACTION PLAN

A. Coordinate efforts with parish and diocesan Education Commission and, if needed, with other parishes.

B. Identify resources and people to assist in or provide educational programs, for example:
   + Members of cultural/racial minorities to discuss their heritage
   + Ministers from other churches to explain their tradition

C. Emphasize the study of the Bible and theology in programs designed to foster meaningful dialogue with others (e.g., learning “their” language).

D. Discover special problems and factors accounting for the leakage of Catholics (e.g., marriage issues, hurts), for the lack of interest of the unchurched (e.g., hypocrisy of so-called Christians, secularization), and for lack of response from minorities (e.g., worship services foreign to their culture, lack of minority leadership), and design programs around these.

E. Sponsor programs and support groups to increase motivation to share and provide examples and techniques for evangelization.

F. Sponsor education and other programs to acquaint others with Catholic Christianity such as: information nights, inquiry classes, We Care/We Share, and the use of tracts and pamphlets.

IV EVERY PARISH WILL BE ENGAGED IN CONTINUOUS EFFORTS THROUGH SPECIFIC OUTREACH PROGRAMS WHICH PROVIDE INFORMATION, HOSPITALITY, AND SERVICE TO OTHERS THROUGH THE PARISH AS A WITNESS TO THE OPEN WELCOME OF THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN SUPPORT OF EVANGELIZATION AND JUSTICE.

ACTION PLAN

A. In conjunction with the Spiritual Life Commission, develop strong welcoming programs including:
   + Special liturgies with special helps designed to increase understanding and appreciation of inactive Catholics, unchurched, and minorities
   + Open houses
   + Ushers, Greeters, who really welcome
   + Use of visitor cards, introductions before and after Mass
   + Participation in community welcome wagons
   + Home visitations, hospital visitations

B. In conjunction with appropriate commissions, develop and provide social service and social justice programs in the name of the Catholic community, such as support for:
   + the Bishops’ Peace and Economic Pastors
   + alternatives to abortion and capital punishment and shelters for homeless
+ assistance for worker-owned businesses
+ sustained efforts for world peace and reduction of nuclear arms
+ programs and other activities which provide service and aid to individuals, groups, and communities as well as programs and activities designed to change social structures in keeping with recommendations or requirements expressed in apostolic exhortations and encyclicals.

C. Participate in ecumenical religious, social, and service activities as a Catholic Community.

D. Encourage volunteerism, whereby lay people, especially youth, from one area of the diocese might engage in parish programs of proclamation and action in their own or other areas of the diocese which need their talents.

E. Make use of multi-media (e.g., bulletins and newsletters, radio, newspaper articles and ads, TV and The North Carolina Catholic) in support of outreach programs. These activities will be carried out in conjunction with the Diocesan Communications Office.

B. By 1990 the Director of the Diocesan Office of Evangelization will submit to the Bishop and his advisors for their approval the major diocesan plan for evangelization.

C. At least 75% of the parishes will be engaged in an approved program of evangelization to meet the specific needs within the parish territory in the context of and in conjunction with the diocesan-wide program of evangelization.

VI THE DIOCESE OF CHARLOTTE WILL ESTABLISH AN OFFICE FOR MINORITY AFFAIRS WHICH WILL INSURE THAT THE SPIRITUAL, EDUCATIONAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL INTERESTS OF MULTI-CULTURAL GROUPS ARE CONSIDERED AND ACTED UPON IN ALL DIOCESAN AFFAIRS.

ACTION PLAN

A. Secure a director and establish an advisory committee representative of the diverse racial, cultural and geographical groups in the diocese.

B. Investigate and report to the Bishop on the feasibility and desirability of distinct departments and or programs for clearly identifiable minority groups.

C. Provide education and training to people ministering to minorities which insures that ministry will be conducted with special sensitivity to the culture and particular situation of minority groups.

D. Assess the status of all ministers to minorities, and support efforts to eliminate oppression of minorities wherever it might occur both within and beyond the diocese.

E. In cooperation with appropriate commissions, develop on a diocesan level liturgical celebrations, retreats, workshops, etc. that reflect the soul of the minority group.

V BY 1992 THE DIOCESE WILL SPONSOR AND DIRECT A MAJOR, COORDINATED, MULTI-LEVEL, MULTI-MEDIA, INTEGRATED EFFORT TO PROCLAIM THE GOOD NEWS IN WORD AND DEED AS UNDERSTOOD BY CATHOLIC CHRISTIANS THROUGH A DIOCESAN-CREATED OR OTHER AVAILABLE EVANGELIZATION PROGRAM (E.G., WE CARE WE SHARE) ADAPTED TO THE CHARLOTTE DIOCESE TO INACTIVE CATHOLICS, THE UNCHURCHED, AND MINORITY PEOPLES.

ACTION PLAN

A. Every parish will attempt to complete a religious census, in cooperation with other local churches wherever possible, with technical guidance from the Diocesan Office of Evangelization.