

Catholic Evangelization: 20 TOOLS

Padre Pio, Miracle Man).

1 According to Pope Paul's encyclical "Evangelization in the Modern World," the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life. Live simply. Give away what you don't need. Reach out to the materially and spiritually poor.

2 Know your own faith story and cultivate a willingness and readiness to share it—or parts of it—in appropriate and opportune situations.

3 Read the Bible regularly and keep making connections between biblical characters/events and the events/emotions of your life. As you listen to others, identify parallel biblical events and issues related to their situations.

4 Read about the lives of the saints. Just as with the Bible, keep making connections between issues, concerns, situations in your life, and those of the saints. As you listen to others, identify parallels for them, as well.

5 Point out where you see God is at work in the lives of the inactive Catholic and the un-churched. Affirm all that is good in them: We catch more flies with honey than vinegar! Present a softer, kinder approach to a loving God through gentler parenting, befriending.

6 Pray before you share matters of faith, and speak with love. If words fail, speak to people about Jesus through your actions. Show that **YOU CARE. IF PEOPLE DON'T FEEL CARED FOR, THEY COULD CARE LESS WHAT YOU BELIEVE.**

7 Share an inspiring book, video or audio podcast (may or may not be explicitly religious), and take time to follow up with a discussion on its faith-dimensions (e.g., *A Man for All Seasons; Song of Bernadette; Entertaining Angels: the Dorothy Day Story;*

8 **HAND OUT MIRACULOUS MEDALS.** Catholics, including St. Mother Teresa, St. Maximilian Kolbe, have handed out untold numbers of blessed Medals, which have extraordinary graces of conversion, healing, and protection attached to them. Read up on the Miraculous Medal and be inspired by the miracles of conversion it brings.

9 Be ready to share aspects of your story that are appropriate: "That reminds me of the time when. . . and prayer was my only recourse," or "I find listening to spiritual music very helpful," or "I benefit from praying the longer version of the Serenity Prayer. May I share it with you?"

10 **PRAY FOR PEOPLE'S CONVERSIONS.** In your prayer groups and intercessions, make it a point to pray for unbelievers and people alienated from the Church.

11 Invite people of other faiths to pray with you over matters of mutual concern. Plan and share in works of mercy. Play together. Offer compliments about their faith. Point out commonalities in your beliefs.

12 Tell others you will pray for them. Then do it! People are almost always grateful for this offer.

13 Offer hospitality. Invite others over for a meal. Pray before the meal. Be welcoming! Reach out to those who are lonely, who feel friendless and isolated. Many of them are just waiting to have companionship and hear some good news of God's love and the opportunity for community.

14 Invite people to Mass and take time afterward to answer their questions. If you aren't sure of how to respond, say, "Let me get back to you on that." Then pick up the Catechism of

the Catholic Church or a booklet like *Beginning Apologetics 1: How to Explain and defend the Catholic Faith* (www.catholicapologetics.com). Pray and share what you learned with charity and kindness.

15 Do not abandon people when they leave the church or fall into sin. God is unconditional love, and we are called to demonstrate that love for others.

16 Be an example of forgiveness. People may be moved by the story of the prodigal son and the forgiving father (*Luke 15*). But more powerful still are **LIVING EXAMPLES** of forgiveness among their family members, friends, and business associates. Be open to forgiveness always and get spiritual help and guidance when forgiveness is too difficult.

17 Let people vent about their problems with religion and the Church. Let them be angry. If they don't feel listened to, they may distance themselves further from the Church. They may have been very hurt by a Catholic or Protestant person. Be a good listener and try to understand their point of view. Their grievances may not have been acknowledged before, and you may be the first Christian person to empathize with them. Do not be too quick to defend our Church, which is full of saints and sinners alike. But if they are clearly wrong about a certain aspect of our faith, gently correct them. We are called to challenge, if necessary, and we are called to

console, if appropriate. Speak the truth with love. Taking a defensive stance will alienate you from them.

18 Honesty is always the best policy. The fact that we, a believing people, remain in continual need of conversion and forgiveness is the best possible invitation to people looking for the same. They may more readily feel at one with us if we admit our faults. Truly, the sins of the church acknowledged, we are ever more the witness to the grace and forgiveness of God!

19 Fast on behalf of someone, or on behalf of people who do not believe. We can fast by eating just bread and water, for instance. Or we can give up a craving or comfort dear to us. This form of prayer is very efficacious. God will take your prayer very seriously because you are willing to sacrifice something for what you are asking. As it says in the Catechism, the Church calls us to fast in "Lent and each Friday in memory of the death of the Lord." Some people fast every Wednesday and Friday, traditional fast days in the Church, on behalf of those without faith. When words fail to evangelize, pray and fast. Prayer without fasting is like a bird trying to fly with one wing.

20 Trust. Trust in the Holy Spirit to produce results. The Holy Spirit is the principal agent of evangelization. We are not. Thus, we are not in charge of the results.