

## DYNAMIC DUAL: EVANGELIZATION AND CHRISTIAN INITIATION

The exhortation of Pope Paul VI in *Evangelization in the Modern World* is a call to all the baptized to continue to live faithfully the mission of Jesus. It is a challenge to bring the message of the gospel to those who may not have heard this good news, and also to continue to proclaim the gospel to those already familiar with it in new ways. While this proclamation of the Good News does happen through verbal witness, the most effective evangelization is the manner and quality of an individual's and a community's lifestyle.

The world calls for and expects from us simplicity of life, the spirit of prayer, charity towards all, especially toward the lowly and the poor, obedience and humility, detachment and self sacrifice. Without this mark of holiness, our word will have difficulty in touching the heart of modern man. It risks being vain and sterile.  
(EN #76)

This primary form of evangelization is an essential part of the Christian Initiation process. Men and women hear the gospel proclaimed by word and deed, and come to a particular Christian community because of this initial stirring in faith. The process by which adults both hear and respond to this gospel in the Catholic community is called the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)*. Over and over again, inquirers have related how the personal and communal witness of the baptized was what drew them to the Catholic Church. People see how we live, how we relate, how we pray. Through the period of inquiry, they begin to ask questions and gradually are led to seek entrance into the catechumenate process.

Evangelization needs to be intimately connected with the vision of the parish community and its own call to conversion. Each of us, whether we are early in the conversion process or well along the way, is called to an every deeper relationship with the Lord and with the Church. While the catechumens and candidates strive to grow personally in their relationship to Jesus and, ultimately, are responsible for their own response to God's grace, they cannot do it alone. There must be a strong, faith-filled community into which the new members can be enfolded. Our new Christians will need our prayerful support and witness of faith in order to sustain a life of discipleship and continue the journey of conversion.

The process of evangelization stands at the center of Christian Initiation and is a part of our everyday call to live according to the gospel mandate which all of the baptized are expected to assume. The Rite uses the term "evangelization" in its broadest sense: "faithfully and constantly the living God is proclaimed ..." (RCIA #36). When this evangelization is done well, inquirers are drawn to the process of conversion that is the work of the Holy Spirit and ongoing transformation takes place in the hearts of the entire community.