THE NEW EVANGELIZATION
For The Transmission of the Christian Faith

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Faith-Worship-Witness

2013-2016
USCCB STRATEGIC PLAN
PART I
THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

*The New Evangelization: Faith-Worship-Witness*

**Introduction**

In 2011, during a consultation with the standing committees and the body of bishops, the theme of the *New Evangelization* surfaced as a primary approach and focus for the work of the USCCB during the planning cycle 2013-2016. This topic was the dominant, recurring theme. The bishops voiced the hope that, by focusing on the *New Evangelization* over a sustained period of time, people can be re-energized and re-engaged with their Catholic faith that begins with a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ and leads to a stronger commitment to His Church and its mission in the world.

*A new evangelization is synonymous with mission, requiring the capacity to set out anew, go beyond boundaries and broaden horizons. The new evangelization is the opposite of self-sufficiency, a withdrawal into oneself, a status quo mentality and an idea that pastoral programs are simply to proceed as they did in the past. Today a “business as usual” attitude can no longer be the case. Some local Churches, already engaged in renewal, reconfirm the fact that now is the time for the Church to call upon every Christian community to evaluate their pastoral practice on the basis of the missionary character of their program and activities.*

—Synod of Bishops XIII Ordinary General Assembly, *The New Evangelization for the Transmission of Christian Faith, Lineamenta, #10*

The Framework offers a way for the USCCB to make the *New Evangelization* come to fruition and to bring “new tools and new forms of expression to life …making the Word of God more understandable in the life of people.” (Instrumentum Laboris)

1. **The tasks of the New Evangelization.** The *New Evangelization* will be specifically addressed through four Conference-wide priority initiatives deemed necessary for the *New Evangelization* to take root in our Church and culture today. These initiatives seek to achieve the following pastoral outcomes during the four year USCCB planning cycle:
   - A deepening of our relationship with Jesus Christ, a greater knowledge of faith and an increase in our sacramental practice especially participation in the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance;
   - A strengthening of our understanding of the Christian vocation lived through a public witness to Jesus Christ and to the life and dignity of the human person;
   - A supporting and protecting of marriage, married couples, and family life
   - A constant affirming and protecting of our religious liberty.
2. **The strategies to accomplish the tasks of the New Evangelization.** In addition to the four conference-wide priority initiatives, the committees and offices of the USCCB are asked to integrate four planning strategies into the outcome objectives and projects.

These four strategies define two “who’s” and two “how’s” to accomplish the tasks of the *New Evangelization* for the transmission of the Christian faith. They are:

- Engage culturally diverse and age diverse communities (Who);
- Call, form and develop leaders-especially clergy (Who);
- Create effective communications (How);
- Involve collaboration and working together (How).

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**Giving Direction to the Work of the USCCB**

*The New Evangelization: Faith-Worship-Witness*

The *Year of Faith*, as a doorway that engages us in the work of the *New Evangelization*, is a “summons to an authentic and renewed conversion to the Lord, the One Savior of the world” (*Porta Fidei*, 6). The *Year of Faith*, as the first year of the new planning cycle and a first instance to be engaged in the *New Evangelization* for the transmission of the Christian faith, is an opportunity for Catholics to experience a conversion – to turn back to Jesus and enter into a deeper relationship with him. The “door of faith” is opened at one’s baptism, but during this year Catholics are called to open it again, walk through it and rediscover and renew and deepen their relationship with Christ and his Church.

The *New Evangelization* presents three opportunities or audiences for the transmission of the Christian faith:

- To engage more intently those who are faithful and need to be renewed and to be catechized more;
- To reach out to those who have never heard the gospel proclaimed; and
- To re-engage those who are baptized but have lost a living sense of the faith in their daily lives.

The *New Evangelization* is an opportunity to Rediscover the joy and confidence of believing in the Triune God and to enthusiastically profess that faith as “a true encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ. Transmitting the faith means to create in every place and time the conditions which lead to his encounter between the person and Jesus Christ.” (*Instrumentum Laboris*, #18)

Therefore, this time can be a moment where Catholics are offered a new appreciation of the gift of faith, deepening their relationship with God and strengthening their commitment to share and live their faith with others. It is “formational” in that it emphasizes a desire for a greater knowledge and personal encounter with God, who is Father, Son and Spirit, as primary to one’s dignity, sanctity and mission as a disciple.
The New Evangelization: Faith-Worship-Witness as a theme has a natural progression that engages the Church in a three-fold movement during 2013-2016 by:

1. Inviting Catholics to a deeper relationship with Christ, and a deeper understanding of and relationship with his Church, and knowledge of the faith;
2. Inspiring confidence in the gospel and the teachings of the faith expressed in a vibrant sacramental life, most intensively in the Eucharist and Penance; and
3. Engaging believers in their vocation to be witnesses who transform society through living and sharing their faith in Jesus Christ and giving recognition to the life and dignity of the human person.

This pastoral approach can be expressed programmatically with special activities directed toward:
- young people
- inactive Catholics
- married couples and parents

CONFERENCE-WIDE PRIORITY INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

FAITH FORMATION AND SACRAMENTAL PRACTICE
As the Church enters into the Year of Faith and actively responds to the Holy Father’s call for a New Evangelization it is important to reaffirm and to continue the projects and activities that the bishops initiated in 2008 around the priority of Faith Formation and Sacramental Practice. The desired outcomes for these initiatives are that Catholics have a renewed energy and confidence in their faith rooted in a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ, an increased knowledge of the Faith, a greater participation in the sacramental life of the Church, and a stronger commitment to be active disciples.

The success of these efforts can be measured in such ways as an increased attendance at Sunday Mass, increased knowledge and understanding of the faith, greater participation in the sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation, more visible participation of young people in parish life, and a stronger public engagement on behalf of the most vulnerable. Greater attention should also be given toward the calling and forming of leaders, especially clergy, to assist the bishops to achieve this ongoing evangelization, catechesis, and outreach directed to culturally diverse and age diverse communities.

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE
As the bishops continue their focus on strengthening marriage several outcome objectives continue to be important. These include: The support of married couples from diverse cultural communities and a strengthened catechesis on marriage; greater care and focus on families and family life, and the continued promotion and protection of marriage - defending the institution of marriage against attempts to alter the definition of marriage in law and public policy.
This focus is important since the bishops recognize that as the domestic church healthy married couples and families are foundational to the mission of the Church and to society. Additionally, bishops expressed the need to focus on their outreach to young adults so that there is an increase in the number (percentage) of marriages with at least one Catholic party taking place in the Catholic Church, thus reversing the decline in Church weddings.

**LIFE AND DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON**
The bishops continue their focus to protect all human life by anticipating, providing and arranging services to mandated populations; advocating for policies that protect life and promote the dignity of all persons; researching more effective ways to communicate the Catholic teaching on human life and dignity; and convening Catholic leaders to advance our common commitment to human life and dignity.

Bishops also voiced the need for a greater awareness of and attention to the current economic conditions, especially as these impact the poor and vulnerable, noting that the Church’s teachings can contribute to society as it addresses the economy and the common good and provide a framework for a more just and peaceful society.

**RELIGIOUS LIBERTY**
The bishops identified challenges to religious liberty, both nationally and internationally, as a significant issue the Church now faces. It emerged as a priority in a variety of ways and over a wide span of topics. In the Church’s engagement with society and culture, there is the desire to re-affirm the longstanding heritage and positive role of the Church and of all people of faith as voices and agents for the common good in the public square. There is a particular need to address and affirm the freedom of religious organizations and conscience rights of individuals not to be forced to engage in actions forbidden by conscience.

Internationally, there is a significant need to promote and defend the religious freedoms of individuals and institutions of all religious traditions. Currently Christians are the most widely persecuted group in the world. It is critical that our religious liberty priority include this issue of international justice.

Nationally, the relationship of religious liberty and conscience protection within the contexts of the ethical challenges in health care, the defense of marriage, education, and the family is crucial. Accordingly, bishops have a responsibility to be leaders in these efforts by proclaiming, both to the faithful and to the world, the Catholic vision of religious freedom based on the life and dignity of the human person.
FOUR STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE EVANGELIZATION

To be successful in achieving our goals it is important to focus on how pastoral and societal needs are addressed. This framework proposes that the work of the Conference in support of the *New Evangelization* is to be viewed through the engagement of four strategies or lenses.

**ENGAGE OUR CULTURALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES**

While the Church’s message is timeless, it is essential to express this message in ways that acknowledge the current Catholic demographics in the United States and in the world, particularly the culturally diverse populations and varying age groups. This includes recognizing that the gifts and experiences of our diverse cultures are vital for building up the Church and for unity among disciples.

**CALL, SUPPORT & FORM CHURCH LEADERS – Clergy, Religious and Laity**

To successfully re-engage Catholics with Jesus Christ and His Church; and to create a new enthusiasm for living this faith, the bishops make a renewed call to the priesthood and consecrated life linked with formation and support of priests, deacons and religious. In light of current demographics, the Church can also be increasingly attentive to the formation of lay ecclesial ministers, including volunteers, as collaborators with clergy and religious.

**CREATE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES**

Communications is a key concern of bishops and other Church leaders. Many have noted that effective communication addresses the methodologies and systems—the “how”—through which we accomplish the work, rather than the substance of the work itself. This awareness comes as digital communications are providing an opportunity to return to humankind’s most ancient form of evangelizing: one-to-one conversations. Social media, and overall networking with others, facilitates a stronger need for collaboration; and, with the necessary training they support collaborative relationships.

**CREATE COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

Collaboration among groups both inside and outside the Church will be essential for the successful planning and implementation of the goals and objectives identified by the bishops for 2013-2016. The *New Evangelization* will be more effectively realized when all available expertise and resources are appropriately utilized and distributed. It also acknowledges a growing concern in modern society of fracture and division both within communities and among nations.
Planning Model for 2013-2016 Strategic Plan

In November 2006, the bishops adopted a new Strategic Plan for the Conference. The bishops used the Plan to focus and prioritize their work in support of the larger mission of the USCCB. In November 2011, the Committee on Priorities and Plans (CPP) further clarified the strategic planning model by noting that the USCCB accomplishes its mission through 16 priorities served through the leadership of 16 standing committees of the Conference.

This model also affirms that during any given strategic planning cycle the bishops may choose to identify three or four Conference-wide priority initiatives of national significance that require sustained effort among multiple committees for a successful outcome.

A four year strategic planning cycle provides sufficient time for committees and staff to develop, implement, promote and evaluate the approved goals, objectives and projects related to both the Conference-wide priority initiatives and the 16 committee priorities. This framework for leadership is represented by the following diagram:

Committee Priorities are those priorities that emerge as a result of the mission responsibilities defined for each Committee based on the pastoral and societal needs and opportunities during a given strategic planning cycle.

Conference-wide Priority Initiatives are of national significance, and call for a unified approach where the bishops believe that the Conference is the best entity to provide leadership in addressing these issues or opportunities. As such these priority initiatives engage most of the standing committees to achieve the desired outcome in service to the Church.

Committee & Office Annual Mandated Responsibilities represent the valued ongoing strategic goals, and associated work tasks, that come with the overall mission of a standing committee or office of the Conference. The ongoing governance of the Conference is a shared and primary responsibility in service to the larger mission: to support the ministry of bishops with an emphasis on evangelization.