How To Evangelize?

                        **Start Evangelism Group In Your Church**

                                                           **By**

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When the Lord sent His disciples to evangelize, the gospel says: “And He called the twelve to [Himself], and began to send them out two [by] two” (MARK 6:7).

Here the Lord set up a great rule of evangelistic work. It is better to have at least someone else works with you in evangelism.

Although, I recognize the difficulty of finding people with keen interest in evangelism at present time, we need to start establishing an evangelism group in every church, even if we start with only two people.  Here are some practical steps explaining how to do that:

1-     **Raise evangelism awareness in your church**:

In an Islamic society like Egypt, evangelism is a punishable crime that could lead to death penalty.  This severe punishment stopped evangelism activities in Egypt for over twelve centuries.  As a result, now evangelism is foreign to Copts.  Before Islamic invasion of Egypt in 642 A.D., Copts were the first to evangelize in Ireland many centuries before St. Patrick.  They evangelized in Switzerland and other parts of Europe. In addition, they evangelized in Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Ethiopia, and Sudan in Africa, and in India, Yemen, and other parts in Asia.

Not only Copts traveled to other countries to evangelize, but they also attracted thousands of students from all over the World to their first International theological school, the Theological School of Alexandria. Many of those students were not Christians and they ended up not only converted to Christianity but also became pillars of the church.

Christian Monastic life that started in Egypt in the Fourth Century, made Egypt a pilgrimage for all those who seek spirituality.  Many knew Christianity when they met the Desert Fathers of Egypt.  This type of evangelism some call it ‘Passive Evangelism.’  However, it is better to call it “Non-Verbal Evangelism.”

Therefore, we see here a great church that involved in evangelism for a long time and did not stop until the sword was the only communication tools the Muslims rulers had all the time.  However, the love of God still kindles the hearts of the Copts.  They only need someone to open their eyes to the facts of evangelism.

Our first job in evangelism is to raise the awareness of our congregations of the need to evangelism. To do that, you need to talk to your priest or Sunday school teachers or youth leaders in your church and offer arranging lectures or discussions about evangelism.  You will find many helpful topics in the evangelism web page: [www.suscopticdiocese.org/evanelism](http://www.suscopticdiocese.org/evanelism)

 If it is hard for you to talk to a big group of people, try to find someone in your church who can do that, if not please let me know.

In addition to lectures and discussions, there are other means of raising the awareness of evangelism, such as distributing small articles or brochures that address the topic.  Currently, we don’t have such brochures. I hope that somebody from this class starts using the available articles in writing brochures. I will be happy to work with anyone who willing to start writing brochures.

2-     **Find People Interested in Evangelism**:

While visiting youth meeting or Sunday school classes or discussion, pray that God lead you to those people who are willing to work in the field of evangelism

**3-      Invite those people to meet:**

Get this group together to pray, to study the bible together, and to discuss what you could do for evangelism.

**What the Evangelism Group Could Do?**

**1-    Prepare the church to receive guests:**

-         There are many relevant things that you could do here.  First, make sure the church is clean. There are no soda cans or any other objects in the yards of the church.  The rest rooms are clean and have enough paper towels and soaps.

-         Thermometer is set at a comfortable degree.  I will never forget a guest came to our church to find herself shaking and sneezing because someone who feels hot set the temperature at very low degree, and the church became freezing.  Of course, she never came back.

-         Set the microphone of the church at a reasonable volume.  Some deacons love to set microphones at high volume and then they sing very close to the microphone’s mouth, the produced sound is horrible and uncomfortable to the ears.

-         The pews of the church are clean.

-         There are enough English Prayers Books

-         There is a screen that shows the page number of the prayers, it works, and there is at least one person who can operate it.

**2-    During Prayers:**

-         There is at least one person who stands at the door to welcome any guest

-         Prepare small cards for the guests to fill out their names, e-mails, and their telephone numbers.  Meet the guests with a smile and welcoming words.  Introduce yourself and welcome them in the name of the church. Ask them politely to fill out the card so the church can welcome them.

-         Give each guest a prayer book, tell them about the screen, and ask them if they need someone to help with following the prayers.  If their answer is yes, ask someone to stand next to them to help.

-         Prepare them for our divine liturgy: tell them briefly that the worship here is biblical and goes back to the first centuries of Christianity. Therefore, it is different from what they may are custom to.  Nevertheless, it is very rich in spirituality.  Tell them we stand up most of the time, but they may feel free to sit down.

-         Lead each person to where he/she will sit down.  Please, avoid seating them at the very rear of the church whereas usually this area has more noise of children.  Also, avoid seating them upfront where they feel uncomfortable since everybody can see their inadequate following up of prayers and rituals.  Don’t let them sit next to a loud speaker!

-         Prepare a list of the guests’ names and give it to the priest to welcome them publicly from the pulpit.

-         Make sure that there is a translation for the sermon.

3-     **After Prayers**:

-         Welcome guests again and express your desire to see them again next week.  This way they feel accepted and welcomed.

-         If they have the time, lead them to the coffee room and make sure that you help them around.

-         Introduce them to others and ask people to spend time with them and let them feel welcomed and acceptable.  Also, ask those people to let the guests know that they enjoyed their company and they like to see them next week.

-         Introduce them to the priest to welcome them and spend a few moments with each.  Guests consider the priest as the manger of the church, therefore his welcome is so important for them.

-         During the week, call the guests and thank them for coming and invite them to come again.

-         Give their names to English Bible Study group.

-         Add their names to the list of people the evangelism group would pray for.

**4-   During the Week:**

-         Meet with other members to pray for guests and for evangelism, share a bible reading, and discuss evangelism activities.

-         Promote evangelism activities.  The list is enormous. To give you a few examples: a church advertisement in the yellow page, in the local newspaper, and in all bulletin boards in the community that accept adds from churches.

**5-   Other Activities:**

-         Establish a bible study for the guests: Bible study is a very effective American way to attract people to the church.  While studying the bible refer to the authentic bible commentary available through the fathers of the church.  Expose them to the depth of the Orthodox bible interpretation. I recommend starting with the ‘gospel according to John.’  Simply, because it let them meet Jesus face to face.  Divinity of Jesus is very direct in this gospel.  In addition, you have countless opportunities to talk about our faith as Christian and as an Orthodox Church.  For example, first chapter talks about the divinity of Christ, second chapter talks about Holy Matrimony, third chapter speaks of baptism, and the sixth chapter deals with the Holy Communion.

-         Prepare for other evangelism events, such as church open -house, church reach out programs to visit hospitals or prisons or elderly homes.

-         Work slowly and wisely with the priest and other dignitaries in the church to solve some of the problems we face in the church, such as: plying and running of children during the divine liturgy; translations; prayers in English so children, youth, and guests can pray; keeping the church clean and neat, and how to make guests feel welcome.

Finally, let us agree to pray for each other and to pray for starting evangelism groups in our churches.  Let us try to be more open and active.  Send your experience to share with others in this class.  Let me know when you start something, and let us all share the encouraging news about our groups.  Remember, many of what I mentioned in this lesson need wisdom to apply.  You may not find welcome of some of these ideas.  No problem, just be patient, pray, and try again after a period of time.  Physical changes are relatively easy to do, but changing people’s mind is very hard and it takes a long time to do.

Start an evangelism group, even with two people.  Apply what you can for now.  Others will come later.  Some may take years to occur.  Nevertheless, we will continue to do the work of God, no matter the surrounding circumstance.