THE PROCESS OF EVANGELIZATION

The process of evangelization is like setting a bonfire ablaze. It begins with preparatory work, moves into the ignition of the elements, entails stoking and feeding these elements to maintain the fire and lastly, allows and encourages the fire to blaze forth within proper parameters.

1. Prepare the Fire

Pre-evangelization, that is, preparation of hearts for the reception of the Gospel message, is needed in many cases before a person can respond to the call to commit or recommit him or herself to Christ and His Church. This preparation may entail something as simple as a single conversation with an individual or it could require more extensive dialogue and relationship building before there is an openness and/or ability to receive the gift of grace being offered.

2. Ignite the fire

St. Paul tells us that the grace of ‘faith comes through hearing the Word of Christ’ (Rom. 10). Hence, proclamation of the message of Christ, (the kerygma in Greek), is the essential component for igniting the fire of faith in a soul. There is no true evangelization without the simple, direct and integral announcement of the Good News of Jesus to an individual, that is, the meaning of His Life, Death and Resurrection for them. This proclamation includes an invitation to conversion and commitment of one’s life to Jesus Christ and His Church. Its goal is none other than to call the hearers of the message to make a free choice of discipleship: ‘Come Follow Me’.

3. Stoke the Fire

Once a commitment or recommitment of one’s life has been made the third phase begins, namely, discipleship. Disciples are conscious followers and students of the Lord Jesus Christ. They have a living, personal relationship with Him and require extensive formation in The Faith. This formation is to be at once systematic and integral and its goal is complete transformation of life. The fire that was ignited in the second stage will smolder and wither if it is not stoked by sound spiritual, intellectual, moral and communal teaching and mentoring. Jesus spent three years forming/discipling twelve men and then commissioned them to evangelize the world. Failure to form a disciple after conversion is both irresponsible and harmful.

4. Let the fire blaze

Discipleship is followed by apostleship which is marked by the recognition that one has a baptismal mandate to bring the Gospel to all people. A fire will continue to blaze only if it is properly fed and stoked. So too the work of evangelizing will endure only if there is appropriate and ongoing formation for the faithful and continuous proclamation of the Gospel message by them.

Source: Office of Evangelization | Diocese of Metuchen | www.diometuchen.org/evangelization