

Saints Alive!

The Quarterly Newsletter of Emmaus Journey

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“The Catholic Church has been evangelical since long before the term came into vogue.”

Isn't That an Oxymoron?

My description of the Church raises a few eyebrows

By Rich Cleveland

Over the past 10 years, as I have shared with friends and acquaintances some of the exciting ministry taking place within the Catholic Church, I have used the expression “evangelical Catholic.” When I do, invariably someone will reply, or imply, “Isn't that an oxymoron?” — a contradiction in terms. It is fun and sometimes a challenge to assure them that it isn't an oxymoron but that Catholics are increasingly in the forefront of evangelization.

The term “evangelical” can have various shades of meaning but by in large it refers to a Christian who is committed to the advancement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by word and deed. “Being an Evangelical Catholic requires that we know the Gospel, believe the Gospel, live the Gospel, and share the Gospel.”¹ This evangelical imperative provoked Pope Paul VI to ask in 1975, “Does the Church or does she not find herself better equipped to proclaim the Gospel and to put it into people's hearts with conviction, freedom of spirit and effectiveness?”² Catholics did not turn away from this question but in response spawned many movements within the Catholic Church that have provided a new surge of evangelical activity by Catholic men and women.

I say a *new* surge because the Catholic Church has been evangelical since long before the term came into vogue. Christianity's spread around the world prior to the Reformation took place by Catholics who took the Gospel to Europe, Russia, the Far East, and to the New World. St. Francis, St. Dominic, St. Patrick, St. Ignatius of Loyola, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, and most recently, Pope John Paul II are but a few of the well-known names of leading Catholics who could be called evangelical in the true sense of the word.

For instance, Bishop Sheen pioneered religious radio in 1950, speaking to more than 4 million listeners in the States and receiving in response as many as 6,000 letters a day, with one third of them coming from non-Catholics. He provided the first-ever religious telecast and his program, *Life is Worth Living*, reached approximately 30 million people each week.

Bishop Sheen “had a deep passion for helping others find faith” and to see lives changed by Christ. He believed, “ ‘Conversion’ in Greek is *metanoia*, or a complete turning around from the direction which we are facing. . . . Conversion is an experience in no way related to the upsurge of the subconscious into consciousness; it is a gift of God, an invasion of a new Power, the inner penetration of our spirit by the Spirit and the turning over of a whole personality to Christ.”

He traversed the world and had many fabulous, and some quite funny, personal encounters sharing Christ. Always warmly direct, he once was confronted by a young woman whose opening challenge was, “I am an atheist. What are you going to do about it?” He simply answered, “I'll bet you a dime you cannot give me three good arguments for atheism; if you do, I will find three answers in a book that was written seven hundred years ago.” Well she couldn't come up with three arguments and he spent the next year instructing her in the faith until she came to Christ.

A more humorous and less successful encounter took place with some boys he met in Philadelphia. He asked the boys for directions to Town Hall. When the boys asked him what he was going to do there he explained that he was going to give a lecture. “On what?” they asked.

“Boys, I'm going to talk on Heaven and how to get there. Would you like to come and

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Emmaus Journey Mission Statement

Emmaus Journey is a Catholic evangelization and discipleship ministry that is conducted primarily in and through Catholic parishes. Emmaus Journey has embraced Goal 1 of *Go and Make Disciples: A Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, produced by The National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

Emmaus Journey's Goals are:

- To help enable non-practicing Catholics, occasional Catholics, and nominal Catholics experience conversion to Christ, transformation in Christ, and mobilization for Christ as Catholic disciples.
- To encourage Catholics to embrace Jesus' call to advance the Gospel and his Kingdom by becoming laborers who live and disciple others from among the nonreligious.
- To help mature and gifted Catholics discover a particular call to participate more fully in the task of evangelization.
- To indirectly serve Catholic parishes' evangelization efforts through small-group materials, evangelization and discipleship resources, seminars, ministry events, and messages that move them forward in their efforts to make Christ known, and to nurture mature Catholic disciples who can help others experience conversion, transformation, and mobilization for Christ.



Emmaus Journey
A Ministry of Catholic Evangelization & Discipleship

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Multiple copies of *Saints Alive!* are available upon request.

From the Heart By Rich Cleveland

The Power of the Dinner Hour

Zacchaeus probably wasn't much to look at. Obviously, he was "height impaired" for he had to climb a tree to get a glimpse of Jesus over the heads of the crowds.

Society tends to favor the tall and good looking, so he probably didn't get much respect, at least not enough to warrant a place at the front of the crowd. In addition, he was a tax collector, a not so noble profession in Zacchaeus' day. Tax collectors were invariably dishonest, gouging people for all they could get, and engaging in political graft to maintain their appointments. Zacchaeus probably felt like the comic Rodney Dangerfield who said, "I don't get no respect."

Fortunately, Jesus doesn't only look on the outward man, he also looks on his heart. In Zacchaeus, Jesus saw a genuine seeker of truth. No doubt, years of dishonesty were weighing heavily upon Zacchaeus and when he heard rumors of this man Jesus and his message of God's love and forgiveness, he had to find out for himself. So Zacchaeus climbed a tree to have a look.

He illustrates the mark of true seekers of truth; they will not let anything stand in their way to discover the real answer. Some people avoid an encounter with Jesus by hiding behind an excuse, such as the presence of hypocrites in the church. But a person must be smaller than the object they hide behind. Zacchaeus was short of stature but he was not small of heart.

Jesus looked right through Zacchaeus' shortness and dishonest profession and saw a sincere, inquiring, heart. When Jesus invited himself to be Zacchaeus' guest for dinner, Zacchaeus jumped at the chance. Imagine what would *not* have happened if Jesus had only looked on the man's outward appearance. Perhaps the critics were right when they said that Jesus had gone to be the guest of a sinner, but they were premature in their analysis. By the time the dinner was over, Jesus left as the guest of a repentant believer.

Do we avoid being invitational and welcoming because we don't want to associate with "sinners"?

Dietrich Von Hildebrand, in the book *Transformation in Christ*, said, "It is in repenting our sins that we expressly repudiate evil and revert to God." During that brief dinner hour, Zacchaeus' life was converted and transformed. Recognizing Jesus as "Lord" he immediately repudiated the evil he had committed and restored it four times over. He had fully reverted to God.

His was not a token belief; it was not a simple agreeing to articles of faith or an academic formality of joining a church. His was a true conversion, repudiating evil and reverting to God, that set him on a path of spiritual and moral transformation.

We can learn much from Jesus through this encounter.

- Do we relate to people, especially non-believers, on the basis of their outward appearance?
- Do their looks and manner of dress cause us to turn away with a scowl, writing them off as unreachable?
- Do we avoid being invitational and welcoming because we don't want to associate with "sinners"?

Jesus' life suggests that we need to look beyond what we see to ascertain someone's heart. Perhaps their tree climbing antics are not just a selfish desire to get a better look, but a real cry for help, a real inquiry as to whether there is hope.

Let's not be spectators like the Pharisees, standing apart, critical and uninvolved. We can extend an invitation to have a meal together to see if Christ living in us can reach out to their need. At worst, we will have had a meal with a "sinner," and at best we could be instrumental in helping the "sinner" begin the journey of becoming a repentant believer.



Saints: The Extraordinary Lives of Ordinary People

Saint Patrick: Ireland's Evangelizer

What comes to mind when you hear the name Saint Patrick—green ale, shamrocks, or an island driven free of snakes? Popular legend has succeeded in diminishing the contribution of this great Christian's life and witness. In reality, Saint Patrick was an evangelizer par excellence.

As a Scottish boy, captured and enslaved for six years by an Irish druid when only 16, God used Patrick's work as a herdsman to bring him to faith and teach him the power of prayer: "His fear increased in me more and more, and the faith grew in me, and the spirit was roused, so that, in a single day, I have said as many as a hundred prayers, and in the night nearly the same, so that whilst in the woods and on the mountain, even before the dawn, I was roused to prayer and felt no hurt from it, . . . because the spirit was then fervent within me."¹

Patrick fled enslavement and proceeded to Britain where he pursued a life of service and devotion to God. After training and becoming a priest, Saint Patrick distinguished himself in learning and piety for some 18 years. Then he was appointed by Pope St. Celestine to take the Gospel to the pagans of Ireland.

The boldness of Saint Patrick and his companions, the miracles performed through them, and the extraordinary conversions of the Druids, is a wonderful story of evangelization, the details of which we cannot go into here. But we do need to point out that his evangelizing success was undoubtedly connected to his dependence on God and devotion to Christ in prayer. A small portion of one of Saint Patrick's prayers points this out: "I bind to myself today, God's Power to guide me, God's Might to uphold me, God's Wisdom to teach me, God's Eye to watch over me, God's Ear to hear me, God's Word to give me speech, God's Hand to guide me, God's Way to lie before me, God's Shield to shelter me, God's Host to secure me."² This was in fact Saint Patrick's experience during his 60 years ministering in Ireland.

Evangelizers today would do well to echo Saint Patrick's prayer, "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ at my right, Christ at my left, . . . Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks to me, Christ in every eye that sees me, Christ in every ear that hears me."³

¹ St. Patrick, from the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, online at www.newadvent.org.

Tim Kruse: An Evangelical Catholic

Like he did in the life of Saint Patrick, God uses our experiences, both good and bad, to shape and craft us for the work he calls us to do. Tim Kruse is an example of this principle at work. As a non-practicing Catholic, Tim experienced conversion while in the Navy. His early spirituality was shaped both by the practical spirituality of The Navigators and by the enthusiasm of the charismatic movement. These experiences led Tim to seminary where he began to develop his love for Catholic teaching. This journey eventually led Tim to re-embracing Catholicism. This varied background prepared and equipped him to begin the vibrant Evangelical Catholic ministry.

Tim explains that an Evangelical Catholic is a Christian committed to living an evangelical life and doing evangelical ministry within the Catholic Church. Avery Cardinal Dulles recently affirmed Tim's focus by saying, "It will be enough for you to aim at the objectives so lucidly described in the leaflet on 'The Evangelical Catholic Vision.' . . . It calls for five qualities: interior conversion, devotion to the Scriptures, habits of discipleship, Christian community, and commitment to the work of evangelization. Any Catholic who feels called to grow in these qualities can rest assured of being attuned to the needs of the Catholic Church today."¹

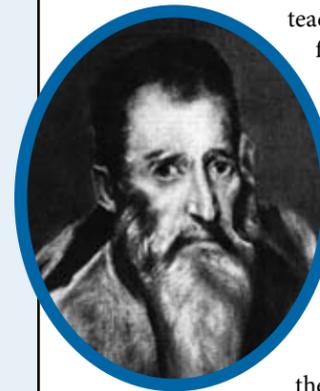
Tim and his wife, Sandy, along with a team of Catholic lay people, have developed college students and laypeople who are vibrant Catholics, in love with the Church, the liturgy, and Christ's presence in the Eucharist. In addition, these are Catholics whose hearts are on fire to advance the Gospel. This movement began on the University of Wisconsin campus in Madison and spread across the United States.

Tim observes, "We know who these people are, those looking for the answers. Don't we recognize that searching look in our neighbors, our colleagues, our children, ourselves? The spiritual hunger of our age waits to be appeased. But where and how do we begin to face this spiritual world hunger?"²

The answer, of course, is through Catholics, evangelical Catholics, who take seriously Christ's invitation to "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men."

¹ From a message by Avery Cardinal Dulles at St. Paul's Evangelical Catholic Institute.

² From *The Evangelical Catholic Vision*, www.evangelicalcatholic.com.



Tools You Can Use

Called to Be Apostles



The DVD discussion series, *Called to Be Apostles*, is all about helping Catholic lay people recognize the need to become actively involved in spreading the Gospel within their natural spheres of influence.

The series offers 11 short message segments on various aspects of evangelization, along with discussion guides designed to move the content from the head to the heart.

Called to Be Apostles is available either as a DVD set, or as a downloadable streaming video at www.emmausjourney.org.

The *Called to Be Apostles* DVD series includes:

- *The Task Before Us* by Rich Cleveland
- *The Christian Mandate* by Fr. Sean Wenger
- *Having A Life Of Influence* by Mike Shamy

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Isn't That an Oxymoron? continued from front page

find out how?”

The boys replied incredulously, “You don’t even know the way to Town Hall.”³

Most of us will never be a Bishop Sheen, or a John Paul II, or a St. Ignatius, but we can still be, and we must be, evangelical Catholics. The world is a dark and dangerous place spiritually. On one hand, worldwide crises like terrorism, abortion, and the potential of nuclear proliferation capture people’s attention and raise their concerns. On the more personal level, lack of meaning and values in people’s lives are resulting in an increase of hedonism, drug addition, and materialism, which is destroying lives and society. Now more than ever before, the imperative to believe the Gospel, live the Gospel, and share the Gospel should grip our lives and give us purpose. “For it is only in the Christian message that modern man can find the answers to his questions.”⁴ The real oxymoron is the “non-evangelical Catholic,” since, “The presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church [you and me]. It is the duty incumbent on her [us] by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is necessary. It is unique. It cannot be replaced. It does not permit either

indifference, syncretism or accommodation. It is a question of people’s salvation.”⁵ The Catholic who is not evangelical about sharing his faith lives in contradiction to his baptismal vows and to his weekly reception and profession of Christ.

Being an evangelical Catholic doesn’t necessarily involve going to foreign lands, or starting great movements. It simply involves representing Jesus with a smile, a word of encouragement, and talking about his message of hope in a joyful, loving, and warmly direct way. When we are faithful to do and be a person like this who reaches out to others, spanning the gulf of indifference and uncaring, we do in fact become an evangelical Catholic. People will respond, first with friendship, then with faith, and finally with gratitude to the Lord Jesus.

This is something we should do. This is something we can do!

1 David Tiede Hottinger, M. Div., St. Mary’s Center for Evangelical Catholicism.

2 Evangeil Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, 4.

3 Details and quotes regarding Bishop Sheen are taken from, *Treasures in Clay*, by Bishop Fulton J. Sheen.

4 Evangeil Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, 3.

5 Evangeil Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, 5.