

Forming Intentional Disciples – Session 3

Thresholds of Conversion

Evangelizing another person and introducing them to the person of Jesus Christ is not simply a process of catechesis. Conversion does not “just happen” through catechesis and education alone – it is a personal journey of faith requiring different levels of commitment over time, and cooperation with the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Research has shown that individuals typically go through a series of 5 stages, or thresholds, of conversion. Each person may spend a different amount of time in each stage, but these thresholds have proven to be fairly universal.

5 Thresholds of Conversion:

- 1. Initial Trust** – Developing some bridge of trust in a person or experience associated with Christianity
- 2. Spiritual Curiosity** – Wanting to know more about Jesus or some aspect of Christianity
- 3. Spiritual Openness** – Becoming open to the possibility of personal and spiritual change
- 4. Spiritual Seeking** – Actively seeking to know God and His Church
- 5. Intentional Discipleship** – Making a conscious commitment to follow Jesus and His Church and live accordingly

Initial Trust is a positive association with the Church that makes it possible to move closer to God. It could be a Catholic friend, a good experience with a Catholic school or hospital, or even a positive image of the faith portrayed in a book or movie. The first task of evangelization is to find out if a bridge of trust already exists. Many don't trust God or the Church, but perhaps they will come to trust you or another individual person who can lead them to Christ.

Spiritual Curiosity is when the individual shows an interest in the Catholic faith in a casual way. We can arouse curiosity by living a life of faith, prayer, trust in God, and works of mercy. Whether through word or action, one of the most helpful ways to arouse curiosity is to pose a question. Jesus taught by asking questions, which is a method of drawing people into an encounter with Himself. In the New Testament, Jesus asked 183 questions, gave 3 answers, and answered 307 questions with a question in return. Jesus welcomes and cultivates curiosity. Sherry Weddell writes:

“When we live lives that are inexplicable apart from the grace and power of the Gospel, we will often find that curiosity is sparked among people who were formerly hostile to the faith. To be a witness does not consist in engaging propaganda, nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist.”

Reflection Questions:

- 1) Have you lived the Gospel in your life so that others will become curious about Jesus? How could you grow in this area?
- 2) How have you experienced the thresholds of conversion in your own faith journey?

Reading Assignments:
Forming Intentional Disciples: Chapters 5 and 6

Scripture	Catechism
1 Corinthians 4:1-2	CCC 160
Sirach 6:16-17	CCC 1098
Galatians 15:13-14	CCC 1229
1 Peter 5:2-4	CCC 1432
Romans 10:16-17	CCC 1888
2 Corinthians 4:3-5	CCC 2608-2609
2 Timothy 2:24-26	CCC 2800
Ephesians 4:25	CCC 177