

30 Ways to Sanctify, Evangelize and Catechize a Parish



*By
Rev. Francis J. Peffley*

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to Sanctify, Evangelize and
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Holy Trinity Catholic Church
Gainesville, VA 20155
703-753-6700
www.holytrinityparish.net

About the Cover

The cover picture reflects the Holy Week procession on Holy Thursday, 2010 into Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Gainesville, Virginia. The call to conversion, to turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel, is a call of every soul. This booklet reflects the three ways of perfecting a soul in a parish – sanctifying, evangelizing and catechizing. Holy Trinity parish has over 200 altar boys and since the founding of the parish has had more converts to the faith than any other parish in the Catholic Diocese of Arlington. We are all called to be saints.

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30 Ways to Sanctify, Evangelize and Catechize a Parish

Introduction

My priestly background began at Mount St. Mary's seminary where I studied from 1986 to 1990. I had graduated from Christendom College and settled in the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, Virginia, for which I was ordained twenty one years ago. I served in several parishes before becoming founding pastor of the newly formed parish named the Church of the Holy Trinity in Gainesville, Virginia, from 2001 to 2011.

We started with twenty acres of land, entered the hectic world of fundraising, architecture and building committee meetings, and eventually the Church was built and is now up and running. Three hundred families made up the parish ten years ago, when Sunday Masses were held in a public high school, daily Mass in the local Benedictine Monastery, and the rectory was (and still is!) a private home in one of the neighborhoods. Eventually the parish grew, and just a year ago we had 2,000 registered families. Now in 2011 we are blessed with over 4,000 families. I've baptized over 2,000 babies in the last ten years and told the deacon that it seems everyone in the parish is pregnant except him and me! We have 1,800 kids in Religious Education. In our first year of the new church we did about forty weddings and currently have about 65 organizations and ministries functioning in the parish.

It has been a wonderful blessing to be in this kind of parish situation; I've learned much I didn't think I'd ever need to know about building the "body and soul" of a parish, and although I am aware that each parish is unique and has its own particular set of needs and circumstances, I would like to offer some practical suggestions on how to sanctify, evangelize, and catechize a parish.

Sanctifying the Parish

1. EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

The number-one factor to examine is starting a Eucharistic Adoration Chapel. It will focus our people on the very center of the Catholic Faith, Jesus Christ. It will strengthen their belief in the Real Presence and get them to spend time in silence and prayer. Eucharistic Adoration gives our people an opportunity to do spiritual reading, to discern a vocation, make reparation or influence them toward confession or deeper appreciation for the Sacraments. The Adoration schedule in my parish lasts 140 hours a week, and runs from 5 p.m. Sunday night until 9 a.m. Saturday morning. We started our program by arranging for a priest from the Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament to preach at all the Masses, after which 500 signed up for a weekly holy hour. I believe this Holy Hour is a vital for the conversion of a parish, county or region. Bishop Sheen has said that time spent before the Blessed Sacrament is “radiation treatment” that burns away sin.

2. KNOW THE LEGION OF MARY

Although the Legion of Mary is primarily known as a worldwide *apostolic* organization, its main purpose is *sanctification* – first, of its members and second, of the society and environment in which it works. The Legion offers those who join it a system of spiritual formation based on St. Louis de Montfort’s “True Devotion to Mary”, Our Lady’s Spiritual Motherhood of Souls and the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ.

I have been involved with the Legion since I was ten years old, moving up through the junior and intermediate membership and on to the young adult level. I am now spiritual director of eight Praesidia in my parish: six for adults and two

for younger and teenage kids, all following the same spirituality and apostolic discipline which has produced many unknown saints (and known martyrs) in its history, and potentially canonized ones today. The Church has accepted this sanctifying charism of the Legion by recognizing three of its members as candidates for Beatification: Venerable Edel Quinn, Legion envoy to Africa, and Servants of God Alfie Lambe, Legion envoy to South America and Legion founder Frank Duff. I have found the sanctifying presence of the Legion in the parish to be a great blessing (I will deal with the apostolic value of the Legion in the section on “Evangelization of the Parish).

3. CONFESSION: GOOD FOR THE SOUL, PARISH AND PARISHIONER!

Our weekly Confession times are: every Thursday evening, every Friday morning after 9:00 a.m. Mass, and of course, Saturday afternoons for an hour and a half (where three priests are kept busy the entire time) and during Lent on Friday evenings after Stations of the Cross. We also feature Confession during the 12 to 3 period on Good Friday afternoon and also on Holy Saturday morning from 9 to noon with extra priests assisting. I find that if this sacrament is promoted and encouraged from the pulpit and if we site in the confessional, our people will come.

4. THE CONFESSOR AS PHARMACIST

I have placed a small bookcase in my confessional, equipped with quantities of holy cards and other useful prayer leaflets; these are my “prescriptions” based on the penitent’s confession. In addition to words of advice and encouragement and the “Three Hail Marys and Three Our Fathers,” I give an appropriate card to match the problem or situation of the soul. When I hear of stress, scruples, anxiety, they receive a tangible help for that condition; when I hear contraception I give Natural

Family Planning information; with abortion, Project Rachel literature.

The space behind my screen could be considered a medicine chest. When the contractors were installing the confessionals I made sure the screen had a slot at the bottom for passing out my “pills”; these include copies of the Act of Contrition to help those who can’t remember it, and also a Guide to Confession for those returning after a long absence, which is very much appreciated by them. By the way, for the kids, it becomes not just a routine confession – they love the holy cards! (I get my supply from Autom Company for about a nickel a card).

5. HALF-DAY RETREATS

We have found it beneficial to the spiritual life of the parish to hold “half-days of Recollection” either mornings or evenings, separately for men or women. We bring in priests from various Religious Orders and Congregations such as Opus Dei who offer these services. They give a talk, hear confessions and give spiritual direction when needed. Similarly, days could also be held for CCD teachers, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, lectors, etc.

6. INAUGURATE A WEEKLY NOVENA

The Miraculous Medal Perpetual Novena I find to be another wonderful element of spiritual uplift for the parish. Usually held on Monday evenings, ours is on Friday morning after the 9:00 a. m. Mass, since Friday is our largest attendance for daily Mass (about 200 attend, thanks to the presence of homeschoolers and many senior citizens). Our Novena is offered for returns to the sacraments, healings, conversions, and miracles of grace.

7. PARISH RETREATS AND MISSIONS

Lent is a perfect time for a Parish Retreat, because our parishioners are focused on spiritual things such as prayer and sacrifice. It's a help to have a guest priest for a week emphasizing the truths of the Catholic Faith in the context of Lenten holiness. Our schedule for the priest is to preach all the weekend Masses, to say the daily morning Mass, and hear confessions for about an hour after Mass. He also holds a Holy Hour in the evening and gives a talk and Benediction with confessions following. We also hold an annual Fall Mission in October or November following the same routine, using a mailing and newspaper ads to publicize the mission. The mission is a great way to reach people who may want to go to confession to a priest outside their own parish.

8. THE PARISH SACRAMENTALIZED

Order sacramentals by the thousand, and give them to every parishioner. In November, around the feast day, give the Miraculous Medal; in July, in honor of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, give the Brown Scapular, and in October, a Rosary. We do this every three or four years. We know that by promoting these items we are promoting instruments of grace. Holy Water bottles, for example, can be made available near the dispenser for people to take home. The devotional use of votive candles before the statues are also very popular. And with regard to statues, at each one of ours there is a pack of holy cards to match the saint for the devotional use of the parishioners.

9. THE GIFT SHOP

In this connection we have found the small parish gift shop is a convenient way to make available to our people not only the sacramentals mentioned but also books on the lives of the saints, prayer books, medals, crucifixes, First Communion

items, etc. in order to extend the Catholic influence deeper into the home. The gift shop is not so much a business as it is a service, and an extension of our evangelizing intent; it pays its own way by a modest percentage of profit on the sales. The parish provided the seed money at the start, and volunteers run the operation in a simple but professional way. It plays an evangelizing role, for example, providing books and CDs when guest speakers are scheduled or when missions and retreats are held. I think a visit to the gift shop by parishioners is an “occasion of grace” for them as they expose themselves to religious items and books available. It’s another means of strengthening parish family life.

Evangelizing the Parish

10. THE SHEPHERD AND HIS "SHEEPDOGS"

I'm very blessed to have eight groups of the Legion of Mary in my parish. I could use ten -- I could use twenty! As I have already mentioned, six are for adults and two for kids. Four are mixed groups of men and women, one is Spanish, and one is made up of Moms who bring their babies and their little kids. The Moms and the junior and the high school groups all meet at the same time, so I am able to get around to each of the meetings. I am guided by a principle of Father Robert Bradshaw, a Legion priest who died evangelizing in Siberia. He said, "A priest should do the work of a hundred men a day -- but use a hundred men to do it!" That has been my goal wherever possible: to involve and delegate, not to do anything I can get someone else to do! So the adult Legion of Mary goes door-to-door throughout the parish for their pastor. It takes from a year to two years to knock on each of the 16,000 doors in the parish boundaries. This is in addition to all the other things I like to see being done: Pilgrim Virgin statue program, Sacred Heart enthronements and welcoming new parishioners. When no one answers, a packet is left containing a parish bulletin, information about the church and a letter from me. Many people will show up merely because of the packet left at their door. It's wonderful to see!

During the summer, the legionaries knocked on the door of a Catholic man away from the church for forty years; he cried when he tried to talk to them and said, "Jesus sent you to me!" He was dying of stage four lung cancer. I saw him a few days later, heard his beautiful confession and anointed him. His wife, a Baptist, began bringing him to Sunday Mass. He lasted a peaceful six months and often expressed his gratitude to the Legion for having brought him back to the Church.

On another occasion the legionaries came across a family with three lovely non-baptized children ages two, four and six. Both parents were lapsed Catholics. We got the kids baptized, both parents attended RCIA, were confirmed and married in the Church and were teaching CCD the following year! Being shepherd of so large a flock, I affectionately call my legionaries the “Pastor’s Sheepdogs” because they go about rounding up the lost sheep of the fold!

11. THE PHONE APOSTOLATE

I can vouch for the fact that it is not easy to call every parishioner on his or her birthday! When I started using this evangelizing tool the parish was small, and I made only half a dozen calls a day. Now it’s thirty to forty! It involves about a minute to speak to the person or leave a message, but if you’re willing to do it it is well worth the time! You’ll hear things such as: “Father, I’ve been a Catholic for seventy years and no priest has ever called me on my birthday!”, or “Father, your birthday call got us back to Church – we hadn’t gone for months!” Although my main motive is evangelization, I look on it as an act of kindness to people I may not often see in person (non-Catholic spouses also receive a call which has led some to join RCIA). One break is in the fact that, about half the time, no one answers, so leaving a message takes much less time than talking in person!

12. THE “POSTORAL” APPROACH

Each year before RCIA begins, a personal letter from me is sent to each family in which there is a non Catholic spouse. I personally sign about 500 letters a year, expressing how pleased we are with their presence in the parish and inviting them to learn more about the Catholic Faith. We’ve been very blessed to have had a good number of converts in the last eight

years, averaging thirty a year. This year, thanks be to God, we had forty, in addition to twenty-five adult Catholics who were confirmed at the Easter Vigil.

We send another letter to every parishioner before Christmas and Easter, supplying them with the Mass and Confession schedule. A third letter is sent when someone is newly registered. The first thing they receive from the parish is a welcome letter signed by the pastor; the envelopes come a few weeks later! We should try to change the practice that the first thing you get when you register in a parish is envelopes! It also helps to have friendly and personable receptionists who project a good “first impression” of the parish!

13. SELLING THE FAITH TO SUNDAY CATHOLICS

Never underestimate the importance of the Sunday homily. It’s really our one chance to reach all the “Sunday Catholics”, to make use of that one collective moment to educate, motivate, and inspire them, and to help them move their will to be “Weekday Catholics” as well. I think it is a great, providential opportunity given to us priests, the one chance to influence our people each week. I am reminded of the ditty: *Paddy Reilly went to Church / He never missed a Sunday / But Paddy Reilly went to Hell / For what he did on Monday!* Let us pray our “Sunday Catholics” will become “Weekday Catholics” as well!

14. ENTRÉES AND EVANGELIZATION

Marriage preparation meetings are a great time to evangelize couples. I meet with every couple about four times and do about forty weddings a year; that’s 160 meetings! It’s not that bad, though, since I do most of my marriage prep in restaurants! Saturday and Sunday lunch is a great time to meet

couples. This system leaves most of my weeknights free to have dinner with families and then attend other meetings.

I usually do back to back lunches with the couples, scheduling one for 11:30 a.m. and have a salad while they have lunch; the next couple comes at 12:45 p.m. and I have my entrée with them. If I happen to have another couple, I get dessert. I evangelize by giving them CDs, miraculous medals, the pictures of the Sacred Heart and Immaculate Heart, and lots of handouts. By the way, every couple getting married at Holy Trinity has to take the full Natural Family Planning course; it's not an option. When one of them is not a Catholic, I invite the couple to attend RCIA and our Young Adults group. We've had a good number of converts with this approach.

15. THE WELCOME TABLE

We equip our large vestibule with friendly greeters, smiling, accommodating ushers and a welcome table. Some of my legionaries are assigned to be on duty before and after Mass where they can converse with the parishioners, answer questions about the parish, give people registration packets or recruit for parish organizations. At the table people will find rosaries, and leaflets on how to pray the rosary, literature and holy cards. Just recently one of the legionaries called me over to meet a young woman whom he learned in conversation was away from the Church for ten years. While chatting with her she asked if I had some time. I do have some time between Masses, so we walked down to my office where she made a beautiful confession. I gave her literature about the parish and encouraged her to look into our organizations; the following week she appeared in the choir. It was a neat experience! I thank God and Our Lady for these special graces!

16. MASS MANAGEMENT

Before and after Mass, on Sundays and weekdays, it's very beneficial for a priest to just "hang out" in the vestibule. Brian Tracy calls it MBWA, *Management by Wandering Around*. It's a great idea to just be present, to move among the people and greet them as they come and go. So many souls are attracted to the Church, or come back to God, when they can expect, on coming to Mass, to meet a friendly, unrushed priest who's willing to say hello and chat, and introduce his parishioners to one another.

This practice helps the priest, too. We get to know our parishioners better, and learn the names of everyone in the family. We can also invite people to get involved in parish activities which will deepen their spirituality and their connection to the parish.

And believe it or not, having coffee and donuts after Sunday morning Mass is great for evangelization and developing Catholic friendships. Many a Catholic (who may have once been Protestant) will seek that Christian fellowship and friendship in the parish, which in many parishes is not easily found. When parishioners stay for donuts and they meander, munch and meet each other, they get to know each other and feel connected. It's a great thing!

17. GO FOR GROUPS . . .

I can't emphasize enough the need to get as many parishioners as possible involved in parish life. These groups *make* parish life! We must especially provide for the young adults, both married and singles. In addition to good social events our Young Adults attend our monthly Praise and Worship Holy Hour on Sunday nights from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. The lights are dimmed throughout the church, the monstrance is well lit, and I hear confessions during that time. After Benediction the

young adults go out for a bite to eat at a nearby restaurant. This group is a good resource for helping with parish activities and is a seed-bed for future vocations.

And we can't forget groups for the men, the moms, and the seniors. The men's group meets once a month on a Saturday morning, the mom's group meets once a month on a Monday morning and the seniors meet once a month on a Tuesday morning. These groups do not involve big time commitments from the priest, but go on regularly and happily.

18. . . . AND MORE GROUPS

By now I'm sure you realize my goal as a pastor is to start as many organizations as I can. At last count we had 65. Do I go to all of them? No. Do I delegate to the laity? Absolutely! The more there are, the more life there is around us, the more wholesome activities are available *in the parish* for the non-participants to discover. The Knights of Columbus was one of the first things I started. We have both the Samaritans and the House of Mercy that help the needy. They work very well; no money is given out from the parish office or on church property but about \$45,000 worth of aid was given out by them to needy families last year: payment of gas bills, electric bills, etc. With these challenging times, the need seems even greater than before. We also have the Cyrenians who do bereavement meals; the Pro-Life Group that prays at the abortion clinic; there's actually a Sewing Committee that makes baptismal garments and vestments. It's wonderful what they do. Another special group is the Altar Boys -- we have 250 of them! There will usually be between 20 to 30 altar boys serving at each of my Sunday Masses. It is inspiring for the people to see these possible "future vocations."

19. CATCH THEM IN THE WEB

I'm sure every pastor in today's world realizes the value of a parish website for information, education and evangelization. Our website was recently re-designed by a convert who came into the Church last year. It has been especially helpful with the sections on RCIA, how to deepen your Faith, the Mass and Confession schedules, photos of the church, the church calendar, and listings of our many Ministries. I invite you to check it out at www.holytrinityparish.net.

20. RECORD AND REACH OUT

With today's advanced technology, your parishioners can be provided with homilies and talks simply by using a digital recorder to put them on the parish website. For example, Holy Trinity parishioners – and others – can click on and listen to our Sunday and daily homilies -- or those of Palm Sunday, Easter or Christmas -- which are recorded and put on our parish website within a day or two. The shut-ins, the homebound, and anyone around the country or the world can listen and be evangelized.

21. "ADVANGELIZING"

Order car magnets for your parish! There's nothing like it for keeping the Catholic name in the public eye. We ordered 5,000 and gave them out after the Christmas Masses as a gift to the parishioners. The magnet is an oval shape, yellow-gold on dark blue, proclaiming: "Holy Trinity Catholic Church, Gainesville, VA" and the website address. They show up everywhere. In the neighborhood where I live I've seen them on cars of people I didn't know were my parishioners! When I see this I can comfortably go up and say hello. It creates a nice connection as well among the other neighbors who see the magnets displayed. Our magnets were reported as being seen as far away as Richmond, VA, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, PA,

Atlanta, GA and the Outer Banks, NC. Some call it advertising – some call it evangelizing; I call it “Advangelizing”!

Another area in which to “advangelize” the Church is in the local secular newspapers. Many people come to our church because we advertise our Mass and confession schedule in the local papers. Another idea would be to post a welcome home sign on the church property, something like “Welcome home, inactive Catholics; rediscover your Church.”

Catechizing the Parish

22. THE BAPTISMAL CLASS

At our monthly Baptismal class, participants receive a binder that we put together containing good articles about Baptism, messages for the Godparents and literature on such topics as *Why go to Mass on Sunday*, *Why Go To Confession*, *Examination of Conscience*, *Natural Family Planning*, etc. Many of our couples have come back to the practice of their Faith through our Baptismal class. Parents can be caught and taught through their kids – their kids' Baptism, their kids' First Confession and First Communion, and Confirmation. We want to use these "sacramental opportunities" to bring people back to the Faith. They are always given Immaculate Heart and Sacred Heart plaques as a gift at the Baptismal class. They get a rosary and a Miraculous Medal. And if they are not married in the Church we get their information and I, or the other priests or deacon, will work with them to get their marriage validated.

23. THE THREEFOLD LIBRARY

To be a catechizing parish, a library is a must -- not just the usual library of excellent books, but in today's world, a library of DVDs and videos and CD audio books. We have over five thousand volumes of donated books in our library, all solid, orthodox Catholic books. The video and audio sections are nicely stocked with good family and Catholic DVDs, and it's great to see parents and others coming in to the library after Mass and signing out this worthwhile material, offsetting, hopefully, the dominance of secular influence. The CD audio books get a lot of use since many of our parishioners have long commutes to work and can listen in the car, turning their car into a "university on wheels."

24. THE PAMPHLET RACK

A familiar sight for years in the vestibules of many Catholic churches was the pamphlet rack. I always stopped and read through the small selection of titles as a young man. The need for these today is greater than ever, and I recommend some space be made for these “impulse items” for people to pick up after Masses, or before and after Confession or while gathering in the vestibule. Our Sunday Visitor is one of our sources, with attractive covers and “Take Me and Read” titles. I also recommend the pamphlets from the Knights of Columbus, Couple to Couple League, One More Soul and Catholic Answers. By the way, once a year you could invite the Daughters of St. Paul or other Catholic vendor to set up a display for your parishioners, to acquaint them with what good Catholic books are available to them.

25. INSERTS AND HANDOUTS

Frequent inserts in the parish bulletin can be a regular way of catechizing the parish. In anticipation of a recruiting drive, I included *Ten Reasons to Join the Legion of Mary* with the listing of the meeting times of our eight groups. We have used articles such as *How Old is Your Church?*, *Why Make a Holy Hour?*, *Why Not Women Priests?*, *Why Celibacy for Priests?* Around Christmas and Easter, and at the beginning of Lent and Advent, the *Guide to Confession* is inserted. Educational items about vestments or the sacred vessels can be used. These are all wonderful handouts that bring about results. A few weeks back the inserts were: *Origins of the Catholic Faith*, *The Four Marks of the Church*, *The Timeline of Christianity*. On Sunday after Mass, a man came up to me and said, “Father, this is great; just this week I was talking to my non-Catholic neighbor about when his church and the Catholic Church began and, lo and behold, the article shows up in this

week's bulletin!" The bulletin is the perfect place for the EWTN television schedule, which is free for the asking. Get enough for each bulletin! They come every two months. Needless to say, the need for supplying information on decent TV programming is paramount in the widespread and ever-present video world.

26. BULLETIN BOARD — NOT BULLETIN BORED

Of itself, the bulletin can more than catechize; it can be an aid to evangelization as well. Space given to "The Pastor's Corner" or "From the Desk of the Pastor" can be most beneficial. I try to highlight a saint of the week or some other topic of spirituality or apologetics. An important use of the bulletin is to touch on the subject of Annulments and getting marriages validated. We know many people go to Communion without realizing their marriage is invalid. Some enlightening item with encouraging words like, "Please feel free to talk to your priest or deacon about the Annulment process" does get results. Lately I have been using the bulletin to familiarize parishioners with the Catholic Catechism. The question and answer approach of the Compendium of the Catholic Catechism is a great way to catechize on the teachings of the Church.

27. E-MAIL, AD-MAIL

These days, the parish registration form is not complete without space for our parishioners to include their e-mail address. Registration forms should gather the following information: Married in the Catholic Church? Are the kids baptized? In CCD? Non-Catholics interested in RCIA? What language spoken at home? Anyone in need of seeing a priest? But to complete the form we should get our parishioners email addresses. Each week we send out an e-mail to every parishioner, highlighting guest speakers, activities and events. It

is like a personal invitation to participate in parish life. It is one of the best (and least expensive!) ways to reach each parishioner weekly.

28. INVITE SOME GUESTS

Nothing perks up parish life like occasional guest speakers like Scott Hahn, Steve Wood, Jeff Cavins, Matthew Kelly or Father Larry Richards. For Pro-life emphasis there's Priests for Life or the Fathers of Mercy; and there are many Catholic artists available for concerts with a message for our youth. Recently one of our diocesan priests held a seminar at our parish on praying the Liturgy of the Hours. It was well attended. Oftentimes these visiting priests are asked to speak at all the weekend Masses, which is a great way to reach the whole parish.

Also available at our parish is a Natural Family Planning *teaching couple* that can offer NFP classes at least three times a year – and we have a beautiful handout that goes in the bulletin each time they are about to start a class.

29. OPEN FOR DISCUSSION

The Legion of Mary's discussion group called "The Patricians" can have a remarkable effect on the parish. It is great adult education. We average about 40 people a month, but we've had as high as 100 attend. Some topics have been *The Meaning of Suffering*, *Angels and Demons*, *What Does the Church teach about Miracles* or *Why Confess to a Priest*. This is an all laity discussion; monitored by the priest who gives his talk towards the end, based on the ideas (and/or heresies!) generated during the session. The topics are often not fully covered, so that the "Patricians" find themselves discussing them on their own on other occasions.

My other recommendation for monthly adult education is the “Book of the Month” discussion, based on good Catholic books that are ordered and put on sale in the gift shop and parish office. Titles range from biographies of saints and famous laypersons to theology and spiritual reading categories. About 15 to 20 attend each month, and there is usually much enriching discussion.

30. CD OR NOT CD – NO QUESTION!

When it comes to catechizing, there is no better tool than the spoken CD. At Christmas or Easter we will give a gift of a free CD on some topic on the Faith to all the parishioners as they leave Mass. We have to reach those “Christmas and Easter Catholics” somehow! It has been a Scott Hahn or Jeff Cavins conversion tape, a CD on how to pray the rosary or Father Larry Richards on the Mass or on Confession. In fact, this past Palm Sunday we gave out 3,000 copies of the one on Confession. Hundreds of people listened to it during Holy Week and came to Confession. Last Christmas we gave out the Seven Secrets of the Eucharist. There’s no question that the CD is the right tool for this technical age.

I recommend the *Catholic Lighthouse* CDs. With about 200 different titles and a CD stand, it’s a great buy. The Mary Foundation is another economical place for CDs; if you buy in large quantities they’re only .50 each. Left in the vestibule and at each of the exits, people will pick them up and usually leave a donation. But if they don’t, who cares! We’re interested in souls. If there are concerns about expenses, don’t worry; with one CD-listening convert or one lapsed Catholic who returns “home” we would probably cover most of our costs in the first few Sunday collections!

Conclusion

As I mentioned in the introduction, I am aware that each parish is unique and has its own particular set of needs and circumstances. I am not suggesting these “ways” are exclusive of others that my fellow priests may find equally effective. In my particular situation, I found the solution for any priest who would assume he had to face “the work of a hundred men” and that was in my discovery of *delegation*, placing as many of the parochial “ways” as appropriately possible in the hands of staff and volunteers. For example, it may not be feasible (or desirable!) for a pastor to wish each parishioner a happy birthday with a personal call or message, but perhaps through weekly office-prepared staff reminders, it could add much to his own personal greetings of parishioners after Mass.

In my 21 years as priest and pastor I have found these “ways”, built around my principal duties of offering the daily sacrifice of the Mass and administering the sacraments, to be very effective in aiding me in my priestly ministry of sanctifying, evangelizing and catechizing. Having been so providentially blessed with growth in RCIA, religious education, reception of the sacraments and returns to the Church, I felt one way to express my gratitude to The Blessed Trinity and Our Lady (who are ultimately responsible for our special blessings) would be to share a knowledge of these blessings with others, who could in turn know encouragement and also share in our gratitude.

About the Author

Father Francis J. Peffley graduated from Christendom College in Front Royal, VA with a B.A. in Theology. He attended Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, MD where he received his M. Div. and M.A. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1990 for the Catholic Diocese of Arlington, Virginia. In June, 2001 he was named founding pastor of Holy Trinity parish in Gainesville, VA. until 2011. He is the Diocesan Spiritual Director for the Legion of Mary.





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Gainesville, VA 20155
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www.holytrinityparish.net