

Dear Friends,

Late in the summer of 2009 (it already sounds like ancient history), I accepted an invitation to join the Evangelization Commission for the Rockford Diocese. Actually, I asked John McGrath, he's the one in charge, if we had an Evangelization Commission and he said we did, and that we needed a priest. So, it was kind of a simultaneous volunteering on my part, and request on the part of John McGrath. At any rate, I am so glad I joined.

Several years ago the Evangelization Commission came up with a beautiful document called CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EVANGELIZING PARISH. This document lists six characteristics. I would like to spend the next few weeks reflecting on these characteristics of an evangelizing parish.

AN EVANGELIZING PARISH ESTABLISHES A CORE GROUP OF PARISHIONERS TO CREATE A PLAN FOR EVANGELIZATION, USING GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES AS THE FOUNDATION.

This core group has recently been established. Here is a brief timeline of how things have been happening.

Late August 2009 – We had a meeting of all the staff members and all other leaders of the parish to begin a planning process for evangelization based on the first goal of the Bishops' Document GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES. This goal states that parishes are *“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.”* After a great deal of discussion, we came up with a very large list of different ways our parish needs to evangelize.

Fall of 2009 – From September through December, we asked all the commissions and committees to look at this list to determine which they think would be the best ideas for our parish to look at. This narrowed down our list from well over 100 ideas to about 30 ideas.

January 10, 2010 – This weekend we are going to have another meeting of the leadership and staff to determine which would be the five best goals for evangelizing in our parish through this new year. These five goals are rooted in the document GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES.

Catholics Come Home - From December 16 through January 24, the Rockford Diocese is airing commercials for the Catholics Come Home program. Through our cooperation with this effort a new core team has been established that will help both our parish effort and the Catholic Come Home campaign to be successful.

I love the idea of a core group of parishioners to help create a plan for evangelization. It is a great comfort to know that there are so many very good people in this parish who are willing to step up and help proclaim the good news of God's love to this community. It is important to remember, though, that evangelization is the task of every baptized Catholic. When we live our faith enthusiastically we become a beacon of grace that invites others to enter in and see.

In Joyful hope,
Fr. Tim Seigel