

## SHARING THE GOSPEL

### 4.4

## A CALL TO CONVERSION

### *Optional Lectio Divina Prayer*

1. Read Acts 4:8-12.
2. Meditate on the words.
3. Speak to Christ about this passage.
4. Rest and listen in God's presence.
5. Discuss together.

**W**hen starting his religious order, the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola planned to use his dear friend Francis Xavier as a scholar and teacher for their growing movement.

But his plans were soon interrupted. King John of Portugal requested that the Jesuits send missionaries to his recently acquired territory in India. Ignatius appointed two of his Jesuits for the task, but when one became seriously ill, he was forced to send someone else. With great hesitation, he sent Francis Xavier, knowing that he would probably never see his dear friend ever again.

After his departure, Francis Xavier would send letters back to Ignatius to update him on his mission. Francis Xavier described how he invited thousands of people to accept the Gospel and be baptized. He saw hundreds of thousands of conversions, but he was still frustrated that more couldn't be done. He wrote to Ignatius,

Many, many people fail to become Christians, simply for the lack of a teacher of the Christian faith! Often I think of running throughout the universities of Europe, and principally Paris and the Sorbonne, there to shout at the top of my voice, like one who had lost his senses—to tell those men whose learning is greater than their wish to put their knowledge to good use, how many souls, through their negligence, must lose Heaven and end up in hell.<sup>28</sup>

While not all of us are called to go to India to evangelize, Francis Xavier's conviction holds true wherever we are: There are people all around us who aren't living out a relationship with Jesus Christ and his Church for one main reason—there is no one willing to help them! As St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans, “And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?” (Rom 10:14).



As Catholics, each one of us is called to this task. God has put people in our lives for a reason. We can't just hope those around us will somehow stumble upon the Christian Faith on their own; we have to actively work to share with them the good news about Jesus.

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### DISCUSS

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*Are you convinced of the need to share the Gospel? How can you grow in this conviction?*

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## ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA: THE BRIDGE

Sharing the good news with others can't be simplified to a set process or presentation. We share Jesus and the Church with others in everything we do. And yet, it can be difficult for people to respond to the Gospel if they are not given a clear invitation. That's why the Church calls all Catholics to evangelize not just by our example, but also by proclaiming the Gospel message itself and inviting others to commit their lives to friendship with Jesus Christ and to his Church.

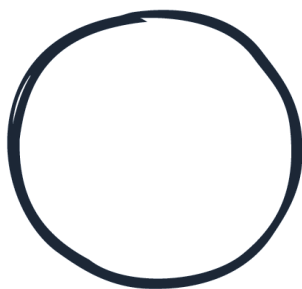
So how can we make this invitation? While there's no one right way to present the Faith, we can learn from the advice of the saints to help us. In her famous work called *The Dialogue*, St.

Catherine of Siena was given by God the image of a bridge that helps articulate how salvation works and how we can enter into a relationship with Jesus.

Below, we've adapted themes from her dialogue with Jesus into five steps that can enable you to share the Gospel in a simple, practical and effective way that also remains conversational and is rooted firmly in the Catholic tradition. We've also included pictures to help you illustrate the Gospel as well. Note: This is only one way to share the Gospel.<sup>29</sup> Feel free to explore other methods.

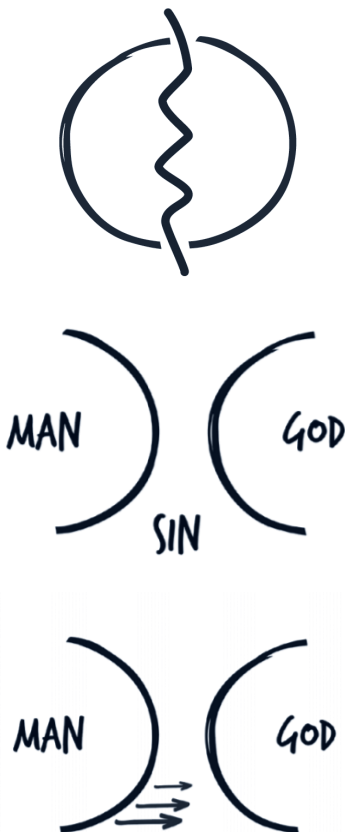
### **Step 1: We Are Made for Relationship (The Good News)**

The good news is that, in the beginning, God created us in his image and likeness as his sons and daughters. We were made for a personal relationship with him and to share in his divine life (CCC 1). Drawing the circle below can help visually illustrate how this relationship was perfect and whole in the beginning.



## Step 2: This Relationship Is Broken by Sin (The Bad News)

Despite God's original plans, the bad news is that our relationship with him was broken by sin. Romans 3:23 tells us, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." And this fall was severe: "For the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Today, we see this brokenness in our own lives, in our relationships and in the world around us. Sin creates an infinite chasm between us and God and prevents us from having eternal life with him. This infinite chasm is so great that there's nothing that we can do on our own to restore our relationship with him.



### Step 3: Jesus Is the Answer (Even Better News)

#### Notes

The even better news is that, while we were unable to save ourselves, “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (Jn 3:16). Because Jesus is fully human, he can represent the human family and offer an act of love on our behalf. However, because he is also fully divine, his act of love on the cross takes on infinite value. Thus, Jesus is able to *bridge* this infinite chasm. His death gives us an opportunity to overcome sin, to live as his sons and daughters and to go to heaven (CCC 615).

*Many, many people fail to become Christians, simply for the lack of a teacher of the Christian faith.*

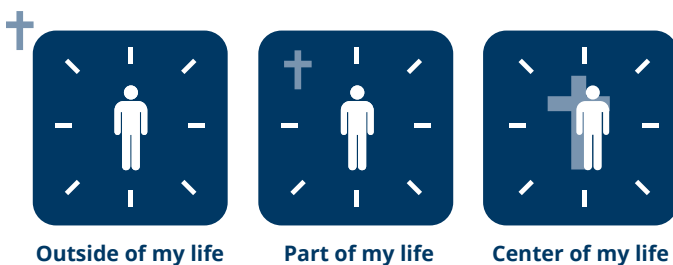
— St. Francis Xavier



## Step 4: Invitation and Response

Jesus provides an answer that bridges the gap made by sin. Salvation is a gift, freely offered to each of us by God through the Church. The decision to accept God's saving gift means making the fundamental choice to become a disciple of Jesus. God's gift is a complete gift of himself to you and for you; the only appropriate response is a complete gift of ourselves in return.

At this stage, it can be helpful to share about three different types of people: those for whom friendship with God is not a part of their lives; those whose friendship with God is part of their lives, but not the center; and those who have God at the center of their lives.



With this in mind, two simple questions can be helpful: “Which person are you?” and “Which person do you want to be?” These questions can reveal where someone thinks they are in terms of their relationship with Christ as well as potential obstacles that may prevent them from going deeper. Then, at some point, ask them specifically, “Do you want to make Jesus the center of your life?” or some similar question.

If they *do* want to make Jesus the center of their lives, we should encourage them to either go back to confession or if they are not Catholic to be baptized or received into the Church. For friendship with Christ is covenantal, meaning it is ecclesial

*Notes*

and sacramental involving the family of God, the Church, and the Church's liturgy. But even right now, they can express their desire to commit their lives to Christ by praying a simple prayer like the one below or a spontaneous prayer of their own:

*Take Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. To you, O Lord, I return it. All is Yours, dispose of it wholly according to Your will. Give me Your love and Your grace, for this is enough for me. – St. Ignatius of Loyola*




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**DISCUSS**


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*Are you prepared to make this invitation? If not, what do you need to do to be prepared? How can you communicate these steps in a compelling way?*

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## Step 5: Life in Christ

*For I am not  
ashamed of  
the gospel: it  
is the power  
of God for  
salvation to  
every one who  
has faith.*

— Romans 1:16



When we accept this invitation of God's love, we must respond not just with thoughts or words but with our actions as well. Our whole lives should be a response to the gift of salvation that God offers us.

Here are some practical steps you can take to walk with someone after accepting the Gospel:

- Going to confession
- Beginning to pray daily
- Going to Sunday (or even daily) Mass
- Reading scripture daily
- Spending time with other Christians
- Joining RCIA
- Discussing additional articles like this one

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### DISCUSS

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*How will you follow up with people after they have accepted  
(or possibly rejected) the Gospel?*

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## PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH JESUS

*Notes*

Sharing the Gospel is so critical for helping others personally encounter Jesus Christ.

Throughout the history of the Church, people have come to faith because Christians have had the courage to proclaim Jesus, helping others have an encounter with him. Take the time to learn how to present the Gospel, so that those around you can experience the life-changing power of a relationship with Jesus.

We've presented one way to share the Gospel in this article, but many different ways exist. Feel free to use some of the others below:

The Ultimate Relationship: <https://issuu.com/ccocanada/docs/theultimaterelationship-finaldraft>

Other ways to present the Gospel: <https://catholicmissionarydisciples.com/news/the-content-of-the-kerygma-good-news-for-the-world>

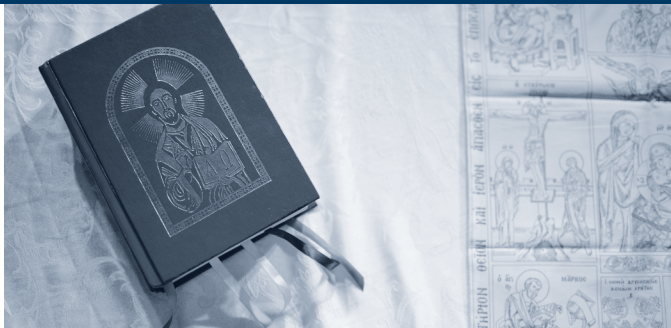
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### DISCUSS

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*What method will you use to share the Gospel? What will the person with whom you are sharing the Gospel respond to best?*

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## ROADBLOCKS

Sometimes we can be hesitant to share the Gospel, because we aren't quite sure it's the right step to take. Here are some common objections:

- ***Is this Catholic?:*** The Gospel is for all Christians. Everyone should be invited to a relationship with Jesus Christ. As Catholics, we don't believe that a simple sinner's prayer is all that is necessary for salvation. However, so many Catholics need to know that Jesus desires a personal relationship with them, and we need to share that truth with them.
- ***Presenting the Gospel seems forced or impersonal:*** Let's be honest, sharing the faith can be awkward sometimes. However, by building strong relationships and sharing the Gospel honestly from the heart, you can make it more natural. Don't let a little awkwardness prevent someone from knowing Jesus.
- ***I don't know if I'm ready:*** Maybe so. But, God doesn't call the equipped, he equips the called. The real question is, "Are you willing?" Do you want someone to come to know Jesus? Then pray, practice and share. Imagine what could happen if they say, "Yes!"

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## DISCUSS

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*Notes*

*Do you have any hesitations about sharing the Gospel? How can you overcome these?*

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## TAKE ACTION

Now that you have read this article preparing you to share the Gospel, make a list of the people in your life who need to hear this message. Pray about whom God might want you to share it with now. Then make a plan for sharing the Gospel with those people. If you don't yet feel confident sharing the Gospel with them, take additional time to practice. And remember, presenting the Gospel isn't mainly about having a perfect presentation, but rather, introducing someone to Jesus in personal way. Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance.

## TRANSFERABLE CONCEPTS

**The Five-Step Gospel:** Based on St. Catherine of Siena's dialogue with Jesus, we can share the basic message of the Gospel in five steps:

- We Are Made for Relationship
- This Relationship Is Broken by Sin
- Jesus Is the Answer
- Invitation and Response
- Life in Christ

### Endnotes

<sup>28</sup> Walsh, Milton. (2012). *Witness of the Saints: Patristic Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours*. Ignatius Press: San Francisco, CA, 638.

<sup>29</sup> This section is based on Curtis Martin's book, *Making Missionary Disciples*, pp. 45-49.

## *Notes*