



SAINT PAUL

Evangelization Institute

Basic Evangelization Training

Course 1: The Basics

1.4 Witness of Life & Proclamation with Words

Witness of Life & Proclamation with Words

So knowing this, here is the next question we should ask: what does an evangelist do, practically speaking? Let's start with some foundational truths here, and we'll get to more specifics in later modules.

First and foremost, the evangelist must be a good Christian example. St. Paul wrote in 1 Thess,

You know what kind of people we proved to be among you for your sake.... 2 for though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi...we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition.... 4 we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts. 5 For we never used either words of flattery... or a cloak for greed, as God is witness; 6 nor did we seek glory from men.... 7 But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. 8 ...we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves.

Pope Saint Paul VI wrote that "...the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God... and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal." And he said, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

Integrity of life, especially over time, is not only a powerful witness, but a necessary one. There is no underestimating the evangelizing power of a life well-lived, joyfully fixed on "the one thing necessary" (Lk 10:42), attentive to the words of the Lord, learning, and obeying. We must love God and neighbor above all else, and live out of that love. As St Paul tells us in the first letter to the Corinthians, We must be "patient and kind, not jealous or boastful, not arrogant or rude, not insisting on our own way, not irritable or resentful, not rejoicing in wrong, but rejoicing in right" (cf. 1 Cor 13:4-6).

As he tells us in the letter to the Galatians, the fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (cf. Gal 5:22-23). We need to give to the poor. We need to be humble, and when we make mistakes or sin, we should be ready and willing to acknowledge them and ask forgiveness. With open hearts, we should share our lives with those who are in need, and bring peace where there is conflict. All of this is impossible without a thriving life of prayer.

Secondly, though this witness of life is most important, it is not enough in itself. Pope Paul VI wrote that there is also the "necessity of preaching" – proclaiming the gospel with words. Through formal preaching or teaching, or informal conversation, spiritual encouragement, we speak the truth of the Gospel out loud, in the hopes that the word spoken will bear fruit in the hearts of the hearers.

You may have heard, "Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words." There is no evidence that St. Francis of Assisi actually said this. The truth is that using words IS NECESSARY. Paul VI wrote that our witness must be "made explicit by a clear and unequivocal proclamation of the Lord Jesus." He said, "The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word of life."