

How to Make Baptism More Welcoming and Evangelizing

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: "We have always done it this way". I invite every- one to be bold and creative in this task of re- thinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. (EG 33)

3 target groups for evangelization, according to *Evangelii Gaudium*

- "Ordinary Pastoral Ministry"- "seeks to help believers grow so they can respond more fully"
- "The baptized whose lives do not reflect the demands of baptism"- lack a meaningful connection to church
- "Those who do not know Jesus or have always reflected him"- Christians have a duty to proclaim the Gospel, without excluding anyone and should do so through joy rather than proselytizing

10 questions for baptism teams and parish leaders

1. Do we believe that baptism is a start or a goal?
2. What is the experience when a family first contacts the parish about baptism? Use three adjectives to describe it.
3. Does our formation process allow flexibility for various family needs, including (but not limited to) baptizing older children, single-parent homes, challenging work schedules, or out-of-town preparation?
4. Do we set reasonable conditions for who our parish will baptize? Are our policies designed for those already in our parish, or is there room for those who are seeking to enter?
5. Is our process of formation an educational process, or a journey of accompaniment? Is this how we wish to proceed? Is there value to having different processes for those who do or do not have a meaningful connection to the church?
6. Do the times we offer for baptism meet the needs of families, many of whom are separated by distance or do not have local family help? Are these times sympathetic to the needs of infants and young children?
7. Does the baptism ritual seek to include all present in their respective ways, or is it enacted in such a way that only those "on the inside" are able to participate?
8. Would the new family say that they feel welcomed and supported by the faith community? What makes you arrive at this answer?
9. What systems or connections do we have in place to accompany parents for the first 5 years of their child's life, or until the child would formally begin religious education? Are these attentive to both the growth of the parent and the child?
10. Does our faith community have connections to parents that don't already belong to our parish? If not, how might we find them and make connections?