

Clear Path of Discipleship



Pre-Trust

A person likely has no positive connection with an individual Catholic or the Church and might harbor suspicion or outright hostility toward Catholicism.



Trust

A person has a positive association with Jesus or an individual Catholic and may begin asking questions out of passive curiosity.



Openness

A person admits to a general need or desire for personal spiritual change. This is not the same as a commitment to specific changes.



Seeking

A person moves from being passive to actively seeking to know the God who is calling him or her. The seeker is engaged in a spiritual quest.



Decision

The decision in faith to follow Jesus as an obedient disciple in the midst of the Church which brings about new life.



Beginning Disciple

A person has committed to following Jesus by turning away from sin, and makes sacrifices in order to personally grow, and lives habits of the Christian life.



Missionary Disciple

A person has decided to personally answer the call to take part in the mission of the Church by sharing the Good news.



Fruitful Disciple

A person is equipped for mission and accompanies others sacrificially which bears the fruit of changed lives (seeing a person grow closer to Jesus).

Relational Outreach

Conversion Moment

Discipleship Formation

Evangelization Formation

Definitions:

A Clear Path: A parish framework designed to help both new and experienced parishioners take the next step in their formation as missionary disciples of Jesus. In other words, *a parish framework to make and mature disciples.*

Relational Outreach: A ministry that builds trusting relationships with disengaged members and non-believers. (e.g., neighborhood outreach)

Conversion Moment: A ministry that offers a clear proclamation of the Gospel and fosters initial conversion through an encounter with Jesus. (e.g., Alpha, ChristLife, CEC)

Faith Formation: A ministry that equips disciples as they grow in the Christian life. (e.g., small groups for prayer and formation)

Evangelization Formation: A ministry that equips disciples as they engage in the mission of evangelization. (e.g., monthly skills training for evangelization)

Phases of Building a Clear Path:

1. **Assessment:** What is the purpose of our current ministries?
2. **Discernment:** What will be our process for making missionary disciples?
3. **Implementation:** What part of the clear path do we build first?
4. **Communication:** Who needs to know what we have decided? How do we tell them?
5. **Alignment:** How do existing ministries connect with our clear path?
6. **Expansion:** What is the next step to build or expand our clear path?

To help fulfill the purpose of the Church and to live out their vocation as missional communities, parishes are expected to develop a clear path of discipleship.

The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth ... [so that] ... the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ.

-Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, 2

Benefits

A clear path makes it easier for a parish to...

- See the baptized grow and reach their full stature in Christ
- Bring back the lost sheep who have wandered away
- Send missionary disciples who are fully equipped to share their faith
- Become an outpost of mercy and healing for the neighborhood

Qualities

Conversion: A clear path fosters conversion by providing a framework with steps for growth.

- Intentional about invitation – A clear path facilitates movement and growth in discipleship through invitations to simple next steps.
- Evaluated for fruitfulness – A clear path produces lives transformed by grace. Increased Mass attendance and increased giving are signs of a fruitful clear path.

Clarity: It provides clarity by highlighting a few ministries for simplicity and maximum fruitfulness.

- Inclusive of families – A clear path creates effective on-ramps that engage school and religious education families in parish life.
- Integrated with sacramental formation – A clear path should be integrated with the sacramental formation of adults and children (e.g., OCIA, marriage preparation, first communion, etc.).

Connection: It offers connection between highlighted ministries, so no one gets lost on the journey.

- Overseen by parish leadership – The pastor guides and oversees the integrated development of the clear path while the evangelization coordinator is responsible for leading its implementation.
- Built upon relationships – Personal accompaniment is the foundation of any clear path.