

# Evangelization or Winning an Argument

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Many of us have been in situations where the subject of faith comes up in conversation and we start out trying to evangelize but end up trying to win an argument. Afterwards, we realize that we didn't help the persons draw closer to Jesus and may have actually pushed them further away.

Here are some things to keep in mind the next time this happens:

Mercy/Compassion Our attitudes can set the tone of how the conversation will go. We all have baggage, since no one is perfect. We all need some level of healing. Don't focus on people's mistakes. Try to establish a tone of mercy and compassion, regardless of how hard someone may be trying to argue. Remember "slow to anger." This is not a game that we are trying to win. Rather, this is a soul in need of transformation.

Build Relationship Look at the conversation as an opportunity to build a friendship and not as a one-time event. People questioning the faith may mean still be open and curious about it. It may be a way of asking for help. People have a fear of being wrong, of being humiliated or looking stupid. Recognize that, although their words may be harsh on the surface, they do not really convey what is in their hearts. Building a relationship takes time, patience, and forgiveness. Offer to accompany them on their quest for understanding.

Humility Friendship is based on trust. The seed of trust is humility. When we take off our masks and reveal to each other what is in our hearts, friendship blossoms and grows. Unfortunately, pride and ego get in the way. Let us exercise humility; be good listeners. Let us listen to understand and clarify, and not to give the "right" answer or box someone into a corner.

Common Ground Don't assume you know what people are thinking just because they aren't actively living

their Catholic faith. Making judgments escalates arguments and diminishes true understanding. Ask good questions; ask them why they believe what they believe. What sources of information do they refer to? Keep asking "why" to get to the root cause. Encourage critical thinking and do not rely just on second-hand information from a sound bite. Archbishop Rozanski says, "We want to open a door rather than push them through a door."

Share Your Story No one knows your relationship with the Holy Trinity better than you! No one can argue with you on how you came to believe what you believe. Share your trials, pain, and suffering, as well as your love, joy, and peace. Remember, there is no resurrection unless there is death. You must "die" to your old ways before you can "rise" to a new life with Jesus.

Truth Today, many people say the "the truth for me is..." They see truth as a concept that is adaptable to justify a current lifestyle. Introduce them to the idea that the Truth is really a person – Jesus ("I am the way and the truth and the life"). Truth is not relative; it is absolute. It is true for all of us, over all of time. People are influenced by culture. People follow little voices in their heads (which may be evil spirits disguised as good). Or, people may not know that God is an option. Truth leads people to Jesus.

Pray Let us offer to pray and let them know that we will continue to pray for them. Prayer builds hope and combats despair. We are not responsible for convincing people, but we are responsible for presenting the Truth. We plant the seeds and the Holy Spirit does the work.

## FR. JOHN'S DIGITAL QUILL FOR SPIRITUAL MUSINGS AND PARISH NEWS

### *The Fourth Week of Advent*

One of the priests at the seminary a few years ago gave a talk to the seminarians. It was May, the end of the school year. The seminarians were tired and looking forward to the summer to come.

The priest talked about the end of the year and what they were looking forward to. But, he told them, it was not a time just to get through to the end of the year. It was a time to continue to grow, to do better. He encouraged the men to run up the score in the last weeks and not just sit on the lead they had built all year long.

How has your Advent been this year? Perhaps it has been good and you are looking forward to Christmas, ready just to get through this last week. Maybe you are not happy with how this Advent has gone and are hoping just to get to Christmas.

Wherever we may be, this is a week not just to be complacent. It is a time to run up the score.

How can we do that this last week of Advent?

- Attend one of the Advent Prayer Groups on Sunday at 6:00pm, Monday at 2:00pm, or Tuesday at 9:30am.

- Take some time for Eucharistic Adoration on Monday or Wednesday from 3:00-9:00pm

- Receive the Sacrament of Confession. We will have a special time Wednesday evening this week, beginning at 6:00pm and going until 8:00pm or until everyone has had a chance to receive the sacrament.

- Prayerfully read one of the Gospel accounts in Matthew or Luke about the Nativity or just sit with the nativity scene in your home in quiet meditation.

- Pray the ARRR Prayer.

- Just pause for a few moments with an invocation as simple as "Jesus," or "Jesus, I need you."

May each of us see this week not just as a time to rush through to Christmas, but a period to run up the Advent score so we are prepared to welcome the Newborn King.

### *Rectory Flood Update*

As you may recall, the rectory basement was flooded at the end of July. Following this event, we had to hire a company to do remediation in the

flooded area of the basement and engage a water-proofing company to take care of leaking areas. I am happy to announce that these preliminary steps have been completed, and we are ready to move forward on reconstruction.

This past Wednesday, I met with Woodard Restoration to review the scope of work and to set a schedule for reconstruction. We hope this work will come together quickly and we will once again have the basement open for meetings and events.

Again, many thanks for everyone's patience during this extended closing of the rectory basement.

### *School Pageant*

Thank you to our school faculty and students for putting on such a wonderful pageant on Thursday evening. It was great to be able to offer this tradition again after needing to cancel it due to the pandemic. Thank you for all of your hard work to make this possible!

I will see you online or in Church! - Fr. John #SRAstrong

