

Larry Tomczak: 6 Tips for Winning Catholics to Christ

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark16:15).

In over 50 years of ministry here’s one of the most asked questions I’ve faced: “How do you witness to a good Catholic?” There are many who are ready to respond when they receive genuine love, encouragement, hope and friendship in these turbulent times.

I was raised Catholic, with 12 years of parochial schooling and privileged to write a nonthreatening, humorous and helpful book “Clap Your Hands!” which reached over a quarter million (mostly Catholics) for Christ.

I’m not singling out the 70 million Americans with Catholic affiliation in any critical or condescending way, but there has been a steady and steep decline in Catholicism with scores, especially young adults (18 to 35), saying “sayonara” to the church. Our catechism taught us that “murder, adultery and willfully failing to attend Sunday Mass” was a “mortal sin” and if you “die with a mortal sin on your soul you will go to hell forever.” Millions no longer believe that and have simply left.

Sobering Realities

A 2020 Gallup poll registered 25% of the U.S. population identifying as “Catholic” yet less than 4 in 10 attend weekly mass. Only 13% of young Catholics attend regular Mass with 73% believing they can be a Catholic without going to Mass.

There are lots of “Catholics” all around us, but is Jesus really Lord of their lives where they follow Him in obedience? Jesus told us, “You will know them by their fruit” (Matt. 7:16). Consider Joe Biden, Nancy Pelosi, Stephen Colbert,

Michael Moore, Bill Maher, LeBron James, Robert De Niro, Alec Baldwin and even Madonna. Are they genuinely “born again” as Jesus stated was the non-negotiable standard by which to be “saved,” forgiven of one’s sins, reconciled to God and be able to enter heaven? Saying, “I was infant baptized” isn’t sufficient according to Jesus.

A respected and religious man, Nicodemus, came to Jesus at night and asked Him this most important question and Jesus told him in no uncertain terms, “Nicodemus, you need to be born again.” In fact, He said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Every single person has sinned and must genuinely repent, put their faith in Jesus Christ alone and His sacrificial, substitutionary, finished work on the cross to experience the radical change of the “new birth.” Infant baptism, attending Mass, doing good works, giving money, praying the rosary, trying to be a “good person” simply doesn’t qualify a person for eternal life according to Jesus. “By the grace of God you are saved by by works, lest anyone should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9).

I didn’t understand this until I was 20 years of age and opened a Bible for the first time in my life. Wonderful Christians explained to me God’s simple plan of salvation. Since then I’ve shared with countless people the same good news of God’s free gift of abundant and eternal life through an authentic relationship with Jesus Christ.

“Larry, are you still a Catholic?” A high-level Catholic leader advised me decades ago to respond when asked this: “I have a Catholic background and I’m grateful for all the good but today I’m more comfortable referring to myself simply as a Christian.”

Because of our Catholic upbringing, my wife and I have celebrated and been a part of genuine conversion experiences

of multitudes of Catholics: my dad, mom, sister, coach, girlfriend, 4 of 5 members of our Lost Souls band and numerous relatives; my wife's parents and her six siblings who were living at home at the time of her conversion!

How About You?

Would you like to be used by God to help Catholic family members, friends, neighbors, business associates, fellow students and those in your sphere discover a new beginning in life with Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior? Here are some helpful suggestions:

1. Pray expectantly. Pray that God the Father gives you His heart for all people for whom He sent His Son; for wisdom to engage in fruitful interaction; divine appointments where God providentially arranges your steps with those He wants to reach; for the gifts of the Spirit to be operative in you such as discerning of spirits, gift of faith, healing, miracles and prophetic words to impact the lives of others (1 Cor. 12:7-11) and show them a supernatural, loving God in reality.

2. Prepare yourself. Educate yourself on effective ways to evangelize others. You need to be equipped to answer legitimate questions, handle objections and lead somebody to faith and repentance and establish a personal relationship, not with a religion, but the person of Jesus Christ!

Check out "Loving Lifestyle Evangelism" my free 5 part video series on YouTube so you'll be confident and motivated in the adventure of reaching others for Christ.

3. Be positive. Look for ways to affirm their interest in God; their humility to discover more of God's plan for their life; commend areas of Catholicism like its strong pro-life work for decades, Catholic charities work among the poor and the inspirational examples of individuals like Clarence Thomas, Amy Coney Barrett, Mother Theresa, Pope John Paul, Newt Gingrich and Francis of Assisi. Pay tribute to Catholic

conservatives like Bill O'Reilly, Laura Ingraham and others who stand for faith, family and freedom. Look for common ground.

4. Put aside controversy. Jesus said to be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16) so avoid arguments and getting drawn into difficult doctrinal issues (2 Tim. 2:24). The enemy of our souls uses distractions and digression to divert conversations off of what is most important. The woman at the well fell prey to this (John. 4:20) but Jesus steered things back on course. Missing Mass [mortal sin?], the rosary, indulgences, purgatory, statues, praying to saints and other “thorny” issues quickly sidetrack healthy interaction so use wisdom. Honor Mary as the phenomenal mother of Jesus but say, “Let’s do as she told us, “Whatever He says to you, do it” (John 2:5).

5. Portray Christ’s character. Accept people where they are; take a genuine interest in their life; bless them with tangible expressions of God’s love; be a servant and trustworthy friend; demonstrate generosity and hospitality (have them over to your home!); love their children; when the timing is right, invite them to join you for a Bible study, outreach in your church or a special children’s event. Give them a book by C.S. Lewis to awaken their faith. Lavish them with the love of God!

6. Persevere. We can’t convert anybody but we can cooperate with God in His process of drawing people to Himself. Like the sower who went out to plant seeds, we can plant seeds in the hearts of people so they’ll discover a whole new dimension of life only found in Jesus. Hang in there! {eoa}

Here’s the Deal: *There are multitudes of good Catholics who are trying hard yet have never really understood the good news of the gospel of grace to find peace with God in these tumultuous times. Encourage them to listen to the free audiobook of “Clap Your Hands!” at . It has helped so many*

Catholics worldwide! Don't say it's a "religious story" but rather an inspirational story of a young man's journey to find his destiny in life. Tell them it's nostalgic, funny and will bring back lots of childhood memories.

Remember: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring good news of good things!" ().