

Parishes Adapt to Challenges and Evangelize

Tricia's Story: From Lapsed Catholic to Online Evangelist

Online Prayer Teams Play Pivotal Role During Pandemic

Sister Servants Evangelize with ChristLife



CHRISTLIFE™
CATHOLIC MINISTRY FOR EVANGELIZATION

'REACH MORE' CAMPAIGN STRENGTHENS OUR COMMON MISSION

We surpassed our 'Reach More' fundraising goal, which, thanks to matching gift donors, exceeded \$163,000! We are now beginning to execute the three main 'Reach More' initiatives.

Improve digital access to ChristLife's training and course videos.

The first phase of this initiative is releasing online training courses on a new web platform this Summer. The second phase is a more user-friendly way to access our course videos this Fall.



New resources to sustain small groups beyond the 3 courses.

With the ChristLife courses as the foundation, we will provide teachings to establish and equip relational small groups. We are currently developing the content and will pilot it this Spring.



Translate Following Christ into Spanish.

We are currently in early stages of project design, obtaining bids from translation and production contractors, and recruiting a team of Spanish-speaking practitioners to serve as a review team.



All of these "Reach More" initiatives will strengthen our common mission to proclaim the Good News and make missionary disciples.

To stay updated on the progress of these initiatives, sign up for email updates: www.ChristLife.org/email

After this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. And he said to them, "The harvest is huge. But there are not enough harvesters to bring it in. As you go, plead with the owner of the Harvest to send out many more workers into his harvest fields.

LUKE 10:1-2

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS,

During this last year, despite the circumstances, ChristLife has seen an expansion in our mission of helping others to personally encounter the Lord Jesus, grow in lifestyle discipleship, and be equipped to tell others the good news of how *'Jesus changed my life and he can change yours, too!'*

We praise God as we hear your reports of how you have continued presenting ChristLife online during these times of shaking—some as self-initiated ChristLife small groups, others as parish or diocesan teams. We have included a number of these stories inside. *We're so glad to be on mission with you.* The Lord truly has sent us on mission right where we live (Luke 10:1)!

I thank all of you who made the 'Reach More' campaign so successful. As a result of your partnership, we are able to expand our common mission. *If you're not already, please consider supporting our mission in an ongoing way by becoming a monthly donor.* A donation of \$10, \$25, or \$50 a month would be a tremendous help and is greatly appreciated.

We sense the Lord calling us to expand as a missionary community, a relational network, who together are witnesses to his presence and love. It's wonderful, isn't it?

We have reason for hope as we celebrate this Easter-Pentecost season.

Despite the circumstances we are facing presently, our hope rests in our Redeemer, who has been raised from the dead and is now seated at the right hand of the Father, until he comes in glory to judge the living and the dead! In the meantime, the Lord Jesus calls us to enter into the huge harvest as his workers for the salvation of souls.

Let's pray for more workers in our parishes and his entire Church.



Your brother in the Lord Jesus,

Dave

Dave Nodar

Founder and Senior Leader

PS - We released an Easter message on the importance of hope. You can view it at www.ChristLife.org/EasterHope



YOUNG ADULTS GROWING AS DISCIPLES

Over the last year, ChristLife Young Adults has continued to be a community where young adults in the Archdiocese of Baltimore can encounter the living God and follow Jesus as missionary disciples. Through weekly virtual meetings, young adults have been invited to read the Word of God and grow in discipleship. **Learn more about ChristLife Young Adults at www.clya.org**

PARISHES ADAPT TO CHALLENGES AND EVANGELIZE

BY JENNIFER KING

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul explains how he met people where they were to bring them the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He wrote, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel...” (1 Corinthians 9:22-23)

If St. Paul wrote his letter today, he might add, “for those stuck at home because of a pandemic, I learned video conferencing to share the Gospel.” This is something many parish leaders can say after 2020.

From experienced parishes offering ChristLife courses online, to parishes beginning ChristLife for the first time, to individuals hosting their own small groups—the Gospel is being shared and people are turning to the Lord!

Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Ellicott City, MD was in the midst of Following Christ when things shut down last year. They decided to continue virtually. Subsequently, they went on to offer Sharing Christ. As the new year approached and they realized in-person activities still wouldn't be possible, the team offered Discovering Christ online.



One of their leaders, Lisa Dryhurst, shared, “Having ChristLife on Zoom has been a light in the darkness of this pandemic. COVID has been a real wake-up call to the question, ‘Why am I here, and what is my

purpose?’ One of the blessings of the pandemic is that people have been able to slow down and are looking for answers to these questions.”

St. Eleanor Parish in Collegeville, PA planned to continue the ChristLife process in March 2020, but, as in-person activities were restricted, they paused to discern what to do next. Their leadership team realized that the need to gather greatly overrode any concerns about the limitations of technology. “We thought better to do something, even if it wasn't perfect, than not do anything at all.” They decided to run Following Christ online and the Holy Spirit moved powerfully through the ten sessions as people grew in discipleship of our Lord.

St. Eleanor's ChristLife team leader, Frank Giesa, joined ChristLife for one of our online training courses and encouraged other parish leaders by saying, “Even when we feel we are limited as to what we can do, we should not extend those limits to the power of the Holy Spirit.”



St. Bernard Parish in Tulsa, OK was one of the parish teams at that online training course. After being trained, the parish ran their very first Discovering Christ course in the Fall online. Deacon Tim Sullivan, who led the effort, decided to bring together RCIA with the other Discovering Christ guests. This was a wonderful

way to introduce those in the RCIA class to the larger parish community, especially with limits on in-person activity. One of the RCIA candidates expressed gratitude, saying, “I had a great group that really helped me feel connected at St. Bernard's. It was a wonderful way to start RCIA.”



Deacon Tim shared, “I've been in ministry in the Catholic Church for over 20 years, and the content of Discovering Christ and Following Christ is extremely good and is presented in a highly effective manner. The courses have been very well received by our parishioners and participants in our RCIA sessions.”

St. Bernard's online offering of Discovering Christ allowed many people to participate who wouldn't have been able to otherwise. One guest shared, “Meeting in person would be optimal, however, as a family at risk—quarantining and limiting exposure—meeting via Zoom and being able to share our faith journeys with each other was a Godsend.”

Even in the face of unforeseen challenges, our mission to share the Good News of Jesus Christ continues in bold and creative ways. And when restrictions are lifted and circumstances change yet again, we know the Holy Spirit will continue to inspire and guide each of us as we “go and make disciples of all nations.”

TRICIA'S STORY: FROM LAPSED CATHOLIC TO ONLINE EVANGELIST

My boyfriend decided he wanted to return to his Catholic faith, which led me back to the Catholic Church. Shortly after the sudden and unexpected death of my father, my brother invited my mom, my boyfriend, and me on a silent retreat—to go to confession, learn about prayer, and all of that good stuff. After this retreat, we started going to church more regularly.

About a year later, on my birthday, our Church launched ChristLife and I decided to go. If you would've told me a year before that I'd be spending my birthday at a Catholic Church, I would have laughed at you. I would have said, "No way, that's so not me." But there I was on October 21, 2019, meeting new people and starting this ChristLife journey.

I attended the retreat and offered the recommitment prayer to Jesus. After the retreat, things started really moving and God started really speaking to me with very clear messages. The retreat for Following Christ was great. And then Sharing Christ came when the pandemic hit and we had to turn our meetings on to Zoom.

Towards the end of Sharing Christ, I got a nudge from Christ that said, "Hey, you can do this, you could invite some people through Facebook and start Zooming."

Come June 2020, I posted on Facebook inviting friends to join me on Zoom for Discovering Christ. I messaged some friends that I hadn't been in touch with or in contact with in a long time and I found about six ladies who

were interested. They were in their 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s—different age groups, different backgrounds, and from different areas of Maryland. If it weren't for the pandemic and doing ChristLife on Zoom, I don't think this group of women would have ever come together. We went through all three courses: Discovering Christ, Following Christ, and Sharing Christ. We had our own retreats in-person and my ChristLife leaders joined us for prayer. We even made a video of our cardboard testimonies!

In December, my boyfriend proposed. God brought us closer through ChristLife and our return to the Catholic faith. I'm thankful to my fiancé for leading me back to my faith and my brother, who will walk me down the aisle, for inviting us on that initial retreat. All these pieces led me to this place I'm meant to be for such a time as now!

I'm really excited about what God has done in my life through ChristLife. He's given me the tools to be more open, have relationships with people, and how to be an evangelist in the truest sense. I thank ChristLife for that.



Share your story of how God changed your life through ChristLife by emailing us at info@christlife.org

ONLINE PRAYER TEAMS PLAY PIVOTAL ROLE DURING PANDEMIC

BY PETE ASCOSI

Early in the pandemic while much of the country was under lockdown, I had my first opportunity to participate in online prayer ministry. There I was, sitting in my bedroom in Maryland, joined by my prayer partner, Scott in Colorado, praying over participants from New York!

As each person joined our Zoom prayer room, I was humbled and honored that I could witness their personal surrender to the Lordship of Jesus.

As we've had more and more opportunities to help with online Holy Spirit retreats—we've needed a whole new category of volunteers: virtual prayer ministers. Over 50 volunteers have stepped up and have played a pivotal role by literally praying with hundreds of folks from all over the U.S. and beyond.

Here's what prayer team volunteers said about their experience:

"At first you wonder how this is going to work... but when you see

how people are affected you realize the Holy Spirit is not constrained by distance" **-Marg**

"We've been pleasantly surprised. Every time the power of the Holy Spirit came through." **-Len and Donna**

Gathering together as prayer teams on Zoom, has also connected us together in new ways. Through technology we are realizing new ways of supporting one another and

serving together. It is helping us see that ChristLife is at its core a growing network of disciples on mission.



If you would like to be part of ChristLife's virtual prayer ministry, please email info@christlife.org

SISTER SERVANTS EVANGELIZE WITH CHRISTLIFE

BY DIANNE DAVIS

In January 2020 I attended the FOCUS' SLS20 conference in Phoenix. One evening I was at dinner with our friend Bob Flanigan who introduced me to the Sister Servants of the Eternal Word from Alabama. I sat next to Sister Mary Philomena and we felt an immediate connection. But neither of us knew this time together would lead to a beautiful collaboration of our ministries.

A few months later in April, ChristLife partnered with the Archdiocese of New York to host the first virtual ChristLife series. Joining our three Discovering Christ small groups were Sister Mary Philomena, Sister Rita Marie and Sister Clare Marie. During the next few months, the Sisters experienced the kerygma in a new way, along with people from all over NY, NJ, AL, TN, CO who were part of their small groups. They even invited their friend, from Lourdes, France who was lonely and isolated during lockdowns, to join us. Sister Rita Marie shared with me how encouraging it was to hear stories and of faith from the other participants:

“It put to the forefront of my mind my own journey with the Lord, both in the past and the present.”

The Sisters were so encouraged by the authenticity of the ChristLife teachings and the fruits they witnessed, they asked their Mother Superior, Mother Louise Marie, if they could begin evangelizing with ChristLife at their Casa Maria Retreat House. She gave a wholehearted yes! So they began hosting virtual groups and invited their own family members, some of the hardest people to evangelize. But they quickly began to love the teachings and small group discussions and the ChristLife sessions became their favorite night of the week. One family member shared her testimony with Sister Philomena:

“I just wanted to share that since Monday evening when, through your guidance, I repeated the most



L to R: Sister Marie Francesca, Sister Mary Michael, Sister Mary Philomena, Sister Rita Marie

beautiful Prayer of Commitment to Jesus, my heart has been filled with a Joy and Peace completely new to me. Hearing Sr. Rita Marie, Sr. Clare Marie and you pray out loud for me was amazing, a true gift from Heaven.”

The sessions were such a success that they have been running the ChristLife series continuously since last Fall. Right now they have two groups, plus they are helping a local parish run two additional groups. Sister Rita Marie, who runs catechetical groups, firmly believes we need to evangelize before we can catechize:

“If we don't have a personal relationship with the Lord and fall in love with Him, then catechesis becomes just head knowledge and it doesn't have the right impact on your life.”

I asked them if they noticed any difference in themselves after coming through the ChristLife series and running it multiple times with various family members, friends, and parishioners. Sister Rita Marie quickly spoke up about Sister Philomena:

“Yes, she's changed. She used to be timid, but now she's become confident and empowered by the Lord to do the work of evangelization and making missionary disciples.”

They both shared with me how they used to go into town and people would ask for prayer, they would say yes and pray later on. But after participating in and leading Following and Sharing Christ, they felt encouraged and equipped to pray anytime and anywhere. So now when they are asked for prayer, they pray right on the spot!

Well done Sister Servants of the Eternal Word, good and faithful servants of the Lord!



ChristLife is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Donations are gratefully accepted in support of the essential mission of evangelization. All donations are tax-deductible. www.ChristLife.org/donate

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