

Process Chart

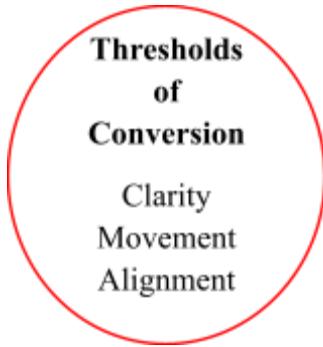
The St. Francis Xavier Strategic and Pastoral Plan outlines three major initiatives that will, with God's help, grow and strengthen the Catholic faith in Payne County for generations to come. In addition, this plan details the Mission of St. Francis Xavier, in light of the Holy Spirit's guidance at this appointed time in history. This "mission statement" will be defined as our Sacred Purpose. The Sacred Purpose will follow the process the parish intends to utilize in order to become an evangelizing parish.

The process is the purpose and the purpose is the process.

Sacred Purpose: *Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Stillwater, Oklahoma is committed to helping each person in Payne County: Encounter Jesus Christ, Grow in a relationship with Him as a disciple, and to "Go, make disciples".*

Discipleship Process/Pathway: This provides clarity and movement. Everything should be aligned to this process (youth, children, adults, ministries, Councils, leadership, staff, etc.)





Process Chart

“Catechized Catholics are clearly not necessarily evangelized Catholics.” (Sherry Weddell, FID)

“We are dealing with the mystery of a relationship that God himself is initiating in the human heart.”

The *National Directory for Catechesis* outlines two critical steps that should precede catechesis: pre-evangelization and initial proclamation of the basic kerygma, or the Great Story of Jesus Christ. Both are necessary to awaken the initial Christian faith, and as we have seen, Christian faith is necessary for catechesis to be fruitful.” (*Forming Intentional Disciples*, Sherry Weddell)

Five Thresholds of Conversion:

1. **Initial Trust** - A person is able to *trust* or has a positive association with Jesus Christ, the Church, a Christian believer, or something identifiably Christian. Trust is *not* the same as active personal faith. Without some kind of bridge or trust in place, people will not move closer to God.
2. **Spiritual Curiosity** - A person finds himself *intrigued* by or desiring to know more about Jesus his life, and his teachings or some aspect of the Christian faith. This curiosity can range from mere awareness of a new possibility to something quite intense. Nevertheless, a person at the threshold of curiosity is not yet open to a personal change. Curiosity is still essentially passive, but it is more than trust.
3. **Spiritual Openness** - A person acknowledges to himself or herself and to God that he or she is open to the *possibility* of personal and spiritual change. This is one of the most difficult transitions for a postmodern nonbeliever. Openness is not a commitment to change. People who are open are simply admitting they are *open to the possibility* of change.
4. **Spiritual Seeking** - The person moves from being essentially passive to actively seeking to know the God who is calling him or her. It is, if you will, “dating with a purpose but not yet marriage. Seekers are asking, “Are you the one to whom I will give myself?” At this

stage, the seeker is engaged in an urgent spiritual quest, seeking to know whether he or she can commit to Christ in his Church.

5. Intentional Discipleship - This is the decision to “drop one’s nets”, to make a conscious commitment to follow Jesus in the midst of his Church as an obedient disciple and to record one’s life accordingly.

Important to note, the thresholds usually look and feel very different to “insiders” than it does to someone approaching from the outside. As evangelizers we need to make a real effort to imagine, to see Christ, the faith, and the Church through the eyes of outsiders. The same thresholds can seem overwhelming and insurmountable to them while looking very simple and obvious to us.

Also, people who are already disciples within the Christian tradition usually go through these same stages as they contemplate the possibility of entering the Catholic Church.

There is no one size fits all way of negotiating the journey to discipleship. People will move through at different paces. In intense retreat settings, some may bound through a couple thresholds in a few days. Others may be stuck in one place for years or ping-pong back and forth between different thresholds. There may be great leaps as well as relapses.

Conversion and true faith are the works of the Holy Spirit. We can, by our responses, help or hinder another’s journey. Responding to seekers in a way that does not accept and honor their lived experience may cause them to “freeze” or even move away from God. Understanding the thresholds can help us help them, or at least, help us to not get in the way of what God is doing.