



December 2018

Greetings!

Not to complicate your mail during this busy season, but we are happy to send our December issue of Evangelization Exchange.



We need to continue to explore discipleship as Catholics. I have a piece which helps us reflect on the power of the Mass to form disciples. A huge part of discipleship is relationship! "The church really markets relationship..."—this is part of what Jane Angha tells us in her next piece on welcoming—something that we cannot do enough.

An article from America magazine shares ideas for how to turn Christmas worshipers into year-long worshipers. Another article from Pew Research compares various European countries and their religious practice. Who would have thought Romania would top the list? This is a way for us to think about our own changes in religious practice in the United States and Canada.

We also have links to new offerings from us here at Paulist Evangelization Ministries. Learn more about our new book, *Catholic Discipleship, Spiritual Exercises and Reflections* and key programming for Lent, *Living the Eucharist*.

We send, along with this material, our deep prayers for many blessings for you and your parishioners during this joyful time of Christmas and Epiphany.

Frank DeSiano, CSP  
President



# The Spirit of Liturgy

*By Fr. Frank DeSiano, CSP  
President, Paulist Evangelization  
Ministries*

Nearly forty-percent of Catholics attend Mass monthly or more often. Although this is a discouraging number, given the essential place the Mass has in Catholic life and discipleship, it offers encouragement in one clear way: four out of ten Catholics can grow as missionary disciples because they are nourished and sustained by the celebration of the Mass.



In fact, the Mass provides a necessary foundation for growing as followers of Jesus Christ and finding the resources to live and share faith more clearly. It does so because it grounds Catholic spiritual life on the Word of God and the shared Sacred Food in which Jesus gives himself to his followers and to the world.

While this has always been implicit in Catholic life, the Second Vatican Council helped to make these elements of formation and grow much more explicit for virtually every Catholic. The beautiful and ancient ritual of the Mass (which had evolved slowly century by century) was opened up for God's people to relish more clearly than ever. Not only was the Mass put into the "language of the people"; even more, the structure of the Mass was clarified before the eyes of all participants. Whereas the Mass celebrated in Latin could look like one unbroken and mysterious rite, the Second Vatican Council helped Catholics to see the Mass in the two major moments of its ritual. The Eucharist was composed of the "Table of the Word"; and the "Table of the Eucharist." Each of these Tables is necessary to feed Christ's disciples.

Each of these Tables also provides the foundational elements of being missionary disciples—being converted by the Word of God and being strengthened by the Bread and Wine that Jesus gives his friends.

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## Becoming a Welcoming Parish



By Jane Angha of  
[www.ministryblueprints.com](http://www.ministryblueprints.com)

A college professor recently said recently over dinner that his students are lonely. He attributes it to their use of technology which he says is a crutch, a screen and or just a device that keeps them safe from the outside world. I wondered about that and figured if it was happening to young

adults, it was happening to the rest of the population too. Loneliness is only

conquered through relationships. Relationships happen through connection and belonging and those are at the heart of parish life.

We might not use these terms- but the church really markets relationships. First and foremost is the relationship with Jesus found through personal encounter, Scriptures, Sacrament and community. Those who have had their lives changed by these very things can't help but want others to share in it too - so we invite people in. But what kinds of things does your parish have to offer those who are lonely, seeking and hungry for purpose and belonging? Where are the personal encounters with Jesus? Where are the small groups to learn more, to find support or are there places to use leadership skills?

There must be something that satisfies once one is through the doors, sitting in the pew or volunteering at Vacation Bible School.

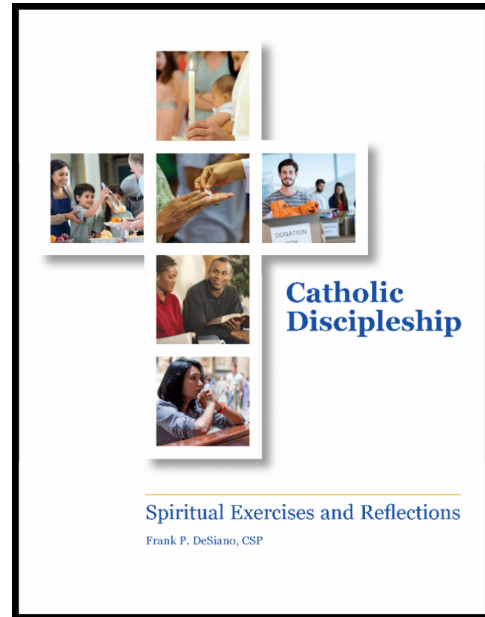
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## New from Paulist Evangelization Ministries

*Catholic Discipleship: Spiritual Exercises and Reflections* features twelve units focusing on the fundamental dimensions of what it means to be a disciple in today's world. Each unit features a Spiritual Exercise which includes Scripture and questions for reflection and discussion.

*Catholic Discipleship* is a new resource for parishes and individuals who want to explore their identity as missionary disciples and can be used by individuals looking to deepen their own connection to Christ, or by parishes looking for small group faith formation or a parish wide-renewal.



This new book published by Paulist Evangelization Ministries concludes with a “checklist” for Catholic Missionary Disciples. To celebrate the release of this new resource, we are sharing the checklist with our newsletter subscribers. [Click here](#) to see the checklist so that you can explore the way you reveal your missionary discipleship.

[Order Here in English](#)

[Order Here in Spanish](#)



## How parishes can turn ‘Christmas Catholics’ into regular Massgoers

*From America Magazine*

*By Jack Bentz, S.J.,*

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No one wants to be the innkeeper in a Christmas pageant. You know the one, the door-slamming landlord who turned away Joseph and Mary before they became the Holy Family. Any other role is better than



that one. Even wearing the scratchy sheep costume is better or being the rope pull on the flying angel—anything but the mean innkeeper of Bethlehem.

This failure to give a bed to a tired pregnant teenager has had far-reaching consequences. Imagine how different Christmas would be if the couple had not been left out in the cold. In one small action of thoughtfulness, we would have been spared all those plastic light-up outdoor Nativity scenes. If only we could do it all over again.

The Latin American tradition of las posadas gives participants a chance to be better than the original host. For several nights before Christmas, groups accompanying children dressed as Joseph and a pregnant Mary travel from door to door looking for lodging. The procession can feature lanterns, singing, a donkey and a whole lot of adorable kids dressed in biblical costumes. On these nine nights, the holy couple is welcomed inside, and festive foods like tamales and atole are served. The community gathers and ritually rewrites the Scriptures, this time welcoming the strangers in from the cold.

If Jesus and Mary had been regular guests at the inn, their room would have been reserved, their names would have been known and the story would be different. But it was their first time at this inn, and they didn’t know you had to show up early. They didn’t know a lot of things. How could they? That is what being a stranger means: Not being known is part of it, but not knowing is the rest.

But even if las posadas is not part of your tradition, this Christmas we can all do better than the innkeeper who shut the door. Many of us will be gathering with family and friends for Christmas Mass. And, as usual, we will be a mixed group made up of those who get to Mass regularly and those who do not. Our experience of Christmas Mass is going to be different depending on our place in the mix. For the regular Mass-goers, it will seem homey and routine, and a nod of recognition is going to be enough.

[Continue Reading at America Magazine](#)



## Act now to share the light of Christ in your parish with *Living the Eucharist*

*Living the Eucharist* inspires Catholics to live and share the Gospel through life-giving personal encounters with Christ during Lent. The stakes have never been higher and the need has never been greater to empower all Catholics to live as missionary disciples. That's why now is the perfect time to plan to bring *Living the Eucharist* to your parish for Lent 2019.



Our **Parish Starter Kit** has everything you need to review and plan for this coming Lent, including easy-to-follow leader guides, introductory videos, and samples of every program tool so that you can decide what works best for your parish. Use Savings Code **JOY2019** to receive \$10.00 off the purchase price.

Already familiar with *Living the Eucharist*? **Order your parish materials for Lent 2019 today.** Use savings code **LENT2019** to save 10% on your total materials order. Act now to make Lent 2019 the best ever for your parishioners.



## How do European countries differ in religious commitment?

By Jonathan Evans and Chris Baronavski, Copyright 2018 Pew Research Center

Europeans generally are less religious than people in other parts of the world. But within Europe, there are sometimes sizable differences in levels of religious commitment, according to an analysis of recent Pew Research Center surveys in 34 countries.

To learn more about religion in the nations of Europe, select a country to see where it ranks in overall religiosity. While exploring the interactive, keep in mind that differences between two countries may not be statistically significant due to the margins of error inherent in survey data.

There are many ways of defining what it means to be religious, but for this analysis, we looked at four common measures of religious observance: religious service attendance, prayer frequency, belief in God and self-described importance of religion in one's life.

The interactive tool above allows you to see how 34 countries across Europe rank on each of these measures - and by the share of adults in each country who are "highly religious" overall.

What does it mean to be “highly religious”? In our analysis, this includes any adult who reports they are highly observant on at least two of the four measures while not reporting a low level of religious observance in any of these four areas: attending religious services at least monthly, praying at least daily, believing in God with absolute certainty and saying that religion is very important to them. In addition, if a person reports a low level of religiosity on one of the measures (such as seldom or never attending religious services), they will still be considered “highly religious” if they report highly religious behaviors in the other three measures.

[Continue Reading at Pew](#)



## Join Partners In Mercy, Partners in Mission this Christmas Season

You are invited to become part of the missionary work of the Paulist Fathers to build up the Church and transform lives by reaching out to those who have drifted away from the practice of their faith.

**Partners in Mercy, Partners in Mission** is a prayerful, active way to join forces with one of the oldest Catholic religious orders in the USA to reach people you care about—family members, friends, and co-workers—who are not active in our Catholic faith community.



We Catholics often feel frustrated as we watch people, especially younger generations, disengage from their Catholic faith--or any faith. Our hearts ache to bring these people to the sacraments, but we don't know how.

Now there's a way you can help:  
Join Partners in Mercy, Partners in Mission.  
Become a Partner today.

Thank you for all you do to bring faith to others, and thank you for considering this invitation to join **Partners in Mercy, Partners in Mission**.

[Watch our Introductory Video Here!](#)



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