

Official recognition of the Parish Evangelisation Cell System

The Pontifical Council for the Laity on 15th April 2015 gave official recognition to the Parish Evangelisation Cell System as an approved means of parish evangelisation and was celebrated at a papal audience with Pope Francis in Rome on 5th September 2015.

Testimony by Bob Skudder - from 'no faith' to 'Catholic faith'



My wife Cecilia has always been a staunch Catholic but I wasn't a churchgoer. In 2012, Fr Victor Vella, who is the parish priest in Orpington, invited us to go to Milan for an international seminar about the parish evangelisation cell system. Cecilia had damaged her shoulder so I had to go to help her. I didn't attend any of the sessions, but joined the group for Mass, meals and the nightly discussion. They were very friendly and inspiring and made me want to be more involved in the Catholic faith too. So when we came back I started going to Mass regularly. Fr Victor and I had some good discussions about the Catholic faith and I began researching about it on the internet. One person in the group, noticing my interest, invited me to join the RCIA, which I did. To my wife's delight I was baptised and received into the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil in 2014.

When the cells were launched in June 2014, I was put in Cecilia's cell. But in March 2015 a new cell began and I became a co-leader and now a leader of one. We have three non-Catholics in our cell. Because of my background they find it easy to talk to me. I find being in a cell is very spiritually uplifting. We are like a family. I am good at technical things, so I have been responsible for recording Fr Victor's teachings for the cells, first as audio teachings, then, since autumn 2016, these have been filmed and put on YouTube. The Parish Evangelisation Cells certainly worked for me!

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Link: [Evangelising Cells at Holy Innocents](#)

Parish Evangelisation Cell System

providing a way of forming disciples, identifying their gifts
and launching them into ministry
through small group cells



'In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelisers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey and a centre of constant missionary outreach'

Joy of the Gospel -
Pope Francis

'Go out to the whole world
and proclaim the good news'

Mark 16:16



'Follow me and
I will make you
fishers of men'
Matthew 4:19

Holy Innocents' Parish in Orpington, Kent adopted the Parish Evangelisation Cell System (PECS) model in 2014.

This journey from maintenance to mission
- harnessing the gifts of the laity and energising them to evangelise -
has opened up many surprising paths and blessings.



"As a priest I feel much more realised and fulfilled. We are not ordained to supervise bricks and mortar and to be managers but to form disciples. We are called to be icons of Christ: to preach, to teach and to heal. I feel for the first time I am really doing this."

Fr Victor Vella, parish priest of Holy Innocents', Orpington, Kent.

THE PARISH EVANGELISATION CELL SYSTEM IS BUILT ON THREE COMPONENTS

- small weekly or fortnightly cell group meetings
- adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- regular proclamation of the gospel message through Life in the Spirit seminars, Alpha Course or other Parish Missions to awaken faith.

WHAT IS A CELL?

- Each cell is like an extended family where prayer, practical help and evangelisation are encouraged through the personal witness of the cell members and formation is given through regular teaching by the parish priest.

HOW DO CELLS GROW?

- Cell members are encouraged to pray for, serve and evangelise their "Oikos" (friends, family, work colleagues and neighbours) and then invite them to participate in a local cell and experience the joy of Christian fellowship. When there are more than 12 members the cell divides and forms two new cells.

FRUITS OF PARISH EVANGELISATION CELLS at Holy Innocents' since implementation in 2014

- Growth in prayer life of cell members
- Enhancement of the gift of 'Welcome' by the whole parish
- Existing groups being re-energised
- Mushrooming of new ministries in the parish
- Spirit of discipleship and joy in service among cell members in outreach
PECS team enabled Fr Victor to organise a national Life in the Spirit retreat led by Fr Raniero Cantalamessa OFM for 100 priests in 2016
- Development of a spirit of co-responsibility in the parish
Setting up of leadership co-responsibility team to provide development and implementation of both the parish pastoral plan and parish vision

"For no matter how numerous our activities, our ministries; however numerous our concerns, our exertions - if there is no love, everything becomes meaningless."

St. John Paul II



WHAT HAPPENS IN A CELL MEETING?

- Cell meetings are held in people's homes, last for one and half hours and follow the outline below:
- Praise and Worship - time to come into the presence of God
- Sharing prayer and evangelistic experiences since the last meeting
- Scripture teaching (*Google YouTube Fr Victor Vella for his teachings for the cells*)
- Discussion by cell members on the teaching to understand, take root and apply to daily living
- Intercessory prayers and prayers for healing
- The Lord's prayer for the wider community

SEVEN PURPOSES OF PARISH EVANGELISING CELL MEETINGS

- to grow in ongoing intimacy with God
- to grow in love of one another
- to share faith by word/lifestyle
- to minister in the Body of Christ
- to give and receive support
- to raise up new leaders
- to deepen our Catholic identity