

# **Parish Evangelical Cell**



**Catholic Cell Community  
of Evangelization**

# **Parish Evangelical Cell System**

## **Guidebook**

This guidebook was written by a master class of the St. Bellarmine Faculty of Theology.

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## Preface

At the Taiwan Evangelization Congress, held between 2019 and 2021, the importance of the Small Communities of Faith (Basic Ecclesial Communities) for the Church in Asia, as it has been for other



local churches, was once again confirmed. Although there have been previous unsuccessful experiences of trying to establish the Basic Ecclesial Communities, now the congress put forward a new suggestion: to establish one particular kind of Small Community of Faith, that is the Parish Evangelical Cell (PEC). The document says:

The Church of Taiwan already made a clear decision to establish in all the parishes the Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC) more than thirty years ago. Today we should work even harder to achieve this important goal. Why give priority to Basic Ecclesial Communities? The answer is because they are “Christian,” (or ecclesial) small communities in which the members, in communion with the pastor and one another, actively participate in the Church’s life and mission. And because they are “faith communities” (or “basic” communities) in the sense that they are not based on a specific interest of a group of people, or stressing a particular aspect of the Christian life, as usually happens in other groups, movements, and associations....

Recently some parishes have started to use the method of the Parish Evangelical Cells (PEC). This method is very similar to that of the Basic Ecclesial Communities, and so is worth consideration.

Its peculiarity is that, in addition to prayer, Bible sharing and mutual support, it puts a strong emphasis and gives a clear method for the evangelization of the people we meet on a frequent basis, namely, our relatives, our neighbors, our colleagues, and our friends.

Moreover, in this method, to facilitate the Bible sharing, the Taiwan National Evangelical Cell Committee every week records a brief explanation of a chosen biblical passage, with some input for reflection, and shares it with all the Evangelical Cells through YouTube, Line or other social media. The cell members watch it before the meeting to better prepare their Bible sharing. During the cell meeting, the group watches it together. Then the members do the Bible sharing according to their insights and experiences. We can easily promote the method of the Parish Evangelical Cells because, for the preparation of the leaders, two manuals and other training material already translated into Chinese are available.<sup>1</sup>

The main reason for promoting the Parish Evangelical Cell system is that it presents a simple, specific, and effective way of evangelization. Another reason is that this method is provided with Chinese reference materials,<sup>2</sup> which facilitate its implementation.

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1 Chinese Regional Bishops' Conference, *Pastoral and missionary guide for parishes of the Catholic Church in Taiwan* (Taipei: 2021), 7-7.1.

2 Cf. 培裡齊與法國細胞福全協會編著，任安道譯，《向近人傳福音，堂區細胞福傳介紹暨培訓讀本》（台北市：光啟文化，2013）。Its English version: Michael J. Eivers, A. Perry Vitale and Muriel Kroll, *Cell Leaders Training Manual, Parish Cell system of Evangelization* (Milano: St. Eustorgio Parish, 1995). The content of this book has been summarized into a series of videos to facilitate diffusion, available at the webpage of "Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine, Ecclesial Small Communities Pastoral Center": <https://theology.catholic.org.tw/J/data.php?id=410&tpl=0> and at Facebook: 台灣地區福傳細胞。

In order to further promote the Parish Evangelical Cell system in the Chinese speaking parishes, we have prepared this handbook. It explains PEC's key points in a simple way, and make some adjustments that are in line with the local situation. Hopefully it will help to understand how to foster the establishment of this method in the Chinese speaking parishes.

## **Part one: Theological Basis of the Parish Evangelical Cell (PEC) System**

All communities formed in the Church are manifestations of the love and unity of the Holy Trinity. As the image of the invisible God, we, especially as Christians, have the responsibility and mission of spreading his love to the entire world. Every community, like the “ecclesial basic communities” or the “parish evangelical cells”, by living according to the teachings of Christ, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are channels of expression of God’s love. Therefore, anyone who with eagerness joins a small community of faith, grows in faith and unity with others, gradually living a real Christian life.

Pope St. John Paul II, in *Redemptoris Missio*, wrote:

A rapidly growing phenomenon in the young churches - one sometimes fostered by the bishops and their Conferences as a pastoral priority - is that of "ecclesial basic communities" (also known by other names) which are proving to be good centers for Christian formation and missionary outreach...

Within them, the individual Christian experiences community and therefore senses that he or she is playing an active role and is encouraged to share in the common task. Thus, these communities become a means of evangelization and of the initial proclamation of the Gospel, and a source of new ministries. At the same time, by being imbued with Christ's love, they also show how divisions, tribalism and racism can be overcome.<sup>3</sup>

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3 John Paul II, *On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate (Redemptoris Missio)* (1990), 51.

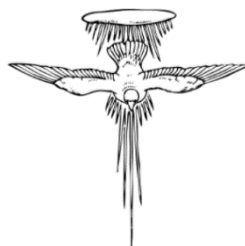


From the above quote, we can see that the PEC has two axes, which show the characteristics of its life and mission: community and evangelization. In the community the members share the Word of God, pray together, grow in sanctity, and offer each other mutual support. Then, animated by such spirit, the members try to be witnesses of Christ towards their neighbors, that is the people they often meet in everyday life. While in the PEC the first element, that is the community life, is similar to other forms of small faith communities, the second element, the personal method of evangelization, is its peculiar feature. After his resurrection, Jesus entrusted the special mission of evangelization to his disciples: "Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to every creature!" (Mk 16:15). The PEC longs for every one of its members to be animated by this commandment of Jesus and look at the non-believers with the same heart of Christ. Each member, by words and deeds, should proclaim the Christian faith. "This is how all will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13: 35)

## **Part two: The five pillars of the Parish Evangelical Cell system**

### **1 The Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is not only the "soul" of the church, but also the "soul" of every group in the church. Therefore, PEC members should especially seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and listen to his voice with humility. The PEC must let the Holy Spirit be the pillar and promoter of the group, because the Spirit is the main pioneer of evangelization. Without the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, the evangelization efforts of the cell members will not bear fruit.



### **2 Prayer**



The PEC meeting, because it is a time of encounter with God, begins with songs of praise and ends with intercessional prayers. It is a kind of "liturgy" led by laity.

The adoration of the Eucharist also gives the members of the PEC special spiritual power. The *Decree on the ministry and life of priests* states that " Every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, is tied together with the Eucharist and is directed toward it. The Most Blessed Eucharist

contains the entire spiritual boon of the Church."<sup>4</sup> It reminds us that we should not try to evangelize counting on our good will and capacity. As a group and as individuals, we need always to bow down before the Eucharist and pray, because what we want to preach is the resurrected Lord Christ hidden in the Holy Eucharist. Therefore, the Eucharist is the source of grace and power that enable the group to effectively evangelize in its internal and external activities.

### **3 Holy Scripture**

Bible sharing and the homily of the pastor are the focus of the PEC meeting. In the cell, members share how the words of God can live in the lives of modern Christians. Through the rich content disclosed by the video homily and the Bible sharing, every member understands how to live out the Gospel in daily life, and nurtures his/her faith. It is also an effective way for non-Christians who join the group to gradually know Jesus and his teaching.

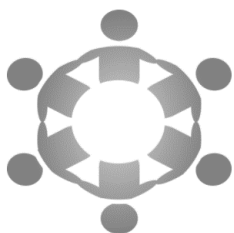


### **4 Communion**

The Second Vatican Council offers inspiring words to all lay people: "The group apostolate of Christian believers then happily corresponds to a human and Christian need and at the same time

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<sup>4</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (Presbyterorum Ordinis)* (1965), n.5.



signifies the communion and unity of the Church in Christ.”<sup>5</sup> Therefore, any gathering of the people of God should not just be an external assembly of a few people, but a communion that fosters mutual growth.

The life and action of Christ and the communion of the Church are reflected in such a group.

## 5 A specific method of evangelization

Pope St. John Paul II mentioned that the Church has to use new methods of evangelization in the modern world: "Evangelization can be new in its ardor, methods and expression."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, in a rapidly changing world, the Church needs to embrace a new missionary activity. Therefore, evangelization is the responsibility and obligation of every member of God's people and must be carried out in a fresh and innovative way. The Parish Evangelical Cell system offers a new way of bringing the faithful together and nourishing their missionary spirit, so that members, by praying, serving and sharing, try to evangelize their neighbors, in the place where they live and work.




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<sup>5</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) (1965), 18.

<sup>6</sup> "The Task of the Latin American bishops", *Origins* 12 (March 24, 1983) p. 661.

## **Part three: The process of evangelization**

Proclaiming the kingdom of God to the whole of creation is the mission that Jesus gave to his disciples before his ascension. This is also the mission of the Church and the primary and basic responsibility of all Christians. Therefore, in addition to being a particular way of meeting in small groups, PEC also has another main axis, namely a method of evangelization through personal relationship. Let us understand each stage of this method, and also learn the skills of effective evangelization.

### **3.1 The recipients of evangelization**

The recipients of evangelization of the Evangelical Cells are all people, but in practice are our neighbors (close people). Neighbors are those who have a close relationship with us, those we meet often. They are our family members, relatives, friends, classmates, colleagues, and next-door neighbors (The PEC system uses the Greek word “Oikos”, which means household, in a broad sense, to refer to these people).<sup>7</sup> The evangelizer and the object of evangelization share a common circle of life. So, each living environment, such as home, school or workplace become our everyday missionary field. Therefore, PEC lead the members to be evangelizers in their daily lives.

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7 Cf. Michael J. Eivers, A. Perry Vitale and Muriel Kroll, *Cell Leaders Training Manual*, pp. 11-13.

Because the objects of evangelization are people we often meet and know well, it is easier to strike up a conversation, and share our experience of faith. Knowing them well, even people



who lack evangelistic skills feel confident to say something and overcome fear. However, even though we are in frequent contact and chat about many things, it is always

more difficult to share our personal experiences, especially regarding our spiritual journey of faith. Nevertheless, since we are together every day, the opportunities to share are always there. In other words, evangelization does not need to deliberately organize a certain activity in a specific place, but we do it in our daily environment: where we live or where we work; in our school or in the restaurant where we meet our friends. In practice, we have many opportunities to share the Gospel with those near us. Our neighbors are the natural recipients given to us by God. Indeed, the Second Vatican Council teaches that the mission of the laity is to be witnesses of the faith in their social environment:

Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardor of the spirit of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 2.

Therefore, the PEC process of evangelization is not primarily exercised in a communitarian way by the group, but individually by each member towards the people they are close to.

Every PEC member should make a list of his/her close people, including family members, friends, colleagues, classmates, neighbors, etc., and consider their spiritual situation. (see Appendix 1). Many of them may be non-Christians, who ignore the Gospel; some may have heard of Christ but still refuse to believe; some may have accepted God but refuse to join the Church; some may have been baptized, but they no longer live their faith; and there are also some people who may actually be open to the Gospel. Through prayer, the PEC member should discern who among them might be most open to accepting the faith, then choose one or two of them to be his/her preferred targets of evangelization.



### 3.2 Starting from the daily relationships

A good relationship with others is a chance for us to evangelize. This is the main characteristic of the method used by the PEC system. The journey begins with prayer for those we wish to evangelize, so that the Holy Spirit forges a spiritual bond with them. Then we serve them, helping them according to



their needs, so that friendship and trust grow. Our closeness to them allows us to perceive the problem they are facing, so that at the appropriate time we can suggest them to open up to experience the presence, help and love of Christ and know his good news. When this happens, not only do they experience renewal, growth and fulfillment in their lives, but they also receive the

strength to face the challenges and hardships of the present. In this way, witnessing to faith and sharing the Gospel become more natural and more life-oriented. At the same time, evangelists experience the constant renewal of their relationship with the Lord, and learn to cooperate with the Holy Spirit, for the growth of the Church. Therefore, the PEC method of evangelization is not primarily about training the members in how to preach. On the contrary, it is above all about getting members to establish good relationships, which is done mainly through prayer and service. If there is no good, friendly



relationship with the "neighbors" (as sometimes happens), then there is no way to preach the good news to them.

### **3.3 The power of the Holy Spirit**

Just as the early Church was full of energy to preach the gospel after receiving the grace of Pentecost, so we also need the Holy Spirit to invigorate our evangelistic efforts, so that we can bear abundant fruit. Indeed, in order to make the evangelism process more fluid, we try to learn preaching and service skills, and how to get along well with others. However, without the help of the Holy Spirit we work in vain. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit gives us inspiration and wisdom and, on the other hand, offers the recipients of evangelization suitable opportunities to listen with interest and open their hearts to the faith. That is why, in the process of evangelization, we need the assistance of the Holy Spirit, with whom we must fully cooperate. Therefore, constant prayer and openness to the Holy Spirit are always our necessary attitudes.

### **3.4 The focal point of evangelization**



Often the Catholics who wish to evangelize try to invite their relatives or friends to participate in the Sunday Mass, hoping that they will like it, will continue to come, and eventually attend a catechumenal class, and be baptized. But often this process is not successful, because even though people accept our invitation to come and to participate in the Mass, they have not

yet started to believe. The invitation is not preceded by a process of personal evangelization. Before we invite people to the church, we should try to introduce Jesus to them, and help them to open their heart to him. In other words, they should have a beginning of faith. This is the PEC method: first a personal encounter with Jesus, then invitation to the cell, and at the end entrance into the catechumenate and the Parish.

In the process of evangelization, we are often faced with the problem that, while we want to share the gospel with others, they are not at all interested, or even feel repulsion or distrust. Perhaps everything in their lives is going well, so they don't think the gospel is necessary. For this reason, we need an attitude of constant and vigilant observation, attentive to the changes of life, the challenges and



the difficulties encountered by our neighbors. Because these critical moments in life are a good opportunity to guide them to accept and convert to the Lord Jesus, to establish a personal relationship with them and to begin to pray. Once they start to feel close to Jesus and have a beginning of faith, we can take the next step by inviting them to join the Parish Evangelical Cell, so that they can experience the warmth of a Christian community. Attending cell meetings helps these new friends of Jesus deepen their knowledge of the Church. Then, gradually, they will participate in the Eucharistic celebration and enter the

catechumenate, in order to prepare themselves to be baptized and to enter the Church.

### 3.5 Scheme of the process of evangelization

<b>Prayer</b>	To pray for the “neighbors” one often meets in daily life.
<b>Service</b>	Through service, to build a friendly relationship with them.
<b>Sharing</b>	To be a witness of Jesus by sharing one’s personal experience of faith.
<b>Explanation</b>	To answer their questions about Christian faith, and clarify misunderstandings.
<b>Commitment</b>	When they face stressful situations, to lead them to a beginning of trust in Jesus and prayer.
<b>Joining a PEC</b>	To invite them to join a parish evangelical cell, to grow in faith and love.
<b>Entering the parish community</b>	Gradually to lead them to attend Mass and parish activities, enter the catechumenate, receive the baptism, and become an active member of the Church.

## 1 Prayer as the first step



Prayer is the beginning of evangelization and an indispensable part of the whole process of evangelism. In prayer, we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, deepen our knowledge and experience, and ask for the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit, his wisdom and guidance, so that we can serve and share the Gospel.

In the gospel, Jesus taught his disciples how to pray. During the two-thousand-year history of the Church, rich traditions and methods of prayer have developed. Regardless of the prayer method, it is about leading us to God, being with him, experiencing his beauty, and obtaining divine blessing and grace. This not only allows our inner spiritual life to continuously grow, but also enables us to acquire spiritual power and help us fulfill the mission of preaching the Gospel. Common ways of praying include: attending Mass, worship and praise, reading and meditation, the rosary, Eucharistic adoration, and spontaneous individual or group prayers. We can use different methods, but in addition to praying for ourselves and our families, we should pray every day for the people we want to evangelize, so that they can know and believe in Jesus. In CEP meetings, members should also pray fervently for their evangelistic targets. When a member began to pray each day for someone else's conversion, he or she had already started to be an evangelizer.

## 2 Serving in the spirit of the Gospel

Service, with practical actions, is the way to gain the trust of others and gradually establish an atmosphere of mutual friendship. It helps the unbeliever to abandon an attitude of secular hostility and resistance to Christianity. As a matter of fact, many people have been influenced by reports of scandals or misleading news, and have a negative view of the



Christian faith and the Church. In this case, to dispute with them will not easily change their point of view. Rather, we can provide opportunities for clarification through sincere service, so that the seeds of the gospel can germinate and grow in their hearts. Every Christian should serve others, but PEC members in particular should pay close attention to the needs of their neighbors, to help them at the right time. They should observe the real situation of their life; and when they need help, it's a good opportunity for service. For example, to help co-workers finish their jobs smoothly, or to care for sick relatives, or to care for neighbors' children in need, or to help elderly neighbors buy things and clean their house.

To serve is to follow Jesus, to learn his way of serving others and to become a servant. Service is not only for evangelization, but it is also for our growth in charity and sanctification, as Jesus said: "Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant" (Mt 20:26). To serve is not to have a spirit of servility,

but to want freely, from the bottom of the heart, to serve others for the love of Jesus. Serving others does not mean suffering a loss, because we know that our reward is with God, and it is a greater reward. To learn to be a servant, like Jesus, is also to practice the teaching: “love your neighbor as yourself”; and it is an act of dedication.

Service is given in a friendly relationship, and is guided by the Holy Spirit. We serve others in accordance with the wisdom and ability of each person.

### **3 Sharing our faith experience**

The spirit of sharing is: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." (Rm 12:15). Sharing is very different from teaching someone. It is to reveal something that is important in our life. Whether it is a moment of joy or sorrow, it is being with our neighbors, listening to them, walking with them through the high mountains or the low valleys of life, and together overcoming the challenges of life.

Since through service, we and our neighbors can gradually establish a good friendship, at the right time, we can share with them that Jesus is the source of our loving service and that faith is our driving force, not our own goodness. We are to bear witness of Jesus, not to brag about ourselves. All the PEC members should prepare their own story of salvation, and be ready to share their personal religious experience in a succinct manner. For example: small miracles that have happened in our lives; or when we have encountered difficulties, how we have received concrete help through prayer, etc. We can also share how faith helps us have peace in life; or share stories of the love, wisdom, and joy

we have learned from the gospel. Through these testimonies to the power of faith we can move and encourage our neighbors.

An important principle to remember is that when we share a life experience, we should never force others to listen if they don't feel comfortable. For the sharing to achieve the desired results, we have to patiently wait for the right time. In the process of telling our own testimonies, we also need to patiently listen to our neighbors, and maintain a relaxed and caring attitude. We should not criticize and judge the preferences and lifestyles of others. We must be as patient as God, respect the pace of growth of others and accept their situation, just as the Father accepts us too.



#### **4 Answering questions**

By sharing their faith, CEP members will give rise to many questions for people who listen to the Gospel for the first time. Answering the questions helps them understand Jesus and the Gospel correctly, and accept faith wholeheartedly. The CEP members answer the questions according to their level of knowledge of the faith. It is neither a preaching nor an unmistakable interpretation of the Bible or the doctrine of the Church. Rather, it is simply a matter of concisely answering basic questions, such as: to whom do we pray, the manner of praying, the main teachings of Jesus, such as the commandment to love the Lord and the neighbor, and the way of life of Christians. Also,

the structure of the Church: the role of the laity, priests, religious sisters, and the pope. If the person asks questions that are difficult to answer, the CEP member can ask the priest, or a competent layperson, for explanations. At this initial stage, the people we try to evangelize do not need to learn complex theories, but only simple concepts, especially the basics elements that new believers should know and practice.

Brotherly love is the best attitude in explaining faith, because this can create a friendly relationship. To avoid unpleasant situations, we should refrain from behaving as preachers or even judges of others. Better to avoid unnecessary debate, even though the other party insists on some misconceptions. Heated discussion will only deepen their attitude of defense and resistance to the Church and the Gospel, and will not make them feel the love of God. On the contrary, we should be respectful, tolerant, and patient with them, waiting patiently for the right moment to explain ourselves better. The purpose of the explanation, in fact, is not to win arguments, but by our graceful manner to help them understand and accept the faith.

### **5 Leading our neighbor facing a stressful situation to find help in Jesus**

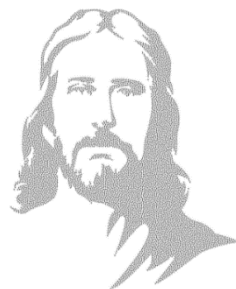
In our society it is usual that many people are not interested in religion, and are not open to accept an invitation to participate in religious activities. They simply do not feel any need of it. So, in such circumstances it is extremely difficult to evangelize. But things change very much when they face a stressful situation that scares or threatens them. This happens when they encounter difficulties in their life and feel helpless, due to illness,





unemployment, bereavement, etc. Or when they have to make important choices, especially when they have to choose a school, get married, and have a child. At that moment, people feel their limitations, are willing to drop their pride, and are more open to humbly seek God's help. At that moment, they especially need our accompaniment and are more willing to listen to advice.

A transition period in people's lives is very important for faith acceptance. This is the time when one needs Jesus' relief most, and when it is easier to accept faith. Therefore, PEC members should always be attentive to the difficulties and stressful moments of the person they want to evangelize. In addition to serving him/her with charitable actions, they must also take the opportunity to share that, just as their lives have changed by trusting in the Lord Jesus, so too he/she can overcome difficulties by believing in Jesus and praying to him. Although that person does not yet have a sufficient knowledge of Jesus and has not been baptized, still the almighty and loving Lord Jesus is willing to help all who believe in him. In other words, we should teach the one in need to pray to Jesus in a simple way, but with insistence: or we should pray with him/her. However, it is important to clearly explain the true meaning of prayer. Prayer is not repeating some clichés or doing some rituals, but at its core is the sincere faith in Jesus.



Because without an original intention of true faith, there will be no good results in prayer. Faith is entrusting one's life to Jesus, opening one's heart to him.

If the person is willing to begin to believe and sincerely pray to Jesus, and if God is willing to make him/her feel his existence and his mighty help, for that person this is the turning point and the beginning of faith. From this we can see that this is the crucial moment in the PEC way of evangelization. It is here that we begin to guide people to know Jesus, to experience his power, and to decide to believe in him. The next step is to enter the cell community.

## **6 Invite our neighbor to join the Parish Evangelical Cell community**



If the person we wish to evangelize has begun to believe in Jesus and accepts Jesus as Savior, we can try to invite him/her to take the step of participating in the PEC meeting. If he/she accepts, we can introduce him to the group and he/she can start attending the cell

meeting. In regular meetings, each member should share with other members the progress made with the person one intends to evangelize. So, when that person is invited to join the cell, the other members already know him/her and are ready to welcome him/her. Therefore, that person will not feel like a stranger, and

will feel warmly welcomed by the PEC. Conversely, if that person was invited directly to the Mass of a large parish, he/she would not receive the same warm welcome, friendly attention, and adequate care. In the cell community, the person gradually learns about Jesus, participates in sharing the Bible, sings and praises with hymns, and prays together with other members. The cell becomes his/her first school of faith. There he/she can experience the life of the community of faith, learn the fundamental concepts of Christianity, and prepare to welcome the Holy Spirit and his gifts. Then gradually he/she will join the ranks of those who evangelize.

## **7 From the Evangelical Cell to the parish community**

When a non-Christian person participates in the PEC, he/she should not be urged to prepare quickly for baptism. On the contrary, we should respect the rhythm of others, and give time according to the situation and needs of each person. Perhaps gradually we can encourage him/her to participate in Mass and other ecclesial activities, to experience the life of communion in the church. If he/she is willing to go on, then we can accompany him/her to attend a catechism course, so as to receive a systematic explanation of the faith, prepare for the reception of the sacraments, and become a member of the Church.

During the catechumenate, and after baptism, the person should continue to participate in the meeting of the PEC, which is of great help for his/her growth in faith. In fact, after baptism, many newly baptized people gradually leave the Church. One of the reasons is the inability to become rooted in the parish, to make friends, or to find a group wherein they can continue to nurture

the faith. Whenever a newly baptized person encounters adversity, it is easy for him/her to leave the church, and if the parish has a large number of parishioners, no one notices his/her absence. On the contrary, in the PEC, members care, encourage, and support each other. Therefore, each parish should encourage catechumens to start participating in the PEC before baptism.



## **Part four: The meeting of the Parish Evangelical Cell**

The evangelization cell is a small-scale group, with a membership of eight to a maximum of twenty people, and among them there must be at least four to eight members who participate regularly. This small group makes it easy for all members to participate actively. The name “cell” is due to the fact that as the



cells of the body multiply, in the same way the cell of evangelization should always try to evangelize and attract new members, and then multiply. Then, whenever a cell has more than fifteen members, it must prepare to divide into another new cell.

### **1 The meeting place.**

Possibly it shouldn't be in the church. It can be regularly in one house, or take turns in several, in offices or other locations convenient for members. If for various reasons this is not possible, a room in the parish can also be used. It is very important to carefully prepare the place so that the participants can feel comfortable, otherwise the quality of the meeting will suffer. The room should be well lit, neither too hot nor too cold. The chairs must be in a circle, so that everyone can see each other. It is very important to maintain the spiritual and prayerful atmosphere of

the meeting; therefore, apart from some special circumstances, one should not eat food during the meeting.

## **2 Equipment.**

To help everyone watch the videos of the homily and the subtitles of the songs, the ideal is to prepare a computer. If it can be connected to a projector, the effect will be better. If, on the other hand, mobile phones are used, care must be taken that everyone can hear clearly. A small external speaker can be added when needed.

## **3 Frequency and time of meetings.**

The ideal frequency for PECs is to meet once a week, but it can also be fixed once every two weeks depending on the availability of the members. They also decide the appropriate time. Each meeting takes place according to the usual six steps, the duration of which must be controlled, to prevent the meeting from becoming too long. It should be kept within 75-90 minutes

## **4.1 The goals of the cell meeting**

PEC has two main objectives: to spread the Gospel to neighbors, and to consolidate and deepen the faith of the members, to help them to live a life according to the gospel, so as to sanctify themselves. On the one hand, each member should have the goal of evangelizing his/her neighbors. So, in addition to attending the meetings, during the week he/she should carry out that mission. On the other hand, when the neighbors begin to have faith in Christ, the next step is to suggest them to participate in the PEC. Therefore, PEC meetings have a double function. First, they give members preparation and spiritual strength, so that they can

evangelize in their environment. Second, the PEC is also an important stage, and goal, in the process of evangelization: one of the members initiates it, and then it is continued by the entire group. Indeed, the group helps non-Christian, or lukewarm Christians members, to know Jesus, to learn to pray, to understand the Bible, to experience church life, to grow in faith.

The PEC meeting consists of the following six steps: song of praise, sharing of life, listening to the homily, Bible sharing, announcements, and prayers of intercession. Occasionally, if needed, prayer of healing, after the meeting.

## **4.2 The conduct of the cell meeting**

### **1 Song and praise (10-15 mins)**

The PEC leader and the assistant leader should arrive in advance at the meeting place in order to welcome each member with joy and enthusiasm. To allow everyone to pray in an atmosphere of profound prayer, each meeting must begin by giving thanks to God with hymns of praise, and by invoking the Holy Spirit. It is better if the singing is accompanied by musical instruments. Another possibility is to choose songs available on the Internet. It is good to choose hymns that are familiar, so that all members can sing. The purpose is that the participants open their hearts to God and meet him with joy.

The hymns of praise can be accompanied by spontaneous prayers, mainly praising the Lord and invoking the coming of the Holy Spirit. Members should open their hearts and ask the Spirit to lead them to an intimate encounter with Christ, preparing them



to listen to what God wants to say to them during the meeting, and paying attention to the needs of the brothers and sisters around them.

It is better to choose a member to be responsible for the songs of the meetings. The song selection should start with a vibrant and joyful rhythm, and then continue with a softer, slower, meditative melody. Singing some parts repeatedly helps the atmosphere of prayer. The leader of singing should choose a suitable key for the members to sing along. One should not be afraid to sing badly or be shy when singing, because praising God wholeheartedly is the most important thing.

## **2 Life sharing (10-15 mins)**

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, members communicate their life experiences in each meeting. This is an opportunity to get to know each other and share spiritual graces. It is also a testimony of the presence of God in their life. In sharing, the evangelization process should be the center of attention, focused on the following two questions:

1. In the last week (or two weeks), what has God done for me?

This means: how God manifests himself in my life? How he takes care of me, protects me and gives me what I need? How God shows me his love through all things and situations? How do I experience God through the love of my family and neighbors?

2. What have I done for God?



This means: have I responded to God's goodness towards me, serving my neighbor out of love? Of course, various experiences of service may be shared, but the cell leader should guide members to focus on sharing what they have done to evangelize their neighbors. For example, what specific services did they do? Did they share their faith? Have they answered questions about faith? Did they pay attention to the stressful moments of their neighbors, encouraging them to trust in Jesus and to pray? Have they invited neighbors who accepted Jesus to attend the cell meeting, etc.

The group leader should pay attention lest the sharing plainly deviates from its focus, and, in an appropriate manner, provide suggestions to prevent the life sharing becoming a banal chat.

It is important to listen carefully to the sharing of each member, to become aware of the grace given by God and the fruits of cooperation with grace. Through the sharing, one often understands the expectations and problems of others, physical and spiritual. Through attentive listening, members can understand each other better, care for and support each other, and learn to serve and witness the faith more effectively.

The group leader should be a humble facilitator who guides, inspires and encourages members to actively share their thoughts. The leader must avoid the situation of monologues, and should not comment on any of the members' sharing. It is not necessary to ask all members to share, which would be impossible due to limited time. The sharing atmosphere should be respectful and free, without forcing those who do not wish to share. It is good to avoid heated discussions, especially when it comes to controversial topics. In fact, the purpose of PEC meetings is not

to debate, but to share the experience of faith, better understand the Word of God, and put it into practice.

Usually sharing should refer to events that occurred in very recent times, and not become a story of things from the past (older people tend to repeat things from the past, but this type of repetition does not help the group, and should be avoided).

Since people can share very personal matters, whether concerning themselves or others, it is important that all members strictly refrain from talking to outside people about the personal things shared during the meeting.

### **3 Brief recorded homily (5-10 mins)**

An important moment of the PEC is listening to a recorded homily/preaching so as to facilitate the sharing of the Bible. The video of the preaching is produced by the National, or Diocesan, Committee of Parish Evangelical Cells, and distributed online to all groups. Another possibility is that the parish priest records the homily for the groups of his parish. To allow all PECs to benefit from it, the content of the homily can be adapted to different ages, ethnicities, languages or dialects. The homily is usually in video format, but it can also be audio. To facilitate the preparation of the meeting, each video should be accompanied by a written summary of the content.

To help the leader and assistant leader to prepare well for the meeting, the video of the homily is produced and sent at least two days before the meeting. This allows the leader to better focus on the content and think about how to apply it to the current PEC situation. All members also receive the video in advance, so that

they can reflect on the biblical passage and prepare the content of their sharing.

In general, the priest rarely participates in cell meetings and makes himself present only through the video homily. The reason is to avoid transforming the meeting into a question and answer discussion, with the priest at the center, which deviates from the original intent of the PEC. This allows the laity to have the opportunity to effectively lead the group.

The video preaching gradually and systematically explains the Bible and Church doctrine, helps PEC members grow in their spiritual life, and blows on the fire of their call to the mission of evangelization, as Pope St. Paul VI said:

Having been sent and evangelized, the Church herself sends out evangelizers. She puts on their lips the saving Word, she explains to them the message of which she herself is the depositary, she gives them the mandate which she herself has received and she sends them out to preach. To preach not their own selves or their personal ideas, but a Gospel of which neither she nor they are the absolute masters and owners, to dispose of it as they wish, but a Gospel of which they are the ministers, in order to pass it on with complete fidelity.<sup>9</sup>

#### **4 Bible sharing (20-25 mins)**

The preaching provides a biblical explanation of the original meaning of the text, and an interpretation of its meaning for us, who live now in a different context. The Bible sharing aims at

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<sup>9</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World (Evangelii Nuntiandi)*, 1975, 15.

developing this second part, that is to understand the meaning of the Bible for today's life, through the living experience of the participants.



After reading the Bible and watching the video, there is time for sharing. Members should make reflections on the basis of the preaching and the questions proposed, or share some points of the biblical passage that most impressed them. Due to time

constraints, content sharing should focus on the central idea, be concise, connected with personal experience in real life, saying what one has understood or the help one has received. Theoretical discussions and controversies should be avoided.

In sharing the Bible, the focus should be on how today, through the preaching or the reading of the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit has touched me. In addition, it is good to say how we can put that Word of God into practice in our life, trying to find out on what aspects the church, society, family and individuals should improve. For example, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, we should not stop only to comment on the behavior of the high priest or the Levite, but we should explain how we can put into practice the words of Jesus: "Go and do likewise!".

## **5 Group announcements (5 mins)**

During the meeting, the important information of the parish, other information related to the PEC, or issues raised by certain members can be reported to the members in a concise way.

## **6 Prayer for intercession (10-15 mins)**

The prayer for intercession has its source in the prayer of Jesus who, as our mediator, constantly intercedes for everyone, especially for sinners. It is a prayer for the needs of all, and the practice of our charity, in caring for the church, society and our neighbor. When we intercede for others, we obey the will of Christ, in the communion of all the saints. In reciprocal intercession we live in love, "Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Phil 2: 4).

The intercessory prayer is a continuation of the prayer of praise at the beginning of the meeting. Members pray according to the intentions of the parish, for the members of the cell, and for their neighbors (those they wish to evangelize). In the PEC a

member can be responsible for taking note of the intentions of prayer during the meeting. Some will be proposed again in the Mass, at the time of prayer of the faithful.

Intercessory prayer is similar to the prayer of the faithful at Mass. Prayer



should be short. Each prayer should contain only one intention (for example, it is better not to pray in the same prayer for the Church, the poor, the sick, etc.). It is important not to focus on preparing a beautiful and long prayer, because at that moment one is not hearing the prayers of others. Instead, each member should pay attention to the prayers of others. Sometimes it is also good to continue another member's prayer. For example, if one begins to pray for a sick person, another may continue to pray for the sick person's family, another for the financial burden, etc.

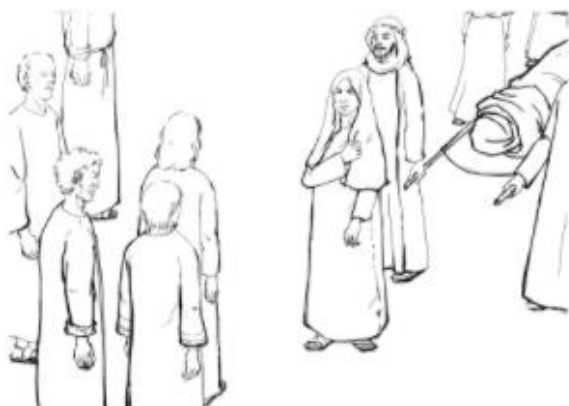
When praying, there is no need to follow an order, such as: first for the Church, then for the pope, bishops, priests, and then for society, etc. It is not necessary for the leader to pray first. The members freely pray for what they care about. Eventually the leader concludes the prayer. He/she can do it with the Our Father.

### **7 Healing prayer (optional, 10-15 mins)**

If someone is in need of spiritual or physical healing, he/she can invite the brothers and sisters present to pray specifically for him/her at the end of the meeting. Such prayer usually brings grace and peace, and also makes one feel loved by God and supported by the community. The prayer should be led by someone who is familiar with such kind of prayer. Whoever asks for prayer can choose to explain his/her problem in detail or not. The prayer leader may suggest that he/she kneel down, and then invite other members to surround him/her and pray together. Some people can pray for that person by putting hands on his/her shoulders (but not on the head).

Praying for the sick is a way to practice charity; it has been part of the tradition of the Church from the beginning. But since

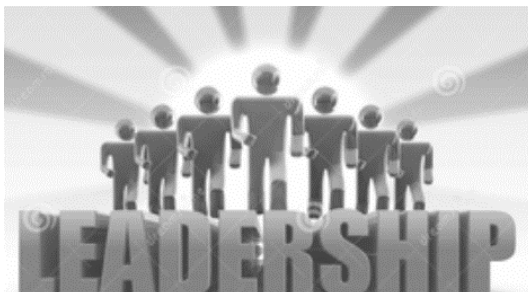
some faithful are not used to this form of prayer, or do not have a deep understanding of it, they prefer not to participate. So, to avoid embarrassment, it can be omitted. Or it can be done after the meeting, so that people who are unwilling to attend will be free to leave before the starting of the prayer.



## **Part five: Characteristics and responsibilities of the cell leader**

### **5.1 The role of the cell leader**

In a parish evangelical cell, the division of tasks and cooperation between the members is very important. The role of cell leader is established to serve



the community, not to dominate and control the group. As mentioned above, the PEC has two purposes: the first is to nurture the faith of the members, and the second is to evangelize. Therefore, the responsibility of the cell leader is to help members achieve these goals: to lead and encourage members to sanctify themselves and become active evangelists.

### **5.2 The choice of the leader**

At the beginning of the establishment of the PEC, the future leader should receive adequate training. The parish priest must identify some qualified and willing parishioners and invite them to attend the training course. The leader does not need to be perfect, but he must have stable faith, enthusiasm, and a strong will to learn how to evangelize. He must be able to interact with other parishioners in a friendly way. Because he has to understand



well the spirit and functioning of PEC, he/she needs to attend and complete the training course. After the cell begins, he/she will need to spend more time than others caring for and encouraging group members, as well as preparing for cell meetings. Therefore, the leader should not be a parishioner who already has heavy responsibilities in the parish.

After the establishment of the PEC in the parish, the formation of a new cell leader takes place in the cell through the experience of being an assistant leader. The purpose of having an assistant leader in a cell is to prepare him/her to become in the future the leader of a new cell.

### **1 Appointment by the parish priest**

After they have completed all required training, the cell leaders are appointed by the parish priest. They will maintain a close relationship with him, in a spirit of unity and collaboration.

## **5.3 Characteristics of the cell leader**

### **1 An earnest desire for the salvation of all people**

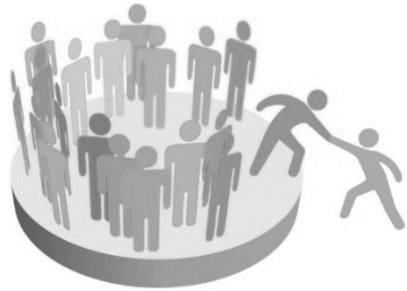
In order to lead the group in carrying out its mission, the cell leader should consider evangelization as his primary responsibility.

Evangelization does not happen overnight, it requires perseverance. In the process, if the cell members do not see clear results, they can feel frustrated, which will diminish their enthusiasm for evangelism. If faced with this kind of situation, the cell leader should encourage the members of his group to

persevere, relying on God's grace. Therefore, the group leader should encourage others to keep the missionary spirit, as Pope Francis said: “We are always ‘missionary disciples’”.<sup>10</sup>

## **2 Spirit of communion and unity**

The leader of the PEC group must have a spirit of communion and value teamwork. “Evangelization is for no one an individual and isolated act; it is one that is deeply ecclesial”.<sup>11</sup> Love and collaboration in the group make evangelization more effective. The cell leader, and all the members, must try to maintain good communication not only within the group, but also with the priest and the other parishioners, accepting and helping each other.



## **3 A positive attitude of life, to be a witness of the Gospel**

The cell leader should be animated by the desire to grow in holiness, and be willing to share the grace God has given him with others. Like the other members, he/she must share the Gospel with neighbors, and do so fervently, being active in the service and in the sharing of the faith. He/she must be the one who encourages others by example, acting with integrity, and,

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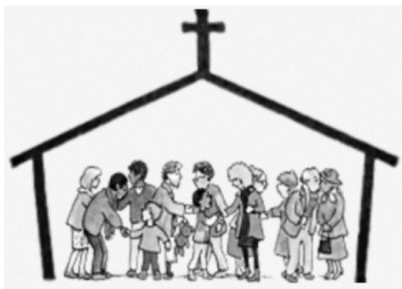
10 Pope Francis, *On the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World* (*Evangelii Gaudium*) (2013), 120.

11 *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 60.

according to the spirit of the Gospel, seeking to become salt, light and leaven in his/her environment of life.

Service is a priority of the cell leader. When PEC members or their neighbors are in need, he/she, even in the midst of his/her personal affairs, will do everything to be able to devote his/her time and energy to give them attention and care. This kind of service attitude requires the cell leader to learn from Christ the spirit of sacrifice and dedication.

#### **4 Engagement in the parish**



The PEC is an integral part of the parish. Therefore, the cell leader should be a person who loves parish life, participates fervently in its liturgy and activities and encourages the members of his/her cell to participate actively too.

Parish PECs should also make efforts to help support the daily expenses of the parish. Therefore, the cell leader and other members should always generously pay attention to the needs of the church.

#### **5.4 The assistant leader**

The cell leader and the parish priest should select together a suitable member of the cell to be the assistant leader, who will be the future leader of a new cell. Since the number of cell members is limited to 20 people at most, if more people join the cell and

exceed that number, then the cell must be split to create a new one. At this point, the assistant leader of the original cell becomes the leader of the new cell.

The criteria for choosing the assistant leader are the same as those for the cell leader: love for the parish, friendship and communion, dedication, fervent spirit of evangelization. He/she too is appointed by the parish priest. If the diocese continues to provide PEC training courses, he/she too should participate. If that is not possible, then the cell leader must care for his/her training, discussing the PEC situation with him/her, and sometimes letting him/her to conduct the meeting, etc. In other words, the leader must train his/her assistant to become the leader of a new cell in the future.

## **5.5 The responsibility of the cell leader**

### **1 Sharing pastoral responsibility**

Jesus is the Good Shepherd of the Church. He gave the pastoral mission above all to the pope, the bishops and priests, but, in another way, also to the lay people. The faithful have received this office through the sacrament of Baptism, to build up the body of Christ, the Church. As Paul says:

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift... And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph 4: 7, 11-12).



The cell leader has the mission of guiding the PEC, and has pastoral responsibilities towards its members. Therefore, just like a shepherd leading a flock, the leader should also do his/her best to help each cell member gain salvation and become a saint. He/she must pray for them, encourage them, support them, and when needed, advise them.

## **2 Leading the PEC meeting and participating in the meetings with the PEC area leader**

Conducting the cell meeting is the primary responsibility of the leader. Generally, meetings take place in fixed locations, but if they take place in different locations, the leader should adequately inform the members of the cell.

If there are a few PECs in the parish, regular meetings of the cell group leaders and the area leader should be held (for example once a month). In the meeting, the leaders share the spiritual growth of their cells, the accomplishments, the joy and the difficulties of evangelization, examining the problems and praying together. The goal is to keep the cells constantly focused on evangelization, overcoming frustrations and discouragement, so as to help them to maintain a good spirit of communion and evangelization.

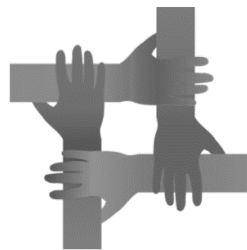
### **3 Keeping a good relationship with the assistant leader and the group members**

The cell leader should understand the situation of each cell member, including their personality, experience, education, family, relationships, work, health, and spiritual maturity. He/she should be concerned about their personal and spiritual growth. When they have difficulties, the leader should contact them in time and try to give them support and help.

The cell leader should trust, guide, and encourage the assistant leader. As far as possible, with him/her together prepare the cell meetings, and sometimes give him/her the opportunity to lead the meeting. When the cell will have to divide, the assistant leader should be willing to take responsibility for the new cell, and make adequate preparations for its future.

### **4 Collaboration with the parish priest and the area leader**

The PEC is part of the parish, so cooperation with the parish priest is particularly important. All PEC members should do their best to participate in the evangelization activities of the parish. If a cell member has a problematic, or particular situation, the group leader should discuss it with the area leader and/or priest, and see how to help. In the evangelization process and in the cell meetings, when the leader encounters problems that he/she struggle to handle, he/she should consult the area leader and the priest.



The cell leader must write a very short report on every cell meeting. This report briefly describes each meeting, the participation of the members, the progress of the cell, the attendance of the members, etc. In Taiwan, the PECs can use a Google Form to submit the report online, which is very convenient. With this report, the PECs diocesan committee is also informed about the situation of the PECs in the parishes, so that it can take them into account in the preparation of the weekly video homily.

## **5.6 Moral standard of life of the cell leader**

1. To obtain respect and cooperation, the cell leader should be the example of the group. He should become the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

2. The leader should be a person of prayer. Prayer can bring us closer to God, and lead us to communion. He/she should also pray for the cell members every day.

3. The cell leader lives in spirit of communion, both with God and with others. Therefore, he/she should often pay attention to the cell members and interact with them.

4. The leader assumes the identity of a servant doing his/her best to serve the members of the cell and their neighbors, according to their needs.

5. The cell leader should have observation skills, and take the initiative to contact those who occasionally come to PEC, or the newcomers to the parish, to get to know them, establish a brotherly relationship, and care for them. He/she must also remind other members to have the same attitude, not to neglect

the responsibility of evangelization, and encourage them to become evangelizers not only in name but in fact.

## **5.7 Leadership skills**

### **1 Meeting preparation**

Before the meeting, the cell leader or his/her assistant prepares the place and the equipment to play the video. The person in charge of the songs should choose suitable hymns of praise, and be responsible for their performance.

Before each meeting, the leader must listen twice to the video preaching for the meeting, and carefully reflect on its content and the issues raised.

### **2 Maintaining the best atmosphere in sharing**



The leader should pay close attention to the atmosphere of the cell meeting, so that it is filled with fervor, friendship and joy. During the meeting, he/she gives all members a chance to speak, and encourages those who don't like to share or are shy, but without pressuring them. When sharing, the group leader should pay attention to each person's sharing time, to prevent someone from talking continuously. He/she should also remind the members to focus on the topic of the meeting, avoiding to lapse into chatter between members. In short, the group leader



adequately facilitates the sharing, and does not allow members to monopolize it or to be just spectators.

The leader of the cell should be the facilitator of the meeting, instead of turning it into a personal show, trying to control the members. The opposite is also to be avoided, where the leader is limited to asking or answering questions. He/she also participates in discussions and sharing, expressing his/her opinion. Also, a disposition of tolerance is required, because some members in the sharing can hurt the leader or the members. He/she must know how to accept these situations, without feeling frustrated and freezing.

When the leader animates the sharing, he/she tries to use words that are as positive and constructive as possible and avoids using critical tones. For instance, one should say: "It may be better to do in this way", instead of saying: "It is wrong for you to do this."

### **3 Paying attention to the content of the sharing**

During the sharing, the leader helps the members to not deviate from the theme, but with flexibility, because everyone can freely express their ideas, and there is no right or wrong. But if someone clearly goes off topic, the leader, in an appropriate and polite way, can say something and redirect the discussion on the topic. One of the important leadership skills of a leader is to avoid admonishing or contradicting people in front of everyone. If a group member continues to talk too much, or has other attitudes that make others uncomfortable, so that it is



difficult for the leader to conduct the meeting and maintain a good atmosphere, he/she can communicate with that person privately, and help that member to improve his/her attitude. In sharing, we must avoid discussing politics; because the members of the cell probably have different political opinions, and discussing politics will only cause quarrels and divisions. Therefore, when the group leader observes that there is a tendency to discuss politics, he/she must bring the discussion back to the original topic.

If a cell member is too pessimistic about sharing emotions or thoughts, the leader and the cell members should help him/her feel accepted and loved in the cell, so that he/she can have a more positive attitude.

When different points of view emerge in the sharing, the leader must have the ability to mediate, in order to create a harmonious atmosphere, and not to allow divisions to appear in the group. He/she must foster a harmonious relationship between the members and make the atmosphere of sharing more spiritual.

The group leader should have a positive attitude, open to listening, and eager to evangelize. But nobody is perfect. When some setbacks in life affect his/her emotions, he/she should do his best to control his/her emotions and not hinder the meeting. If emotion control is difficult, he/she can ask the assistant leader to lead the meeting.

#### 4 Listening carefully and answering questions



Attentive listening is an act of respect for those who share, and therefore it is a necessary attitude for group members. When someone shares, it is necessary to listen with attention, patience, and empathy. In particular, the group leader should listen carefully to those who share. Regarding their questions, he/she should think carefully before answering.

The leader of the group is an ordinary lay person and may not be able to answer all the questions raised by the members, but this is not even his/her responsibility. However, he/she should do his/her best to answer simple or non-specific questions and can also invite other members to help answer them. Faced with a difficult question, he/she can study it after the meeting, or consult a priest or lay person having adequate theological preparation.

The leader must not be afraid of moments of silence, because in those moments people reflect and prepare what they have to say. Often people, after an initial sharing of their thoughts, continue to reflect and find a better way to explain their ideas. Hence, the leader should be attentive to this aspect. After a first round of sharing, he/she can ask if some members would like to add something more.

## **5 Encourage members to participate in Church activities**

The cell leader should keep in touch with all members each week, paying particular attention to those who are having difficulties. If a member does not come to the cell meeting, the leader should look after and encourage him/her, especially if he/she is facing challenges or adversities in life. Even during cell meetings, he/she should encourage participation in the meeting, Sunday Mass, and daily parish activities.

## **6 Encourage members to evangelize**

The cell leader should encourage all members to become evangelists and take every opportunity to evangelize. Therefore, during the life sharing of the meeting, he/she should remind members to serve their neighbors, share with them, invite them, etc. If he/she wants to be effective, he/she must be the first to share more in this sense. If a member shares his/her evangelism experience with neighbors, the leader should emphasize that example, so that other members can learn and imitate. Furthermore, during the intercessory prayer the members must pray for their neighbor to evangelize.

If most of the cell members start evangelizing, their enthusiasm will affect others. However, if there is hardly anyone in the cell who evangelizes, then the group leader must pray intensely. At the same time, he should also discuss the situation with the area leader and the parish priest, and find ways to remind members to pay attention to the mission and goals of the

evangelizing cell. The leader can also suggest some simple methods of service.

All in all, the cell leader always keeps in mind his/her role, responsibilities and goals, and don't neglect his/her mission, remembering that the cell leaders are:

Participants of the common priesthood: they are people who pray for others, living the spirit of the gospel.

Prophets: They are the ambassadors of the Word of God, they always read the Bible with enthusiasm and are passionate in evangelization.

Kings: they are ready to serve, to care for and lead their group, understanding the mission and vision of PEC, making right decisions, and building consensus.

In order to establish evangelization cells, the team leader must have in-depth knowledge and guide the group members to fulfill the mission of evangelization. Lack of adequate understanding of the true meaning of PEC leads to futile efforts and meagre results.



## **Part six: Establishing PEC at the diocesan and parish levels**

It is not an easy task to develop new PECs. It must be achieved through discernment, prayer and cooperation between the diocese and the parishes. After the establishment of the PECs, we must continue to follow them, facing new challenges and adapting the method, systematically recording the video weekly homily, and following the cells leaders. Therefore, the diocese and the parish to be successful must cooperate closely from the beginning. The dioceses should take the initiative, by formulating a clear plan of establishing the PECs, and by consistently implementing it. If only a few parishes start the PECs, it would be difficult to convince the faithful of their importance. Conversely, if under the leadership of the diocese, there is a concerted effort of various parishes, then the chance to succeed is much higher, and this will encourage other dioceses and parishes to follow.

### **6.1 The role of the diocese**

**1** The deepening of the faith and evangelization are two sides of the same coin. First of all, the diocese must be firmly aware of the importance of evangelization. Then it should elaborate a program for the evangelization of the diocese and promote the sense of the mission of priests, so that they can have a common priority and work for the same goal. To this end it is useful to convene a meeting of all the priests of the diocese, to study together the nature and method of the PEC, to encourage everyone to establish the PEC in their own parishes.

2 To establish the Diocesan PEC Committee. This can be made up of a chaplain, religious Sisters and lay faithful. In addition to providing training and helping various parishes to establish the PECs, it is also responsible for recording the teaching videos used in cell meetings. The preparation of the videos can be organized by the diocese by requesting the collaboration of talented priests, nuns and evangelist teachers. It is best to have two to four people taking turns to do it. Basically, the content of the video teaching should be based on the Scriptures, but it must also be related to the concrete life of the faithful. In the beginning the obvious choice is to comment on the Gospel (or occasionally other readings) of Sunday Mass. But later, to help the PECs grow in faith, a different program can be made. It is also possible to make a teaching program on topics for different categories, such as family, work, economics, parenting, etc. It would also be good to produce appropriate video teachings for youth cells. Similarly, if there are people available, it is possible to prepare different versions for particular ethnic groups, using various languages, such as Taiwanese, Aboriginal languages, and English. Several dioceses can also collaborate to set up a national PEC committee, which can prepare the same video homilies for all the dioceses.<sup>12</sup>



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12 In Taiwan, the recorded weekly homilies are available at: 【堂區福傳細胞。聚會視頻】:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCUaICO3GcuQ4K1Z7UzIo8fg>

and at Facebook: 台灣地區福傳細胞。

After registration, the video teaching is passed on to all the PECs of the dioceses.

**3** To nominate a priest as the group chaplain. His task is to ensure that the PECs do not stray from the objective of evangelization and can collaborate with priests and other parish groups, to achieve the dual goal of deepening the faith and evangelization. He can also act as a bridge for collaboration between the PECs and the diocese, and can adapt the modalities of the PECs to particular needs.

**4** The lay representatives of each parish will participate in the diocesan training course of the PEC system. Participants will be able to clearly understand the connotation, characteristics and functioning of the PEC, and deepen their vocation to the mission of evangelization. The parish priests can choose from among them the future leaders of the cells, because one important part of the training is on the responsibilities and the function of the leader.



The training course shouldn't just focus on theory, but first provide some basic theoretical elements and then start practicing how cells work. In this way, the participants get a clearer understanding of the characteristics of PEC. At the same time, the formators can also guide and assist the participants by paying



attention to the parts that need clarification. In this way the theory is tested with practice, and the progress of the course is adapted and adjusted according to the situation of the participants. Then, when they have learned the basic elements, the training should continue with the more specific elements for cell leaders. In this way, with the combination of practice and theory, cell leader candidates and each member can quickly become familiar with how PEC works. As training material, we can use this guidebook, the basic manual: "Preach the Gospel to the Neighbors", as well as the related training videos.<sup>13</sup>

**5** The diocesan PEC Committee should organize talks or workshops on PEC in the deaneries or in large parishes. The aim is to promote the knowledge of PEC among more faithful, to avoid that in a parish only a few parishioners learn the PEC method, while the majority know nothing about it. If that happens, it is more difficult for few people to be able to form a cell in the parish, and they can also be unfairly criticized for the misunderstanding of other parishioners. To avoid this and effectively implement the PEC, it is therefore necessary to offer basic explanations for everyone.

**6** The nominated cell leaders should maintain communication and exchange of opinions with their parish priests during the training process.

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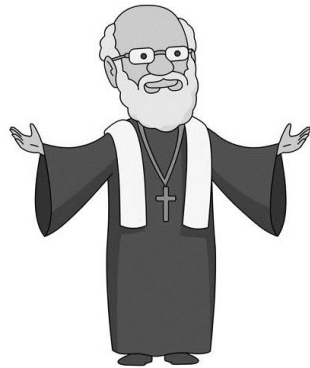
13 Video materials are available at the webpage of the of "Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine, Ecclesial Small Communities Pastoral Center": <https://theology.catholic.org.tw/J/data.php?id=410&tpl=0> and at Facebook: 台灣地區福傳細胞。

**7** The diocese should continue to arrange PEC training courses every year, so that more and more parishes can send their faithful to learn. It will also give further formation opportunities to the parishes that have already set up the PECs.

**8** Regular diocesan meetings should be held for group leaders. These meetings can give them space and opportunity to evaluate their achievements and reflect on problems, and promptly propose corrections and adjustments.

## **6.2 The role of the parish**

**1** Parish priests should actively respond to the diocese's evangelization plan, and send some parishioners to participate in the diocesan PEC training course. In their parish, they should encourage the faithful to participate in PEC meetings. To form a cell, it is necessary to have a few well-trained people: the leader, the assistant leader, the area leader and the secretary. For each cell to be established, the pastor can send three to five good parishioners with experience, sense of responsibility, dedication and leadership qualities to the course. If there are no suitable candidates, parishioners can be sent who are open and willing to learn and attend the course. At the same time, the parish priest selects the leader and the assistant leader of the future cell, so that they can actively participate in the training for leadership.



In addition, they should do their best to attend all the lessons of the course.

**2** The Eucharist is the main source of strength for the development of the evangelical cells. Therefore, as far as possible, the parish should set up a chapel for Eucharistic adoration, so that the worship of the Eucharist becomes an inexhaustible source of strength for sanctification and evangelization. Furthermore, all the faithful should be encouraged to participate in worship, praying for the cells and for evangelization.



**3** The parish can also encourage other existing groups to send three to five members to receive adequate training in order to deepen their love for the church, strive to improve the group, and deepen their vocation for evangelization.

**4** Some fervent faithful already are very engaged in the parish, or participate in various groups, so it is difficult for them to be available to participate in a new evangelical cell. However, for some groups, such as Bible sharing, the members can take up some elements of PEC method for their group if they are interested. They can participate in PEC training, first trying to understand if this mode of operation is suitable for their group, and then decide about it.

**5** If there are three or more evangelical cells in the parish, these should be coordinated by an area leader. He/she must be a person who knows the PEC system very well and is able to relate to others. The task of the area leader



is to take turns taking part in the meetings of the various cells in the parish, as a companion and assistant. He/she should take notice of the problems and difficulties, and to report to the parish priest. Then as soon as possible, in the coordination meeting, he/she with the parish priest and the cell leaders, try to find solutions.

**6** The parish priest usually does not participate in the meetings of the evangelical cells. However, he will occasionally attend them as a sign of companionship and presence, bringing support to the participants, and giving advice, if needed. When the priest participates, he must not influence or modify the normal functioning of the meeting; that is, he will not lecture or answer all questions, but rather let the meeting proceed as usual, paying attention instead to the situation of the cell and its members.

**7** After the cell meeting, the group leader must fill out a simple online or written report (see Appendix 2: Parish Evangelical Cell Weekly Report Form) and submit it to the parish priest. The leader of the area also writes a report once every three months, and submits it to the parish priest and the diocesan chaplain, so that they can know the situation of the cells. This also

helps the diocesan chaplain, and the diocesan PEC committee, to adapt the recording of the video homilies to the situation of the cells.

**8** The parish priests, the area leader and all cell leaders hold a meeting once a month to review the development and functioning of the cells during that period, analyze the experience and try to address the problems that arise.

**9** The diocesan PEC committee, the parish priest, the area leader and all the cells leaders meet once a year to review the situation of the cells in the parish, strengthen the integration of the parish cells and the diocesan PEC committee, and plan future developments.

## **Appendix**

### **1 The neighbors (oikos) list**

In your environment there are 20 to 30 people who are your neighbors (oikos). These are people whose life you touch on a regular basis either because they are in your family, you work together, you live near each other, or you share a common interest. This form will help you to classify their status of faith. Place their names on it, and prayerfully consider their spiritual life.

- A. Unaware of the truth of Christianity and disinterested.
- B. A baptized Catholic, but his/her faith is extremely weak.
- C. Understands the Christian faith, but does not want to follow and practice it.
- D. Ready to accept Jesus.
- E. Understands the Gospel, but has difficulty to obey the call of Jesus.
- F. Open to the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- G. Accepting God, but unwilling to participate in the Church.
- H. A fervent and engaged Catholic.

<b>The neighbors (oikos) list</b>		
	<b>Name</b>	<b>Status of faith</b>
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		

## 2 Parish Evangelical Cell Meeting Report

(\*Required)

### 1. Date of Reporting\*

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### 2. Where the scheduled hours respected? \*

(Mark only one answer)

At the beginning                      Yes ( )   No ( )

During the various phases        Yes ( )   No ( )

At the end                              Yes ( )   No ( )

### 3. Please evaluate the sharing at the meeting: \*

Life sharing    Insufficient ( )   Fair ( )   Good ( )   Excellent ( )

Bible sharing   Insufficient ( )   Fair ( )   Good ( )   Excellent ( )

### 4. Any specific questions raised by members?

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**5. Did all members watch the recorded homily before the meeting?**

\* (Mark only one answer)

All of the members. ( )

Most of them. ( )

Few of them. ( )

None of them. ( )

**6. Did you watch the recorded homily together with the assistant leader?**

Yes ( ) No ( )

**7. How did they feel about the recorded homily? \***

(Mark only one answer)

Helpful. ( )

Well. ( )

Difficult to understand. ( )

Insufficient. ( )

**8. Are there any problems in the cell group? \***

(Check all that apply)

Regarding doctrine ( )

Regarding morals ( )

Regarding discipline ( )

Regarding finances ( )

Recently no problem ( )

Other problems. Specify:

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**9a.** Did the members serve their neighbors? How many of them?  
Please specify. \*

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**9b.** Any member testifying their faith with their neighbors? How many of them? Please specify. \*

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**9c.** Any other action of evangelization toward the neighbors by any of the members? Please specify. \*

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**10.** Was there any visitor attending in this meeting?

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Members attendance				
	Name	Present	Absent	Communicated the absence
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				

**11. Regarding members attendance**

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**12. Any other problem to report?**

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(The content of this form was translated from the Chinese Google form of 2020).

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培裡齊與法國細胞福全協會編著，任安道譯，《向近人傳福音，堂區細胞福傳介紹暨培訓讀本》。台北市：光啓文化，2013。

This guidebook and other material related to the Parish Evangelical Cell System are available at the webpage of the of "Fu Jen Faculty of Theology of St. Robert Bellarmine, Ecclesial Small Communities Pastoral Center":

<https://theology.catholic.org.tw/J/data.php?id=410&tpl=0>

and at Facebook: 台灣地區福傳細胞



## **Parish Evangelical Cell system training videos**

Another easy way for establishing the Parish Evangelical Cells: one can watch the following videos to understand the basic concepts of PEC system. Purpose: when a parish wants to establish the PEC, these videos can be used to show to the faithful and discuss with them.

### **Brief introduction of the Parish Evangelical Cell:**



堂區福傳細胞  
簡介 1



福傳細胞簡介  
2: 福傳方式



福傳細胞簡介  
3:運作及聚會

## Training for PEC members:



福傳細胞。  
團員培訓-1



福傳細胞。  
團員培訓-2



福傳細胞。  
團員培訓-3



福傳細胞。  
團員培訓-4



福傳細胞。  
團員培訓-5



福傳細胞。  
團員培訓-6

## Training for PEC leaders:

The following videos are for the training of the Parish Evangelical Cell leader and assistant leader, because, besides watching the members training videos, they need more complete formation.

Purpose: when a parish wants to establish the PEC, these videos can be used to for future cell leaders and assistant leaders to watch and discuss (other members are welcome to participate, if they are willing to, but it is not strictly required).



福傳細胞。  
組長培訓-1



福傳細胞。  
組長培訓-2



福傳細胞。  
組長培訓-3





福傳細胞。  
組長培訓-4



福傳細胞。  
組長培訓-5



福傳細胞。  
組長培訓-6



福傳細胞。  
組長培訓-7

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