

# The Rector's Reflections

by The Rev. Dr. Gregory A. Tournoux, Rector  
Christ Episcopal Church, Springfield, Illinois



As I stated last month, when the pre-Christian is brought to the cell group, cell members must continue to pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten the pre-Christian's heart and mind with a receptivity to embrace Jesus Christ. cell members must understand that the Holy Spirit and the evangelistic process proceed simultaneously. Why? The Holy Spirit convicts the pre-Christian regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:5-11). So, anytime a cell brings a person to Jesus Christ, ultimately that work of conversion has to be attributed to the Holy Spirit. Everything that happens up to the conversion of the pre-Christian in the context of the cell, and even the very act of converting to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, is the work of God's grace (Ephesians 2:1-9) through the Holy Spirit's power.

Additionally, why is praying for pre-Christians in cell groups so important to the evangelism process? The Bible affirms that when Christians ask "for anything in [Jesus] name . . . [He] will do it" (John 14:14). Further, Sacred Scripture reveals that God does not want "anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). As a result, when cells corporately pray in their common life for

Postmodern pre-Christians, asking the Holy Spirit to intervene and open their heart and mind to Jesus Christ, our Lord will uphold His promise.

Once the pre-Christian arrives at the cell, there are several essential experiences which facilitate the evangelistic process in an interactive highly relational loving way. First, although "Postmodern society may be intrinsically hostile to the Christian faith . . . it is extremely open to Jesus the Christ, even its truth claims that Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life." (Leonard Sweet, *SoulTsunami*, 49). Thus, when the cells begin each weekly community experience by inviting Jesus Christ to become the central focusing agenda of the cell, "All other agendas are realized" (M. Scott Boren and Don Tillman, *Cell Group Leader Training: Leadership Foundations for Groups that Work – Trainer's Guide*, 63). In other words, as Jesus is "lifted up" (John 12:32), he will "draw all [people] to himself" (John 12:32) in the cell, and will "fulfill now . . . our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of

your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting” (BCP, 102).

Second, as cell members pray (Acts 2:42) and receive tangible expressions of Christ’s direct involvement in their daily lives, resulting in personal transformation in the Holy Spirit (II Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 1:6), which is subsequently verbally shared (Matthew 9:27-31) and visibly expressed in the cell (Galatians 5:22-23), pre-Christians begin to open their hearts to the truth of Jesus Christ as being Savior and Lord.

A life lived out is worth many sermons. As people share their life and victories with one another, they also get involved in praying for each other and helping each other. This release of testimony builds great faith and motivates the members of the group to further growth and prayer. . . . Many people who will not attend church because it is too threatening, will come to a home meeting. There they are made to feel welcome and comfortable. Non-Christians brought to Tender Loving Care groups, accepted and included and loved, will soon see the love of Jesus in these other people and become hungry and thirsty to know Christ (Dale Galloway, *20/20 Vision*, 143-144).

Another evangelistic dimension of the Upward value is worship. This aspect of cell communal life, however, is not meant

to be an exact replica of the corporate Eucharistic liturgy. Moreover, as Modernism separated the sacred from the profane, a radical shift in belief and behavior is required for evangelism through cell worship to become normative. Namely, a parish must readily embrace God’s call to manifest Christ’s kingdom through worship evangelism amidst this Postmodern culture in multiple places (John 4:21-24).

Join me next month as we continue this discussion further.

Faithfully in Jesus Christ,

*Greg J*