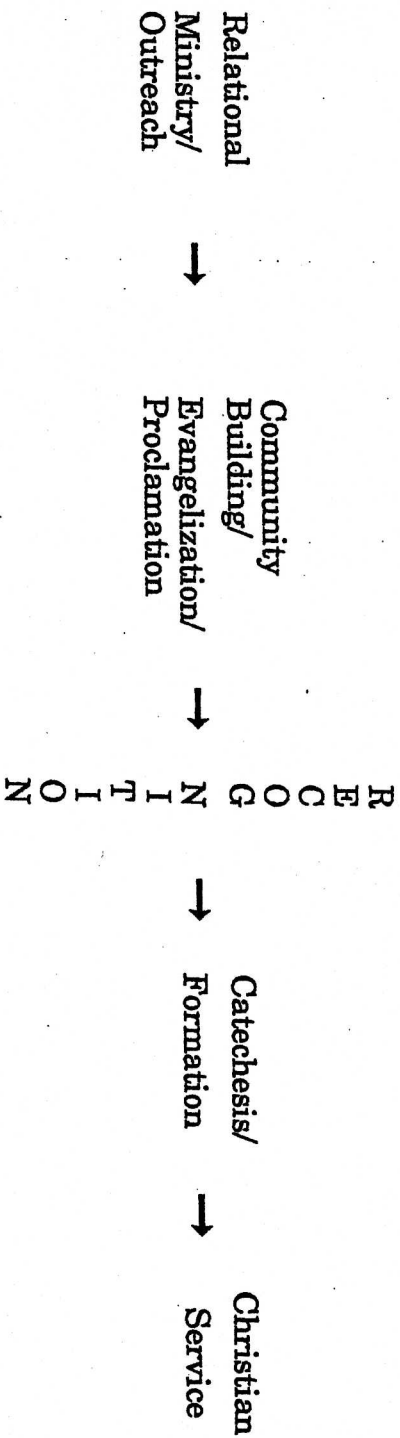


# The Community of Faith and Conversion

The following chart attempts to represent the process by and through which faith is passed on from one generation of Christians to another within the community. The process seems consistent for all age groups, but the *methods* or *strategies* for achieving the tasks of each phase of the process will vary from one group to another according to age, ethnic and cultural characteristics, and so on. The phases or movements are not nearly as linear as they appear here; the *entire* process is going on *all* the time in a healthy faith community. Each phase can be understood as follows:

- \* *Relational ministry* includes the building of relationships of trust between individuals within the community. If the individuals have been alienated from or never bonded to the community, outreach and healing may be required.
- \* Effective trust building leads to the *building of a sense of community*. It is only within such a community of trusting people that the Gospel can be effectively proclaimed. This is *initial evangelization*.



- \* For the process to continue, the individual must experience some kind of personal *recognition* (the “Aha! moment”), a sense of the relevance of the Gospel to her or his life. Though often understood and defined as conversion, I see this as but one moment (and a repetitive one) within the lifelong process of conversion.
  - \* Recognition, in turn, opens one to the possibility of true *catechesis*, a complex and lifelong activity (not just “religious education”) in which the individual joins with believers to deepen understanding of and commitment to the Gospel and the life of the church.
  - \* *Christian service*, then is understood as the free expression of the person’s growing commitment to Jesus, his vision and his values, and the church.
- A community reflecting these characteristics, then, is understood as the context within which individuals can be invited into and nurtured along the journey of lifelong conversion.