

HOSPITALITY:

**THE DOORWAY
TO
EVANGELIZATION**

**Diocesan Office for Parish Life
Diocese of Scranton**

Is our Parish Welcoming?

“For I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” *(Matthew 24:35)*

How welcoming is my parish?

- ✧ **My parish is easily identified with the name and times of Masses visible from the road.**
- ✧ **The church, rectory and parking lot are well marked and easily identified.**
- ✧ **Rooms and buildings are clearly marked.**
- ✧ **Parish buildings are wheel-chair accessible.**
- ✧ **There are parking spaces provided for persons with disabilities.**
- ✧ **Large print missalettes and assistive listening devices are available.**
- ✧ **Hospitality ministers are present to greet and assist people at all Masses.**
- ✧ **New parishioners are introduced to the community.**
- ✧ **Our parish works towards inclusion for those who speak other languages.**
- ✧ **Our parish welcomes young children, those with special needs and persons of all ethnic backgrounds.**
- ✧ **The parish community reaches out in times of grief.**

How welcoming am I?

- ✧ **I am a welcoming presence in my parish.**
- ✧ **I am welcoming in my facial expressions and my mannerisms.**
- ✧ **I see Christ in others. Do others see Christ in me?**
- ✧ **I greet people as I approach the church.**
- ✧ **I greet people in the gathering space of the church.**
- ✧ **I make a conscious decision to speak positively about the Catholic Church, my parish, my pastor, etc.**
- ✧ **I am inclusive...**
- ✧ **I make a conscious effort to participate in the Mass to give glory to God and give good example to others.**
- ✧ **I extend Christ’s peace to others, looking them in the eye, and acknowledging everyone around me.**

Ministry of Hospitality

“Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.” (Heb. 13:2)

- ◆ A Ministry of Hospitality in a parish begins when the pastor gathers a few parishioners together to organize the Ministry.
- ◆ This group draws up a list of potential candidates for the Ministry of Hospitality. They look for individuals, families, persons of any age, and invite them to attend an information meeting to learn more about the Ministry of Hospitality.
- ◆ At the Information Meeting:
 - ✧ Pray from a scripture passage of “welcoming.” (e.g. *Gen 18:1-8*)
 - ✧ Share the importance of welcoming and having a Ministry of Hospitality
 - ✧ Explain responsibilities. Some possible responsibilities are:
 - ⇒ be present at assigned entrance twenty minutes prior to the start of Mass
 - ⇒ extend a warm welcome to all who enter
 - ⇒ invite visitors to sign the guest book or ask them to fill out a “Welcome to Our Parish” card (found on p. 7).
 - ⇒ thank the people for attending while distributing the bulletins
 - ⇒ prepare the church for the next Mass.
 - ✧ Seek a commitment from each person and family for one Mass either weekly or monthly

Ministry of Hospitality Committee Members also:

- ◆ Plan a parish reception for newcomers a few times a year. Invite those who have signed the guestbook or who have returned a parish card.
- ◆ Offer a parish handbook or list of parish ministries with contact information.
- ◆ Provide information on the various ministries of the parish, including the Religious Education Program, school and youth activities.
- ◆ Encourage new parishioners to attend parish events and socials.
- ◆ Recognize the new parishioners attending Mass.

Welcoming Persons with Disabilities

“It is essential that all forms of the liturgy be completely accessible to persons with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together.”

(Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities, 1989.)

Ten Commandments for Welcoming Persons with Disabilities to Church

1. Treat a person with a disability as you would anyone else. Relax when communicating. Rely on natural courtesy, consideration and common sense. Avoid getting flustered or irritated if misunderstandings arise. Repeat yourself if you sense misunderstanding, or ask the person to repeat himself or herself if you do not understand.
2. Address the individual, not an assistant, interpreter or family member.
3. Treat adults with disabilities as adults rather than as children, regardless of the disability.
4. Speak at a normal rate, without exaggeration or overemphasis.
5. Do not be afraid to ask questions about the person’s disability.
6. To facilitate communication, have pads of paper and pencils available in all meeting rooms and other gathering places on parish property. Use them when helpful.
7. Allow people to do things for themselves when they want to, even if it takes longer or results in mistakes. Do not always “do for” the person.
8. Offer assistance, but do not impose if help is not desired.
9. During all gatherings or meetings, allow time to attend to personal needs and rest. Be patient.
10. Respect the individual’s personal space and auxiliary aids. Do not lean against or push a wheelchair, pet a service animal in a harness, move wheelchairs, crutches, white canes or other assistive devices out of reach of a person who uses them.

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We must be attentive to our parishioners who have disabilities. They do not want our pity! On the contrary, they have gifts and talents to offer to the parish. Many times they are looking for opportunities to serve as committed baptized members of the Church. Remember to include and invite all interested parishioners to participate in the roles of service which are most comfortable and compatible for them. Together we can make our parishes welcoming communities of faith and love.

Holy Days and Special Occasions

“Rejoice and be glad...” *(Matthew 5:12)*

Sacrament of Baptism

- ✧ Form a committee to help with preparation for Baptism
- ✧ Suggest that the baptism can take place during a Sunday Mass.
- ✧ If the baptism is to take place after Mass, encourage parishioners to stay and take part.
- ✧ Have greeters and other ministers of hospitality present to welcome the families, and help with seating.
- ✧ After the baptism, follow up with a card or note at Christmas or on the anniversary of the baptism. (Suggestion: Take a picture of the baby or family at the Baptism. Send the picture to the family with a personal note saying that the parish is praying for them.)
- ✧ Encourage the parents to take part in parish activities.

Sacrament of First Holy Eucharist ✧ Sacrament of Confirmation

- ✧ Very often, these sacramental celebrations are occasions for large family gatherings.
- ✧ They provide good opportunities for people to re-connect with their parish family.
- ✧ These are times when parishes can make extra efforts to welcome.
- ✧ Ample seating should be made available.
- ✧ Programs and worship aids must be made available to help the congregation worship well.
- ✧ Ushers should be present to seat the people.
- ✧ Hospitality ministers should be part of the planning for these events.
- ✧ Be aware of persons with disabilities.

Christmas ✧ Ash Wednesday ✧ Palm Sunday ✧ Easter Sunday

- ✧ As with Sacramental celebrations, these holy days are wonderful opportunities for welcoming and for liturgical catechesis from the presider.

Funerals

“Blessed are the sorrowing, they shall be consoled.” (Matthew 5:4)

Simple Ways to Enhance the Funeral Liturgy

- ✧ Form a Funeral Liturgy Committee to assist the pastor and the family in the planning of the Funeral Mass.
- ✧ Frame a picture of the deceased and place on the bulletin board with name and date of death.
- ✧ Create a “scroll” like the one to the right. Print the name of the deceased and display it in the gathering space of the church.
- ✧ Provide ways for the family to be actively involved in the liturgy. e.g. placing the pall and Christian symbol on the casket, presenting the gifts, etc.
- ✧ Form a “Resurrection Choir.” (This choir is committed to singing at funerals.)
- ✧ Have lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion available if needed.



- ✧ Have Ministers of Hospitality greet and assist with seating.
- ✧ Initiate a “Lazarus Committee” which prepares a luncheon for the family and friends attending the funeral.
- ✧ Remember the deceased at a Memorial Mass on All Souls Day. Invite the families of the deceased to participate in a ritual of remembrance during the Mass.
- ✧ Offer comfort to the family with a card of remembrance on the first Christmas or Easter following the death of their loved one.

Evangelization in the Marketplace

“Preach the Gospel always, and if necessary, use words.” *St. Francis of Assisi*

Our interactions with people at work, in the neighborhood, at a ball game or in the grocery store can be opportunities for evangelization. Invite your friends and neighbors to Sunday Mass or other parish functions. Ask them to “Come and See.”

Be approachable and willing to listen when someone begins to talk about faith, teachings of the Church, and other concerns about religion. Keep an open mind and be non-judgmental. Continue to invite.

Other suggestions for your parish:

- ◇ **Set up a “Welcome Table” in the gathering space of your church with information about parish ministries.**
- ◇ **Encourage new parishioners to attend parish events and socials.**
- ◇ **Offer a gift to newcomers. This could be a printed prayer card including Mass times and parish contact information.**
- ◇ **Introduce visitors and newcomers to the pastor.**
- ◇ **Welcome new parishioners with a special recognition in the parish bulletin.**
- ◇ **Using the information on the “Welcome to Our Parish” card, contact the newcomer by phone a week or two after your initial meeting.**

Sample Card

Welcome to Our Parish

Please indicate if there is anything we can do for you.
Drop in the basket or hand to a parish representative.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

I am looking for a Parish Home.

I would like to return to the Church.

I would like to know more about Catholicism.

Please pray for _____

Other: _____

Resources

Diocesan Office for Parish Life: 570.207.2213

Books

- Boucher, John and Therese. *When You Notice the Empty Pews*. www.christkey.com.
- DeSiano, Frank, CSP. *The Evangelizing Catholic: A Practical Handbook for Reaching Out*.
- DeSiano, Frank, CSP, and Boyack, Kenneth, CSP. *Creating the Evangelizing Parish*.
- Hater, Rev. Robert J., Ph.D. *The Catholic Parish: Hope for a Changing World*.
- Pable, Rev. Martin, OFM Cap. *Remaining Remaining Catholic: Six Good Reasons for Staying in an Imperfect Church*. ACTA Publications (Assisting Christians to Act), www.actapublications.com.
- Rivers, Robert S., CSP *From Maintenance to Mission: Evangelization and the Revitalization of the Parish*.

Pamphlets

Our Sunday Visitor (800-348-2440); www.osv.com/pamphlets

Duquin, Lorene Hanley. "Six Ways I Can Make My Parish Better." OSV, 2008.

Liguori Publications (800-325-9521); www.liguori.org

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (800-235-8722); www.usccb.org

- *A Time to Listen... A Time to Heal*, A resource directory for reaching out to inactive Catholics. ISBN # 1574553062
- *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. No. 5-110
- *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Evangelization in the United States*. No. 5-475
- *Guidelines for the Celebration of the Sacraments with Persons with Disabilities*. No. 5-027
- *Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us: A Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation*. No. 5-299
- *Pastoral Statement of U.S. Catholic Bishops on People with Disabilities*. 1978. Reprinted with updated language, 1989. No. 135-0
- *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*. No. 5-450

Web Addresses

- Catholics Come Home: www.CatholicsComeHome.org
- Ministry to Returning Catholics: www.onceCatholic.org
- Ministry to Young Adults: www.bustedhalo.com
- Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association (PNCEA): www.pncea.org
- RENEW International: www.renewintl.org

The Diocese of Scranton is grateful to the Office for the Formation of the Laity of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia for permission to incorporate portions of their publication, "Unlock the Secrets to a More Vibrant Parish," into this booklet.