



SHINING CHRIST'S LIGHT
SUNRISE TO SUNSET

A Mutually Shared Vision

WELCOMING PARISHES



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PREFACE

This document is the result of the work of one of the six teams working on goals set forth through the Diocese of Gaylord's Mutually Shared Vision process. That process included listening sessions with parishioners and leadership throughout the diocese which ultimately identified three priority areas: Communications, Evangelization and Faith Formation. Two goals were then established in each priority area based on concerns and suggestions shared during that process.

The "Welcoming Parishes" team, working under the Evangelization priority, was officially chartered by the Bishop "to use our awareness of diversity and key outside resources to formulate protocols to promote the increased development of authentic, sensitive, welcoming parishes." The material on the following pages represents the work of our team and the product of that Charter. We hope you will find it useful, and perhaps even a springboard, for further reflection and discussion in your parish about how we are to welcome one another as well as newcomers in our midst.

The "Welcoming Parishes" Team

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REFLECTION ON “THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL”

Pope Francis' recent Apostolic Exhortation, “The Joy of the Gospel,” expounds beautifully on the concept of “Resurrection Joy.” Even the title he chose for the document gives insight into the message of the Exhortation.

At its heart, the Pope's message is that the Gospel itself deserves to be a source of joy for us. This joy is not something passing, or occasional. Rather, it is a joy that might flow from our very being as a result of our having been deeply touched by the Word of Truth and Life, especially through the experience of the Mercy of God; such joy is “Missionary Joy.”

The following quotes from “The Joy of the Gospel,” by Pope Francis, make a striking connection to the goals of this document on Welcoming Parishes. While the Exhortation concerns itself with evangelization in general, that evangelization is rooted in the same kind of Gospel joy that frames a Welcoming Parish.

The seventy-two disciples felt it as they returned from their mission (cf Lk 10:17). Jesus felt it when he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and praised the Father for revealing himself to the poor and the little ones (cf. Lk 10:21). It was felt by the first converts who marveled to hear the apostles preaching “in the native language of each” (Acts 2:6) on the day of Pentecost. This joy is a sign that the Gospel has been proclaimed and is bearing fruit. Yet the drive to go forth and give, to go out from ourselves, to keep pressing forward in our sowing of the good seed, remains ever present.
(par. 21)

The Church which “goes forth” is a community of missionary disciples who take the first step, who are involved and supportive, who bear fruit and rejoice. An evangelizing community gets involved by word and deed in people's daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Evangelizers thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice. (par. 24)

I dream of a “missionary option,” that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channeled for the evangelization of today's world rather than for her self-preservation. (par. 27)



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The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. (par. 28)

"Wherever the need for the light and the life of the Risen Christ is greatest, it will want to be there. ...I encourage each particular Church (Diocese) to undertake a resolute process of discernment, purification and reform." (par. 30)

Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: "We have always done it this way." I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their respective communities. (par. 33)

Being a Welcoming Parish is not an end in itself. But if the visitor or the regular community member experience "welcoming" when they are among the community, then the fire of belonging to the community will already be lit. That fire of evangelization will spread by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to build the Kingdom of God in ways that we could not otherwise imagine. That is why it is so important to take care that welcoming is inherent and sincere in every Parish Community!



INTRODUCTION

We are a people of the Resurrection! That is the reality this document seeks to proclaim as it makes suggestions about being a Welcoming Parish. Sunday worship is meant to mark "the Lord's Day," and every Sunday is therefore a "little Easter." Sunday worship in particular, and parish life in general, would do well to reflect in every way that joy of the discovery of the Empty Tomb; the same joy shared by those disciples experiencing the shock of the Risen Lord for the first time.

Christians are called to live the fullness of the Paschal Mystery: the Passion, the Death, and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. As disciples of the Lord and People of the Resurrection, let our parishes reflect this joy in every respect, always remembering, "...if Christ was not raised, your faith is worthless" (1 Cor. 15:17). We must allow the victory of Christ to become the power of grace within us through joy!

Such joy will not survive if it is artificial. Resurrection Joy would best be purposefully and consciously nurtured throughout the parish, in every aspect of parish life. Furthermore, in "The Joy of the Gospel," Pope Francis challenges us to "remain steadfast in our intention to respect others, to heal wounds, to build bridges, to strengthen relationships" and to "bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). (par. 67) What better place to pursue this challenge than in the local parish.

This *Welcoming Parishes* document is meant as a guide to help foster discussion within your parish. How do we become a welcoming parish? What regular practices can we employ that might help us increase our focus to be more responsive and loving toward others in our parish and in society at large?

The *Welcoming Parishes* journey might begin with the people in your parish asking themselves:

- Is our parish welcoming?
- Do people experience us as a joyful Community?
 - If so, how?
 - If not, what is lacking?
- Do our liturgies reflect the joy of the Resurrection?
- Do we live as members of the Body of Christ?
- How do we go forth to share the Good News with our neighbors?

To assist in exploring these questions, the following protocols have been developed by the diocesan Welcoming Parishes Team. These protocols are intended to help provide insight into the strengths and weaknesses of each parish in its mission to witness and



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share the joy of the Resurrection to the fullest extent possible. The protocols are divided into seven categories:

- I. Church Environment -- Outside
- II. Church Environment -- Gathering Space
- III. Worship Space / Art & Environment
- IV. Parish Greeters/Ushers
- V. Liturgical Music
- VI. Pastoral Leadership
- VII. Welcoming New Families

In each category, a series of questions will help you evaluate various welcoming aspects of your parish. We recommend that these welcoming protocols be discussed by the Parish Council, the Finance Council, and other groups or committees in each parish, so that each organization can provide their input. A parish could also find ways to seek input from Sunday worshippers, visitors, etc., to benefit from a wide sampling of the parish community concerning their parish experiences.

Once data is collected from all these sources and summarized, some clear patterns should emerge that will help clarify what is being done well in the efforts of welcoming, as well as what may still need attention.

Each parish's successful efforts of welcoming should be honored and joyfully celebrated. Efforts that are not bearing fruit may need to be re-evaluated. Where change is needed, parish leadership would have opportunities for catechizing, preaching, and discussion to extend the welcoming nature of the parish.

A list of resources is also included to assist with ideas and implementation of the protocols. Members of the diocesan Welcoming Parishes Team are also willing to assist parishes in this process.

All parishes are unique and what works in one parish may not work in another. Each parish will need to discover their own identity as a Welcoming Parish. We must make room for the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us on this never-ending journey of becoming joyful Disciples of Christ. May we live the fullness of the Paschal Mystery and welcome others to this same challenge and grace!

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PROTOCOLS

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I. OUTSIDE CHURCH ENVIRONMENT

The parish's outside environment is the "first greeting" to the faithful who are gathering as a community for the great celebration at the Lord's Table – The Eucharist. A sense of "welcome" is key in the experience of Church and sets the tone for joy-filled, full, active participation in the Liturgy.

Following are some questions to assist in discerning how welcoming your parish is.

Signage

- 1) Is the Church building easy for visitors and newcomers to find?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 2) If your location is on a side street, do you have signs on main routes that direct the way?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 3) Is your signage visible from the street with the parish name printed large and clear?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 4) Is the area around the sign well groomed?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 5) Does your signage include multi-cultural language to reflect your community?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

Parking areas

- 6) Are your parking areas and parking lot entrances clearly marked?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 7) Do you have lighting in your parking lot and along your sidewalks?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 8) If lights are on a timer, are they adjusted for evening meetings and events?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 9) Do you have sufficient and clearly marked handicapped parking?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 10) In the winter, are parking lots, walkways and entrances open and ice free?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____



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11) Are there persons available to assist the elderly and handicapped as they arrive for Mass?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

Church entrances

12) Is the entrance to the church clearly identified?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

13) Does the entrance invite people to enter?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

14) Is the liturgical season visible on the outside of the church building?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

15) Are Mass times and Reconciliation times posted in a prominent place at the entrance?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

Church grounds

16) Are the church grounds pleasingly landscaped?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

17) Is the outside of the church well maintained?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

Additional comments regarding the Outside Environment:

Suggestions:

- Signage is important for visitors to find the church building as well as the entrance.
- More than one language is appropriate if the parish has ethnic diversity.
- Provide seasonal color to the outside of the church.
- Consider outdoor assistance to those who may need it (something as simple as providing an umbrella when it rains). This might be a good ministry for families with young children.
- Make sure the outside is nicely landscaped and has an inviting appearance.
- Good lighting and proper removal of snow and ice is important.



II. CHURCH GATHERING SPACE

The welcome of the outside environment should continue into the gathering space and nave of the church where the faithful will truly feel they are brothers and sisters in Christ. When the faithful are sent forth at the end of the liturgy, they should be invigorated and revitalized in living the Gospel.

Realizing the architectural limitations of some parish gathering spaces, the following questions are meant to identify some basic necessities of a welcoming parish. An "ideal" gathering space would be large enough to accommodate your congregation as they arrive so that people can greet each other and move about comfortably.

Gathering Space

- 18) Is the space clean, well maintained, and well lit?
Yes ___ Somewhat ___ No ___ Unsure ___ Not applicable ___
19) Is the space comfortable?
Yes ___ Somewhat ___ No ___ Unsure ___ Not applicable ___
20) Are restrooms easy to locate and accessible to all?
Yes ___ Somewhat ___ No ___ Unsure ___ Not applicable ___
21) Are there ministers at the doors to offer a greeting?
Yes ___ Somewhat ___ No ___ Unsure ___ Not applicable ___
22) Is it easy to recognize designated persons who can answer questions?
Yes ___ Somewhat ___ No ___ Unsure ___ Not applicable ___
23) Is there a clutter-free information area?
Yes ___ Somewhat ___ No ___ Unsure ___ Not applicable ___
24) If there is a nursery or area for families with small children, is it clearly marked?
Yes ___ Somewhat ___ No ___ Unsure ___ Not applicable ___
25) If there are liturgical aids, are they visible, or handed to each person?
Yes ___ Somewhat ___ No ___ Unsure ___ Not applicable ___

Additional comments regarding the gathering space:

Three horizontal lines for writing additional comments.



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Suggestions:

- Consider forming a Welcoming Committee.
- Welcoming Ministers should be at all church entrances to offer a genuine smile and a simple word of “welcome.”
- Consider having someone open the door as people enter.
- Ministers can also hand out liturgical aids if used in your parish.
- Ministers should not get caught up in lengthy conversations because they are unable to provide the “welcome” to each person entering the gathering space.
- Consider adding a television monitor with parish activities, calendars and other information. This should be visible in the gathering space or parish hall.
- This is another area where seasonal color or simple decorations might be included.
- Consider having someone from parish staff or parish council navigate a wheelchair and walker through your space to identify any problem areas.
- Having Welcoming Ministers in the gathering space at the end of Mass could help those who have questions about the parish or upcoming events.



III. WORSHIP SPACE / ART & ENVIRONMENT

Entering the worship space for liturgy should open our hearts to the sacredness of the environment, the desire to be present for worship, and the privilege of being part of the Body of Christ. It is important to provide a holy and welcoming church environment, which flows from the gathering space.

26. Does your worship space flow well from your gathering space?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

27. When you enter your worship space, are you drawn into a sense of the sacred?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

28. Is your liturgical art of high quality and appropriate to the style and scale of the worship space?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

29. Is the altar the focal point of the worship space?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

30. Is the worship space clean and comfortable?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

31. Is the temperature appropriate for the season and is there proper ventilation?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

32. Is there enough seating to accommodate worshippers?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

33. Is the worship space and sanctuary well lit?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

34. Do all worshippers have the necessary liturgical aids or song books to fully participate in the Sunday worship?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

35. Does the space reflect the liturgical season, in a dignified, artistic manner?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

36. Does your worship space reflect the Joy of the Resurrection? (Please see *Introduction, pg. 5*)

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____



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37. Is the worship space handicap accessible?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

38. Is your sanctuary accessible to all?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

39. Can all Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers navigate easily into the sanctuary?

Yes _____ Somewhat _____ No _____ Unsure _____ Not applicable _____

Additional comments regarding Worship Space and Art Environment:

Suggestions:

- Provide liturgical training to art & environment volunteers.
- Introductions and informal greetings should be completed before the entrance procession.
- Decorations should add color and beauty, not obstruct or overwhelm the altar or other areas of liturgical focus.
- Special areas of seating (such as for families with young children or for those with physical limitations) should be clearly marked. If not, an usher could direct them to the proper location.



IV. GREETERS AND USHERS

Greeters/Ushers are most likely the first face of the parish. Offering a smile and welcome to all helps set the tone for good worship. It is here that most people feel the warmth and invitation of the parish and decide if they will return.

- 40. Are Greeters/Ushers available to greet and answer questions?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 41. Are they identifiable and available, before, during and after worship?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 42. Are they polite, courteous and friendly?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 43. Are they attentive to and engaged with people arriving to the church?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 44. Do they reach out to those they don't know?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 45. Are they knowledgeable about the facilities?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 46. Do they know where the first aid kit, umbrellas, etc., are located?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 47. Do they dress appropriately and do they wear a welcoming smile?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 48. Are they trained according to the *Diocesan Hospitality Handbook*?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 49. Are they helpful to the elderly, others in need, those with children, coats, bags, etc.?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 50. Do you have Greeters/Ushers at each entrance of the church?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____



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Additional comments regarding Greeters/Ushers:

Suggestions:

- Proper training for handling emergency situations is important.
- Have at least one wheelchair available.
- Make sure greeter/ushers know when it is appropriate to seat people once the Mass begins.
- Greeters/Ushers should be knowledgeable about parish events to assist those with questions.
- Consider inviting all parish members - families, senior citizens, etc. to be Greeters/Ushers.
- Help Greeters/Ushers understand the spiritual importance of their ministry.



V. LITURGICAL MUSIC

The music in our liturgical worship continues to gather us together into family, making us aware of those around us and open to God’s direction in our lives. It should promote full, active participation in the liturgy.

- 51. Does your parish embrace the importance of music in liturgy?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 52. Are song books or worship aids available and easy to follow?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 53. Is an explanation needed to fully participate and is it provided?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 54. Do you have a good, effective sound system?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 55. Can it be heard from all parts of the church, including overflow spaces?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 56. Can the volume of the sound system be independently adjusted for different areas in the worship space?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 57. Is there variety in the styles of music?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 58. Is the music uplifting?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 59. Does your music recognize the cultural diversity of your parish?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 60. Is the music easy to sing for your congregation and visitors?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 61. Do instruments properly support the voice of the congregation?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____



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Additional comments regarding the music during liturgy

Suggestions:

- Review your sound system with special concern for:
 - volume control
 - number of microphones the system can handle
 - local access for repair and maintenance.
- Introduce new songs regularly to add variety.
- The music director should actively participate in Worship Commission meetings.
- Open communication is always beneficial between the music director and the presider.



VI. PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

Creating and maintaining a vibrant parish requires a style and attitude of your parish leadership, both priest and lay, that is open and welcoming to all. Programs and education should capture the hearts of all parishioners to want to grow as disciples of Christ, serving their parish and community, while nurturing their own spiritual growth.

Parish Priest / Pastoral Administrator

Effective and joyful pastoral leadership is important to the growth and outreach of any parish. The priest/administrator should be available to the parishioners and provide meaningful and uplifting teachings, liturgical celebrations, and opportunities for spiritual renewal.

62. Does the priest/administrator take time to meet and greet parishioners and visitors?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
63. Is he/she friendly and approachable?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
64. When parishioners are ill or absent, does the priest/administrator visit them in the hospital or in their homes?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
65. If asked, does the priest/administrator bless homes and enjoy meals with other parishioners?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
66. Is Reconciliation offered regularly?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
67. Is the Reconciliation experience compassionate?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
68. Does the priest/administrator ask parishioners to help with parish events?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
69. Does the priest/administrator acknowledge and respect the administration and leadership of others?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____



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Parish Staff and Leaders

When visitors come to the parish office, staff members should warmly greet all and be willing to provide assistance and answer questions. Registration material and other information should be in a format that is easily understood. Parish staff should be sensitive to the cultural, social and ethnic diversity among parishioners.

70. Are parish staff and other leaders active within the parish community and known to all?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

71. Are parish staff members and other parish leaders accessible and willing to help?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

72. Do they know how to effectively listen to others?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

73. When answering the phone, is the office person friendly and courteous?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

74. Are inquiries responded to in a timely and helpful manner?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

75. Is the phone recording accurate and user-friendly?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

76. Are the bulletins or other flyers informative and interesting?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

77. Do parish leaders reach out and invite other parishioners to become involved?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

78. Do Eucharistic Ministers bring communion to the homebound?

Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

Additional comments regarding pastoral leadership:

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Suggestions:

- Provide information on the various commissions within your parish. Also provide names of parishioners who serve on each commission.
- Once a year have an open Pastoral Council meeting to provide information to interested parishioners.
- Once a year have a Ministry Fair to encourage more participation and learn about needs.
- Evaluation of Sunday worship could be conducted on a regular basis. Review whether Sunday worship is uplifting, joyful, and reverent.
- Consider having a weekly Bible study reviewing upcoming Sunday readings to help build community and nourish the Sunday homily experience.

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VII. FOLLOW-UP WITH NEW FAMILIES

Our outreach to others makes them feel welcomed, valued, and interested in getting involved in their faith and in each other. A follow-up with new families is encouraged, especially through a personal visit. Invite them to become involved in parish ministries or outreach, through awareness of all spiritual, educational, and social parish events.

- 79. Do we warmly acknowledge all visitors who worship and celebrate with us?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 80. Do we follow-up with new families through a personal visit?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 81. Are welcome packets provided for new parishioners?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 82. Do new members feel welcomed (not isolated) at parish functions?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 83. Are events planned to welcome new persons or families?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 84. Do we explain the ways our parish communicates, and how to use the website?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 85. Do we offer babysitting for families who participate in parish events?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 86. Do we continue to follow-up with new families through phone calls or emails?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____
- 87. Do we offer additional brochures or books to encourage them in their faith?
Yes ____ Somewhat ____ No ____ Unsure ____ Not applicable ____

Additional comments regarding follow-up with new families:



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Suggestions:

- Encourage the priest/administrator to participate in welcoming events for new parishioners and/or send them a personal note of welcome.
- Acknowledge new parishioners in the bulletin.
- Develop a means of assessing the pastoral needs of new parishioners.
- Make a special effort to include new parishioners in all events.
- Have a team of people present who make them feel a part of the event.

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RESOURCES

LIST OF RESOURCES



1. "Hospitality Basics," Dr. Glenn CJ Byer with Michael R. Prendergast, 2009 Pastoral Press, Portland, Oregon
2. "The Ministry of Hospitality," James A. Comiskey, 1989 Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota
3. Diocese of Gaylord Handbooks for Ministers as follows:
 - Ministry of Hospitality - Ushers and Greeters
 - Ministry of Lector Handbook
 - Handbook for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion
 - Ministry of Altar Server
 - A Handbook for Parish Music Ministries
4. "The Joy of the Gospel Evangelii Gaudium," Pope Francis Apostolic Exhortation, 2013 Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City, published in the United States, December 2013.
5. Powerpoint Slides: "The Art of Hospitality," by Fr. Eduardo Montemayor, SOLT

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The Art of Hospitality

by

Fr. Eduardo Montemayor, SOLT

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A Hospitality Prayer

My Heavenly Father, endless Love and Mercy, thank you for the gifts you have blessed me with. I commit to using them responsibly within this ministry of hospitality, that I may be a blessing to the persons you bring to church today. Give me a fresh supply of joy, patience and love to receive everyone as I would receive you.

Anoint me with your Holy Spirit, so that even through my smallest actions people may know and feel your love. Lord, I acknowledge your deep love for the persons I will meet today. I speak your peace, your grace, your mercy and your perfect love upon them. May this ministry bring you glory. And may the way I do it bring faith, joy and a smile to all that I come in contact with today. In Jesus Holy Name. Amen.

The Art of Hospitality



The *ART* of Hospitality

- Hospitality is not a **science**; it is rather an **Art**:
 - It requires a large dose of creativity, innovation, motivation and inspiration.
 - The same actions will invariably elicit different reactions.
- One must offer individualized and unique attention for each visitor at church.
- Therefore, hospitality must be tendered much like a high quality work of art, with creativity, dedication, passion, love and "personality."

The Art of Hospitality

Why be hospitable?

1. Because it is an act of love toward others.
2. Because it is one of the most important ways in which we can accomplish the work Jesus gave us to do --- bring others to know the love we have found in Him.
3. The mission is so important.
4. People need the Gospel.
5. Some people will not tolerate a mediocre Church.
6. People will choose other churches if we are not our best when they visit.

The Art of Hospitality



Cold & Unfriendly Churches

VS.

Warm & Friendly Churches

A big difference is a hospitality ministry that cares about people.

The Art of Hospitality

Cold & Unfriendly Churches

- * Attitude: intimidating
- * Ignored
- * On our terms
- * Dress code: conform to an unknown standard
- * You're on your own
- * Make your own friends

The Art of Hospitality



Warm & Friendly Churches

- * Attitude: inviting & attractive
- * How can I serve you?
- * You belong here.
- * I will help you.
- * I will be a friend and help you find others.

The Art of Hospitality

Think like Newcomers

- People are visiting for a reason.
 - Felt the "urge" to come
 - Experienced a critical event in their life (death, illness).
 - To marry, to baptize, a new parish, church shopping, etc.
- Some have confidence in coming to a new church.
- **For many** it is frightening and uncomfortable to walk through the doors of a new church.

The Art of Hospitality



Think like Newcomers

- Some carry **all kinds of feelings**:
 - Guilt, fear, shame, unworthiness, mistrust, pain, etc.
 - A sense that they must be crazy for coming to church, or the toxins of protestant friends that attack the church
- **To Overcome** these feelings we must make them **feel** relaxed, comfortable, reassured, accepted, cared for, and at home.
- **“People** will forget what you said, **people** will forget what you did, but **people** will never forget how you made them **feel.**” Maya Angelou

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Biblical Roots

- **In our culture, people are expected to pay for their own hospitality (hotel, restaurant).**
- **In the Bible, hospitality to others was considered a personal responsibility.**
- For example: **Gen 18:1-8** Abraham welcomes the 3 visitors.

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Biblical Roots of Ushers & Greeters

- 2 Kings 22:4, "doorkeepers"
- 1 Chronicles 9:19, "guardians of the threshold"
- Jeremiah 35:4, "keeper of the doorway"
- 1 Chronicles 23:1-5, "4,000 gatekeepers"
- 1 Chronicles 26:1-19, "Classes of gatekeepers"

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Biblical Roots

- **Code of hospitality in Jesus time**
 - Mk 6:8-10, "...enter a house, stay there..."
 - Mt 25:35, "I was a stranger... You welcomed me."
 - Mt 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered...there am I..."
 - Lk 24:29, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening, and the day is almost over."
 - Heb 13:2 "Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels."
 - 1 Peter 4:9 "Be hospitable to one another without complaining."
 - Example: ask people to greet each other before Mass.

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In Christian History

- In the 3rd Century - **Pope Cornelius** mentioned doorkeepers serving the Church of Rome.
- A 4th Century Syrian Church document, "The Apostolic Constitution" also speaks of the role of doorkeepers or porters.
- **St. Thomas Aquinas** describes the role of porters as one of the original functions of deacons in the Church.
- For hundreds of years the role of porter was one of the 4 minor orders conferred on all seeking ordination to the **priesthood** (suppressed in 1972 by Pope Paul VI).

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So how do we build a hospitality ministry in a parish?

Five Roles

1. Ministry Director
2. Coordinator (one per Mass)
3. Ushers
4. Greeters
5. Parking Attendants

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Establish Identity

- **For greeters:** Custom badges only
- **For Ushers:** Custom badges, plus suit jacket with an emblem of the parish
- **For Parking Attendants:** A bright vest



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Training Overview

Phase I: Hire or appoint a Ministry Director.

- Train him to train others.

Phase II: Training for Ushers

- Set date & publicize (open to anyone; established ministries)
- Typical training session:
 - 6:00 p.m. - light dinner
 - 6:30 p.m. - intro. to hospitality min. (PowerPoint)
 - 7:30 p.m. - practicum (scripted role-play in church)
- Select a coordinator for each Mass & launch ministry

Phase III: Training for Greeters (1 or 2 months apart)

Phase IV: Training for Parking Attendants

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Responsibilities for All

1. Arrive early
 - Coordinators: 20 minutes before Mass
 - Everyone else: 15 minutes before Mass
2. Check-in with coordinator
3. Check your appearance
 - Dress appropriately & no excessive fragrance
 - Hair, shirt, teeth, mouth wash, etc...
4. Get focused & **pray** (see prayer at beginning of slides)

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Tasks of Coordinators

1. **Prepare printed materials and other supplies**
 - Order of worship, missal, welcome packet
 - Complete, up-to-date, and adequate supply
2. **Check about reserved seating with priest/sacristan**
 - Clearly mark both ends of reserved pews
 - Advise other greeters & ushers about reserved seats
3. **Select Gift Bearers**
 - Check with priest/sacristan for special instructions
 - Don't select someone who is not dressed appropriately
4. **Set-up information area (table or pamphlet holder)**
 - Make sure everything is filled
5. **Check-in all volunteers and assign positions**

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Supplies and Materials

- Order of worship, missals, bulletins
- Pew cards
 - Visitors will be invited to fill and place in collection basket, or turn in at the office
- A pen for visitors to sign 'Guest Book'
- Welcoming brochures or pamphlets
- Bubble gum tissue
- Umbrellas, flash lights, golf cart, etc...
- Hand sanitizer, wipes

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Tasks of Parking Attendants

1. Check-in with coordinator
2. Get materials: hat, umbrella, flash light, bright vest, golf cart, etc...
3. Take position at entrance of major parking lots
4. Assist in:
 - directing traffic to available spots
 - helping people cross the street
 - providing an umbrella on rainy or very hot days
 - providing courtesy golf cart ride
5. Welcome everyone: "**Good morning, welcome to (name of Church)...**"

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Tasks of Greeters

1. Check-in with coordinator and take position
 - On the outside of every entrance
2. Try to greet everyone
3. Hand-out printed material if any:
 - About church or about Mass, etc...
 - Preferably not missal - to be free to focus on the needs of visitors
4. Engage in conversation (when time permits)
 - Pleasant conversation (brief is not superficial)
 - If visitor - welcome them and ask a little about them

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Tasks of Greeters

5. Introduce visitors to VIP's
6. If they have children, tell them about child-care:
 - Be ready to walk them to child-care & introduce parents to teacher.
 - Note: pagers for child-care parents is recommended.
7. Transition to ushers

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The Script for Greeters

1. Try to shake hands with everyone, but stay calm and joyful if you are not able.
2. If Mass already started, use a short greeting:
"Welcome. Enjoy the Mass."
3. If you don't recognize someone -- as they approach about 10 feet away say: "Hello/Good Morning/evening...Welcome to (church name)."
4. Once they are closer say: "I'm (your name). Have I met you before?"
5. **WARNING!** Never ask: "Are you *new*?"

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The Script for Greeters

6. If they say, "Yes, we've met before." Simply say, "I must be **having a senior moment. Great to meet you again. Please tell me your name.**"
7. "Yes, I've been here for 40 years, is about time..."
 - **Do not** apologize for not recalling (agree with them).
 - Recovery: "**Well I feel silly, but I'm glad to finally meet you.**" Or "**Well, I'm relatively new to the Parish, but it's good to finally meet you.**"
 - Then say, "**Please tell me your name.**"
 - Conclude: "**Enjoy the Mass.**"
 - This is not the time to invite on a "date"

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The Script for Greeters

8. If they say, "**No, this is my first time.**"
 - Say, "**Then welcome. It's great to have you with us. Please tell me your name.**" "I'm (your name.)"
 - "**Do you live in the neighborhood?**" etc...
 - Then engage them in conversation, but not beyond their level of comfort (if time permits).
 - Then say, "**Here is some information about our church.**" And give brochure, "A guide for newcomers to Mass."
9. Ask if they have any questions. Typical question: **Where can I purchase candles?** (Do not be defensive, and do not argue with them; if you do not know the answer, offer to introduce them to someone who does at the information booth or after Mass.)
10. Conclude: "**Enjoy the Mass.**" (**Estas en tu Casa.**)

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The Script (after Mass)

- Don't judge if they leave Mass early (maybe ill, or late for work, etc.); "**See you next week...**"
- Introduce visitors to priests (name & home town/state).
- Direct people to gatherings after Mass (i.e., breakfast in parish hall).
- Invite to "newcomers session/night."
- Invite them back next week.
- If possible, help ushers clean-up the pews.
- My experience at Lakewood.

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Tasks of Ushers – Before Mass

1. **Before people arrive:**
 - Check-in with coordinator and take your position
 - Tidy-up your space
 - Clean pews, inspect restrooms, turn on lights, etc.
 - Kneelers up & hymnals neatly stacked or placed in pews
 - Be aware of any safety concerns (on stairs, aisles, doorways, emergency exits etc...)
 - Do not huddle in a pack
2. **As Assembly Gathers**
 - Hand-out "Order of Worship," "Missal" (for Spanish Mass).
 - Help visitors find a seat:
 - Reassure them they are free to seat anywhere they choose.
 - Yet, gently remind the people about seating together & up front
 - "We have plenty of seating up front."
 - If almost full, help visitors find available seat; patrol aisles and hold up fingers (remember, you are **a servant**, not a traffic cop!)

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Tasks of Ushers – Before Mass

3. **Hats & Gum**
 - Hats are normally not a problem. Be very sensitive to cancer patients. Best not to say anything (priest can take care of it).
 - **"May I take your gum?"** (have tissue available)
4. **Seating latecomers (after start of Mass)**
 - Do not judge them, serve them. Give directions, not commands.
 - Assume they have a good reason. Ask them to wait, and then escort them quietly, and quickly to a convenient area, at a convenient time
 - After opening prayer, responsorial psalm, or Gospel.
 - Speak softly, **"Would you mind waiting here a few moments, until after the (prayer, reading, Gospel)?"** Or **"I'll be happy to help you find a seat in a moment."**
 - Escort through the side aisles if possible.
 - If they insist in being seated immediately - **do not stop them.**

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Tasks of Ushers – During Mass

1. Participate in Mass as much as possible

- Seating for Ushers in the back of church, or near the side doors.

2. Preparation of the Gifts (no longer called "offertory")

- Gather Collection (cf. 2 Kings 22:3-4)
 - Bow to the altar before you begin
 - Use smooth & dignified movements
 - Careful with facial expressions (always smile no matter amount given)
 - Pew cards might be placed in collection basket

3. Procession with the Gifts

- During collection, the usher assists those presenting the gifts to come to the middle of the church. Ideally, they are chosen in advance by the coordinator (single people & teens can also present gifts).

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Tasks of Ushers – During Mass

4. Communion Procession

- After bowing to altar -- call forward one pew at a time (4 simultaneous sections)
- Don't look at those who do not go up (better to face the altar).
- **Don't** hurry them & no waving hands
- Instead, approach them & invite them (OK to point forward)
 - **Would you mind going to that communion line up front?**
- Remind ministers to bring communion to those who cannot approach (handicapped, elderly)
- Watch out for anyone not consuming the Eucharist! Speak softly, but firmly.
 - **Would you please consume the Eucharist now.**
 - If no, say "**Please give the Lord, back to me**" (return to priest)

5. Concluding Rites

- Second collection (after the closing prayer).
- Don't judge if they leave early (maybe ill, or late for work, etc.); "**See you next week...**"
- Offer to take song book from presider (small detail)
- Introduce visitors to priests (name & home town/state).

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Ushers Special Duties

1. Dealing with disruptions

- Put aside your feelings of irritation and hurt
- Allow Christ's love to flow through you
- Be careful not to have a condemning tone to your voice

2. Crying Children (beyond normal noise):

- Ask what you can do to help the parent, or
- Gently invite parents to cry room, or remind them of nursery.
- **Do not** expect the priest to handle this problem.

3. A drunk, or severe mental problems, etc.

- The same principles apply -- use gentle firmness.
- Offer to help; or suggest the two of you go to a place where you can talk; gently remind he/she is disturbing others.
- If necessary, seek help from others, or call the security guard or the police.

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Ushers Special Duties

4. Responding to Emergencies

- Fire (call 911, and ask priest to evacuate building)
- Natural disaster (same)
- Power failure (have a flashlight handy at evening Masses)
- Medical emergencies:
 - Ask for a medical professional, or if someone knows CPR
 - Call 911 without hesitation
 - Go for first aid kit
 - Always err on the side of caution

5. Special Liturgical Rituals

- Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Easter Vigil, Feast of Corpus Christi -- check with Master of Ceremonies

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Tasks of Ushers After Mass

1. Distribute bulletins
2. Direct people to gatherings after Mass (i.e., breakfast in parish hall, bookstore, etc...)
3. Clean-up the pews

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Your Handshake

1. **Firm grip**
 - valley to valley (thumb to thumb)
 - not overly tight, but not weak
2. **Eye contact**
 - Look them in the eye
 - and smile
3. **Extend hand** (if they initiate)
4. **Shake**
 - 2 - 3 shakes
 - Then release (let's practice)

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Respect Personal Space

- Position yourself outside the entrance, but not where you block the path to enter.
- Stand 2 1/2 - 3 feet away from the person

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How to Remember Names?

1. Say it
 - Repeat the name of few times in natural flow of conversation
 - Ex. When introducing VIP's do so by name. "**Fr. Joseph, I want you to meet Mr. Garcia. He is visiting us for the first time this morning.**"
 - If you did not hear it clearly say: "**I'm sorry, I didn't catch that.**" Or "**Please repeat your name.**"
2. Write it
 - On an index card or small note pad
 - After Mass, review list of names and seek them out by name.

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Be Enthusiastic

- A **must** for hospitality ministers
- Greek "en-theos"
 - "en" means to be "filled with"
 - "theos" means "God".
 - Therefore, enthusiasm means "**to be filled with God**"
- May all encounter the presence of God in You.

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