

## **Parish Hospitality: Much More than Greeters at the Church Door – Christine Heusinger**

Hospitality is communicated one-on-one and it is everyone in the parish's "job". Everyone should greet others with a smile, all the time. Everyone in the parish is on the welcoming committee.

Millennials need to feel welcomed or the desert

Make it easy for visitors/newcomers

1. Help people find their way
  - a. Clear directions to the church
  - b. Clear signage and directions about where to park
  - c. Clearly marked entrance
  - d. Good signage at the church and good website with clear instructions
2. Greeters at the door AND ushers inside
3. Welcome table
4. Welcome card in the pews

Going the extra mile for others. i.e. in one parish she visited the youth walked people to their cars when it was raining.

Tips for the front office:

1. Clean and welcoming
2. First person someone meets should ALWAYS look at them and acknowledge them
3. What are your "office hours"? Consider being open before/after liturgies
4. Listen to the staff as they interact with parishioners – are they hospitable/friendly
5. Are forms readily available?
6. Telephone etiquette
  - a. If at all possible, don't use automated systems. People want to talk to a real person!
  - b. The person on the phone needs to smile, when you smile, your smile is in your voice
  - c. When people inquire about sacraments and/or using the church, the first question should NEVER be – are you a member? Congratulate them, rejoice with them.

Ways of Welcoming New Parishioners:

1. Announce at Mass, "Has anyone joined our parish in the past month?" Recognize them
2. Print newcomers names in the bulletin
3. Put photos of new families on a bulletin board with their names
4. Send out a welcome mailing as soon as they register
5. Host new parishioner welcome events several times a year. Don't advertise them in the bulletin, call or send a hand-written note to invite them.
6. Give newcomers a welcome gift. Some ideas: prayer card with the parish on it, a decal for their car, homemade bread, a magnet with Mass times on it

Ways of Building Community:

1. Recognize parishioners on special days like anniversaries, birthdays, eagle scouts
2. Send cards from the parish for sick, those in mourning, new babies, marriages, etc.

- a. A perfect job for the homebound
- 3. Give recognition in the bulletin for accomplishments
- 4. Offer after Mass hospitality of some kind consistently
- 5. Host regular social gatherings, like Bunco nights or Monday Night Football
- 6. Regularly send information regarding parish events in a newsletter, postcard, email, etc. – beyond the bulletin

Some parishes send a seasonal parish activity mailing

Some parishes send a weekly parish email using “Constant Contact” which highlights ministries and activities in the parish with video clips and also includes a weekly stewardship message.

Misc ideas:

1. Train ALL liturgical ministers. They are part of the welcoming team. They should attempt to meet one new person each week.
2. Have large photos of staff and parish council in a prominent place. Create nametags for staff and council members. Require them to wear them at all times when on church property.
3. Host a monthly pot-luck if you are a small parish
4. When greeting new members, share what you love about the parish.
5. Be sure to put an ad in the paper before Christmas and Easter
6. Have a welcome card for any Mass/event where a lot of disengaged, inactive or non-Catholics will attend – i.e. Christmas/Easter/funerals
7. Plan a special program shortly after Christmas and Easter so that there is something to invite people to
8. Have a team that reaches out to families a month after a funeral
9. Have new parishioners over to the pastor’s house for dinner

Checklist:

1. Do parishioners believe that being welcoming is part of their baptismal call?
2. Are all parishioners encouraged to exchange a personal greeting and smile every time they are in the parish/at Mass?
3. Is hospitality a part of every committee, meeting, etc.?
4. Is there rapid follow-up when people are seeking information?
5. Who is responsible for orienting new parishioners?
6. Is there a hospitality committee? Is it multi-generational i.e. are there teens inviting teens?
7. Are people with special needs given flexible options?
8. Does your parish look for ways to be especially welcoming and hospitable at weddings and funerals?
9. Are the people in your parish, especially the leadership, smiling, smiling, smiling until it becomes natural?
10. Does your website have a welcoming message on its main page? Is your website kept current?
11. Does your ministry leadership rotate?
12. Are ministry members thanked regularly? One pastor thanked his servers by name each week.
13. Is hospitality evaluated annually?
14. Is your parish open to becoming a multi-cultural parish?

15. Signage: Have you evaluated both your permanent and temporary signage? Do you make use of banners/posters outside and inside your parish?

The Rewards of working hard at hospitality:

1. Infectious faith
2. Greater enthusiasm
3. Deeper engagement
4. Stronger bonding
5. Sustained growth
6. Abundant sharing

## **Keynote/Vendor Quotes:**

Fr. Andrew Kimmerling: Theology of Stewardship is summed up in the petition in the OurFather, "Give us this day our Daily Bread."

And in these four words: Identity, trust, gratitude, love.

Keynote Danella Zsupan-Jerome: Communication is a human, relational act. In it we give and receive a gift – a gift of another person. Communication is not an exchange of information. Genuine communication must always lead toward communion with God and others.

Diocese of Pittsburgh's first ever capital campaign. It was successful because "it's not about money but about tools for the mission."

LPI consultant: Vibrant Churches have a Long-range plan, a fiscal plan and a communication plan

Greg Erlandson:

Mother Teresa: They are Jesus in one of his more distressing disguises"

We have a God who revels in diversity

Civility is an expression of mercy.

- Start from a place of familial bond – relation is prior to being in the disagreement
- Accompaniment – speaking and listening – we need to do both

## **Casting Nets ministries: 7 pillars of evangelization**

To create stewards, you have to create missionary disciples.

We have a moral obligation to evangelize. To be a disciple means to be a disciple-maker. Look at the example of the cursed fig tree in the Gospel (Matt 20:18-22)

Evangelization is not a program, these are pillars to build on:

1. Prayerful – one must have a relationship with Jesus to give a relationship with Jesus to another. Jesus is more concerned with “sanctifying me than sanctifying others through me.”
2. Invitational – the spirituality of invitation
  - a. Persistent – ex of student group – saying no for an entire school year before he said yes
  - b. At the request of the Holy Spirit – not our own initiative
3. Hospitable – real, sincere and joyful
4. Inspirational – if we live with passion and conviction, people will be inspired. We have to be beacons of hope and have zeal – breathing the Spirit of Hope back into their lives.
5. Sacramental – 2 ways:
  - a. Be a sacramental people, especially Eucharist and Reconciliation
  - b. Bring people to sacraments so they can encounter Christ
    - i. Act as an usher – give opportunity and place and allow Christ to work
6. Formational – build relationships, walk with people
  - a. Evening prayer: “forms disciples who’s holiness is worthy of your Kingdom.”
7. Missionful – full of the mission. The Church IS mission

We are not truly a disciple until we have made disciples who make disciples – this is the great commission.

## **Keeping Our Focus on God in the Busyness of Everyday Life:**

Are you mindful or do you have a full mind?

‘God is in the bits and pieces of everyday’

Tips for being mindful:

- wake up and go to the window and thank God for 3 things
- make a morning offering
- lunch is an opportunity to feed the soul as well as the body
- open every meeting with, “What is the gift you brought today?”
- end the day with “Protect us Lord as we stay awake, watch over us as we sleep. That awake we may keep watch with Christ and asleep, rest in peace.” From Night Prayer

## **From the Year of Mercy to a more impassioned discipleship:**

First say, I am a sinner in need of mercy.

All are welcome, on Christ’s terms.

He desires all to say, “I am a sinner,” “I desire you to transform us.”

Lessons in Stewardship from the poor:

They are more generous than the wealthy – they are hospitable

It is important to specify the need – show why

They need to know how they can be generous

Poverty is relative

Poor are capable of generosity

Solidarity enables them to do big things, - i.e. quincenera

Where are the poor in our lives?

People at the margins, families, young adults, those who feel excluded

Mercy inspires discipleship, having encountered/experienced mercy, they are inspired to become disciples.