



Newcomers Welcome Ministry Suggestions

*“...I was a stranger and you welcomed me...”
(Matthew 25:35)*

Welcoming those who are brand new to your parish can be a joyful part of the life of stewardship. A sincere welcome will allow newcomers to see that they have joined a vibrant faith community that encourages their participation and the use of the unique talents that God has given to them to share.



Consider the following as you evaluate the parish's current plan on welcoming those who are new. And, most importantly, reflect on the question: *If I was new to this parish, do I have a sense of how this community of believers lives out the Gospel of Jesus Christ?*

- **First Impressions**

- Church Website: Many newcomers will look at the church website before coming to Mass. Review the website quarterly to ensure it is up-to-date and that Mass times are easy to find. Add a special welcome for visitors on the site. Include directions on where to park, a map of the campus, and main entrance locations.
- A Front Door Welcome: Ask clergy to be present at the front door or in the narthex to welcome everyone before Mass. Ask ushers or greeters to be ready to open the doors several minutes prior to the beginning of Mass and to wear nametags so they can be easily identified if a newcomer has a question. Provide information about the parish/the diocese/the local area in the narthex.

- Recognizing and Praying for Visitors: Include a special time before or after Mass to recognize visitors. Incorporate a prayer for the visitor or a prayer of hospitality to invite all parishioners to participate in the welcoming of someone new. Periodically ask all new parishioners to stand or bow their heads for a special blessing.
- **Welcome Events:** Ask the welcoming committee to personally invite (by name) recent visitors and new parishioners to join them for Mass. Connect a visitor to a parishioner with similar interests. Ensure the pastor can attend all newcomer events as well as other leaders in the church (associate pastors, deacons, parish council president, all parish ministry leaders, etc.) Ensure ministry leaders introduce themselves and invite newcomers to participate. Coordinate events on a quarterly basis or as often as needed.
- **Nametags:** You may wish to ask newcomers to wear a nametag so that they can be easily greeted and welcomed into the life of the parish. Nametags may also be given to all parishioners to assist everyone in knowing each other's names, making it easier to greet someone they may not already know.
- **Registration:** Encourage registration by using the bulletin, special announcements, and the parish website. Make registration as simple as possible and in person. Consider special "Registration Sunday" events right after Mass along with doughnuts and coffee. Or, as an extension of your annual Ministries Day fair, host a registration table staffed by welcome committee members. Offer online registration for the convenience of those who cannot come in during normal parish hours.
- **Welcome Packets, Brochures, and Take-home items:** Include a personal letter from the pastor to the new parishioner. Offer information such as the history of the parish, Mass times, sacraments, parish ministries, parish staff contact information, a copy of the parish mission statement, a stewardship brochure and ways to give (online, envelopes, stewardship as a way life messaging), etc. Include information on local Catholic schools in the area by using resources

available at the diocesan Catholic Schools website located [here](#), a parish bulletin or annual parish report, and a special message from the welcoming committee with an invitation to the next parish event. Consider the gift of a Bible, a devotional prayer book, a patron saint medal or prayer card for the new parishioner.

- **Personal Outreach:** Once a new parishioner has registered, the pastor may want to call them to personally welcome them to the parish.
- **A Sustained Welcome:** List the number of newcomers/new families in your annual parish report, invite newcomers to serve on a parish committee, invite new families to man a table at the parish picnic or bring up the gifts during Mass, etc. It is also vital to continually find new ways to involve those who have completed the RCIA process. It is estimated that over half of RCIA Catholics become inactive in the Church within two years of their initiation.

Stewarding New Disciples



Individuals who participate in RCIA often experience a close bond with each other and with their sponsors. Most of the individuals in RCIA are engaged, preparing to join the Church, and want to discover what's next for them in participating and living out their faith. Special care should be given to support

them during the RCIA journey, to educate them on all aspects of stewardship and to fully welcome them into the life of the parish.

The Gift of Prayer

Encourage a family rosary time at the beginning of the Lenten season. Ask families to pray specifically for those in RCIA. The RCIA rosary can be passed around the parish, from household to household, so that the whole parish is praying for RCIA participants. The season of Lent is a wonderful time to pray

for those in RCIA as many, after much study and prayer, will enter the Church directly after Lent during the Easter Vigil.

The Gift of Participation

Invite the pastor, deacons, and parish ministry leaders to speak during an RCIA class so that RCIA participants can get to know them prior to joining the Church and learn more about the ministries of the parish and how they can become involved.

A Commitment to Generosity

Host a parish day or evening of reflection specifically for RCIA participants. The Advent season has a beautiful connection with the journey that a Candidate or a Catechumen is on and could be the potential theme of the retreat. Incorporate stewardship reflections and education within the day's activities. You may consider inviting a leader from your parish stewardship committee to offer a talk or a representative from the diocesan stewardship office. As a part of the retreat, consider a small Advent project that RCIA participants can work on together such as a donation to the parish St. Vincent de Paul Society to assist with their charitable work in the community.