

5 WAYS TO BE MORE WELCOMING

Gather together a small group of parishioners who are interested in supporting the evangelization efforts of *Catholics Come Home* and share the following ideas. Allow time to brainstorm and then choose from that list a few ways your parish will welcome any newcomers.

MEET AND GREET

Match up your parish outreach efforts with opportunities to meet people face-to-face after several Masses over a period of time. Evangelization is about building relationships and all your efforts will only succeed if people get to know one another. Invite all those who are new to the parish to meet the Pastor after Mass. Have other staff members available to introduce themselves and offer their services to those who are new to your parish. This may also be time for the Pastor to hear about a hurtful experience that has kept someone away from church. Sharing these emotions may be the first step to healing.

CHILDREN HELP WELCOME

For those parishes that also have a school, use the talents of the children to welcome your newcomers. Offer opportunities for schoolchildren to create artwork that will enhance your evangelization efforts during their Fine Arts class or after school as a Service Project. Choose banners, posters or prayer cards that they can decorate and add a personal message, to welcome new families to your parish. They can be hung up near the welcome table in church or cards can be distributed to families as they register. Children can also decorate boxes, bags, folders or envelopes that will hold informational material about your parish.

NAMETAG SUNDAY

Encourage all parishioners to welcome each other and introduce themselves to anyone who is new by wearing nametags. You can begin with a “Nametag Sunday” when everyone is handed a stick-on nametag as they enter and encouraged to call each other by name during the Sign of Peace. As this becomes more comfortable, “Nametag Sunday” may become a monthly event or the highlight during a particular season.

DIVORCE SUPPORT

How welcoming is your parish to those who have experienced divorce? Begin a Divorce Support group that meets to speak about issues of marriage, divorce, and annulment. Offer opportunities to hear speakers, read books like [Divorced and Beyond](#), provide materials from the Tribunal Office on annulments, plan social events for these individuals. Family Ministries has information on how to support families experiencing divorce:

<http://www.dioceseofjoliet.org/familyministry/>

WELCOMING AND CARING FOR HOUSEHOLDS IN CRISIS

Often families experiencing a crisis are the ones who distance themselves from the parish because they have set their priorities on caring for someone who is ill or dying. Your parish can provide support for those households in crisis through offering groceries, childcare, transportation to healthcare facilities, etc. Invite parishioners who are compassionate and caring to join together to search out these needy families in your community and work together to help them through this time of great stress.