



Becoming a Welcoming Parish

Tired of Preaching to the Choir?

Try These 4 Laws of Effective Evangelization Outreach

Is there a flow of new visitors coming through your church doors every week? Do first-time visitors have a positive experience when they enter your church buildings? Do they keep coming back? Are your parishioners regularly inviting their inactive family and friends to your parish? Maybe these 4 Laws of Effective Evangelization Outreach could be of help.

1. *Create an Identity for Outreach*

There are six building blocks of Identity:

Mission: Who are you? What is the heart and passion of your parish community? How is that expressed in your parish mission statement?

Community: What are the values, attitudes and shared cultural experiences of your parish community?

People: How well can you define the demographics of your parish community?

Resources: How effectively do you utilize the potential treasure of gifts and talents found in your parishioners?

Programs: What resources are available for the various age groups of people in your parish?

Image: Does "who" you say you are match "who" you really are? When did you last review the parish mission statement in light of the needs of the community?

2. *Attract Participation by Clearly Communicating Your Identity.*

There are four principles that can help to clearly communicate your parish identity:

Timing: How well do you use holydays (Christmas, New Year's, Easter), and holidays (Thanksgiving, July 4th, Valentine's Day) to invite regular participation in your parish or to welcome inactive Catholics into connectedness with the community?

Audience: How familiar are you with the demographic profile of your parish including median age, population, married/not married/want-to-be-married, household income, primary race/cultural backgrounds?

Message: Do you take time to insure that all of your parish communications speak clearly to your parishioners? Avoid acronyms, abbreviations and terminology that would be unfamiliar to your parishioners.

Method: Does your parish select and implement a variety of communication methods containing a compelling message, to reach targeted groups in your parish, in the neighborhood? Periodically sponsor a neighborhood wide event.

3. *Connect Parishioners*

Do not assume automatic connections are happening. Some things have to be in place:

Hospitality: Do visitors AND parishioners feel wanted?

Follow-up: Do you connect newcomers with long-timers?

Assimilation: Do parishioners feel needed?

Assessment: Does your parish create multiple opportunities for all parishioners to become involved in the church's life? Does your parish focus on providing opportunities for people to build relationships through events, ministries, renewal possibilities? Does your parish implement an intentional welcome process for visitors, inactive/returning Catholics, neophytes?

4. *Equip Members to be Inviters*

Catholics are notoriously shy about inviting others to their church. Here are five ways to equip parishioners to be better inviters:

Provide parishioners with extra copies of the parish bulletin, newsletters, even business cards to distribute to family, friends, neighbors, co-workers.

Plan special adult faith formation programs, renewal processes, parish family activities designed for parishioners to bring their inactive/unchurched family and friends to.

Use multiple communication methods to share the value and teach the tools of inviting others to the parish.

Design a parish outreach web site that parishioners can share with others.

Consistently build and support your parishioners' confidence and ability to reach out to others.

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