



Best Practices for Parishes

People who respond to the invitation from Catholics Come Home® commercials or from a friend are not seeking a program, they are seeking an encounter with Christ. This encounter with Christ is the core value of each and everything we do in the Church. As Paul VI reminds us “**the Church exists in order to evangelize**” (EN 14), that is, the Church exists to proclaim the Good News and bring people to an intimate encounter with Christ. Below you will find some best practices for preparing for the Catholics Come Home® commercial campaign in your parish.

Pastor:

- 1) **Preach on Evangelization:** The Pastors primary role is to animate and encourage his parish and staff to evangelize, to share the good news with others and witness to it in their actions.
- 2) **Show the Commercials:** Show the commercials to your staff, to your parish council, and when appropriate to your entire community. Ask them what they will do to proclaim the good news, witness the good news in their lives, and be ready to invite and receive fallen away Catholics.
- 3) **Plan as a Staff:** Meet with the staff to discuss how best your parish can respond to the needs of those whom are fallen away and how your parish will receive those who return.
- 4) **Pulpit Announcement:** Announce the campaign, the commercial airing schedule and your intentions as a Pastor and as a community for inviting and receiving returning Catholics.

Parish Staff:

- 1) **Evangelization at the Core:** Make each and every moment at your parish an opportunity to encounter Christ.
- 2) **Hospitality:** St. Paul instructs us “Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you” (Romans 15:7). By receiving people on the phone, in person, via email etc with love and graciousness we model the love Christ has for each of us, and witness to what we proclaim.

- 3) **Flexibility:** As people return it is important that we are ready to try to meet their needs. While it is not our responsibility to create new programs to meet each individual need, it is important that we do more than just ask people to wait. While people wait to register for Religious Education, RCIA, marriage prep etc, encourage them to attend Mass, involve them in other ways, and stay in contact with them.
- 4) **Sharing the Good News:** As a staff be sure to share all the good you are doing to make an impact in the lives of those you serve. "Always be ready to give a reason for your hope" (1Peter 3:15) to one another and to those you serve. During the campaign keep track of any increase in Mass attendance and share any stories of people returning with each other and with Catholics Come Home®.

Receptionist:

- 1) **Hospitality:** For many, the receptionist is the "Coordinator of First Impressions" and serves as the first face of Christ to those who visit or call the Parish Office. Be ready to receive and serve those with love and patience. Always be sure to give them your name and invite them to call you personally if they have any questions.
- 2) **Referrals:** It is important to know what each person on the parish staff does so that you can refer people to the correct staff member or volunteer. Know the job responsibilities of each person and their work schedule so you can inform people if the person they need is out of the office and when they will return.

Parish Community:

- 1) **Hospitality:** Be ready to receive those who may come home. To greet them, welcome them, and by your example model for them what it means to have a relationship with Christ and His Church.
- 2) **Evangelization:** The dismissal from Mass illustrates the important role of the community to go forth "to love and serve the Lord". This love and service is demonstrated by our willingness to proclaim the Good News and witness to it with our lives. We are called to "bring Jesus into every situation" (GMD p. 2), the laity have the unique ability to bring their faith and love for Christ to the workplace, the home, the mall etc.
- 3) **Invitation:** The average active Catholic knows 2 to 3 inactive Catholics. It is so important that each and every parishioner is asking their family and friends to come home.
- 4) **Catechesis:** Many Catholics don't know the teachings of the Church, even less know the scriptures of which all teaching is connected to. The Parish should be ready to answer the basic questions about Mass, Confession, Scripture and Tradition, Marriage and Family Life, etc.

- 5) **Prayer:** All the collective efforts of the community must be offered up in prayer. The Parish is encouraged to pray specifically those who have left the Church, those who may have been hurt by the Church, and those who are returning home.



Returning Catholics Prayer

*Dear Lord, may our hearts and minds be nourished by your sustaining love,
may our words and actions be guided by your ever present grace,
That all who seek to know you; encounter you here,
That all who seek to serve you; be welcomed to the vineyard
That all who seek to love you; know that they are loved.
That all who seek to return to their Catholic faith may be welcomed and received.*