

CATHOLICS REACHING OUT

Parish Staff Presentation Manual

For Supplemental Use with the
“Parish Staff Presentation”
Video on the DVD

Inviting and Welcoming



Understanding the Pastoral Urgency



Joy



How is our parish radiating joy
when our members come together?



Pastoral Preparation



- 1) **Empowering** our parishioners to invite
- 2) **Preparing** parish personnel for calls
- 3) **Designing** events to stimulate interest from people



**PAULIST
EVANGELIZATION
MINISTRIES**

Copyright © 2018 by Paulist Evangelization Ministries, Washington, DC.
All rights reserved.

No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the copyright owner.

Paulist Evangelization Ministries
PO Box 29121
Washington, DC 20017

www.pemdc.org



**PAULIST
EVANGELIZATION
MINISTRIES**



Introduction

Parishes have felt the results of seismic shifts in demographics, in society, and in the attitude of people toward religion. As society seemingly becomes more secular, fewer people seem willing to participate in church. This is true of almost all religious expressions, and it is certainly true of Catholicism.

As Catholics, we have, in a little more than five decades, moved from being a mostly urban, ethnic-based population to being mostly dwellers in the suburbs. Large churches in the center of cities—particularly in the Northeast and Midwest—experience low attendance on Sundays, whereas newer suburbs have to build larger churches to accommodate Catholics who have moved there. This is particularly true in the South and Southwest.

Nevertheless, the number of Catholics attending church on any given Sunday has noticeably declined, except for the surge felt by some groups, including newly arrived Latinos and Asians. Our Catholic population would be one-third smaller were it not for the influx of immigrants into the United States and Canada. The children and grandchildren of immigrants who came and settled here more than a hundred years ago—when the parish played a crucial social role—now live in a vastly different world framed by multiple options.

Being involved in church is one of the things that younger people feel they have choices about. This means that parishes need to be much more proactive in inviting and welcoming people. We have to be one of the choices that people consider when they think about what's important in their lives. We have to know what we have to offer—and offer it more clearly to

people. In all this, we also must realize that we are appealing for people to be *disciples*, personally committed to Christ, not just *members* who attend.

CATHOLICS REACHING OUT will give your parish resources to reflect on reaching out, inviting, and welcoming people to your parish. A video on the accompanying DVD will explain the process for your staff; this manual supplements that video. Watching the video first as a parish team will provide the best experience for parish staffs. The video and manual will help you decide on and plan for the kind of outreach that makes sense in your neighborhood and parish. Other videos on the DVD give presentations to (1) parishioners who will distribute brochures, (2) seekers, and (3) inactive Catholics.

Thank you for reaching out in faith!

How to Use the Parish Staff Presentation Video

The “Parish Staff Presentation” video should be played for the parish staff. Each member of the staff should have a print manual to accompany the video presentation. The video will present the issues involved in inviting and the three steps that the parish needs to attend to if it were to successfully reach out to people today.

As the parish staff watches the video, there will be times when it will be good to pause to explore issues specific to a particular parish.* It is vitally important that all the staff be committed to reaching out:

- ◆ The pastor who communicates his vision to the staff, the ministers, and the whole parish
- ◆ Adult faith formation and catechetical leaders who are in touch with many people marginal in the full practice of their faith
- ◆ Young Adult ministers
- ◆ RCIA leaders
- ◆ Those involved in leading ushers and ministers of hospitality

Only if the whole staff understands what the parish is trying to accomplish will it be able to organize an outreach and, most important, lead the parish in welcoming people who are on the margins in terms of their religious experience and practice.

Pastors should realize that doing this kind of evangelizing outreach brings tremendous energy and pride to a parish. Catholics feel pride that we have something important and essential to offer people—and that we feel good enough about ourselves to make the effort to offer what we have to others.

*You will see these times to “Pause for Reflection & Discussion”:

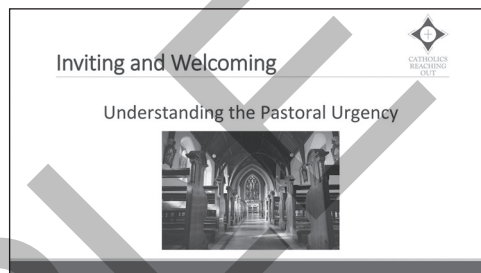
- after “General Trends” on page 8
- after “Active Catholics” on page 10
- after “The Catholic Parish” on page 14
- after “Prayer” on page 20
- after “Finalizing Step One” on page 26
- after “Finalizing Step Three” on page 34

Inviting and Welcoming

Behind any ministry of CATHOLICS REACHING OUT to others must be a sharp awareness of the pastoral urgency to get beyond our church walls and connect with others. This urgency springs primarily from our mission as a Catholic people but also from the particular circumstances that make up our modern world.

Your parish is undoubtedly already aware of the changes happening in religious practice. By and large, Catholic populations are getting older because we are missing people from younger generations for whom involvement in church has not played the same religious and social role that it played in earlier generations.

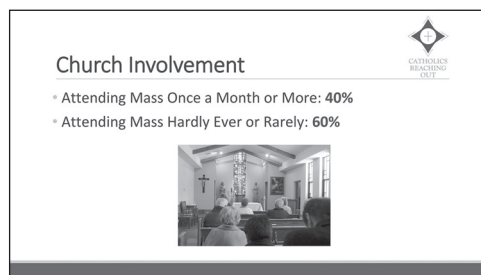
There are many ways to access data about church attendance. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate regularly publishes information about attendance and trends in the Catholic sphere (www.cara.georgetown.edu). The Pew Charitable Trusts likewise produces statistical data about religion, church involvement, and other issues (www.pewtrusts.org).



Church Involvement

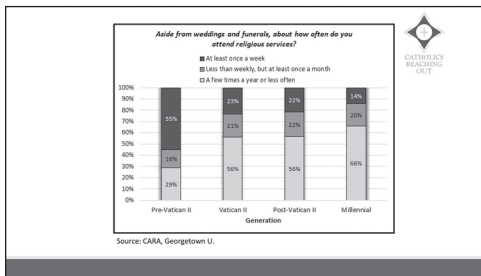
When all is said and done, the basic reality looks like this:

- ◆ 40% of Catholics attend Mass once a month or more.
- ◆ 60% of Catholics attend Mass a few times a year or less.
- ◆ Those most likely to attend are older than 60 years of age.



Statistics

In fact, a closer look at these statistics reveals how the age and backgrounds of different cohorts over the decades shape these statistics. People reared before 1960 behave very differently when it comes to church practice than do



those raised in the 1980s. As a result, different generations have been raised with different ways of identifying with church—and, in fact, with a variety of other institutions—from education, to the workplace, to societal expectations, to the age of settling down, to parenthood, and to church participation. This means that, along with thinking about non-participation in church as a personal lapse, we also have to realize the generational factors that structure much behavior.

“Nones”

A recent statistical category, the “nones” have caused church leaders to stop and wonder. These are folks when asked “What church is your religious preference?” answer “none.” This is a growing segment, particularly among millennials, which is the youngest demographic that we are looking at. There are multiple factors influencing their answer, and a clear interpretation of the response “none” cannot be given.

“Nones”

Responding to the Question:
What is your religious preference?

“NONE”

CATHOLICS REACHING OUT

We should not think, however, that the “nones” are without faith or even faith practice. How people respond to a survey does not

uncover what they actually believe and practice in their daily lives. We have to think about ways God is still working in their lives, and there are values in our lives to which we can appeal when we think about reaching out. The “nones,” in fact, have a lot of religious curiosity and activity happening, though it might not be in the organized form that we have come to expect. One of the dangers in using statistics lies in the ways they can lead us to write off certain groups when, in fact, one size does not fit all, and, within any group, there are individuals who might respond to an invitation and gesture of welcome.

General Trends


We can look at general trends happening throughout American society today. Some people have a reluctance, and even a suspicion, about involvement in institutional religion. Certainly, a sense of not feeling “bound” or “trapped” in a tradition plays a role, so involvement is a lot more tentative than it used to be.

Furthermore, the general thrust of modern, secular societies has moved away from upholding values that people see as “primarily” religious. Current attitudes toward marriage, for example, continue directions set many decades ago when legislatures relaxed attitudes toward divorce and contraception. This means that participation in faith today needs to be driven far more by values and choices, rather than by the general expectations of a society.

It will be harder for us to depend on society enforcing religious values as it did in the past. We have seen huge shifts in terms of families, relationships, and sexual practices—many of which create challenges for all faith communities. Nevertheless, secular society will never solve the religious hungers of people. Nor will people ultimately decide that they have no need of community or communities of faith.

Although many Catholics tend not to practice their faith, particularly in younger generations, they still maintain a strong identity with the Church. If they are asked about their faith, they will respond that they are Catholic. This fact should stimulate our desire to reach out to others, particularly our less-than-active Catholic brothers and sisters. Whether this tendency to maintain a lingering identity as a Catholic will last in upcoming generations remains a question.

Similarly, we should not be lulled into thinking that ethnic patterns among recent immigrants will provide a long-term answer to church attendance. For the past five decades, we have been witnessing the diminishment of ethnic-based Catholicism in the United States. Worship was helped, in part, by an ethnic culture that revolved around parish, school, and other neighborhood patterns. Such urban faith density hardly exists anymore,



General Trends

- In society there will be fewer people involved in “institutional” religion.
- Society at large will continue to “honor” religion, but will give it less influence in the public sphere.
- Among Catholics, there is a strong identity with the Church (“I am Catholic”) but a diminishing number of people actually in Church on Sunday.
- “Ethnic” patterns last only so long.

except among primarily first-generation Latino, Asian, or recent African immigrants. Some studies show, at least among Latinos, the same drop-off patterns for later generations.

Nonetheless, Catholics need not be passive when it comes to dealing with the factors that are affecting church participation today. Whatever is happening in the broader culture, each parish establishes its own culture—its own ways of welcoming and involving people, its own patterns of reaching out and serving. We all have to work to be the kind of parish that people will choose to come to out of their personal commitment. For this reason, some parishes experience far greater success than others when it comes to participation. Our parishes play a vital role in this mix of factors affecting people today. Parish programming is a key element in the role that a parish can play in the lives of people.

What do you think is happening in your local setting? What kinds of demographic shifts do you see, and how are they impacting regular attendance on Sunday? You may pause and discuss your own local situation. Makes notes below.

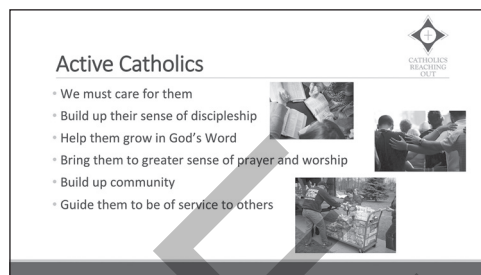


PAUSE FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

What is your local situation?

Active Catholics

If we are not caring well for our active parishioners, it will be nearly impossible for parishes to sustain the attention and energy needed to care for others. Parishes provide essential means whereby Catholics can mature in faith and in their sense of being personally committed to following Christ as disciples and, then, expressing that discipleship in daily life through serving others. The energy that comes from committed Catholic disciples fuels the energy required to reach out to others.



One of the most important shifts in our thinking about mission and evangelization happened in 1974 when the Third Ordinary Synod of Bishops met from the end of September to the end of October. This synod, “Evangelization in the Modern World,” brought to light the realization that we believers—not just those who have not heard of Christ or accepted him—need ongoing evangelization. As a result of this insight, no parish can reach out to others without continuously working to deepen the experience of conversion and the faith life of its own parishioners.

The faith of our parishioners will only be strengthened to the extent that we attempt to share it with others. We only have to ask our catechists who will tell us: when they started sharing their faith as catechists, they grew to appreciate it all the more. Essentially, there can be no conflict between the ongoing formation of our Catholic people and our desire to reach out to others. If people start to quibble that we are ignoring them for the sake of these “others,” this will provide a good opportunity for us to remind both them and ourselves that if a parish is not reaching out, it is not doing its mission.

Here is a way to think about the elements of discipleship:

- ◆ The Word of God leads us into relationship with God and into experiences of conversion.
- ◆ We express our relationship with God through personal prayer and worship, especially the Eucharist.
- ◆ We grow as disciples in a community of faith that sustains and challenges us.
- ◆ We express discipleship by serving others as Jesus did.

These were the elements emphasized in the major documents of the Second Vatican Council, which grounded modern Catholic life on worship, on a renewed sense of Church, on Revelation, and on a renewed commitment to engaging the modern world. In fact, we can use these elements to think about how we organize our parish as part of our ongoing growth in Catholic discipleship; these elements can help us identify the emphases necessary for our people to continue maturing in their faith.

Sometimes, this important insight about our need for ongoing evangelization gives the impression that we cannot reach out to others until we ourselves have advanced in the Gospel to a high degree. However, the ongoing evangelization of us believers should in no way preclude our reaching out to both those who are unconnected to a community of faith and those whose faith has grown weak in its practice. However much we need to be further evangelized, we always have the riches of our faith to share with others.

You may pause the presentation to reflect on your own parish's strengths in terms of fostering discipleship because those elements that most support the faith of our parishioners will undoubtedly be the ones by which returning Catholics or new inquirers will be drawn to participation in our parish community. Have parish staff members share their impressions of strengths with each other.



PAUSE FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

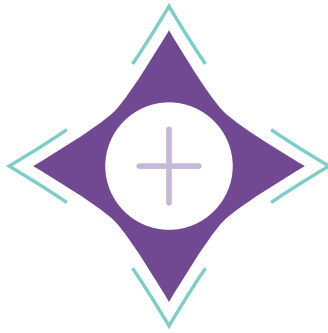
Briefly write how you think your parish is strong in areas of discipleship:

God's **Word** (preaching, catechesis, faith formation, scripture study, etc.)

Prayer and Worship (liturgies, sacramental celebrations, prayer in daily life of families and parishioners, witness to prayer in the parish, etc.)

Community (unity and cohesiveness, a desire to share and support each other, responsiveness to needs within the parish, hospitality, welcome, etc.)

Service (ministries beyond the parish, involvement with the poor, care for vulnerable populations such as seniors, involvement in neighborhood events, etc.)



CATHOLICS REACHING OUT

Parish Staff Presentation Manual

For Supplemental Use with the
“Parish Staff Presentation”
Video on the DVD

Catholics Reaching Out

A simple, direct way to help any parish undertake invitation to people who are not involved in parish life or people who are seeking faith.

This manual is accompanied by a DVD that takes a parish staff through the various decisions and directions to implement parish outreach to others.

Prayer for Evangelization

Loving God, you called each of us by name and gave your only Son to redeem us. In your faithfulness, you sent the Holy Spirit to complete the mission of Jesus among us. Open our hearts to Jesus. Give us the courage to speak his name to those who are close to us, and the generosity to share his love with those who are far away. We pray that every person throughout the world be invited to know and love Jesus as Savior and Redeemer. May they come to know his all-surpassing love. May that love transform every element of our society. Amen.



**PAULIST
EVANGELIZATION
MINISTRIES**

Paulist Evangelization Ministries
PO Box 29121
Washington, DC 20017

www.pemdc.org Item No. 2040