

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

## FOR REACHING OUT TO INACTIVE CATHOLICS

The basic message we want to get across is: We miss you. We care about you. We invite you to take another look at our Catholic community and we will be there to welcome you.

We need to exhibit an attitude of openness, love, warmth, compassion and caring. Many Catholics don't think of inactive Catholics as their concern. We are members of Christ's body and members of a body have a stake in one another. Invitation can mean everything. How is the church, our parish impoverished by their absence?

Have process goals rather than result goals. Conversion is a process. We must respect the person's freedom. "Caring, not curing."

Ask yourself, "What are we bringing them back to, inviting them to?" Once they return, how do we assist with their re-integration?

Inactive and alienated Catholics need to tell their story. There is healing in the sharing. We need to listen in a nonjudgmental way. This is the beginning of reconciliation.

Don't hesitate to apologize for the church.

Be aware of occasions to seek out the alienated and inactive Catholic.

*Catholics cannot proselytize – that is, manipulate or pressure anyone to join our Church. Such tactics contradict the Good News we announce and undermine the spirit of invitation that should characterize all true evangelization.*

*Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*



Evangelization constitutes the essential mission of the church. It is proclaiming the person of Jesus Christ to all the world. In essence it means bringing the Good News to every human situation and transforming individuals and society through gospel values.

The Office of Evangelization assists parishes, groups and organizations in the Diocese of Cleveland in evangelizing active, alienated and inactive Catholics and implementing strategies to attract, invite and welcome persons who are not members of the Catholic Church.

The vision of the office is to promote understanding of evangelization in its broadest scope and to provide education, strategies and resources to implement the diocesan goals of evangelization and those set forth in Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

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# COME HOME for CHRISTMAS



## Office of Evangelization Diocese of Cleveland

# COME HOME for CHRISTMAS

Some easy steps you can take to welcome inactive Catholics to your parish in the Christmas season.

## Before Christmas:

Encourage parishioners to think of family members, friends, neighbors, etc. to whom they can extend an invitation to come to Mass with them on Christmas.

## Parish Bulletin and Pulpit Announcement for Advent:

This Advent we are making a special effort to welcome home for Christmas those who have not been active in the church. Think about family members, friends, neighbors, etc. that you can invite to our Christmas liturgy celebration and extend a warm welcome to join you and our parish community at Mass.

## Homily Helps:

Make reference to attitudes we should have toward inactive members who come to church at least on Christmas: Am I angry that they took "My seat" or can we rejoice that they have joined us at least today, that this may be a beginning for them to become more active? Let's be welcoming and glad they're here. People will come back if they experience a warm and welcoming community they want to be part of.

## Prayers of the Faithful for the weekends of Advent:

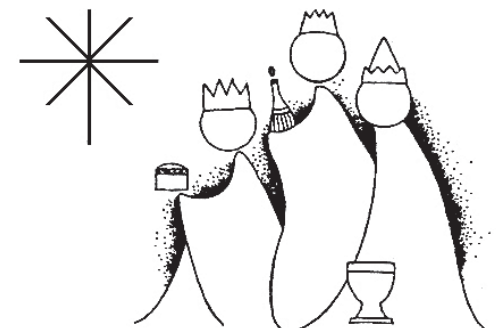
- Week I** That the love we have for one another will strengthen us with courage to invite inactive Catholics to a fuller and richer participation in the church.
- Week II** That the One who began the good work of the gospel in us will inspire inactive and alienated Catholics to come home for Christmas.
- Week III** That those who feel separated from the church because of divorce, doubts, painful memories, hurts or life style will feel welcomed by our parish community of faith.
- Week IV** That the presence of Christ in each of us may stir the hearts of those who have drifted away from active membership in the church.

## During Christmas Liturgy:

- Have sufficient "Come Home" cards or trifold brochures in pews or to hand out to people by greeters as they enter the church.
- Make sure ushers are attentive to seating people and making them feel welcome.
- Make an announcement welcoming everyone:  
*We're glad you're here whether you are a registered parishioner or a visitor; we want you to feel at home and always feel welcome here.*
- Acknowledge those who may be home on college break, relatives, or invited guests of parishioners.

## After Christmas:

Follow up as soon as possible to any phone calls or responses to the invitation card.



*"We want to let our inactive brothers and sisters know that they always have a place in the Church and that we are hurt by their absence...Every Catholic can be a minister of welcome, reconciliation and understanding to those who have stopped practicing their faith." –Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*