



Stewardship and Hospitality

Hospitality is one of the signs of a stewardship parish. While the ministry of hospitality is the responsibility of every member of the parish, it is important that the pastor, staff, and parish leaders encourage an atmosphere of hospitality. They ought to be models of hospitality in all aspects of their ministry.

The ministry of hospitality does require some degree of planning and organization. Depending on the size of your parish, the ministry of hospitality may require a separate dedicated committee, or it may be accomplished by a sub-committee of the Pastoral Council or Stewardship Committee.

Some years ago, a special committee including members of the International Catholic Stewardship Council, *Our Sunday Visitor* and Villanova University's Center for the Study of Church Management conducted a study to look at best practices in parish stewardship across the United States. A total of 1,459 parishes were surveyed. The study resulted in 8 best practices in parish stewardship. One of those 8 best practices was to be a welcoming parish that takes community building seriously. The most effective stewardship parishes were those that sponsored 4 or more welcoming/hospitality activities in a year, and those that sponsored 4 or more community building activities in a year.

According to Dr. Chuck Zech, in his book *Best Practices in Parish Stewardship*, where he summarizes the result of that survey, parish welcoming and community-building activities have a high direct impact in successful stewardship of treasure, volunteer time, spiritual time, and outreach time in the parishes he studied.

Parishes throughout the country have shared some of their successful hospitality activities. Many can be found in *Keeping Stewardship Alive-Proven Stewardship Ideas*, published by the International Catholic Stewardship Council. The list below highlights many successful hospitality and community building activities for new parishioners, ongoing hospitality activities and ongoing community building activities.

Welcoming the New Parishioner

Depending on the size of your parish, consider some or all of the following activities to welcome visitors and new parishioners to your parish.

- Trained greeters at Mass make a special effort to welcome strangers or newcomers.
- **Pastor sends a welcome letter and/or makes a personal phone call.**
- **Personal phone calls from Parish Council Members.**
- **Recognize visitors at Mass.**
- **Assign a "sponsoring family" to call and/or visit a new family.**
- **A member of the Welcoming Committee personally visits each new family taking a Welcome Packet and a dessert. Follow-up calls are made no later than two weeks after visit.**
- **Provide a "newcomers basket" with such items as parish note cards, recipe book, calendar, directory, and home baked goods.**
- **Have monthly/quarterly newcomers' reception or dinner.**
- **Provide a "newcomers packet" of information on the parish as well as community resources. Be sure to include stewardship information.**

- **Have a “welcome desk” before and after Mass.**
- Display a “Book of Welcome” in a prominent place for visitors and newcomers to sign.
- Provide a list of parishioner-owned businesses or services.
- Make it a point to extend a personal invitation to parish activities for the first 6 months.
- Invite newcomers to stand and all pray a “Prayer of Welcome” at Mass.
- **Recognize new members in the bulletin, at Mass, or on with pictures on the bulletin board.**
- Give newcomers a “free ticket” to monthly Knights of Columbus parish breakfast or dinner.
- “Pizza with the Pastor” – an opportunity for newcomers to meet informally with the pastor and parish leaders to ask questions and share their faith journeys.
- “Coffee with the Pastor” provides a way to complete the registration process. Coffee and a light breakfast after one of the Sunday Masses, held in the Rectory, is a way of spending some quiet time with the pastor. Parish leaders are also present.
- **Have a youth minister contact newly registered teens.**

On-going Hospitality

Depending on the size of your parish, consider some or all of the following activities as a means of on-going hospitality for all parishioners.

- **Use trained Ministers of Hospitality (Greeters) with name tags at all Masses.**
- **Greet parishioner from the podium before Mass.**
- **Ministers of Hospitality are stationed at each door to welcome each person who enters.**
- **Before Mass begins, the Cantor introduces the presider of the Mass and invites everyone to stand and greet one another by exchanging first names.**
- **Provide and staff a Welcome Desk in the narthex.**
- **Have special ministers with a regular connection to the homebound and elderly.**
- Remember parishioner’s special days (birthday, anniversary, awards, honors, etc.).
- Have a team of hospitality ministers make a “How are you doing?” phone call every 6 months.
- Remember special occasions in bulletin or newsletter.
- Publish photos of parish events on bulletin board and/or parish website.
- Establish a program of bereavement ministry to the family.
- Provide trained ministers for outreach to the sick and those in nursing homes.
- Provide outreach to people with disabilities at Mass.
- **Provide nursery and child-care at Mass and all adult activities.**
- Show appreciation through phone calls and mailings to parishioners, volunteers and donors.
- Send a “Thank-You” to your spouse and family, who often take on additional responsibilities at home so you can share your time and talent with your parish.
- **Provide parking attendants.**
- **Provide “Welcome” signage in the parking area.**
- **Provide police officers on site.**
- **Provide welcoming meeting space.**
- **Use social media to encourage hospitality and engagement.**
- **Live-stream Masses, Baptisms, Weddings and Funerals for family members who can’t attend.**
- **Phone calls by ministry leaders or staff to reach out to those who have not come back to Mass yet.**

On-going Community Building

- **Provide on-going community building activities such as parish picnics, pancake breakfasts, pot-luck dinners, holiday celebrations, parish festivals and Lenten soup suppers.**
- **Have receptions to celebrate special events such as First Communion, Confirmation, RCIA, etc.**
- **Provide outreach to people with disabilities for special events.**
- **Have a “Parish Festival” on the parish feast-day bringing everyone together for fun, games, talent shows, food and conversation.**
- **Recognize the various Ethnic groups in the parish with an “International Day” when everyone brings a covered dish representative of their nationality. National folk dancing is part of the entertainment.**
- **Encourage social time with refreshments after Mass.**
- **Family game nights.**
- **Provide parish Feast Day celebrations.**
- **Provide coffee and doughnuts after weekend Masses.**
- **Organize group activities for youth, young adults and adults.**
- **Organize senior ministry events for those 55 and older.**
- **Blessing of the animal events.**
- **Mail monthly or quarterly newsletters to parishioners.**
- **Send weekly e-newsletters with highlights of what’s happening for the upcoming week.**
- **Fireside chats.**
- **Ice cream socials.**
- **Coffee and conversation.**
- **Volunteer appreciation Sundays followed by reception.**
- **Appreciation gifts to those involved in parish and community ministries.**
- **Leadership training events.**
- **Discipleship workshops.**
- **Parish mission during Lent and Advent.**
- **Parish retreats.**
- **Build community through service events, such as meal packaging events, Habitat for Humanity home builds, neighborhood food pantry collections, various collections for special drives for the needy - underwear, socks, coats, Christmas gifts, maternity and infant needs, etc.**
- **Vacation Bible School.**
- **Pastor videos sharing special messages and formation.**
- **Have occasional “Welcome Back” events for those who have been away from the church.**