



Reaching the  
inactive and unchurched

## Did You Know?

### Why people leave

- Family Tension: when person is old enough move away from family and church
- Weary: bored by the Church
- Lifestyle: People who do not comply with Church laws
- Spiritual Need: Seeking community, bible study, dynamic preaching
- Anti-Change: objected to changes after Vatican II

*Could You Ever Come Back to the Catholic Church* pp. 8-9, Lorene Hanley Duquin

### Why people return

- Marriage-Life: influenced by a spouse or concern for their marriages.
- Family-Life: concern for children's religious upbringing
- Guilt-Feelings: feel nostalgic, for the religion of their youth
- Seeker: searching for answers, dealing with life issues

*Could You Ever Come Back to the Catholic Church*, pp. 175-178, Lorene Hanley Duquin

### Statistics

- 69 million Catholics in the United States (24% of the population).
- 21 million inactive Catholics in the United States. (Gallup, 2001)
- Of Catholics born between 1946 and 1961, 33% remained loyal to the Church, 67% dropped out. Of the 67% who dropped out, 25% have returned to the Church..  
(*The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation*, pg. 176, Wade Clark Roof)
- 40% of alienated Catholics said they would consider coming back to the Church if they felt the Church wanted them.
- 42% of all Catholics drop out during some time in their lives.
- 40% of American Catholics enter into interreligious marriages.  
(*Faithful to Each Other*, USCCB, 1989)
- 98 million (47% ) of American adults are unchurched. (George Gallup, 2001)



# Fruitful Inviting Approaches

**□ Begin Each Day with God . . .**

Holy Spirit, may I recognize any open doors today. Doors of conversation where I can speak your Word; doors of first encounters that others may feel your love and doors of surprise meetings where I can bring your comfort and support. Amen.

**□ Share God's Love Without Saying a Word . . .**

⇒ **Prayer of the Loving Look:** Realize that you are filled with God's love and you beam God's love towards others.

⇒ **Prayer of the Loving Touch:** Realize that you are filled with God's love and pass on that love to all those that you touch.

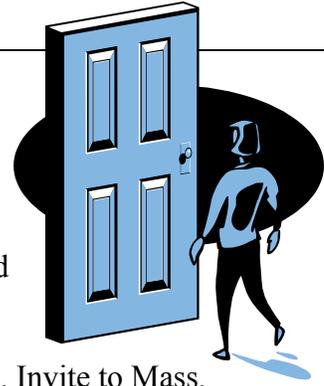
**□ Appreciate the Uniqueness of Each Person**



<b>Names</b>	<b>Invitation to . . .</b> Parish event, Mass, small community, retreat, service project, religious shrine, family event, magazine, bible study, read a book, other...
<p><b>Corporate Cory</b> <i>When I die, I don't think God will ask me if I was Catholic. I think God will ask me to account for my life in general. (M.G., State unknown)*</i></p>	
<p><b>Seeking Susie</b> <i>My path back to the Church was through Transcendental Meditation, the Unitarian Church, art, music, having a baby and getting a divorce. (T.B., Washington)*</i></p>	
<p><b>Apathetic Annie</b> <i>I can't call myself a Catholic, and yet, somehow, I can't walk away either. (A.F., Ohio)*</i></p>	
<p><b>Angry Allen</b> <i>When I found out my son died in a fluke accident, I wanted to die. I was so angry at God for taking him away from me. (E.L., New York)*</i></p>	
<p><b>Hurting Henry and Hannah</b> <i>I was raised Catholic, married, left the Church, now getting a divorce. I want to consider rejoining the Catholic Church. What are my options? (R.B., California)*</i></p>	

\*Quotes are taken from: *Could You Ever Come Back to the Catholic Church?* Lorene Hanley Duquin

## □ Recognize the 5 Open Doors to Dialogue



### 1. QUESTIONS

Person asks questions about God, good and evil, meaning and purpose in life.

#### **Your Response**

Active listening. Non-threatening comments. Offer resources. Invite to Mass.

### 2. MEMORIES

Person reminisces about Catholic schools, nuns, priests, parish activities, childhood devotions, incense, special liturgy.

#### **Your Responses**

##### *Positive memories:*

Suggest revisiting their childhood parish together, or connect with a person who had a profound impact on the person.

##### *Negative memories:*

Apologize in name of Church. Encourage the person to separate anger toward person from anger at the Church.

### 3. READING

Person has picked up some Catholic reading materials. (Many converts have read their way into the Church. Ignatius of Loyola and Edith Stein both claim that reading Catholic materials affected their conversion to Catholicism.)

#### **Your Response**

Have Catholic books, magazines, newspapers and parish bulletins in convenient and varied places.

### 4. CURRENT EVENTS

Catholic news events can trigger interest in some people and be an opening for dialogue.

#### **Your Response**

Clearly explain the event, what impact it would have, ask if they have questions, be aware of Church news both nationally and internationally.

### 5. MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

Illness, death, divorce, birth of child, loss of job, moving to a new home can trigger a desire to revisit the Church.

#### **Your Response**

Provide accurate information, offer personal support, suggest support groups and accompany if needed.



## □ Reach Out

### A. At Mass

After Mass, approach a person you don't recognize and say:

- ◇ *Hi, my name is . . . I've been a parishioner for . . . years, I'm not sure if we have ever met.*
- ◇ *What is your name . . .*
- ◇ *Are you new here?*
- ◇ *This is our Church bulletin . . .let me just point out some interesting items* (name of pastor, phone numbers of parish, times of Masses, adult faith formation presentations, if appropriate—activities for children, etc.)
- ◇ *Before you leave, let me introduce you to the pastor and some other parishioners* (introduce them to your friends and/or ministers in the parish)
- ◇ *I hope that I meet you again, I usually sit in this pew. If you are here again next week, please join me.*
- ◇ *Have a nice week.*



### B. At Parish Gatherings (coffee and donuts, parish picnic, Adult gathering)

Notice anyone standing alone. Give your name, ask them their name, don't act rushed, spend a few minutes in small talk. Adapt above script to the event. (wear name tag if possible)

### C. At "Ordinary Times"

- Recognize "open doors" to dialogue
- Share your own faith experience
- Be a joy-filled Catholic
- Communicate correct information
- Invite people to communities that will support them (ex. Sunday Mass, justice groups, Bible study, devotions, grief support groups, etc.)
- Offer to accompany to Mass or event if appropriate
- Leave the "door open" for future dialogue



## Dialogue Exchanges

### SITUATION

I am no longer a practicing Catholic.

I am angry at the Church because . . .

I am too busy at this time to consider Church.

I am not Catholic but am interested in knowing more about Catholicism.

I am a practicing Catholic but new in the area .

I am divorced and remarried, I was told that the Church has excommunicated me. If the Church doesn't want me, I don't need the Church.

### POSSIBLE RESPONSE

I am sorry to hear that. For whatever reason you left the Church, I hope you will give us another try. What would you need to consider coming back? (Name Parish and talk about strong points.)

While divine, the Church is a human institution as well. It is unfortunate that we cause pain to one another. In the name of the Church I apologize and hope that you will join us again.

I can only imagine how hectic your life must be with all that you have on your plate, I don't want to add anything to your plate but to offer some balance in your schedule. (Mention lecture, scholarly materials, Mass)

I would like to offer you some material on the Catholic Church and on our parish. If you like, I could take your name and have someone from the parish contact you.

We invite you to our parish, which is a great community because . . . Here is our Church bulletin. If you would like to register (explain process).

I am sorry that you picked up that message from us. While you may not be able to receive the Eucharist you are not excommunicated and the Church does not want you to feel separated. You can and are encouraged to share in the life of the Church. (If appropriate invite them to consider speaking to a priest, seek an annulment, volunteer for a ministry)

### Remember key question

*Not* "Why did you leave?"

*Rather* "What would you need to come back?"



These comments were made by people who had left the Church. They help us to know their feelings.

Taken from *The Unchurched Next Door*, Thom Rainer



## My Personal Response

I sense God wanted me to hear . . .

As a result of this session, I will . . .

## Closing Prayer

### Concluding Prayer:

Christ has no Body now on earth but Yours.

Yours are the only hands with which He can work,

Yours are the only feet with which He can go about,

Yours are the only eyes through which His compassion can shine forth. Amen.

(St. Teresa of Avila)



## Resources

- Bausch, William J.: *While You Were Gone: A Handbook for Returning Catholics (and those thinking about it)*
  - Duquin, Lorene Hanley:
    - *Could You Ever Come Back to the Catholic Church*
    - *When a Love One Leaves the Church*
  - Pable, Martin W. OFM Cap.: *Reclaim the Fire*
  - Rainer, Thom S.: *The Unchurched Next Door*
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