Catholics Come Home
Resource Packet
Sacramental and Pastoral Resources

Prepared by the Departments of Evangelization &
Worship and Stewardship & Pastoral Services
January 2010
# Catholics Come Home (CCH) Resource Packet

## Sacramental and Pastoral Resources

### Table of Contents

- Index of Enclosed Pamphlets and Brochures ................................................................. 3
- Hispanic Services Offered Through the Diocese of Green Bay (English) .................. 3
- Servicos en Español, a la Comunidad de la Diocesis de Green Bay (en Español) ........ 3
- Guide to the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation ................................................. 3
- What the Church Teaches: Annulments ...................................................................... 3
- The Pastoral Ministry of the Tribunal ......................................................................... 3
- Special Supplement for Returning Catholics .............................................................. 3
- Catholics Come Home: Young Adult Puzzle Pamphlet .............................................. 3
- What Happens When Catholics Come Home? ......................................................... 4
- Liturgical Resources ...................................................................................................... 6
  - General Intercessions ............................................................................................... 8
  - Music Suggestions .................................................................................................... 10
  - Some Reflection Questions on the Readings ......................................................... 12
- Pastoral Care Resources ............................................................................................... 14
  - Potential Brochures to Order .................................................................................. 17
  - Healing After Parish Mergers, Closures, and Reorganizations ............................... 20
  - Sample Letter ......................................................................................................... 22
Index of Enclosed Pamphlets and Brochures

The loose pamphlets and brochures provided with the packet are resources for parishes to help welcome Catholics home. All materials may be reproduced for parish use, except *What the Church Teaches: Annulments* which can be obtained from Our Sunday Visitor.

*Hispanic Services Offered Through the Diocese of Green Bay (English)*
This brochure offers information about parishes that have bilingual masses or staff members, as well as the names and contact information for diocesan employees dedicated to Hispanic outreach.

*Servicios en Español, a la Comunidad de la Diocesis de Green Bay (en Español)*
This brochure offers information about parishes that have bilingual masses or staff members, as well as the names and contact information for diocesan employees dedicated to Hispanic outreach. En Español. **NOTE:** We recommend every parish reproduce copies of this brochure as we are doing an extensive Catholics Come Home Spanish campaign throughout the entire region.

*Guide to the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation*
This letter offers an explanation of the sacrament of Penance and its importance in the lives of Christians. Several self-reflective questions are included, followed by a suggested prayer of contrition. This document was used with permission from the Diocese of Chicago.

*What the Church Teaches: Annulments*
See page 15 for information on ordering more copies of this brochure for your parish.

*The Pastoral Ministry of the Tribunal*
This Q: and A: formatted handout was prepared by the diocese and can be given to individuals interested in knowing more about the Annulment process in our diocese. Please copy this for your use!

*Special Supplement for Returning Catholics*
In conjunction with the Compass, the diocese is creating a 4-page supplement that can be given to returning Catholics throughout the Lenten season. This flyer also shares other special opportunities The Compass is offering in light of Catholics Come Home.

*Catholics Come Home: Young Adult Puzzle Pamphlet*
This pamphlet shares important information on young adults who may be missing from your parish, how CCH may impact them and how the Young Adult Ambassador program will be utilized to welcome young adult Catholics back to our parishes.
What Happens When Catholics Come Home?

By Sr. Ann Rehrauer, Director of Evangelization and Worship

A number of our parishes have already had the experience of a Catholic or family returning to the practice of the faith. This usually happens one at a time – an individual or family returns to Church because of the experience of grace. Sometimes the experience of God’s invitation comes through the prayer or urging of family or friends, sometimes through an article in a paper or magazine, or sometimes because of a personal tragedy or experience of spiritual crisis.

When that has happened, most parishioners aren’t even aware of the person’s return unless they know the individual and his or her story. But the parish staff has been a vital part of that experience.

When the person has the courage to call the parish office or ring the rectory doorbell, the pastor and perhaps a pastoral associate or key volunteer listens with compassion to the person’s story and helps determine the kinds of spiritual assistance the person (or family) needs. Some assistance is needed with the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In addition, there may be marriage questions – either the need for an annulment or perhaps marriage counseling, parenting skills, or referrals for more extensive help.

Depending upon the length of the person’s or family’s absence, there may be the need for some “catch-up religious education and sacramental preparation” for children. There may also be questions about the Church or the way we worship now or other issues of faith that will take some adult education. This may be offered in one-on-one sessions or perhaps the person was invited to attend some information sessions which are part of the RCIA process. Some parishes have adult formation sessions for people with questions or those desiring to learn more about the faith.

To help people become re-integrated into parish life, a companion or sponsor-like friend may have been available to stay in touch with the person, to issue an occasional invitation to attend a parish event, or to invite the person to help with a particular project.

With the Catholics Come Home Initiative this Lent, there will be some similarities in the process of return and the parish’s response, but some significant differences as well.

1. **The Invitation:** Over the next weeks, people will be invited and encouraged to return to the practice of their faith by commercials airing on our TV stations, some radio spots, and articles in the *Compass*, including a special issue mailed to all registered households during the week of February 12th.
2. **The numbers:** Because of the media campaign and parish outreach, we expect a number of people to respond to the invitation. Instead of one or two people returning, parishes will experience larger numbers with various and more diverse spiritual needs and situations. Staff and volunteer ministers will need to be prepared to respond with graciousness even as resources of time and energy are taxed by the larger numbers. Parish secretaries and pastoral staff will need to follow through and to keep track of people who begin this process of return.

3. **Parishioners:** This time, parishioners will be very aware of people returning. They will see the commercials and read the articles, they will be praying for the people returning, and they will be making concerted efforts to be a welcoming and hospitable community – working hard to live up to the description of our best selves which the Epic commercial presents.

4. **The kinds of assistance:** Extra people will be prepared to provide information and assistance for those who return. DREs and school principals as well as teachers of religious education will need to be ready to provide the background for children who haven’t been well educated in faith. Some will need special assistance to prepare for sacraments that other students in their grades have already received.
   - While people probably won’t be ready for “programs” right away, parishes may want to provide some sessions in later weeks to help update adults on faith issues or questions.
   - Information will be readily available for people with questions about reconciliation and the annulment process.
   - Since most people will experience the Church most directly at the Sunday liturgy, liturgists and musicians will work carefully to prepare the General Intercessions, to choose music, and to carefully arrange the physical environment so the worship experience is a good one.
   - Ushers and ministers of hospitality will be on the look-out for people who are unfamiliar with the placement of restrooms at the church, how the parish receives communion, and other needed information.

5. **Companionship:** Depending on the need and preference of individuals and families, parishes may have some companions prepared and available to walk with people for a while to help them re-integrate into parish life and to take advantage of parish activities and services. This process will be gradual and getting people involved takes sensitivity, but we want to provide the support people will need along the way.
Liturgical Resources

Some Liturgical Suggestions for Lent

1. Look at the season as a unit (and then the divisions within the season)
   6 Sundays of Lent – Lent and Passiontide
   i. Lent
   ii. Palm/Passion Sunday & first days of Holy Week

2. The Scriptures
   a. Unlike ordinary time where the first and third readings are harmonized &
      the second reading is continuous. In Lent, all readings work in consort.
   b. Lent – tones of journeying with the catechumens and renewal/recovery/
      reinvigoration of baptismal commitment

3. Lent
   a. First Sunday is always the temptations
   b. Second Sunday always transfiguration Gospel
   c. Year A – baptismal (Samaritan woman, blind man, Lazarus)
   d. Year C – Gallileans and the tower, Prodigal Son, adulterous woman (If
      you don’t have catechumens, Year C is especially good in light of
      Catholics Come Home)

4. Prefaces
   a. Four general Lenten prefaces
   b. Five related to the readings (cycle A)
   c. Two related to the Passion
      i. I week 5
      ii. II Passion Sunday and M,T,W of Holy Week

5. Possibilities for Lent
   a. Penitential Rite – think about kneeling; think about singing the Kyrie
      i. Samples in the sacramentary – look at the structure
      ii. Addressed to Christ
      iii. Focus is on God who is merciful – not on how awful we have been
   b. Responsorial psalm
      i. Generally the psalm of the day (Lectionary intro #89)
      ii. Options from the commons, votive Masses
      iii. Seasonal psalms (cf. Lectionary #173, 174)
         1. Lent: psalms 51, 91, 130
         2. Holy week - psalm 22
5. Possibilities for Lent (Continued):

c. General Intercessions – see *Sacramentary Appendix* – samples for general situations, Advent, Christmas, 2 for Lent, and for Holy Week
   ** Diocese of Lansing has things for sale
   i. Structure
      1. Invitation to pray by the priest
      2. Statements of intercession
      3. Closing prayer by the priest
   ii. Sequence
      1. The needs of the Church
      2. The needs of civil leaders/salvation of the world
      3. Those oppressed
      4. Local needs
      ** You’ll want to add special intercessions for those who return to the practice of their faith during this season.

d. Eucharistic Prayers - Lent
   i. 4 plus Reconciliation and Various Needs
   ii. If using cycle A – choose a Eucharistic Prayer that allows for a separate preface -- EP IV has its own preface that is always used.
      If cycle C – you may want to use one for Reconciliation on week V – Gospel of the Prodigal Son

e. Silence – make use of it - especially for the penitential rite and after the readings

f. Announcements – the post communion prayer closes the communion rite. Announcements come AFTER the prayer.

g. Dismissal rites
   i. Announcements, then the greeting, blessing, and dismissal
   ii. In Lent – use the prayers over the people

h. Music
   i. Be attentive to the different movement within the season (not using “passion/suffering” songs in the early weeks of Lent – but look for the “40 days” element, journeying, movement with the catechumens. Save the “O Sacred Head” and “Were You There” until passiontide.
   ii. Be as attentive as you can to multicultural aspects.
      1. There is a simple but lovely response to the General Intercessions done in English, Latin, Spanish or English, Spanish, and one of the Asian languages. (Lord hear our prayer, Deus exaudi nos, Senior escucha nos)
   iii. Perhaps utilize a seasonal responsorial psalm to assist congregation in singing
   iv. NPM (National Pastoral Musicians) website with ideas from multiple hymnals, including selections in Spanish
      [www.npm.org](http://www.npm.org)
General Intercessions

In addition to the usual intercessions and those for the candidates and the elect, you may want to add one or more of the following:

Ash Wednesday:
That those who minister in the Church may work to free all people from the oppressive yoke of sin and guilt, we pray

For the Church gathered here, for us, and for our families as we begin this Lenten season with a spirit of love and compassion for one another, we pray

First week:
That all who experience a spiritual wilderness in their lives may find a welcome and spiritual home in our parish, we pray

For all who search for meaning in their lives, that this season of Lent may be the occasion of God’s grace to renewed faith and a deeper relationship, we pray

That the Church always be faithful to her proclamation of the Gospel and bring the Good News of repentance and forgiveness to all who would hear, we pray

That all who are suffering or in need be assisted by our Lenten sacrifice, we pray

Second week:
That the Church will be a herald of good news and manifest to all people the glory of the Lord, we pray

That all people may recognize the glory and Lordship of Jesus Christ, we pray

That our parish community may show forth the splendor of Christ and be a reflection of his glory, we pray

That the sick and suffering find hope for healing and strength in the Transfigured Jesus, we pray
Third week:

That the Church may lead all people to believe in God who is rich in mercy, we pray
That each of us may be faithful to the difficult work of repentance, so that we might be a source of strength for others, we pray

Fourth week:

That the Church may be an instrument of God’s grace and a source of strength and encouragement for all who seek God’s mercy, we pray
That all who feel estranged or separated from the Church may know that Christ is near and that they will find welcome and care from the people of this parish, we pray
That those who suffer in body or mind may find release from their burdens in the mercy of God, we pray

Fifth week:

That God may touch all who are searching and lead them to rejoice in his love and mercy, we pray
That world leaders govern in such a way that nations extend forgiveness and mercy and come to peace, we pray
That the justice we seek to bring to our community and our world will reflect the justice of God, we pray

Sixth week:

That all of us may surrender our lives to God for the sake of the life of the world, we pray
That all who suffer pain and loss will find hope and consolation through the suffering of Christ, we pray
For those who carry the cross of sickness, suffering, poverty, or oppression, that God will bring comfort through our loving service, we pray
Music Suggestions

For more specific suggestions for each Sunday (with a listing of the hymnals in which you can find them), go to the website of the National Pastoral Musicians [www.npm.org](http://www.npm.org) and click on the “Planning calendar.”

Consider a silent entrance and singing the Penitential Rite for the season.

Consider a seasonal setting for the Responsorial Psalm such as:

- **Ps 91** Be With Me Lord Create in Me
  Mi Amparo, Mi Refugio Misericordia, Señor

**A particularly appropriate hymn for Lent and Catholics Come Home** suggested by Michele Becker, Liturgy and Music Coordinator for Resurrection Parish, is David Haas’ “You Belong to Us/Litany of Welcome” from the album “All is Ready” GIA 6651. This can be used in a variety of ways.

General Lenten Hymnody

- Again We Keep This Solemn Fast
- Deep Within
- In These Days of Lenten Journey
- There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy
- Turn Our Hearts
- Remember Your Love

- The Glory of These Forty Days
- Parce Domine
- Lead Me, Guide Me
- Save Your People, O Lord
- Grant to Us, O Lord
- Attende Domine

** Save hymns that focus on the Passion for the sixth Sunday, Holy Week and Triduum

Ash Wednesday

- Ps. 91 Be Merciful O Lord Create in Me O Dios, Crea en Mi
  Again We Keep This Solemn Fast Ashes
  Deep Within In These Days of Lenten Journey

First Sunday

- Ps 91: Be With Me Lord Mi Amparo, Mi Refugio
- Led by the Spirit (Bob Hurd) From the River to the Desert
- Lead Me, Guide Me Lord, Who Throughout These Forty Days
Second Sunday
Ps 26/27 The Lord is My Light El Senor Es Mi Luz
Tis Good Lord to be Here Transfigure us, O Lord
From Ashes to the Living Font O Sun of Justice
Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence Open My Eyes Lord
Transfiguration Glory and Praise to Our God

Third Sunday
Ps 102/103 El Senor Es Compasive The Lord is Kind and Merciful
Loving and Forgiving are You Remember Your Love
There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy Come to Me

Fourth Sunday
Ps 33/34 Gusten Y Vean Taste and See and O Taste and See
Eternal Lord of Love Come to the Feast
Amazing Grace Yes, I shall Arise

Fifth Sunday
Ps 125/126 El Senor Ha Estado Grande con Nosotros The Lord has Done Great Things
Forgive our Sins as We Forgive
Only This I Want
* Consider singing the “Our Father” if you don’t usually do so

Passion Sunday
Ps 21/22 Dios Mi My God/My God
At the name of Jesus
Do This in Remembrance of Me
Sing My Tongue, the Savior’s Glory
Some Reflection Questions on the Readings

First Sunday: What are the areas of spiritual wilderness in our lives?
How can I study the Scripture in a way that responds to God’s invitation and increases my understanding of God’s will for me?
When I change, I also change the communities in which I live and work.
What are the areas in my family, work, parish, and world that I feel a personal call to transform with God’s help?

Second Sunday: What would I feel if I were experiencing Jesus’ glory on the mountain top with Peter, James, and John?
Where do I see Jesus’ glory today?
If I had a faith experience like the apostles, how would I share that with my family and friends?

Third Week: What do I really believe about repentance and the ability to change?
As a member of a family and a parish, how do I live out the process of repentance and conversion?
What does it take to offer and to accept forgiveness?
What areas of society and our local community need repentance and change?

Fourth Week: How do I feel about the father’s treatment and welcome of the son who left home?
What about conversion for those who never leave?
How do I feel about the return of inactive Catholics?
How am I encouraging their return?
What parts of today’s Gospel apply to my marriage, my family, my local community?
**Fifth Week:** How difficult is it for me to let a wrong-doer go free without condemnation or punishment?

Where am I being called to forgive as God forgives?

What do the truths of today’s Gospel say about our attitudes toward immigration reform, health care, our justice system, personal security, relationships with other nations?

**Passion Sunday:** How has this Lent been a growth experience for me?

How has our parish grown this Lent?

What are the signs of growth?

Where am I called to be an ambassador of mercy in a practical way this week?

What occasions call me to “self-emptying”? 
Pastoral Care Resources

As Catholics Come Home to your parish community, they may present with a variety of pastoral care needs. The following is a list of helpful and thought-provoking resources to provide basic pastoral care information and support. Formatted as pamphlets, booklets, magazines, newsletters, books, and e-letters, they provide messages of hope and compassion on a wide variety of contemporary topics and issues.

Most can be purchased inexpensively and made available to your parishioners in the gathering space at your parish or inserted in your bulletins.

Bereavement Publications
Featuring resources that address the issue of living with loss associated with death, terminal illness, cancer, jobs, natural disasters, finances, divorce, mental health and physical challenges, pet loss and military loss. Spanish and English versions available.

4765 North Carefree Circle
Colorado Springs, CO 80917-2118
1-888-604-04673 - www.bereavementmag.com

Care Notes
In addition to their well-know Care Notes Series, Abbey Press has recently added a new series entitled: Catholic Perspectives Care Notes that provide a Catholic viewpoint on pastoral care themes in their familiar 5 x 7 inch full color, 8-page booklet. The format is easy-to-read and addresses a wide variety of contemporary social and pastoral issues. Some topics available in their new series: nurturing faith and hope, grief/loss, the Eucharist, the rosary, loneliness, and the sacraments. Available in bulk orders, or on subscription plan. Spanish and English versions available.

One Caring Place and Abbey Press
One Hill Drive
Customer Service Plant 1
St Meinrad, IN 47577
1-800-325-2511 - www.onecaringplace.com

Liguorian Publications
Pamphlets and books available on a wide variety of topics: Catholic faith, divorce adjustment, annulments, family life, moral/ethical issues, addictions, grief/loss, illness, senior care, sexuality, and prayer/devotion. Spanish and English versions available.

One Liguori Drive
Liguori, MO 63057
1-800-325-9521 - www.liguori.org
Our Sunday Visitor
Pamphlets and other printed matter that addresses contemporary subjects and questions. They also provide careful explanations of Catholic sacraments and practices. The publications can be used as bulletin inserts, in a rack in the gathering space at your parish, or as handouts at RCIA or other group meetings. An additional feature is specially sized pamphlets for inclusion in your offering envelopes. Some topics covered include: Top 10 Reasons to Come Back to the Catholic Church, Living Through Change in Your Parish, How to Forgive the Church, Annulments, Stewardship, Healthcare, Social/Moral Issues, and End of Life Issues. Spanish and English versions available.

200 Noll Plaza
Huntington, IN 46750
1-800-348-2440 - www.osv.com

Catholic Updates
St. Anthony Messenger Press and Franciscan Publications
Inspirational and educational Catholic resources that cover contemporary topics and spirituality issues. These publications, Catholic Update, Every Day Catholic, and Bringing Home the Word can be used as bulletin inserts, in a rack in the gathering space at your parish, or as handouts at RCIA or other group meetings. They also have books, audios, and videos. Spanish and English versions available.

28 W. Liberty St
Cincinnati, OH 45202
1-513-241-561 - www.americancatholic.org

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB)
Official publishing office of the USCCB providing Papal statements, Bishops’ statements, bulletin inserts, brochures, pamphlets, books, DVDs, and church documents on contemporary social and moral issues. Many are provided free of charge. Spanish and English versions available.


3211 Fourth Street, NE
Washington, DC 20017
1-800-235-8722 - www.usccbpublishing.org

**Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC)**

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC) provides studied positions and Wisconsin Bishops’ Statements on social and moral issues. Spanish and English versions available.


131 W. Wilson St., #1105
Madison, WI 53703
1-608-257-0004 – www.wisconsincatholic.org

**211 Hotline**

A supportive listening and crisis intervention line supported by United Way available 24 hours a day providing information about community resources by phone or searchable on-line [www.get211.org](http://www.get211.org)
### Hispanic Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simbolos y tradiciones de la Cuaresma (Symbols and Traditions of Lent)</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Via Crucis de Jesus Migrante</td>
<td>64-page booklet</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>$3.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 buenas rezones para ser catolico: Una guia de la Iglesia para el adolescente (10 Good Reasons to Be a Catholic)</td>
<td>64-page book</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>$4.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¿Que significa ‘ser Iglesia’?</td>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siguendo la Misa: Explicacion de cada paso (A Walk Through the Mass: A Step-by-Step Explanation)</td>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Family Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why Do We Have to Go to Mass?</td>
<td>Magazine for youth</td>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>$1.19/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do I Have to Go to Church?</td>
<td>Pamphlet for children</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Your Family to Mass and Liking It</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Catholic: What Does It Mean?</td>
<td>Youth Update Newsletter</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Prayer Traditions for Lent</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Lent Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>These 40 Days: Understanding the Symbols</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Practices of Lent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Celebrate Lent</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Observe Lent as a Catholic</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Faith Facts: Q &amp; A for Lent and</td>
<td>Cardlinks,</td>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>$7.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>100 pp</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrating Lent in Your Home</td>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Pastoral Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How to Forgive the Church</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loving Our Church – Warts and All</td>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Do We Have to Go to Mass?</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing Mass With Heart and Mind</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Get More Out of Mass</td>
<td>Pamphlet</td>
<td>OSV</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nine Things That Make Us Catholic</td>
<td>Newsletter</td>
<td>CU</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**OSV Pricing:**
- Pack of 50 .......... $14.95
- 1-9 copies ............$0.55 each
- 10-99 copies ..........$0.39 each
- 100-199 copies .......$0.33 each
- 200-299 copies .......$0.28 each
- 300-499 copies .......$0.22 each
- 500-999 copies .......$0.17 each

*CU Pricing:
- 1-9 copies ............$0.55 each
Healing After Parish Mergers, Closures, and Reorganizations
By Mark Mogilka, Director of Stewardship and Pastoral Services

Over the past 15 – 20 years, a significant number of parishes in the diocese have undergone changes due to the closure, merger or reorganization of their parish. While many Catholics successfully negotiated these transitions to new parish communities, others have not. Some have not adequately grieved the loss of their former parishes. Others may have merely chosen to step back from active involvement and practice of their faith. It is hoped that for some of those who have been away, that the airing of the Catholics Come Home commercials will fan those embers of Catholic faith that are still in their hearts and souls. Based on the experience in other dioceses around the country, we know that some will take this as an opportunity to revisit and hopefully come back home. How the parish invites back former active members and welcomes them is one of the major keys to the success of Catholics Come Home.

A national authority on parish reorganizations, Fr. Michael Weldon, OFM notes “How a community’s past is remembered is key to its future flourishing. Its health is related to its memory”. Two key questions to ask are “How does the current parish honor and remember former parishes?” and “How does the parish celebrate the creation of the new parish?”

Invitation Ideas

1. Research mailing lists from former parishes. Note who is no longer on the active list of parishioners. Consider sending a personal letter inviting them to take another look at the parish and welcome them back. (see attached sample letter)

2. Ask active parishioners to forward the names of former parishioners who are still living in the area. At weekend liturgies, place 4x6 cards in pews and ask for names. Invite them to place the cards in the collection baskets. Let them know that you plan to mail a no-pressure, no-guilt, soft sell letter of invitation and welcome.

3. Invite active and formerly active Catholics to an evening of prayer and remembering. In the context of a prayer service invite a few former members to prime the sharing pump by coming prepared to share a few of the stories and memories from the former parish(es). Make sure there are snacks and time for socializing.
4. Consider purchasing billboards or ad space in a local newspaper. Within the ad, make sure to mention “You are invited to come home to St. Mark’s – a vibrant Catholic community created by the coming together of St. Mary’s and St. Barbara’s” or “Come home to St. Mark’s – built on the foundation of St. Mary’s and St. Barbara’s”

Honoring and Remembering Ideas

1. If there is not a permanent memorial in the parish that honors a former parish or church, now would be an excellent time to create one. The healing and reconciliation of former members through such actions cannot be minimized. For ideas and suggestions for such memorials, contact the diocesan department of Stewardship and Pastoral Services.

2. Statues, artifacts, sanctuary furniture, etc. should be given a prominent place and or displayed to honor former communities and churches. Pictures of churches or the people in the vestibule or parish hall that pay homage to the rich history that contributed to the creation of the current parish should be considered.

3. Annually, parishes are encouraged to celebrate in a special way the feast days of former churches and parishes.

4. During prayers of petition at weekend liturgies, give thanks for the faith communities; the parishes that make up the foundation for the current parish. Name them explicitly.

Celebration Ideas

1. Annually, the parish should plan a celebration of the creation of the new parish. The celebration should always include a time to remember the past, give thanks for the present, and share hopes and dreams for the future of the parish. Make sure that key members of former communities are part of the planning for these celebrations.
Sample Letter

For those away from the Church and/or impacted by parish mergers and closures.
Underlined references should be replaced with the names of your parish and former parishes

Greetings In the Lord,

Over the past week or two you may have seen one of the “Catholics Come Home” commercials aired on local TV stations. The purpose of this program is to encourage Catholics who may not be regularly practicing their faith, to take another look, consider what it means to be Catholic once again, and consider coming home once again. My reason for writing to you today is to personally extend a special invitation to you to come visit us at St. Mark’s. Consider taking a fresh look at your Catholic faith and at the faith community of St. Mark’s.

St. Mark’s is a community of saints and sinners. We’re not perfect by any means. We are a community that has worked hard to blend together the gifts and parishioners of St. Mary’s parish and St. Barbara’s parish. There is a plaque that reads, “Please be patient – God isn’t finished with us yet.” In many ways that sums up St. Mark’s journey of faith. We still have quite a way to go. We also want you to know that we would really love to have you join us on that journey.

If you have even the tiniest, remote interest in taking a closer look at St. Mark’s we encourage you to do so by one or more of the following ways.

- Visit the parish website at __________
- Email us with any questions or concerns you might have at ________
- Give us a call at _________
- Join us for mass – our weekend mass schedule is __________
- We celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation (Penance) at _________
- Feel free to write us a letter and share whatever is in your heart.

If for whatever reasons now isn’t quite the right time for you to look closer at St. Mark’s, know that we understand. So be it. Regardless, know that as a Catholic, however involved you may or may not be, daily we’ll be praying for you and all the members of your household. We’ll also “leave the light on for ya” and keep the door open. With God’s grace, hopefully we’ll meet and greet you sometime in the future. Until then, with best wishes I remain.

Sincerely Yours In Christ,

Fr. Mark