Fall Leadership Evening Workshop, 2009
Radical Welcoming
Handout for People who could not attend

Focus of Session: Getting people back into your parish the 2nd time (and 3rd and 4th and…)

People form an impression of someone within 3-5 seconds of meeting them and then begin to seek out information to confirm their first impression.

2 major areas of concentration for making a great first impression:
Worship
Welcome
(Note: Both are current workshop topics! Here are some “radical” welcoming ideas for now.)

Overall Philosophy of Welcome – Guests vs. visitors
We must give people the message that you matter, you are accepted, you belong here. Think of the difference between Guests and Visitors. We need to continue moving the direction of considering people who come to Mass that we do not know as welcomed, invited, greatly anticipated/desired guests instead of unwelcome visitors knocking on our doors.

The process of moving from being an inactive Catholic to an active Catholic involves 3 phases
1. Inviting
2. Connecting
3. Involving

Initial “radical” welcoming ideas tied to the three phases:
Note: These and other ideas will be further developed and specified in November packet with different price options. (Ex. Specific Our Sunday Visitor brochures will be suggested.)
Ideas based on 3 phases of Becoming an Active Catholic:

1. Inviting – Goal is to have parish staff and parishioners have an inviting attitude consistent with the invitation received via the commercials. Here are a few ideas:
   Greeters and Ushers – Attend the Front-Line Workshops in Jan.!
   Best Parking and Best Seats (practice this in January by having folks park behind the first lamppost, for examples, and by having folks practice moving in when people come to their pew, smiling and introducing themselves)
   Welcome Pew Cards – Pew cards should not be envelopes (which conjure up images of giving money) and should not be “multi-purpose.” Pew cards should simply welcome people and invite them to talk now or anytime with people wearing the red staff shirt (or a nametag or other identifier) if they ever want to talk with a friendly face about the parish. Do NOT use pew cards to try to get new members, only to extend the welcome they will (hopefully) already be feeling.
   Materials to give people besides bulletins – Examples pamphlets produced by parish and/or professional prepared pieces like from Our Sunday Visitor.

Kristina M. DeNeve, Ph.D.
Director of Spirituality and Evangelization
920-272-8304
kdeneve@gbdioc.org
2. Connecting – Goal is to help people know 2 people by their first name within a month and to know 7 people by their first name (and know contact info for some of them) by the end of six months. Newcomers that stay more than 6 months have an average of 7 church friends compared to only 2 among those who drop out. Here are some ideas:

Buddy System – when person talks with someone in the parish (wearing a nametag or parish designed shirt), ask them if they preferred to be contacted in the future by phone or email. Get their contact info and then assign them an active Catholic phone/email “buddy” who contacts them every couple of weeks. Buddy is not just for “church” stuff but also to get to know them, ranging from seeing if they can join them at Mass sometime to asking how their child did during the basketball tournament a parent previously mentioned.

Rule of Three – Before Mass starts, every person must introduce themselves by first name only to three people sitting near them. First name only will help avoid confusion and make it easier to remember people over time. This should be done at the beginning of every Mass because people often sit in a similar section of church from week to week, so over time, they will know people’s first name (and then more and more about them)

Ten Foot Rule and Just Say Hi Rule – If you are within 10 feet of someone you do not know, “just say hi” to them. This is a great one to introduce to parishioners in January and have them begin practicing and doing this every week thereafter. With time it gets easier and more fun. (Keep doing reminders though – will help newcomers to do this too!)

Five Minute Rule – If you have coffee and donuts after Mass, or any kind of Narthex gathering space even if there is no coffee and donuts, require that no one can talk about church business for the first five minutes after Mass (during coffee). This will prevent the active parishioners from simply taking care of church business while they grab a donut and go out the door.

3. Involving – Goal is to help new people get active in the parish sooner rather than later. Involved people become more committed to the faith and the parish through their involvement and by getting to know others in the parish.

The goal of involvement is NOT to get them to sign up to be a new member and fill out paperwork. (Many inactive Catholics, all of whom consider themselves Catholic, prefer to be multiparishional and attend different Masses at different times. For these folks, they will make financial contributions, but they don’t care about the tax statement so they still won’t care to get on your rosters. Begin to think of new ways to consider someone a “member” of your parish.)

Pastor’s Dessert or Dinner Eights or Dinner Sixes – could be the evolving dinner or at one person’s house, but the key is to mix active parishioners with less active parishioners

5 Minute Mental Munchie – after Mass, have someone other than the homilist give a less than 5 minute “mini-talk” sharing something about the faith. Do it in church, do it after Mass and people will stay as they can and leave as wish/need to.

Ministry Placement Interview – speak with people individually and know their interests and such and then ask them to participate in specific ministries based on their interests and skills

Small Groups – Yes, it’s true. Small Christian communities are one of the most important ways to help people become involved with their church. We have the church documents that speak to it’s importance, but it is the nondenominational churches that are doing this. It’s our turn!

Host “Learn More about our Faith” Sessions on a monthly basis on topics such as “Learn More about what the church really says about annulments” or “What Catholics really believe about the Bible.” The sessions should have no advance registration required. Session should be short, like 45 minutes, including 15 minutes of small group sharing.