

Diocesan Evangelization Commission

Purpose: To discern and implement a plan for identifying, encouraging, and facilitating effective parish strategies for re-engaging inactive Catholics.

Parish Council Discussion Guide

Some recent statistics* regarding fallen-away Catholics in the United States:

- #1: Only 23% of American Catholics attend Mass weekly.
- #2. Those who have left Catholicism outnumber those who have joined the Catholic Church by nearly a four-to-one margin.
- #3. Catholicism has lost more people to other religions or to no religion at all than any other single religious group.
- #4. 10.1 percent of the adult population in the United States now consists of people who have left the Catholic Church for another religion or for no religion. To put it another way, one out of every ten people in the United States (or 22,725,000) is an ex-Catholic. (It should be noted here that these are not non-practicing Catholics who, when asked about their religion, identify themselves as Catholic. Rather, these are individuals who were baptized and raised Catholic but who no longer identify themselves as Catholic.)
- #5. Among all inactive Catholics, over 40% of them left Catholicism before reaching age 18, and 70% left by age 23.
- #6. When asked ...a reason for leaving Catholicism, most former Catholics say that the primary reason they left was that they gradually drifted away.

*Statistic #1 from a 2008 CARA Study; #2-6 from the Pew Research survey "Leaving Catholicism"

1. How significant within your parish is the reality of inactive Catholics? What percentage, roughly, of registered parishioners rarely or never attend Mass?
2. Within the past three years, has your parish implemented either a short-term strategy (e.g. during Lent or Advent), or an ongoing strategy for reaching out to inactive Catholics? If so, what did you learn from that process? If not, what is the primary obstacle to implementing such a strategy: lack of time, lack of motivation, lack of resources, lack of direction, etc.?
3. Would you be open to partnering with the diocesan Evangelization Commission to develop a more intentional plan for yourselves?
4. If yes to #3, of the following approaches to reaching inactive Catholics, which do you find most appealing and realistic for your parish? (may choose several)
 - A. Intentional parish renewal (creating a culture of evangelization within the parish)
 - B. Mentoring (parishioners partner with individual returning Catholics)
 - C. Use of small group catechesis and community
 - D. Use of media (internet, social media, advertising via TV, radio, direct mail)
 - E. Direct contact through parishioner relationship spheres, home visitation, calling, letter
 - F. A "returning Catholics" program (Like "Catholics Returning Home" for example)
 - G. Special events (Advent/Easter, parish festival, parish speaker)

