

Contents

Introduction

I. For Your Planning Team

- Step-by-Step Parish Preparation for the Welcome Day
- Reflections for the Planning Team
- Creating a Welcoming Parish: A Leader's Resource

II. For Your Parishioners

- Welcome Email Template
- Bulletin Insert Full-Page Template
- Welcoming the Stranger: Prayer for Hospitality
- Bulletin Announcement Template
- Five Tips on How to Be a Welcoming Parish

III. For Your Team on the Welcome Day

- Overview
- Welcome Day Activities
- Tour of the Church
- A Walk Through the Mass
- Welcome Day Prayer Service

IV. For Your Visitors

- Overview
- Who We Are as a Parish [Customizable Template]
- Become a Friend of Our Parish [Customizable Template]
- Our Parish Activities and Ministries [Customizable Template]
- "Thank You" Email Template



Introduction

Teach us Lord, the ways of
hospitality. Give us the spirit
of joyful welcome . . .

—From *Catholic Household
Blessings and Prayers*

Is your parish excited about the upcoming visit of Pope Francis? This excitement provides your parish with an evangelizing moment. The public interest in his visit is an opportunity to invite family, friends, and neighbors to encounter Christ at your parish. It is a unique moment to show the surrounding community the love and fellowship that is present in your parish. Pope Francis continually asks us to go and share Christ with others. What better time to do so than when he comes to visit?

Enclosed in this packet, you will find a step-by-step guide and several types of resources to help you prepare, plan, and celebrate a parish Welcome Day. This Welcome Day is designed to be one day, chosen according to your parish's schedule and resources, when your community can join together to invite family, friends, and neighbors to experience Christ. The day is meant to be a welcoming, faith-filled, and relaxing event with a variety of activities that encourage people to want to know more about your parish community.



For Your Planning Team

STEP-BY-STEP Parish Preparation for the Welcome Day

1 **Get Started**

The first step is to form a Welcome Day planning team. This may seem obvious, but it is important. The team should be comprised of parish staff (pastor, priests, and lay staff), key parish leaders, and parishioners representing the entire community. Since the goal of this parish event is to be welcoming, all members of the team should embody a sense of welcome.

2 **Form the Team**

Now that you have a team, it's time to form the team. The Welcome Day is essentially a moment of evangelization. It is a moment for visitors to encounter Christ through parishioners and parish staff. In order for visitors to feel welcomed and encounter Christ, your team must be formed to be witnesses to Christ.

As a team, set aside a meeting or two to review and discuss the preparation materials in this packet. The team preparation materials are

meant to help facilitate honest conversations about why people stop practicing their faith, how a parish community helps or hinders others from joining the parish, and how to start building a welcoming community.

3 **Pick a Day for the Welcome Day**

Once you have your team selected, pick a day to host the Welcome Day. As a team, look at the parish calendar to determine the best weekend based on your parish's regularly scheduled liturgies and events, resources, and team availability. If you want to host the Welcome Day before or immediately after the papal visit, consider the weekends of September 19-20 or October 3-4. If you want to host the Welcome Day during the papal visit and plan on live-streaming one of the events, consider the weekend of September 26-27.

4 **Plan the Welcome Day**

Take time as a team to review the Welcome Day template included in Section III of this packet. Review (1) the overview of the day, (2) the step-by-step guide, (3) the various activity templates, and (4) what type of



informational material for visitors you would like to have available.

The Welcome Day template provided can be adapted to your parish's needs. Simply select from the various activity templates listed, and plan your day based on your parish's needs and resources. You can select as many activities as needed and make the day as long or short as desired.

5 Form the Parish

Once you have selected a date and planned the Welcome Day, the team should start forming the parish. Engaged, happy, and faith-filled parishioners are the best evangelizers. Your announcement of the Welcome Day should let parishioners know:

- The date and time
- The purpose of the Welcome Day
- That they are invited to participate either by attending or by volunteering
- How they can help prepare for the day

Use the customizable bulletin inserts to tell the parish about the Welcome Day and its purpose. You may also use the homily as an opportunity to discuss Christian hospitality and the importance of evangelization. As a parish community, pray the *Welcoming the*

Stranger prayer (included in this packet) after Mass to prepare for the day.

Distribute the *Five Tips on How to Be a Welcoming Parish* through the bulletin, in the pews, and on your website.

6 Promote the Welcome Day

Advertise the Welcome Day in your bulletin, through diocesan communications, social media, the local newspaper, and other local means. Remember, it might be necessary to include maps showing the location of the parish church and other buildings. Relevant locations should also be very clear in invitation resources. Use the email template provided to invite people from the surrounding community to the event.

7 Host the Welcome Day

Before the Welcome Day, make sure information about the parish and the Catholic Church is available in the parish church and buildings. Think about assembling welcoming packets for visitors that include basic information about the parish, whom to contact if they have questions, and a list of ministries and resources the parish offers. For customizable templates and pre-printed USCCB materials for purchase, see the fourth section of this packet.

Gather at the parish early enough to place signage that clearly marks the parish buildings and locations where various events will be taking place. Someone coming to this event may not know the names of various buildings



or rooms. Ideally, have volunteers stationed near the entrances to welcome people as they arrive and direct them to the event. Making sure visitors know where to go, including where the restrooms are, is a necessary step in making them feel welcomed. Remember to smile, greet people, and have extra people available to direct visitors to various activities. It is also important to be present and listen, should visitors have questions.

Do your best to stick to the day's schedule of events, and make sure to thank people for attending as the event concludes.

8 Follow-Up After the Welcome Day

After the event, take time as a team to discuss what worked well and what could have been done better. If you collected contact information from visitors, make sure to follow up with them. Use the included “thank you” email template to contact visitors, letting them know you were glad they came and that you hope to see them again soon.

Consider planning another welcome event or creating a permanent hospitality committee in the parish with regular events.



For Your Planning Team

REFLECTIONS for the Planning Team

The Importance of Preparation

Do you remember being welcomed for the first time at a family member's or friend's house for a meal? What do you remember—their warmth, the amount of time it must have taken them to clean and cook, their openness to your staying well past the meal to catch up?

Believe it or not, preparing to welcome people to your parish is a lot like preparing to have guests over for dinner—Sunday Mass is, after all, our Eucharistic feast where we gather at the Lord's table. You have taken the first step by deciding to host a Welcome Day for the community. The next step is preparing yourselves to welcome people to your parish home.

It is not enough to welcome people. We must also ask ourselves: what are we welcoming them back to? Is our parish a joyful, hospitable, Christ-centered community focused on living the Gospel? Each parish will live this out in its own unique way, based on their gifts guided by the Holy Spirit. Some parishes will have a thriving music ministry that has both Gregorian chant and Gospel music, while others will have multiple social ministry programs reaching out to the larger community. When a parish community takes time to prepare, assess their gifts, and then reach out to invite others to join them, their hospitality is authentic and truly welcoming. Your Welcome Day should reflect the true gifts and spirit of your parish.



For Your Planning Team

CREATING A Welcoming Parish: A Leader's Resource

Based on the bishops' statement *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization*

“When he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him.” —Luke 15:20

When we see new or returning family, friends, neighbors, and even strangers joining us for Sunday Mass, how often do we embody a sense of welcome, hospitality, and openness? Believe it or not, it is not hard to create a welcoming parish: it just takes openness to the Holy Spirit, willingness to reach out, and a few small steps.

The Context

For outreach to be effective, it is important that you see yourself as Christ's witness. Your life of Christian charity and faith is the most effective form of evangelization and welcome.

It is also important to understand the reasons why people have stopped attending Mass. The top three reasons people give for not going to Mass are as follows: (1) “they have busy schedules or a lack of time, (2) have family responsibilities, [or] (3) have health problems or disabilities” (*Disciples Called to Witness* [DCW], p. 1).

Questions for Reflection

Are you surprised by the top three reasons why people stop attending Sunday Mass? Why?

Has there been a time in your life when you didn't regularly attend Sunday Mass? Was it because of the top three reasons? How did you feel?

Creating a Parish Culture of Witness

So practically speaking, how do we overcome the reasons listed above for why people drift away from the faith? One answer is found in creating a culture of witness. “The everyday moments of one's life lived with Christian charity, faith, and hope provide witness to family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and others who have stopped actively



participating in the life of the Church. This witness is essential for reaching others in today's modern world" (DCW, p. 10). Having a parish culture of witness is another way of saying our parish is focused on helping people rather than hindering them in encountering Christ. People encounter Christ through a parish because of pastors, staff, catechists, and parishioners who are disciples, leading lives of service. The parish is seen and experienced as a place where the doors are always open, there is a rich liturgical life rooted in prayer, and families are supported. (For a more detailed description of witness, see DCW, pp. 11-14.)

Questions for Reflection

How can I, as a parish leader, help encourage people to regularly attend Mass?

Are we as a parish helping people experience Mass as a prayerful moment with Christ?

Do we offer programs that honestly address people's questions about the faith?

Do we also provide occasions for quiet reflection, solitude, and one-on-one opportunities to address an individual's questions and concerns?

What parish-based pastoral programs support people in their everyday lives? Are there programs for the newly married, parents, divorced, grieving, and unemployed?

Building a Welcoming Community

In order to build a welcoming community of witness, the parish needs outreach strategies designed to invite all to more fully participate in the parish. Effective outreach is rooted in an openness to others' conversion experiences; personal contact with parish leaders; an atmosphere of hospitality and trust; catechesis based on the Creed, sacraments, and moral teachings that address questions openly; opportunities for prayer; participation in the Sunday Mass; and continued support and resources for those who need them. (For a more detailed description pastoral outreach strategies, see DCW, pp. 15-20.)

Questions for Reflection

Do we as a parish recognize that an individual's journey is unique and guided by the Holy Spirit?

How do we as parish leaders personally invite people to our parish and demonstrate a sense of hospitality?

Do we have prayerful, faith-filled Sunday Masses with good preaching and opportunities for popular devotions?

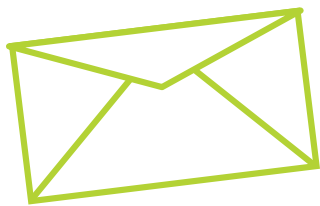
How does the parish support people at key moments (weddings, funerals, baptisms, quinceañeras, and Christmas and Easter Masses)?

Do we provide people continuing support for their faith life through parish prayer groups, as well as assistance for everyday needs (help for addiction, shelter, tribunal assistance, etc)?



For Your Parishioners

WELCOME Email Template



See HTML
file in
Templates
Folder



You are invited to attend a Welcome Day!

[Parish leaders: When customizing this template, please place your parish's information and Welcome Day information—date, time, location, and specific activities—where indicated below. When you are done, remove all brackets and bracketed text, as well as these instructions and the template header, before sending.]

[Date], [2015]
[Parish Name]
[Parish Address]
[Time]

Do you want to learn more about the parish that you've been attending? Have family responsibilities—or just a busy schedule and lack of time—prevented you from attending Mass and getting to know your parish?

Now is a great time to come visit and explore!

On the Welcome Day you can

- Participate in a viewing of Pope Francis' message at the World Meeting of Families
- Meet others in your community and participate in family-friendly activities
- Enjoy the beauty and quiet space of the parish
- Take a tour of the church and attend a walk-through of the Mass
- Celebrate a Welcome Prayer Service before the evening Mass

[Adjust these activities based on what your parish plans to offer.]

We look forward to seeing you and hope you, your family, friends, and neighbors can attend!

Feel free to forward this email to your family, friends, and neighbors.



For Your Parishioners

BULLETIN INSERT

Full-Page Template



See Word
file in
Templates
Folder



Bulletin Insert

[Customizable Template]

[Parish leaders: When customizing this template, please place your parish's information and Day of Welcome information—date, time, location, and specific activities—where indicated below. When you are done, remove all brackets and bracketed text, as well as these instructions and the template header, before sending.]

[Insert your banner image here.]

WELCOME DAY!

[Date], [2015]

[Time]

Join us for a Day of Welcome! Celebrate the excitement of Pope Francis' first visit to the United States by sharing an afternoon of fellowship with family, friends, neighbors, and other parishioners.

Our Holy Father continually asks us to share Christ with others. What better time to do so than when he comes to visit?

All are welcome to attend the Day of Welcome!

Activities will include the following:

- Participate in a viewing of Pope Francis' message at the World Meeting of Families
- Meet others in your community and participate in family-friendly activities
- Enjoy the beauty and quiet space of the parish
- Take a tour of the church and attend a walk-through of the Mass
- Celebrate a Welcome Prayer Service

[Adjust these activities based on what your parish plans to offer.]

Please share this invitation with your family, friends, and neighbors who might not attend this parish regularly. We'd love to meet them!



For Your Parishioners

Welcoming the Stranger: Prayer for Hospitality

From *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*

Loving God, your Son Jesus said
your Kingdom is like a banquet:
a festive gathering for all people
of every race and color—
a table at which the lonely find company,
the hungry savor rich foods and fine wine
and strangers enjoy warm family ties.
Jesus calls us to build this Kingdom here on earth.

Teach us Lord, the ways of hospitality.
Give us the spirit of joyful welcome and
the sensitivity to help people on the move
to feel they belong.

Grant that our tables at home may draw our
new neighbors
into a loving community
and that the Eucharistic tables in
our parishes may prefigure that banquet
in heaven where all are one with you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever.
Amen.



For Your Parishioners

BULLETIN Announcement Template



See Word
file in
Templates
Folder



For Your Parishioners

FIVE TIPS on How to Be a Welcoming Parish

1

PRAY, for a welcoming heart.

2

SMILE, say “hello,” and introduce yourself.

3

LISTEN to others.

4

ENCOURAGE new people to connect with the pastor and the parish staff.

5

INVITE people to parish events and liturgies.

“The everyday moments of one’s life lived with Christian charity, faith, and hope provide witness to family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and others.”

—*Disciples Called to Witness*



For Your Team on the Welcome Day

OVERVIEW

The enclosed materials are meant to help guide you (the pastor and parish leaders) as well your parishioners as you prepare, plan, and celebrate a Welcome Day at your parish community. A Welcome Day is one day, chosen according to your parish's schedule and resources, where the parish community can join together to invite family, friends, and neighbors to learn more about the parish community. The day is meant to be welcoming, faith-filled, and relaxing, with a variety of activities to engage the

larger community around your parish. Ideally, the event will show the love and community that is present in the parish.

The Welcome Day template can be tailored to your parish's schedule and resources. Feel free to use the template in whole or in part. Talk to surrounding parishes to see what has worked for them, and remember to call your (arch)diocese to see if they have any additional resources for you.



For Your Team on the Welcome Day

Welcome Day ACTIVITIES

Have all parish clergy and staff present to welcome attendees to the parish. Briefly share your joy and enthusiasm for their interest in attending the event today. Let them know that no one will be asked to share, answer questions, or speak. Today is simply the parish's way to introduce people to the parish community life and offer an invitation for them to consider joining.

[Select one, two, or all of the following activities as part of the Welcome Day.]

First Activity

(Possible time: Mid-Morning to
Early Afternoon)

Invite people to enjoy the beauty and quiet space of your parish. It's important to remember that for some people, their first step in returning to the Church or joining a new parish is quiet reflection and prayer in a non-obtrusive way.

Have the Church door's open, quiet music playing in the background, prayer cards in the pews, and staff members available should a visitor wish to speak with someone. Make sure you illuminate your parish's artwork, stained glass windows, and statues. People are drawn to the beauty of religious artwork and calm prayerful opportunities of silence. If you have outdoor space—such as gardens or a walkable Stations of the Cross—place signs directing people outside to meditate in the beauty of God's creation. Make sure the pastor, priests, and staff are available should someone feel the desire to learn more about the faith or the parish. Place a schedule of the day's events, as well as their locations and where restrooms can be found, in the pews and entrances to the Church.

Second Activity: Tour of the Church and a Walk Through the Mass

(Possible time: Mid-Afternoon)

Arrange for volunteer tour guides to show parishioners and visitors the art and architecture of your parish. After the tour, offer an explanation of the parts of the Mass, based on the enclosed template "A Walk Through the Mass." Many visitors have questions about the Mass. "A Walk Through the Mass" is a simple



way to engage people in learning about the Eucharist, as well as to invite them to join you for Sunday Mass.

See the “Tour of the Church” and “A Walk Through the Mass” templates included in this kit to get you started.

Third Activity: Family and Friends Activity

(Possible time: Late Afternoon)

Have a family-friendly activity suited to your local community’s demographics and resources. For example, your parish might do one of the following:

- Host a spaghetti lunch, and invite the children’s choir to sing.
- Have family-friendly games for people to enjoy.
- Have an informal come-and-see session where people can learn about the various ministries in the parish.
- Host a concert, show, or health fair.

Your parish may already host an event like this. If you do, the key is to ensure that the atmosphere is welcoming and that people have the opportunity to encounter Christ through your parish. Whatever activity you plan, be sure to have the pastor, staff, ministry coordinators, and hospitality ministers there to welcome people, answer questions, and be ambassadors for the parish. Seek out new people to say hello to, and invite them to return.



Fourth Activity: Welcome Prayer Service

(Possible time: Early Evening before Evening Mass)

Celebrate a Welcome Day prayer service. Invite visitors, parishioners, staff, and the pastor to join in a short prayer service thanking God for the gift of those visiting. The prayer service should include the following elements:

- Opening Blessing
- Scripture Readings
- Words of Welcome
- Reflection on the Scriptures
- Closing Exhortation

A sample welcome prayer service has been created and can be found in this kit.

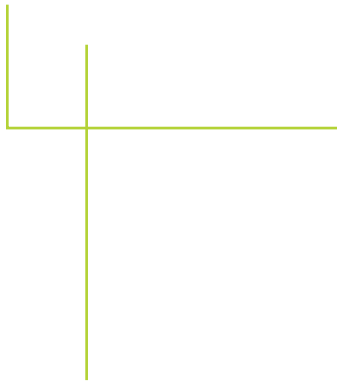
Closing Activity: Viewing of Pope Francis’ Message at the World Meeting of Families or Evening Vigil Mass

(Possible time: the evening of the Holy Father’s address to the WMF)

Set up a viewing area for people to watch Pope Francis’ Saturday evening address at the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia, PA. Have light refreshments for people and a short Q&A session after his address. As people are leaving, make sure to give them the parish welcome packets as a reminder of their day with you.

If you are hosting the Welcome Day on a different day, close the day with Mass. At the conclusion of Mass, remember to thank people for coming, and make sure ushers present them with the parish welcome packets as a reminder of their day with you.

For Your Team on the Welcome Day



Adapted from Diocese of Tyler, *Handbook for Candidates and Households—Formation for Confirmation/First Eucharist*, issued January 2006

A church tour is a great way to help people get to know the parish. It also enhances their prayer experience. The church tour is an opportunity for children and adults to see the church up close and ask questions. The tour may be conducted by the pastor or designated catechist. The following are some of the highlights to include on the tour.

Background Knowledge About the Sacred Space They Are About to Enter Into

- God gave us his Church on earth as a sign of his love for us, so we can celebrate his love as a community here on earth—we don't have to wait until heaven.
- Explain how you enter into God's church. This would include concepts

Tour of the CHURCH

like why we are quiet in church, what reverence is, why we are reverent, and what holiness is.

- Start the church tour outside the front doors.
- Talk about the name of the church: who is it named after?
- Talk about the structure of the church. Does it have stained glass windows? A steeple? Bells?

The Holy Water Font

- This is usually the first thing you see when you come in the doors. People often see others dip their fingers and make the Sign of the Cross, but they may not know why. Explain and demonstrate how this action is completed and that it reminds us of our Baptism. Show people the baptismal font in which new Christians are baptized into the Paschal Mystery of Christ.

The Tabernacle and Sanctuary Light (Candle)

- Direct people as they enter into the church to look for the tabernacle and to check



and see if the sanctuary candle is lit. (If the sanctuary candle is lit, it is indicating that Jesus is present inside the tabernacle.)

- Explain the Real Presence of Jesus. This is who we genuflect towards when we enter into a pew or when we happen to be in front of the tabernacle.

Entering the Pew, Walking Quietly, Genuflecting, Kneeling, Standing, Sitting

- Go through the worship booklet, doing and explaining each gesture.
- Explain genuflecting. This comes from the tradition of kneeling on one bended knee in the presence of the king. Who is our King? Jesus. This is why we genuflect towards the tabernacle: Jesus is present. We do not genuflect towards the altar itself or any other place in the church as such, but to Jesus present in the Holy Eucharist.

The Crucifix

- Point out the crucifix in the sanctuary. Explain how every Catholic Church has a cross with the body of Jesus on it; we call this the crucifix.
- We begin all our prayers with the Sign of the Cross, another powerful sign of our faith.

- The crucifix reminds us of how Jesus died for our sins and how much he loves us.
- Sometimes the server who leads the procession at the beginning of Mass carries a crucifix.

The Altar

- The altar reminds us that the first Mass took place at a meal on Holy Thursday with Jesus and the Twelve Apostles.
- When the priest starts Mass, he kisses the altar as a sign of his love for Jesus.
- Sometimes an altar may have a tiny relic of a saint in a small stone called an altar stone.
- We never put anything on the altar (other than what is necessary), because it is a holy place.

The Ambo

- This is a large stand upon which the Lectionary is placed (explain what a Lectionary is: the book from which Scripture is read at Mass). The ambo is the place where God's Word is proclaimed. God gave us Sacred Scripture through the Holy Spirit.

Chair for the Priest Celebrant

- The priest who celebrates Mass has a special chair at the front of the sanctuary. This chair represents his office of leading the people's prayer.



- The chair reflects the dignity of the one who leads the community in the person of Christ.

Votive Candles

- These candles are a symbol of our prayer for others or ourselves. The lit candle is placed either before Jesus or before Mary and the saints who intercede for us.
- When you are lighting a candle, usually you put a donation inside the box (to cover the cost of replacing the candle when it burns out). Then you say a prayer, remembering that Jesus is the light of the world.

Statues

- Most Catholic Churches have statues of Jesus, Mary, and/or certain saints. The saints that are chosen usually have some connection with the community.
- Explain that our prayers are not addressed to statues but to the saint who we are asking to intercede for us.
- The saints are still part of our community, even though they are not here on earth with us. They are our friends in heaven. They are living with the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and with Mary and the other saints.

Stations of the Cross

- Most Catholic Churches have on the wall representations of the last hours of Christ. We call these stations. If we follow the story of each station, we see how Christ suffered as he carried his Cross and was crucified and buried. Most of all, we see how much Jesus loves us.
- Point out each station, and see if visitors are able to identify what is happening.

Confessional

- Be sure to point out the confessional. Mention that this is the place where we seek God's forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- If possible, go inside the confessional and identify the items seen in the confessional, e.g., crucifix, stole, Bible, chair, kneeler, screen, etc. Look around—confessionals are set up in various ways.

The Sacristy

- See if the priest or sacristan would be willing to show the group the various vestments, chalice, paten, linens, etc.



For Your Team on the Welcome Day

A Walk Through THE MASS

Adapted from *A Walk Through the Mass: A Resource from the Archdiocese of Chicago's Year of the Sunday Mass 2012-2013*

Introduction

Catholics and non-Catholic visitors to parishes often ask questions about the Mass and why we do what we do during Mass. Parishes that have planned gatherings in which they walk through the Mass together and break open its various parts have reported how beneficial this process is for the participants.

This resource has been developed so that it may be led by various staff members or parish leaders: priest, pastoral associate, DRE, etc. It is offered to parishes as a way to help provide a formative, reflective, and interactive opportunity for Catholics to come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the Sunday Mass.

Suggestions for Using "A Walk Through the Mass"

- This resource was designed to be inter-generational. It can be used in any number of settings: family faith formation, adult faith formation, high school groups, religious education, preparation to receive first Eucharist, etc.
- While this resource literally walks through each part of the Mass, it is not an actual celebration of Mass. Thus, the leader can be a priest, or it may be one of the lay leaders in the parish's or school's religious education program.
- The script was prepared in such a way that it may be used strictly on its own, or it could be the basis upon which the facilitator builds, adding to or expanding the explanations of the various parts of the Mass.

Notes for the Leader

- Read through this entire resource so that you can familiarize yourself with items that you may need and ministers you may ask to participate.



Welcome and Introduction

Today is about learning by doing. We will walk through most of the actions and gestures of the Mass, and together we will explore the meaning and origins of the sacrament that is central to who we are as Catholics.

Introductory Rites

This first part of the Mass is meant to gather all the individual people in the Church into the Body of Christ. The rite takes each of us out of our individual thoughts and gathers us all into the prayer of the Church. This is a transition that gets us ready for the awesome mystery of the Eucharist, where we can meet God and God can meet us.

Veneration of the Altar

As the priest approaches the altar, he bends forward in reverence and kisses it. Many of our altars today contain relics of a saint.

(Tell about the relic that is held within the altar in your church.)

The priest reverences the altar with a kiss because the altar is a table of sacrifice. It is an image of Christ, who made the ultimate sacrifice, offering his very self to the Father.

Greeting and Sign of the Cross

When each one of us was baptized, we were signed with the cross of Jesus Christ. In that moment, the Church *claimed* us for Christ; we belong to him. This also reminds us that the Mass, though it has many parts, is one great prayer. All the different pieces help to form this one most perfect prayer that we, as Catholics, have been given.

Penitential Act

We have transitioned from everyday life to the Sacred Liturgy through procession and song, a kiss, and the Sign of the Cross. As we begin, we recognize our sinfulness and our need for and our dependence on the mercy and forgiveness of God.

Gloria

After we have remembered God's mercy and forgiveness given to us in Christ, the only appropriate response is to praise God. We do that in the Gloria which follows. This ancient hymn comes from the song of the angels at the birth of Jesus.

The Introductory Rite concludes with the Opening Prayer, or the Collect. Here the priest gathers all our prayers. Notice the hands and how they hold and lift up the prayers of the whole Church. All of our prayers are gathered together and joined with the prayer of the Church around the world. In every nation and in every language, the same words are said.

The Introductory Rite prepares us for participating in the Eucharist.



Liturgy of the Word

Once we have been gathered as the Body of Christ, remembered our need for God's love and mercy, and given praise to God, we enter into the Word of God. Once again, the Mass of today reaches back to the earliest Christians. Our Liturgy of the Word follows the pattern of a Jewish synagogue service, with its procession of the Torah to a place of honor so it can be read and God's word proclaimed. Our posture changes in response to the readings, though we remain active listeners, because in the Liturgy of the Word we enter into an actual dialogue—a conversation—with God.

First Reading

In this reading, usually taken from the Old Testament, we are reminded of all the things that God has done throughout history to save us. As we remember his greatness, it gives us hope. In this reading you get a “sneak preview” of the Gospel, because the reading was chosen to match the theme of the Sunday Gospel.

Psalm

We respond to all that God has done for us, using words from the Old Testament as we sing the Responsorial Psalm. The Psalms have been called the Church's first prayer book. The Psalms are words that Jesus himself

used in prayer. As we sing the psalm, we are responding to God's greatness using the very Word of God.

Second Reading

This reading comes from the New Testament, most often from one of the epistles. These are instructional letters written by the Apostles to the earliest Christian communities, offering spiritual advice on how to live as a disciple. In these letters are advice and counsel that help us, too, live out our faith.

In response to this second reading and in preparation for the Gospel, we stand and sing “Alleluia,” which is a Hebrew word meaning “Praise God.” Just as in the Introductory Rite there was a procession that helped us transition from the outside world to Mass, now there is a procession so that we might prepare our hearts and minds to hear from Jesus himself. We stand as a sign of respect, prepared to hear the very words and life of Jesus.

Reading of the Gospel

Before the Gospel is proclaimed we say:

Deacon (or Presider): The Lord be with you.

All: And with your spirit.

Deacon (or Presider): A reading from the holy Gospel according to _____.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

With these words we sign ourselves with the sign of Christ—the cross. We trace the cross on our foreheads, lips, and heart, so that these words of Christ may fill our minds and be on our tongues and in our hearts.



When the Word of Christ has been proclaimed, the priest or deacon shows reverence with a kiss. The priest or deacon shows reverence to symbols of Christ: the book of Gospels, the altar. We show reverence through our posture: standing for the Gospel.

Homily

The Liturgy of the Word continues with the homily, where the priest or deacon helps us make connections between the Scripture readings and how we live out a life of faith. The homily helps us understand the Scriptures and leads us to the Eucharist.

Creed

After the readings and the homily, we respond to the Lord, who has spoken through the Readings: we proclaim “I believe!” This is the Creed.

Universal Prayer/Intercessions

From there, we actually ask God for *more* of his divine presence and action, which we have just heard proclaimed in the readings. And so we stand and present before him our needs and the needs of the Church, usually following a similar pattern: prayers for the Church, for those in authority, for the sick and the poor, and finally for those in our community.



Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Liturgy of the Eucharist follows another Jewish tradition, the Passover Meal. In the Passover Meal, where food is blessed and shared, prayers are said to remind the people of God’s love and mercy.

Presentation of the Gifts

People from the community bring forth the bread and wine to be shared with everyone. However, the bread and the wine are not the only things we offer God in the Presentation of the Gifts. We also offer ourselves. Each time we go to Mass, we are called to offer to God all that we are.

Washing Hands

In ancient times, when the gifts were brought forth from the community, they could have included live animals. The washing ritual was a practical step before consecrating the bread and wine to be shared. The ritual remains in our Mass of today as a symbolic washing with a prayer that the priest says for interior purification: “Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” It is a prayer that we can pray with him in our hearts to help us prepare to receive the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation.

The presider says: “Pray, brothers and sisters, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.”

All say: “May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands

For the praise and glory of his name,

For our good and the good of all his holy Church.”

Everything we experience at Mass can be summed up in this invitation to prayer that the people say.

Eucharistic Prayer

This is the Church’s great prayer of praise and thanks. There are thirteen versions of the Eucharistic Prayer, but the underlying structure is the same. Each Eucharistic Prayer acknowledges our need to give thanks to God, offers the bread and wine, asks God to send the Holy Spirit to transform the bread and the wine into the very presence of Christ, and intercedes on behalf of the Church, the world, the poor, and those who have gone before us. In a very real way, everything that we have done at Mass before this point has prepared us to enter into this great prayer.

The Lord’s Prayer

This is the prayer that unites all Christians, the prayer that Christ gave us. Before we share in the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation, we recognize that our daily bread comes from God.

Sign of Peace

In this ritual sharing of Christ’s peace we use the first words of Jesus after his Resurrection: “Peace be with you.” Once we have received Christ’s peace (not just a kind greeting), then we are prepared to receive the fullness of Christ in the Eucharist.

The following prayer dialogue introduces the Sign of Peace:

Presider: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

All: And with your spirit.

Deacon (or Presider): Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

Communion Rite

Once more, we enter into a procession. All processions are outward, physical symbols of inward and spiritual realities. Each one of us, in our own faith lives, is on a procession. Our whole life is one great procession—one great journey—to heaven and to the Father. So now, as we move forward to receive Holy Communion, we are more than simply “in line.” We are in another procession, which is a symbol of our pilgrimage to the Heavenly Banquet. As we reach the priest or the extraordinary minister, we are presented with the Eucharist in the very simplest of words: “The Body of Christ.” This most awesome mystery, the very presence of Christ Jesus given for our lives and for the life of the world, demands a response from each one of us. And so we respond, “Amen,” another Hebrew word which means “Yes,” or “So be it.” Similarly, we are presented with the chalice with the words,



“The Blood of Christ,” and again we respond with a strong “Amen.”

The Eucharist is the spiritual and sacramental nourishment for our life journey. As the Lord fed his chosen people with manna from heaven, so too does he feed us with this Bread from heaven. As the two disciples in Emmaus recognized the presence of the Lord in the breaking of the bread, so too do we recognize the presence of Christ in our midst, feeding us with his very Body and Blood. When all have received Holy Communion, the priest prays a prayer of thanks, which brings the Liturgy of the Eucharist to a close.

Concluding Rites

Blessing and Sending

Once we have received Holy Communion, there is very little for us to do before we are sent out to take the Eucharist—in so many different ways—out into the world. Remember, the

Mass is one great prayer. Just as we began it by marking ourselves with the cross of Christ, so now, at the conclusion of the Mass, we do the same. This time, we mark ourselves as we receive the final blessing.

The final part of the Mass, the Concluding Rite, is actually the shortest part. It consists of a blessing and a dismissal—a sending out. We have what we need: the Eucharist. Now we are charged to *be* Christ’s presence in every other part of our lives—in our family life, in our work life, in our neighborhood life. We are sent to be the Body of Christ in the world.

You can’t miss the mission that we are given. The deacon (or priest) expresses it in these words:

“Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.”

Or: “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life.”

All respond: “Thanks be to God.”

Excerpts from the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*, copyright © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL). Used with permission. All rights reserved.



For Your Team on the Welcome Day

Welcome Day PRAYER SERVICE

Based on the “Blessing to be Adapted in Various Circumstances,” found in *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers*

[1984]

This blessing may be adapted to various circumstances not explicitly provided for elsewhere in this book.

[1985]

It is not meant to be used in inappropriate or frivolous ways.

[1987]

All make the sign of the cross.

[1989]

The leader greets those present in the following words:

Let us bless and praise the Lord, the fountain of all goodness. Blessed be God now and forever.

R/. Amen.

[1990]

In the following or similar words, the leader prepares those present for the blessing.

All that God has created and sustains, all the events he guides, and all human works that are good and have a good purpose, prompt those who believe to praise and bless the Lord with hearts and voices. He is the source and origin of every blessing. By this celebration, we proclaim our belief that all things work together for the good of those who fear and love God. We are sure that in all things, we must seek the help of God, so that in complete reliance on his will we may, in Christ, do everything for his glory.

[1991]

One of those present or the leader reads a text of sacred Scripture.

[1993]

Listen to the words of Isaiah:

43:1b-3a

Fear not, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name: you are mine.

When you pass through the water, I will be with you;



[1997]

in the rivers you shall not drown.
When you walk through fire, you shall not be
burned;
the flames shall not consume you.
For I am the LORD, your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your savior.

Reader: The word of the Lord.
R/. Thanks be to God.

Deacon (or Priest): The Lord be with you.
R/. And with your spirit.

Deacon (or Priest): A reading from the holy
Gospel according to Matthew.
R/. Glory to you, O Lord!

Matthew 10:28–31

[Jesus said:]

“And do not be afraid of those who kill the
body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid
of the one who can destroy both soul and
body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold
for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to
the ground without your Father’s knowledge.
Even all the hairs of your head are counted.
So do not be afraid; you are worth more than
many sparrows.”

Deacon (or Priest): The Gospel of the Lord.
R/. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!

**After a time of silence, all join in prayers of
intercession and in the Lord’s Prayer.**

Let us pray to God who cares for all, and with
earnest humility say:

R/. Have mercy on your people, Lord.

Guard the Church. **R/.**

Watch over **N.**, our Pope. **R/.**

Protect and bless **N.**, our Bishop. **R/.**

Save your people. **R/.**

Preserve peace among the nations. **R/.**

Bring an end to strife and hatred. **R/.**

Guide the rulers of nations. **R/.**

Guide parents in the fulfillment of their
responsibilities. **R/.**

Nourish children by your loving care. **R/.**

Support and give solace to the aged. **R/.**

Be a helper to the poor. **R/.**

Comfort those who are troubled. **R/.**

Grant deliverance to captives. **R/.**

Bring exiles back to their homeland. **R/.**

Grant health to the sick. **R/.**

Be present to those who are dying. **R/.**

Admit those who have died into the compa-
ny of the saints. **R/.**

Gathering our prayers into one, we pray as
Jesus taught us: Our Father...



[1999]

Then the leader speaks the blessing, chosen from appropriate prayers elsewhere in this book.

Loving God, your Son Jesus said
your Kingdom is like a banquet:
a festive gathering for all people
of every race and color—
a table at which the lonely find company,
the hungry savor rich foods and fine wine
and strangers enjoy warm family ties.
Jesus calls us to build this Kingdom here
on earth.

Teach us, Lord, the ways of hospitality.
Give us the spirit of joyful welcome and
the sensitivity to help people on the move
to feel they belong.

Grant that our tables at home may draw our
new neighbors
into a loving community
and that the Eucharistic table in
our parish may prefigure that banquet
in heaven where all are one with you,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
One God, forever and ever.
Amen.

The prayer service has been adapted from the *Book of Blessings*, copyright © 1987, International Commission on English in the Liturgy, Inc. (ICEL), Washington DC. All rights reserved.

Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible* © 1991, 1986, 1970, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, DC, and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All rights reserved. No part of the *New American Bible* may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.



For Your Visitors

OVERVIEW

The resources included in this section are suggestions for you to consider handing out to your guests during your parish's Welcome Day. The resources can be packaged together in a simple welcome packet, so your guests can read through the materials at home and continue to reflect on their time with you. The resources and templates in this section are yours to adapt as you wish.



For Your Visitors

WHO WE ARE as a Parish



Who We Are as a Parish

[Customizable Template]

Adapted from a resource of the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, Archdiocese of Washington

[Parish leaders: When customizing this template, please place your parish's information where indicated below. When you are done, remove all brackets and bracketed text, as well as these instructions and the words "Customizable Template," before printing.]

Our Mission

We, the Roman Catholic Parish of [Name of Parish], are a diverse and multicultural parish in [Anytown, USA] under the care of our (Arch)bishop [N].

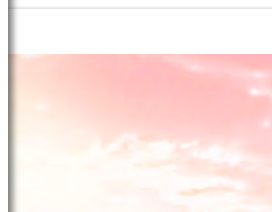
As a Christian community of faith, we seek to become closer to God through worship, prayer, sacraments, spiritual formation, and fellowship. Strengthened by this, we go forth proclaiming the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus and serving our brothers and sisters with our time, talents, and treasure. Through our evangelization in word and deed, we strive to be the light of the world as proclaimed by [Name of Parish].

Our History

Established in [year], the parish church [originally was/is] located at [123 Main St.] The first Mass was celebrated on [month, day, year].

Our Patron Saint

[Include information about the saint your parish is named for. Example: St. Matthew is one of the four evangelists of the New Testament Gospels. In iconography, he is symbolically represented as a human or angel. In the New Testament, he is described as a tax collector, an official of the local Jewish and Roman governments. Because of this public office, Matthew is designated by the Church as the patron saint of civil servants.]



[Phone]
[Phone]
[Phone]
[Phone]
[Phone]
[Phone]
[Phone]

[Name of Parish]
 [123 Main St.]
 [Anytown, USA, Zip]
 [Phone]
 [Email Address]
 [If you have a parish website and/or social media link(s), you can include them here.]



See Word
file in
Templates
Folder



For Your Visitors

BECOME A FRIEND of Our Parish



See Word
file in
Templates
Folder



Become a Friend of Our Parish

[Customizable Template]

Adapted from a resource of the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, Archdiocese of Washington

[Parish leaders: When customizing this template, please place your parish's information where indicated below. When you are done, remove all brackets and bracketed text, as well as these instructions and the words "Customizable Template," before printing.]

We encourage you to sign up as a Friend of the Parish. Friends receive periodic letters from the pastor with updates on the [Name of Parish] community. To sign up, fill out the form below and leave it in the basket at the back of the Church or return it to one of the ushers.

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Do you want a parish member to contact you about parish events or ministries? Yes No

Is there a specific parish activity or ministry you would like to learn about?
(Check all that apply):

- Altar Server Ministry
- Communications and Evangelization Committee
- Communion Ministers—Extraordinary
- English Language Classes
- Faith Formation Committee
- Homeless Ministry
- Hospitality Ministry (Ushers, Greeters, Social Events)
- "Just Married" Fellowship
- Lector Ministry
- Ministerio Hispano
- Ministry to the Sick and Homebound
- Music Ministry

ewardship Committee
Young Adults
reflect offerings of your own parish.]
one from the parish will follow up



For Your Visitors

Our Parish ACTIVITIES AND MINISTRIES



See Word
file in
Templates
Folder



Our Parish Activities and Ministries

[Customizable Template]

Adapted from a resource of the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, Archdiocese of Washington

[Parish leaders: When customizing this template, please place your parish's information where indicated in brackets below. Review the template carefully, and substitute your parish's own ministries, groups, etc. for those supplied below. You may use the wording provided wherever it is appropriate to your own parish. When you are done, remove all brackets and bracketed text, as well as these instructions and the words "Customizable Template," before printing.]

God offers so many ways to participate in his Church, both by enjoying the benefits of his gifts and blessings and by giving back. Below is some information on our ministries and other volunteer opportunities, along with contact information on how to get involved.

Altar Server Ministry

Servers have been a long-standing form of service in the liturgy. Typical duties of the server are to carry the processional cross, the incense, and the processional candles; to assist with the sacramentary and other liturgical books used in the liturgy; and to assist in preparing the altar.
Contact: [Mr. Joe Doe (email and/or phone)]

Faith Formation

The Faith Formation Committee is concerned with Christian education and spiritual enrichment of parishioners with activities designed, in the words of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Christian Education, to give clarity and vigor to faith; nourish a life lived according to the spirit of Christ; and lead to the proclamation of the Good News, to apostolic action and evangelization through words and deeds, and to knowing and active participation in the liturgy. Activities include [List your parish's activities. Examples: Becoming Catholic, Returning Catholics, Sacramental Preparation for Children, Prayer Groups, Bible Study, and Small Faith Sharing Groups].
Contact: [Pastor Rev. Name (email and/or phone)]

Contact: [Mr. John Doe (email and/or phone)]

"Just Married" Fellowship

Are you recently married (within 3 years) and interested in meeting other newly married parishioners for fellowship and service projects? Please join members of the "Just Married" group for dinner the second Sunday of each month after the 5:30 Mass or for fellowship and service projects as announced in the bulletin.
Contact: [Mr. and Mrs. John and Jane Doe (email and/or phone)]

Lector Ministry

Lectors are special liturgical ministers whose principal duty is to serve the community by proclaiming the readings from Scripture during liturgies such as the Liturgy of the Mass, the Liturgy of the Hours, and on other special occasions when readings from Scripture are included.
Contact: [Ms. Jane Smith (email and/or phone)]

Ministry to the Sick and Homebound

The Social Justice Committee and the Parish's Extraordinary Ministers of Communion work together to provide home and nursing home visits—both with Communion and social companionship visits—to the sick and homebound in our parish.
Contact: [Deacon Paul Gonzales (email and/or phone)]

Social Justice and Service

The Social Justice and Community Services Committee mobilizes the parish community by promoting opportunities to serve those in need and to give witness of our faith in Jesus Christ through concrete acts of love and service that overcome our selfishness and indifference. We



opportunities that we need your help with, including Soup Kitchen, Activities, Homeless Outreach, ESL Classes, etc.



Social Events

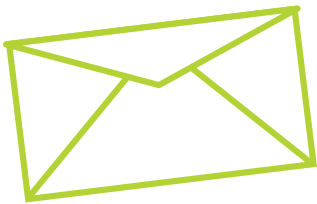
Ministers of worship as part of our meeting and events, and providing also assist in a

adults in their 20s and 30s who discernment of their opportunities for socializing,



For Your Visitors

"THANK YOU" Email Template



See HTML
file in
Templates
Folder



Thank you for attending the Welcome Day
at [Name of Parish]!

[Parish leaders: When customizing this template, please place your parish's information where indicated in brackets below. When you are done, remove all brackets and bracketed text, as well as these instructions and the template header, before sending.]

Thank you for taking the time to join [Name of Parish] for our Welcome Day. We hope that you enjoyed meeting our community and learning more about our parish.

We invite you and your family and friends to come back for Mass each Sunday at [Mass times].

Sincerely,
[Parish leader's signature]

