



Catholics Returning Home

A Ministry to Inactive Catholics

What is *Catholics Returning Home* all about?

Those who have become inactive in the Church are given the chance to share hurts, decisions, or events that led to their leaving or drifting away, be offered apologies for the sins of those in the Church who have caused them pain, and experience new perspectives and renewed invitations to return to the Catholic community. If successful, participants find ways to move past old hurts or issues, and re-center God in their lives. If very successful, participants identify and embrace pathways that lead to their renewed communion with the Church as a whole.

Who might benefit from *Catholics Returning Home*?

Even though people become inactive in the Church for a lot of different reasons, this program is for ***any of these*** who are seeking a more honest relationship with God, and are ready to explore the Church's role in that relationship.

Why is our parish offering *Catholics Returning Home*?

"By some estimates, there are over 60 million US citizens claimed as members by the Catholic Church, but of these, some 18 million are inactive. This group of 18 million is bigger than any other non-Catholic active or inactive religious group in our country," say Pastor Msgr Charles Troncale. "In our families, most all of us know, or have known, the pain of family gatherings in which there are loved ones missing from the table - due to anger, shame, or whatever reason. The family is "not whole" and the events celebrated less joyful than they would be if all were there and reconciled. Having any Catholics who have decided against, or drifted from, active communion with the Church leaves all of us less whole and our worship less joyful. Face to face, we wish to tell those who have not been with

us that we really miss them, that for our part and for the pain anyone in the Church has unnecessarily caused we are truly sorry, and that we long for them to be back at the Church's table."

When is the next session of *Catholics Returning Home*, and how can I get more info?

Sessions are planned several times per year. Call (334) 277-1873 or the Church of the Holy Spirit parish office (334-277-5631) for more info.

***Catholics Returning Home* Prayer (Thomas Merton)**

“My God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following Your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, I will trust you always, though I may seem to be lost in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.”

Inactive Catholic Myths

Inviting inactive Catholics home will only chase them away or anger them.**FALSE**

While the WAY inactive Catholics are invited DOES matter, most importantly, inactive Catholics need to know the invitation is heartfelt and that they are missed.

Most people leave the Church due to controversies over Her teachings.....**FALSE**

Many just drift away, based on priorities and choices, as young adults. Nearly one 1/3 leave due to remarriage outside the Church, though many might be eligible for an annulment and remarriage IN the Church.

Inactive Catholics must not care much about returning, if they don't.**FALSE**

Most non-practicing Catholics would like to return to the Church, but they don't know how, and/or, they are afraid of the reception/rejection they might get if they try. Many mistakenly believe they have been excommunicated, and that this state is irreversible. Even if they were educated in the Catholic school system, many who have been away are now unfamiliar with even the most basic beliefs of the Church. There are also a large number among these who have dysfunctional, suffering, or abusive families or marriages in their past, and have difficulty feeling God's (or the Church's) love for them.

It is more important to focus on the state of their souls and their redemption, rather than give a false impression about their issues by being "nice."**FALSE**

Accusations, nagging, or condemnation are generally not effective ways and not how we should reach out to this group. They are to be treated compassionately and kindly; many are so touched that they joyfully return and generously give of themselves, including their time and talents in ministries.

It is important that returnees hear as much about the current Church from priests and deacons (as opposed to laity) as possible.....**FALSE**

While the ordained are an important part of the entire "Welcome Back" and "We're sorry if the Church has hurt you" message, their excessive presence can retard the process of returnees speaking freely about their past. For some angry or frightened folks, a priest can make them even more frightened or angry (and all this can be very rough on the poor priest!). This ministry is led and largely conducted by laity, most preferably by those who were once inactive themselves.