Welcome Home!

Tips for Parishes When New People Walk In

Message from Michael Brough, Director of Pastoral Planning, Parish Vitality & Mission Integration
When I moved to Maine this year, I was blessed to visit parishes across the diocese. Walking in as a newcomer, I learned quickly how much a clear sign, a smile and simple greeting, and a sincere exchange at the sign of peace can mean. As our parishes prepare for Catholics Come Home, many who have been away will be walking through our doors, perhaps for the first time or the first time in years. Here are some practices I've seen make the biggest difference.

WELCOME

Pray
Before Mass, say a quiet prayer for the people around you, especially the faces you don't recognize yet.

Share Your Pew
Scoot over to the middle and leave the aisle and back seats open. Newcomers will appreciate the easy spot, and you might make a new friend!

Introduce Yourself
If the moment feels right, share your first name and, if appropriate, ask for a newcomer's. If a name is shared in return, greeting that person by name the next week is a wonderful gift.

Smile
A warm smile and a sincere handshake at the sign of peace may be the first sign that someone truly belongs here.

Help
Share a hymnal, point to the page with the readings or prayers, or lead the way up to Communion or for a blessing. A little kindness goes a long way.

Linger After Mass
Stay a few extra minutes after the closing hymn. Newcomers might pause at the door, hoping someone will say hello or strike up a conversation. Be that someone!

Listen
Many returning Catholics carry a story of leaving. If someone wants to share it, listen with an open heart, without rushing to respond.

Welcome Without Judging
Every journey home is different. What matters is that someone is here today — what a reason to rejoice!

Extend an Invitation
Ask a newcomer to join you for coffee and donuts or an upcoming parish event. As you say goodbye, a warm "It's so good to have you here" means more than you might think.

Follow Up on Every Registration Card/Form
Every card is a hand raised. Volunteer to make a personal call or email so each person hears back within days.