

**Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales
Marriage and Family Life Project Office**



The Ministry of Welcome

A training resource for parishes

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**Extracts from the Report on Evangelisation supplied by the Catholic
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The Ministry of Welcome

A training resource for parishes

Foreword

In 2004 the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales launched a major programme of listening to the needs of families in our church. You may remember this, and indeed, you may have taken part in it. At the end the Bishops published an interesting report of what we heard called *Not Easy But Full of Meaning*. First of all we heard that, most of all, families needed, by way of support, that their parish should be family friendly. In response to this we are launching a programme in 2006 called "Everybody's Welcome."

In the report, families talked about how important the parish was to them. It was a community in which they wanted to feel known, accepted and loved for who they are. They wanted to experience their parish as a place where they could find friendship, and to experience their parish as a wider family to whom they could turn in times of joy and sorrow. They would love their parish to be a place where their values are shared and reinforced, and a place where they find spiritual nourishment. They also expressed a desire for practical help, including information and skills to help them become better family people.

Sadly we heard from families who did not experience any of these things in their parish communities. Some felt quite isolated and alone. Sometimes this was because they felt their lives did not match up to the ideal of Catholic family life. Sometimes it was because they came to Mass each Sunday and left without anyone talking to them. Sometimes they felt guilty because their busy lives left them unable to contribute to the life of the parish family. Sometimes it was because they saw no sign that the parish cared about the rest of their life outside of Sunday Mass.

A great deal of work has been done already on these issues in so many parishes across the country. In our programme "Everybody's Welcome" we aim to share the ways that have been discovered and tried out - ways of being sensitive to family needs, ways of being welcoming, ways of being family friendly. Some of these ways have been developed within other Christian communities. The pack you are reading now was originally developed by the Anglican Diocese of Winchester. It was then adapted (with their permission) by the Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth. We have added extra material that we hope will further help parishes to make use of it. We are grateful to all those who have contributed to this current edition and whose generosity has enabled us to make it available to you today.

+ John Hine

Chair, Bishops' Conference Committee for Marriage and Family Life



Celebrating Family: Blessed Broken Living Love **An initiative of the Catholic Bishops in response to** **the families of England and Wales 2006-2008**

In April 2005 the Bishops of England and Wales agreed a plan of collaborative action to meet the needs identified in the report *Not Easy But Full of Meaning: Catholic Family Life in 2004*. These needs have been summarised as follows:

Welcoming, family-friendly parishes (2006)

- to offer understanding, friendship and support to all
- to be a source of help in times of need
- to help everyone in the parish feel that they belong there
- to encourage and celebrate all family life whether married, widowed, single, divorced, separated, with children or without

“The challenge is to build highly loving supportive communities within our parishes for all of us, including our families.”

Marital and family spirituality (2007)

- to share the holiness of the home as a place of life, love, service, teaching, fellowship, witness and prayer
- to celebrate the presence of God as love in all loving family relationships

“A broader understanding of marital and family spirituality among both clergy and laity will be fundamental to the success of any future work by the church in support of family life.”

Helping parents and grandparents to pass on faith in God (2008)

- to provide them with more support, tools and resources
- to respect the role of the family and to see where they fit into the roles of school and parish
- to provide comfort and healing where necessary

“Parents expressed a need for more help in raising their children in the Faith, both in terms of deepening their own understanding and being able to integrate it into the life of the home.”

In families own words....

“Hospitality, friendship, community support was rated as the significantly highest hope that families expressed of their parish community.”

“I hope for friendship, caring, supporting, belonging and a warm caring atmosphere.”

“My church is my other family where everyone is so kind and thoughtful-always helping me.”

“No-one should feel alone - the Church brings everyone together as the bigger family.”

“I have found a great inner peace and love going to Church and joining in Church activities. I can feel and talk to God in a way I never did before.”

What is the purpose of this training resource?

- To enable all parish groups to understand why welcoming visitors and strangers matters, and that all parishioners need an ongoing welcome
- To prompt parishes to improve their own welcome policies

How might a parish group use it?

- With a group of up to ten people
- With an identified leader, who may be one of the group. This person will take responsibility for preparing the sessions but does not need to be 'an expert' on the ministry of welcome.

What can we expect to cover?

- An assessment of the way the parish welcomes everyone
- An exploration of different ideas and experiences of welcoming and being welcomed
- The development of a structured welcome policy
- A commitment to regular reassessment of parish welcome

“The parish remains the pre-eminent place for catechesis. It must rediscover its vocation, which is to be a fraternal and welcoming family home”

Catechesis Tradendae #67

Content, Aims and Timings

Session 1: Happy to welcome Him (Luke 19) 2 hours

Aims: to welcome the group and help them welcome each other; to highlight listening skills; to decide as a group why welcome is important by exploring personal experience and scriptures to prepare for next session.

- ✚ Welcome and Prayer (10 mins)
- ✚ Introductions and Listening skills (10 mins)
- ✚ Welcome in the Parish community (30 mins)
- ✚ Welcome in the Scriptures (30 mins)
- ✚ Preparing for the next session: Assessment of your Parish welcome (30 mins)
- ✚ Prayer and Farewells (10 mins)

Session 2: More than Handing out Hymnbooks (Luke 7) 2 hours

Aims: to report findings of assessment of parish welcome; to begin to identify ways to improve welcome; to formulate action plans.

- ✚ Welcome and Prayer (10 mins)
- ✚ Reporting findings of your assessment of your parish welcome (60 mins)
- ✚ Identifying ways to improve welcome (20 mins)
- ✚ Action planning (20 mins)
- ✚ Prayer and Farewells (10 mins)

Session 3: Welcoming People to Faith (Acts 2:47) 2 hours

Aims: To identify what keeps us in relationship with God; to explore why we gather in church on Sunday; to identify ways of encouraging a sense of belonging and people to return.

- ✚ Welcome and Prayer
- ✚ Coming to faith in God (30 mins)
- ✚ Going to church? (30 mins)
- ✚ A Welcome Outside the Walls (30 mins)
- ✚ Prayer and Farewells (10 mins)

Session 4: Talk to them Agreeably (Colossians 4) 2 hours

Aims: To explore what it's like to be a newcomer; to practice the Ministry of Welcome by questioning skills, by role play, by feedback skills; to review assessments and add to them.

- ✚ Prayer and Welcome (10 mins)
- ✚ Being a newcomer (20 mins)
- ✚ Talking and listening to newcomers (role play) (60 mins)
- ✚ Final review (30 mins)
- ✚ Prayer and Farewells (10 mins)

Additional follow-up review meetings are recommended.

Guidance for Group Leaders

- ✓ You will need to read the guidelines for each session in advance of each meeting. Check whether you need any extra equipment – for example:
 - A flip chart or a pad of large paper
 - Suitable felt tips or pens to write up conclusions of discussions
- ✓ From your study of the material calculate roughly how much time you will need for each part of the session. Include in your calculations the time you will need for coffee, sharing news, arranging the next meeting, etc. We have suggested timings but you may prefer to manage the time differently.
- ✓ The atmosphere in a group, while heavily dependent on the way people treat each other, is also influenced by the physical surroundings in which the conversation takes place. Consider the layout of the room – arrange the chairs carefully, ensure that the lighting is not too harsh or too dim, decide how warm the room should be.
- ✓ It is useful to obtain contact details for each participant and permission to circulate that list.
- ✓ It is helpful to start each session with short prayers or readings. The course leader could select these in advance or could appoint different members of the group to do this at each session. Prayers are provided at the start of each session but you could, alternatively, simply use *The Lord's Prayer* to start and the *Glory be* to conclude. Consider whether it would be helpful to have a candle, a picture or a small cross to focus on during prayer time.
- ✓ At the meeting try to ensure that you stick to the timing you have planned for each part of the session. It is important to be a little assertive about moving on if the group is reluctant to do so.
- ✓ You may find that you have to stop some people from talking. On the other hand, you may need to draw out some members of the group. Consider ways to do this tactfully. While you should not feel responsible for the group as a whole, you should always be looking to care for, encourage and affirm each person, especially those who appear vulnerable.
- ✓ Where the instruction suggests silent reflection, do not be afraid to allow a reasonable time of silence.
- ✓ After the session, consider what went well and what could be better. The leader may consider asking other group members to offer some feedback. Remember in offering feedback there are no rights and wrongs of content only of style of delivery. Feedback is the perspective of the giver and as such might be offered tentatively and with respect.

The Facilitative Role by Mark Davis

- * A Way of Being in Groups – You should, first and foremost, ‘model’ an appropriate way of relating to others – behaving in such a way as to encourage others: to accept one another regardless of the quality of their contribution; to listen with empathy to personal testimony from outside their own experience; to hold each person in the highest regard, including those to whom they would not ordinarily be drawn.

- * Not an Expert – You should not present yourself as ‘an expert’ about the issues under consideration. You are simply a participant with particular extra responsibilities - to set a tone of welcome and acceptance; to make sure that the whole process is satisfactorily completed in the time available; to intervene to protect the interpersonal boundaries already negotiated in advance.

- * Intervention – Apart from moving the group from one stage to another, with suitable words of introduction and explanation, you should be slow to intervene. But you should be ready and prepared to, however, if the group gets into difficulties. Examples might include: when someone is speaking for too long; the conversation drifts towards argument; someone is openly criticised; someone wants to speak and is not given the opportunity. These interventions should be undertaken calmly and in a good humoured way.

Extracted from Guidance for Small Group Facilitators by Mark Davis. produced for CBCEW in 2004

Checklist for Group Leader Preparation

- Obtain contact details of group members
- Communicate proposed dates and times
- Communicate course outline
- Arrange hospitality/refreshments
- Prepare room
- Prepare materials:
 - Prayers / handouts
 - Bible readings handout
 - Programme / timings
 - Equipment / resources

SESSION 1 - Happy to Welcome Him

“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. Luke 19:5-6

Welcome and Prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Let us begin by thanking God for all the people we have met today... family, friends, neighbours, people who offered us a particular service.... or who were simply kind to us....

Pause for reflection

Lord, we give you thanks for the love and care we have received from others today. Help us to offer love and care to all those we live with and meet so that through us they may know your abundant love. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Introductions and Listening Skills

Introductions

The group leader introduces him or her self, explaining why this Ministry of Welcome programme is important to them personally and also why it's important in the context of the Listening 2004 findings.

The leader then invites each member of the group in turn to give their name, how they prefer to be addressed, where they live and why they are here.

Structure of the programme

The leader next *briefly* introduces this ministry of welcome training resource, clarifying the time commitment and the intended outcomes (It might be useful to photocopy the Content, Aims and Outcomes page for the group members to keep).

Leaders tip: You can help participants to feel more relaxed and secure by establishing agreement between them about a number of issues before you start. You should check that the group are clear about:

Why they are meeting.

How they will proceed.

How they will try and relate to each other.

(This helps to address concerns about confidentiality, appropriate levels of self-disclosure and the avoidance of personal criticism)

The importance of listening

A short discussion of listening skills is initiated by the leader to highlight the importance of both *listening* and *hearing* each other's experience. It is worth mentioning that anyone can at any time check that they have heard correctly by repeating back to the speaker what the speaker has said. This gives them an opportunity to correct or clarify any mistaken impressions as well as confidence that they have been fully heard.

Welcome in the Parish Community

The leader then invites people to talk together *in pairs* and recall the first time (or a particular time) when they really felt part of the parish community. If they have never felt they belonged, do they know why this is? The leader reminds the group of the value of respectful listening.

(Allow 5 minutes for each person to share their story = 10 minutes for this part of the exercise)

The leader brings the group back together by inviting participants to share briefly what they have said with the wider group - if they wish. *(5-10 minutes)*

Next the whole group explores the question:

'Why does welcoming people matter?'

Write up your conclusions. You might want to use a flipchart to note some keywords. *(15 minutes)*

(Before the next session, type these notes up so that everyone can have a copy.)

Welcome in the Scriptures

Everything we do is rooted in scripture including our welcoming of others.

Scripture 1: Read the following passage aloud:

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus,

hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. Luke 19: 1-6

Divide the group into two groups of four or five to reflect on the scripture passage using the questions below. The leader reminds everyone that though they may all have different ideas each is equally valid, offered as a personal perspective. *(Allow 15 minutes for this conversation)*

The groups discuss the following questions:

- How do you think Zacchaeus felt climbing the tree?
- How do you think he felt as Jesus called him down?
- How do you think the crowd felt?

The leader brings the group back together for a short review of the main points. Once again the key words are recorded onto flip chart paper *(5 minutes)*

Scripture 2: Read the following passage aloud:

Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.
Mark 9:37

The leader again invites the group to reflect again on the passage using the questions below. Depending on time this can be done as two groups or as one. If the group divides it will be important to briefly recap their findings altogether as before. *(Allow 10 minutes for this conversation)*

The group discusses the following:

- Consider the ways in which we make children feel at ease when they are anxious.
- How can we relate this to welcoming adults in our church?
- What makes each of us feel at ease in new situations?

Summing Up

Return to the flip chart paper and review the list of reasons why welcoming people is important. Add anything that has arisen from your exploration of scripture. Remember to type all this up later and provide copies for everyone at the next session. *(Allow 5 minutes for this review)*

Preparing for the next session: Assessing your Parish Welcome

The next part of the course involves an assessment of the ways in which the parish already welcomes newcomers and existing parishioners to church. The

aim of this exercise is to celebrate good practice and to look for ways of becoming more welcoming.

The assessment requires group members to work in pairs over the next few Sundays using the questions in ***Assessing your Parish Welcome*** (Appendix 1 of this resource).

Each pair will answer the questions asked by observing the parish at work, 'starring' the issues which they see are addressed well and marking "could do better" those issues that they see might be improved. Each pair will bring their completed sheets to the next session.

Clarifying and planning the task

The leader distributes copies of the questionnaire to everyone and takes the group briefly through it to ensure that all the questions are clear and members understand what is expected of them. *(Allow 5 minutes to look through the questionnaire.)*

The leader then invites group members to decide together who they will each work with, to plan which Mass they will survey, who will do what etc. It would be good if people did not assess their usual Mass. *(This may take about 10 minutes.)*

Finally the leader confirms the date and time of the next group meeting, allowing a month or so for the surveys to be completed. *(You may find it helpful to confirm the dates of all subsequent meetings at this point.)*

Prayer and Farewells

Keep silence for a minute, aware of God's living, loving presence.

Say together the prayer of St Ignatius:

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve; to give and not to count the cost; to fight and not to heed the wounds; to toil and not to seek for rest; to labour and not to ask for any reward, except that of knowing that we do your will, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The leader concludes by thanking everyone for coming and for their participation. Coffee and tea and other refreshments are available

SESSION 2 - More than Handing out Hymnbooks

“I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and dried them with her hair.” Luke 7:44

Welcome and Prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A reading from the Gospel according to Luke.

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him and he went into the Pharisee’s house and took his place at the table. And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was at the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him – that she is a sinner.” Turning toward the woman, Jesus said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and dried them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.” Luke 7:36-39, 44-46

After a period of silent reflection, pray together:

God grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change, courage to change the things we can and wisdom to know the difference. Amen.

Welcome

The leader welcomes everyone back together, briefly recalls the outcomes of the last meeting, distributing any typed-up flipchart material.

Reporting back on the Parish Assessment

Each pair reports back on their findings from using the Parish Assessment, taking each section in turn. Rather than each pair giving a full report on every section, it might be better for pairs to lead in turn, the rest adding any discoveries that have not been mentioned.

The leader will need to keep this process moving! No digressions! It might also help if couples simply list the aspects of the parish welcome for which they would award 'stars' and those which they see as 'could do better' rather than

go into the minutiae of their findings. It may also be helpful for each person to have a clean copy of the assessment form on which to take notes.

[NB The results of the survey, or a digest of them, will need to be circulated to the parish priest, the parish pastoral council, and eventually made available to the whole parish.]

After each section the whole group discusses *briefly* the significance of what has been discovered.

The leader writes up the group's conclusions on the flip chart. *(This process should take no more than 60 minutes. The group might need a one minute stretch break at this point)*

Suggesting Improvements

Next the leader invites the group to divide into pairs to discuss ways in which the 'could do better' findings can be improved. It will also be useful for pairs to identify ways in which the 'stars' can be celebrated. *(10 minutes)*

The pairs come back and report their suggestions. The leader writes up each idea on a flipchart. *(10 minutes)*

Formulating an action plan

In a plenary discussion the group will decide on some actions that can be taken to improve the welcome of the parish. Priorities may need to be established.

Underneath each idea, try to write an answer to the following questions:

- 1 Who will carry out the action?
- 2 What is the deadline for completion?
- 3 What resources will be required?
- 4 What problems are there likely to be encountered in trying to carry out this action?
- 5 How can these problems be solved?
- 6 Who will communicate these to the Parish Priest and the Parish Council; who else needs to know?

FOR EXAMPLE

Revamp the notice board

1 To be done by the parish secretary

- 2 As soon as possible
- 3 Coloured paper and gold card? A new notice board?
- 4 Restricted space?
- 5 Additional notice boards needed? Location?

Encourage the congregation to approach newcomers at coffee

- 1 Put notice in the bulletin, and a member of the parish to mention in the notices at the end of Mass
- 2 Before Christmas
- 3 Time and co-operation from the regular congregation
- 4 People are naturally shy
- 5 Build up peoples' conversation skills. Help others to see how vital it is to overcome their shyness

These charts will be the basis of the group's proposals for change which will be agreed more formally at the final session. The charts need to be typed up and distributed to all the group at the next session. (20 minutes)

NB: Most proposals will need to be taken forward with the approval and support of the parish priest and parish pastoral council. Therefore they will need to be placed on the agenda of the parish pastoral council.

Prayer and Farewells

Keep silence for a minute, aware of God's living, loving presence.

Say together:

Stay with us Lord Jesus, as evening falls. Be our companion on our way. In your mercy inflame our hearts and raise our hopes, so that in union with our brothers and sisters we may recognize you in the scriptures and in the breaking of Bread, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

The leader concludes by thanking everyone for coming and for their participation. Coffee and tea and other refreshments are available.

SESSION 3 – Welcoming People to Faith in God

“Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread together at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” Acts 2:46-47

Welcome and Prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pray together:

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work.

I give you my feet to go your way.

I give you my eyes to see as you do.

I give you my tongue to speak your words.

I give you my mind that you may think in me.

I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.

Above all I give you my heart that you may love in me your Father and all your people.

I give you my whole self

that you may grow in me,

so that it is you, Lord Jesus,

who live and work and pray in me. Amen.

(The Grail Prayer)

The leader welcomes everyone once more, briefly recalling what happened at the last meeting, emphasising why welcome is so important. Typed-up flipchart material from the previous meeting is distributed. The leader invites participants to share any thoughts they have had since the previous meeting.

Coming to Faith in God

The leader initiates a *brief* conversation among those present about how they came into a relationship with God. Perhaps the journey to becoming a Catholic Christian was a sudden event, or a gradual awakening, or a developing awareness of the implications of their infant baptism. The leader also invites participants to share what keeps them in relationship with God. (15-20 minutes)

Next, each person takes a few minutes to think about the following questions:

- Name a person who was instrumental in bringing you to faith. How did this happen?
- What particular aspect of parish life kept you coming back when you first came to church?

- If you came to faith through a sudden experience:
What sort of event was it?
Where did you have this experience?
What made you respond to the experience by coming to church?
- If you came to faith gradually:
What were a few of the significant moments?
What part did churchgoing play in the development of your faith?

Leaders tip: Let the group know that if they've never thought about things in this way before, don't worry about it. They may well find that others haven't thought in this way either.

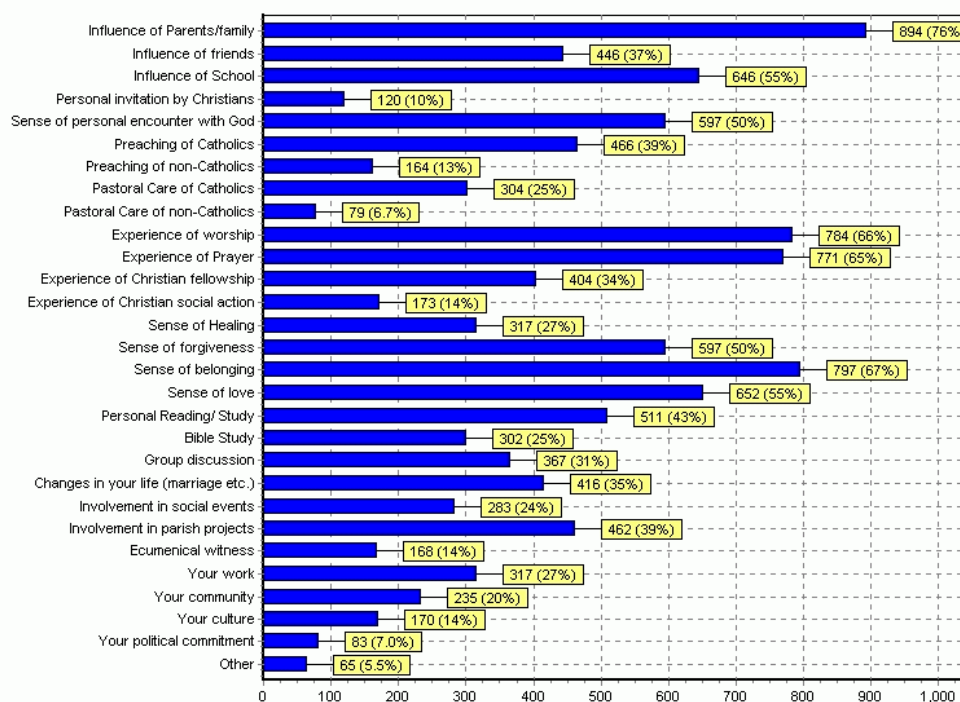
When participants have had a few minutes to themselves, the leader invites them to explore the questions in twos and threes. (15-20 minutes)

For greater privacy, the pairs should be well spaced out from each other. At this point the leader should stress the importance of confidentiality in conversations of a personal nature.

The leader takes a moment to thank God for the gift of our faith.

The Wider Context

Everyone looks at the following illustration from the Report to the Catholic Bishops on Evangelisation in England & Wales (CBCEW 2002). The chart shows the responses participants in the survey gave to the question: which of these helped you personally come to or enrich your faith?



Someone reads out this quotation from the text of the report:

Figure 21 is revealing in relation to understanding how important participants perceive certain factors to have been in their initial and ongoing encounter with the gospel. What is very apparent yet again is that it is in the context of the family that faith would seem to be most effectively communicated and nurtured. Secondary to this however is the importance attached to a sense of belonging in the local Church which was mentioned by 67% of participants.

Evangelisation in England and Wales. CBCEW, 2002 p121

The group is invited to talk more about how this relates to their personal experience. (10 minutes)

Going to church?

The group together considers this question:

Why might people suddenly decide to come to church on Sunday, perhaps for the first time?

Someone writes up the ideas on a flipchart. (5 minutes)

FOR EXAMPLE

Why people visit church

- ✓ Looking for friendship
- ✓ Following a funeral in that church
- ✓ At a time of crisis in their life

Why do we come to church?

Each person spends a minute or two in silence, thinking about their last visit to church, using the following questions.

- Why did you go?
- Was there a personal or family need?
- What did you hope to gain from the service?
- Was this fulfilled?
- Did you go because you felt obliged to?
- Did you go because a previous experience encouraged you to return?

- Did you hope to contribute anything to what went on in the service?
- Was this fulfilled?
- Did you feel encouraged to go back next week?

After a couple of minutes the group leader invites participants to form pairs to share their responses to these questions.

Each partner listens and repeats what they have heard. The pair then repeat the exercise the other way round. (5-10 minutes)

The group leader then invites everyone to regroup for a plenary discussion on the following question:

Why do we come to church on Sunday?

Someone writes up all ideas on a flipchart. (5-10 minutes)

Finally the group explores the following question:

What is there in your church activity which helps people feel they belong or might persuade the occasional visitor to stay around long enough to 'catch' the Christian faith?

The leader reminds the group that they can refer to their findings from their parish assessments. (5 minutes)

A Welcome Outside the Walls?

Allow a few minutes for everyone to read the following description of ROOTS.

ROOTS

ROOTS was created in response to a need in the Church to welcome back inactive Catholics. Its main component is home visiting.

In 1995 in St. Joseph's parish in Upminster, Essex, RCIA leaders noticed that a number of returning Catholics were joining the RCIA group. Some had left the Church many years previously and were bringing along with them a lot of baggage which didn't help to build up the non-Catholic enquirers following the rite. It was therefore decided that a special group for non-church-going Catholics should be started. Local advertising attracted 12 people to the first meeting.

During the next two years about two dozen Catholics passed through the ROOTS programme as part of their journey back to the practice of their faith. It soon became clear, however, that many non-church-going Catholics were reluctant to come to meetings, so the ROOTS team decided to visit them in their homes – a daunting task in a parish of about 3,000 (900 Mass-goers)! Working closely with the parish priest and secretary, the team identified 400 households unknown to them which they felt they could visit.

Before visiting, the team sent each home a letter of introduction, giving them the option of refusing a visit if they wished. As the front door opened the usual introductory phrase used was, “We have you on our list as a Catholic and just came to say hello.” Those visited were often surprised and delighted to hear that they belonged and contact details were left with them in case they ever needed information or help of any kind from the Church. Many were content with this, but it often happened that ROOTS visitors were invited in to share stories and talk through difficulties, and follow-up visits were not uncommon.

People shared their shock at abuses in the Church, their opposition to aspects of church teaching, the hurts they had received, especially as a result of the Church’s rules on marriage and sexuality. The team discovered that they shared some of these experiences themselves – the hurts, the shock, the questions and doubts, but received support and strength from the Sacraments and the faith community, whereas those visited have to cope alone.

ROOTS experienced a further expansion when church-going parishioners asked to be visited too. Every home in the parish will have been visited by summer 2005. This has helped to build a far stronger sense of community in the parish. (This work has since evolved into <http://kit4catholics.org.uk/>)

In an open group discussion the leader invites participants to explore their impressions of ROOTS.

- What surprised you? What excited you? What disappointed you?
- Would such a scheme be attractive to your parish and if so what resources do you have and what do you lack to make it happen?
- Did the article prompt any further ideas of ways to approach the ministry of welcome in your parish?

Write up your ideas on a flipchart. (20 minutes)

Prayer and Farewells

Before the group departs the leader should remind everyone that they will need at the next and final session the notes they made on assessing their parish welcome. The leader must remember to bring the flip chart with the group’s proposals for change.

Keep silence for a minute, aware of God's living, loving presence.

Spend a few moments reflecting on this extract from St Matthew's Gospel:

**I was hungry and you gave me food;
I was thirsty and you gave me drink;
I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you
clothed me, sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to
see me...'** Matthew 25: 35-36

Pray together: Our Father, who art in heaven.....

The leader concludes by thanking everyone for coming and for their participation. Coffee and tea and other refreshments are available.

SESSION 4 - Talk to them agreeably

Be tactful with those who are not Christians and be sure you make the best use of your time with them. Talk to them agreeably and with a flavour of wit, and try to fit your answers to the needs of each one. Colossians 4: 5-6

Welcome and Prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Begin with an examination of conscience. The following passage is read slowly and prayerfully, encouraging participants to meditate alone quietly:

Am I a welcoming person?
Is there room in my life for others or am I too busy?
Do I extend the welcoming gesture, the warm smile?
Do I hear with my heart as well as with my head?
Do I go out of my way even when it is not convenient to do so?
Do I try to use inclusive language whenever possible?
Do I work on my own spiritual development?
Am I open to full, conscious participation at worship and in parish activities?
Do I make an effort to encounter Jesus Christ
in the people with whom I work and worship?
Am I a promoter of social justice?
Sherry Bitsche in *The Ministry of Hospitality*,
The Liturgical Press 1989

We pray together:

Loving Father,
since today as never before, your work is in our hands,
we, your family,
in all our frailty and mystery,
with all our races and peoples,
join hands around your table,
in doubt, in love, in risk, in hope,
and offer you thanks in a new way.
Not by being taken out of what is human
but by daring to be what we truly are:
the work of your loving hands.
Since we, your people,
are those who have not seen,
yet are called upon to believe the mystery of faith,
send over us your Holy Spirit:
the Spirit who brings us life,
the Spirit who brings us love,
the Spirit who makes all we do
not easy but full of meaning.
We make this prayer in the name

of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen

The leader welcomes participants, briefly recalls what happened at the last meeting, and distributes any typed-up flipchart material.

Being a newcomer

Remember a time when you were a newcomer (not necessarily in a church situation). The leader invites the group to share a few recollections, reminding them not to make too many assumptions on the basis of their experience. (5 minutes)

Someone reads out the following quotation:

“I sat at the back of the church, and the person sitting next me to showed me the place in their mass book. I whispered that I was not a Catholic and could not receive communion. He said “That’s all right – you can go up and receive a blessing from the priest...” The emotion I felt on being blessed was quite overwhelming.”

(A person who described themselves as being “of no fixed religion”)

Discuss: How do we relate to the experience of this person? (5 minutes)

Someone reads out the following quotation:

“The last thing I want when I go to church is a hearty person at the door who insists on shaking my hand and asking me a whole string of questions about myself.”

Discuss: How should we respond to people who do not want a ‘hearty’ welcome? (5 minutes)

Why is it difficult to start a conversation with a newcomer? (5 minutes)

Talking and listening to newcomers

Many people find it difficult to talk to newcomers. Here are a few tips to make this easier.

What’s in a name?

Someone reads out the following paragraph:

It is important to remember to introduce yourself by name. Once you have said, 'Hello...' it is vital to say, 'My name is...'. Giving your name this way is like offering a gift – your personal identity!

Many churches give their parish pastoral council members, parish catechists, etc, an identity by displaying their photographs near the entrance to make it easy for newcomers to put faces to names, or having their photographs in the parish handbook.

How did you get to know the names of people at church? Are there still some names you do not know? (10 minutes)

Hello, have we met before?

One way of beginning a conversation with a newcomer is to ask a question.

Someone reads out the following tips:

Remember that it is far better to use *open questions*.

An open question is one that requires a full answer:

“What did you think of the sermon today?”

A closed question can be answered by a simple “yes” or “no”.

“Did you enjoy the sermon?” “NOT A LOT!”

Open questions start with words like:

How? What? Why? Who? When? Where?

***But only ask if you have time to listen to the answer!
Your time is another gift you can give, along with your name.***

List some opening questions that may be helpful.

Write up your questions on a flipchart. (10 minutes)

What do I know about this person? (Role Play)

The leader asks for three volunteers who would be prepared to role play the experience of welcoming newcomers. In making this request the leader will acknowledge that some people are embarrassed by role play or do not see the value in it. However the benefit of role play is the opportunity to practise new skills and behaviours in a non-threatening situation. As the name ‘role play’ implies, the participants are assuming the role of someone else, not themselves. In this role they practise different ways of responding to the same situation. The behaviour they experiment with may be planned by other members of the group. They will be encouraged by constructive feedback from the group. This feedback describes

- 1 what the others have seen
- 2 The effect it had on them
- 3 What might be done differently?

The actors are encouraged to remember that feedback is only the opinion of the other person.

The group will prepare a role play within the setting of the parish hall after Sunday morning Mass.

Characters:

The first person acts the part of a newcomer to church, in the parish hall after Sunday morning Mass.

This person chooses a name for themselves and invents a personal 'profile', such as their job, where they live, their family and interests.

The second person greets the newcomer.

During the course of the conversation the second person must find out some facts about the newcomer.

The third person is a member of the regular congregation.

Scenario:

The second person introduces the newcomer to the third person, and tells the third person at least one or two things about them, e.g. 'Hello, John, this is Roger. He lives in Portland Street, not far from you.'

The second person has given the third person a way to continue the conversation.

The third person then carries on the conversation from this piece of information.

This continues for two or three minutes. Then, while still in role, each volunteer describes how they feel after this experience.

They then receive feedback from other group members, using the structure described above:

- 1 What they have seen
- 2 The effect it had on them
- 3 What might be done differently?

Finally the volunteers then come out of their roles, by stating their names and one personal thing about themselves e.g. I am John and I live in Roland Road, not Portland Street. When everyone has come out of their role the whole group discusses what they have learned from this exercise, recording the points on a flip chart.

What issues have arisen in terms of welcoming newcomers? (40 minutes)

Final Review

For this section you will need the notes that you made in pairs as a result of your assessment of the welcome in your parish.

The leader will need the flip chart sheets from session 2 with the group's feedback from the reflection after the assessment.

The full group re-examines their original findings concerning the welcome in your parish, using the following questions.

- What ideas that you have learnt have already been put into practice in the parish?
- How has participation in this course developed your understanding of the Ministry of Welcome?
- What additions would you like to make to your original proposals for improving the welcome in your parish?

Write up your ideas on a flipchart or a large piece of paper. Include the names of the people who will implement your proposals on your list, and indicate the courses of action required.

Next use the evaluation sheet in Appendix 2 to evaluate the course.

Finally, the group leader arranges for the whole group to meet again after a specified length of time – e.g. in three months. In the meantime, smaller groups may be needed to keep the process going, preferably in collaboration with the parish priest and parish pastoral council. Remember to ensure that the whole parish is kept regularly informed about progress.

Prayer and Farewells

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Leader: We are gathered in the name of Christ, the one who calls us to build the kingdom of God: a kingdom not of houses, not of land, but a kingdom of love and acceptance, a kingdom where we are God's hands in this world. In Christ's name we welcome each other, we welcome the stranger, we welcome all who come. We are not alone in welcoming all and in welcoming all we welcome Christ, who is with us always.

I am with you when you're running out of wine
at your child's wedding feast
and you know the shame of it will last forever.
I will be for you the Best Wine of all.

I am with you in your storm-tossed boat
when joy, hope, life seem lost at sea
and you come close to falling overboard.
I will still the storm, restore you to tranquillity.

I am with you when you're caught out on a limb—
a social climbing tax collector, treed!
I too will climb a tree and be mocked on it.
I will honour you by coming to your house to eat.

I am with you when your body is so bent
that friendly faces, trees, sky are lost to view
and all you see are feet hurrying by.
I will empower you to stand up straight again.

I am with you when men catch you in adultery
and your death is but a stone's throw away.
I am the Gate to the sheepfold. I will lay
my body down between your enemies and you.

I am with you when you claim you do not know me,
I have prayed that you may overcome despair
and bring the heavy burden of your sin to me.
I have forgiven you ahead of time.

I am with you when your dearest friend and brother
passes through the dark door of death,
leaving you disconsolate. I know the pain of loss.
I AM the Resurrection and the Life.

(Incarnation. Irene Zimmerman)

After a few moments of quiet reflection, personal prayers on intention are invited,
which conclude with:

God be in my head, and in my understanding,
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking,
God be in my mouth, and in my speaking,
God be in my heart, and in my thinking,
God be at my end, and at my departing.

SESSION 5 - Follow-up review

This should take place three months after the last session.

The leader should bring along the flipchart sheets from the final session.

Welcome and Prayer

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Someone reads the following passage aloud:

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1John 4: 7-8

Pause for reflection.

Pray together:

God of all wisdom, open our heart and mind to your name, to your mercy, to your love, so that we can finally acknowledge that all along you have loved us. May we be warmed and empowered by your love. But first, teach us to know you through listening to your words spoken and modelled by Jesus. He is always with us to teach and guide us.

(From: *150 Opening and Closing Prayers* by Carl Koch. Saint Mary's Press, 1990)

Review and evaluate progress

Decide what has been achieved and what still needs to be done.

The following questions may help:

- What changes have been made?
- What has been the effect of the changes?
- What could have been done better?
- How do we as a group feel about these changes?
- What still needs to be done?
- How do we continue to recruit and train new welcomers?

Use the flipcharts from the course to remind the group of decisions made earlier.

Action plan any outstanding work as in Session 2.

Prayer and Farewells

Creation's Lord, we give you thanks
that this your world is incomplete;
that challenge calls our marshalled ranks;
that work awaits our hands and feet;

That you have not yet finished man;
that we are in the making still,
as friends who share the Maker's plan,
children who know the Father's will.

Since what we choose is what we are,
and what we love we yet shall be,
the goal may ever shine afar;
the will to reach it makes us free.

(after William De Witt Hyde, 1903. Oremus Hymnal)

The leader thanks all those who have worked so hard to make the parish more welcoming. Copies of the evaluation sheet (Appendix 2) are distributed for completion before departure. The leader commits to forwarding the feedback.

Tea and coffee are provided or participants adjourn for a well deserved drink elsewhere.

**Continue to review the process at regular intervals, for example, annually.
You could use the questions in Appendix 1.
There is no room for complacency in the Ministry of Welcome!**

APPENDIX 1 Assessing your Parish Welcome

Here are some questions to ask in pairs as part of the preparation for Session 2

DETAILS OF THE MASS YOU ASSESSED:

| |
|------|
| TIME |
|------|

| |
|------|
| DATE |
|------|

| |
|---|
| LOCATION (e.g. if more than one church/mass centre in the parish) |
|---|

1: The view from the pavement

Are the church grounds tidy?

- Excellent Good Average Poor Terrible

| |
|----------|
| Comments |
|----------|

The Notice Board

Can the main notices be read from the street?

- Yes No Only during the day

| |
|----------|
| Comments |
|----------|

Is the board tidy, in good repair and up-to-date?

- Yes No

| |
|----------|
| Comments |
|----------|

Are the phone numbers of the parish priest and the parish office clearly displayed?

Yes No

Comments

Are the posters friendly and colourful?

Yes No

Comments

The Porch

Is the porch tidy?

Yes No

Comments

Are notices kept up-to-date and well displayed?

Yes No

Comments

Are the posters friendly and colourful?

Yes No

Comments

Is there plenty of information to show the activities of the parish?

Yes No

Comments

Is there information about people responsible for various activities - their names and telephone numbers?

Yes No

Comments

2. Sunday morning

Arrival

Is the car park clearly indicated?

Yes No

Comments

Are there disabled spaces?

Yes No

Comments

Are the car parking arrangements clear?

Yes No

Comments

Does anyone help people to park?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Is the entrance of the church clearly indicated?

Yes No

Is there disabled access?

Yes No

Comments

How are the welcomers identified?

Badges Other insignia No identification

Comments

How do the welcomers welcome people?

In a friendly manner In a neutral manner In a cool manner

Comments

Does someone give newcomers hymn books, mass books or orders of service and newsletters – and explain which is which?

Yes No

Comments

Does someone show newcomers to a seat?

Yes No

Comments

Are members of the congregation welcoming if a newcomer sits next to them?

Yes – all Yes – some/most Yes – a few No – none

Comments

Are there parish welcomers at baptisms, funerals and other services?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

During the service

Is the church P.A. system adequate? (Quality of sound, microphone provision?)

Yes No

Comments

Are newcomers welcomed at the start of the service?

Yes No

Comments

Are newcomers given help with page numbers and hymns etc?

Yes No

Comments

Is it made clear when to stand, sit and kneel during the service?

Yes No

Comments

Is it clear when and how to come up to receive communion?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Are people invited to come up for a blessing if they are unable to receive communion?

Yes No

Comments

After the service

Are there parishioners available to speak to people as they leave?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Does someone invite and accompany newcomers to coffee?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Is it easy to locate the lavatory? Is there disabled access to it?

Yes No

Comments

Are there welcome cards for newcomers to fill in to inform the parish of their names and addresses?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Do members of the congregation spontaneously approach newcomers at coffee?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Is there a loop induction system for the hearing-impaired?

Yes No

Comments

Are there large-print hymnbooks, newsletters, etc, for the visually-impaired?

Yes No

Comments

Are people with disabilities invited to undertake liturgical ministries?

Yes No

Comments

Is it clear from the notice board and at the door that children are a normal part of church life?

Yes No

Comments

Is there an area where restless toddlers can be taken, babies breastfed, etc?

Yes No

Comments

Is there a selection of books and *quiet* toys available for very young children?

Yes No

Comments

Is there a Children's Liturgy of the Word or other group for children?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Does someone invite new children to join in the Children's Liturgy of the Word?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Are the congregation involved in the blessing and dismissal of the children? Do they know what will be happening in the children's celebration?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Are the children involved in the procession of the gifts when they return to the church?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

How does the congregation react to a parent with a small child in church – especially if the child is noisy?

Supportive reaction Neutral reaction Angry reaction

Comments

Are children invited to come up for a blessing at communion?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Do children play any part in the service?

Yes – as altar servers Yes – in other ways No
Sometimes

If Yes in other ways, please specify:

After the service, are there drinks and toys suitable for children?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Are young people (11+) involved in the service in any way?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

4. After the first Sunday

How does the parish use the information written on welcome cards?

Rapid follow-up Delayed follow-up No follow-up Don't know

Comments

Does the parish have a welcome pack of information relevant to newcomers or a parish handbook?

Yes No

Comments

Are newcomers contacted during the week after their first visit to church?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Is there a parish process for welcoming returning Catholics (e.g. *Landings*)?

Yes No

Comments

Are all social and ethnic groupings included in the life of the parish?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Does the church have a bookstall or repository?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Are there social events in the parish?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Does the parish organise welcome events (e.g. *cheese-and-wine for newcomers*)?

Yes No Sometimes

Comments

Does the church have ongoing contact with the local press?

Yes No

Comments

Does the parish have a website, and is it updated regularly?

Yes No

Comments

Are there regular leaflet drops in the neighbourhood?

Yes No

Comments

Is there the opportunity to meet church people socially away from church premises?
(e.g. *the pub or*)

Yes No

Comments

Additional thoughts

Add any other observations about the way your parish welcomes newcomers and/or regulars.

APPENDIX 2: Ministry of Welcome Evaluation

The Everybody's Welcome Working Group is keen to ensure that resources are constantly reviewed and improved. We would be very grateful for your comments about this material now that you have completed the course.

What did you find helpful about the course?

What could have been better?

What general observations would you make about the course?

Please return this to:

Elizabeth Davies
Marriage and Family Life Project Officer
Catholic Bishops'
Conference of England and Wales
39 Eccleston Square
London SW1V 1BX

Email: Elizabeth.davies@cbcew.org.uk

APPENDIX 3: Scripture and Prayer Resources

1: Examination of Conscience for a Member of the Assembly

Am I a welcoming person?

Is there room in my life for others or am I too busy?

Do I extend the welcoming gesture, the warm smile?

Do I hear with my heart as well as with my head?

Do I go out of my way even when it is not convenient to do so?

Do I try to use inclusive language whenever possible?

When I am a liturgical minister, do I function as a member of the team?

Do I work on my own spiritual development?

Am I open to full, conscious participation at worship and in parish activities?

Do I make an effort to encounter Jesus Christ in the people with whom I work and worship?

Am I a promoter of social justice?

Sherry Bitsche in *The Ministry of Hospitality*,
The Liturgical Press 1989

2: Opening Prayer Format

(courtesy of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton)

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

We begin by thanking God for all the people we have met today...
family, friends, neighbours, people who offered us a particular service....*Pause.*

We sing together...

Father we adore you, lay our lives before you, how we love you.

Jesus we adore you, lay our lives before you, how we love you.

Spirit we adore you, lay our lives before you, how we love you.

Let's spend a few moments reflecting on this extract from St Matthew's Gospel:

I was hungry and you gave me food;
I was thirsty and you gave me drink;
I was a stranger and you made me welcome;
naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me; in
prison and you came to see me...'

Matthew 25: 35-36

Catholic Trust for England & Wales. 39 Eccleston Square, London SW1V 1BX
Registered in England & Wales. Registered Charity Number: 1097482 Company Number: 4734592

3: The Grail Prayer

Lord Jesus, I give you my hands to do your work.
I give you my feet to go your way.
I give you my eyes to see as you do.
I give you my tongue to speak your words.
I give you my mind that you may think in me.
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me.
Above all I give you my heart that you may love in me your Father and all your people.
I give you my whole self
that you may grow in me,
so that it is you, Lord Jesus,
who live and work and pray in me.

4: Using Scripture to Reflect on Welcome

(courtesy of the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton)

Everything we do is rooted in holy scripture, our road map for our faith journey.
What has scripture to tell us about welcome and hospitality?

[1] Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, "Peace to this house!"
And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you...Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, "The kingdom of God is very near to you". But whenever you enter a town and they do not make you welcome, go out into its streets and say, "We wipe off the very dust of your town that clings to our feet, and leave it with you. Yet be sure of this: the kingdom of God is very near."
Luke 10: 10-11

[2] "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.'
Luke 15: 11-24

[3] If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come; and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care.
Romans 12: 12-13

[4] Be tactful with those who are not Christians and be sure you make the best use of your time with them. Talk to them agreeably and with a flavour of wit, and try to fit your answers to the needs of each one.
Colossians 4: 5-6

[5] My brothers, do not try to combine faith in Jesus Christ, our glorified Lord, with the making of distinctions between classes of people. Now suppose a man comes into your synagogue, beautifully dressed and with a gold ring on, and at the same time a poor man comes in, in shabby clothes, and you take notice of the well-dressed man, and say, 'Come this way to the best seats'; then you tell the poor man, 'Stand over there' or 'You can sit on the floor by my foot-rest'. Can't you see that you have used two different standards in your mind, and turned yourselves into judges, and corrupt judges at that? Listen, my dear brothers: it was those who are poor according to the world that God chose, to be rich in faith and to be the heirs to the kingdom which he promised to those who love him. James 2: 1-5

You might like to spend time reflecting on these words too:

Hebrews 13: 1-2

Luke 24: 27-32

Mark 12: 28-31

5: Additional prayers

Prayer to the Holy Family

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, like you we are members of God's family. We pray that our family love may reflect God's loving openness to all people. May we forgive even when not forgiven, and be patient with others' weaknesses.

Jesus, grant us peace, unity and strength to meet the difficulties of daily living. May we use our family resources to improve the quality of life for ourselves and all people. Let us show joy in serving, for whatever we do for others, we do for you.

Mary, inspire us, that our love may be strong but not possessive. Let our willingness to give depend on the needs of others rather than on the cost of giving.

Joseph, help us to be attentive to our Father's will. Let us be ready, as you were, to act whenever he calls us.

We make this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Diocese of Shrewsbury Family Prayer

Loving Father, bless each member of our family.

May we be open to your Holy Spirit
and so grow in your love.

Help us to listen and understand.

Give us the courage to forgive one another
and grant us peace in our family.
Protect all children especially those whose parents are apart,
guide and support families all over the
world in the various difficulties and joys of their lives.
Let us remember we are all One Family united in your love.
May we be one in Jesus Christ.
your Son, Our Lord. Amen.

An Evening Prayer

Stay with us Lord Jesus, as evening falls. Be our companion on our way. In your mercy inflame our hearts and raise our hopes, so that in union with our brethren we may recognize you in the scriptures and in the breaking of Bread. We make this prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.