

Invite One Back Series with  
**JOEL STEPANEK**

Part 2: “Parish Health: Laying the Foundation for Invitation”

**PART 1 RECAP**

In the last webinar, we discussed creating a culture of invitation and connection.

The five elements of a strong parish culture.

Parish leaders identified common challenges and we discussed how to overcome them.

To access the complete handout from part one of our series, [click here](#).

**ASSESSING PARISH HEALTH**

Before COVID-19, 24% of adult Catholics attended Mass once a week; now only 17% attend Mass. (Eucharistic Beliefs: A National Survey of Adult Catholics)

The essential qualities of a thriving parish:

- **Eucharistic-centered**—Everything you do points back to the Sunday liturgy, the most important thing you do.
  - Where does most of your time, energy, and money go?
  - Are your ministries explicitly connected with the Sunday liturgy?
- **“I Am Seen”**—Every person has some meaningful connection to the parish community. There are seekers, but no consumers. Instead, we have collaborators.
- **Invitation Is Natural**—It feels easy to invite people to the parish for a variety of things and at a variety of entry points:
  - Community functions and groups
  - Prayer groups / small groups

- Eucharistic adoration / non-Mass worship
- Mass

Guidance on conducting a parish assessment:

- What is your community demographic? Who do you need to reach out to?
- Who did you lose and who is walking away? Where does your parish fail to reflect the broader community demographic?
- Who is missing or still watching live streams? Who isn't active from your parish directory?
- Create a roadmap for every ministry. What is the entry point and what is the end point?
- Where does your budget go? Where do you spend the most time and energy?

**BUILD A SOLID FOUNDATION**

Explore the structural essentials for a thriving parish that can effectively support the Invite One Back initiative:

- **Honesty** is vital as you engage the process.
- **Vulnerability** is required from everyone involved.

**PART 2 HIGHLIGHTS**

**JOIN US ON JUNE 12!**

Next Webinar: Part three focuses on how you can bridge parish data with your mission.

**CHECK YOUR INBOX**

Registered webinar participants will automatically receive a link to join us for part three. See you there!



- **Leadership**

- Ministries—everyone needs to be aligned on this mission and initiative. Each ministry will need to come into the mission for the greater good.
- Create a dashboard to track your progress and a parishioner journey map that all can follow.

- **Communication**

- Set up parish-wide communication channels.
- Provide training on how to invite people back:
  - Vulnerability, invitation, prayer, story

- **Ministries**

- Audit - What is the parishioner journey in each ministry?

Align parish activities with the mission and vision of both the parish and the National Eucharistic Congress.

### IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES

Case studies and success stories from parishes engaging their communities through similar initiatives.

Practical steps to enhance parish health:

- Welcoming culture
  - “Secret Shop” your parish with outsiders.
  - Be honest about where it is good and areas you’ll need to improve.
  - “Welcome” and “Hospitality” are bigger than name tags—it is a disposition that requires discomfort.
- Leveraging technology
  - Technology can automate tasks and keep people connected.
  - Create communication strategies
    - Does your technology serve you well and empower you to do more relationship-building?
    - Tech can’t build relationships, but it can clear the way for you to do that.
- Creating meaningful experiences
  - **Beauty**—Is it the best your parish can offer?
  - **Reverence**—Does it point toward God or toward us?

- **Relevance**—Is it where this community is as far as worship?
- **Catechesis**—Help people understand so that they can do it often.
- **Preaching**—The message matters.
- **The Outsider Principle**—Could someone outside of your parish with no understanding of your liturgy identify what is most important?

### FEEDBACK FROM PARISH LEADERS

A parish culture is the soil in which things are growing. What good fruits have you seen different parishes bear?

- Fellowship, community, and being noticed.
- Youth and families are participating in parish life.
- An abundance of time spent in reconciliation and devotion.
- Contagious joy and disciples making disciples.
- Eucharistic Adoration and people returning to weekend Masses.

How have you assessed your Mass attendance since the COVID-19 pandemic?

- One parish tracks tithing numbers.
- Quarterly and weekly Mass counts.
- Leaders report varied attendance:
  - Decrease of 20% in attendance since October.
  - 15% increase in attendance.
  - Lower numbers than pre-COVID.
  - 80% of pre-pandemic attendance.
  - Added an extra Mass on Sunday since COVID and large crowds for daily Mass.
  - Spike in younger families joining Mass since the pandemic.

Any fruit your parish bears is not good fruit if it’s not pointing people back to Sunday Mass and the Eucharist. How do you assess your parish’s health?

- Mass count, Disciple Maker Index, Alpha and Healing the Whole Person classes.
- Parish survey on needs and interests for faith formation.
- Phone calls, letters, and emails to registered parishioners.
- Number of families and teens involved in parish life.

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