

Fields of Justice
Social Justice Collaborative

The Northern Voice

Volume 3, Advent 2024



Welcome to this edition of *The Northern Voice*, the newsletter of the Fields of Justice collaborative. Fields of Justice includes individuals and representatives of parish families in the northern part of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. We hope you'll join us as we explore the justice issues facing our region, our country, and our world, and seek ways to address these issues with prayer, information, and action.

EXTENDING WELCOME TO ALL

Many who visit our churches during Advent and Christmas may not be regular Mass attendees. We know, however, that our gentle yet sincere efforts to welcome all who enter our doors during this season may be the encouragement they need to join our parishes and renew a faith-filled life. Advent's arrival is upon us! May all of us again make a conscious effort to welcome those who visit our parishes, whether they've come from down the street or halfway around the world. Indeed, creating welcoming parishes and sharing the joy we have found in the Paschal mystery and in our families of faith is everyone's year-round responsibility!

J. David Eshelman says, "Loving [those new to the pews] the way Jesus did is the most overlooked key to growing a church." But how can we in our parishes demonstrate this love to visitors from near and far?



Here are a few ideas, adapted from Echelman's book *Now Go Forward*:

The most important person for a visitor to talk to in order to feel at home in a new church is you. It is not the pastor, or the greeter, but a regular person in the pews. Eshelman says "One of the most impressive gestures we can extend to first time visitors is for people with no official position to take the initiative and welcome them."

Treat first time visitors as children of God, not strangers.

Look people in the eye, smile, and offer your hand.

Take the initiative, don't wait for visitors to initiate conversation with you.

Ask questions and learn about your guests. It is better to express interest in them than it is to try to "sell" your church.

Listen. Listening is a very effective way to show love.

Invite visitors to join you at something, anything! Never let new people sit alone.

Pray for your guests throughout your week. Be yourself! You are loving! You have a good thing going! You have the capacity to love more people, and to love more deeply. Eshelman says,

"Practice making people feel special, and what you give to others will be returned to you."

Let love of the brethren continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.—Hebrews 13

Learn more about Fields of Justice and its work by contacting one of our co-chairs, Judy Zimmerman (670 Plum Ridge Trail, Sidney 45365; 937/638-2733) or Bonnie Banks (154 W. Parkwood Street, Sidney 45365; 937/492-7564).

What Can We Do?

1. Pray, as individuals and parish families.

Prayer for Divine Hospitality

Father, Giver of Life, open my heart so that I will welcome others as You do. Dispel all that holds me back from giving freely to those I do not know well, to the strangers in my life. Help me to know the holiness that comes from acknowledging those I meet, from seeing others as eternal souls, and from sharing a place for them at my table. Here is where I will find Christ, Your Son. Amen.
—from the National Shrine of St. Jude

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me....
—Matthew 25

2. Learn. *Discover these websites for more information!*

Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity | USCCB
usccb.org/committees/pastoral-care-migrants-refugees-travelers/welcoming-stranger-among-us-unity-diversity

5 Ways Your Parish Can Be More Welcoming – diocesan.com/5-ways-parish-can-welcoming/

Creating a Culture of Welcome & Care
dmdiocese.org/filesimages/Finance/Business%20Office%20Forums/Welcome-Care_Parish-Toolkits.pdf

archlou.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/welcoming-strangers-document.pdf

Unity in Music: Different cultures sharing their gifts - Santiago Fernández
youtube.com/watch?v=g_ZntBZQjTc

3. Act.

In addition to the suggestions on Page 1 of the newsletter, here are a few more ideas, geared to welcoming those from other countries/cultures:

Offer simple greeting in the native language of the person to whom you're speaking. Google Translate makes this easy. For example, to say, "WELCOME!":

Spanish: ¡Bienvenido!

Haitian Kreyol: Byenvini

Swahili: Karibu

Ukrainian: Ласкаво просимо (Laskavo prosymo)

And get ready for the holiday with: ¡Feliz Navidad! Buon Natale! Frohe Weihnachten! And more!

Consider incorporating the music of other countries/cultures at your liturgies or the food from other cultures at parish get togethers. Invite your guests/new parishioners to be part of this process. Ask them how your parish can be more welcoming to all!



Catholic disciples in mission are called to put Two Feet of Love in Action! This tool describes two distinct but complementary ways we can put the Gospel in action in response to God's love: social justice and charitable works.

Social Justice: We step with this foot when we work to address the root causes of problems facing our communities by advocating for just public policies and helping change the social structures that contribute to suffering and injustice at home and around the world.

Charitable Works are our "response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison, etc." We step with the Charitable Works foot when we assist others locally and globally to meet their immediate, short-term needs. Examples include providing food, clothing, shelter, or monetary assistance to help those in need. (from the US Bishops)

How do we in the Northern Area put both feet into action for our brothers and sisters?