



PARISH MANUAL
RESOURCES FOR THE PRECATECHUMENATE

SEEKING CHRIST

FIRST STEPS TOWARD CATHOLIC FAITH

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SEEKING CHRIST

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INTRODUCTION

There is a widely felt need in many Catholic parishes today. *Seeking Christ* is a resource to address that need.

Most Catholic parishes in the United States have successfully adopted the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. As a result, they have a catechumenal process that happens yearly, primarily for adults who are not baptized. It is also a way to help those baptized in other Christian traditions enter into the full communion of the Catholic Church. The joy of parishes as they see newly baptized Catholics emerge from baptismal waters at the Easter Vigil affirms the strength, beauty, and success of the R.C.I.A.

Nevertheless, often people who are inquiring about joining the Catholic Church come to parishes after the catechumenal process has begun and parishes in effect tell them, “Wait until we begin a new R.C.I.A. group”—not the most welcoming or accepting of messages for people who are seeking. Many parishes do manage to have a year-round inquiry and precatechumen process that can accept people throughout the year. However, many parishes would benefit by having additional resources to foster the process of inquiry and evangelization when seekers identify themselves as wanting to learn more about Christ and the Catholic faith.

Seeking Christ is a way to address this challenge by providing resources that foster evangelization and growth in faith during the precatechumenate. It provides a simple process requiring skills that most parishes already have on hand. It takes inquirers as they approach the parish and gives them a fundamental orientation to the Catholic Church. The material covered is very apt for this time of evangelization—basic attitudes and positions of the Catholic Church about God, Scripture, grace, freedom, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and the Church. *Seeking Christ* in this way is a tool for the period of the precatechumenate, which is described in the R.C.I.A. as “a time, of no fixed duration or structure, for inquiry and introduction to Gospel values, an opportunity for the beginnings of faith” (see R.C.I.A., section titled “Outline for Christian Initiation of Adults,” preceding no. 36).

Seeking Christ is designed to expand and supplement most parishes’ usual precatechumenal efforts. This resource introduces themes and material but makes no claim to be the kind of thorough treatment and discussion that such topics ultimately require, because these will be covered more completely during the catechumenate. *Seeking Christ* presents this introductory material in a friendly, conversation-based format that is attentive to the needs and spiritual journey of each inquirer.

Seeking Christ allows a parish to engage as few or as many seekers as may emerge, and it permits the parish to consistently invite people throughout the year to consider the riches of the Catholic faith.

This Parish Manual provides material and resources that cover the elemental information needed to begin implementing *Seeking Christ: First Steps toward Catholic Faith* in a parish. It gives an overview of the process, the content of the sessions, and ways to think about inviting seekers more vigorously. In particular:

- **Chapter 1** explains the various components of the program, including the role of the facilitator for the *Seeking Christ* process.
- **Chapter 2** presents the sessions, the basic content, how participants can be sequenced into them, and how the resources of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* can help the facilitator's preparation for these sessions.
- **Chapter 3** provides ideas to help a parish do the inviting that is essential for the success of this undertaking, particularly one as sacred and important as inviting people to the Catholic faith.

CHAPTER ONE

AN OVERVIEW OF *SEEKING CHRIST*

The purpose of the *Seeking Christ* process is to give parishes and RCIA teams a method to help people who make an initial inquiry about becoming a Catholic. It provides resources, primarily the Scriptures, to help inquirers begin to orient themselves to the faith of Catholic people.

As such, the methodology for *Seeking Christ* serves basically to frame certain questions and issues, in an introductory way, for the spiritual reflection and growth of the seeker. The questions and topics present thematic issues about faith, seeking, Jesus, and community. These topics, in turn, begin to shape the imaginations of the inquirers, helping them explore the basic commitments of the Catholic tradition of faith. *Seeking Christ* can be used either in a group setting or simply as sharing sessions between one or a few people and a Catholic who is helping them reflect on their interest in the Catholic Church.

Before beginning the *Seeking Christ* sessions, the parish must first welcome and engage the seeker in a pastoral way, attending to the needs and issues that the inquirer raises. Initial dialogue with such seekers demands attentive, pastoral listening and discernment on the parish's part. *Seeking Christ* does presume that inquirers have made some initial contact with a Catholic worshipping community, and also that they will continue this contact in some way. Indeed, experience shows that most inquirers already have contact with a parish community and are drawn to the Catholic faith by the example of individual Catholics.

Seeking Christ has eight sessions, outlined in Chapter 2 of this Parish Manual, which begin with basic human experiences and situations; it builds upon these to help people prepare to formally seek entry into the Catholic Church.

THE COMPONENTS OF *SEEKING CHRIST*

This precatechumenate resource has three components:

- The Parish Manual and the Facilitator Guide equip parish leaders to understand this ministry and to offer the sessions.
- The DVD for *Seeking Christ* contains the presentations for each of the eight sessions.
- The Inquirer's Booklet provides the inquirer with an introduction to *Seeking Christ* and materials for all eight sessions.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE *SEEKING CHRIST* PROCESS

Seeking Christ assists inquirers in their search for faith by engaging them in three types of experiences in each of the eight sessions.

- **The DVD reflection** helps present the basic topics for each session. This reflective material is offered to help engage the inquirer and start

the conversation between participant(s) and the facilitator. It comprises simple meditative ideas, combined with visuals. The DVD provides various entry points on different human levels (visual, aural, emotional, and intellectual) for people to begin exploring faith today. This material is not long, but it will offer the opportunity for people to begin thinking and asking about dimensions of the Catholic faith. Even people who have been raised in a tradition of faith can benefit from these short presentations. The DVD can also be played on computers with a DVD player.

- **Scripture readings**, with their follow-up discussion, form the heart of the *Seeking Christ* process. The Scripture readings have been chosen to evoke a response, regardless of the background of the people who read them. The passages are accompanied by three questions designed to evoke conversation and open the topic up for the inquirers.
- **The Take-Home Reflection** provides a way for inquirers to advance the theme of each session on their own time and in another environment. Each session has a short essay that brings out basic Catholic approaches to the themes; this forms the first part of the Take-Home Reflection. The second part consists of some broad questions, which participants are encouraged to write about as a type of journaling exercise.

PARTICIPANTS

Various kinds of participants can benefit from the *Seeking Christ* experience. The parish will be able to recognize different kinds of people who come forward and adjust the process to their needs.

UNBAPTIZED SEEKERS

The participant who will gain the most from *Seeking Christ* is someone who has relatively little knowledge of the Catholic faith, probably someone

unbaptized in any Christian tradition. The broad, welcoming, and exploratory nature of this process will help them begin sorting out what it is they are seeking, and will introduce them to fundamental Catholic approaches to various themes. Many of these kinds of participants may well come from parts of the world other than North America or Europe; assumptions about their culture may make Catholicism seem more remote than it should. The *Seeking Christ* process will help these inquirers begin to see what Catholicism has to offer them in an unforced and open way.

THOSE BAPTIZED IN OTHER CHRISTIAN DENOMINATIONS

Christians from other traditions will also benefit from *Seeking Christ*. Parishes and facilitators have to be aware that there may well be significant differences in people who have been baptized, but in other Christian denominations. Some may come from backgrounds in which their faith was more or less nominal; so they can use some religious language to help them open up various dimensions of their faith. Others may come from highly-formed backgrounds, with fairly extensive knowledge of the Bible or Christian teachings.

Both of these kinds of participants will benefit from *Seeking Christ*, but in different ways. Those less formed in any Christian tradition will focus on basic ideas; those more highly formed will gravitate to those aspects of faith that make Catholicism different from their own tradition (say, our Catholic approach to the sacraments or to the Bible). People in the latter category may particularly benefit from reading chapters from the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*.

Parishes have to discern, particularly with people who have a fairly solid acquaintance with Christian belief, how much formation they need. While some parishes ask these inquirers to be involved in a whole R.C.I.A. process, this may not, in fact,

be appropriate. *Seeking Christ* may provide a basic service—helping the parish see how formed or unformed candidates are.

BAPTIZED BUT UNCATECHIZED CATHOLICS

Many Catholics received only baptism. They have some rudimentary, cultural impressions about the Catholic faith, but perhaps they attended religious education only erratically, if at all, and they never were prepared for First Communion or Confirmation. These potential participants should be welcomed into *Seeking Christ* because it will help give them a vocabulary and an approach to the faith that is still, even if vaguely, latent in them. Whether these Catholics belong in an entire R.C.I.A. process or some other preparatory program will require careful judgment by parish leaders.

Participants will need to be interviewed by parish leaders prior to joining a *Seeking Christ* process and again at the end of the process, by someone designated by the parish. Chapter 1 of the Facilitator Guide provides an approach to these interviews. This initial discernment and conversation will allow parish leaders to serve the particular needs of each inquirer and to facilitate the person's spiritual growth through participation in the precatechumenate. It will also help uncover which of the eight sessions make the most sense for the inquirer, depending on his or her particular needs.

In every case, parishes should see the resources provided by *Seeking Christ* as flexible and adaptable. Our processes, programs, and ministries have to serve what God is doing in the lives of people. The greatest service a parish can give will be the welcome, support, and spiritual discernment that best helps a seeker find what he or she is looking for.

INVITATION

Because *Seeking Christ* allows a parish to receive seekers throughout the year, it permits the parish to invite people on an ongoing basis. Parishes can, and should, stir up interest in the Catholic faith throughout the year. Chapter 3 of this Parish Manual gives some specific ways to accomplish this. Chapter 3 will provide stimulus for the imagination of parish leaders and help them assemble a vigorous invitation for people to come to know Christ in the Catholic tradition. The more a parish invites (in effect, the more a parish gets its members to invite), the more potential participants for *Seeking Christ* may emerge.

THE FACILITATOR

Seeking Christ is designed to be used by a single facilitator, although, of course, more than one can be involved. The facilitator basically will a) employ the dynamics of welcoming and sharing; b) play the DVD; c) lead discussion about the Scripture passage; d) orient the participant to the Take-Home Reflection, and e) elicit any comments or questions participants have about their experience of the previous session.

As such, the process is not complicated or deeply involved. Many who have served as sponsors in the R.C.I.A., and have a basic grasp of, and comfort with, their Catholic faith, should be able to serve as a facilitator. Facilitators should, of course, be active and stable Catholics, finding peace and joy in their Catholic faith, with a fundamental desire to share that faith with others.

Because some sessions may have a small number of participants, and others may contain more, facilitators will need the flexibility to deal one-to-one or one-to-several, depending on how participants emerge through the year.

Facilitators should be carefully chosen by the pastor, the Director of Faith Formation, or the R.C.I.A. Coordinator. While the facilitator's role is important, it should not be made to seem very difficult or demanding.

Facilitators should enlist the help of other parishioners with welcoming, hospitality, and other tasks needed for the process. They should ensure that petitions during the Prayer of the Faithful are regularly offered during the weekend Masses for those seeking to know Christ in our Catholic faith.

Facilitators will serve as the human bridges by which people may enter the Catholic Church. Their demeanor, their welcoming attitude, their connecting this process to the catechumenate and to the ongoing life of the parish—particularly the sacraments—are essential for the success of the *Seeking Christ* process.

THE EIGHT *SEEKING CHRIST* SESSIONS

The eight sessions of *Seeking Christ* can be outlined as follows:

SESSION	PURPOSE	SCRIPTURE VERSES FOR DISCUSSION
SESSION ONE SEEKING & FINDING	To help people recognize the dynamic of seeking as part of a life-long growth in spiritual life. To help people see the power of discovery and commitment in giving meaning to life.	John 1:35–51 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of seeking in human life • How to seek well • How we are influenced by others in seeking
SESSION TWO WORD & TRUTH	To discuss how our freedom is guided by the words and ideas that we accept most deeply; God has a word to speak to us, which is deeper than all words.	Acts 8:26–40 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience of finding things • “Insight” and human life • God’s revelation to us in the Scriptures • God’s Word spoken in our lives
SESSION THREE GOD & FAITH	To explore the dynamic of faith, and faith in God, in resolving the deepest needs of humankind.	Mark 9:14–29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are things we believe in our daily life? • What does it mean to have faith in God? • Modern people and faith • Faith, relationship, and prayer • Faith and the Creed

SESSION	PURPOSE	SCRIPTURE VERSES FOR DISCUSSION
SESSION FOUR JESUS	To introduce Jesus as God’s Son who, at the same time, shows us the nature of God and shows the capacities of humanity to respond to God.	Luke 4:16–22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Images of Jesus ● Jesus’ relation to my own life ● Jesus’ ministry and the Kingdom of God ● Becoming committed to Jesus
SESSION FIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT	To explore the life of the Spirit—openness to God, prayer, conversion, and transformation—in the Christian vision.	Romans 8:11–24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Spirit is an essential part of Christian life ● The Spirit is experienced in ordinary and extraordinary ways ● The Spirit guides individuals and communities ● The Spirit connects us to God and each other
SESSION SIX THE CHURCH	To present the need for community and church in our searching and finding faith.	Acts 2:39–47 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People touch each other’s lives ● God touches us through human community ● Church is made up of people who share the Word of God and celebrate sacred deeds that unite us ● The attributes of the Church ● Church as the Body of Christ
SESSION SEVEN FREEDOM & CHOOSING	To help people realize the power of freedom, and its consequent choices, in spiritual life; to affirm the basic capacity of humans to choose God.	Deuteronomy 30:11–20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Freedom and openness ● Freedom leads to choice ● We have the power to choose and shape life ● Choosing God ● Grace and freedom ● Sin
SESSION EIGHT CONVERSION	To present dynamics of conversion	John 20:19–29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Change in life ● Invitations to change ● The R.C.I.A.

Although there is an obvious sequence to the eight sessions, each one can stand alone. Some inquirers may benefit from an emphasis on one or another of the sessions, depending on their needs and questions. These sessions are better seen as resources for inquiry rather than a full-scale program.

CATECHETICAL RESOURCES FOR THE SESSIONS

Resources for these various sessions can be found in the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, published by the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (available at www.pncea.org/store). This accessible catechism can help facilitators get a feel for the various topics covered.

Facilitators, however, should be cautious in implying that participants should use or purchase this catechism. Some inquirers will be at a level to appreciate a resource like this; other inquirers, however, may be frightened to death to think they have to read a 600-page book, no matter how user-friendly it may appear. At this stage, people are only looking into the Catholic faith; they can get into more elaborate resources later on. Facilitators should try to stick with the material provided in the Inquirer's Booklet.

Here is a list of the sessions, coordinated with some sections of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, which can serve as resources for the facilitator's further reading.

SESSION 1: SEEKING & FINDING

Chapter 1, pp. 1-9

SESSION 2: WORD & TRUTH

Chapter 3, pp. 11-19

SESSION 3: GOD & FAITH

Chapter 4, pp. 35-47

SESSION 4: JESUS

Chapter 7, pp. 77-87

SESSION 5: THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 9, pp. 101-110

SESSION 6: THE CHURCH

Chapter 10, pp. 111-123

SESSION 7: FREEDOM & CHOOSING

Chapter 23, pp. 307-321

SESSION 8: CONVERSION

Chapter 15, pp. 181-199

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The sessions have a natural flow, from some basic human dynamics of seeking and finding, to the final session on conversion. Someone participating in these sessions in succession will see how they build on previous sessions. Themes of prayer, conversion, relationship with God, the Word, and other factors elemental to this initial process are woven in various ways throughout the sessions.

Nevertheless, it is not necessary for people to attend all eight sessions. Some people may benefit from only a few of the sessions. Because each session can stand on its own, parish directors and facilitators can be flexible in their use. Depending on when inquirers begin to emerge—often this happens during Lent or right after Easter—parishes can offer as many or as few sessions as they wish, again in accordance with the particular needs of each inquirer.

Depending on how many facilitators are willing (and able) to host a process, people may be accepted for *Seeking Christ* at various times of the year. Parishes easily should be able to find several willing facilitators, particularly since the facilitators have the particular joy of beginning to involve someone in the Catholic faith. Facilitators will, of course,

help participants understand the role of a church community, in the form of R.C.I.A. leaders and sponsors, in the reception and growth of explicit faith in Jesus Christ as found in the Catholic tradition.

The key is to understand *Seeking Christ* as a flexible pastoral process to catch people at different stages of their lives, and different times in the year, in a method that can help move potential seekers to faith and deepen their commitment to explore the Catholic faith. As such, it provides a tool that can be shaped as needed by pastoral leaders, all the while attending to the particular circumstances of inquirers.

Although some basic Catholic attitudes and positions are laid out, these sessions do not provide an explanation of the nature of faith, or of Catholic teaching on God, Jesus, the Spirit, or the Church, nor a comprehensive approach to the Bible or moral life. These topics need to be handled during the catechumenate, in tune with the dynamics that has made this period of the R.C.I.A. so successful.

The ideal for every parish is, of course, to provide a year-round precatechumenate and catechumenate. The North American Forum on the Catechumenate offers resources and training for this. *Seeking Christ* provides parishes resources to welcome seekers whenever they emerge, as part of the parish's precatechumenate.

INVITING PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN *SEEKING CHRIST*

Now we can welcome—and invite—people all the time!

That's the good news that a flexible resource like *Seeking Christ* brings to the Catholic people and to our parishes. We can vigorously invite all year long—instead of the often anemic invitations we make sometime late in the summer, before the R.C.I.A. gets underway in many parishes, usually in early September. Parishes typically put something in their bulletins or make an announcement from the pulpit. Whatever we do, however, never seems to have the power or urgency proper to what we are actually offering people—a way to discover Jesus Christ today, in their lives, through the depth of our Catholic tradition and life.

Often we envy other denominations in their desire, and ability, to get a message of welcome out to the public. Many of these denominations actually do marketing surveys, figuring out what kinds of people live in a certain demographic and what kinds of services would appeal to that segment. And we think, how come we Catholics don't do anything like that?

This kind of marketing does not come into our minds because we do not think of our Catholic faith as a product and, more importantly, Catholicism is not a “niche” experience of religion. By definition,

we are “catholic”—we are “for everyone”—regardless of social situation, ethnic or cultural background or, thank God, economic class.

Well, if we Catholics do not instinctively market, and for good reasons, what is our alternative? The answer is obvious: consistent, compelling invitation, through our own congregations, to the many worlds touched by our congregants. Invitation to the Catholic Church has to become as palpable with us Catholics as it appears to be for Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, as for so-called non-denominational congregations and megachurches. Invitation has to be part of the way we do things.

Once we have a way to receive people whenever they show up, we are liberated to think about ongoing invitation. We do, indeed, need to think about invitation, particularly in our specific settings, because different communities and settings call for very different approaches of invitation. Obviously, how things happen in rural communities will differ from how things happen downtown. How word gets out in more affluent areas of downtown obviously will differ from how things might happen “in the hood.”

It might be helpful to reflect on invitation on three levels: the personal, the parochial, and the universal.

PERSONAL

Invitation on the personal level means helping parishioners see their own ability to invite other people to think about the Catholic faith. On the one hand, this should be natural; indeed, the evidence that the R.C.I.A. gives us every year is this: people come to the Catholic Church because of their contact with Catholics whom they know and admire. On the other hand, in spite of there being a natural dimension to invitation, Catholics often seem most reluctant to talk about faith—even to each other, let alone to those who are not members of our Church.

Here are some ways a parish might think about upgrading their sense of invitation.

- During homilies, often mention turning points in the lives of people that lead them to think about renewing or becoming involved in faith. Without hammering an idea, preachers and teachers can bring up examples of how ordinary life transitions often raise issues of faith. Among these life transitions are: going away to college, falling in love, getting married, having children, baptizing a child, starting a child in school, career choice, career crises, health crises, empty-nesting, the aging of one's parents, one's own aging, the experience of suffering and, of course, the mystery of death.
- Pew cards can easily be placed in all the pews, with a box to check off "I'm interested in the Catholic Church." Some parishes have cards like these in the pews all year long. Other parishes concentrate on big holidays to put in pew cards. Some parishes combine pew envelopes, for people who occasionally visit churches, with option boxes for people to check off, including "I'm interested in the Catholic Church." If pew cards are in the

pews, those who make announcements, whether celebrants or lectors, should mention them every now and then. The Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association has created invitational pew cards for distribution at Christmas, Easter, and on special occasions. Go to www.pncea.org for more information.

- Parish business cards, which parishioners can hand out, provide an inexpensive and simple way to get word out about our parishes and the Catholic Church. These cards can be put in the vestibule of parishes for parishioners to carry in their pockets and give to people who have recently moved into the neighborhood or acquaintances who are asking about a church. A business card can have the following content:

ST. MARTYR CATHOLIC CHURCH

A Welcoming Community for Those Seeking Faith Today

111 My Street, Any Town, ST 00000

PHONE (111) 222-3333 WEBSITE www.ourparish.org

We are open for quiet prayer daily from 9a.m. to 8p.m.

**Come by for worship, prayer, and support,
an opportunity to serve, and learn about the
Catholic Church and what it has to offer you.**



- Parishes have to learn that whenever there is something happening in the parish of community import, they need to get the word out. Parishioners should have at hand fliers, invitations, or other tools to give to others about social offerings, school plays, Christmas pageants, block parties, and other parish activities that might have a social impact. What excites people more than a free ticket given by a friend? The more we invite people to be around us, the more our Catholic faith looks possible for people who have no faith practice.

PAROCHIAL

Parishes can support their parishioners' inviting others by undertaking activities of broader outreach. How can parishes reach out more effectively in their neighborhoods? Here are some suggestions.

- A parish brochure can be a huge asset for a parish. We should remove from our minds those dreary pamphlets that parishes put out with endless lists of organizations, chairpersons, and phone numbers. Those only serve in-house functions. Rather, we have to place ourselves in the minds of people who live in our area—what might be the one or two compelling things that make our parish an asset in the lives of others? Those we should highlight, along with basic Mass times, telephone numbers, URLs, and the pastor's name. Some ways to think about this might be:

A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

- Pictures of people gathering, greeting
- Basic times for service
- A word of welcome from the pastor

A CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

- Pictures of people worshipping, perhaps even adult baptisms
- Mass times
- Choirs that people can join
- Perhaps one message about adult classes
- Something about discovering Jesus in the Catholic faith

A SERVING COMMUNITY

- What our parishes offer the neighborhood
- Ways to reach out to the poor
- Ways to touch people in need

Along with this basic information, very clear statements about welcoming, coming to know our community, and ways to look into the beauty of the Catholic faith should be part of our brochure.

- Parishes often have outdoor signs. Several parishes have noted that a message like “The Catholic Faith—Classes Starting” or “Come Learn About the Catholic Church” has drawn in passers-by who have gone on to become Catholic. Parishes should always be looking at their signage, what implicit message we give with those signs, and how they can be improved.
- Friends' Sunday has been tried by a variety of parishes. Certain Masses are set aside to which parishioners invite friends; the friends are welcomed, greeted, called forward after communion, blessed, and receive a small gift from the parish. In addition, they become centers of attention at hospitality after the Mass—certain stores will make sheet cakes with “Welcome Visitors” or “Welcome to St. Martyr's Parish” on them. Packets of information can be given, including information about *Seeking Christ*.
- Parishes can also do a concerted invitation program, such as one the Paulist National Catholic Evangelization Association has developed—*Invite!*—a complete program to help Catholics invite others to consider the Catholic faith. In addition to the parish manual, there is a parishioner guide that helps Catholics know the opportunities they have to invite, and, most importantly, an attractive brochure entitled “Come and See,” which is subtitled, “An Invitation to Explore the Catholic Faith.” A program like this can be done annually, at least; the “Come and See” brochure can be strategically placed around the church. For more information about *Invite!* go to www.pncea.org.
- Letters can be written to a variety of people, particularly those who visit our churches and sign our guest books. A warm letter thanking people

for coming and inviting them to return never hurts—especially when you can include your parish brochure.

- People who move into our neighborhoods can receive letters from us. One method is to get the names from the PNCEA New Mover Mailing List Program. Go to www.pncea.org for more information. In addition to introducing our parishes, we can also invite people who want to learn more about the Catholic faith to check out the *Seeking Christ* program.
- Parishes should, of course, have a rather constant poster in their entryways to welcome people and to mention how people can come to join the Church.

UNIVERSAL

Beyond our individual parishioners and our parish outreach to its neighborhood, parishes can extend their reach even more broadly. We can do this thanks to modern technology. Parishes should be consistently considering ways to get the message of invitation and welcome out to their broader audience—the whole town or city where they serve. With all of the traveling people will do to go to a church where they feel comfortable, parish boundaries do not mean, in practice, what they might have meant years ago. Here are some ideas to consider.

- Billboards and public posters can sometimes be used at reasonable cost because a parish is non-profit. Bus companies have shelters with windows in which advertisements can be mounted.
- The parish's website is a tool that potentially can reach around the world. In addition to paying more attention to the website in general (something that many pastors neglect), parishes can put on their sites material of interest to more than our parishioners—articles with information about a variety of religious

and family concerns. Catholic websites should always have an invitation, and a click-button, for people who would like to know more about the Catholic faith.

- The Internet has not quite killed the newspaper, particularly local newspapers that thrive on businesses touching people who live in their neighborhood. Sometimes these newspapers are quite reasonable for advertising. Below is some text that might be used to produce a newspaper ad.

DID YOU EVER WONDER ABOUT THE CATHOLIC CHURCH?

NOW YOU CAN FIND OUT FOR YOURSELF!

St. Martyr's Catholic Church can help you find out about the Catholic faith apart from all the prejudices, stereotypes, innuendo, and outright misstatements about Catholics that often circulate around the media.

The Catholic Church sustains the faith of millions of believers.

MAYBE IT CAN BE A RESOURCE IN YOUR LIFE!

Call John Smith at (111) 222-3333 to find out how you can begin to understand this faith, which has brought renewal, peace, and hope to billions of people with more than two thousand years of prayer, preaching, and serving.



SEEKING CHRIST
FIRST STEPS TOWARD CATHOLIC FAITH

- Neighborhoods often have public kiosks for fliers. Sometimes we see them in parks, sometimes at local supermarkets. Occasionally parishioners with stores will want to put up a flier about some church activity—often bazaars or festivals, but sometimes special Mass times or even an invitation to learn about faith. Parishes can be creative in the fliers they make, or they can find examples online.

- Perhaps parishes have access to television, particularly channels reserved for public use. They can make a little ten- or twenty-second video and ask that it be run as a public service ad. At the very least, they can list the start of *Seeking Christ* on the public bulletin board that these channels often provide.
- Young people (and more gray-haired folks, too) know about YouTube and Facebook. These can be utilized by parishes and may be particularly effective in reaching a main target audience, young adults, who are often experiencing life transitions. Small video segments can reach out to this audience that may never read our bulletins or even come near our churches.

These suggestions, digested by a parish staff, pastoral council, evangelization team, and R.C.I.A. leaders can be fruitful starting points for helping our parishes get the word out—“We have a message. We want you to hear it. It will enrich your life.”

Now with *Seeking Christ* available we can welcome—and invite—people all year long.

Let’s see if we will do it.