



## Welcoming Newcomers

**T**he challenge for pastors and parish staffs is in finding ways to be a welcoming presence to those who have sought a new life.

Pastors and Parish staff meet that challenge when they respond to the diverse faith and human needs of the newcomer to become aware, and accepting by demonstrating a willingness to learn from and understand the newcomer's deepest yearnings and demonstrate a willingness to adapt to new people, new needs and new ways of doing.

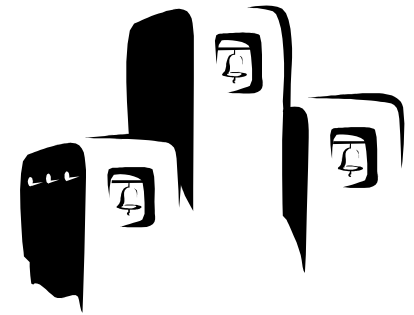


### WISE SAYINGS

- If we really mean "IT" we must be resolved to ask ourselves the deeper, harder questions: Are we really committed to welcoming and accepting the newcomers...those different from us?
- There must be a will to acknowledge the mistakes that have been made and the well-meaning, but imperfect ways, that we have tried to understand, welcome and assimilate newcomers into the parish community.

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## The Changing Face Of The Church



### Responding To Diversity In Times Of Change

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## Understanding The Experience Of Immigration

**T**he Office of Conciliation and the Archdiocesan Office of Ethnic Ministries compiled the following information in an effort to help meet the needs of the growing diversity of the church family. It is a gathering of ideas to help deepen the understanding of the immigrant experience.

The information includes reflections on the experience of immigration and a list of *prompts* that will encourage parish leaders to continue to provide compassionate and sustained pastoral outreach to those newly arrived to the parish.

### **Immigration is a process of people coming into new life.**

- Immigration is displacement and unsettledness, even when it is freely chosen.
- Most newcomers harbor feelings of uncertainty rooted in the unknown.
- The process of displacement causes feelings that include alienation and insecurity in establishing new relationships, and in the challenges of adapting to a new and unfamiliar culture.
- Newcomers to the parish may be in a vulnerable state as they attempt to adjust to new parish surroundings. Newcomers can be fragile, particularly the first generation immigrant.

## Relationship Building

**Fearful people find it reassuring when they are welcomed and spoken to from the heart...to the heart**

**Prompt:** Please keep in mind that newcomers, like all of us, long to be embraced by the parish and accompanied in their journey of acceptance into the community of believers.

**Prompt:** Remember that when people, especially the recently displaced, come to the Church, it is their hope and expectation that they will be welcomed, acknowledged and treated with patience and compassion.

**Prompt:** In turn, failure of parish leaders to build relational bridges, leaves immigrant people feeling marginalized, if not isolated.

**Prompt:** Conscious or not, marginalization of newcomers disallows the parish family from receiving the gifts of the newcomers among them.

**Prompt:** An integral component of embracing and welcoming is education and information sharing. To assist the newcomer in their understanding of how things are done in their new parish is a special ministry!



## Perception, Interpretation And Understanding Culture

**Beware, and wary, of stereotyping! Even people of goodwill are susceptible.**

**Prompt:** Consciously examine your unexamined assumptions about people. Take the time to do so privately, and with others. Get into the habit of looking beyond differences. **Embrace the humanity of each person.**

**Prompt:** Life - one's own life - is formed in large measure by each person's dissimilar experiences, expectations, and ways of thinking about life and its meaning. **Welcome the differing perspectives of all.**

**Prompt:** A common experience, occasion or event shared by different people, even in the same moment, can be given different meaning. The moment is translated differently, especially in the context of one's past experiences, history and culture. **Withhold judgment, take the time to understand.**

**Prompt:** Be attentive to the differing manner and ways diverse people express emotion and feelings. It is true that we are all quite alike under our skins. We love, we yearn, we experience joy and sadness, yet we don't always express in the same way. It is especially important that we learn the differing ways people demonstrate their emotions, particularly hurt, concern and distress... **Respect and honor those differences.**