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How to be a good...  
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# HOW

## to be a good *Parishioner*

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# How To Be A Good Parishioner

THERE are two places that every good Catholic loves to talk about. One is his home, the other is his parish. Much has been written about the home, but very little about the parish. To supply this need and to help Catholics be good parishioners, we present this booklet.

## The Parish

Most of us would find it impossible to be good Catholics if it were not for that smallest unit in the organization of the Church—the parish. For what would we be today if it were not for the baptismal font, the parochial school, the parish hall and playground, the altar and tabernacle, the priests who were truly shepherds of our souls? How many happy memories are bound up with the parish in which we were raised: our first confession, First Holy Communion, confirmation, Sunday Mass, Lenten Way of the Cross, marriage perhaps, and the burial of our dear ones! In every truly Catholic life it is the parish that keeps the light of faith and the fire of charity aflame in the mind and heart.

The parish is vital to our religious lives because God has created us as social beings. This means that for our spiritual as well as our material prosperity we are dependent upon one another. Very seldom could one person erect a church, but a group united as a parish always can. Very seldom are parents able by their own efforts to give a proper Christian training to their children but with the aid of priests and nuns and fellow parishioners supporting a parochial school they easily can. In times of temptation, perplexity and sorrow, we all need the help of others, and we find it in the form of direction and comfort given principally by our pastors. Indeed, the Church, as the Saviour founded it, is a social organization, known most truly as the Mystical Body of Christ. The parish is the most important unit in the Mystical Body of Christ; through it we retain sound and healthy our membership in Him.

### Your Pastor

As a boy, your pastor had a dream. It was a dream inspired of heaven, a dream in which he pictured himself at the altar and in the confessional, helping thousands of human beings to save their souls. As a youth, when the pleasures of this world were most attractive, he buried himself in a seminary, devoting some twelve or more

years to hard study, discipline and prayer. In the course of that exacting preparation, he saw more than two-thirds of those who started out with him toward the same goal give up their quest. Finally, on the day of his ordination, he knelt before his bishop and stepped back an *alter Christus* (another Christ) with all the powers of the priesthood.

All priests are called *Father*, but it is your pastor and his assistant priests who pre-eminently deserve that title. As much as a natural parent has a fearful responsibility in rearing his children, so much greater is the burden of a good parish priest, because he must answer to God for so many souls committed to his care. He is a man who has given up the delights of family life, to take upon his shoulders the worries and spiritual destinies of all the families of his parish. Not for worldly fame or pleasure or riches did he become a priest, for there is very little of these to be found in his calling. The only real reward of a good pastor in this life is the knowledge that his parishioners are trying to be good Catholics and making their way toward heaven.

### The Sisters

Too often we take the nuns in our parish schools for granted. Seldom do we remember that, in a worldly sense, they are the poorest paid teachers in the nation, while so fre-

quently they are unequalled in their profession. In the United States there are about 140,000 American Catholic women who have freely and wholeheartedly bound themselves to the sweet slavery of the three vows, most of them to help your children learn the true liberty that is theirs as adopted sons and daughters of God. Not very often do you see the nuns out of their school room or home, but their gentle influence is by no means confined to the convent walls: from the cloister and classroom it radiates to the hearts and homes throughout the parish.

### The Parishioners

A parish would be an empty framework if it did not have parishioners. It is our good people themselves who, by their devotion, sacrifice and zeal, create and maintain our parishes. Because of the constant shortage of priests and nuns, almost always it is the laity who first carry the faith to a given locality; after them come the priests, the parish church and school.

In this country there are various kinds of parishes, which may roughly be classified as the rural, the small town, and the large city parishes. While each type may have its own characteristics and difficulties, in the main they are all conducted in the same way and are confronted with the same

problems. In each parish, priest and people unite to offer sacrifice at the same altar, to impart the faith to children and converts, to receive the same sacraments, to obey the same laws under their bishop and the Holy Father—in a word, to help each other be all that a Catholic should be. Most truly does every active, fervent parish fulfill the promise of our divine Lord: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them."

### **Be A Real Parishioner**

There is a difference between a home and a boarding house. In the latter a person usually obtains only his meals and rest, but in a home he receives not merely the necessities of life but also care and love, and in turn he is vitally concerned about all that affects the stability and happiness of the home. Some Catholics, it is to be feared, are content to look upon their parish, not as a home, but as a spiritual boarding house. They are satisfied to look for the bare essentials there, such as the fruits of the Mass and the sacraments, but at this point their interest and activity in their parish cease. They lose, and so does their parish, all the wonderful spiritual and social fruits that might result from their full participation in active parochial life. To be a good parishioner you must:

## Know Your Parish

It is important for each Catholic to know to which parish he rightfully belongs. This is determined by the limits assigned to each parish and the location of your home. Thus, if your home is within the designated territorial limits of St. Anne's parish, then your parish is St. Anne's. The pastor of St. Anne's is your spiritual shepherd, answerable to God for your and your family's eternal welfare. The good Catholic does not want to make himself an exception to the universal laws of the Church by seeking membership in a parish other than the one in which he lives. If his own parish is small and struggling, he recognizes his duty to help it to grow, and does not abandon it in order to attend a more successful or more fashionable parish. In return for the many spiritual benefits gained from membership in your own parish, you have certain obligations towards its maintenance and healthy growth.

## Know Your Pastor

The good parishioner makes and keeps himself acquainted with his pastor, no matter how large or small the parish and no matter how many people belong to the parish. If you happen to move into a new parish, one of your first and most important actions should be to call on your new



pastor, have your name placed on the parish rolls, and promise your cooperation and support for all the activities of the parish. The Canon Law of the Church ordains that there are certain religious functions that only your pastor, as your spiritual father, should perform for you. These are:

### *The Baptism of Your Children*

No other priests than your parish priests are allowed, without the special permission of your pastor, to baptize your children. Of course, in case of sudden danger of death for your child, any priest, even any layman if no priest is available, can and should baptize. Every parish has a regular weekly time for baptisms, and after a baby is born, the pastor should be informed and the baby should be brought to the church at the appointed time. This should usually be within a week or two after birth, unless there be a serious reason for deferring the baptism. Parents who, without a reason, put off the baptism of their children for more than a month commit a mortal sin.

### *The First Communion of Your Children*

This is one of the most important events in the religious life of your child, and the preparation for it is one of the most sacred and gratifying duties of the pastor. If your child is in the parochial school, as it should

be, this preparation will be timely and thorough. If for some very important reason your child is forced to attend a public school, you have an obligation to cooperate with your pastor in seeing to it that your child attends the instructions that will prepare it for the great event of its First Holy Communion. In large city parishes it is especially important that you report to your pastor when your child, if not in the parochial school, is of age to receive its First Communion (usually about seven years). Some parents will have a fearful account to make to God because they neglected to provide for the First Holy Communion of their children until they were far advanced in years, with the result that they were forced to grow up without the graces that this sacrament could have brought to them, and sometimes with the result that they gradually lost their faith.

### *The Confirmation of Your Children*

This sacrament is necessary in order that your children may grow strong in faith and virtue and resist the dangers and temptations of the world. Again, if your child attends the parochial school, this will be taken care of in the ordinary course of events. If not, however, it is your obligation to see that the child is brought to the pastor for instruction when it is announced that confirmation is to be administered.

*Note for converts:* According to custom, converts may be baptized in the church of the priest who has instructed them, regardless of their residence. After that, however, converts should make themselves acquainted with their own legitimate pastors and begin at once to take an active part in parochial life. If they have missed confirmation in their new parish and would have to wait for a considerable time for this sacrament, their pastor will readily arrange for them to be confirmed in another parish at an earlier date, and will help them to prepare for the reception of this sacrament.

### *Your Marriage*

According to the law of the Church, only the bishop, or your pastor, or his assistant priests, has the right to officiate at your marriage. If two people planning marriage happen to be from different parishes, then the pastor of the girl is the one who is to officiate. If it is to be a mixed marriage, the pastor of the Catholic must assist at the marriage. The prospective bride and groom should approach the pastor at least three or four months before the ceremony. Above all, they should not set the date for the marriage, and then afterwards see the pastor; if they do, complications may arise that will be distressful to all concerned. It is the pastor's duty to make sure that there

are no impediments to the prospective marriage, and no good Catholic ever resents the questions he may ask to make sure of this.

If a non-Catholic wishes to become a Catholic before marriage, or is at least interested in taking the full course of instructions in the Catholic religion, the couple should go to the pastor at least six months before the ceremony, if possible, so that the instructions may be completed. Every truly Catholic young man and woman want to have the full blessing of the Church on their marriage, and will abhor the thought of a mixed marriage, at which no blessing of the Church can be given. If they are going with a non-Catholic, they will do all in their power, both by word and example, to win such a one over to their faith before even promising marriage. They will not only offer to introduce a non-Catholic friend to a priest, but will accompany him (or her) to the instructions.

Although there may be rare occasions when it would be proper for a Catholic to ask his pastor's permission to bring in an outside priest to perform the marriage ceremony (as in the case when one has a close relative who is a priest), still it is the wish and command of the Church that, ordinarily, you go to your parish priest to be married. As your spiritual father, he has

the responsibility for your spiritual welfare, and it is to him that you should turn for the most important and holy step in your life.

No matter what fashionable society or local custom may decree as to the advantages of afternoon or evening weddings, the good Catholic will always want to be married at Mass, therefore in the morning. Similarly, he will reject all suggestions that he seek permission for a home or apartment house or garden wedding.

### *Sick Calls*

The care of the sick is one of the most sacred duties of every zealous pastor. If a member of your family is dangerously ill (do not wait till he is dying), you should immediately call your parish priest. Try to make such calls during the daytime, whenever possible; but if the danger should develop during the night, then contact your pastor, regardless of the hour. A priest from outside your parish may be summoned only in case of emergency, when it is impossible to reach your pastor or his assistant.

Even in illness in which there is no immediate danger, but which may mean protracted confinement, you should notify your parish priest. He can come to bless you, hear your confession, and bring you Holy

Communion. If you are entering a hospital for an operation or a serious sickness, even though most hospitals have a Catholic chaplain, it is well to tell your pastor about it.

### *Funerals*

Though a dying person, or the close relatives, have the privilege of designating the church of his funeral, the good parishioner always wishes to be buried from his own parish church, where he prayed and worshipped and received the sacraments during life. It is fitting that, in accord with Canon Law, the same priestly hand that so often absolved you from your sins and placed upon your tongue the Bread of Life should impart the final blessing to your earthly remains.

### *Easter Duty*

The best place in which to fulfill the obligation of receiving Holy Communion during the Easter season is your parish church, though this duty may be satisfied in any other church. Frequent communicants need not worry about where they receive their Easter Communion; but those who have been away from the sacraments for a long time should, if possible, receive in their own parish church so that pastor and fellow-parishioners will know that they have approached the sacraments. It may

be noted that if a Catholic deliberately misses his Easter Duty, he is guilty of mortal sin, but he does not incur the penalty of excommunication.

## The Devout Catholic

The good parishioner is faithful to his Catholic ideals. The truths of his faith are not simply beliefs, but convictions on which he bases the conduct of his life. His religion is not a separate compartment in his mind, divorced from his every day activity: his home is Catholic, his work or business is Catholic, even his recreation is Catholic. Wherever he goes, he is known as a Catholic, and a good one.

Such a Catholic is no stranger to the tabernacle. A man of prayer, he is not too busy to drop in for a visit to the Blessed Sacrament whenever occasion permits; he goes often to week-day Mass, and even makes a habit of doing so, if that be possible; and he is regular in his reception of the sacrament of penance. Of course he receives Holy Communion frequently, surely not more seldom than once a month, and he would not think of missing the exercises of a mission, retreat or Forty Hours' Adoration held in his parish. Lenten devotions, First Friday, and other occasional services in his parish church are made a part of his schedule. He is not hesitant about

giving his time and effort, within reason, to any organization or project beneficial to his parish or the Faith. Perhaps there is no tribute that can be paid to a man that is greater than the designation: *a devout Catholic.*

### Sunday Mass

For more than 1900 years Catholics have been gathering in groups to assist the priest while he offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We know that this is the most perfect way of adoring God, because in each Mass our Redeemer comes to the altar under the appearances of bread and wine to immolate Himself, though in a bloodless way, once more for us. We know, too, that we have need of the Mass, because our Saviour ordained that through this mystic sacrifice and the various sacraments all that He won for us on the cross is to be imparted to our souls. For both these reasons the Church commands that all Catholics assist at Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation under penalty of mortal sin.

Ordinarily a good parishioner will go to his parish church for Sunday Mass, even though he can fulfill his obligation in any church or chapel officially open to the public, and on occasion may have a reason for attending Mass elsewhere than in his parish church. By going to your parish



church for Sunday Mass as a general rule, you will be more certain of receiving continuous instruction in your faith; you will give encouragement and good example to your Catholic and non-Catholic neighbors; you will participate in the corporate worship of your parish, and probably more often receive the sacraments; and you will fulfill your obligation of financial support to your parish and keep in contact with your parish priests. In the large cities Catholics who "shop around" for the latest and shortest Mass are always poor parishioners and are even in danger of losing their faith.

### Your Children in a Catholic School

The existence of our extensive Catholic school system is a miracle of accomplishment. Truly we can say that this has been built up at a cost of "blood, sweat and tears". Yet, sad to say, there are very many parishes in which it has been impossible as yet to erect a parochial school. Sadder still it is, in regions where there are Catholic schools, to find careless Catholic parents who are content to send their children to a public school, while non-Catholic parents often beg permission to send their children to "the Sisters".

The public school, even at its best, is both a negative and positive danger to the religion and morality of your child. In those

areas where it is still impossible to maintain a parochial school, parents are bound to cooperate closely with the pastor in giving instructions to their children at home and especially in seeing to it that they attend every catechism class held for them. And in every parish where there is no Catholic school it should be the desire and goal of every Catholic family that some day a Catholic school may be erected. There are parishes in which there is no parochial school today only because of the opposition to such a project carried on by some of the members of the parish in the long ago. Such Catholics will have a stern reckoning to make before God!

The Catholic parent who wilfully neglects or refuses to send his child to a Catholic school is opening the door to great sorrow and worry in the future. How often have not most priests heard careless parents lament their folly too late, when the few years of schooling were past, the poison sown, and the damage to the souls of their children already done! So great is the possible harm to your children from a non-Catholic education that the Holy See has decreed that Catholic parents who deliberately and needlessly expose their children to a dangerous, irreligious school are to be refused the sacraments. The good Catholic also recognizes that, under ordinary circum-

stances, the only kind of high school or college for his children is one that is Catholic. If he feels he has a good reason for sending a son or daughter to a non-sectarian high school or college, he consults his pastor before doing so.

### Join Your Parish Organization

A parish is not only a center of worship; it is also an agency for saving souls. For that reason there must be active organizations in every parish that fill the needs of various groups, men and women, young and old. Some of these organizations limit their activities to the purely spiritual; others have a mixed spiritual and recreational or social program, the latter to counteract the baneful influence of dangerous associations and amusements in the world today. Thus a pastor and his assistants in a large parish have not only to provide for the spiritual needs of their people, but to supervise the activities of many organizations: to attend meetings, to sponsor athletic teams for young people, to arrange social gatherings and outings, and, if possible, to provide club rooms or recreational facilities for the different classes of people in the parish. A priest's work would be far easier if he could limit himself to the purely spiritual, or even to directing the purely spiritual organizations in his parish; but he recognizes the

importance of these other things for the welfare of his people.

The sad thing is, however, that there are so relatively few who cooperate with the parish organizations that mean so much to the work of the parish. "When I was at St. . . . . 's parish," said a zealous priest recently, "where there were 400 families, the number of men who would appear for Holy Name Communions and meetings would be about 70. Then, when I was transferred to St. . . . . 's parish, where there are 2000 families, I found the number of men taking part in Holy Name affairs to be about 70. Then after weeks of effort to build up membership and enthusiasm, at our next meeting there were just about 70 men!" So often pastors have the same complaint: it is only a faithful few who can be counted on.

It is true that active membership in parish organizations is not obligatory and that attendance at meetings or even spiritual functions may mean making sacrifices. But you can hardly be energetic in any parochial group without being a better Catholic for it, and besides—and this is often forgotten—if you do your bit in the Holy Name Society or the St. Vincent de Paul or the Altar Society, you can be sure that you are taking an effective part in the salvation

of souls. Too many people say, when the question of joining a parish organization arises, "I don't need it," or "Don't get anything out of it," or "I prefer to practice my religion by myself," forgetting that, even if these statements were true, the important point is what they can do for others by uniting with their fellow-Catholics. Without his people's cooperation a pastor can do little to extend Christ's kingdom on earth; with their cooperation—and that means large and active membership in each parish organization—he can plan improvements, win back lapsed Catholics, make converts, know his people and inspire them to greater sanctity. It is the holiness of pastor and people that measures the degree of good that a parish will perform, but it must be an active holiness, one that will make use of all natural means to accomplish its purpose. In this modern age a parish will grow stagnant unless it operates as a strongly knit organization. For this it needs parishioners firm in faith and great-hearted in generosity, who are willing to give their time and energy to promote the cause of God in every way possible. How often have not the Popes of recent times told the Catholic world that the only answer to paganism and Communism is Catholic Action, which means the organized activity of the laity under their bishops and pastors.

## Pull Together

In the early centuries the pagans used to say of the Christians: "See how they love one another." It is to be feared that modern pagans might not be able to say the same of Catholics in many Parishes today. The parish, like the good Christian home, should be a little bit of heaven here on earth, made so by charity, where there should be no refusal to serve, no seeking of self, no distinction of class, race or color, no jealous factionalism, no damaging cliques, no stubborn pride, no hatred. "Pulling together" in a parish means nothing more than putting into practice your holy religion, loving all with a love like Christ's in the wondrous Mystical Body of which He is the head and we are the members, giving all to the work because the work is Christ's.

Thus the Catholic girl who declares "I won't join the Young Ladies Sodality as long as so-and-so is president," is not being true to her Catholic ideals. The man who refuses to attend Holy Name Communions and breakfasts because there are too many present "from across the tracks," or the lady who refuses to help at the bazaar because she has not "been recognized," is hardly displaying the humility of the humble Christ. Above all, anyone who would deny to any baptized child of God

full opportunity of worship, Catholic education, and parochial membership because the latter happens to be a Mexican, Negro or Hungarian, is not doing the work of Christ but of the devil. Happy is that pastor and parish whose people truly love one another with a charity that knows only the generosity of the Saviour. They will "pull together."

### Support Your Parish

Most pastors do not find it pleasant or easy to talk about money for their parish needs. They were ordained to minister to people spiritually, but in many cases circumstances have forced them to become builders, property administrators and financial wizards. Many a good pastor has wound up with his health ruined and his nerves shattered under the constant burden of a parish debt or the taxing responsibility of maintaining a parish plant. No one but the pastor does much worrying about these problems.

The fifth precept of the Church commands all Catholics to help support their pastor, parish church and school. The law does not state how much each one should contribute. We do know that in the old Jewish Law, under the direct command of God, people were to give tithes, i. e., one tenth of their income, to the support of the temple. You never hear such a figure men-

tioned today, except among some small and very devout Protestant sects, where the Old Testament norm is still accepted. The amount of each Catholic's contribution to his church is left to his own conscience and judgment. This much is certain, that if each member of any parish did his share, according to his means, there would be little cause for financial worry on the part of the pastor.

In the matter of supporting your parish, it is of the utmost importance that you use the system that is in vogue in your parish. Don't be among the few in every parish who insist on the right to support the church in their own way—standing out against the system that has been adopted. If Sunday envelopes are the ordinary means of church support in your parish, *use the envelopes*, and see that yours is handed in every Sunday. If your parish is supported mainly by pew rent, hand in your own share promptly and do not make it necessary for the pastor to announce Sunday after Sunday that "some are in arrears." And if straightened circumstances make it impossible for you to contribute anything at certain times, do not be afraid or ashamed to tell your pastor just that; he will deeply appreciate the willingness and interest that will be evident in your coming to him. In most cases he may be able to help you, in some way, to get over the rough spots.



It is well to remember that your contributions directly provide for the maintenance and improvement of your parish and can truly be called "giving to God." The salaries of pastors and assistant priests are fixed and very small, as salaries of professional men go, and you should flatly contradict anyone who suggests that contributions to your parish go to make your pastor rich. Most parishes need the help of special drives, card parties, social affairs, etc., not only to make improvements, but just to maintain parochial property and activities. Take the parochial school for example; small as the Sisters' salaries are, they are seldom more than covered by whatever tuition is charged. Besides that, there is the cost of light, heat, janitor's service, etc. A good parishoner recognizes these needs and is always ready to do his share in any fund-raising drive. And he is never among those who complain that "the priests talk too much about money," even though the subject may have to be brought up quite often; he knows that if he is doing his share, the talk is not meant for him; if he is not doing his share, the talk is a needed reminder for him.

It is customary, and sanctioned by Canon Law, that parishioners make a donation to the parish priest at baptisms, weddings and funerals. In many dioceses the amount is

more or less fixed by custom. However, a person who is poor has a full right to the services of his priests even though he is unable to make an offering of any kind. It is to the poor that every priest, like his divine Master, is especially sent, and no priest would expect or accept an offering from these favorites of Our Lord.

### Stick to Your Parish

"Drifters" seldom do well in any walk of life; they lack a stable home and a steady job, from which they might concentrate their energies on worthwhile accomplishments. In our large cities especially, some Catholics become "spiritual drifters". They have no real affiliation with any parish; they are not in close contact with any priest; they are in great danger of slipping away from the faith.

Whatever be the necessity of merits of centralized high schools, as opposed to parochial high schools, one thing is certain: very often young people in a central high school lose all interest in and contact with their own parish activities and organizations. This is not healthy, either for the young people or for the parish, since the habits and associations of the "teens" usually carry on throughout life. Extra-parochial clubs, movements, societies, etc., are beneficial and often necessary, but if they

take you out of all parish activity, they are not good. The Catholic who lives in one parish and is a synthetic parishioner of another, is likely to run into trouble when it comes to sick calls, baptisms, marriages, funerals; besides, he is probably neglecting his obligation to support his own parish.

Stick to your parish; be interested and active in all its projects; know your priests personally; all this will help you to be a real Catholic. Ordinarily, if your pastor meets you on the street and does not recognize you as one of his parishioners, there is something radically wrong.

## Above All, Be Catholic

On the other hand, some well-meaning parishioners make the mistake of becoming so parochial-minded that they are in danger of ceasing to be Catholic. The interest and zeal of every Catholic must reach beyond his parish boundaries. There are at least five non-Catholics in this country for every Catholic, and they depend on Catholics if they are ever to know the truth. As a result of the last war, European Catholics can no longer give their customary support to the foreign missions, and the Holy Father is looking to American Catholics to assume a large part of the burden. At home and abroad, there are the needy, the afflicted,

the unenlightened, the persecuted and the sorely tempted; while one's first duty is toward his parish, still Christian charity and zeal know no parochial bounds.

A good parishioner, as a member of the Mystical Body of Christ, will be interested in everything that has any bearing on his holy religion. He will take and read his diocesan newspaper, and at least one or the other good Catholic magazine, so as to keep abreast of affairs in the Church at large. He will have a copy of the Bible and other Catholic books in his home. He will defend his faith in the presence of unbelievers, and will defend his priests in the midst of the anti-clericalism that is so rampant today. He will gladly advise and enlighten others who are groping for the truth, and will pray daily, not only for those of his own household, but also for those not blessed with the gift of faith. His life will manifest his dedication to the cause of Christ, and all who know him will say of him in their hearts: "There is a *real* Catholic."

## Do's and Don't's

If you move from one parish into another, go to the rectory and make yourself known to your new pastor as soon as possible. Likewise, if a new pastor is appointed to your parish, make yourself acquainted with him at the first opportunity.

Make it a point to be on time for Mass and other services in church, also for parish meetings. If you have an appointment with one of the priests of your parish, try to be on hand ahead of time rather than late. He probably has other appointments scheduled after yours.

Except in case of emergency, do not call your pastor by telephone during ordinary meal times. When you do call, it is good to ask: "Is Father busy now?" Try to be foresighted enough to make routine calls, e. g., concerning the hours of Masses, during the day and not late at night.

Don't be a parish gossip. It is true, every priest has his faults and perhaps idiosyncrasies, but before God he is trying to do his best for you. Much of the gossip passed around about priests is based on misinformation or ignorance of the facts.

Accept it as a *personal obligation* to take part in special events in parish life, such as

missions, retreats, novenas, Forty Hours Devotion, etc. Be a regular and frequent communicant. One can usually gauge the spirituality of a parish by the number of people who attend daily Mass and receive Holy Communion, and who are present for week-day devotions. A good Catholic knows that he cannot outdo God in generosity.

Remember: you offer the Mass with the priest. Accompany the priest in the prayers of the Holy Sacrifice with your missal or prayer book. You will thus gain more from the Mass and be less distracted.

Build up the habit of receiving Holy Communion each time you assist at Mass. This is the perfect way of sharing in the Holy Sacrifice.

Invite your non-Catholic friends to come to Mass with you, and to other church services. Give them simple explanations of what the services mean. Most of them will be grateful for this kindness.

Remember that it is easy for Catholics to scandalize non-Catholics and converts by unbecoming conduct at Mass and in church. Talking, giggling, hasty genuflecting, and rushing out of church before the end of the services, give great disedification.

Receive Holy Communion regularly with the parish organization to which you belong. Apart from that, make use of the beautiful

custom of having your entire family receive together at certain times.

Be on the alert to offer your services as a baby-sitter for young couples, so that once in a while they can attend Mass together.

Urge Catholics who are in a bad marriage to attend Mass. If they cling to the Mass, there is great hope for their ultimate conversion. Besides, even though they may be excommunicated, they are still obliged to attend Mass on Sundays and holy days.

If you know how to serve Mass, and you see a priest beginning Mass without a server, offer yourself for the task. Adult servers are becoming more and more common; men who have served in their youth should keep up their knowledge of the prayers and rubrics of the Mass, and be proud to make use of opportunities to serve.

For the baptism of your children, choose god-parents who are *good* Catholics.

If you know a fallen-away Catholic in your neighborhood, inform your pastor about them. A word or visit from him may be all that is needed to bring them back to the faith.

If a non-Catholic shows interest in the Catholic faith, offer to accompany him on a visit to a priest. Don't just send him.

Try to show your appreciation of the great gift of faith by spreading it in any way you can. Catholics are sometimes far less zealous than are the Communists or the Witnesses of Jehovah. These have nothing to offer, while you have everything.

Do not look upon your pastor as a man with just "another job". You could not pay him for what he does for you with all the money in the world. But he does need your prayers, often.

If you are respectful toward priests and nuns, you may be very sure that you have a deep respect for your faith.

When you meet priests or Sisters on the street, be the one to give the first greeting. They themselves must be prudent about whom they address.

If you have even ordinary ability as a singer, offer to help out in the choir of your parish. Men are especially needed and welcome.

Do not deprive your child of the necessary benefits of Catholic school training because you fear you cannot afford it. Have a talk with your pastor about it. Your child must not be harmed by a secular education, and it is the duty of your pastor and parish to see to it that it receives a full Catholic education.



Do not take sides against the Sister in school in questions involving the disciplining of your child. Go to the Sister and talk the matter over. In doubtful situations, you may have recourse to the pastor. But don't talk against the Sisters to your neighbors, and above all, don't encourage any opposition to the Sisters in your child.

If your parish priest preaches a sermon that is particularly helpful to you, tell him about it when an opportunity offers itself. If he does something that you feel is not beneficial to the parish, don't express your views to your neighbors, but tell the pastor, in a kindly and humble way.

Don't be "an Easter lamb" by going to confession and receiving Holy Communion only once a year. If you receive only once a year, the chances are that you will live most of each year in the state of sin, and also that you may die in that state.

Don't "shop around" for a different confessor every time you go to confession. Although every Catholic has full liberty to confess to any authorized priest, it is most beneficial to have a regular confessor. This holds especially for those who may be battling with some great temptation or problem, and for those who wish to make some progress in holiness.

Try to have a regular time for going to confession, and go often. Remember that confession is not only a means of having sins forgiven, but also of gaining strength against future temptations. If you have nothing else to tell the priest at your regular confession, just mention again some sin of your past life.

When it is necessary to call the priest for one who is sick, try to send someone to the rectory who can tell him the circumstances of the illness, what sacraments can be received, how much in danger the patient may be, etc. If you must telephone for a priest because there is no one about to act as messenger, be sure to tell him the condition of the patient and what sacraments can be received.

Keep on hand in your home at all times blessed candles, a crucifix, and holy water, for use in case of an emergency sick call. When the priest is called, prepare a table by the bedside of the patient with a white cloth, the crucifix and blessed candles, holy water, and a glass of ordinary water and a spoon.

When a member of your family dies, make the funeral arrangements with the pastor yourself. Don't leave this to the undertaker.

Have a smile and greeting for your fellow-Catholics on the steps of your parish church.

One of the growing evils of city life and large parishes is the unfriendliness and unneighborliness of Catholics, even at the door of the church.

Parish gatherings are excellent opportunities for Catholics to find suitable partners for marriage. Some people complain that they never have a chance to go out with good Catholics, and yet they never attend Catholic gatherings.

Choose only a *good* Catholic for steady company-keeping. Above all, keep away from divorced persons. Marriage is too important a step to be trifled with. The general rule is that a Catholic can be truly happy and successful in marriage only with a Catholic partner. Therefore keep company only with such a Catholic or with a person who shows a sincere interest in your faith.

Talk over a contemplated marriage with your parents, your pastor or your confessor. Their experience and wisdom will help you beforehand; it will not help you much to come crying on their shoulders after you have entered an unwise marriage.

Remember that as a Catholic you can be validly married only before a priest and two witnesses. If a Catholic attempts marriage in any other way, he is not married and is therefore entering upon a life of sin. If he attempts marriage before a

non-Catholic minister of religion, he also incurs excommunication.

Do not let yourself be talked into a fashionable "home" or "evening" wedding. The proper way for Catholics to be married is in the sanctuary, at a nuptial Mass, with both bride and groom sealing their sacramental love with the reception of Holy Communion.

Have a truly Catholic home, with crucifix and holy pictures, especially one of the Blessed Mother, in prominent places.

Establish the custom of having common, family prayers in your home. Children who are taught to pray thus in their homes, do not usually abandon the habit of prayer in their later lives.

Children learn more from their parents than from anyone else in the world. Therefore your example is supremely important. If you want your children to be good, try to be a saint yourself.

It is from devout Catholic homes that most vocations to the priesthood and the religious life proceed. Be ready to foster such vocations in your children, and grateful for the honor of giving a child to God.

Have plenty of good Catholic literature about your home, and ban any books or magazines that could be even slightly harmful to yourself or your children.

Keep a supply of holy water in your home at all times. Provide yourself with a decent container; you can always obtain holy water at your parish church.

If your home has never been blessed, ask your parish priest to bless it for you.

Wear a scapular or a scapular medal, and carry your rosary on your person. These things are tokens of your love of God; they bring you extra graces, and they remind you often to pray. Besides, they prove that you are a Catholic, and in case of an accident show that you are entitled to all the ministrations of a priest.

If you are considering a vocation to the priesthood or the religious state, place yourself under the guidance of your pastor or your confessor. They are the only persons qualified and commissioned to direct you in so important a decision.

Do not try to be "a big shot" in parish activities. Subordinate all personal ambition to the good of the cause, and be content to be just "a good worker". Whatever you do should be for God, not for yourself.

If you find yourself a perennial officer in any parish organization, be willing and even eager to step down and give others a chance. Ordinarily it is harmful to the spirit of parish organizations to have the same officials year after year.

Do not let either jealousy or laziness keep you from serving your parish when the occasion offers itself. This may mean sacrifice and overcoming your feelings at times, but it is worthwhile in behalf of the spread of the faith and the salvation of souls.

A faithful and zealous worker should not feel hurt if the pastor sometimes passes him over and assigns tasks to others in order to spread out the work.

If you are attending a non-parochial high school or college, keep up your membership in your parish and your participation in parish activities. Too often when young people leave their parish school, they lose all contact with their parish, to the great detriment of their spiritual welfare.

Remember that, as a Catholic, you are "on the spot". The world will be quick to criticize you if you do not live a truly Catholic life, even though it has little use for the Catholic Church. If you are a genuine Catholic, do not expect much praise, except from God. You may be sure, however, that by giving the example of a devout Catholic life you will be influencing a countless number of souls. On the contrary, no one does so much harm to himself, to the Church, and to the world, as a bad Catholic or a fallen away Catholic. Fear nothing so much as the loss of sanctifying grace and your faith.

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# A PAMPHLET

*For Your* NON-CATHOLIC NEIGHBORS

## How To Become A Catholic

BY

D. J. Corrigan, C. Ss. R.

A simple explanation of the steps to be taken by a Non-Catholic who wishes to enter the Catholic Church, and an answer to the objections of many against the Catholic Church.

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