

## The Fraternity of Christian Doctrine Publications Department

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### INSTRUCTIONS FOR FISHERS

"Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). The name "fishers" as used by the Fraternity of Christian Doctrine is taken from these words, which Christ addressed to Sts. Peter and Andrew. The fishers' division consists of those practical Catholics who are willing to give an hour a week to recruit children, youth and adults for the religious instruction classes and clubs which the parish Fraternity offers to all those within the parish confines who are not in the Catholic school.

One indulgence of the many granted by the Holy See to the Fraternity of Christian Doctrine applies especially to fishers: "Seven years to members if they go about the city to bring men, women and children to religious instruction" (Pius X, June 6, 1918).

#### Organization of Fishers' Division of Membership:

Usually the priest director of the parish Fraternity appoints a Chairman of Fishers. He or she consults with the director, coöperates in his plan for recruiting fishers and in the other details relating to this division of the work, and arranges for weekly meetings of the fishers. Both men and women enroll as fishers. In a number of dioceses Catholic high school students have "fished" successfully for public school students to attend religion



classes. Where students are instructed in methods and assigned specific work, they may become excellent fishers.

### Preparation of Fishers:

Fishers attend the general meetings of the parish Confraternity to obtain a clear understanding of its purpose and organization. At their own first weekly meeting, they should read and discuss the *Suggested Constitution and Plan for Organizing the Parish Unit*. At subsequent weekly meetings fishers should become better acquainted with their duties. First, they should learn from the director the amount of work they should undertake and the procedure best adapted to local needs. If they are working in a parish where religious are doing home visiting, they may get helpful supplementary instructions and suggestions from these religious.

### Duties:

Fishers are usually assigned to districts into which the parish has been divided. In a large parish, a map showing the location of every street and avenue is useful in making the assignments. Within these districts, fishers make a systematic, door-to-door visit to every family in the parish. (The tabulated result of this survey is the *Fishers' Census*.) They may secure the names of the parishioners from the priest in charge of the parish census. A special effort should be made to locate families who have recently moved into the parish and whose names do not appear on the parish or school records. In making these visits, the immediate objective is to meet and interest:

1. Catholic elementary school pupils not attending Catholic schools, in enrolling in school year religious instruction classes and religious vacation schools;
2. Catholic high school students not attending Catholic schools, in enrolling in religion classes or clubs;
3. Catholic students in secular colleges, out-of-school

youth, men, women and non-Catholic members of mixed marriages, in attending religious discussion clubs;

4. Non-Catholics: "turning to our separated brethren in the spirit of Christian charity and brotherly love" (Twentieth Annual Meeting, American Hierarchy, Nov., 1938), to make the Church known to them.

The fisher wishes every family to know the spiritual opportunities offered by their parish church: the time and place of religious services, instruction classes, discussion clubs, information or inquiry classes, and meetings of parish societies. Each person with whom contact is made should be invited to take part in the religious life of the parish. If the fisher cannot speak the language or languages of those whom he visits, he should take along someone who can interpret for him. The fisher makes a friendly, cordial visit, keeping his main purpose constantly in mind — the winning of souls for Christ. Every Christian means should be used in order to reach even the most indifferent individuals.

In many dioceses, the taking of a family religious census is the initial work of fishers. The form shown here (FAMILY CARD) suggests the specific information desired. Keep a separate card *for each family*.

#### General Suggestions for Fishers:

1. The first requisite for a fisher is a kindly, sympathetic attitude and sincere personal interest. Thus equipped, one easily wins both parents and children. The fisher is collecting information, but the real purpose of the visit is to bring people to the knowledge and practice of religion.

2. The best preparation for a visit is attendance at Holy Mass, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament and prayer for success.

3. The fisher should learn to judge human nature and to make his method of approach an adaptable one. Every

home visited is different from every other home, with different situations, different personalities, different opinions.

4. The fisher should always keep in mind the importance of his mission. The best organized and staffed school or club will fall short of its objective unless the fisher has achieved success in bringing children, youth and adults to instruction.

**FAMILY CARD**  
Confraternity of Christian Doctrine

Name .....

Address .....

Parish .....

Religion: Father .....

Mother .....

Number of Children: Preschool .....

Out of School ..... Grade School .....

Catholic ..... Public .....

High School ..... Catholic .....

Public .....

Remarks: .....

For Non-Catholics only:

Would you desire Catholic literature sent to you? ..... Would you like information about Catholic Religious Vacation Schools? .....

Religious Discussion Clubs? .....

Inquiry classes? .....

Suggestions — Details:

1. Before making a visit the fisher should try to learn the name of the householder. It may often be had from a mailbox, a neighbor or some other source. People like to be called by name.

2. The fisher should keep registration cards and literature under cover.

3. Literature should not be placed in mailboxes. There is a federal law against doing this.

4. The fisher should speak distinctly and courteously at all times. He may explain the purpose of his visit by saying: "I am from [naming the parish] Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. May I ask if any Catholics live here?" If the answer is affirmative, he should ask the general questions on the family card; if negative, he should ask the questions "For Non-Catholics only." There may be occasions when it will be well to explain that his visit is not connected with finances.

5. After filling in the card, the fisher should try to ascertain the names and the religion of neighbors not yet visited.

6. Where no one is at home, the card should be marked "Call back." On the next visit to this address, a different time of the day should be tried. Evening is often opportune.

In parishes where a family census has been made, the names and addresses of families in which there are elementary or high school pupils should be recorded on RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION REGISTRATION cards prior to:

*Fishing for Religious Vacation School and School Year Religious Instruction Classes:*

Before starting to enroll pupils for religious vacation school or instruction classes, the fisher should know something of the respective programs and the plan of presentation for the various classes. He can awaken interest by showing some of the textbooks to be used and some of the developed projects. For each child who may be enrolled, the fisher should leave a card giving the place, day and hour of the opening of the vacation school or instruction classes. The successful fisher will draw upon his knowledge of local conditions to determine the best means of attracting the indifferent child to these very important classes.

The fisher may explain the purpose of the visit by saying: "I am from ——— parish. Father ———, director of



the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, has asked me to call on you. Father wishes to invite all the children of grade or high school age in the family to attend the religion classes to be held at ——." Prospective candidates should be enrolled on the registration cards supplied by the Confraternity. A separate card should be kept for each pupil not attending the parochial school. High school pupils should be listed separately, and by their respective grades.

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION REGISTRATION	
Confraternity of Christian Doctrine	
Parish .....	Date .....
Name .....	
Age .....	School Grade .....
Address .....	
Telephone .....	Baptism? .....
Holy Communion? .....	Confirmation? .....
Attended Religious Vacation School .....	years.
Instruction classes .....	years.
Father .....	Religion .....
Mother .....	Religion .....
Church .....	
Location .....	
(On the back of this card list Catholic publications received at this address)	

In these visits specific attention should be paid to:  
*Fishing to Promote Attendance at Catholic Schools:*

If there are accommodations in the parish school for more pupils, the fisher should overlook no opportunity to give discreet encouragement to Catholic school attendance. The fisher should be able to give information about the parochial school. In this whole matter, fishers should be guided by the priest director and the Catholic school principal.

The holding of a well-organized religious vacation school (attended only by secular school pupils) in a Catholic school building invariably results in the enrollment of

some of the vacation school pupils in the Catholic school the following term.

The enrollment in religious discussion clubs of parents of pupils in secular schools often convinces the parents of their obligation to send the children to Catholic schools. And working the other way about, sometimes indifferent parents are reached and interested by their children who are enrolled in Confraternity activities.

#### The Distribution of Literature:

Fishers help in the redistribution of Catholic literature. They should first list the names and addresses of persons who will provide Catholic literature for redistribution and supply the Chairman of Helpers with a copy of this list so the helpers may be directed to collect it. Then fishers may obtain literature from the Chairman of Helpers and distribute it personally as they make their visits. To know where it will be acceptable, the fishers on earlier visits should list Catholics and non-Catholics who wish to receive it.

On all their visits they should be prepared to furnish information regarding the diocesan paper and should encourage families to subscribe to it and to develop the habit of reading it. (On these visits, too, they may list those who wish to attend inquiry classes.)

#### Importance of Follow-up Visits:

Frequently the first call does little more than establish a friendly contact. Additional visits are often required, not only to enroll children and adults in Confraternity activities but (as may be necessary) to arrange for Baptisms, for the rectification of marriages or for successful results in enrolling the indifferent, the lukewarm, the nominal Catholic, and all other persons in the parish "who have not known Christ or who have lost Him" (Pius XII, Oct. 20, 1939). But when a fisher has given his best efforts, nothing should discourage him. If he

does not accomplish his purpose after three or four visits, he should still continue to call on the individual or the family. Gaining their confidence will secure their interest. Rebuffs will have to be met on many visits, but the fisher should have recourse to prayer and return to his task again, to urge and entreat with all patience and kindness. Eventually the reward is sure to come.

If the pastor so directs, the fisher should make prudent and tactful inquiries of members of the household regarding attendance at Mass, marriages contracted outside the Church, unbaptized children, failure to receive the sacraments. Such information must be reported *to the pastor only*, and recorded separately. Follow-up visits are essential in such instances. Where material help is necessary, the names should be given to the pastor, who will notify the proper agencies.

Occasionally it is necessary to take children to the first or even to several religious instruction classes, or to take adults to discussion club meetings. When there are absentees from any of the meetings or classes, fishers should visit or telephone them before the next meeting.

Nihil obstat. Henry J. Zolzer, Censor librorum.

Imprimatur. † Thomas H. McLaughlin, Bishop of Paterson.

**This and other literature issued by the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Publications Department, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W., Washington 5, D. C., may be ordered direct from the St. Anthony Guild Press, Paterson 3, N. J.**

The cost of this leaflet is \$2.00 per 100.  
In ordering, designate form 4C.