

RETURN

- The Church never regards her children as having left the family, even if they themselves no longer regard themselves as belonging to it.
- These strategies will create the *best possible environment* to facilitate her/his return.
- Conversion is a slow process.
- So commit right now to being in this for the long haul.

Why are they leaving? Most common reasons in 2014 - Diocese of Springfield IL

- **Spiritual needs not met (68%)**
- **Lost interest (67%)**
- **Too many money requests (56%)**
- **No longer believe (48%)**
- **Dissatisfaction with atmosphere (47%)**
- **Too ritualistic (38%)**
- **Too formal (38%)**
- **Music not enjoyable (36%)**
- **The Power of the 'Pelvis Issues' revolving around:**
- **Cohabitation, contraception, divorce, homosexuality and abortion.**
- **These issues are putting a lot of pressure on young people to leave and stay away from the church.**
- **Ultimate reason; they are not rooted in a living encounter with Jesus in Church**

MORALISTIC THERAPEUTIC DEISM (warped view of God)

- **DEISM** A God exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth, BUT RARELY INVOLVES HIMSELF IN DAILY AFFAIRS.
- **THUS ONE OF OUR FIRST TASKS IS TO MAKE FAITH PERSONAL FOR HIM/HER.**
- **MORALISTIC** God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and most world religions.
 - **THIS IS WHY LEADING WITH MORAL COMMANDS CAN OFTEN HARM YOUR CHILD'S CHANCES OF RETURNING.**
 - **BECOMING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST LEADS TO BECOMING A GOOD PERSON, BUT THAT'S NOT ALL.**
 - **TRUE CORE: KNOWING, LOVING AND IMITATING 'JC'**

- **THERAPUTIC** The central goal in life is to be happy and feel good about oneself
- We want, not so much a Father in heaven as a grandfather in heaven
- This view sees God as a sort of cosmic therapist whose main goal is not to upset our feelings or bring us discomfort

- **YET POPE BENEDICT XVI AFFIRMED, “WE WERE CREATED NOT FOR AN EASY LIFE, BUT FOR GREAT THINGS, FOR GOODNESS”**
- **CHRISTIANITY OFFERS US EVERLASTING JOY**
- **THE GOAL OF LIFE IS TO FIND JOY IN KNOWING AND LOVING GOD**
- **ANOTHER TASK IS TO HELP PEOPLES ENCOUNTER JESUS, TO EVANGELIZE AND CREATE WHAT POPE FRANCIS CALLS A ‘CULTURE OF ENCOUNTER’**

Five Thresholds Needed to Cross

Initial Trust

Spiritual Curiosity

Spiritual Openness

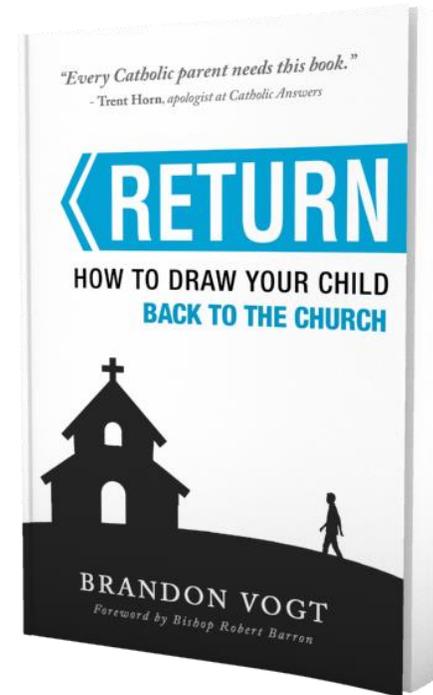
Spiritual Seeking

Inten. Discipleship

- Initial Trust: Many people never make it to this stage. If you can lead your child to at least hold a positive view of God, the Church, or Catholics, you've conquered the 1st threshold and helped prepare for the next.
- Spiritual Curiosity: Curiosity ranges from mere interest about a new possibility to a strong infatuation.
- Spiritual Openness: This is a significant step. People acknowledge they are open to the possibility of personal change. One of the most difficult for a 'postmodern nonbeliever'.
- Spiritual Seeking: Person moves from passive openness to faith to an active search, senses something drawing her/him closer to God and the Church and wants to respond. Wants to know what the Catholic Church teaches and why.
- Intentional Discipleship: Involves a conscious commitment to follow Jesus in the midst of His Church as a genuine disciple.
- **OUR GOAL IS TO SHOW OUR CHILD CHRIST, THE TREASURE OF LIFE. WE ARE THE KEY.**

Pray, Fast and Sacrifice

- **Make time to pray; traditional, attend Mass, rosary, novenas, Eucharist adoration, Chaplet of Divine Mercy.**
- **Fast for right purpose, fast humbly, fast from non-food items or things you enjoy, fast in small doses and specifically for your child.**
- **Offer up sacrifices, “Lord I offer this to you for the sake of my child” Ask Holy Spirit for guidance and carry burden.**



EQUIP YOURSELF CONVERSATION



START THE

Create Opportunities to Chat/ don't start with faith

Listen First, Then Listen some more

ABSORB THE CRITICISMS; Welcome venting, give space to voice their concerns

Powerful Questions You can ask

What do you believe about _____?

Why do you think that is true?

How did you come to believe that?

What do you mean by _____?

What would you say to someone who says _____?

What is the biggest thing keeping you away from the Church?

What's the one thing that bugs you most about the Catholic Church?

INVITE



CONNECT



Personal Objections

- **“Mass is boring and irrelevant.”** *Response: Mass is exhilarating once you learn to see what is really going on.*
- **“How could anyone remain Catholic after the sexual abuse crisis?”** *Response: The Church has always been full of sinners, but our faith is grounded in Christ, not the actions of wayward men.*
- **“I’m married to a non-Catholic. Returning to the Church would really upset my spouse.”** *Response: Your marriage is extremely important, so don’t unsettle it. You’re better off moving into the Church gradually, rather than suddenly.*
- **“The Church is too focused on rules and making people feel guilty.”** *Response: The Church doesn’t add guilt; it takes guilt away. It’s mission is forgiveness and healing.*
- **“I had a bad experience and I can’t see myself coming back.”** *Response: I’m sorry that happened. But the Catholic Church is so much bigger than just one local parish or one mean priest. Don’t let this keep you away.*

Moral Objections

- **“The Church is so judgmental. Didn’t Pope Francis say, ‘Who am I to judge?’”** *Response: We should never judge persons, but it’s okay, and sometimes necessary, to judge actions.*
- **“The Church hates gay and lesbian people.”** *Response: The Church welcomes everyone and demands that Catholics treat all people with respect, compassion and sensitivity.*
- **“I’m gay. How could I ever be Catholic?”** *Response: Same-sex attraction isn’t incompatible with Catholicism, but those who struggle with it need love, support, and guidance.*
- **“Why is the Church against me living with my boyfriend/girlfriend? We love each other, so what’s the problem?”** *Response: True love leads to lifelong commitment in marriage, not a temporary partnership through cohabitation.*
- **“I’m divorced. The Church does not want me.”** *Response: Divorced people are most certainly welcome in the Church. They are vital parts of the Body of Christ.*
- **“I’ll come back when the Church stops oppressing women.”** *Response: Even though women can’t be priests, they overwhelmingly lead the work of the Church.*

Theological Objections

- **“There is simply no evidence for God.”** *Response: There is plenty of evidence including, strongest of all, the universe itself.*
- **“Faith and science are at odds, and I choose science.”** *Response: Faith and science are mutually supportive and do not conflict. Some of the most famous science pioneers were Catholic.*
- **“I never found a personal relationship with Jesus in the Catholic Church.”** *Response: The Church exists to help people enter into a relationship with Jesus.*
- **“I just wasn’t being fed in my parish. I’ve found another church that is more vibrant and fulfilling.”** *Response: NOTHING can replace the Eucharist, which offers a direct encounter with God that no song, sermon, or experience can match.*
- **“How could God possibly let that happen?”** *Response: Although pain and suffering are difficult to understand, God doesn’t leave us alone; he suffers with us.*
- **“Catholics don’t value the Bible.”** *Response: Is a Bible-based faith that reveres Scripture.*