

Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

September 1, 2019

Spiritual Ponderings

Pinterest Church

The year before I came to St. Joseph Parish, I decided that I needed a new hobby and so I began woodworking. At the time I was content to make different size crucifixes. It was a simple project cut two pieces of wood and then join them together using a dado blade and glue. I was also blessed that I had a good friend who was good at using tools and the parish maintenance person was also willing to teach me a few things. When I first began my woodworking hobby, I never would imagine that one day I would be making tables, bookcases, etc. Eventually though I began to look for new projects to do and someone suggested that I look at Pinterest. If I had to describe Pinterest for those who do not know what it is, I would say it was something like Google for hobbies. I just typed in woodworking and all these different woodworking websites popped up. A few months ago, I decided to type in the word "Church" into my Pinterest search bar and found some interesting articles about ways people are trying to make their parish Church better. For the month of September, I am going to share some of these with you. Quotes from the Pinterest Sites will be in Bold and my commentary will be in regular font. Sadly, I did not think at the time to copy the actual website address.

The first Pinterest site I came across that caught my attention was titled: *5 Ways to Help Make your Church Visitors feel Welcome.*

I (the author) was reading in a book today and it inspired me to make this blog post for you. Every church wants (or should want) visitors! Always be wanting to grow.

Sometimes I wonder, if we truly want visitors at Church. We have all heard the jokes about "don't sit in my pew". How often though do we invite people to go to Mass with us on Sunday.

1. Smile at people.

A smile can change a person's day and make them feel connected. When you don't smile, people can assume you are too arrogant or mean, even though you may be just thinking about something else. So do your best to smile at people you meet, walk past, or look at.

For those of you who know me well, know that I have a problem smiling. I feel that my default facial expression is more of a frown than a smile. There have been many times where I have been having an awesome time and I think I am smiling the biggest smile and people will come up and ask me "What is wrong?" because my actual facial expression appears to be more frown than smile. This is something I struggle with every day because I know that I am more likely to approach someone or feel more comfortable around someone who has a smile on his or her face than a person who does not.

2. Look them in the eyes.

Looking people in the eyes is kindness. It says to them, "You count." And it reminds them that we are all part of the same human race. When you avoid looking people in the eyes, you seem cold and unattached, and that doesn't help to spread the love of Christ but hides it!

I have found also that most of the time the reason I do not look people in the eyes it because I am feeling inadequate but I have also discovered that most of the time the person mistakes my own feelings of inadequacy for me being proud and snooty. I try very hard to trust in God's teaching that everyone is His child.

3. Offer a hand.

When someone is struggling with something heavy, offer them a hand. When someone looks lost, ask them if you can help. When you offer to help people, you share kindness with them and lighten their load.

We do not always have to find someone beat up on the side of the road to take on the role of the Good Samaritan. Sometimes it is the small acts of helpfulness that help people connect with the larger Church. I can remember my first time at a Life Teen Camp outside of Missouri and how appreciative I was of a man Sean who kept making sure I felt included.

4. Say hello.

In today's busy world it's easy to become isolated from the others, oblivious to the pain and concern of the people around us. But kindness gets involved; it steps into the lives of others, even if only to say hi. It WILL make a difference. Say hi to anyone that looks you in the eyes. Even if they don't look at you, interrupt their isolation and say hello. Remember, People remember Kindness!

Be the first to offer kindness. You have permission to be kind and welcoming.

5. Go above and beyond the normality.

Here are 'rituals' visitors usually do at church. Go into the building, find a seat near the back, (they wouldn't dare sit up front!) sing, listen to the preacher, get up and go.

Take time to introduce yourself and share with the visitor why it is that you love the parish you go to. What is it about the Mass that strikes you? Let the other person know that you are excited that they are here.

Make sure your church is Alive in Christ! Be Joyful in the Service of Your Lord and King. We need each other to do this!

Remember to be happy that you are at Church because it is a chance to grow closer to God and that attending Mass is a blessing. Don't spend a lot of time complaining especially to visitors.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius

September 8, 2019

Spiritual Ponderings

Pinterest Church

For the month of September, I am sharing with you some interesting articles I found on the internet using Pinterest. Quotes from the articles will be in bold and my commentary will be normal font.

This week's Pinterest article was titled: **10 Things Church Visitors Never Want to Hear** and was written by Ben Reed.

1. Our pastor isn't normally this _____. Insert whatever you want in this blank: loud, obnoxious, offensive, long-winded. If you have to explain part of your pastor's style because you know outsiders won't like it, you've got a problem. Talk with your pastor about that.

As a newly ordained priest before I was assigned to a parish, I was told many times "do not to sack your own quarterback." This saying from football was meant to remind us young priests how much harm we could do if we spoke badly about our pastor in public and how important it was that any issue, I had with the pastor needed to be dealt with between the pastor and I. So many times, I hear people speak negatively about their parish in such a way that makes me never want to be assigned there. If we are not speaking positively about our Church how can we ever expect our pews to be full again. On a side note, I think it is important to always approach problem people (including pastors) with love and patience. I am a big fan of Dale Carnegie's book **How to Win Friends and Influence People**.

2. We're full. Sorry. Always have a backup plan. Always. If someone sees your service is full once, they'll deal with it. But they probably won't come back if they don't see a plan you have in place.

I wish we had this problem in our parishes more than twice a year. It is important to see Christmas and Easter as opportunities to get fallen away Catholics back into the life of the Church and not a time to complain about them taking up all the good parking spots.

3. What are you doing here? Never say this. Never. Your shocked, open mouth reveals your judgmental spirit...at least in the eyes of visitors. When you say this, all they can think is, "God couldn't really love someone like you."

One of my biggest pet peeves is men wearing hats inside the Church. I just want to scream at them especially if it a young boy with a ball cap on. I stop myself though and remind myself that maybe this person does not know that wearing a hat in Church is considered disrespectful. I therefore take the time to approach him and gently ask him to remove his cap. Most of the time they do so with no problem and they often seem grateful for knowing that what they were doing was wrong so now they can avoid doing it in the future.

4. You can't serve now...you've got to be a member first. Why would someone want to become a member if they've never had the chance to serve?

It is more crucial now than ever to welcome and serve people first and then hope that they will join the group. We serve them not because they are Christians but because we are.

5. We don't believe in serving coffee on Sunday mornings. If you say this, I can only assume you are leading a church in the pit of Hell.

I don't really know what to do with this one because we do not serve coffee on Sunday. We do take time once a month to have a donut Sunday and serve coffee. I am taking away from this point, the need for some sort of fellowship. We should do more together as a community than just worship God. This is why we have donut Sunday, festivals, and more.

6. What's your address? I didn't catch it on the first six forms I had you fill out. Try to streamline the "first-time visitors check-in process." Nobody likes to feel like they're visiting HR on their first church visit.

We need to better at this.

7. You want to join a small group? You'll have to wait until next fall. If you ask people to wait more than a month to join community, they'll often look elsewhere.

One of the great things about St. Joseph is that we have a lot of actives for people to get involve with. Do you know what they all are? Have you ever directed someone to a ministry that you think they would be good at? For example if someone loves sewing have you suggest they go to "Cases for Smiles" ministry which makes pillowcases for sick children.

8. Here we just care about the Truth. If you don't like it, you can leave. I get it. You love the Bible. You love preaching the Truth. But don't love that more than you love people.

It is important for people to know that you care for them for who they are and not for who you hope they will become. We all know that spending time with Jesus changes us for the better. Don't expect the end produce today. Give Jesus time to work on them.

9. Here are the 38 things we do each week as a church. Simplifying is the key, otherwise you'll give people decision paralysis.

We have a lot of things that go on in the parish. Maybe to start, just take time to do one activity to get started. Chances are you will find people at the one activity that will connect you to other groups.

10. Next time, could you make sure to wear _____. Fill that in with "something nicer," "something more relaxed" or "something that's clean," and you've offended someone unnecessarily.

Instead of suggesting how someone you just met can improve, simply thank him or her coming and being themselves. Compliment then without adding anything else to it.



**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
September 15, 2019
Spiritual Ponderings
Pinterest Church**

For the month of September, I am sharing with you some interesting articles I found on the internet using Pinterest. Quotes from the articles will be in bold and my commentary will be normal font.

Here is the summary of a presentation on "The 4 Pillars of Stewardship" by the Diocese of Wichita, KS. That I found on Pinterest.

1. Hospitality - leads to a sense of ownership in the parish. This "ownership" and personal involvement fosters a sense of belonging. When parishioners experience a warm and sincere welcome, they in turn become open to giving of themselves to others. When we are recipients of such love from others, we are attracted to follow their example.

This pillar made me think of the following quote from Mother Teresa: "Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty." So just as people will do anything not to end up physically poor, they will do even more to avoid being lonely. We should therefore devote ourselves to wiping out loneliness in our world today. I remember as a young boy searching for a Boy Scout troop to join because our parish was too small to have its own. We went to Parish A and did not feel welcome and spent the two-hour meeting feeling alone. We then went to Parish B and were shown hospitably and made to feel a part of the group. We of course chose to go to Parish B. We know people are looking for places to belong and so we should be providing them with spaces to belong.

2. Prayer - purifies and intensifies the intention of the steward. Prayer increases our yearning to receive the Eucharist. It is in the Eucharist where we recognize our total dependence upon God for everything. At the heart of the steward's prayer is "thy will be done."

The following quote from Mother Teresa comes to mind: "If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives: Be kind anyway. If you are successful you will win some false friends and true enemies: Succeed anyway. If you are honest and frank people will try to cheat you: Be honest anyway. What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight: Build anyway. If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous of you: Be happy anyway. The good you do today, will often be forgotten by tomorrow: Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough: Give your best anyway." When I pray I become more and more the person God wants me to be and we know that will include someone who is a good steward of the gifts God has given me.

3. Formation - the steward sees his gifts are meant to be shared, not buried. The formation of each individual becomes part of the formation of the parish community. Inherent in each individual is the need to give - to move from selfishness to selflessness. Stewardship formation is a life-long journey educating the mind and converting the heart. Every parish organization has a role in faith formation.

God's ways are not our ways. The following passage from St. Paul's Letter to Philippians (5-11):
Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

It takes a lot of work surprisingly not to "deem equality with God."

4. Service - the parish stewardship family stands ready and eager to help others when they suffer and celebrate special events. If a parishioner finds they can be served and ministered to, they have little need to search for fulfillment elsewhere. Service is the concrete way to put the other three pillars of hospitality, prayer, and formation into practice.

Actually, doing service is where we can prove to others that we have the heart of a servant and that we are willing to follow Jesus foot washing example.



Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
September 22, 2019
Spiritual Ponderings
Pinterest Church

For the month of September, I am sharing with you some interesting articles I found on the internet using Pinterest. Quotes from the articles will be in bold and my commentary will be normal font.

These quotes come from an article titled: "10 Things Every First Time Church Greeter Should Know" that I found using Pinterest. Here are Numbers 1-5

If you are a first time church greeter, here are ten things you need to know about the work of the greeter in the church.

While most parishes has some sort of Greeters or Ushers Ministries but we should all considers ourselves a part of the Church "Greeting Team."

1. Honor your members and guests. - Each church member and guest who arrives at your building is a human being. Some prefer anonymity. Others hope to see a friendly face in a strange place. The things you do and say will show either honor or disrespect. Think of ways to honor your guests in your greeting.

When at Mass make sure you don't keep hanging out with the same people over and over again. If you do have a group of good friends, make an effort to include those who seem to be alone.

2. Don't get stuck saying "hello." - There are plenty of ways to greet a person than simply give a "hello." You can say all sorts of things: Welcome to our church. We are glad you are here. Can we help you with showing you where to take your kids.

I try to go beyond just saying "hi" by talking about people by complimenting their clothes for example I might say: "Nice Shirt" or "I see you go to such and such university or high school." Even if they don't go to that school, the conversation has begun and the person feels noticed.

3. Greet people after the service. -Make a point to spend time greeting people after the service. If you are in a smaller church under 250 people, you might easily know who is a first-time visitor. In larger churches, make yourself available at the visitor center, or look for people who seem a little out of place or looking for signage, or appearing a little uncomfortable. Don't simply give up your role after the service gets started.

Some of my favorite parishioners have been those I only see once a week but who take time to say "hi" to me when I am greeting people at the end of Mass. It saddens me to see so many people leave Mass early because I know they are people who I am not going to be able to say "hi" to when I reached back.

4. Offer to pray with visitors if appropriate. - If you are making small talk with a visitor after the service is over, listen for a need that could be prayed for. Don't go fishing for something just to create a prayer opportunity, but listen. Offer to pray with your guest before leaving if appropriate. Then pray something short and simple before your leave their presence. Allow this to be a potential aspect of care, and an opportunity for God to work.

This may feel weird at first, but I guarantee it takes a person experience of Church to the next level.

5. Help visitors know where to go. - If you are able to recognize a church visitor when they are arriving at the church, offer to help them find the sanctuary. If they have not been to your building before, they may need some guidance. Some church facilities are laid out easily enough to find the sanctuary.

Sometimes, I think going to Church for the first time is like going to a movie sequel without seeing the original movie. It can be helpful therefore if we help people understand what is going on. When people are trying to figure out where things are, it is important to help them because it shows them that we are helping community.



**Fr. Thomas M. Pastorius
September 29, 2019
Spiritual Ponderings
Pinterest Church**

For the month of September, I am sharing with you some interesting articles I found on the internet using Pinterest. Quotes from the articles will be in bold and my commentary will be normal font.

These quotes come from an article titled: "10 Things Every First Time Church Greeter Should Know" that I found using Pinterest. Here are Numbers 6-10.

6. Smile - It shouldn't need to be said, but it does. Give a genuine welcome with a genuine smile. I've entered too many churches where the greeters were just too "ho-hum" to really display any care. A smile goes a long way towards a warm welcome.

Two great quotes from Mother Teresa: "Every time you smile at someone, it is an action of love, a gift to that person, a beautiful thing," and "Peace begins with a smile."

7. Provide the Handouts or Bulletins - If your church provides handouts or bulletins, your job is to share those with a smile (see #6). Make eye contact with people. This is not the time or place to talk about Sunday's game, or the college game, or anything else. Rather, notice people.

Sundays can be a great day to catch up with people you have not seen in a week, we must make sure in doing so that we are still providing a welcoming spirit to guests. Would you want to go to a restaurant where the staff ignored you while they talked about their lives? To a visitor each parishioner is an employee of the Church when it comes to greeting.

8. Pray -As a church greeter, you are part of the welcome experience of your church. A good greeting process will help prepare the way for whatever work the Lord wants to do in that visitors' life. Pray for the visitors that God will bring to your church. Pray for your work, that you might be a blessing, rather than a hindrance, to each visitor and member who comes.

These two quotes from Mother Teresa: "The highest form of worship is to find the least among you and treat them like Jesus." And "My secret is very simple: I pray. Through prayer I become one in love with Christ. I realize that praying to him is loving him."

9. Extra Care for the Elderly - I've gotten great joy in greeting those members and guests of our church who are far older than I am. Often times, if they are long term members, they have spent a lot of time investing, serving, or giving in your church. Always express honor to them. If assistance in the form of a wheelchair is needed, you should know where to get one. If they need hearing devices, you should know where those things are.

How treat others especially the most vulnerable shows our faith in actions.

10. Extra Care for Children - Don't simply greet the adults. Greet the children as well. They might be more nervous than their parents who are attending a new place. They might be a little fearful about all the new people they might have to meet. Some may be more outgoing than others. But they are your guests. Honor the children with a personal greeting, eye contact, and handshake.

I think my comments for number 9 summarize my thoughts for number 10.

I want to conclude my reflections on this Pinterest article with the following quote from Pope Francis:

"The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door... Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community.... This is especially true of the sacrament which is itself "the door": baptism...the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems."

