

**Best Practices for Phone calls**

Here are some useful tips for engaging people over the phone:

 **Prepare with a Prayer**

Ask Jesus to give you his heart for this person before you pick up the phone, and invite the Holy Spirit into the conversation. God knows exactly what this person needs to hear and will speak through you.

 **Keep Voicemails Short**

Many people subconsciously associate the length of the voicemail with the amount of effort necessary to call back. Keep your first voicemail short and sweet. You can give more detail in the next voicemail if they miss your call a second time.

 **Don’t Monologue**

Give the other person a chance to speak within the first 15 seconds. Asking something simple like “How have you been?” before launching into the reason for your call is a great way to get the other person more invested in the conversation.

 **Project Familiarity**

Even if you don’t personally know the recipient of your call, they used to be a valued member of your parish family. On behalf of your parish, speak with the warmth that comes with that connection.

 **Use Your History**

If you DID personally interact with the parishioner when they were active at the parish, work as many details as you can into the conversation.

 **Assume the Best**

The goal of every call is to make the person on the other end feel seen, heard, valued, and desired as a member of your community. They should hear genuine concern in your voice, never accusation or judgment.

**Ask Open Questions**

If you leave them room to answer with a yes or no, chances are they will choose to do so. These one-word responses won’t allow you to truly connect with the person on the other end of the call, and you won’t gain any insight into why they stopped coming to Mass or where they could use support from the parish community. Open ended questions allow you to encounter more of their heart and mind in their answers.

 **Respond Appropriately**

Their responses might pull you “off script”—and that’s ok! The most important thing is that you connect with them, wherever they’re at.

 **Take Notes**

When making a lot of calls, it can be easy to forget the details of each conversation. Have a pen and paper handy so you can remember what they shared with you. That way you can reference what you discussed next time you speak (e.g., “How’s your nephew feeling after his surgery?”).

 **Don’t Hang Up Without a Plan**

If they have questions about Catholicism, have you set up a time for them to come speak with the pastor or deacon? If they’re homebound, are you going to send an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion to their home with the Body of Christ? Or are they going to say hello to you after Mass this Sunday to continue your conversation? Do your best to gently get their verbal agreement to a specific action and timeline. The more specific the commitment, the more likely people are to follow through. Reiterate any agreements at the end of the conversation so they’re fresh in both your minds, and write them down.

 **Follow Up**

Text or email after your call to thank them for their time and/or openness. Remind them of any commitments they made in a simple statement. (e.g., “I’ll see you at 11am Mass on Sunday!”) This makes it even more likely they will follow through.