

LITURGY MATTERS

Sunday Visitors

Informal conversation reveals a rather predictable anecdote: when people visit Protestant churches, they report always getting “special treatment.” They were recognized as visitors, greeted personally by those around them, asked to sign a visitors’ book and often received a follow-up letter from the pastor.

We can be sure that this is not true of every Protestant congregation, but this is reported frequently enough to give us pause: can it be that there is a whole etiquette, a whole method of greeting visitors to our parishes that we

Catholics simply have not caught on to? This feeling that we are missing out on something basic, along with the sense that our parishes generally put out a cold shoulder, combines to raise some fundamental questions for every Catholic congregation.

Although we never really know how many “visitors” are in our pews, we all know that just about everyone in the RCIA catechumenal program was once just such a visitor, coming as a stranger to our church. Even though we advertise far and wide for “inactive Catholics,” we know that most people who show up at ReMembering Church have often “sneaked a peek” at our parish on Sunday mornings.

There obviously are extremes in welcoming visitors: people do not want to be embarrassed or feel prevailed upon. But to tell the truth, most Catholic parishes are far from getting near to this danger. Certainly, it is the mission of our greeters to make each person welcomed when they enter our doors.

. . . Let's walk together as disciples in the footsteps of the Lord.

