



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

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A Best Practice: Hospitality Team Formation

Several of our past issues of GEMS reflected on the importance of hospitality in the parish and in our adult faith formation endeavors.

This issue shares the formation/training which one parish offered for their hospitality team. Brendan Steven, a parishioner of this parish in the archdiocese of Toronto, described the experience.

Brendan, an active lay leader in Toronto's Roman Catholic community, is a co-founder and coordinator of the Lumen Gentium Forum, a learning community building up Catholic leaders for the Church and society by offering young Catholic professionals an intensive formation in Catholic social teaching and virtuous leadership principles. (<https://lumenforum.ca/>)

The parish

The parish is in the downtown of Canada's major business city, Toronto, with a very diverse population. Toronto is a city of immigrants; many are also very busy senior professionals.

How it Began

The parish recently began a new hospitality team at the parish, calling it the Emmaus Team, to express the idea that strangers who come to the parish offer the parish a fresh encounter with Christ, who meets us on the road, and who help our hearts burn with a new desire to know Jesus and to follow him.

In turn, the parish can strive to play that role for those who enter the parish. They wanted to equip a hospitality team to proactively connect and meet one on one with new parishioners, training them to ask good questions and inviting deep relationships with new people.

The Workshop

The workshop for the Emmaus Team began with dinner (an act of hospitality in itself!).

During dinner, people engaged in conversations over questions pulled from a bucket. Two of the sharing questions were:

- What keeps you at our parish?
- When have you felt most alive in our parish?

Brendan reflects, "Many of these team members who were strangers immediately shared warmth and openness with one another."

Some Other Possible Questions

What is the single most important thing our parish has contributed to your life?

What can you envision our parish doing in the next two to three years to help you to live your faith in your everyday life, to grow in a deeper relationship with Christ?

In your opinion, what are the two or three best resources and/or greatest examples of vibrancy in our parish?

If you could imagine or transform our parish in any way you wished, what one to three things would you do to enhance its life and vitality?

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The leaders then explained the model of the ministry, demonstrating and then practicing one-to-one relational conversations, a style of conversation where hospitality team members would – in the future - spend most of their time asking questions of new parishioners.

Some Possible Questions

What brought you to our parish?
Where are you from originally?
Can you share a little about your family?

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What has been meaningful in your faith journey so far?
Are there particular devotions, saints, or traditions that are special to you?
What are you hoping to find or experience in parish life here?

How can our parish best support you and your family at this time?
Are there particular needs or concerns we can pray for with you?
What helps you feel most at home in a parish community?

What kinds of parish activities or ministries interest you most?

Are there children or teens in your family who might want to get involved in parish programs?

Would you like to be connected with other parishioners who share your interests or life stages?

Brendan reflects: “Even in practicing it with each other, we felt a deepening of our connection to each other, and we left the workshop feeling more known and loved within the group. It was a giant living-out of the very principles we were asking these parishioners to live out with the new parishioners we connect them to! It was a nourishing faith experience personally as well.”

“Do not neglect hospitality,
for through it
some have unknowingly entertained angels.”

~ Hebrews 13:2

Determining the Success of the Workshop

In the words of Brendan: “We wanted people to leave the room feeling very inspired to partake in this ministry: to take personal responsibility for the experience of hospitality in our parish and to feel energized by the idea of meeting new people and welcoming them to the community.”



Janet Schaeffler, OP
www.janetschaeffler.com
jschaeffler@adriandominicans.org

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