

## CREATING EXCITING AND INVITING MINISTRY FAIRS

Ministry fairs are public events that offer the parish an opportunity to celebrate its work as the people of God with the goal of building a culture of involvement.

Ministry fairs are marked by a welcoming spirit, enthusiasm, no-risk participation, ease of navigation, celebration of differences, and clarity of information. Include music, children's activities, and have a number of people around to welcome and guide visitors.

If your parish chooses to do a ministry fair every year, it is important to try new approaches and designs to avoid repeating the same thing year after year.

Some parishes have an annual ministry fair as part of an overall effort to recruit more volunteers. Typically, the parish sets aside a weekend when they set up booths and committees in the parish gathering space. Volunteers are available before and after all masses to answer questions and hand out materials about the opportunities for service.

Other parishes use the ministry fair as a time to provide information only. Commitment cards and the formal "sign up" happens another weekend or through the mail.

Another variation that is relatively new is borrowed from the idea of continuing education. In this model rather than just passing out information about the various ministries, everyone who attends leaves with knowledge that they can use. In this style of "fair", each exhibiting group or committee is challenged to come up with activities that they can actually teach those attending the "fair". In this way, prospective volunteers are given an opportunity to actually get involved with the ministry for a few minutes.

What might these hands-on teaching experiences look like? The publicity committee might demonstrate how to design a simple layout for a newsletter, the human concerns committee might teach a craft that they use as a fundraiser, or the peace and justice committee might offer a video tour of a sister parish they sponsor.

While this type of "fair" might require a little more effort, it will certainly engage the interest of those attending and be a lot more fun. If doing this non-traditional approach seems to be too large of a project, consider highlighting a different ministry each month.