

Christ Renews His Parish – A Parochial Spiritual Renewal Process

An easy to implement retreat program has brought personal and parish-wide renewal at over 800 parishes throughout the United States and Italy.

The need it meets

"Christ Renews His Parish" invigorates the parish by helping adult men and women become vibrant, holy, and active apostles who take initiative in their personal spiritual lives and in parish life.

Where it came from

Christ Renews His Parish began as a renewal weekend at Holy Family parish in Parma, Ohio in 1969. The program has now been used in 826 parishes in the United States and Italy, and more than 500,000 people have participated in it.

It originated out of a concern that although parishioners would often have a powerful experience of Christ and the Church in non-parish activities (retreats, pilgrimages...), their experience of parish life was less dynamic and Christ-centered.

How it works

- The Christ Renew's organizing team at a parish (recommended size: 18) hosts a 30-hour "renewal weekend" (from Saturday morning to Sunday afternoon). It is recommended that the renewal weekends (and the organizing teams) be gender-specific, but ages can vary considerably to involve the whole parish. Everything occurs under the supervision of the pastor.
- Twelve witness talks are the heart of the retreat. They focus on key aspects of Christian discipleship, explained through personal testimony. The members of the Christ Renews organizing team give the talks themselves.
- Attendees participate in Mass both days, confession on Saturday night (this is an essential ingredient), and overnight adoration. Community-building activities based on each witness talk foster participation and assimilation.

- At the end of the retreat, each participant makes a personal commitment to Christ that they share with the pastor as they receive Communion at the final Mass. Over the new few weeks, the participants in the renewal weekend are invited to form part of the next Christ Renews organizing team in order to implement the next "renewal weekend" in the parish 6 months later.
- In preparation for the next renewal weekend, the new team meets weekly to hear each other's personal testimonies and to receive additional formation either from the previous team or through formation activities detailed in the Christ Renews manual.

The results

Parishes have seen parishioners return to the sacraments after being away - begin practicing daily private and family prayer - seek professional marital help - increase their attendance at daily Mass

Key elements

The personal commitments at the end of the renewal weekend and then the 6-month process of working as a team to put on the next retreat are the key elements. This is what precipitates the deep conversion of the participants, helped by the focus on Scripture and the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.

Also, the Christ Renews manual is practical, detailed, and complete. With it, and with the support and guidance of the pastor, any parish could easily implement the entire Christ Renews process from start to finish.

How to implement it

The way to begin the Christ Renews process is to contact a nearby parish that is already using the program and invite their team members to hold a renewal weekend at your parish or you may contact Evelyn Burton at the diocesan office at eburton@dioceseoflafayette.org.

The National Office for *Christ Renews His Parish* is:

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The 225-page manual "*Christ Renews His Parish: A Parochial Spiritual Renewal Process*" by Robert P. Edwards and John O. Jacoby, explains how to organize the retreat. It can be ordered for a cost of \$45 by emailing the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland's Office of Evangelization at mmach@dioceseofcleveland.org, mhamilton@dioceseofcleveland.org, or calling the office at 216-696-6525 Ext. 4530, or by contacting the Christ Renews national office above.