

Suggestions/Ideas for Grade Schools and Youth Groups to Promote Solidarity & Possibly Parish Twinning

From Teresa Phillips and Dr. Mike Gable
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(see our website at www.catholiccincinnati.org/mission
for more ideas and materials to develop youth immersion trips)



(Not in any special order)

1. To let people of other cultures speak for themselves, invite local African, Asian, Hispanic or other youth, adults, sisters and priests, from a variety of nations to speak at your school about:
 - a. Their favorite Catholic saints, how they understand prayer, song, God, Jesus, and Mary from their perspective.
 - b. What spiritual and cultural gifts does their culture bring to the Catholic Church and the world community?
 - c. Form friendships with other students of other schools and cultures.
2. Invite local choirs from other cultures (African, Hispanic, Asian, Native American) to help celebrate a school and/or parish Mass.
3. Invite more peoples of other cultures to join your school, youth group, parish, faculty, social justice commission, parish council, etc.
4. Ask the your (arch)diocesan Office to provide educational material on other cultures from Catholic Relief Services.
5. Ask your (arch)diocesan Refugee Resettlement office to bring refugees or migrants to tell their stories.
6. Plan a trip to another country or another part of the U.S. with older high school students, school teachers, principal, members of the parish social justice commission, pastor, parish council members. Have fund raisers to help with travel costs. Have a send-off blessing and then debriefing upon return.
7. Have students use the web to find information on another culture's music, economics, health, social issues, and religious beliefs.
8. Eventually, develop e-mail, letter writing with twinning partners/students.
9. Invite members of the (arch)diocesan Social Action/Justice office and/or local congressional leaders or their aides to speak on issues pertinent to the area of the world on which you are focusing.

So Why Parish Twinning?

1. It is a response to Jesus' call to social justice, reconciliation and unity of all peoples

2. It promotes both local and global solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ as well as an appreciation for the universality of the Catholic Church, a church with no borders. It's an invitation to go beyond models of charity and compassion.

3. It encourages the Second Vatican Council's call for the empowerment of the laity in our church and mission.

4. Just as healthy friendships or marriages can bring out the best of both partners, twinning enriches our personal and parish faith journeys through engagement with Catholics of other spiritualities in other cultures. It encourages us to appreciate and share all talents, gifts and resources within the Body of Christ.

5. It can help eliminate the grave sins of Racism, Sexism, Classicism, Paternalism, Materialism, Militarism, and Xenophobia; hopefully, the "isms" can be replaced with the fruits of the Holy Spirit such as increased justice, understanding, peace, joy, etc.



6. It can be a joy filled experience! A taste of the heavenly banquet when all are gathered in perfect love with Trinity.

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To sum up parish twinning, one of my Honduran twinning friends Lourdes Chavarria put it this way when she asked about the benefits of parish twinning. She said:

"By having a twinning partners in Cincinnati, we realized we are not crazy or alone in living according to our faith in Christ. For the parish community in general, it is a good experience to see beyond our needs and pray for one other, no matter if they are in another country. They are our brothers and sisters."

So why should other churches, dioceses or seminaries consider these relationships? Lulu stated, "I think it is simply math, 1+1=2. If we add the faith of one parish with another, it simply grows! It's like having relatives or friends. It's always nice to know that we have people we can count on who are always aware of our needs and who want to share our joys... and that goes both ways."

And what was a key moment of your visit? "When we shared Sunday Mass, we found that their experience of faith was amazing and it made me feel very proud of my big Catholic family. We really are the Body of Christ with many, many member."

WE all get by with a little help from our friends...

From Dr. Mike Gable, Mission Office, Archdiocese of Cincinnati www.catholiccincinnati.org/mission

So...What is a Twinning Relationship?

(For more details, see www.catholiccincinnati.org/mission)

It is an experiential learning process for the entire community to develop a Christ centered mission oriented parish. It is a coming together of a parish in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati with people in a home or foreign mission area of the world, in an active, mutual and on-going faith commitment of solidarity.



What does such a relationship accomplish for a parish? It binds people together spiritually, culturally, and in a mutual sharing of resources.

What does such a relationship involve for a parish? It involves crossing over into other cultural, economic, political, linguistic, & religious environments.

Twinning IS About....

- building a mutual relationship of solidarity
- promoting social justice and peace
- sharing faith journeys in Our Lord
 - learning worship styles
- developing joyful friendships in another culture

Twinning is NOT About....

- changing others
- imposing our way of life
- building infrastructure
- only fund raising

So what's needed for a good Twinning Relationship?

****1. Prayer:** a foundation principle that calls us to build a Twinning Relationship *based on our Faith in God together.* This may involve daily prayer, bible study, prayer groups, prayer networks, retreats, days of reflection with twinning partners, and carefully planned liturgies, prayers of the faithful, etc. that build toward this relationship.

2. Communication: a crucial element between the Twinning partners that entails mutual listening, sharing, understanding, patience, and the learning of new means to express concerns, joys, faith and social life. Communication can make use of letters, videos, audio tapes, pictures, phone calls, e-mails, etc.

3. Cultural Sensitivity: an attitude and desire to learn from one another's faith, culture and daily experiences. Discernment of one another's gifts and values becomes a responsibility of each party in the relationship. An attitude of mutual equality is essential to the relationship (moving away from paternalism and dependency).

4. Involvement for Justice: as lives are shared and injustices surface, promotion of human dignity and equal rights becomes an essential element of the relationship. One is called to not only contribute resources (Charity model) but to work on issues that may involve more community and political activity (Solidarity model).

***5. Broad based involvement:** including the parish at large as through school participation, parish social action group, etc. and all ages. *Ongoing mutual visits to each others' communities are strongly encouraged.*

****6. Goal Formation:**

- a) identification of needs in the context of spreading the gospel message and being in solidarity (compassion & commitment) with these needs
- b) planning strategies in how goals are to be met
- c) evaluation of desired outcomes

****7. Assumption and Responsibility of Roles:** strong leadership on the part of both parties to plan, activate, and promote creative ways to develop and sustain the relationship.

8. Parish Celebrations of the twinning relationship such as celebration of particular feast days, liturgically as during Lent, Easter or own created times.



THE BASICS OF PARISH TWINNING RELATIONSHIPS

Mission Office, Archdiocese of Cincinnati
(513) 421-3131 mission@catholiccincinnati.org

VISIT OUR TWINNING WEBSITE
www.catholiccincinnati.org/mission
scroll down to "Twinning information"

BASIC DEFINITIONS

What is a twinning relationship in a parish? It is an experiential learning process for the entire community to develop a Christ centered mission and globally oriented parish. It is a coming together of a parish in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati with people in a domestic or foreign mission area of the world, in an active, mutual and on-going *faith* commitment.

What does such a relationship accomplish for a parish? It binds people together spiritually, culturally, and in a mutual sharing of resources.

What does such a relationship involve for a parish? It involves crossing over into other cultural, economic, political, and religious environments.

BASIC FOUNDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A TWINNING RELATIONSHIP

Prayer: A strong *faith* in the concept of the Mystical Body of Christ and the universal church, which recognizes *all persons* as sisters and brothers. All have gifts to share!

Communication: Listening and sharing information which reveals the joys, sorrows, faith life, cultural habits, social concerns and daily experiences of the bridging communities. Building personal friendships is key!

Cultural sensitivity: An attitude of *solidarity* and desire to learn from one another's faith, culture and daily experiences. How can we appreciate each others' spiritual gifts?

Assumption of roles: Strong leadership on the part of both parties to plan, activate and promote creative ways to develop and sustain the relationship. Empower lay leadership!

Social Justice: As lives are shared and injustices surface, promotion of human dignity and equality or rights becomes an essential element of the relationship

NOTE: Be sure to work in harmony with your twinning partner's bishop and their diocesan plans. Also, twinning may not replace our mandated mission collections for the October Papal Mission Sunday.

RECOMMENDED ELEMENTS AND STEPS

TO DEVELOP THE TWINNING RELATIONSHIP

1. Visit our twinning website at: www.catholiccincinnati.org/mission and scroll down to "Twinning Information" to learn more about the basics. Post this website in your bulletin to educate parish members.

2. Contact the Mission Office for further information and to set up an informational meeting with some parish leadership members and interested parishioners to discuss key issues and questions. (The Mission Office can offer advice with the selection process of twinning partners.)

3. Organize a meeting with the pastor, parish council and leadership groups within the parish to discuss the feasibility and details of the twinning relationship.

4. Develop an interested and committed group who are willing to take on the leadership role as liaison between the pastor, parish organizations, parishioners, and partners in mission.



5. Study the social justice documents of the church and other pertinent documents relating to issues of the country and area chosen for twinning, i.e. Salt & Light, JustFaith (through Social Action Office). Link up and build solidarity with local Catholics from the nation or area with which you twin.

6. EXPECTATIONS need to be clarified between potential twinning partners. What do both parties want or not want in their covenant? With prayer, study and dialogue, eventually leaders of both parties need to plan goals, timelines, roles and responsibility factors for this relationship. Involve the widest variety of parish participation. Build in evaluation and allow for changes in the relationship. Publicize the plan widely in both parishes. *(See our twinning website for suggestions.)*

7. VISIT! Carefully select and prepare a diverse group of parishioners to visit your twinning partners. To orient them about the country, culture, religion, and other necessary factors, invite guest speakers such as returned missionaries, Peace Corps workers, local Catholics from your twinning area. Contact Mission Office for resources. Plan a parish departure ceremony.

8. While visiting your twinning partners, develop a daily debriefing process and spiritual reflection for the visiting.

9. Upon return home, have a reorientation process for the visiting team and process to disseminate the mission experience within the parish. See our twinning website for suggestions and contact Mission Office for resources

10. Join our Twinning Network! Link up with and support your own and other parishes in our archdiocese to nourish and *enliven* your partnership.