
THE FRAMEWORK

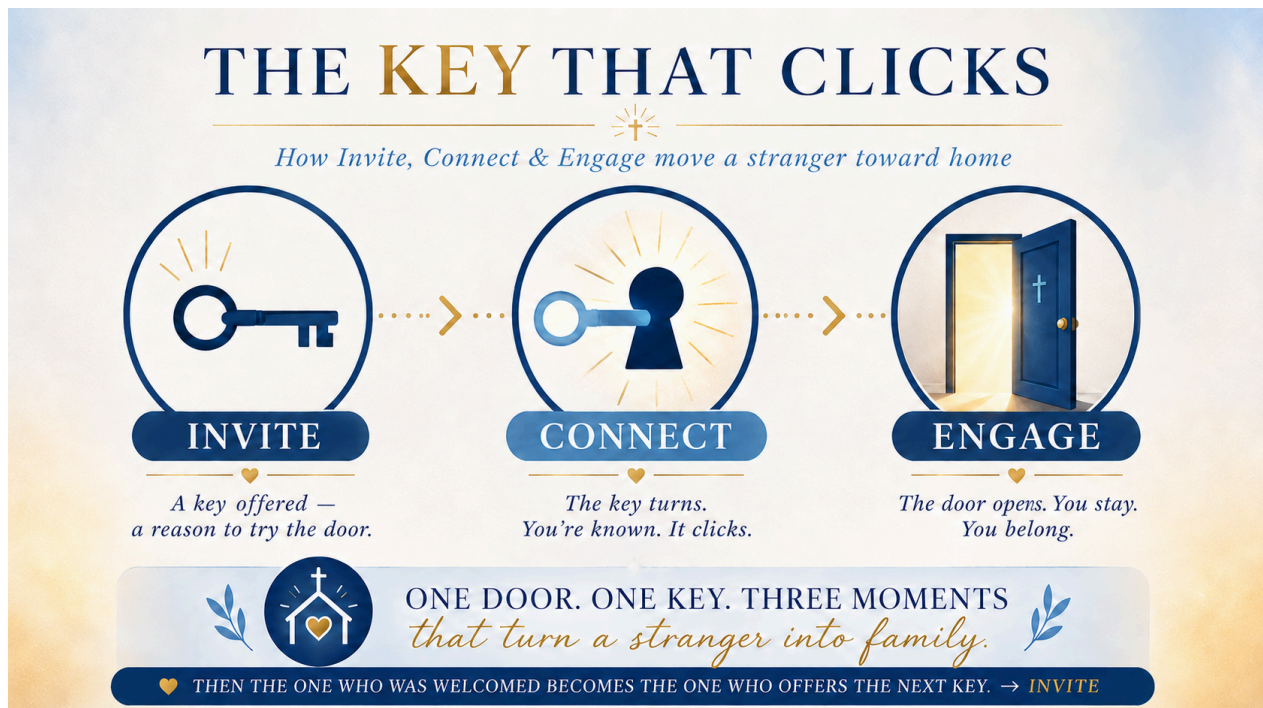
Invite, Connect, Engage is how a person moves from being a stranger to your parish, to belonging within it, to growing in faith, to eventually inviting someone else through the same door. It's the same lens for every parish we work with, the three tenets never change, even though how you apply them to your parish will.

A Note Before You Begin

Think of this as an introduction, not a test. Some of what follows may sound more like a business seminar than a parish. You don't need to memorize any of it now. As we get into what's happening in your parish, these ideas will come together with our help.

The Picture to Remember: The Key That Clicks

Every person outside your parish is standing in front of a door they believe is locked. Some don't think there's a key meant for them. Some have been handed a key but have never felt it turn. Some have already stepped through the doorway but have never been asked to stay. Invite, Connect, and Engage are simply the three moments that change that.



"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me." — Revelation 3:20



Christ does not force the door open. He knocks, and waits for it to be opened from the inside, the same posture a parish is called to take with everyone still standing outside. Keep this picture in mind: nearly everything that follows is just working out one of these three moments: the key, the click, or the open door.

Marketing does not replace evangelization here, it never could. What follows are practical habits of clear, honest, and consistent communication that keep ordinary friction from getting in the way of an encounter only grace can bring about.





1. INVITE

Give people a reason to come.

“Come and see.” — John 1:46

What Invite Means

Before anyone can be connected to your parish, they first must cross its threshold, literally or in their imagination. And thresholds are not neutral. Notice your own life: people will walk through a friend’s front door on a Tuesday night far more readily than they will walk through a church’s front door on a Sunday morning, even though the second threshold leads somewhere the first cannot. That is not a failure of faith on their part. It is simply how hospitality works, and it is a great deal wiser to build on it than to fight it.

This is, in fact, the exact shape of the first invitation in John’s Gospel. The two disciples do not ask Jesus for a program or a doctrine, they ask, “Rabbi, where are you staying?” And he does not hand them a pamphlet. He brings them home. “Come, and you will see.” The oldest Christian invitation on record is a domestic one: come and see for yourself.

Some people arrive at your parish because life has already brought them: a wedding, a child’s Baptism, a death, a return after years away, a move into the neighborhood, a hunger they can’t quite name but are following anyway. For them the door is already ajar; your task is simply not to let it close. For everyone else, the far larger number who are not yet looking, or who assume the door isn’t open to someone like them, the most effective invitation rarely sounds like an announcement. It sounds like a friend saying, “come with me,” carrying the same warmth and specificity as being invited to someone’s table. Philip offers Nathanael no argument at all, only the words Jesus had first spoken to him. The invitation does the work that persuasion cannot.

Why Invite Matters

A parish cannot form a relationship with someone it never meets. Long before any deeper transformation can begin, a person must know your parish exists, believe it might have something for them, and feel that walking through the doors would be safe rather than



exposing. Invitation is the work of clearing away whatever unnecessary friction stands between a person and that first step, nothing more mystical than that, and nothing less important.

In Practice

In practice, this starts with an honest look at what your parish is known for in the surrounding community, not what you hope it's known for, and whether that reputation draws a stranger closer or quietly warns them off.

It means being able to name, specifically, who isn't yet walking through your doors, rather than speaking to "everyone," which in practice reaches almost no one in particular. And it means explaining why something might matter to the actual life someone is living right now, not just announcing what's on the calendar.

It means letting the people already inside your parish tell their own stories of having found something real here, instead of the parish speaking only about itself. It means you, as pastor, are willing to be known, your own story and your own faith, not merely your office. And it means making it easy for the people already inside to bring someone else through the door with them.

None of this needs to be loud, but it does need to be warm. One of the most overlooked tools of invitation is the simplest: joy, and an honest smile. People sense whether a parish is glad to see them before a single word is spoken, and a joyful welcome invites in a way no announcement ever will.

Applying the Principle

The Church's message doesn't change depending on the audience. The way we invite someone to encounter it can. Instead of only announcing "Adoration Thursdays, 7:00–8:00 PM," a parish might say, "Haven't had a quiet hour all week? Come spend one with Christ." The Eucharist hasn't changed. The parish has learned to communicate why the encounter might matter to the person being invited. That is what it means to hand someone a key, not a louder announcement, but a reason that fits their life.

The Principles at Work

Everything above shows what Invite looks like when it's lived out in a parish. Behind each of those examples is an underlying idea, taken from real marketing and communication practice, that explains why it works. We call these ideas principles, and teaching you to recognize and use them in your own parish is part of the work we'll do together. Here are some of the ones behind Invite:

Positioning — what your parish is actually known for in the surrounding community, and whether that reputation draws people closer or quietly warns them off.



Segmentation — naming specifically who isn't yet walking through your doors, instead of speaking to “everyone,” which in practice reaches no one in particular.

Features vs. Benefits — the difference between announcing what you offer and explaining why it might matter to the life someone is actually living.

Messaging Matrix — matching your reason for reaching out to the specific person you're trying to reach, rather than writing one message for the whole parish at once.

Social Proof — letting people already inside your parish tell their own stories, rather than the parish speaking only about itself —sometimes parishioners are more persuasive.

Witness (Founder Story) — you, as pastor, being willing to be known through your own story and faith, not just your office.

Rule of Seven — the recognition that a single announcement rarely does what repetition does; a message needs to be said clearly, more than once (up to seven times).





2. CONNECT

Give people a reason to return.

“Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.” — Luke 19:5

What Connect Means

A parish can be full on a Sunday and still be a room of strangers. Jesus does not address Zacchaeus as part of the crowd he is trying to see over; he stops, looks up into the tree, and speaks his name. And then he does something stranger still: he invites himself to dinner. “Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.” The most consequential moment in the chapter doesn’t happen in the synagogue. It happens over a meal, in a tax collector’s home, because Jesus understood what every good host and every good guest already know, that people open up at a table in a way they rarely do standing in a crowd.

That is worth sitting with. The instinct that lets a stranger relax in a friend’s living room, and the instinct that keeps them polite and guarded in the back pew of an unfamiliar church, are the same instinct, simply aimed at two very different rooms. Connection is the work of making your parish feel, as much as it honestly can, like the first kind of room rather than the second.

Why Connect Matters

An invitation without connection produces traffic, not growth, visits that never accumulate into anything. What turns encounter into relationship is not a program but attention. Jesus repeatedly stops for the one person in front of him: he speaks with the woman at the well, notices Bartimaeus by the roadside, and after the Resurrection calls Mary Magdalene by name at the tomb and only then does she recognize him and answer, “Rabbouni” (John 20:16).



Connection is not only relational. It also happens, or quietly fails to happen, through the spiritual messages people hear throughout the week. This framework is not about the craft of preaching itself. That belongs to the pastor alone. It is about whether it reaches the person reading or hearing the message. Is it communicated at a level people can understand? And does it give them one clear point to carry with them, rather than ten good points to sort through? Sometimes too much good information can leave a person with nothing at all because there is simply too much to absorb.

In Practice

This is less a system than a discipline of attention. It means building real places, however small, where relationships have room to begin, a coffee hour, a small group, a hallway conversation held for longer than thirty seconds. No amount of excellent preaching substitutes for it.

It means letting newcomers hear from people, what it has meant to find belonging here. It means giving before asking, welcome and care offered with nothing attached.

It means explaining what an opportunity can mean for someone, not just what it is: not “we have a men’s group on Wednesdays” but “five guys who will notice if you go quiet for a week.” And it means reaching out again after someone’s first visit, so it feels like care rather than paperwork, recognizing that someone six weeks in needs something different from someone who’s been here twenty years.

Applying the Principle

Connection requires parish leaders to examine the experience from the newcomer’s perspective. What happens after someone registers? Who contacts them? Is it easy to meet people? Does the parish communicate only when it wants something? Does a person receive a meaningful next invitation after attending an event? The tactic is not the lesson; connection is the lesson, and the tactic only serves it. That is the click made audible: someone realizes, “they know I’m here.”

The Principles at Work

Here are some principles behind Connect:

Community Building — creating real, small places, a coffee hour, a small group, a hallway conversation, where relationships have room to begin.

Social Proof — letting newcomers hear from other parishioners, not just from the ambo, what it has meant to find belonging here.

Reciprocity — giving before asking: welcome and care offered with nothing attached.



Features vs. Benefits — explaining what an opportunity can mean for someone, not just what it is, “five guys who will notice if you go quiet for a week,” not “we have a men's group on Wednesdays.”

Follow-Up (Retargeting) — reaching out again after someone's first visit, so it feels like care rather than paperwork.

Rule of One — pitching one clear point at a time rather than several, so a listener leaves holding something rather than everything and nothing at once.





3. ENGAGE

Give people a reason to stay.

“Stay with us.” — Luke 24:29,

What Engage Means

On the road to Emmaus, Christ does not announce himself. He walks alongside two disciples who are already leaving, listens to their grief, and opens the Scriptures to them before they ever recognize who is beside them. Only at table, in the breaking of the bread, do their eyes open, and even then, he vanishes, leaving them to get up that same hour and go back the way they came.

Engagement, at its root, follows this same pattern: presence before recognition, and a recognition that sends a person back out rather than simply settling them in. It is never only about filling a ministry roster.

Why Engage Matters

Connection says, “I am known here.” Engagement moves toward, “I belong here, I am still growing, and I have something to give.” The measure was never attendance for its own sake. It is communion, with Christ first, and with his Church because of him.

Acts 2:42 paints a picture of an engaged Christian community: “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.” Teaching, community, the breaking of the bread, and prayer show that engagement is participation in the life of the Church, not merely attendance.

In Practice

In practice, this means offering people a next step that fits where they are, rather than the same high commitment ask handed to everyone regardless of readiness. It means continuing to build places where belonging can deepen past an initial friendly conversation.

It means recognizing that a parent of young children, a recent widow, and a lifelong parishioner are not standing in the same place, and don’t share the same needs. It’s taking one clear next



step at a time, with a reason attached rather than just an ask. And it means the desire to go deeper doesn't stop after someone says yes once: growth is a habit the parish must keep extending, letting people see real value and real examples of others growing before being asked for more.

The Principles at Work

Here are some principles behind Engage:

Value Laddering — offering a next step that fits where someone actually is, rather than the same high-commitment ask handed to everyone regardless of readiness.

Community Building — continuing to build places where belonging can deepen past a first friendly conversation, because it never really stops mattering.

Segmentation & Messaging Matrix — recognizing that a parent of young children, a recent widow, and a lifelong parishioner are not standing in the same place.

Follow-Up — the invitation to go deeper doesn't stop after someone says yes once; growth is a habit the parish keeps extending.

Reciprocity & Social Proof — letting people experience real value and see authentic examples of others growing before being asked for more.

The Cycle: The Engaged Become Inviters

The framework does not end with Engage. In Acts, the life of the Christian community itself becomes part of the witness, and “every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). An engaged parishioner becomes someone who can authentically say to another person, “Come and see.”



The engaged become inviters. A healthy parish does not merely attract people. It forms a community in which people encounter Christ, belong to His Church, grow in faith, and become capable of saying authentically to someone else: “Come and see.”

Preach
to
reach.

Smile.

Belong.



WORKING TOGETHER

Everything in this Playbook is the shared foundation, the picture and the language your parish will build on from here.



Why the Whole Framework Matters

Invite, Connect, and Engage are not three separate programs to run. They are three stages of the same relationship, and each one depends on the one before it.

Parishes sometimes skip several rungs at once. Someone visits for the first time and, before they've been welcomed by name, is asked to volunteer, give, or commit to a high-demand program. The ask itself may be a good one. The timing is the problem.

This isn't a minor miscalculation. Asking too much too soon doesn't just fail to move someone forward; it can push them back out the door they just walked through. A person who feels used before they feel known rarely gives a parish a second chance to get it right.

Jesus himself forms his disciples over time. Peter is not handed every future responsibility at his first encounter by the shore. Jesus begins with an invitation, "Come after me" (Matthew 4:19), and relationship, formation, responsibility, and mission unfold from there — in that order, at that pace.

Our Approach

Clicking Parish does not hand pastors a list of tactics to copy. The goal is to give pastors and parish leaders a repeatable way of thinking: understand your mission, choose the tactic that fits what's happening in your parish, learn the communication or marketing principle behind why that tactic works, apply it, measure what happened, and adjust.



Tactics will change. Platforms will change. Technology will change. The underlying principles of clear communication, relationship, trust, belonging, follow-up, and appropriate next steps endure.

HOW WE'LL WORK WITH YOU GOING FORWARD

This is not a classroom. You will not sit through a semester of business terminology before we get to your parish. In your discovery conversation, we ask about your parish's history, your sense of success, who you're reaching and who you're not, and where people seem to get stuck.

From that conversation, goals are identified and/or a small number of real issues usually surface. Whatever surfaces, that becomes the starting point, not a syllabus.

We then help you settle on one tactic at a time, the specific action needed and discuss the marketing principles you need to carry that tactic out well, applied directly to your parish. Every one of those sessions follows the same six-step process: Tenet, Why, Tactic, Principle, Application, Measure.

For Example

Say your discovery conversation reveals that your parish has real momentum, good preaching, a beautiful building, active ministries, but people outside your registered families rarely walk through the door. That points toward Invite, and toward a specific tactic: reshaping how the parish is known in the surrounding neighborhood. Doing that tactic well means first understanding positioning: what your community already associates with your parish, whether you've chosen that reputation deliberately or not.

This is only one example. Your parish may need Connect or Engage work instead, or something else within Invite entirely. Not every concept applies to every parish, and we will only ever bring you what's relevant to what you're facing.

Each tactic/concept comes with its own plan, so what we agree to in the room becomes a plan your own team can act on afterward and a record we can both return to at the next check-in.

That is the whole of it!



Step	Question
1. TENET	Where are we focusing: Invite, Connect, or Engage?
2. WHY	Why does this matter for parish growth, Catholic mission, and evangelization?
3. TACTIC	Given the issue in front of us, what specific action are we planning to take?
4. PRINCIPLE	What marketing or communication principle do we need to understand to do that well?
5. APPLICATION	How does that principle shape exactly how we'll carry out the tactic?
6. MEASURE	How will we know whether it worked?

Example of the Model

Step	Detail
TENET	Invite
WHY	People cannot encounter a parish they do not know or feel comfortable approaching.
TACTIC	Together we'd design one specific, low-pressure way to reshape that reputation — a message, an event, a story.
PRINCIPLE	Positioning — what people associate with your parish, and how they distinguish it from alternatives.
APPLICATION	We'd ask what your community currently believes your parish is known for, and compare that to what you want it known for, so the tactic actually shifts the right perception.
MEASURE	We'd agree in advance what change would tell us it's working — awareness, inquiries, first-time attendance.





Long before we speak,
people feel *welcome* or not.
A *joyful welcome*
opens hearts in a way
no announcement ever can.

