

Redemptorist missions reach out to inactive Catholics

Father John Murray is convinced that fear keeps a lot of inactive Catholics from reconnecting with their faith.

Some have committed serious sins and are fearful they won't be forgiven. Others haven't been to confession in decades and don't know how to receive the sacrament. Still others are divorced and erroneously believe themselves to be excommunicated from the church.

The Redemptorist priest has a special ministry to reach out to inactive Catholics and help them overcome their fears. He leads missions all along the East Coast that are specifically geared at making lapsed Catholics feel welcome in the church.

"We want to reach out to the inactive Catholic in ways that are realistic, effective and intelligent," said Father Murray, a New York-based former columnist for The Catholic Review who has given many missions in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

"Missions are the church's most effective tool in re-evangelizing America, especially in reaching out to the inactive Catholic and educating the active Catholic about evangelization," he said.

Redemptorist missions are effective, Father Murray said, because they incorporate preaching with devotional expressions of the faith. Confession is an important element of any Redemptorist mission, and the faithful are encouraged to find God's healing touch in the sacrament.

"Ritually, it speaks to the Catholic mind," he said.

In early November, Father Murray helped coordinate a massive Redemptorist mission effort in 23 parishes on Staten Island, N.Y. More than 30 Redemptorists preached. To prepare for the missions, the Redemptorists distributed 3,000 lawn signs emblazoned with, "Meet me at the Mission."

“We cannot convince anyone to join the Catholic Church or come back to the church,” he said. “We let people who are thinking about it or wonder about it know that this is the best chance to come back to church and they only have a week to do it.”

Father Murray noted that many people “quietly slipped out” of the church 10 or 20 years ago. They prefer to come back into the church in a quiet way, he said. Missions give them that opportunity.

“It’s God’s grace that works in them,” he said.

For more information, visit www.redemptorists.net.