



## PARISH CONSULTATION WITH SMALL GROUPS SESSION 2 HANDOUT

**Focus Area 1 (Sessions 1 & 2): Forming missionary disciples who know Jesus' love and respond to his call.**

### PRAYER

#### 1. John 15: 5-12, The Vine and the Branches

I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

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#### 2. Litany to the Holy Spirit, abridged. Responses listed in **bold**.

- Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, **enter our hearts.**
- Holy Spirit, who art equal to the Father and the Son, **enter our hearts.**
- Promise of God the Father, **have mercy on us.**
- Author of all good, **have mercy on us.**
- Consuming fire, **have mercy on us.**
- Spirit of love and truth, **have mercy on us.**
- Spirit of wisdom and understanding, **have mercy on us.**
- Spirit of counsel and fortitude, **have mercy on us.**
- Spirit of knowledge and piety, **have mercy on us.**
- Spirit of the fear of the Lord, **have mercy on us.**
- Spirit of grace and prayer, **have mercy on us.**
- Spirit of peace and meekness, **have mercy on us.**
- Holy Spirit, the comforter, **have mercy on us.**
- Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, **have mercy on us.**
- Holy Spirit, who governs the Church, **have mercy on us.**
- Gift of God the Most High, **have mercy on us.**
- Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, **send us thy Holy Spirit.**
- Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, **pour down into our souls the gifts of the Holy Spirit.**
- Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, **grant us the Spirit of wisdom and piety.**
- Come, Holy Spirit! Fill the hearts of thy faithful, **and enkindle in them the fire of thy love.**

*A Prayerbook of Favorite Litanies, Compiled by Father Albert J. Herbert, S.M., Tan Books, 1985.*

## TOPIC 2A: LIFE-LONG FORMATION

### 1. Formation is a life-long process.

Conversion does not happen all at once. It's a process that unfolds over time and needs to be strengthened by ongoing formation, like the refining of fire-tried gold.

### 2. Peter's first encounter and conversion.

After a fruitless night of fishing, Jesus tells Peter to "Put out into the deep and lower your nets for a catch." (Lk. 5:4) After a miraculous catch of fish, Peter realizes who Jesus is and kneels before him, saying, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." (Lk. 5:8) Jesus responds, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." (Lk. 5:10) Peter left everything and followed him.

### 3. Peter's understanding is deepened through Christ's teaching.

After Peter declares Jesus "the Christ, the Son of the living God!" (Mt. 16:16), Jesus tells Peter he is the rock upon which Jesus will build his Church. After Jesus talks about going to Jerusalem to suffer, die and be raised on the third day, Peter responds "God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you." (Mt. 16:22) Jesus rebukes Peter strongly saying "You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." (Mt. 16:23) The Lord is purifying Peter's intellect, helping him to gain a deeper understanding of God and the call to lay down his life to follow Him. Like St. Peter, we are also called to the ongoing formation of our minds through prayerful study of Scripture and the teachings of the Church.

### 4. Peter's will is strengthened through experiences of Christ's love.

We also need to allow the Lord to strengthen our will, or our ability to choose what we know is good. After boldly proclaiming his loyalty to Jesus, Peter denies knowing Jesus three times just as Jesus had predicted. After his resurrection, Jesus appears to his disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. He looks at Peter and asks him three times, do you love me? Jesus is providing Peter the chance to three times affirm what he had previously three times denied. Christ entrusts his followers to the care of Peter, saying "Feed my sheep." (Jn 21:17) Like St. Peter, our discipleship must be grounded in experiences of Christ's love for us through prayer, the sacraments, and Christian community.

### 5. Strengthened in his intellect and will, Peter is faithful to Christ to the end.

Through the ongoing formation of Peter's intellect and will, he is able to remain faithful to Christ to the end. In the traditional account of Peter's martyrdom, he meets Jesus on his way out of Rome, and understands Jesus is inviting him to turn around, pick up his cross and suffer with Him. Peter asks to be crucified upside down, as he is not worthy to die the same way as his Lord.

### 6. Go forward or go backward.

In the life of the soul, if we are not moving forward, we are moving backward. To withstand the trials of life, we need to continue to be formed in our faith.

## TABLE DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

### 1. GENERAL GUIDELINES (read out loud by the table facilitator)

- My job as facilitator is simply to make sure everyone at the table has an opportunity to contribute, the time is shared amongst all table members, and the discussion stays on track. Table facilitators, as members of the small group, will be involved in the discussion and provide individual feedback. Table facilitators are not theologians or experts.
- For fruitful table discussions, please take into consideration that the Synod process is intended to recommend pastoral priorities for our Archdiocese that are both realistic (e.g., within the competence of the Archdiocese to implement) and consistent with the teachings of the Church.
- Please turn to the Discussion Questions & Feedback Forms for our two topics today
  - If you feel comfortable doing so, please fill out the demographic information.
  - Table discussion questions are listed at the top. We are each invited to choose one or two of the questions on which to share.
  - Below that you will see some ideas for consideration. The ideas for consideration are provided to help us get started in our discussion and provide a framework to give feedback.
  - The bottom of the form is where we provide feedback. We are asked which of the ideas for consideration have worked for us individually, and which ideas the parish or Archdiocese should prioritize in the future. We can choose up to three ideas under each of these two sections. In the third section, we can each provide an idea of our own, up to 20 words.

### 2. RESPECTFUL DISCUSSION GUIDELINES (read out loud by the table scribe)

- Everyone's input is valued. We are here to listen to each other and to the promptings of the Holy Spirit with a disposition of the heart that we all have something to learn. As it says in 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up, as indeed you do." We are not here to debate. Expect differing viewpoints and presume the good will of the other.
- People may share personal experiences. Please be sensitive to this vulnerability and do not share others' private information outside this group.
- Feedback forms do not have names. In addition, scribes have been asked to keep your responses confidential.

### 3. PROCESS FOR SHARING (read out loud by a table volunteer)

- To allow everyone an opportunity to share, we will proceed as follows:
  - The table facilitator will share first. After the facilitator is done, he or she invites another to share. You can invite anyone at the table, whether they are next to you or across from you. After that person has shared, they invite another. We will do this until everyone at the table has been asked to share.
  - All are encouraged to share but no one should feel pressured to speak. If you don't want to share, simply say "pass," and ask another to share.
  - We ask you to listen and not immediately respond to someone's sharing. After everyone has had an opportunity to share, the facilitator will initiate an open discussion of the question (time permitting).
- The facilitator will now read the discussion questions out loud and allow some quiet time to consider the questions and ideas for consideration. Then the facilitator will share first.

## TOPIC 2B: UNIVERSAL CALL TO HOLINESS

**1. Each of us is called by God to be holy – to love like God loves.**

2. Jesus commands us to love one another as he has loved us (Jn. 13:34), with a self-giving, sacrificial love.

**3. Our call to holiness is universal, but radically personal.**

Holiness is the primary calling, or vocation, for every person. Holiness will look different based on the conditions of our lives and the particular unique way God has made us, but holiness always involves certain stable things – keeping the commandments (even though each of us have particular struggles and weaknesses), daily personal prayer, and a sacramental life involving frequent communion and regular confession.

**4. We are called to holiness in our everyday circumstances.**

As Mother Teresa reminded us, “Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love.” The key to holiness is to start living fully my relationship with God today – striving to love the people in my life as God loves – amidst whatever circumstances, challenges or responsibilities we face. As Jesus taught, “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” (Mt. 25:40)

**5. Our state of life shapes our pursuit of holiness.**

There are different vocations in the Church, different paths to holiness. We call these paths “states of life.” These states of life are different ways of living by which Christians fulfill the call to self-giving, sacrificial love. Our state of life and commitments can also help us to make holy life decisions in areas like career, finances, time management, and even leisure. Pope Francis taught: “Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by laboring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain.”

(On the Call to Holiness in Today's World - Rejoice and be glad, 14)

**6. Marriage is a lofty call to participate in God's fruitful love.**

Marriage is a special participation of God's self-giving love. The fruitful, unitive, exclusive and permanent nature of marriage is no accident, but is God's way of inviting husbands and wives to love as He does. Parents are to make their homes a “domestic church.” As the *Catechism* says, “the home is the first school of Christian life and a ‘school for human enrichment.’” (CCC, ¶1657)

**7. God is calling each of us to holiness at every moment!**

Holiness helps us to be more fully alive, more creative, free, and authentic. It's living the life of love we were made to live. As St. Therese of Lisieux said, “Holiness consists simply in doing God's will, and being just what God wants us to be.”