



PARISH CONSULTATION WITH SMALL GROUPS SESSION 5 HANDOUT

Focus Area 3 (Sessions 5 & 6): Forming youth and young adults in and for a Church that is always young.

PRAYER

1. Matthew 13:1-9, The Parable of the Sower

On that day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down by the sea. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd stood along the shore. And he spoke to them at length in parables, saying:

"A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep, and when the sun rose it was scorched, and it withered for lack of roots.

Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it. But some seed fell on rich soil, and produced fruit, a hundred or sixty a hundred or sixty or thirtyfold. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

2. Litany of Saint Joseph, abridged. Responses listed in bold.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us. • God the Son, redeemer of the world, have mercy on us. • God the Holy Ghost, have mercy on us. • Holy Mary, pray for us. • St. Joseph, pray for us. • Spouse of the mother of God, pray for us. • Foster father of the Son of God, pray for us. • Watchful defender of Christ, pray for us. • Head of the Holy Family, pray for us. • Joseph most just, pray for us. • Joseph most chaste, pray for us. • Joseph most prudent, pray for us. • Joseph most valiant, pray for us. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph most obedient, pray for us. • Joseph most faithful, pray for us. • Model of workmen, pray for us. • Pillar of families, pray for us. • Hope of the sick, pray for us. • Patron of the dying, pray for us. • Protector of the Holy Church, pray for us. • Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord. • Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord. • Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, have mercy on us. |
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"Litany of St. Joseph" (abridged). Prayer Book of Favorite Litanies, compiled by Fr. Albert J. Herbert, S.M., Tan Books, 1985.

TOPIC 5A: PARENTS AS PRIMARY EDUCATORS

1. The family is an essential part of God's plan.

The family is an icon, or a reflection, of our Trinitarian God, who is a communion of persons. Family life and parenthood are essential parts of God's plan, and fundamental ways that men and women are called to love like God loves. This is why the family is the most basic unit of both society and the Church – sometimes called the domestic church.

2. Parents are called to be the primary educators of their children.

Having brought a child into the world in cooperation with God, parents have the right and responsibility to educate their son or daughter in how he or she should live in the world. Education should lead children into a loving relationship with their heavenly Father. This is why at a couple's wedding, they not only vow to accept children lovingly from God, but to bring them up according to the law of Christ and his Church. And they renew this vow every time they have a child baptized.

3. Parents face unprecedented challenges today.

American culture today includes all kinds of obstacles to teaching our children the truth of who they are, and the incredible relationship God wants to have with them. In addition, our children have free will.

4. Dedicated parents make the difference.

Researchers identified four things that parents can do to help their children keep the faith in today's challenging circumstances.

(1) Parents can lead by example. Youth value authenticity, so it's important for parents themselves to be intentional and joyful followers of our Lord. In addition to witnessing the faith, parents need to talk about the faith with their children and how it guides their lives and decisions.

(2) Parents can be intentional about children's faith lives. Effective parents consciously reflect on the goals they have for the faith lives of their children and plan concrete activities to achieve them.

(3) Parents can create a Catholic culture at home and beyond. Consistent practices of our faith, like sharing prayer intentions before dinner, reflecting on the Gospel after Mass, attending confession together, and serving in our community, communicate to our kids that our Catholic faith isn't just a "Sunday Mass" thing – it's an everyday thing.

(4) Parents can help the youth apply the faith to their own lives. Parents can initiate and encourage conversations about the faith starting at an early age, applying the truth of the faith to the particular challenges in the child's life or to current events, in an age-appropriate manner.

5. There is always hope.

Through Saint Monica's prayer and witness, her son, Saint Augustine, converted. She lived out Scripture's instructions to "rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer."

(Rom. 12:12)

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 5B: HELPING THE YOUNG KNOW AND LOVE JESUS (birth through grade 6)

1. Children are uniquely open to begin a relationship with God.

"Let the children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mk. 10:14) Jesus wants to encounter our children; let's bring them to him!

2. We must help our children to know God's presence in their lives.

Like the Old Testament prophet Samuel, our children need the help of parents, teachers, youth ministers and other trusted adults in their lives to recognize and respond to God's voice.

3. We can introduce children to God through prayer.

We can help children learn about God's love by teaching them simple ways to pray. We can also model how to talk to Jesus throughout our day and invite them to do so. We can pray to God out loud saying things like, "Jesus, thank you for the beautiful sun today." "Jesus, I love you because you always take care of us." "Jesus, I'm sorry for being impatient." "Jesus, I need you because I can't do this alone."

4. We can help our children know God through creation.

We can cultivate an attitude of wonder and awe, especially in their engagement with nature. Nature reveals God's glory and goodness and can help our kids connect to our creator. This attitude of wonder can lead to children becoming lifelong learners who want to discover more about God and the beauty of his truth.

5. We can help our children enter relationship with God through the sacraments.

We can teach our children that through the sacraments God wants to share his love with them in real and powerful ways. We can teach them to see with their hearts what really happens at Mass, celebrate their first sacraments as immensely important moments in their lives, annually commemorate each family member's baptism as a life-altering event, and model the importance of the sacraments.

6. We can help our children develop moral character.

The Ten Commandments have always been the basis of Judeo-Christian morality, and they provide a firm foundation to form the moral character of our children. All the Church's rules are guides to help us stay in the loving relationship God desires for us. Just as important is to form children in the virtues.

7. We can help our children understand their true identity as a beloved son or daughter of God.

One way to teach identity is to explain that there are three "I am" statements which determine how we see ourselves, but only one that is true. We can think: "I am" who others see me to be." "I am" who I see me to be. "I am" who God sees me to be. The only true identity is, "I am" who God sees me to be.

8. It's not too early and it's not too late.