



A Steward's Way

ADVENT SMALL GROUP STUDY



DIOCESE OF
Jefferson City



A Steward's Way

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A Small Group Faith Sharing Experience

BASED UPON

Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation

Evangelii Gaudium

The Joy of the Gospel

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“The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelizes, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptivity, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.”

“This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. The parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration.

“In all its activities the parish encourages and trains its members to be evangelizers. It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a center of constant missionary outreach.

“We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented.”

EVANGELII GAUDIUM
THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL
NO. 28



BETTER TOGETHER

Any renewal in the Catholic Church must begin with the parish. As Pope Francis explains so eloquently in his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), the parish is where people experience God and his people. The Diocese of Jefferson City, under the leadership of Bishop W. Shawn McKnight, is developing a pastoral plan which addresses the reality of our communities through the lens of our Catholic faith.

Our intent is, in response to God's generous blessings, that we, the clergy and laity of the Diocese of Jefferson City, will embrace our responsibility to witness the Gospel, increasing our parishes' presence as centers of charity and mercy.

In brief, we understand we have three foci:

- Creating a culture of co-responsibility between the clergy and laity, in accord with the Second Vatican Council's teachings
- Raising awareness of the spirituality of stewardship as essential for all disciples
- Helping parishes increasing their capacity as centers of charity and mercy

Another way to explain the foci is with this illustration. With a culture of co-responsibility, we can grow in a spirituality of stewardship – so that our parishes can become even stronger centers of charity and mercy.



This Advent, the entire Diocese is being called to participate in a four-week series of reflection evenings, gathering in small groups. In Lent, these groups will be encouraged to meet again for a second, six-week series. This will provide all with a common spiritual formation in preparation for a diocesan pastoral plan.

We are better together. As one body, in Christ, may we grow together in faith, hope and charity through this work.



WEEKLY PREPARATION BY THE LEADER

CREATING A SPIRITUAL ATMOSPHERE

As a prayer focus for the gathering, arrange a Bible, a crucifix, and a light or candle on a small table covered with a cloth. Each week, participants are invited to add items to the prayer table, please be sure to ask for their items ahead of time and remind them to bring their items to each meeting.

OPENING IN PRAYER

This prayer is prayed at the beginning of each small group:

*Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life
in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself
completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own "yes"
to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.
Filled with Christ's presence,
you brought joy to John the Baptist,
making him exult in the womb of his mother.
Brimming over with joy,
you sang of the great things done by God.
Standing at the foot of the cross
with unyielding faith,
you received the joyful comfort
of the resurrection,
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.
Obtain for us now a new ardor
born of the resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life
which triumphs over death.*

*Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty
may reach every man and woman.
Virgin of listening and contemplation,
Mother of love,
Bride of the eternal wedding feast,
pray for the Church,
whose pure icon you are,
that she may never be closed in on herself
or lose her passion for
establishing God's kingdom.
Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear
radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.
Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us.
Amen. Alleluia!*



SESSION ONE: FAMILY AND FRIENDS

VERSE FOR THE WEEK:

“Praise the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures forever”

PSALMS 136:1

PREPARING FOR THE WEEK:

Ahead of your weekly gathering, invite your participants to bring pictures of their loved ones to the meeting. As participants arrive, ask them to place pictures of their loved ones to set on the prayer table.

OPENING PRAYER FOUND ON PAGE THREE

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. In what ways do you express gratitude to God for your family and friends?
2. How can I allow Jesus to use me as his instrument to help my family and friends come to know him?
3. At what three moments in my life did I most deeply feel happiness, not just the pleasure, of being alive? Was making a gift of myself to at least one other person a part of those experiences?



HYMN

COMPANIONS ON A JOURNEY

REFRAIN

We are companions on the journey,
breaking bread and sharing life;
and in the love we bear is the hope we share for
we believe in the love of our God,
we believe in the love of our God.

No longer strangers to each other,
no longer strangers in God's house;
we are fed and we are nourished
by the strength of those who care,
by the strength of those who care.

(REFRAIN)

We have been gifted with each other,
and we are called by the Word of the Lord:
to act with justice, to love tenderly, and
to walk humbly with our God,
to walk humbly with our God.

(REFRAIN)

We will seek and we shall find;
we will knock and the door shall be opened;
we will ask and it shall be given,
for we believe in the love of our God,
we believe in the love of our God.

(REFRAIN)

We are made for the glory of our God,
for service in the name of Jesus;
to walk side by side with hope in our hearts,
for we believe in the love of our God,
we believe in the love of our God.



SCRIPTURE READING

LEADER INVITES A PARTICIPANT TO PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN 4:7-42

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?" (For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

[The woman] said to him, "Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the well is deep; where then can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his children and his flocks?"

Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go call your husband and come back."

The woman answered and said to him, "I do not have a husband." Jesus answered her, "You are right in saying, 'I do not have a husband.'"

For you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true." The woman said to him, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.

Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain; but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus said to her, "Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

You people worship what you do not understand; we worship what we understand, because salvation is from the Jews.

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth;* and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him.



God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Anointed; when he comes, he will tell us everything.”

Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking with you.”

At that moment his disciples returned, and were amazed that he was talking with a woman, but still no one said, “What are you looking for?” or “Why are you talking with her?” The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, “Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?” They went out of the town and came to him.

Meanwhile, the disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.” So the disciples said to one another, “Could someone have brought him something to eat?”

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, ‘In four months the harvest will be here’? I tell you, look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest.

The reaper is already receiving his payment and gathering crops for eternal life, so that the sower and reaper can rejoice together

For here the saying is verified that ‘One sows and another reaps.’

I sent you to reap what you have not worked for; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work.”

Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me everything I have done.”

When the Samaritans came to him, they invited him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days.

Many more began to believe in him because of his word, and they said to the woman, “We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world.”

READER: THE GOSPEL OF THE LORD

RESPONSE: PRAISE BE TO YOU, LORD JESUS CHRIST



EXCERPT FROM THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

NO. 49

Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church what I have often said to the priests and laity of Buenos Aires: I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.

I do not want a Church concerned with being at the center and then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolations born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life.

More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us:

“Give them something to eat” (Mk 6:37)

FOR DISCUSSION

- When or in what way have you been a credible witness of God’s love?
- Share a time when the word or message of God changed your heart.
- When the right moment arises in our relationship with others, we are called to speak about how faith fills our lives with meaning. Give an example of a time when you did this in the past, or a time when you could have but failed to do so.

OPPORTUNITIES THIS WEEK

- At the end of each day jot down three ways for which you are grateful. Be specific. (ex: people, places, events, experience)
- Reach out to a family member or friend who needs your encouragement or support and share the message of Christ love.



PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

LEADER:

Thank you, God, for opening our eyes and ears
to see and hear the goodness which surrounds us.

Response:

Make our hearts ever grateful.

LEADER:

Thank you, God, for the wonder of children
and their spirit of innocence and enthusiasm for life.

Response:

Make our hearts ever grateful.

LEADER:

Thank you, God, for the love of our elderly
who teach us humility and show us wisdom.

Response:

Make our hearts ever grateful.

LEADER:

Thank you, God, for the treasure
of family and friends who share in our joys and sorrows.

Response:

Make our hearts ever grateful.

LEADER:

Help me, Lord, to be a witness of your love.

ALL:

We ask all of these things in your name, Jesus Christ. Amen.



SESSION TWO: COMMUNITY

VERSE FOR THE WEEK:

“How good and how pleasant it is,
when brothers and sisters dwell together as one!”

PSALMS 133:1

PREPARING FOR THE WEEK:

For week two place on the prayer table an image that represents community, such as a loaf of bread, picture of many people, or a circle of friends sculpture.

OPENING PRAYER FOUND ON PAGE THREE

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What does the word “community” mean to you? How big is your community?
2. Share an experience of community that has drawn you closer to God.
3. For what are you most grateful in your neighborhood?



HYMN

LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.

Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant to be.

With God our Father
We are family,
Let us walk with each other
In perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me
Let this be the moment now.

With every step I take
Let this be my solemn vow:
To take each moment and live each moment
in peace eternally.

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.



SCRIPTURE READING

LEADER INVITES A PARTICIPANT TO PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD

ACTS 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need.

Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

READER: THE WORD OF THE LORD

RESPONSE: THANKS BE TO GOD

FOR DISCUSSION

1. What strikes you the most about how these early Christians lived?
2. How can we share our time, talent and treasure to bring about good in our community?
3. As the community of Christ, how are we called to reach out beyond ourselves?



EXCERPT FROM THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

NO. 53

Just as the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality.

Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality.



FOR DISCUSSION

- Can we kill by our inactions as well as our direct actions? What do you think Pope Francis means by the sentence “We also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality?”
- What sometimes separates us in our community? What might help heal these divisions?
- Have you had an experience that deepened your sense of community?

OPPORTUNITIES THIS WEEK

- Volunteer at a non-profit resource center for those in need (ex: Salvation Army, Samaritan Center, Rape and Abuse Crisis Center, Pregnancy Help Center).
- Visit the homebound or an elderly person in a nursing home.
- Reach out to our local schools by offering time and talent.
- Pray for those who need God’s healing, compassion and peace in our community.



PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

LEADER:

We pray, O Lord, in gratitude
for the continued health and prosperity of our community.

Response:

Thank you for the guidance of your Spirit.

LEADER:

We pray, O Lord, in gratitude
for peace and forgiveness within our community.

Response:

Thank you for the guidance of your Spirit.

LEADER:

We pray, O Lord, in gratitude
for the support and compassion we show one another.

Response:

Thank you for the guidance of your Spirit.

LEADER:

We pray, O Lord, in gratitude
for the strength that comes from the Body of Christ.

Response:

Make our hearts ever grateful.

LEADER:

We pray, O Lord, in gratitude for the blessings we have received;
may we in turn be a blessing to one another.

ALL:

Thank you for the guidance of your Spirit.



SESSION THREE: CHURCH

VERSE FOR THE WEEK:

“We must consider how to rouse one another to love and good works. We should not stay away from our assembly, as is the custom of some, but encourage one another, and this all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

HEBREWS 10:24-25

PREPARING FOR THE WEEK:

For week three place on the prayer table images that represents our faith and the Church Perhaps a copy of our Creed, statues of Mary and saints, books on the popes, pictures of your church.

OPENING PRAYER FOUND ON PAGE THREE

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What does the word “church” mean to you?
2. Share an experience when you have felt supported by your local church.
3. Which forms of praise and worship offered in your local church provides for your greatest spiritual rewards?



HYMN

ALL ARE WELCOME

Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions.
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus.
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us.
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger.
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.

Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught & claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter.
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.



SCRIPTURE READING

LEADER INVITES A PARTICIPANT TO PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD

EPHESIANS 2:19-22

So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.

Through him the whole structure is held together and grows into a temple sacred in the Lord; in him you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

READER: THE WORD OF THE LORD

RESPONSE: THANKS BE TO GOD

EXCERPT FROM THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

NO. 114

Being Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love. This means that we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity. It means proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way. The Church must be a place of mercy freely given, where everyone can feel welcomed, loved, forgiven and encouraged to live the good life of the Gospel.

FOR DISCUSSION

- How can we be leaven in the midst of humanity?
- How can we, as members of the household of God, build up and strengthen our church?
- What can we do to be a more welcoming church?
- How has your Church helped you grow in love of God and His Church?

OPPORTUNITIES THIS WEEK

- Invite someone who doesn't frequently attend Mass to attend Mass with you.
- Send a thank-you card to your priest, deacon or faith leader.
- Experience God's mercy and forgiveness by reconciling with God and the Church through the sacrament of confession.
- Build up the Body of Christ by being a good example; do not gossip, ask forgiveness and give alms.



PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING FOR OUR CHURCH

LEADER:

In praise of your holy name, Jesus Christ,
the cornerstone on which we follow:

Response:

We thank you, Lord, for our Church here in on earth

LEADER:

We are one, holy, catholic and apostolic

Response:

We thank you, Lord, for our Church here in on earth

LEADER:

For the spirits and hearts of those who dwell in your presence

Response:

We thank you, Lord, for our Church here in on earth

LEADER:

For the downtrodden and marginalized who seek refuge and peace

Response:

We thank you, Lord, for our Church here in on earth

LEADER:

For Pope Francis, bishops, priests, and the whole Body of Christ, may we be
strengthened by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit to spread the Gospel

ALL:

We thank you, Lord, for our Church here on earth



SESSION FOUR: THE WORLD

VERSE FOR THE WEEK:

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

ROMANS 12:12

PREPARING FOR THE WEEK:

For week four if available, place a globe on the prayer table.

OPENING PRAYER FOUND ON PAGE THREE

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What are you grateful for in this earth?
2. If you could serve anywhere in the world, how and where would you serve?
3. What is your most urgent petition prayer for the world?



HYMN

FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH

REFRAIN

Christ, our Lord, to you we raise
this, our hymn of grateful praise.

For the beauty of the earth,
for the glory of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies.

(REFRAIN)

For the wonder of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale and tree and flower,
sun and moon and stars of light,

(REFRAIN)

For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth, and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild,

(REFRAIN)

For yourself, best gift divine,
to the world so freely given,
agent of God's grand design:
peace on earth and joy in heaven.

(REFRAIN)



SCRIPTURE READING

LEADER INVITES A PARTICIPANT TO PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD

PSALMS 100:1-5

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth.
Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before Him with joyful singing.
Know that the LORD Himself is God;
It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;
We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.
Enter His gates with thanksgiving
And His courts with praise.
Give thanks to Him, bless His name.
For the LORD is good;
His loving kindness is everlasting
And His faithfulness to all generations.

READER: THE WORD OF THE LORD

RESPONSE: THANKS BE TO GOD



EXCERPT FROM THE JOY OF THE GOSPEL

NO. 117

When properly understood, cultural diversity is not a threat to church unity. The Holy Spirit, sent by the Father and the Son, transforms our hearts and enables us to enter into the perfect communion of the blessed Trinity, where all things find their unity. He builds up the communion and harmony of the people of God. The same Spirit is that harmony, just as he is the bond of love between the Father and the Son. It is he who brings forth a rich variety of gifts, while at the same time creating a unity which is never uniformity but a multifaceted and inviting harmony. Evangelization joyfully acknowledges these varied reassures which the Holy Spirit pours out upon the church.



FOR DISCUSSION

- What are some major differences in beliefs and traditions of individuals or groups in our communities?
- How can we be more accepting of these differences?
- What could you be doing to “pay-it-forward” for the healing of our world? (ex: environmental, social, moral and promoting peace)
- What is the role of communal prayer in moving our world toward peace?
- What is the greatest benefit to being part of the universal Church?

OPPORTUNITIES THIS WEEK

- Pick up litter in your neighborhood.
- Sponsor a child-in-need who lives in a developing country.
- Learn what you can do to assist those suffering natural disasters.



A GRATITUDE PRAYER

LEADER:

Good God, Creator of the world,
draw us into prayer and celebration
as we gather to remember the gifts of your earth
and the stewardship you have entrusted to us
as tillers and tenders in your image.

Response:

We know that in the gathering of the people,
power is present among us;
your Holy Spirit stirs and moves and gives us courage to remember
that all good gifts come first from you.
We praise you for this creation in the words of the Psalmist,
sung by our ancestors in faith for generations:

LEADER:

“God speaks: the heavens are made.

Response:

God breathes: the stars shine.

LEADER:

God bottles the waters of the sea and stores them in the deep.

Response:

All earth, be astounded, and stand in awe of God.”

LEADER:

For the downtrodden and marginalized who seek refuge and peace

ALL:

Keep us faithful to this gathering in faith and
“bless this vine your right hand has planted.”
Now and forever, Amen.



FOR FURTHER REFLECTION: BE KIND TO OUR EARTH

Respond to Pope Francis’s call to action on climate change. The following are excerpts from Pope Francis’s encyclical *Laudato Si’*, or Praised Be. Citations are included for your reference.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all. (No. 23)

A very solid scientific consensus indicates that we are presently witnessing a disturbing warming of the climatic system. In recent decades this warming has been accompanied by a constant rise in the sea level and, it would appear, by an increase of extreme weather events, even if a scientifically determinable cause cannot be assigned to each particular phenomenon. Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it. (No. 23)

If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us. (No. 24)

LIVING MORE SUSTAINABLY

Education in environmental responsibility can encourage ways of acting which directly and significantly affect the world around us, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights, or any number of other practices. (No. 211)

There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions. (No. 211)

Along with the importance of little everyday gestures, social love moves us to devise larger strategies to halt environmental degradation and to encourage a “culture of care” which permeates all of society. (No. 231)



THE FAITH PERSPECTIVE

Nature is usually seen as a system which can be studied, understood and controlled, whereas creation can only be understood as a gift from the outstretched hand of Father of all, and as a reality illuminated by a love which calls us together into universal communion. (No. 76)

Creation is of the order of love. (No. 77)

Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. (No. 92)

ECOLOGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (No. 49)

Every ecological approach needs to incorporate a social perspective which takes into account the fundamental rights of the poor and the underprivileged. (No. 93)

CONSUMERISM

The emptier a person's heart is, the more he or she needs things to buy, own and consume. (No. 204)

FUTURE GENERATIONS

Each community can take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence, but it also has the duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations. (No. 67)

Learn more: CatholicClimateCovenant.org



GROUP LEARNING AND FAITH SHARING AGREEMENT

Many Catholics meet regularly in their parishes. These groups are known by a variety of names and come under various lay and ecclesial organizations: small Christian communities, Cursillo, Knights of Columbus, ladies' groups, men's groups, RENEW, CHRHP, TEC, prayer groups, etc. Whatever the name, usually they share five attributes: the members engage in prayer, faith sharing, learning, support and faith-directed action.

The sessions in this booklet include these five attributes. To encourage a healthy and Spirit-filled activity, group members are encouraged to agree to abide by the following:

WELCOMING

- An atmosphere of welcome and hospitality sets a tone. Make sure the setting is comfortable (including the chairs) and the group will not be interrupted by other activities or individuals.
- Encourage people to share something about themselves, if they do not know one another.
- Keep the social and refreshment aspects to a minimum.
- Start and end on time. Each session should take between 60 and 90 minutes.

SHARING

- Commit to coming prepared and being present at all sessions, except for emergencies. The group is lessened when a member is missing.
- Understand this is a "safe place," for people to share matters of the heart and soul. Respect others' need for confidentiality.
- Share honestly.
- Listen to others without "correcting," judging or attempting to preach at them. Ask questions to help you understand better another person's beliefs, opinions or knowledge.
- Help to ensure everyone who wants to speak has an opportunity to do so by not interrupting others, and by allowing silence so those who are more hesitant may have the time to gather their thoughts.
- Help the group to stay on topic.
- Pray for one another and the Diocese between sessions.



HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM

- Ask people at the beginning of the session to serve as readers, prayer leaders and discussion leaders. These roles can be rotated each week.
- If the hymns are unfamiliar, you can find audio tracks of each on the Internet. If your group isn't comfortable singing alone, you can follow along with an audio file.
- Consider making assignments for the next week's readings at the conclusion of the session.

CREDITS

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*Content for prayer on Week IV taken from liturgy materials used
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*Tips on small faith sharing gathered from material provided by
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