

2004

2005



## Small Faith Sharing Group Reflection Guide

Christmas - Winter Ordinary Time



Developed by  
The Office For  
Evangelization  
& the Advisory  
Committee on  
Evangelization

Archdiocese of Chicago  
155 E. Superior Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60611  
312.751.5353  
[www.goingforth.org](http://www.goingforth.org)

## Introduction

*This Reflection Guide is prepared for small faith-sharing group members in Catholic parishes and communities. These pages combine Cycle A readings of the Sunday Lectionary with meditations, reflection questions and the Objectives from the Personal Mandate of **Spreading the Holy Fire: A Plan for Catholics Evangelizing in the Archdiocese of Chicago** for an evangelizing perspective to our Catholic faith.*

This Season of Christmastide/Winter Ordinary Time includes feasts that are the cornerstone of our faith. At Christmastide, we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Holy Family, Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord. We welcome the Bread of Life. The Gospels of Winter Ordinary Time focus on the call of Jesus and His teaching to disciples. In a sense, we reflect on Christ's invitation to be His guests and to join His mission of inviting others to God's table.

Each week we gather with other disciples of Christ. As we encounter Jesus in a new way, we grow to *believe* more deeply in Him. Our shared experience and belief empower us to *share* our faith with others. Together, we take our deepened belief into personal relationships in family, friends, the workplace, our parish, neighborhoods and nation to *transform* the world into God's Reign: a kinder, better, more loving place. Believe, share, transform: this is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, to be a Catholic, and to evangelize.

As a member of a small faith-sharing group, you will gather weekly with others to grow in faith. Be open to the process of growth that comes from sharing. Be open to receive the gift of holiness. Take responsibility to participate and encourage others to take part. The entire group benefits and grows together. As a small group member, please follow these guidelines:

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Prepare</b>         | Get ready for the meetings by reading the Scriptures and reflection material before the meeting.   |
| <b>Participate</b>     | Pray. Read the Scriptures when asked. Respond aloud to the reflection questions. However, you may choose to "pass" at any time without explanation.  |
| <b>Pray</b>            | Pray for the group leader, the other members of the group and for yourself between meeting times.  |
| <b>Be Present</b>      | Commit to attend all meetings unless pressing circumstances prevent it.  |
| <b>Be Personal</b>     | Talk about your own experience and share your own thoughts about how God speaks to you through the Scripture. Listen to the stories of others in the group and refrain from giving advice.   |
| <b>Be Confidential</b> | What is shared in the group stays in the group. Realize that some areas may be too sensitive for people to respond to the faith-sharing questions or share an insight.   |
| <b>Be Gentle</b>       | If differences of opinion arise, respect those differences. There are as many ways to experience God's presence as there are people. We are all growing and on the journey together. Make the effort to understand another's viewpoint by being tender and kind. (Ephesians 4:15). |

May this Season be a rich experience of God's love that leads you to share that love with others.

## Cycle A

## The Gospel of Matthew

### *Insights on Evangelization*

The Scripture readings for the 2004-2005 Liturgical Year are from Cycle A of the Sunday Lectionary. In Cycle A, Sunday liturgies draw their Gospel readings from Matthew. While each Gospel proclaims the Good News of Jesus Christ, each of the four evangelists has a different perspective depending on the author's background, intention, audience, message and theme.

#### *Author/Audience*

Many scripture scholars believe that Matthew was of Jewish heritage and wrote to the Jewish community. The Gospel contains many allusions to people and events in the Jewish Scriptures found in the Pentateuch and the Prophets. Throughout the text, the author shows Jesus giving new meaning to the beautiful traditions of Judaism. Scholars' estimate that the Gospel of Matthew was written about 70 AD. Matthew's Gospel is an unfolding story of the fulfilment of the promise God's salvation through the teaching of Jesus and the events in His life.

#### *Message and Themes*

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is the new Moses, who reveals who God is and what God's will is. Jesus is Emmanuel - God with us - his name given before He was born. Jesus promised to be with us always in His last words to His disciples at the Gospel's end. (Matt. 28:20ff)

By reaching out in mercy to the unjust and the "enemy," Jesus revealed that God is close and compassionate to all humanity. God wants a direct, loving relationship with everyone. It is God Who will bring about salvation and justice in the world.

Jesus is the Messiah of the Jews and for the entire world. Jesus broke through the boundaries of Judaism to include the Gentiles in God's story of salvation. Mercy and compassion are the tools that Jesus uses to build the Kingdom of Heaven. Divine power works through Jesus to heal people. Jesus' words and works embody God's command to love. The many parables of Jesus point to the Kingdom of Heaven, Its presence and triumph in human history. The cross showed Jesus' death is a once-for-all sign of His love and fidelity to God; His resurrection began a new day and age to respond to God's grace by believing in Jesus.

#### *How the Gospel of Matthew Relates to Evangelizing*

All who profess to be Catholic Christians are called to be active disciples of Jesus.

**Commit:** Just as Matthew's Gospel is a narrative, an unfolding story of Jesus' commitment to do God's will, so are our lives a "gospel" and an unfolding story of our commitment to follow Jesus and do God's will. Our baptism is only the beginning.

**Believe:** Jesus is the Messiah of every Christian, who is called to have an ever-deepening trust, and participate in a community of love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

**Share:** As disciples, we learn from Jesus, imitate Him and commit to the mission to "go and make disciples" of all humanity, believing that Jesus is with us always.

**Transform:** As disciples, we are charged to endure and do good works, not just use words. We will be judged on our love of God and neighbor by our works of love and service.

Source: Fr. Donald Senior, C.P. and PHEME PERKINS, *Gospel of Matthew, Reading Guide, The Catholic Study Bible, New American Bible, Oxford Press, pages RG388-RG405*. Please review the article for more detail on this Gospel.

# October 2004 - 2005      The Year of the Eucharist

## *Insights on Evangelization*<sup>†</sup>

“All around us, people are starving for faith and love, meaning and hope. More urgently than ever, we are called to evangelize.” *Francis Cardinal George, Introduction, Spreading the Holy Fire*

Jesus is the food for humanity that fills the starving and hungry with good things – the very life of God. In June 2004, on the Feast of Corpus Christi, Pope John Paul II decreed The Year of the Eucharist to celebrate “*The Eucharist, source and summit of the life and mission of the Church*”.

The Year of the Eucharist begins in October 2004 at the International Eucharistic Congress in Guadalajara Mexico and ends with the Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist in October, 2005. This Year encourages all Catholics to deepen their prayer life and develop a higher standard of Christian living. We can be more active celebrating the Eucharist at Mass, practice Eucharistic Adoration within the Church and reach out to others. To evangelize, Catholics must give an authentic witness to Christ through their lives. The Eucharist is necessary for this to happen.

During the Year of the Eucharist, small faith-sharing communities have a unique opportunity to reflect upon the Word of God from the Sunday Lectionary.

At the 2004 Chicago Catechetical Conference, Fr. Donald Senior, C.P., President of Catholic Theological Union and a member of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, delivered a talk “Biblical Foundations of the Eucharist.” Fr. Senior presented three images found in the Gospels that are central to a Catholic understanding of the Eucharist: Communion, Meal and Sacrifice. *Communion* is that movement of belief in God that involves listening to others, appreciating diversity, with the end of achieving union with God. *Meal* is that movement of sharing in the life of God with others and inviting them to the table of the Eucharist. *Sacrifice* is that movement of self-emptying, giving of oneself out of love for others. As Eucharist, Jesus unites these movements.

Communion, Meal and Sacrifice are closely related to the goals of evangelizing: Believe, Share and Transform. Communion is built and builds upon belief through union with Christ. Meal presupposes a community who share the Bread of Life with others and is always inviting and welcoming newcomers to God’s table. Sacrifice is based upon the intention, words and actions to bring about transformation of society and the world into God’s Reign.

By participating in the Year of the Eucharist, we should expect that the Holy Spirit will help us grow deeper in our belief, instill in us a greater urgency to share our faith with others, and impel us to transform life into God’s Reign of love, justice and peace. Be prepared for this to happen.

This Liturgical Year’s series of Small Faith-Sharing Group reflection guides will offer materials through a progressive sequence through the Liturgical Calendar, as outlined below.

Advent:	Preparing the table
<b>Christmastide:</b>	<b>Preparing the meal; welcoming the Bread of Life</b>
<b>Winter Ordinary Time:</b>	<b>Inviting the guests</b>
Lent:	Getting dressed for God’s feast
Easter tide:	Dining together with God
Summer Ordinary Time:	After-dinner talk: Building God’s community of love
Autumn Ordinary Time:	Preparing for God’s meal to come (harvest)

May the Year of the Eucharist renew our faith, hope and love to live and share the Good News.

**December 26, 2004**

## **The Feast of the Holy Family**

### **PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT**

Optional: Prepare a small table, with a place setting of a plate, silverware and napkin. Place a small sign with the name “Jesus” near the plate. You may choose another symbol, display a small cross and enthrone a Bible. Have small note cards and pens available. Use this or another centerpiece that symbolizes the preparation to welcoming Jesus during the Christmastide/Winter Ordinary Time season.

### **BECOME ACQUAINTED**

Go around the table or circle asking each person to share his or her name. Mention one thing you hope to receive from meeting with your small group.

### **GATHER TOGETHER IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST**

Leader: As we gather together, we recall how God has come into our lives this past week and how God is present in our midst now.

All: *Come Holy Spirit,  
Fill the hearts of all people with the fire of Your Love.  
May all accept Your invitation to know and love Jesus as Lord and Savior.*

*Fill this Archdiocese with people who welcome  
and invite others to share in the Catholic faith.*

*Fill our Cardinal, our bishops and priests, deacons and lay ministers  
with wisdom and courage to live and  
preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*Fill all parish and agency staff with Your power to  
evangelize those whom they serve.  
Fill all consecrated men and women and all lay people with the grace  
to become and make disciples of Jesus through  
prayer, work, and daily living.*

*May the holy fire of Your love  
transform our society according to the Gospel.  
Come Holy Spirit! With the Father and the Son,  
You are worshiped and glorified forever and ever. Amen.*

### **EXTEND GOD'S INVITATION**

On a note card, write down the name of one person that you would like to invite to God's table. If you feel comfortable, share that name with the group and then put the note on the empty plate. During your meeting, hold all those people in prayer, asking God's blessing on them.

### **READ THE SCRIPTURES**

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Colossians 3:12-21

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Read the Sunday Scriptures out loud together. Afterward, mention which scripture passage touched you and why. What does the passage mean to you in your own life at this stage of your personal spiritual journey?

## **REFLECT AND SHARE**

Reflect on each question below in turn or use your own questions. Allow group members, if they wish, to answer that question before the group moves on to the next question.

### First Reading

The reading from the Book of Sirach is an excerpt from Hebrew wisdom literature. This passage reflects upon the honor due to one's parents and children's duty to respect their parents. Faith begins in the home where the words, example and witness of parents are impressed upon their children.

*Reflection Question: How has my family shaped my faith in Jesus?*

### Second Reading

In his Letter to the Colossians, St. Paul describes the ideal behavior of the Christian community as God's family: compassion, kindness, patience, gentleness, forgiveness and love. Gratitude to God, our Parent, is an important element in living our faith. St. Paul's writing applies just as well to us today as it did to the Colossians.

*Reflection Question: Which of the Christian behaviors mentioned by St. Paul has helped me witness my faith to others?*

### Gospel

The Gospel account from St. Matthew follows the departure of the Magi, where an angel directs Joseph through dreams to protect and lead his family. Joseph obeyed God's instructions faithfully. While his family experienced change and disruption, Joseph's decisions to obey resulted in milestones in the faith history of all disciples of Jesus.

*Reflection Question: How has God directed my steps and personal history to bring about transformation in my family and others' families?*

## **PRAY FOR EACH OTHER**

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together around the centerpiece and say the Our Father. Pray daily this week for the person on your right.

## **LEAVE TO EVANGELIZE YOUR WORLD**

Reflect on your mission to grow deeper in your relationship with God, offer hospitality and welcome to others and work for transformation in your daily life.

This coming week:

- |                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Believe/Communion:   | Make a phone call, write a note or send a prayer of thanksgiving to your parents.   |
| Share/Meal:          | Become an inviting person. Take one behavior mentioned by St. Paul and practice it in your home, parish, workplace or with anyone you meet this week. |
| Transform/Sacrifice: | Listen for God's voice encouraging you to make a life-giving change to serve someone in your family or community this week.                           |

**January 2, 2005**

## **The Epiphany of the Lord**

### **PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT**

Optional: Prepare a small table, with a place setting of a plate, silverware and napkin. Place a small sign with the name “Jesus” near the plate. You may choose another symbol, display a small cross and enthrone a Bible. Have small note cards and pens available. Use this or another centerpiece that symbolizes the preparation to welcoming Jesus during the Christmastide/Winter Ordinary Time season.

### **GATHER TOGETHER IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST**

Leader: As we gather together, we recall how God has come into our lives this past week and how God is present in our midst now.

All: *Come Holy Spirit,  
Fill the hearts of all people with the fire of Your Love.  
May all accept Your invitation to know and love Jesus as Lord and Savior.*

*Fill this Archdiocese with people who welcome  
and invite others to share in the Catholic faith.*

*Fill our Cardinal, our bishops and priests, deacons and lay ministers  
with wisdom and courage to live and  
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### **EXTEND GOD'S INVITATION**

On a note card, write down the name of one person that you would like to invite to God's table. If you feel comfortable, share that name with the group and then put the note on the empty plate. During your meeting, hold all those people in prayer, asking God's blessing on them.

### **READ THE SCRIPTURES**

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

Read the Sunday Scriptures out loud together. Afterward, mention which scripture passage touched you and why. What does the passage mean to you in your own life at this stage of your personal spiritual journey?

## **REFLECT AND SHARE**

Reflect on each question below in turn or use your own questions. Allow group members, if they wish, to answer that question before the group moves on to the next question.

### First Reading

The passage from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah was written at the time that Hebrew people were returning from exile to Jerusalem, which was in battered ruins. Isaiah proclaimed God's message of hope and encouragement that this ruined city would become a place of His Dwelling, a light for all nations, a city overflowing with wealth and treasure. The Hebrews were challenged to see beyond the current devastation of Jerusalem and envision an opulent, gleaming city where they would live.

*Reflection Question :*                    *How does my faith help me see beyond the "messes" in life to envision the glory of God's presence?*

### Second Reading

In this brief reading from his Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul affirmed the mystery of God's grace, that the Gentiles are called to belong to Christ's body. This new awareness and understanding of God's Will began with Jesus' teaching and was inspired by the Holy Spirit through the apostles and prophets through proclaiming the Gospel.

*Reflection Question:*                    *How does my awareness of God's Will that all people belong to Christ affect my behavior to other people?*

### Gospel

The Gospel narrative from St. Matthew tells the story of the Magi's visit to Bethlehem. When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem seeking to honor the new-born king, their unexpected announcement threw Herod and the city into a disturbance. The Magi learned their destination was Bethlehem, and following the star, found and worshiped the infant Jesus. Warned not to go back by the way they had come, the Magi went home by a different route.

*Reflection Question:*                    *What transforming moments have I seen as I've journeyed through life, seeking to honor and worship Jesus as King?*

## **PRAY FOR EACH OTHER**

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together around the centerpiece and say the Our Father. Pray daily for the person on your right.

## **LEAVE TO EVANGELIZE YOUR WORLD**

Reflect on your mission to grow deeper in your relationship with God, offer hospitality and welcome to others and work for transformation in your daily life.

This coming week:

Believe/Communion:                    Each day, reflect upon one devastated area of the world. Envision and pray for it as a place experiencing the fullness of God's Presence - love, peace, light, abundance.

Share/Meal:                                Invite a neighbor to share his or her faith experience.

Transform/Sacrifice:                    Help the world go home by a different route by helping someone.

## January 9, 2005      The Baptism of the Lord

### PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Optional: Prepare a small table, with a place setting of a plate, silverware and napkin. Place a small sign with the name “Jesus” near the plate. You may choose another symbol, display a small cross and enthrone a Bible. Have small note cards and pens available. Use this or another centerpiece that symbolizes the preparation to welcoming Jesus during the Christmastide/Winter Ordinary Time season.

### GATHER TOGETHER IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

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All:          *Come Holy Spirit,  
Fill the hearts of all people with the fire of Your Love.  
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### EXTEND GOD'S INVITATION

On a note card, write down the name of one person that you would like to invite to God's table. If you feel comfortable, share that name with the group and then put the note on the empty plate. During your meeting, hold all those people in prayer, asking God's blessing on them.

### READ THE SCRIPTURES

1<sup>st</sup> Reading:    Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:    Acts 10:34-38

Gospel:          Matthew 3:13-17

Read the Sunday Scriptures out loud together. Afterward, mention which scripture passage touched you and why. What does the passage mean to you in your own life at this stage of your personal spiritual journey?

## **REFLECT AND SHARE**

Reflect on each question below in turn or use your own questions. Allow group members, if they wish, to answer that question before the group moves on to the next question.

### First Reading

The reading from the Prophet Isaiah excerpts one of the “Suffering Servant of the Lord” passages. In this reading, God spoke through Isaiah to reveal the nature of His Servant - one who is called and chosen to bring about justice. How justice is accomplished by God is much different than the world’s way. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Servant; disciples of Jesus are called to become servants that witness to Jesus by living God’s justice.

*Reflection Question:                    What examples of service by disciples of Jesus have shaped my faith?*

### Second Reading

The reading from the Book of Acts includes a portion of St. Peter’s speech to the household of Cornelius. The Holy Spirit prompted both Cornelius and Peter to meet and discover God’s saving plan for the Gentiles and, ultimately, all of humanity. Through the experience, Peter grew in awareness that God accepted all people who respected Him and acted in justice.

*Reflection Question:                    How does my awareness that God is active in the lives of others encourage me to share my faith and listen to theirs?*

### Gospel

This concise passage from the Gospel of Matthew recounts the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. When John objected about baptizing Jesus, Jesus told John to proceed to fulfill righteousness (justice.) God’s affirmation of Jesus - by the Holy Spirit and words from heaven - was a response to Jesus’ faithfulness to God.

*Reflection Question:                    How does my baptism reflect God’s justice and righteousness?*

## **PRAY FOR EACH OTHER**

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together around the centerpiece and say the Our Father. Pray daily this week for the person on your right.

## **LEAVE TO EVANGELIZE YOUR WORLD**

Reflect on your mission to grow deeper in your relationship with God, offer hospitality and welcome to others and work for transformation in your daily life.

This coming week:

Believe/Communion:                    Each day, renew your baptismal vows and ask the Holy Spirit to deepen your faith. (See page 18.)

Share/Meal:                                Invite or accept an invitation to have dinner with someone you don’t know.

Transform/Sacrifice:                    Engage in an act of social justice in your parish or community. Tutor someone, help out with ESL, sponsor someone’s tuition.

## January 16, 2004      Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

### PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Optional: Prepare a small table, with a place setting of a plate, silverware and napkin. Place a small sign with the name “Jesus” near the plate. You may choose another symbol, display a small cross and enthrone a Bible. Have small note cards and pens available. Use this or another centerpiece that symbolizes the preparation to welcoming Jesus during the Christmastide/Winter Ordinary Time season.

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### READ THE SCRIPTURES

1<sup>st</sup> Reading:    Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:    1 Corinthians 1:1-3

Gospel:          John 1:29-34

Read the Sunday Scriptures out loud together. Afterward, mention which scripture passage touched you and why. What does the passage mean to you in your own life at this stage of your personal spiritual journey?

## **REFLECT AND SHARE**

Reflect on each question below in turn or use your own questions. Allow group members, if they wish, to answer that question before the group moves on to the next question.

### First Reading

In the reading from Isaiah, God revealed His plan to make Israel show His glory as His servant. God had BIG plans - to bring all of the Hebrews back to Him and to become glorious as a result. But God's vision of His servant doesn't stop there - God intended to make Israel a light to the nations so that all will receive God's salvation.

*Reflection Question: How does the vision of my life as God's servant inspire me to grow closer to God?*

### Second Reading

This reading is the passage that opens St. Paul's first letter to disciples in the Greek city of Corinth. Paul's greeting reaffirmed their identity: called to be holy, sanctified in Christ, members of God's Church, in union with all those who call upon the name of Jesus as Lord.

*Reflection Question: As a disciple of Jesus, how do I see myself sharing my faith with others of a different faith tradition?*

### Gospel

The reading from the Gospel of John offers a different perspective on Jesus' Baptism. In last Sunday's Gospel, the story was told in a third-person voice. This week's passage captures the testimony of John, who is telling a personal story of what he witnessed when Jesus was baptized. John's account involved his own personal awareness recognition of Jesus as the Son of God.

*Reflection Question: How does my personal encounter with the Son of God make Him known to those in my world?*

## **PRAY FOR EACH OTHER**

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together around the centerpiece and say the Our Father. Pray daily this week for the person on your right.

## **LEAVE TO EVANGELIZE YOUR WORLD**

Reflect on your mission to grow deeper in your relationship with God, offer hospitality and welcome to others and work for transformation in your daily life.

This coming week:

**Believe/Communion:** Take time to ask God to show you how your life as His servant can bring meaning to others.

**Share/Meal:** Invite a conversation. Greet everyone you meet with a smile, heart-felt kind words, and as a person of infinite value and worth.

**Transform/Sacrifice:** As we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, do something this week to celebrate and gather with those of a different ethnic background.

## January 23, 2005      Third Sunday of Ordinary Time

### PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Optional: Prepare a small table, with a place setting of a plate, silverware and napkin. Place a small sign with the name “Jesus” near the plate. You may choose another symbol, display a small cross and enthrone a Bible. Have small note cards and pens available. Use this or another centerpiece that symbolizes the preparation to welcoming Jesus during the Christmastide/Winter Ordinary Time season.

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On a note card, write down the name of one person that you would like to invite to God’s table. If you feel comfortable, share that name with the group and then put the note on the empty plate. During your meeting, hold all those people in prayer, asking God’s blessing on them.

### READ THE SCRIPTURES

1<sup>st</sup> Reading:    Isaiah 8:23-9:3

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:    1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

Gospel:          Matthew 4:12-23

Read the Sunday Scriptures out loud together. Afterward, mention which scripture passage touched you and why. What does the passage mean to you in your own life at this stage of your personal spiritual journey?

## **REFLECT AND SHARE**

Reflect on each question below in turn or use your own questions. Allow group members, if they wish, to answer that question before the group moves on to the next question.

### First Reading

This reading from the prophet Isaiah depicts the saving action of God on behalf of His people. The author contrasted the end, the light of God's salvation, with the beginning, captivity and darkness. God's salvation results in rejoicing in the freedom that only He can give.

*Reflection Questions:                    What experiences of God's salvation have I had that resulted in freedom and rejoicing in my life?*

### Second Reading

In this passage from the First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul wasted no time addressing the problem of division in the community. Paul reminded the church about their duty to be united in mind and purpose, and to put rivalries aside. The mission of Paul was an example to the church of Corinth -- to preach the Gospel.

*Reflection Question:                    What actions can I take to create a greater sense of unity in my parish?*

### Gospel

This account from the Gospel of Matthew reflects today's passages from Isaiah as Jesus began to preach repentance, for God's Kingdom was near. The narrative represents the transforming action of Jesus - calling people to follow Him, teaching, preaching the Gospel, and curing disease and illness.

*Reflection Question:                    How does my life reflect the actions of Jesus in today's Gospel?*

## **PRAY FOR EACH OTHER**

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together around the centerpiece and say the Our Father. Pray daily this week for the person on your right.

## **LEAVE TO EVANGELIZE YOUR WORLD**

Reflect on your mission to grow deeper in your relationship with God, offer hospitality and welcome to others and work for transformation in your daily life.

This coming week:

**Believe/Communion:**                    At the end of each day, pray in the dark asking for God's light to shine brightly on your life and the lives of others.

**Share/Meal:**                                Invite someone with whom you have a conflict to have coffee or share a meal.

**Transform/Sacrifice:**                    During this week celebrating Christian Unity, sponsor or participate in an inter-faith prayer service. Meet someone you don't know and get to know him or her.

## January 30, 2005      Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

### PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Optional: Prepare a small table, with a place setting of a plate, silverware and napkin. Place a small sign with the name “Jesus” near the plate. You may choose another symbol, display a small cross and enthrone a Bible. Have small note cards and pens available. Use this or another centerpiece that symbolizes the preparation to welcoming Jesus during the Christmastide/Winter Ordinary Time season.

### GATHER TOGETHER IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Leader:      As we gather together, we recall how God has come into our lives this past week and how God is present in our midst now.

All:            *Come Holy Spirit,  
Fill the hearts of all people with the fire of Your Love.  
May all accept Your invitation to know and love Jesus as Lord and Savior.*

*Fill this Archdiocese with people who welcome  
and invite others to share in the Catholic faith.*

*Fill our Cardinal, our bishops and priests, deacons and lay ministers  
with wisdom and courage to live and  
preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*Fill all parish and agency staff with Your power to  
evangelize those whom they serve.  
Fill all consecrated men and women and all lay people with the grace  
to become and make disciples of Jesus through  
prayer, work, and daily living.*

*May the holy fire of Your love  
transform our society according to the Gospel.  
Come Holy Spirit! With the Father and the Son,  
You are worshiped and glorified forever and ever. Amen.*

### EXTEND GOD'S INVITATION

On a note card, write down the name of one person that you would like to invite to God’s table. If you feel comfortable, share that name with the group and then put the note on the empty plate. During your meeting, hold all those people in prayer, asking God’s blessing on them.

### READ THE SCRIPTURES

1<sup>st</sup> Reading:    Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:    1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Gospel:          Matthew 5:1-12a

Read the Sunday Scriptures out loud together. Afterward, mention which scripture passage touched you and why. What does the passage mean to you in your own life at this stage of your personal spiritual journey?

## **REFLECT AND SHARE**

Reflect on each question below in turn or use your own questions. Allow group members, if they wish, to answer that question before the group moves on to the next question.

### First Reading

In this reading from the Book of Zephaniah, the prophet encouraged the Hebrews to practice the virtue of humility. Humility is not self-degradation or putting oneself down. True humility is recognizing God as the source of all life and accepting God's gift of ourselves. We show that we accept God's gifts when we respond by depending upon God and cooperating with Him to live a just life.

*Reflection Questions:                    How do I practice humility in my faith life?*

### Second Reading

In this passage from the First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul asked the disciples at Corinth to consider their origin in faith. Most were ignorant, weak and of common birth - lowly and despised. In Paul's words, they counted for nothing as the world valued power, fame and wealth. Yet, God lifted them up through Jesus' wisdom and righteousness, counting them among the great of the earth.

*Reflection Question:                    How do I interact with those whom I consider ignorant, weak and of common birth?*

### Gospel

The Gospel narrative recounts Jesus evangelizing His disciples through the Beatitudes. The place is on a mountain, a familiar setting where God encountered and instructed humans. In the Beatitudes, Jesus taught the results of acting in accord with God's will, being blessed in God's Kingdom.

*Reflection Question:                    Which Beatitude means the most to me right now?*

## **PRAY FOR EACH OTHER**

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together around the centerpiece and say the Our Father. Pray daily this week for the person on your right.

## **LEAVE TO EVANGELIZE YOUR WORLD**

Reflect on your mission to grow deeper in your relationship with God, offer hospitality and welcome to others and work for transformation in your daily life.

This coming week:

**Believe/Communion:**                    Reflect on how you can practice the virtue of humility this week and then follow the inspirations you receive.

**Share/Meal:**                                Invite someone who is handicapped, homeless or mentally challenged to a meal this week. Help out at a PADS site.

**Transform/Sacrifice:**                    Take one Beatitude that challenges you and turn it into a positive course of action this week.

## February 6, 2005      Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

### PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Optional: Prepare a small table, with a place setting of a plate, silverware and napkin. Place a small sign with the name “Jesus” near the plate. You may choose another symbol, display a small cross and enthrone a Bible. Have small note cards and pens available. Use this or another centerpiece that symbolizes the preparation to welcoming Jesus during the Christmastide/Winter Ordinary Time season.

### BECOME ACQUAINTED

Go around the table or circle with each person sharing his or her name. Mention one thing you hope to receive from meeting with your small group.

### GATHER TOGETHER IN THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST

Leader:            As we gather together, we recall how God has come into our lives this past week and how God is present in our midst now.

All:                *Come Holy Spirit,  
Fill the hearts of all people with the fire of Your Love.  
May all accept Your invitation to know and love Jesus as Lord and Savior.*

*Fill this Archdiocese with people who welcome  
and invite others to share in the Catholic faith.*

*Fill our Cardinal, our bishops and priests, deacons and lay ministers  
with wisdom and courage to live and  
preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*

*Fill all parish and agency staff with Your power to  
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Fill all consecrated men and women and all lay people with the grace  
to become and make disciples of Jesus through  
prayer, work, and daily living.*

*May the holy fire of Your love  
transform our society according to the Gospel.  
Come Holy Spirit! With the Father and the Son,  
You are worshiped and glorified forever and ever. Amen.*

### EXTEND GOD'S INVITATION

On a note card, write down the name of one person that you would like to invite to God's table. If you feel comfortable, share that name with the group and then put the note on the empty plate. During your meeting, hold all those people in prayer, asking God's blessing on them.

### READ THE SCRIPTURES

1<sup>st</sup> Reading:    Isaiah 58:7-10

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:    1 Corinthians 2:1-8

Gospel:            Matthew 5:13-16

Read the Sunday Scriptures out loud together. Afterward, mention which scripture passage touched you and why. What does the passage mean to you in your own life at this stage of your personal spiritual journey?

## **REFLECT AND SHARE**

Reflect on each question below in turn or use your own questions. Allow group members, if they wish, to answer that question before the group moves on to the next question.

### First Reading

The reading from the Prophet Isaiah depicts instruction from God: act justly and God's glory will light your path. The Israelites were to feed the hungry, speak justly, and help those in need. God's promised reward was the experience of His presence and salvation.

*Reflection Question: How has my faith life grown when I've followed God's instruction to help those in need?*

### Second Reading

In today's passage from the First Letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul reminded the disciples in Corinth of his approach in evangelizing them. Paul did not rely upon his own charisma, but trusted in the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit to convey God's message of salvation. The faith of the Corinthians was not built on human eloquence or reason, but on God's action.

*Reflection Question: What do I believe about the Holy Spirit's activity to challenge and guide me in sharing my faith with others?*

### Gospel

In today's Gospel, Jesus affirmed the great value of His disciples: as salt of the earth and light of the world. As salt, the disciples were to retain their witness; as light, the disciples were to share their witness with others. Jesus taught that the witness of His disciples was a means to show God's presence that would result in God receiving glory.

*Reflection Question: How do my life and my good deeds give glory to God?*

## **PRAY FOR EACH OTHER**

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together around the centerpiece and say the Our Father. Pray daily this week for the person on your right.

## **LEAVE TO EVANGELIZE YOUR WORLD**

Reflect on your mission to grow deeper in your relationship with God, offer hospitality and welcome to others and work for transformation in your daily life.

This coming week:

- Believe/Communion: Recall an occasion when you received a blessing from God after you had first helped someone else.
- Share/Meal: On this day to celebrate those who serve the Church in religious life, thank or invite a priest, brother or sister religious to dinner or dessert this week.
- Transform/Sacrifice: Visit the Catholic Campaign for Human Development website, [www.usccb.org/cchd](http://www.usccb.org/cchd), to learn how you can use Lent to share your bread with those in need.

## Afterword

### Renewal of Baptismal Vows/ Profession of Faith

I reject sin so as to live in the freedom of God's children.

I reject the glamour of evil and refuse to be mastered by sin.

I reject Satan, father of sin and prince of darkness.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His Only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, was crucified, died and was buried, rose from the dead and is now seated with the Father.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting.

### Comments are Welcome

Thank you for participating in these small faith-sharing group sessions, reflecting on Scripture in the light of evangelization. By virtue of baptism, everyone is called to evangelize. If you are interested in working in evangelization in a greater way, ask your pastor about joining a Parish Evangelization Team or participating in an outreach ministry at your parish.

The Office for Evangelization would appreciate your comments, experiences, thoughts and ideas on what you or your group has learned through the small-faith sharing process. You may write, call, fax or e-mail comments to:

Rev. Joseph Kruszynski, OFM Conv.  
Director, Office for Evangelization  
Archdiocese of Chicago  
155 E. Superior Street  
Chicago, IL 60611  
Voice: (312) 751-5353  
Fax: (312) 751-7884  
JKruszynski@archchicago.org

‡ For further reading, please confer:

Apostolic Letter, *In Novo Millenio Ineunte*, Pope John Paul II, January 6, 2001

Angelus, Pope John Paul II, June 13, 2004

Encyclical, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, Pope John Paul II, April 17, 2004

Fr. Donald Senior, C.P., "Biblical Foundations of the Eucharist", Chicago Catechetical Conference, Rosemont, IL, September 25, 2004

### About the Author

Dave Pipitone is an active Roman Catholic who is husband to Cheryl, father to Emily, parishioner of St. Marcelline's parish in Schaumburg, IL. He has participated in and led small-faith sharing groups, authored faith-sharing materials for the Archdiocese of Chicago, wrote the reflection questions for *Spreading the Holy Fire: A Plan for Catholics Evangelizing in the Archdiocese of Chicago* and has contributed to *Disciples in Prayer* (Oregon Catholic Press.) Dave serves as a member of the Advisory Committee for the Office for Evangelization of the Archdiocese. He is a 2003 graduate of the Chicago Catholic Scripture School offered through the Office of Catechesis of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

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