

2005

2006



Small Faith Sharing Group Reflection Guide

Autumn Ordinary Time, Cycle B



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

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Introduction

This Autumn Ordinary Time 2006 Small Faith-Sharing Group Reflection Guide is prepared for small faith-sharing group members in Catholic parishes and communities. The Reflection Guide combines Cycle B 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 (available at the end of this document and on-line at www.goingforth.org).

Autumn is an excellent time to reflect on the harvest and how God is bringing about a harvest of love and justice in and through us: personal conversion, sharing the Good News with others, and acting to transform society through just actions. During Autumn, we anticipate the time when we are called to share God's eternal banquet.

Each week offers the grace to 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 the gift of holiness. Take responsibility for your own participation and encourage others to take part. The entire group benefits and grows together. As a small group member, please follow these guidelines:

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|------------------------|--|
| Prepare | Get ready for the meetings by reading the Scriptures and reflection material before the meeting. |
| Participate | Show up. Read the Scriptures when asked. Respond aloud to the reflection questions. However, you may choose to "pass" at any time without explanation. |
| Pray | Pray for the group leader, other members of the group and yourself. |
| Be Present | Attend all meetings unless pressing circumstances prevent it. |
| Be Personal | 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. |
| Be Confidential | 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. |
| Be Gentle | 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 time be a rich experience of God's love that leads you to share that love with others.

Cycle B

The Gospel of Mark

Insights on Evangelization

The Scripture readings for the 2005-2006 Liturgical Year are from Cycle B of the Sunday Lectionary. In Cycle B, Sunday liturgies draw their Gospel readings from Mark.

Author/Audience

The Gospel of Mark is believed to be the earliest of the four written Gospels. The authorship of the Gospel is uncertain. Traditionally it has been assigned to John Mark, who was a cousin of Barnabas and an early disciple in the Christian community. John Mark accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their missionary journeys. Modern research proposes that the author may have been a Hellenistic Jewish Christian from Syria. Scripture scholars believe that the Gospel was written to the Gentiles, who did not know Jewish customs and traditions. The timing suggests that the Gospel was written to help disciples persevere in their faith during a time of persecution. Scholars estimate that the Gospel of Mark was written around the year 70 AD.

Message and Themes

Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four Gospels. Mark tells a vivid and dynamic story about Jesus' life, teaching and actions. The pace of the story is urgent and calls the reader to make a decision to act without hesitation. The Gospel of Mark gets right to the point. The opening verse states that this is the Good News of Jesus Christ, Son of God. Peter confesses Jesus as Messiah in response to Jesus question (Mark 8:29), "Who do you say that I am?" (It's not about what others say, it's about what we say.) The accounts of Jesus' dramatic healing and exorcisms show God's powerful activity breaking into human history to bring freedom from sin and death. The center of Jesus' saving activity is the cross - the heart of Jesus' mission and work. Mark shows that Jesus' disciples play an important role. The disciples are present in almost every scene of Mark's Gospel. The first disciples follow Him right away (only 16 verses into the Gospel!)

How the Gospel of Mark Relates to Evangelizing

As in Mark's Gospel, we are disciples of Jesus, who calls us to an important role in announcing the gospel in our times. Reflect upon these key insights from Mark's Gospel for evangelizing:

- Commit:** In Chapter 1, verse 16 of Mark's Gospel, the first disciples were called to follow Jesus. They responded immediately. *How do I respond and commit to follow Jesus to become a "fisher of people?"*
- Believe:** In Chapter 8, verse 29, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter responded, "You are the Messiah." *How do I confess Jesus and grow in my relationship with Him?*
- Share:** In Chapter 15, verse 39, the Roman centurion witnessed how Jesus died on the cross and proclaimed, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" *How does my life give witness so that "outsiders" come to see God's love for them?*
- Transform:** In Chapter 16, verses 19-20, Jesus ascended to God's right hand and the disciples went everywhere to preach the Good News. Jesus worked with them with accompanying signs. *How does my activity propel me to go everywhere to bring about God's Reign?*

Source: Fr. Donald Senior, C.P. and PHEME PERKINS, *Gospel of Mark, Reading Guide, The Catholic Study Bible, New American Bible, Oxford Press, pages RG405-RG417, pages 65-68.* See these articles for more detail on this Gospel.

Introduction to All Small Faith Sharing Sessions

PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Optional: On a small table, place a cornucopia with gourds, Indian corn or other items. Place a statue or picture of the risen Christ on it. Put a small basket or bowl in front of the image of Jesus you selected. You may select another symbol and choose to enthrone a Bible. Have small note cards and pens available. Use this or another centerpiece that celebrates the harvest of God's Reign: love, peace and justice.

BECOME ACQUAINTED

Go around the group with each person sharing his or her hopes for the meeting.

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.

After a moment of silence, ask the Holy Spirit to empower you and the group:

*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 notecard, write the name(s) of those whose lives may need to experience a greater springtime - victory over their struggles, a new coming of God's Reign of love, peace, and justice into their lives. Place the cards in the bowl or basket.

REFLECT AND SHARE

For Autumn 2006, the Gospel readings in Cycle B are primarily from Mark. The Gospels teach of the demands of being authentic disciples of Jesus. 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.

September 10, 2006 Twenty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Isaiah 35:4-7a

2nd Reading: James 2:1-5

Gospel: Mark 7:31-37

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's passage from Mark depicts Jesus on a journey into the Decapolis (ten cities.) While He was there, the people brought to Jesus a man who could not speak nor hear. Jesus took the man away to a separate place. Jesus did more than lay hands on the man; He put his finger in the man's ears, spit, touched the man's tongue and groaned a command, "Be opened!" Immediately, the man was cured. Jesus ordered the group to say nothing, but they spread the news more and more with their astonishment, "He has done all things well."

Reflection Questions:

Believe: *What astonishes me about Jesus?*

Share: *What events of Jesus saving activity do I proclaim to others?*

Transform: *What would our society say about Jesus if it would hear the good news like 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 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: In prayer, ask Jesus to remove any impediments that keep you from hearing Him or telling others about Him.

Share: Learn a few phrases in sign language and communicate with someone who has a hearing handicap.

Transform: Identify a group of people who are bound up by hatred and intolerance. Become their voice for justice and truth.

September 17, 2006 Twenty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Isaiah 50:5-9a

2nd Reading: James 2:14-18

Gospel: Mark 8:27-35

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's passage begins a transition in Mark's Gospel. Until this point, the Gospel emphasizes Jesus' power and deliverance. This passage reveals Jesus' ultimate mission with the cross. The transition begins with a simple question, "Who do others say that I am?" and progressed to the personal question, "Who do *you* say that I am?" Peter got Jesus' identity right, but not Jesus' mission. Jesus addressed His disciples, and the crowds, telling them that to follow Him meant to take up ones cross and lose their lives for His sake.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: In light of today's Gospel, what does it mean to lose my life for Jesus?

Share: What things do I need to give up in my life so that I may share my faith more clearly?

Transform: In light of today's Gospel, what elements of our society do not think as God thinks?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: During prayer, answer Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" for yourself. Then, tell Jesus what you think and how you feel.

Share: With whom has it been "a cross" to share your faith? Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and power to witness to him/her/them.

Transform: Take a public stand to confront an area of public society that conflicts with the Gospel of Life. Write a letter, make a phone call, picket, keep a vigil.

September 24, 2006 Twenty Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Wisdom 2:12,17-20

2nd Reading: James 3:16 - 4:3

Gospel: Mark 9:30-37

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

In today's passage from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus revealed His destiny of death and resurrection to His disciples. In contrast, the disciples had argued among themselves who would be the greatest of them. Jesus then corrected them about the spirit of greatness: those who want to be great must be the servant of all. Jesus taught that service entailed embracing and receiving the lowly (in the story, children).

Reflection Questions:

Believe: In light of today's Gospel, what is my attitude toward receiving Jesus simply, as a child might?

Share: In light of today's Gospel, what is my attitude toward serving those who are powerless or helpless?

Transform: In light of today's Gospel, how does prevailing thinking in American society regard greatness?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: In prayer, imagine your inner child receiving Jesus. Tell Jesus how you feel and what you think.

Share: Develop a conversation with those in your family, friends or colleagues about how serving others can benefit those caught up in comparison and competition.

Transform: Do a kind act that values the underprivileged children in your community, our society or world

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Numbers 11:25-29
2nd Reading: James 5:1-6
Gospel: Mark 9:38-43,45,47-48

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

In the passage from Mark's Gospel, John told Jesus about an "unauthorized" disciple who was casting out demons. Jesus's answer indicated that there are those beside the Twelve who furthered God's Kingdom. Jesus then spoke about the necessity of avoiding sin personally and the grave consequences of leading innocent people to sin. The public example of a disciple carries significant accountability.

Reflection Questions:

- Believe:* In the light of today's Gospel, what is my attitude toward learning hard lessons from Jesus?
- Share:* In the light of today's Gospel, what is my attitude toward those who share the Gospel differently than I do?
- Transform:* In the light of today's Gospel, what is my attitude toward those who do good works (mighty deeds) in a way outside of my experience of Catholic tradition?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

- Believe:** Examine your conscience for prejudice and ill will toward other servants of God with whom you may have a conflict. Ask for forgiveness and work toward reconciliation where needed.
- Share:** In prayer, ask Jesus to remind you of all the different people who love and serve Him. Write down a list of everyone who comes to mind. Thank Jesus for them.
- Transform:** Address a sinful pattern in society by offering a personal witness to Gospel values. Mentor someone who is seeking understanding about accountability.

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Genesis 2:18-24

2nd Reading: Hebrews 2:9-11

Gospel: Mark 10:2-16

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

In today's reading from the Gospel of Mark, Jesus addressed common family issues of His day - divorce, remarriage and the value of children. When confronted by the "lawfulness" of divorce by the Pharisees, Jesus upheld the oneness of marriage and God's role in uniting husband and wife, whereas divorce was a human invention to separate what God joined. When people brought their children to Jesus, the disciples rebuked them. Jesus became angry and called the children to Him, blessing and embracing them.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: What does the sanctity of marriage and children mean to me?

Share: What is my attitude toward those who are divorced and how do I reach out to them in love?

Transform: What modern day challenges confront marriage and children?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: In prayer, recall your parents and family of origin. Ask Jesus to bless them, embrace them and give them peace.

Share: As a friend, listen non-judgmentally to someone who has been divorced or is in the process of becoming divorced. Offer your presence and good will. (There are many inactive Catholics who have become so because of misunderstanding about divorce.)

Transform: Become involved in a pro-family ministry through your parish or become involved in a pro-family assistance program in your community.

October 15, 2006 Twenty Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Wisdom 7:7-11
2nd Reading: Hebrews 4:12-13
Gospel: Mark 10:17-30

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel from Mark involves a conversation between Jesus, a young man and Jesus' disciples about the value of God's Kingdom. The man asked Jesus about the condition of inheriting eternal life. Jesus told the man about the necessity to keep the commandments, to give his wealth to the poor and then to follow Him. The man went away because he was unable to part with his many possessions. Jesus used the occasion to say how difficult it would be for those with wealth to enter the kingdom of God. His disciples were amazed, shocked and discouraged. When Peter asked what they would receive, since they had given up everything, Jesus responded they would receive many blessings and eternal life.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: *In light of today's Gospel, how do I value my present possessions and wealth?*

Share: *In light of today's Gospel, how do I value my present opportunity to share the faith that I have?*

Transform: *In light of today's Gospel, how do I value my present circumstances to serve others, especially the poor?*

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: In prayer, imagine Jesus giving you a large sack of treasure. Thank Jesus for the gift. Then, open the sack, examine its contents and tell Jesus what you think and how you feel.

Share: Give up one of your ways of how you keep quiet about your faith and give your faith away to someone whose faith is weak or poor.

Transform: Examine your possessions. Share your excess with others in need.

October 22, 2006 Twenty Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Isaiah 53:10-11
2nd Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16
Gospel: Mark 10:35-45

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's passage from Mark's Gospel contains another account of Jesus' disciples posturing to gain glory for themselves. James and John approached Jesus and asked to be at the top when He is glorified. Jesus asked if they would pay the price of sacrifice. They answered yes. Jesus told them they would share in His passion, but it was God's decision to mete out rewards. The other ten disciples were livid at James and John. Jesus called them all aside and reversed their expectation about greatness. Those who would be great must serve greatly as Jesus would do.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: How do I think and feel toward Jesus when He serves me?

Share: How does serving others allow me to share my faith with them?

Transform: How does our society look upon those who serve others?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: In prayer, thank Jesus for the many ways that He has served you. Renew your commitment to serve Him by evangelizing.

Share: In October, Catholic parishes often hold a stewardship drive for time, talent and treasure. Identify what gifts you are called to share and make a commitment to share them.

Transform: Honor someone in a public service profession - from government, health care, non-profit organizations, etc. Show your appreciation for the sacrifices he/she/they make to help others.

October 29, 2006 Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Jeremiah 31:7-9

2nd Reading: Hebrews 5:1-6

Gospel: Mark 10:46-52

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel from Mark is an account of Jesus healing the blind man, Bartimaeus. The blind man was begging at the roadside and heard that Jesus was coming. Bartimaeus called out asking Jesus for mercy. While many told him to keep quiet, he kept calling for Jesus. Jesus stopped and told the people to bring the blind man to Him. Jesus asked what the man wanted and he replied "to see." Jesus healed the man, who followed Jesus on the way.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: What new things do I need to see about following Jesus?

Share: Whom do I know that has been calling to see Jesus and I've discouraged them from finding Him?

Transform: In what ways is our society blind to Jesus' presence and how can our parish make Him more sought after?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: In prayer, put yourself in the shoes of Bartimaeus. Ask Jesus to see what He sees. Tell Jesus what you think and how you feel.

Share: Share your faith with someone who is blind to his/her own goodness and Jesus' love for them.

Transform: Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance to see what to do to eliminate the sins of those who are blind to racism, intolerance, violence or sexism.

November 5, 2006 Thirty First Sunday in Ordinary Time

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Deuteronomy 6:2-6

2nd Reading: Hebrews 7:23-28

Gospel: Mark 12:28b-34

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's account from the Gospel of Mark depicts a Jewish scribe asking Jesus which is the first of all of the commandments. Jesus replied by quoting the commandment that Moses gave to the Israelites (found in today's reading from Deuteronomy.) God alone is Lord and those who follow God's ways must love God with all of one's soul, mind and strength. Jesus went further to define a second commandment - love your neighbor as yourself. The scribe affirmed Jesus' wisdom in naming these two commandments and how keeping them was worth more than ritual sacrifice. Jesus observed the scribe's response and told him that he was close to the kingdom of God.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: *In light of today's Gospel, what does the first of all commandments mean to me in the way I live my life?*

Share: *In the light of today's Gospel, how does the second commandment influence how I share my faith with others?*

Transform: *In light of today's Gospel, how do these two commandments speak toward transforming the world?*

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: *In prayer this week, consciously renew your Baptismal Vows, found on page 15 of this Guide.*

Share: *Practice sharing your faith with someone with whom you are familiar, but don't know well personally. Let the "second commandment" guide how you witness to your faith.*

Transform: *Live today's Gospel where you work for the next week and notice the results.*

November 12, 2006 Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: 1 Kings 17:10-16

2nd Reading: Hebrews 9:24-28

Gospel: Mark 12:38-44

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

In today's Gospel, Jesus was teaching the crowds to watch out for performing religious acts for people to notice, but not acting justly from the heart. He pointed out several examples of that behavior from Jewish scribes: wearing distinctive clothing, seeking places of honor. In contrast, the Gospel passage includes a segment about a poor widow who gave from her heart, her whole livelihood, from the heart, to the Temple treasury while many others gave simply from their surplus.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: In light of today's Gospel, what value do I place on acting from the heart or maintaining external appearances?

Share: In light of today's Gospel, how do I feel about sharing my faith with those who are religious in name only? With those who are sincere seekers?

Transform: In light of today's Gospel, what areas of American society would be different (and how) if external appearances were not important?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: In prayer, ask Jesus to show you what items from your whole livelihood that you can dedicate to serving Him. Then, recommit yourself to following Him.

Share: Observe what truth and meaning others from a different faith tradition are seeking. Enter a conversation with them about what means the most to them and share what means the most to you.

Transform: Get involved with SPRED, Special Olympics, the mentally handicapped, those whom society considers ugly, worthless or dumb. Tell them how beautiful, worthwhile and precious they are in God's eyes and yours.

November 19, 2006 Thirty Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Daniel 12:1-3
2nd Reading: Hebrews 10:11-14,18
Gospel: Mark 13:24-32

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

The 2005-2006 Liturgical year ends next week. Today's Gospel passage from Mark is about end times and the final days of humanity. Jesus addressed His disciples about how the world's light will fail to compare with His own power and glory. Jesus will gather His faithful disciples from every place in creation to be with Him. Jesus promised that His words would never pass away. The final day was known only to the Father.

Reflection Questions:

- Believe:* How do I feel about encountering Jesus at the end of time as He appears with great power and glory?
- Share:* In light of today's Gospel, how do I feel about having all people with Jesus at the end of time?
- Transform:* In light of today's Gospel, what do I believe is the ultimate destination of creation?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

- Believe:* In prayer, imagine yourself witnessing the final coming of Jesus at the end of time, when He sends an angel to gather you to Him. Tell Him what you think and how you feel.
- Share:* Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you this week to invite someone hungering for love and meaning to attend Mass with you.
- Transform:* Do something to address the conditions of homelessness, poverty, hunger, illiteracy – to help others find greater justice and peace in their lives.

READ THE SCRIPTURES

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?

1st Reading: Daniel 7:13-14
2nd Reading: Revelation 1:5-8
Gospel: John 18:33b-37

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's reading from the Gospel of John is part of the Passion narrative from Good Friday. In the account, Jesus encountered Pilate in a conversation about His role in history. Pilate called Jesus a King, to which Jesus replied that His kingdom is not on earth. Pilate reaffirmed his claim that Jesus was a King. Jesus answered that the reason for His birth and mission was to testify to the truth. Those who belonged to the truth listened to Jesus' voice.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: As the 2005-2006 Liturgical year ends, what truths have I learned about how my faith in Jesus and God has grown?

Share: As the 2005-2006 Liturgical year ends, what truths have I learned about how my ability and confidence in sharing my faith has grown?

Transform: As the 2005-2006 Liturgical year ends, what truths have I learned about how I taken more positive action to bring about greater love, peace and justice in the world?

PRAY FOR EACH OTHER

Pray together for any petitions and any needs that you might have. Stand in a circle together 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. Be welcoming, offer hospitality and work for transformation in your daily life. Suggestions for this coming week:

Believe: Slowly and deliberately pray the Our Father often for our world. Give special reflection and intention to the phrase "Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven."

Share: Celebrate a Thanksgiving meal with someone who has no home, money or friends. Hold the image of seeing these people with you at God's eternal banquet.

Transform: Testify to the truth. Help others in your community to hear the voice of Jesus speaking through your kind, just and prophetic words and deeds.

THE PERSONAL MANDATE:

Becoming a Disciple

PERSONAL OBJECTIVE ONE: COMMITMENT

Each Catholic will recommit her/himself to Jesus Christ as a disciple by embracing evangelization as their personal mission.

Strategies

- Accept God's invitation to personal conversion, to know and love Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- Pray daily for the grace and power of the Holy Spirit to be more of a disciple of Jesus Christ by growing in faith, hope, and love.
- Pray daily for the spread of the Gospel and for all of the disciples of Jesus, especially the Church's official ministers and our Cardinal Archbishop.
- Develop a mindset of "being sent" to share the Good News with everyone.
- Write a personal mission statement in light of evangelization and discipleship.
- Renew your Baptismal Promises on a regular basis (daily if possible) as a sign of your commitment to discipleship and evangelization.
- Take a personal inventory on a regular basis (daily) by examining your conscience, your intentions, and your actions.
- Create a daily plan to evangelize by being "intentional" in what you say and do.
- Witness to the Gospel and to Jesus Christ by living as a faithful, practicing Catholic.
- Support the Church by exercising Gospel stewardship of personal time, talent, and treasure.

Visible Signs

- Individual Catholics have a sense of personal mission and of "being sent."
- Individual Catholics are volunteering for church programs, ministries, and outreach.
- The witness of individual Catholics is noticed at home, in the parish, and in the neighborhood.

PERSONAL OBJECTIVE TWO: BELIEVE

Each Catholic will respond to God's grace to grow in personal holiness by deepening his/her personal relationship with Jesus and His Church.

Strategies

- Actively participate in the Sunday Eucharist on a regular basis.
- Try to share in the Eucharist more often than Sunday.
- Cultivate a daily practice of personal prayer and conversation with God.
- Actively celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a part of your spiritual life.
- Encourage family members to participate in celebrating the Sacramental Life of the Church, especially the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- Develop a deeper appreciation for the Sacred Scriptures by reading and reflecting upon them on a regular basis, especially the readings of the liturgical day.

- Participate in faith-sharing prayer and other spiritual formation events like retreats, parish missions, days of reflection, and the like.
- Join in a small faith-sharing group or small Christian community to share prayer, faith, and Scripture.
- Study and reflect upon the rich heritage and teachings of the Catholic Church as expressed in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* or other such documents and share them with others.
- Develop a daily, personal spiritual regimen; e.g., morning and evening prayers, prayer before meals, examination of conscience, Scripture reading, personal devotions, Mass, etc.

Visible Signs

- Catholics actively and regularly participate in the celebration of the sacramental life of the Church, especially the Holy Eucharist.
- Individual Catholics are enthusiastic about being Catholic.
- Individual Catholics are alive with an informed faith, a vibrant hope for the coming of God's Reign, and a joyful love of God. God's presence is experienced and witnessed.

PERSONAL OBJECTIVE THREE: SHARE

Each Catholic will reach out to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with everyone and especially newcomers, inactive Catholics, the marginalized, and the unchurched.

Strategies

- Become a sharing person who freely witnesses to the Catholic Faith and recount personal experiences openly with others.
- Invite a new parishioner, neighbor, or friend to dinner or a social event to build a friendship based on Christ's love.
- Visit a new parishioner or neighbor in his or her home to build community and communion.
- Become a minister of care and bring Holy Communion to the homebound and hospitalized.
- Practice hospitality in the parish, in the neighborhood, in the workplace by listening, encouraging, affirming, and celebrating others.
- Develop a welcoming atmosphere at home by being present for family meals and other family celebrations and special occasions.
- Celebrate the diversity and faith of people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds by sharing stories and entering into conversation and dialogue. (Resources: The pastoral letter of Francis Cardinal George *Dwell in My Love* (April 2001) and the U.S. Catholic Bishops' statement entitled *Welcoming the Stranger Among Us: Unity in Diversity*)

- Reach out and welcome Catholics who have become inactive in the practice of their faith by listening to their stories and inviting them, when ready, to return to active participation in the Church. (Resource: *A Time to Listen...A Time to Heal: A Resource Directory for Reaching Out to Inactive Catholics*, U.S. Catholic Bishops Handbook, November 1998)
- Know the outreach ministries of the parish and invite fellow parishioners, friends and family members to enroll in outreach sessions.
- Witness the Gospel to the unchurched and to those who have never heard of Christ and His Church by word and deed so that they may come to know of God's love for them.

Visible Signs

- Inactive Catholics are being invited to return to the practice of their faith.
- Individual Catholics express a joyful spirit of hospitality.
- Individual Catholics live out the paradigm shift of the Second Vatican Council by being focused on outreach to all and not just to practicing Catholics.



PERSONAL OBJECTIVE FOUR: TRANSFORM

Each Catholic will participate in the transformation of society and culture by living and proclaiming the Gospel of Life.

Strategies

- Develop a deeper gratitude and practice of sacrificial love in families to mirror the love of Christ and strengthen the domestic church. (Resource: *Follow the Way of Love: A Pastoral Message of the U.S. Catholic Bishops to Families*)
- Seek out opportunities to witness to Christ through social programs and church-sponsored outreach ministries. (Resources: *Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice* and *In All Things Charity: A Pastoral Challenge for the New Millennium*, U.S. Catholic Bishops)
- Exercise political rights in accord with Gospel and Catholic values by voting, campaigning, and becoming involved in the political process to shape a political environment based on Gospel values of respect for the dignity of the human person. (Resources: *Living the Gospel of Life: A Challenge to America's Catholics and Faithful Citizenship* by the U.S. Catholic Bishops)
- Discern and practice the wise use of those contemporary media which affirm human life and Gospel values, including reading materials and viewing programs that are in accord with Catholic values and beliefs. (Resources: *Family Guide for Using the Media, Your Family and Cyberspace*, *Civility in Media*, *Renewing the Mind of the Media*, *Family Guide for Using the Media*, U.S. Catholic Bishops)
- Develop an appreciation of the arts and their messages in order to hear the signs of the times and discern the Holy Spirit's voice calling for transformation.
- Develop and practice a spirituality of work so that all employers and employees are transformed by just labor relationships.
- Practice faith by witnessing to the Gospel in all areas of your daily life including family, neighborhood, workplace, politics, the arts, the sciences, media, and other areas.
- Work in your neighborhood, parish, and home to foster cultural diversity and racial justice.
- Be involved in parish and local service groups in your neighborhood which serve the needs of the neighborhood.
- Study and reflect upon the social teachings of the Church.

Visible Signs

- Individual Catholics are involved in putting into practice the social teachings of the Church.
- Persons are transformed in their personal lives as they are affected by the power of the Gospel.
- People everywhere recognize the transforming presence of Jesus in the workplace, neighborhood, parish, and home in the quality of human relationships.

1. *Of what importance is the Personal Mandate?*

To whom does it apply?

2. *Where and how do individuals achieve the strategies to commit, believe, share, and transform society? What resources do they need?*

3. *What visible signs appeal the most to you? Why?*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS