

2005
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Small Faith Sharing Group Reflection Guide

Easter - Corpus Christi, Cycle B



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

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Introduction

This Eastertide 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).

The Season of Easter offers a time to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the formation of the Church, His Body on earth. The Season of Easter includes several feasts that inspire us to invite the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit deeper into our lives. The Season of Easter offers a unique opportunity for sharing our faith and working to transform society.

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:

- 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.
- Pray** Pray for the group leader, the other members of the group and for yourself between meeting times.
- 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: Cover a small table with a white cloth and 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 God's saving power in raising Jesus and giving us a deeper, new life during this Season.

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 Easter 2006, the Gospel readings in Cycle B are primarily from John. The Gospels give a wondrous account of the continuing presence, love and mission of Jesus among His disciples and Church. 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.

April 16, 2006

Easter Sunday

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: Acts 10:34a, 37-43

2nd Reading: Colossians 3:1-4

Gospel: John 20:1-9

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's reading from the Gospel of John is the same Gospel found in all three Lectionary Cycles (A, B, C.) John's account begins with Mary of Magdala's discovery of the empty tomb. She ran to tell His disciples of Jesus' missing body. Both Peter and the beloved disciple ran to the tomb and witnessed with their own eyes what Mary had reported. They did not yet comprehend Jesus' rising from the dead.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: What does Jesus' empty tomb mean to me?

Share: How fast do I act to report Jesus' empty tomb to others?

Transform: What impact does Jesus' empty tomb have on 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: During prayer, reflect on how your belief in the risen Jesus has brought you new life this year.

Share: Today, or during this week, share your experience of your renewed faith in Jesus with a friend or family member.

Transform: Take one of your personal Lenten resolutions for transforming society, create a plan to take action and then begin implementing that plan.

April 23, 2006

**Second Sunday of Easter
(Divine Mercy Sunday)**

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: Acts 4:32-35
2nd Reading: 1 John 5:1-6
Gospel: John 20:19-31

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's reading from John's Gospel tells the story of Jesus' first appearance to His disciples. In the account, Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on His disciples and gave them the authority to forgive sins. Jesus' disciple, Thomas, missed Jesus' appearance. Thomas expressed the need for physical contact with Jesus to believe. A week later, Jesus appeared again when Thomas was present and invited Thomas' touch. Thomas confessed Jesus as his Lord and God. The end of the Gospel of John states its purpose: it was written so that the reader may come to believe in Jesus and have life in His name.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: What conditions do I place on my belief in Jesus?

Share: What reactions of others do I witness when I share my encounters of Jesus with them?

Transform: Where do I see the Gospel working to bring the world to experience new life in Jesus?

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: As you pray, imagine taking the hand of Jesus and walking with Him each day this week.

Share: Share the peace of Christ with everyone you meet this week - verbally and non-verbally.

Transform: Today is Divine Mercy Sunday. Take positive action to be a channel of God's blessing and mercy to others.

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: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19

2nd Reading: 1 John 2:1-5a

Gospel: Luke 24:35-48

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

The story in the passage from Luke's Gospel occurs after the two disciples encountered Jesus at Emmaus. After they returned to the other disciples, Jesus appeared to them all. Jesus showed them that He was alive and opened their minds to understand His mission - to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus called the disciples to be witnesses of this.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: How do I feel when I encounter Jesus in an unexpected way?

Share: How do I feel about my call to be a witness to Jesus in my daily life?

Transform: How does my willingness to witness to Jesus transform the world in which I live?

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: At all of your meals this week, put an extra place setting on your dinner table as a reminder that Jesus is present. Then, act as if He is present.

Share: Invite a stranger or newcomer at your parish, your workplace or in your neighborhood to dinner this week.

Transform: Observe and witness an area of racism or ethnic strife where you may be called to witness to Jesus' love by your personal example. Take a step to interact with someone affected by that strife to create a greater sense of unity and love.

May 7, 2006

Fourth Sunday of Easter

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: Acts 4:8-12

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:1-2

Gospel: John 10:11-18

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today is Good Shepherd Sunday and the account in John's Gospel contains Jesus' discourse about what a good shepherd does. Jesus knows His followers intimately (by name.) Jesus willingly lays down His life for them. Jesus obeys His Father's command to lay down His life and take it up again.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: What does it mean to me that Jesus is a Good Shepherd?

Share: What does it mean to me that Jesus is concerned with other disciples and people who don't belong to the Catholic faith?

Transform: What does it mean to me that Jesus wants all people to be united in Him?

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: As you pray this week, imagine Jesus guiding you into a deeper relationship of love with Him.

Share: Pray for Christian unity this week and make personal contact with someone from another Christian denomination.

Transform: Do a kind deed for someone outside of your normal circle of contacts – make a new friend.

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: Acts 9:26-31
2nd Reading: 1 John 3:18-24
Gospel: John 15:1-8

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel focuses on the discourse of Jesus as He compares Himself to a vine and His Father to a vine grower. Jesus spoke of the fruitfulness of the vine's branches. Jesus used two symbolic actions: pruning away the dead wood and increasing the flow of life to make more productive branches. The key to bearing much fruit was staying connected to Jesus. People would glorify the Father by bearing much fruit and becoming Jesus' disciples.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: What good fruit do I observe in my life as a result of my relationship with Jesus? What dead wood can be pruned to make it more productive?

Share: How does the witness of my life bear fruit in the lives of others?

Transform: How does the fruit my life bears make a difference for those who are hungry for love, peace and justice?

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: Plant a vine of flowers or vegetables in a pot or in your garden. Use this as part of your prayer. As you water the vine and watch it grow, consider how your life is growing in Jesus.

Share: Take a live plant to someone who is shut-in and spend time visiting with him/her.

Transform: Plant consistent kind, loving words and actions in places that appear dead - to prune away areas of intolerance, racism, misunderstanding.

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: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

2nd Reading: 1 John 4:7-10

Gospel: John 15:9-17

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's reading from the Gospel of John continues Jesus' address to His disciples to love one another. Jesus taught that love begins with His Father and continues with Jesus' love for His disciples. Jesus called His disciples His friends, if they did what He commanded. Jesus' commanded His disciples to love one another as He loved them. That love would involve friendship, service and laying down one's life for one's friends.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: How do I feel when I think of myself as Jesus' friend?

Share: How do I feel about loving others and receiving the love of others?

Transform: What role does friendship play in transforming society and the world into God's Reign of love, justice and peace?

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 time, talk to Jesus and listen to Him as a heart-to-heart friend.

Share: Write a note to or phone a friend that you haven't see or heard from for some time. Renew your friendship.

Transform: Make a new friend of someone of a different ethnic, racial, cultural or faith background.

May 28, 2006

**Ascension Sunday
(Evangelization Sunday)**

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: Acts 1:1-11
2nd Reading: Ephesians 4:1-15
Gospel: Mark 16:15-20

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's passage is from the very end of Mark's Gospel. In the account, Jesus commanded His disciples to go out into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation. Jesus pointed out the need for belief in Him and baptism into His church. Visible signs of Jesus' power would accompany their action to preach the Gospel. Jesus ascended to His Father and His disciples went forth everywhere. Jesus kept His word by working His signs through them.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: What Visible Signs appear in my life that my faith in Jesus is growing?

Share: What Visible Signs does my life display as I share my faith with others?

Transform: What Visible Signs do my actions show that I am going out into the whole world to proclaim the Gospel in all that I do ?

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: Read the Visible Signs in the "Personal Mandate" booklet found online at www.goingforth.org Reflect upon them and the Visible Signs of Jesus' presence and power in your life. Tell Jesus what you think and feel.

Share: Get involved in a door-to-door visiting program in your parish.

Transform: Go out into your community and help with a food pantry, tutoring service, or other development program.

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: Acts 2:1-11
- 2nd Reading: Galatians 5:16-25
- Gospel: John 15:26-26; 16:12-15

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

In today's Gospel passage from John, Jesus taught His disciples about the role of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The Spirit will testify to Jesus, prompting the disciples to testify to Jesus. The Spirit will guide the disciples into all truth. The Spirit will speak the words of Jesus and glorify Jesus. The Spirit will declare what the Father and Jesus speak.

Reflection Questions:

- Believe:* *What do I believe about the Holy Spirit's presence and activity in my life?*

- Share:* *What do I believe about the Holy Spirit's guidance and prompting to share my faith with others?*

- Transform:* *What do I believe about the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Church to transform society?*

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:** Renew your baptismal vows and make a new profession of faith (see page 14.)

- Share:** Go shopping for someone who can't and share the Gospel through your kind service.

- Transform:** Review your resolution to transform society that you considered in Lent and committed to on Easter Sunday. Ask the Holy Spirit for the power to continue in that commitment.

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 4:23-24, 39-40

2nd Reading: Romans 8:14-17

Gospel: Matthew 28:16-20

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

The reading from the end of Matthew's Gospel tells the account of the Great Commission that Jesus gave His disciples. They were to go and make disciples of everyone, baptizing them in God's name - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The disciples were to teach what *Jesus* commanded, knowing that He would always be with them.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: How do I feel about my relationships with God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit?

Share: How does my daily living give witness to God's presence in my life?

Transform: How do I experience community with all nations as a disciple of Christ?

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, imagine Jesus approaching you, assuring you of His presence and commissioning you to make disciples of others. Tell Jesus what you think and how you feel.

Share: This week, learn something new about a culture, a country or a race that you don't know much about. Then, do something to share your faith as a disciple of Jesus using what you have learned.

Transform: Use and support modern media to spread the Gospel: e-mail, the Internet, TV, radio or publications.

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: Exodus 24:3-8
2nd Reading: Hebrews 9:11-15
Gospel: Mark 14:12-16. 22-26

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel from Mark closes out the Easter Season. The account tells the story of Jesus' sharing the Passover meal with His disciples by offering His body and blood. Jesus blessed, broke, and gave the bread to His disciples as His body. He took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to His disciples, who drank from it. Jesus declared that the cup contained His blood of the covenant which would be shed for many.

Reflection Questions:

Believe: *What does receiving the Body and Blood of Christ mean to me?*

Share: *What does witnessing the community receive the Body and Blood of Christ during liturgy mean to me?*

Transform: *What does the vision of all Catholics and all people receiving Jesus' Body and Blood mean to me?*

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 Sunday liturgy, be fully open and aware of receiving Jesus' Body and Blood. Tell Jesus what you think and how you feel.*

Share: *Celebrate the liturgy at a parish in a different ethnic neighborhood or where a different language is spoken. Celebrate and receive the Eucharist, then fellowship with the parishioners after Mass.*

Transform: *Provide for someone who is hungry for peace, justice, love or meaning by offering a gift of your time, money, talent and presence.*

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:

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About the Author

Dave Pipitone is an active Roman Catholic who is husband to Cheryl and father to Emily. 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 an ad hoc 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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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