

2005

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## Small Faith Sharing Group Reflection Guide

Summer Ordinary Time, Cycle B



Developed by  
The Office For  
Evangelization  
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## Introduction

*This Summer 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](http://www.goingforth.org)).*

The Season of Summer Ordinary Time offers us a time to take action to make God's presence more apparent in our lives. The Season of Summer Ordinary Time includes the many, seemingly small events that make our time with family, friends, our neighbors and communities reflect the gradual unfolding of God's Reign.

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 green 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 Jesus' ongoing growth in our lives 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 Summer 2006, the Gospel readings in Cycle B are primarily from Mark with a series of five Sundays which draw from Jesus' Bread of Life discourse in John. The Gospels teach of the ongoing call to be 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.

**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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Job 38:1,8-11

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:14-17

Gospel: Mark 4:35-41

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's reading from Mark's Gospel tells the story of Jesus and His disciples departing a crowd and crossing the Sea of Galilee. A storm arose and their boat began to fill with water. In the midst of the chaos, Jesus slept while the disciples feared for their lives. They woke Jesus, who calmed the wind and waves. Jesus asked why they were so frightened and they responded with awe that the storm obeyed him.

*Reflection Questions:*

*Believe: When has Jesus entered the chaos in my life to bring His calm and peace?*

*Share: With whom do I share how Jesus removed those difficulties?*

*Transform: What specific areas of trouble and distress in society and the world need Jesus to calm them?*

**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 a time in your life when Jesus stilled the chaos and distress. Give thanks and ask Him for peace in any current trials.

**Share:** Be a channel of Jesus' peace. Visit someone who is experiencing difficulty and offer him/her the peace of Christ.

**Transform:** Select a troubled area of the world, buffeted by the storms of nature, war or terrorism. Pray for Jesus' peace and right order and do one small act of kindness to communicate that peace.

**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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Wisdom 1:13-15; 2:23-24

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:7,9,13-15

Gospel: Mark 5:21-43

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

The account from Mark's Gospel contains a healing story within a healing story. Jairus, a Jewish leader, sought out Jesus to cure his daughter. On the way to Jairus' house, a woman afflicted with a hemorrhage touched him, hoping for a cure. Jesus recognized that a healing took place and asked who had touched Him. The woman came forth and Jesus confirmed her healing and sent her away with His peace. Meanwhile, Jairus received a report that his daughter had died. Jesus reassured Jairus to believe and not be afraid. When they arrived at the house, Jesus put out the mourners and told Jairus' daughter to arise. She did so to the amazement of everyone.

*Reflection Questions:*

*Believe:* What area of my life needs Jesus' touch of peace and healing?

*Share:* As a disciple of Jesus, how do I go about accompanying Him to heal others?

*Transform:* What areas of life am I called to transform by cooperating with the healing ministry of 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:* Imagine yourself as one of the characters in today's Gospel. Encounter Jesus and write out an account of your time with Him.

*Share:* Visit someone who is ill - either at home, in a health care facility or hospital. Share your friendship and prayers with them.

*Transform:* Support someone in the health care profession and encourage him/her with your prayers, friendship, kind words and compassion.

**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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Ezekiel 2:2-5

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

Gospel: Mark 6:1-6

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel from Mark is an account about a time when Jesus returned home and the rejection He received from the townspeople. The people resisted Jesus; they could not believe Jesus' ability to teach with wisdom and work mighty deeds, since they knew His family. Jesus was unable to do any powerful works there.

*Reflection Questions:*

*Believe: What parts of Jesus' teaching and works do I resist?*

*Share: What resistance do I encounter as I share my faith with others, especially my family and friends?*

*Transform: How do society and the world reject the message and presence of 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:** In prayer this week, imagine Jesus coming to teach you and work a powerful deed in your life. Don't resist; relax. Let Jesus be with you.

**Share:** Follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit to share your faith. Relax. Be yourself. If people resist you, offer them your peace.

**Transform:** Identify an area of society that consistently rejects the teaching of Jesus. Pray for an opening to be an instrument of God's truth and love. Take action when the opening comes.

**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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Amos 7:12-15

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

Gospel: Mark 6:7-13

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

The passage from today's Gospel is an account of Jesus sharing His mission and power with His closest disciples - the Twelve. Jesus sent them out in pairs. Jesus gave them the authority to heal and deliver. Jesus advised them on where to go and what to do when they arrived. The Twelve went out and continued Jesus' mission - preaching, delivering and curing.

*Reflection Questions:*

*Believe: Who has touched my life with his/her/their witness of faith?*

*Share: How does Jesus send me out to bring His message and healing to others?*

*Transform: What areas of our community, neighborhood or parish need the healing that Jesus can bring through 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:** As you pray this week, imagine Jesus calling you front-and-center to go out and touch the lives of others. Tell Jesus what you think and how you feel.

**Share:** Get involved with a home visitation program in your parish or neighborhood. If there isn't such a program, help start one.

**Transform:** Devote a day during the week or weekend to walk around in your town or city. Observe the many areas that are crying out for freedom and peace. Take a step to bring liberty and peace to one of those areas.

**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?

- 1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Ephesians 2:13-18
- Gospel: Mark 6:30-34

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's account from Mark's Gospel follows the return of Jesus' disciples after He sent them to preach, heal and deliver. After listening to their report, Jesus invited them to get away from the hustle and bustle in order to rest. They went off with Jesus to a separate place. The people found out and got there before Jesus and His disciples did. Filled with compassion, Jesus expressed His care for the crowd and continued to teach them.

*Reflection Questions:*

- Believe: How do I feel about taking a "time out" with Jesus to rest?*
  
- Share: How does taking a break give witness to others about my faith in God?*
  
- Transform: How would creation be different if humanity took a break from everyday consumption?*

**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:** Take a break, a day off, a retreat day, a vacation. Enjoy life. Rest. Thank God for all of the gifts you have received.
  
- Share:** Think of someone caught up in the hustle and bustle of life. Offer help, friendship, and the gift of your love.
  
- Transform:** Recycle your treasure, your trash and your faith.

**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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: 2 Kings 4:42-44

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Ephesians 4:1-6

Gospel: John 6:1-15

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today begins a six week stretch of Sundays where the Gospel reading comes from the sixth chapter of John's Gospel. The entire chapter evolves into a long series of dialogue between Jesus, the crowd, the Jewish leaders and His disciples about the Bread of Life. Today, at the beginning of the series, Jesus journeyed across the Sea of Galilee and went up a mountain with His disciples. A large crowd followed them and Jesus desired to feed them. Jesus charged His disciples with finding the food and the best they could do was five loaves and two fish of a child. Jesus took it, blessed it, and distributed the loaves and fish. All ate and an abundance occurred.

*Reflection Questions:*

*Believe:* In light of today's Gospel, what new meaning do I give the phrase, "Give us this day our daily bread."

*Share:* In light of today's Gospel, what new meaning does the phrase, "Give us this day our daily bread" have for my family, community, workplace, etc?

*Transform:* In light of today's Gospel, what new meaning does the phrase, "Give us this day our daily bread" have for our society and 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:* Whenever you eat a slice of bread this week, thank God for it as part of your daily bread from God.

*Share:* Bake a loaf of bread and share it with your neighbors. Share your presence and friendship, too.

*Transform:* Donate to a food pantry, a charity for hungry children, those displaced by fire or tragedy, those starving in a poor country.

**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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Exodus 16:2-4,12-15

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Ephesians 4:17,20-24

Gospel: John 6:24-35

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel from John continues with the crowd pursuing Jesus and His disciples to Capernaum. When the crowd found Him, Jesus identified their desire to have their hunger satisfied. Jesus pointed to the necessity to work for the bread bringing eternal life. The ensuing conversation between Jesus and the crowd focuses on belief in Jesus, the Bread of Life from heaven that results in having eternal life.

*Reflection Questions:*

*Believe:*            *What does Jesus, as the Bread of Life, mean to me?*

*Share:*             *What does Jesus, as Bread of Life, mean to our parish community, neighborhood, family, workplace?*

*Transform:*      *What does Jesus, as Bread of Life, mean for giving life to 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:**            When you receive Jesus in the Eucharist this week, praise and thank Him for feeding you with the Bread of Life.

**Share:**             If you are a Eucharistic Minister in your parish or in your community, focus on intentionally giving the Bread and Cup of Life to those whom you serve. If you are not a minister, become one or at least tell your parish of someone who is shut-in and would like to receive the Eucharist.

**Transform:**        There are people in your community who are starving for meaning, understanding and love. Ask the Spirit to lead you to them and feed them with Jesus' love and peace through your kindness.

**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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: 1 Kings 19:4-8

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Ephesians 4:30-5:2

Gospel: John 6:41-51

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's passage from the Gospel reveals the developing conflict of belief in Jesus as the Bread of Life. The Jewish leaders begin to murmur, since they knew Jesus' parents. Jesus addressed their concern and reaffirmed His role to give eternal life to those who believed in Him. Jesus proclaimed Himself as the *living bread*; his flesh for the life of the world.

*Reflection Questions:*

*Believe: In light of this Gospel, what does it mean to me to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus this week?*

*Share: In light of this Gospel, what does it mean to our family to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus this week?*

*Transform: In light of this Gospel, what does it mean for the world to have life in Jesus this week?*

**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:** When you receive Jesus' Body and Blood this Sunday, think about spending eternity with Him. Tell Jesus what you think and how you feel.

**Share:** Despair is the opposite of hope. Find someone who is grieving a loss or death of a loved one. Share your compassion with him/her/them and the hope for eternal life.

**Transform:** Look ahead to the Fall 2006 government elections. Identify the pressing issues of life and discover the candidates' position on them. Begin to form your conscience on how you may intend to vote.

**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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Proverbs 9:1-6  
2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Ephesians 5:15-20  
Gospel: John 6:51-58

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's Gospel continues the dialog between Jesus and the Jewish leaders about His flesh as life for the world. Last week, the Jewish leaders murmured. Now, they quarreled among themselves. Jesus expressed His truth more profoundly - if they did not eat His flesh, they would have no life within them. Jesus called His flesh food and His blood true drink. Whoever ate and drank this food would remain connected to Jesus. Jesus changed history. All humanity before this ate food and died. All humanity that followed Jesus would eat His flesh and live forever.

*Reflection Questions:*

*Believe: In light of this Gospel, what does it mean to me to receive God's life through Jesus?*

*Share: In light of this Gospel, what does it mean to our parish to receive God's life as a community this Sunday?*

*Transform: In light of this Gospel, what does it mean to our world to receive God's 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 receive the Body and Blood of Jesus this week, chew and drink slowly and intentionally. You are absorbing Jesus throughout your being. Tell Jesus what you think and how you feel

**Share:** Understanding overcomes confusion. In a heart-felt way, explain your reasons and experience of receiving Jesus in the Eucharist with someone of another faith.

**Transform:** Needy students are returning to school. Contribute toward their education with supplies, tuition, support and the gift of your personal presence.

**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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Joshua 24:1-2a,15-17,18b

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: Ephesians 5:21-32

Gospel: John 6:60-69

Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's passage from the Gospel of John concludes the Bread of Life discourse. Notice that in previous sections, the Jewish leaders murmured against Jesus and then quarreled about Him among each other. Now, the murmuring spreads to Jesus' disciples. Jesus addressed them with further teaching with words that were Spirit and life. He told His disciples that no one could come to Him without His Father's action. Some of Jesus' disciples left and went back to their old way of living. When Jesus asked His other disciples, Peter responded that they had committed themselves to believe Him; they had no other person to follow.

*Reflection Questions:*

*Believe: In light of this Gospel, how do I handle temptations and distractions to abandon Jesus and His teaching?*

*Share: In light of this Gospel, how does our parish leadership encourage active participation in the liturgy?*

*Transform: In light of this Gospel, what other values distract people from hearing Jesus' words of Spirit and life?*

**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 receive Jesus' Body and Blood this Sunday, recommit yourself to Him, His teaching and life. Tell Him what you think and how you feel.

**Share:** Host a meal in your home for strangers or newcomers at work, in your neighborhood or parish.

**Transform:** Take a prophetic stance toward sharing the Gospel values with those in the media and entertainment industry. Advocate art and programs that speak life, not violence.

# September 3, 2006 Twenty 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?

1<sup>st</sup> Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1-2,6-8

2<sup>nd</sup> Reading: James 1:17-18,21b-22,27

Gospel: Mark 7:1-8,14-15,21-23

### Reflection on the Gospel Reading

Today's liturgy returns to the Gospel of Mark. In this passage, conflict has arisen between the actions of Jesus' disciples and Jewish traditions. The scribes and Pharisees challenged Jesus about His disciples' behavior. Jesus responded with a criticism of their appeal to external traditions without hearts committed to God. Jesus then taught the crowds the importance of having goodness in their hearts, instead of evil.

### *Reflection Questions:*

*Believe:* How do I use and monitor my inner thoughts, feelings and beliefs so that my actions and behavior further God's Reign?

*Share:* What traditions in our family, parish or workplace promote love and kindness? Which ones don't?

*Transform:* As we celebrate Labor Day, what traditions about work in our country are good and honorable? Which traditions aren't?

## 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 cleanse you inside of any thoughts, beliefs or feelings that hinder the unfolding of God's Reign in your life.

*Share:* This week, practice hospitality where you work. Treat your boss(es), customers, co-workers and others with encouragement, kindness, deserving praise, and gratitude for their contributions.

*Transform:* Celebrate the dignity of work. Connect with a faith-based work group, like the National Center for the Laity in Chicago, and take positive action to promote social justice through the workplace.

## 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.

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- 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