



Parish Discernment Session #7

Conversion

Focusing Question: How can we support each other in growing in holiness through authentic spiritual friendships?

I. Opening Prayer (20 minutes)

Lectio divina with Acts of the Apostles 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Was there a word or phrase or image that stood out to you?

What insights did you have during your meditation?

What graces did you receive during your meditation (for example: joy, hope, longing, contrition, etc.)?

II. Introductory Comments (10 minutes)

A Message from Bishop Berg

During Jesus' earthly ministry, He gathered the disciples to Himself, spent three years living with them and talking with them. At the Last Supper, He even told them "I have called you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father" (John 15:15). We are offered friendship with God Himself, and that friendship is strengthened as we are transformed by the Eucharist and conformed more to the likeness of our Divine Friend, but this transformation requires conversion. Conversion is a "radical reorientation of the whole life away from sin and evil, and toward God" (glossary of the Catechism of the Catholic Church). Relying on the grace and mercy of God, we choose friendship with Him over the empty promises of the world, and through the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist we accept the grace that He offers to remake us in His likeness, that we may be holy as He is holy.

In Jesus Christ, we find the fulfillment of our deepest longings. Created in the image of the Blessed Trinity, we were made for relationship. Most importantly, we were made for relationship with our God, but we also find meaning and value in good relationships with our families, with those with whom we work, with the members of our parish, and in a unique way with our friends.

Friendship is important. With our friends we share common interests, enjoy one another's company, hold each other accountable, and look out for each other's best interest. As we read in the Bible, "Faithful friends are a sturdy shelter; whoever finds one finds a treasure. Faithful friends are beyond price, no amount can balance their worth. Faithful friends are life-saving medicine; those who fear God will find them" (Ben Sira 6:14-16).

Authentic spiritual friendship is an important element in our life in Christ. If we settle for a mere "one on one" relationship with God and move away from church and the offer of friendship, we find our prayers become an exercise in talking to ourselves. We are instead invited and called to help each other along the way, support one another, and help one another through difficult times. Called to be like Christ, we are each in need of continuing and lifelong conversion, and having authentic spiritual friends can be a great aid to this.

As you pray and discern today, recall the value of friendship, remind yourself of your need for continual conversion to be more like Christ, and think of how you can aid others and others can aid you in that conversion through an authentic spiritual friendship. Ask yourself, "Do I long for deep, meaningful friendships with Christ and with other disciples? What would those friendships look like, how would they be centered on the Eucharist, and how would they help me in my own conversion? How can I be a good friend and help others in their conversion? How could our parish help to cultivate authentic spiritual friendships that contribute to conversion?" Come Holy Spirit!

Points to Remember

- No one of us has all the answers.
- God has the answers.
- God speaks through His people.

IV. Discussion and Conclusions (60 minutes)

A. Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

1. How can I become a good spiritual friend?

2. As a friend, how can I support someone else in their continued conversion and growth in holiness?

3. In keeping with the Little Way (doing little things with great love), what one action is God prompting me to do that will help support the growth of authentic spiritual friendships in our parish that lead to holiness?

B. Large Group Synthesis (40 minutes)

1. What holy desires can we see in these responses?

- 2.. What one step will we take to support authentic spiritual friendships that lead to holiness?

V. Follow-up plan (20 minutes)

- A. This is how we will be sorting through this information:

- B. This is how and when you can expect to hear more from us in response to what is in your input:

- C. Who is in charge of inviting others into this discussion?

- D. How will others be invited into this discussion?

VI. Praise and Thanksgiving

A. Divine Mercy Chaplet

Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet as normal but with the following prayers preceding the appropriate decade.

1. First Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for Your mercy upon our clergy, *(name your pastor, other priests, and deacons)*.

For each decade:

V. Eternal Father, we offer you the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ

R. in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.

(x10) V. For the sake of His sorrowful Passion

R. have mercy on us and on the whole world.

2. Second Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for Your mercy upon all the parishioners of our parish, *(name your parish)*.

3. Third Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for Your mercy upon those in our parish who have fallen away from the practice of their Faith.

4. Fourth Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for Your mercy upon all who live within our parish boundaries.

5. Fifth Decade: Heavenly Father, through Your Son, Our Lord, Jesus Christ, we ask for the mercy of inspiring spiritual friendships in our parish.

B. “Conversational” style prayer of thanksgiving for one another

Those who are prompted may offer aloud a prayer of thanksgiving for others.

C. A Prayer for Eucharistic Revival

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who promised to stay with us always, until the end of the age. Reawaken our wonder at His presence in the Most Holy Eucharist. May our hearts burn within us as He opens the Scriptures and breaks the bread. Give us the eyes of faith to recognize His presence in our brothers and sisters, especially in the face of the poor and the suffering. Nourished by the Eucharist, send us forth to walk faithfully as missionary disciples, proclaiming the Gospel to every heart and extending Your kingdom to every land. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eucharistic Revival Parish Discernment Sessions Overview

Session #1

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Communion
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we enhance communion between pastor and parishioners in our parish?
- This session to be facilitated by representatives from the diocesan team. Subsequent sessions to be facilitated at the local level.

Session #2

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Thanksgiving
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we thankfully move forward as a parish in the gifts we have instead of focusing most of our attention on what we lack?

Session #3

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** The Real Presence of Christ
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we create a culture of encounter with Jesus in our parish?

Session #4

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Food for the Journey
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we help the young adults in our community find the food they need for their journey in Christ and the Church?

Session #5

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** The Sacrifice of Christ
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we more fruitfully help our elderly, sick, and homebound be supported and contribute to the mission of the parish?

Session #6

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Transformation in Christ
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** What can we do to help our children be transformed by their preparation for and reception of the sacraments of First Reconciliation, First Holy Communion, and Confirmation so that they want to continue to grow in their Faith?

Session #7

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Conversion
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we support each other in growing in holiness through authentic spiritual friendships?

Session #8

- **Eucharistic Revival Theme:** Sent Forth
- **Main Topic for Discussion:** How can we help those we love come back to the Church, and how can we reach out in love to the marginalized?

The session handouts for these sessions will be made available approximately every two months, beginning in January, 2023.