



Parish Discernment Session #2

Thanksgiving

Focusing Question: 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?

I. Opening Prayer (20 minutes)

***Lectio divina* with Ephesians 1:3-14**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favor of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved.

In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favor that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth.

In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the One who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

II. Introductory Comments (10 minutes)

A Message from Bishop Berg

As we continue to learn to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through the people of our parishes in these Parish Discernment Sessions, I once again want to thank you for your participation in this effort. You are a gift to me and to your pastor. We have

committed our lives to serving you because we see the treasure that you are. I urge you to spend this time together focusing on seeing the treasure that God has given you in each other and focusing on recognizing the many gifts that God has given to you and to your parish.

Each of us has received a multitude of gifts from God. He gave us life. He fashioned us in His image. Where His likeness in us was marred by sin, He sent His Son to save us, to bring us back to Him, to wipe away our tears, and to bring us peace. In Jesus we find redemption, salvation, justification, sanctification, mercy, joy, and abundant life. He gave us the Church and each other.

Our Church, likewise, has received a multitude of gifts from God. We have the sacraments. We have Sacred Scripture. We have the Truth and the teaching authority of the Magisterium. We have the clergy, the religious, and the laity. We have our saints, and we have each other.

Most importantly, Our Lord gives us the gift of the Eucharist. Jesus is here with us, present to us in His Body gathered together to worship the Father. Jesus is here with us, present to us in the priest, bringing the very life of God to us in the sacraments. Jesus is here with us, present in the Word, speaking to our hearts in the readings and the homilies. Jesus is here with us, present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, binding us in one in Him, strengthening and nourishing us for our task in the world.

God has given us everything we need. We know and we believe that His Loving Providence provides us with what we need at each moment to get closer to Him, both individually and as the People He has gathered to Himself. Let us live in this truth, trusting in the Lord. Today, let us ask Our God to give us clarity of mission and the discipline to stay on task, trusting our efforts to His Holy Providence. Today, let us ask Him to guide us in uncovering and developing the particular gifts we have so that we may move forward, using them in His service to spread His Love to a broken world that needs Him so much.

Continuing the quote from the letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians with which you began this session, I can truly say with St. Paul,

Therefore, I, too, hearing of your faith in the Lord Jesus and of your love for all the holy ones, do not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation resulting in knowledge of him. May the eyes of your hearts be enlightened, that you may know what is the hope that belongs to his call, what are the riches of glory in his inheritance among the holy ones, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power for us who believe, in accord with the exercise of his great might, which he worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavens, far above every principality, authority, power, and dominion, and every name that is named not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way. (Ephesians 1:15-23)

May the Lord be with you and guide your prayer and discussion today.

Points to Remember

- No one of us has all the answers.
- God has the answers.
- God speaks through His people.
- Discussion based in prayer is a means of hearing God's will.
- Do not be attached to your own opinion.
- Look with charity on the thoughts and opinions of others and assume that we are all wanting something good.

Prayer for Openness to the Lord's Will

Lord Jesus, we come together as Your Body to submit to You as the Head of the Body. Send Your Holy Spirit to soften our hearts, to detach us from our own opinions, to help us to encounter You in prayer, to inspire our conversations, to help us to hear Your will for Your Body, and to guide us into deeper communion in You through our time together. Remove any obstacles or barriers that stand in the way of these things, and send Your holy angels to protect us during our time together.

Blessed Carlo Acutis, pray for us!

St. Thérèse, pray for us!

(patron of our parish), pray for us! (or "have mercy on us!" if it is Sacred Heart)

Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us!

Come, Holy Spirit!

III. Ask the Lord (30 minutes)

A. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and silent prayer (5 minutes)

B. Guided Meditation (10 minutes)

- God wants me to be in close relationship with Him. Throughout my life, He has given me gifts to help me get closer to Him.
- Sometimes I focus on what I or my parish do not have instead of the gifts we have. We have Jesus. We have the sacraments. We have brothers and sisters in Christ. We have the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- "Peter said, 'I have neither silver nor gold, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazorean, rise and walk.'" (Acts 3:6)
Pray in these or your own words: "Jesus, You have given me all I need. You have given me Yourself. Help me to move forward in thanksgiving for the gifts You have given, using them for Your glory and the salvation of souls."

C. Ask the Lord these questions: (15 minutes)

1. What are the gifts my parish has?

2. Which of these gifts have helped me grow most in my relationship with God and others?

3. In keeping with the Little Way (doing little things with great love), what one action are You prompting *me* to do that will help us to move forward as a parish using the gifts God has given in thanksgiving?

D. Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

IV. Discussion and Conclusions (60 minutes)

A. Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

1. What are the gifts my parish has?

2. Which of these gifts have helped me grow most in my relationship with God and others?

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 us to move forward as a parish using the gifts God has given in thanksgiving?

B. Large Group Synthesis (40 minutes)

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

2.. What one step will we take beginning now to move forward using the gifts God has given in thanksgiving?

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)*.
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 recognizing and using, with thanksgiving, the gifts you have given for Your greater glory and for the salvation of souls.

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.