



Parish Discernment Session #1

Communion

I. Opening Prayer (20 minutes)

***Lectio divina* with Ezekiel 34:11-16**

Thus says the Lord GOD:

I myself will look after and tend my sheep.

As a shepherd tends his flock

when he finds himself among his scattered sheep,
so will I tend my sheep.

I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered
when it was cloudy and dark.

I will lead them out from among the peoples
and gather them from the foreign lands;
I will bring them back to their own country
and pasture them upon the mountains of Israel
in the land's ravines and all its inhabited places.

In good pastures will I pasture them,
and on the mountain heights of Israel
shall be their grazing ground.

There they shall lie down on good grazing ground,
and in rich pastures shall they be pastured
on the mountains of Israel.

I myself will pasture my sheep;

I myself will give them rest, says the Lord GOD.

The lost I will seek out,

the strayed I will bring back,

the injured I will bind up,

the sick I will heal,

but the sleek and the strong I will destroy,
shepherding them rightly.

II. Introductory Comments (10 minutes)

A Message from Bishop Berg

Thank you so much for coming to this Parish Discernment Session. I and my team believe that our participation in this session and in this process is crucial for our efforts to continue to renew our parishes and to bring our loved ones back to the gift of Jesus in the Eucharist during these years of Eucharistic Revival. This is a step along this path, so I ask you to enter into the prayer and discussion of this session so that the parish is enriched by your participation.

Here, together today, you are taking a step toward fulfilling the mission of Jesus, a mission in which He includes each of us. What was the mission of Jesus? In Colossians 1:19-20 we read, “For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross, whether those on earth or those in heaven.”

The mission of Jesus is to reconcile all things to Himself, to bring all things into one in Him, to bring a true communion that cannot exist without Him.

We see all around us a lack of communion. We see and experience division over politics, over social issues, and over sports. We see and experience sin, both those sins we commit and those committed against us. We see and experience the effects of sin on ourselves, on our loved ones, and on everyone we meet. We are divided. We are separated. We are alone, and we are lonely.

But this is not what we were made for. We were made for communion. We were made for friendship and family. We were made to love and to be loved. And true communion is found in Jesus Christ. This is the paradox. He suffered and died, a victim of division, to bring us communion. And the only way we have true, lasting communion, the only way we turn from the sin which separates us, is in relationship with Him. In “The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church,” we bishops of the United States recall that Jesus brings communion with Himself and His sacrifice, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, with the Body of Christ here on earth, the Church, and with the Church in heaven, the angels and the saints who have gone before us into that perfect communion.

This first of the three years of the Eucharistic Revival is dedicated to enkindling, reviving, and renewing Eucharistic faith and communion among diocesan and parish leadership. Through your participation in this session, you are helping this renewal to happen.

In particular, you will be focusing on how communion between a pastor and his flock can be enhanced. Our priests are a gift to us. They participate in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. They have been set apart and consecrated to the great work of sanctifying their people through the sacraments and prayer, of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus through their preaching and teaching so that others may know the gift of reconciliation in Him, and of governing their flock so as to bring out the gifts that God has bestowed on His people for the salvation of those around them. How can your parish be brought more fully into communion through the work of your pastor, and how can you help him in that task? Please, take these questions to prayer, and may the Lord guide your discussions 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!

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)

- I was made for communion with God and with others. Deep down, don't I long for this communion?
- Pride, stubbornness, selfishness, impatience, unforgiveness, and other sins keep us from this communion. What imperfections or sins of mine keep me from this communion in my spiritual life and in my interactions with my priest and fellow parishioners?
- ***Jesus at the Last Supper*** – "And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me." (John 17:22-23)

Pray in these or your own words: "Jesus, do what I cannot do. Bring me into deeper communion with You, and, through You, with the Father, the Holy Spirit, and my brothers and sisters in Your Body, the Church."

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

1. What should my relationship with my pastor look like?

2. What kinds of actions could I take that would help this relationship to happen?

3. In keeping with the Little Way (doing little things with great love), what one action are You prompting me to start with?

D. Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

IV. Discussion and Conclusions (60 minutes)

A. Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

1. What should my relationship with my pastor look like?

2. What kinds of actions could I take that would help this relationship to happen?

3. In keeping with the Little Way (doing little things with great love), what one action are You prompting me to start with?

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 enhance this communion?

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 a communion among these groups that only You can bring.

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, hopefully beginning in January, 2023.