



ACTS 2:42 GROUPS

ON MISSION AS A EUCHARISTIC PEOPLE

YEAR OF MISSION

PARTICIPANT GUIDE



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**



Office of Evangelization & Discipleship
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

"They devoted themselves to the teachings of the apostles, the communal life, the breaking of the bread and prayer."

- Acts 2:42



ACTS 2:42 GROUPS

ON MISSION AS A EUCHARISTIC PEOPLE

Y E A R O F M I S S I O N

PARTICIPANT GUIDE

A small group series to foster Eucharistic Spirituality and Renewal in the Diocese of Owensboro, KY. Led by Bishop William F. Medley.

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Director: Dr. Jeff Andrini

Editor: Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

Spanish Translation: Patti Gutiérrez

Layout and Design: Sara Lewis

Photos on Front Cover:

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Bishop William F. Medley: Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

Acts 2:42 Participants: Photo courtesy Deacon Chris Gutiérrez

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Office of Evangelization & Discipleship
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**

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NATIONAL Eucharistic Revival

A three-year initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

- Mission- “To renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist.”
- Vision- “To inspire a movement of Catholics across the United States who are healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist – and who are then sent out on mission “for the life of the world.”

Year One (June 2022-June 2023) The Year of Diocesan Revival where Bishop Medley led us to respond to the Lord’s personal invitation and empowered the presbyterate and parish leaders to engage in the revival and plan for the parish year.

Year Two (June 2023-June 2024) The Year of Parish Renewal has taken various paths in parishes across our diocese. Eucharistic Adoration, Bible studies, Acts 2:42 Small Groups and many other opportunities have flourished.

Year Three (July 2024-Pentecost June 8, 2025) The Year of being Sent on Mission, began at the Eucharistic Congress this past July 17-21 and served as a sending out of all members of the Church to be on mission to live the self-giving love of Jesus we receive in the Eucharist and to help accompany others to encounter the love of God through the Eucharist and in our daily lives. As the Bishops put it... “The National Eucharistic Congress will begin to equip the faithful as Eucharistic missionaries to go out the existential and physical margins of society emboldened with the flame of divine charity to be the hands, feet and heart of Christ in the world” (USCCB Revival Website).

Pentecost June 8, 2025 We will pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit on each baptized member of our diocese and celebrate the Jubilee year 2025 with a greater focus on our mission to make present the kingdom of God to all.



DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

McRaith Catholic Center | Office of the Bishop

Dear Acts 2:42 Small Group Participants,

Our Catholic mission is Matthew 28:19-20, “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” This was the mission Jesus gave us and it remains our mission today.

It is indeed a joy to be celebrating the third year of the National Eucharistic Revival, with the theme of “Sent on Mission,” and to be offering a second season of our Acts 2:42 Small Groups across the diocese, titled “On Mission as a Eucharistic People.” The response to Acts 2:42 has been overwhelmingly positive, and I am grateful to all who worked to provide our parishes with an excellent opportunity to grow together.

In the synodal process over the past year, one of the key findings was the desire among adults for ongoing formation, and one of the best methods for doing this and building up parish community is through small groups. In our diocese, we have participated in a number of small groups like Renew, Arise and various retreat follow-up small groups, which have always borne great fruit.

I am grateful for your involvement and the fruit of this experience and will be looking for ways to continue supporting small groups in parishes across the diocese. Know that we at the McRaith Catholic Center are praying for each of you and we ask you to pray for us. May the Lord bless our diocese in powerful ways through our Acts 2:42 Small Groups as we focus on our diocesan mission to live and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.

I offer special thanks to our Parish Small Group Coordinators and Host Team Leaders for your ongoing involvement and leadership.

Sincerely,

Bishop William F. Medley

Diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky

ON MISSION TO THE WORLD

DR. JEFF ANDRINI

The third and final year of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' National Eucharistic Revival will be dedicated to the Church "going out on mission" to renew the world.

Photo by Riley Greif



The revival is a three-year initiative that began on Corpus Christi, June 19, 2022, and will conclude on Pentecost, June 8, 2025. The revival was divided into three phases: the Diocesan Phase, the Parish Phase, and the Mission Phase.

Year three is the mission phase and will challenge every member of the Church to see that by one's baptism, we are each called to share the light of Christ in the many places we go each week. We are to be the hands, feet, heart and mouthpiece of Jesus to our families, parish, workplace and the world!

As we sought the Holy Spirit in our diocesan planning year, we were taken back to the joy, zeal and fruit of the early Church in the book of Acts, and we reflected on the power of the Holy Spirit and the blessings of small groups. We felt called to develop a program for our diocese that would combine the mission of the Jesus and the early Church, with a focus on the Eucharist. The title of our small groups became Acts 2:42 as a goal for our parish small groups, "They devoted themselves to the teachings of the Apostles, the communal life, the breaking of the Bread, and prayer." The Eucharist is indeed the source and summit of our Christian life and sharing the journey with other disciples leads to wonderful fruit.

The Fruit

As we gathered in spring 2024 with 200 Parish Small Group Coordinators and Host Team Leaders from our Acts 2:42 groups, it was obvious the good fruit that has been produced throughout our diocese. Leaders shared stories from their small groups, spoke of how close their group had become and expressed their appreciation for Bishop Medley's teaching. Many expressed feeling so much more connected to Bishop Medley. At a parish gathering of several of their Acts groups, one group said, "it is like we are the early Church and God is working in our midst." Amen to that!

There are over 100 English-speaking small groups and dozens of Spanish-speaking groups that met for year one and more are planning to participate for year two. Participant comments include:

- My husband and I have grown closer
- We have laughed, cried and sat in silence as a group
- We have learned so much about the Eucharist
- We love sharing our God sightings
- Some in our group said they would not speak and now they feel loved and are willing to share
- I knew people at Church on a surface level, now I really know some incredible people I call friends

Pope Francis challenges us to see that “an evangelizing community is always concerned with fruit, because the Lord wants us to be fruitful... by showing mercy, by getting involved in people’s lives in word and deed, and by being supportive of others and standing by them” (Evangelii Gaudium, no. 24). And each of these fruits are evident in small group ministry. We stand with one another and share our joys and sorrows. We learn from scripture, Church teaching and from our experience and the experiences of others. We feel cared for and listened to by one another, and we can pray together and support one another in an ongoing manner.

The fruit of our small groups last year are quite evident, and we are praying the Holy Spirit continues to work in these groups and in the new groups that have formed for this.

year. Thank you for your involvement and we pray that you are richly blessed for your “yes” to step into a small faith group to grow with others and to enrich your faith

The Mission

The Church exists to evangelize” (Pope Paul VI, Evangelii Nuntiandi, no. 16). From the beginning of the Catholic Church, Jesus sent his disciples on mission to baptize and teach all he had taught them. He gives us this same commissioning today. We are to share the Good News of God’s love, mercy and provision in our lives with the world, filled with the joy, knowledge, and experience of a relationship with God. Each of us is to be on mission.

Photo courtesy Linda Fentress



At times in our history, the Catholic Church has been a bit like a football stadium on a Sunday afternoon. Twenty-two battle weary players in desperate need of a little rest and 80,000 fans in desperate need of a little exercise. The analogy is that we have depended on ordained and vowed religious to care for us and our world. The laity have been more like spectators and under-engaged in the mission. Today, like the early Church, we are realizing that the Holy Spirit works through each of us. Scripture tells us that, “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may announce the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

How do we fuel the mission? There is only one way... we are limited human beings, and we need to be connected to the divine vine of Jesus Christ! “I am the vine, and you are the branches... apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). As we receive Jesus into our bodies in Holy Communion, we are invited to live in communion with the Trinity all week long. Our daily prayer lives are meant to be a source of strength and power, and together with the sacraments of the Church, we are to live lives of joy and service to the world. The Holy Spirit plays an important role -- as without God,

we can do nothing of lasting worth, but only when connected to the Holy Spirit and in union with God. Jesus says, “rivers of living water that will flow from within him who believes in me” (John 7:38).

I AM THE VINE, AND YOU ARE THE BRANCHES

John 15:5

Each of us are called to believe, live Jesus' mission, and bear fruit in this life and to enjoy the presence of God in eternity. God has a purpose for our lives. It is abundant life, for he tells us, “I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Our relationship with God is primary in our faith. We are to approach the Lord in awe and worship as we receive him in the Eucharist and then to allow ourselves to be transformed more and more into the very heart of God as we grow into the union of the Trinity.

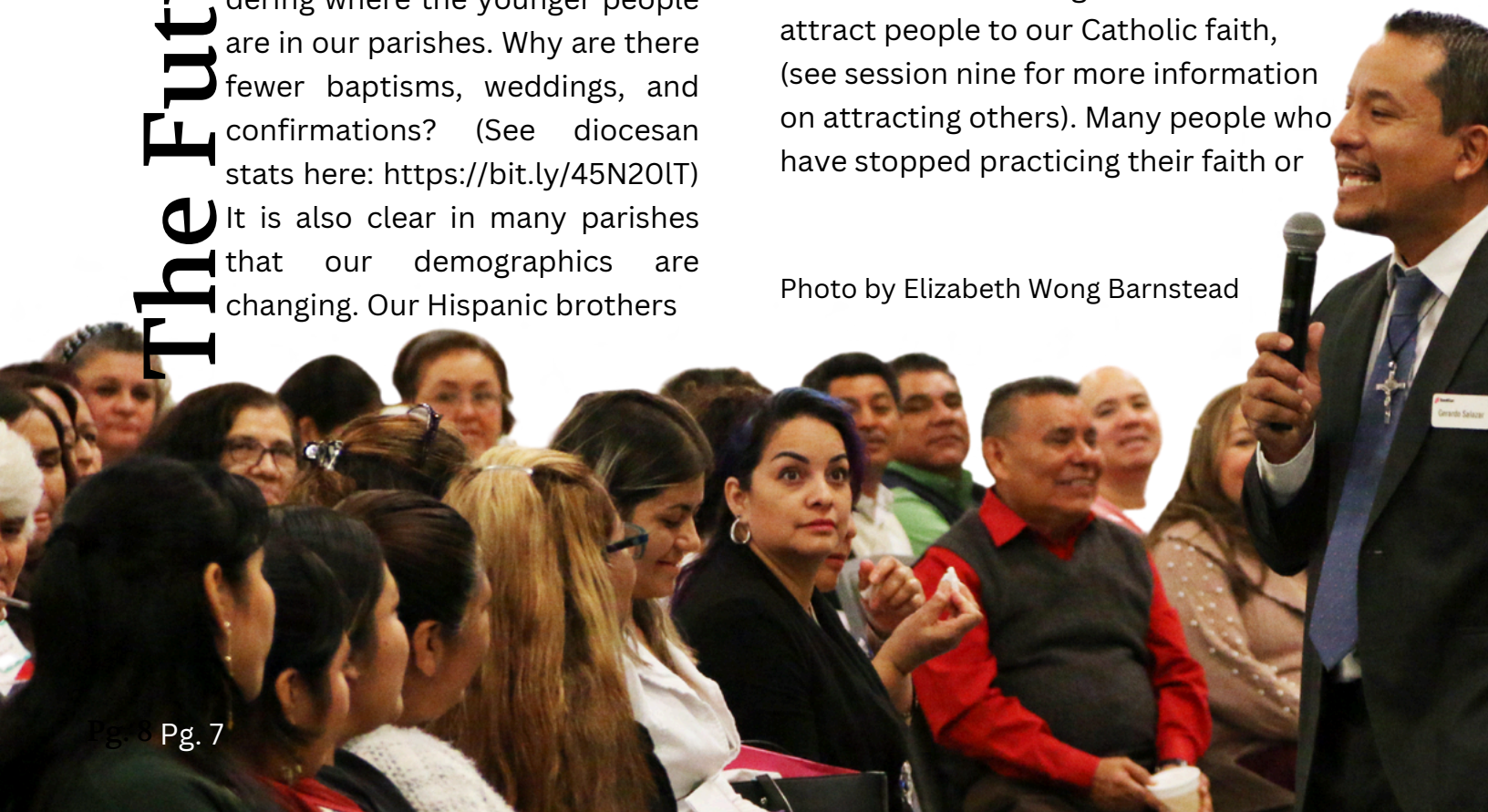
As Catholics, we have so many tools, practices and opportunities to grow in this divine life and live the mission of Jesus, but we must avail ourselves of these opportunities. Mass, Adoration, daily prayer, retreats, small groups, Bible study, group/family prayer, nature walks, silence, solitude, meditation, spiritual reading -- all of these can help us to grow and yet, none of us can do them all. Like Jesus tells us in Matthew 6:33, "seek first the kingdom of God and all things will be given you besides." By seeking God, the Lord will lead us one step at a time. As we grow closer to God, doors will be open for us to live the mission of Jesus in our daily lives. When we grow, the Church grows!

and sisters and other ethnic communities account for growth in our parishes. For instance, Bishop Medley reported that in one of the Bowling Green parishes in the Spring of 2024, there were fifty confirmations and three of the Confirmandi were Caucasian. There are opportunities to address this decline and embrace growth, and the synodal process that our universal Church has been undertaking these past two years is an essential step in our discernment process of where the Spirit is leading and what directions we are being called to embrace. Involving and providing for all our members as we build and celebrate God's reign is certainly one of those important focuses.

The Future None of us have a crystal ball but there has been a clear decline in members. We might be wondering where the younger people are in our parishes. Why are there fewer baptisms, weddings, and confirmations? (See diocesan stats here: <https://bit.ly/45N20IT>) It is also clear in many parishes that our demographics are changing. Our Hispanic brothers

The synodal process is about initiating dialogue, listening to the needs of others and refocusing our mission to attract people to our Catholic faith, (see session nine for more information on attracting others). Many people who have stopped practicing their faith or

Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead



left the Catholic Church have done so because of things they have experienced, or not experienced in the Church. Of Catholics who have joined Protestant denominations, “71% say that their spiritual needs were not being met” and “81% said they enjoyed the new faith’s service and worship” (Forming Intentional Disciples, Sherry Weddell, pgs. 28-29). Among another group who stopped practicing the faith and now are part of a group called “nones, with no faith affiliation, “71% said they just gradually drifted away” (Ibid, pg. 32). There are many reasons why we are where we are as a Church, but there is great hope!

As we return to the core of our Catholic faith and the focuses of the early Church, we find the power of the Holy Spirit, the engagement of community and the mission of Jesus! Like the early Church, we must be people who are “devoted to the teachings of the Apostles, the communal life, the breaking of the bread and prayer” (Acts 2:42).

All humanity is longing for love. So many people feel that they have no one to love them. They do not feel God’s love and they feel abandoned. But we have the greatest truth in all the world, that we have been created in God’s image and likeness and that God loves humanity with an everlasting love! The love and mercy God has shown each of us is meant to be shared by us with the

world. Our parishes are meant to be outposts or an oasis in the desert, where people can find welcome, love and meaning. These provide support for their daily life and support for their eternal life. We are meant to be places of living water for a thirsty humanity. Let us be transformed into missionary disciples of Jesus, making present the kingdom of God in the here and now.

Come Holy Spirit and lead us to your living water and transform us into the hands and feet of Jesus and bless the Catholic Church with your vision and power to transform our world. We make our prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen!

Sincerely your brother in Christ,
Jeff Andrini

Director of the Office of Evangelization & Discipleship



Photos Courtesy Office of Evangelization

Each session will follow the same template, which is outlined here. The general flow will be listed for each session, but you can refer to these pages for descriptions on what each stage means as needed throughout the course of the year.

1. Opening Prayer

Each session will begin with prayer. You can use the prayer provided or let the Holy Spirit lead your group. Remember to take time to pray for any intentions individuals may have on their heart. You are also welcome to use the Acts 2:42 prayer developed by Ed Calhoun of St. Pius X Parish in Owensboro, found on the back of the book.

2. God Sightings

Taking time to share life and faith is an important part of building community and being the body of Christ with and for one another. In our culture, sharing vulnerably or interpreting life through the eyes of faith, can be seen as something personal that should not be shared. But Christian community is different, and we need to create safe places to share our lives and faith with one another. It is also important to learn to say not just that “I will pray for you,” but “can we pray right now for you?” After prayer think about how God has been at work in your life over the past month. Have you had any new beginnings, breakthroughs, or struggles in your life where you can see God’s hand, or where you hope to see God’s involvement? If you have been faced with difficulties and challenges, ask if the group can pray right then for it.

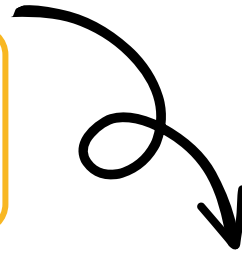
3. Reading & Discussion

Each session will include a reading on the topic followed with discussion questions. The group can ask one person to read the reflection, or several people can participate by reading one paragraph. The Host Team will facilitate the discussion questions and keep on time and task.

Session Overview

4. Video

Our videos feature Bishop Medley and others from around our diocese. Each video discusses the theme of the chapter and how the individual lives out our mission with the Eucharist.



5. Closing Prayer

Just as you did in the beginning, make time to pray together at the end. Encourage each other as you go forth for the coming month while remembering any prayer requests as well.

6. Announcements

There will be time to share events happening in your parish and inviting the group to join. The Host Team can also share updates for any diocesan events happening in your area and inform the group of the next meeting date and time.

7. Social Time

Make time at the end to visit and enjoy each other's company. Some may need to leave soon after the announcements but others may enjoy sharing a dessert or snack together while visiting. As a courtesy remember to watch the room and ensure you are respecting any needs your host might have for clean up and departure.



Photos courtesy
Sandra Bracy



Session One: Becoming a Eucharistic People

**“IF WE RECEIVE
THE EUCHARIST
WORTHILY, WE
BECOME WHAT
WE RECEIVE”.**

St. Augustine



Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

Opening Prayer

*In the name of the Father, and the Son,
and the Holy Spirit.*

Gracious God, we marvel at the gift of your power and presence in our lives and gather today in your name as a community of disciples seeking your divine love. Transform us through the gift of your Holy Spirit and give us eyes to see anew our mission in this small group and in our wider parish community. As our Acts 2:42 groups begin meeting this month, we ask for a fresh outpouring of your Holy Spirit upon Bishop Medley and the diocesan staff, upon all priests, deacons, vowed religious and lay leaders. We humbly pray that we would each become missionary disciples in every area of our lives. Transform us through the Eucharist to be signs of Christ's self-giving love to the world.

If there are any special intentions that anyone would like to add, please do so and we will all pray with you for your intention. Response: "Lord, hear our prayer."

Host Concludes:

Lord, we lift these shared intentions and the intentions that are in the depths of our hearts and entrust them to you. We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Take time to share God Sightings with each other.

(See p. 9)

Session Reading

“Theology is faith seeking understanding” (St. Anselm), and while many Catholics cannot articulate our Eucharistic theology; understand how it becomes the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ; or even necessarily believe it is Jesus, it is nonetheless Church teaching and revealed truth that Jesus is truly present in the elements of bread and wine. We are invited to accept this mystery by faith and then our experience and feelings will follow.

Eucharistic spirituality begins at the table of the Lord Jesus, a truth affirmed at the Second Vatican Council and underscored in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: “The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life. The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual



Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

good of the Church, namely, Christ himself, our Pasch” (1324).

Therefore, the mission of the Body of Christ, the Church, is to be transformed by the self-giving love of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist and become a Eucharistic People that embodies this self-giving love out to the world through our words and deeds.

Some parishes have a sign at their doors that says, “You are now entering the mission field.” As we walk out the doors of the church, after worshipping

God and receiving Jesus into our bodies anew, we are on a mission to live this self-giving love in every area of our lives. It is not because we are so special or super holy, it is because Jesus is transforming us more and more into his disciples to live lives of love that serve the deepest needs of the human heart. We are all evangelists. We are all to experience and live the Good News in our homes, workplaces, parishes, and the world. Jesus says, "I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled" (Luke 12:49).

As the Catholic Church, if we can trust the Holy Spirit to get our minds and hearts right, we will be the fastest-growing church in the world resembling the growth of the Early Church. And more than this, we will be allowing the love of God to impact the world through us with renewed mission, purpose, and zeal. People will want what we have, a living relationship with God with a burning desire to serve others in Jesus' name.

"We are the people of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, which means we represent Jesus to the world, and the world comes to know Jesus through us. "Do we recognize our vocation to transform every crack and crevasse of the cosmos into a space defined by love, rather than scarcity or violence. This is a Eucharistic culture, which takes up every dimension of our lives. Which is what Vatican II wanted, it is what the Fathers of the Church wanted, it is what the Medievals wanted. It is the tradition of the Church that wanted this for Christian life."

-Dr. Timothy O'Malley "Becoming a Eucharistic People" Eucharistic Revival podcast

Discussion Questions

- Name a phrase that struck you in this reading.
- How does faith lead to experience?
- What does self-giving love look like from Jesus? From us?

Video Reflection

Take time to watch this session's video featuring Bishop Medley. Use the space below to write down thoughts or something from the reflection that struck you.

Photo by Riley Greif



Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you for the gift of your presence with us in our gathering. You know the deepest needs of each of our hearts and we ask you to bless each of us with the faith, trust and openness to your Spirit working in and through us. Be with our families and bless our parish family. May we grow this year as a small group and a parish community to become the Eucharistic people you have called us to be and thank you for the gift of your love. We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two-hour time frame.

Photo courtesy St. John the Evangelist Acts 2:42 Group



Session Two: A Living Relationship with God

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Loving God, we thank you for the many times in our lives where you have revealed your love and provision in our lives. We ask for the grace to truly repent of the hardness in our hearts and to have a fresh experience of your care and closeness. Renew each of us and our parish with a deeper awareness of your desire to work in and through our lives and may others come to a deeper friendship with you through our example.

For what else should we pray? Our response is “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Host concludes:

We offer our prayer in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

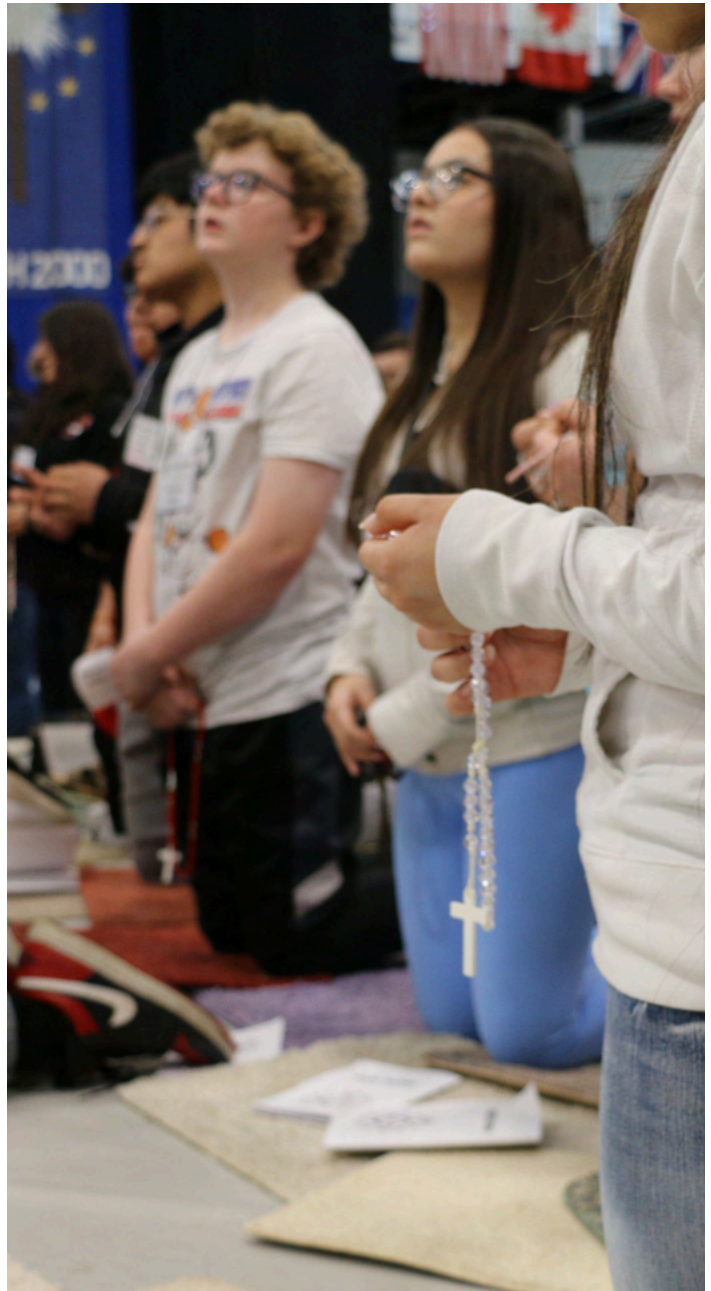


Photo by Rachel Hall

Take time to share God Sightings with each other.

(See p. 9)

Jesus said, “Whoever believes in me, as scripture says: Rivers of living water will flow from within him”

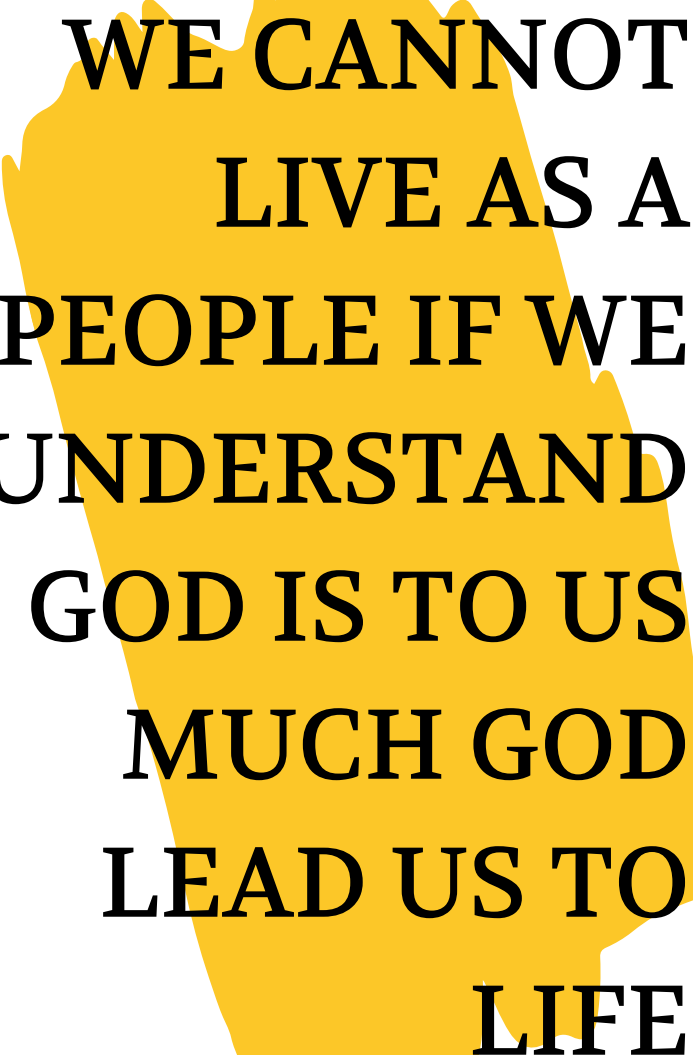
John 7:38

Session Reading

God wants a living relationship with each of us and longs to work in and through our lives to make present God's Kingdom here on earth. Like we say in the Lord's Prayer, "on earth as it is in heaven." What are these values we are praying to see on earth? Peace, love, joy, gentleness, forgiveness, safety, health, and freedom from violence, all of these are qualities of God's kingdom for which Jesus proclaims, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19). In Mark's gospel we read, "Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God... the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).

As Catholics today, do we understand the invitation of Jesus to repent and believe? According to a report from the Pew Research Center, "The majority of adult Catholics are not even certain that a personal relationship with God is possible" (Sherry Weddell, *Forming Intentional Disciples*, pg. 46). We cannot hope to live as Eucharistic People, if we do not understand how close God is to us and how much God wants to lead us to abundant life in the here and now. God

is at work in our lives every moment of every day. Many Catholics have yet to take what seems to be the longest journey in our human lives, 12 inches, from our head to our heart. Catholics as a whole need to understand that God is already present in the heart and soul of every human being, we need only to acknowledge and welcome this presence and live in union with the Trinity. Intellectual knowledge about God and our faith is only part of this important journey; we must welcome God into our hearts through faith. Then the experience of God and our feelings will follow, along with a desire to be



**WE CANNOT
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lifelong learners and disciples of Jesus.

Relationships are hard work and often people choose to withdraw and even avoid relationships because of past hurts. The Lord wants to encounter us daily, heal us, and transform us into a better version of ourselves, into his disciples on mission for the world. It is a great adventure, filled with God's love, friends and lasting, abundant fruit. It is never too late to ask God for an encounter with Jesus.

“This encounter must be constantly renewed by personal

**HOPE TO
EUCCHARISTIC
DO NOT
HOW CLOSE
AND HOW
WANTS TO
ABUNDANT**

testimony, the proclamation of the Kerygma (the paschal mystery; the life, death and resurrection of Jesus), and the missionary action of the community” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Living as Missionary Disciples, 12). We need others in a community, like our Acts group, to tell the stories of God's faithfulness in our lives and to be challenged to live the mission of Jesus with great fervor.

Pope Francis regularly calls for new initiatives in the Church, and as a diocese it's hard to keep up. He called the Church to a Year of Prayer for the World in 2024, in preparation for the 2025 Jubilee Year. The Holy Father announced its launch on Sunday, January 21, 2024, on the fifth annual celebration of the “Sunday of the Word of God.” Previously, the pope wrote: “From now on I am happy to think that the year preceding the Jubilee event, 2024, will be dedicated to a great ‘symphony’ of prayer.” (Check it out at: Towards the Jubilee; www.jubilaem2025.va/en.html)

Prayer is our regular communication with God. We invite you to pray for the Jubilee Year with the Universal Church and even more importantly, to pause and communicate to the Lord your desire to have a living relationship with the Trinity. We cannot move forward with the other sessions of this book

without a daily living relationship with God. We were not meant to follow Jesus on our own strength, but rather to become more and more like Jesus through reception of the Eucharist and our daily connection to the divinity of our amazing God.

Discussion Questions

- How does the Eucharist help us experience closeness with Jesus?

Video Reflection

Take time to watch this session's video featuring Kristin Dorth. Use the space below to write down thoughts or something from the testimony that struck you.

- How have you experienced God's love through prayer?

- Name an experience when you knew that God was real and with you?

Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead





©Photos.com via Canva.com

Closing Prayer

Lord, we are humbled by your faithfulness, even when we are not faithful to you. We thank you for the countless times you have revealed your care and concern for us and pray for each of us gathered here today that we would grow in our relationship with you and others. Jesus, help us to see your hand in our lives each day and to live in right relationship with you, others and ourselves. We make our prayer in God's name. Amen.

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two-hour time frame.



Session Three: On Mission to the World

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Loving Father, we rejoice in the revelation of your son, Jesus, and ask to become more like him and to live the mission he gave to the universal Church to proclaim the Good News of your kingdom. Thank you for guiding the success of so many Catholic agencies that serve this mission and forgive us for the many ways our Church and our members have led others astray and done what is evil in your sight. Renew us with your heart and equip your Church to renew the world.

For what else should we pray? Our response is “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Host concludes:

We make our prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

EVANGELIZATION IS NOT, IN THE FIRST PLACE, THE DELIVERY OF DOCTRINE; BUT RATHER, MAKING PRESENT AND ANNOUNCING JESUS CHRIST.

Directory for Catechesis,
no. 29, 2020

**Take time to share God Sightings
with each other.**

(See p. 9)

Session Reading

“The Catholic Church operates more than 140,000 schools, 10,000 orphanages, 5,000 hospitals and some 16,000 other health clinics” around the world (The Catholic Herald, article title: “The world’s biggest charity,” by David Paton, Feb. 16, 2017). “Catholic Relief Services is one of the largest international humanitarian agencies serving in 116 countries with 193 million program participants and over 1700 partners worldwide” (Facts and figures, CRS, fiscal year 2021). With over 1.3 billion members, our Church has an incredible influence around the world.

In the words of St. John Paul II, “Communion and mission are profoundly interconnected... communion gives rise to mission and mission is accomplished in communion...” (Christifideles Laici, no. 32). Our communion with God is

foundational to our mission. It motivates how we live, how we love and where we spend our time and energy in life.

“The great danger in today’s world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasure, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God’s voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. This is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God’s will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen

Photo by Tina Kasey



Christ” (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 2).

Our world needs to see the Gospel lived out in our lives in all the big and small ways our Church serves. It is also important that we recognize our responsibility locally to care for the world right in front of us. Pope Francis is inviting you and I to accompany others in the journey of life. To befriend others, to reach across cultural lines and welcome others, to live with the joy that comes from a relationship with God. Pope Francis exhorts us, “an evangelizer must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 10). To be truly Catholic, we are called to be on mission. On the mission of Jesus to love the world. Like the story of the little boy walking the beach tossing starfish back into the sea, when his father says, “you will never save all of these,” and he responds, “well, I saved this one,” as he tossed it back into the water.

The little tasks of our day in our homes, workplaces, parish and beyond are a series of practical and meaningful encounters with “the other” where God invites us to share his love and mercy. Fr. Albert Haase has a wonderful definition of God’s will: “God’s will is the unmet need of the present moment.” Let us live our lives in self-giving love to the world. How? Here’s

what Pope Francis has to say: “The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious, and laity – into this ‘art of accompaniment,’ which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 169). In doing so, we will honor Jesus in every person we meet and serve Jesus by caring for, listening to, and loving others in word and deed. This includes being able to share the source of our joy in God and inviting others to experience this joy as well.

Discussion Questions

- What sticks out to you as key contributions the Catholic Church has made in the world?
- How is Pope Francis a new voice in the Church?
- What are some implications of “removing our sandals before the sacred ground of the other”?

Video Reflection

Take time to watch this session's video featuring Fr. Frank Ruff. Use the space below to write down thoughts or something from the testimony that struck you.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church and how much you have accomplished through it over two millennia. We pray for all those who have been injured by the Church and ask for forgiveness and reparation for our sins. Renew your bride, our Church, and strengthen us to make a positive and lasting difference throughout the world and in our local community by being a voice for the voiceless and serving all in your name. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two-hour time frame.



Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

**“IT IS THE BEAUTIFUL TASK OF
ADVENT TO AWAKEN IN ALL OF
US MEMORIES OF GOODNESS
AND THUS TO OPEN DOORS OF
HOPE”** Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI

Session Four: Marriage & Family Life



Photo by Rachel Hall

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Loving and Gracious God, as we celebrate the season of Advent and prepare to welcome Christ into our hearts anew this Christmas, help us to receive your grace to live your gracious love in our families and to draw others to you by our love. Inspire us with your mission to love, forgive and serve our immediate families, and to be open to the ways you are asking us to serve our parish family. May our parish be a true reflection of your love and light this Christmas. For what else shall we pray?

If there are any special intentions that anyone would like to add, please do so and we will all pray with you for your intention. Response: “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Take time to share God Sightings with each other.

(See p. 9)



Photo by Riley Greif



Photo by Rachel Hall

Session Reading

In his Letter to Families, Pope St. John Paul II explains that the Fathers of the Church, in the Christian tradition, have spoken of the family as the domestic church; “a little church” (no. 15). The family is the first place the Gospel is proclaimed and lived. It begins with the spouses being filled with the love of God and growing into the man or woman God has created them to be. They bring God’s love into the marriage and the fruit of this love is witnessed in the gift of children. All members of the family are invited to be transformed by the loving presence of God throughout their lives. While we enter marriage in various levels of maturity and life experience from our own family, it is the role of the parents to ensure the family



is a school of love and that each member is nourished and cared for as God cares for them. The family begins with a marriage and a commitment of both spouses to live a selfless life of service to the other. It may sound easier said than done, but it can be the most difficult and most beautiful journey in life.

As Pope Francis exhorts us, “The love between husband and wife, a love sanctified, enriched, and illuminated by the grace of the sacrament of marriage, is an ‘affective union,’ spiritual and sacrificial, which combines the warmth of friendship and erotic passion, and endures long after emotions and passion subside. Pope Pius XI taught that this love permeates the duties of married life and enjoys pride of place. Infused by the Holy Spirit, this powerful love is a reflection of the unbroken covenant between Christ and humanity that culminated in his self-sacrifice on the cross. The Spirit which the Lord pours forth gives a new heart and renders man and woman capable of loving one another as Christ loved us. Conjugal love reaches that fullness to which it is interiorly ordained: conjugal charity.” (Amoris Laetitia, nos. 120)

What beautiful theology our Church has about the coming together of husband and wife. The call to religious or single life is analogous to

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marriage in that God invites his beloved into union with God's self. So much of our culture teaches us to put ourselves first. Our hobbies, our desires, and our identity can be so wrapped up in our career and the things we are good at. However, like discipleship, which is learning from Jesus how we are to act and depend on the Holy Spirit, marriage and religious or the single life is a similar relationship that is filled with self-denial, selfless service, and dependence on God's grace. It is this service and the care invested in the relationship of the married couple that leads to healthy intimacy and a shared responsibility for raising children in marriage.

In every season of our lives, God is beckoning us to greater faith and transformation. While we may have learned our Catholic prayers, Church teachings and been faithful to attending Mass, many Catholics have kept their faith and life more personal. We might even say that practical tools for marriage, parenting, and even growing in our relationship with God as adults, have not always been encouraged or taken advantage of. There is perhaps a fear that we have not been spiritual or holy enough and that others are ahead of us. Further, that we may not be able to explain our faith well enough to others. Maybe your kids are now adults and are not .

practicing their faith, and we like feel we failed

In the Old Testament we hear God say, "I am," not I was, or I will be, but "I am." Let us not allow the past to haunt us and lead us to regret, bitterness or apathy. Instead, let us seek a renewed relationship with Jesus today and allow his light to live in us and shine through us to our children. Whether they are toddlers or successful adults, they still witness how we live, what we think and experience our love.

Again, a word from Pope Francis, "I like to contemplate the holiness present in the patience of God's people: in those parents who raise their children with immense love, in those men and women who work hard to support their families, in the sick, in elderly religious who never lose their smile. In their daily perseverance I see the holiness of the Church. Very often it is a holiness found in our next-door neighbor's, those who, living in our midst, reflect God's presence. We might call them "the middle class of holiness" (Gaudete Et Exsultate, Pope Francis, n. 7).

We do not have to be canonized saints, but instead be open, seeking and longing for a deeper relationship with God and God's people. As we grow in this relationship, we will realize it is the little things that make the

difference in how we love those in our families and beyond. Let us reflect the light, and love, of Christ in our marriages, families, and world!

Discussion Questions

- What word or phrases stir in your heart from this reading?

- How might the Eucharist strengthen your marriage or close family relationships?

- How does the Eucharist help you through the ups and downs of family life?

Video Reflection

Take time to watch this session's video Bayardo & Susana Solorza. Use the space below to write down thoughts or something from the testimony that struck you.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, you have led each of us into various life experiences and no matter where we currently are, you have called us to live lives of self-giving service to our families and those in need. Open doors of reconciliation and blessings in our immediate families and give us the grace to be initiators of reconciliation and witnesses of your love throughout this Advent and Christmas season. We pray for those who are most in need of feeling your love this Christmas and thank you for the gift of our small group. We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

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Session Five: The Local Parish

In the celebration of the Mass, we are shown what love truly is, and we receive grace that enables us to imitate the love that Christ shows

us [USCCB, The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church, 34](#)

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Triune God, we invite you Father, Son and Holy Spirit to be present to us and to draw us into communion with you and one another. We gather today, each coming from the joys and sufferings of

our lives to grow in our awareness of your mercy and grace in our daily lives. We pray for our parish community, that we would be a place of love and encouragement for all our members and our wider community. Transform us into your presence and anoint each member of our parish for mission. For what else should we pray?

Take time to share God Sightings with each other.

(See p. 9)



Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

Session Reading

“The community of faith is a place of invitation, welcome and hospitality, especially for those who are inquiring or returning. Fellowship and solidarity with one another in the community of faith is a reflection of the Trinity” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Living as Missionary Disciples*, p. 16).

The Trinity is not a word found in the Bible; rather it developed as the Early Church began to understand the revelation of God through the Son, followed by the descent of the Holy Spirit. This communion of love between the three persons in one God is the model, image, and desired reality for the local parish. Consider the communion and relationship that the Trinity experiences. Love, mutual respect, a place of safety, warmth and belonging to one another. So, too, is a local parish community to embody the communion of the Trinity through their worship of God in the Mass and then to extend this communion to the human family.

What does this look like in practical terms? The quote from the USCCB above suggests that there should be a fellowship of the members rooted in a love that is experienced in our living relationship with Christ and then projected into our parish relationships. Fellowship is not just

knowing one another’s names and smiling as we head to the car, only to return next Sunday and repeat. Rather, coupled with solidarity, it is a challenge to have mutual care and support for one another’s well-being



Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

often around a shared belief or mission. Shared communal life is essential for the well-being and belonging of parish members and without a shared vision about how to develop this, we will continue to offer people a personal faith experience without the focus on how the Eucharist is meant to transform us and for what purpose.

Communion as the local church, flows from the Eucharist into our community through worshiping the living God and receiving the self-giving love of Jesus and then being sent forth from the Mass to become signs of the self-giving love of Jesus in every area of our lives. This begins in our own daily prayer life and connection to the Holy Spirit. Then, the focus becomes a process of invitation to the wider community to join us, giving them an experience of radical welcome and hospitality in and through our parish as we make present God's kingdom through our actions.

Radical welcome is not a difficult task in today's American culture, in fact, if we smile at someone and shake their hand, that is more interaction than many people have on any given day. Loneliness is an epidemic in our culture. When someone reaches out and expresses interest, tenderness and care, people are blown away. In our parishes today, we often have our routine. We enter the same door, sit in



Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

the same pew, rarely look people in the eye or say hello, and naturally want the Mass to be in our native language. But to be a welcoming community, we need to each understand that hospitality is the job of all of us, and it involves the whole experience.

Instead of coming to Mass with a desire to be anonymous, come with the idea that you are welcoming others into your home. If there are language barriers, try and put yourself in the "stranger's" shoes and offer your hand and a smile. Whether someone is attending for the first time, returning, or if they look different than us, we can be a sign of welcome and care, helping them to feel that they belong in the Body of Christ, which is your local parish.

Discussion Questions

- How well does our parish welcome new people and what could help us improve our efforts?

- Where have you experienced radical welcome in your life?

- How does the Eucharist help you to feel welcomed in God’s family and call you to welcome others?

Video Reflection

Take time to watch this session’s video featuring Andrew Mung. Use the space below to write down thoughts or something from the testimony that struck you.

Closing Prayer

Jesus, you humbled yourself to use the simple gifts of bread and wine to become your Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity and to share your divine life with us in the Eucharist. Transform us more and more into your Body, the Church, and help us to be a place of welcome, hospitality and care for the weary people who visit our parish. Inspire us to see new ways to be on mission as a parish and equip us with your heart and vision. Thank you for the gift of your presence in our gathering and bless each of us until we meet again. We make our prayer in your name, Jesus. Amen.

Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

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Session Six: The Workplace & Wider Community

THE ECONOMIC SPHERE IS NEITHER ETHICALLY NEUTRAL, OR INHERENTLY INHUMAN OR OPPOSED TO SOCIETY. IT IS PART AND PARCEL OF HUMAN ACTIVITY AND PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS HUMAN, IT MUST BE STRUCTURED AND GOVERNED IN AN ETHICAL MANNER.

Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth*, no. 36

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God our Father, we gather in your name today and pause for a moment to reflect on the abundant blessings of our lives. The gift of living in a democratic country with freedoms and opportunities that many in our world do not have. You have blessed each of us with different gifts and have allowed those gifts to lead us to work that is satisfying and provides us with financial resources to live. Grant us the grace in this gathering to appreciate anew your blessings and to understand how you are calling us to a mission to bring your presence into our workplaces and to advocate for equity and human dignity in our world. All that we have is yours; teach us to be good stewards. We make our prayer in your son's name, Jesus. Amen.

**Take time to share God Sightings
with each other.**

(See p. 9)

Session Reading

The following is from a papal audience with Pope Francis on January 20, 2022.

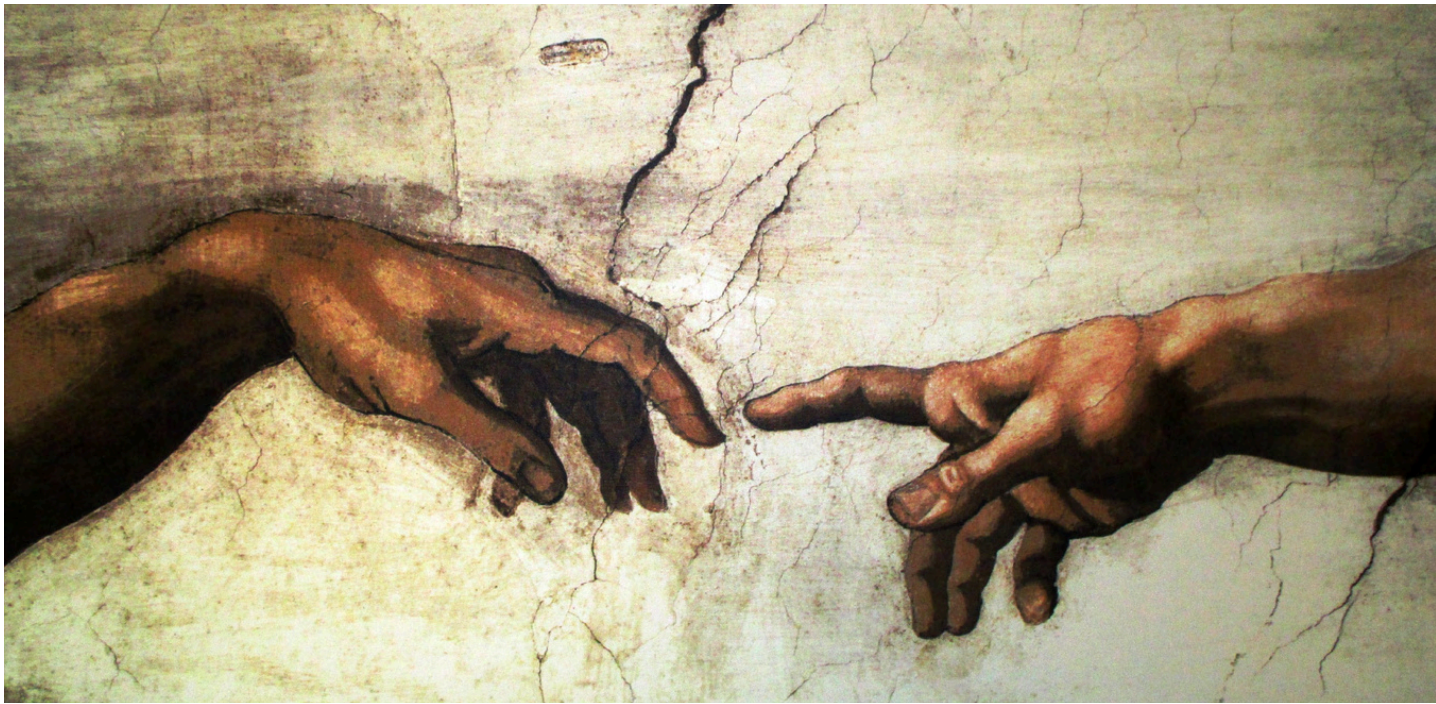
“The young Jesus learned his carpentry trade from his Father. Therefore, when He began to preach as an adult, his astonished neighbors asked: “But where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?” (Matthew 13:54), and “they were scandalized by him” (v. 57), because He was the son of the carpenter, but He spoke like a doctor of the law.

This biographical fact about Joseph and Jesus makes me think of all the workers in the world, especially those who do grueling work in mines and in some factories; those who are exploited through undocumented work; the victims of labor. We have seen a lot of this in Italy recently, children who are forced to work and those who rummage among the trash in search of something useful to trade....

Let's think of them, about those who are exploited with undocumented work, those who are paid in contraband, on the sly, without a pension, without anything. And if you do not work, you have no security. Let us think of the victims of work, of work accidents, of the children who are forced to work; this is terrible! A child at the age of play should be playing. Instead, they are forced to work like adults! Let us think about those poor children who rummage in the dumps to look for something useful to trade. All these are our brothers and sisters, who earn their living this way: with jobs that do not give them dignity! Let us think about this. And this is happening today, in the world. This is happening today.

I think, too, of those who are out of work. ... What gives dignity is not bringing bread home. You can get it from Caritas – no, this does not give you dignity. What gives you dignity is





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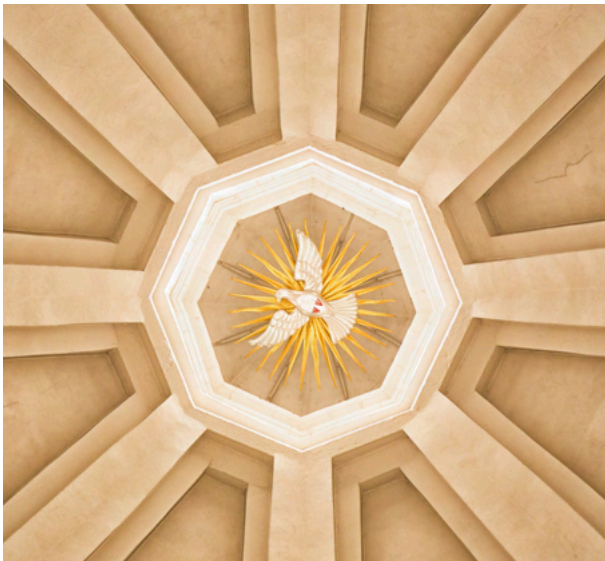
earning bread – and if we do not give our people, our men and women, the ability to earn bread, there is a social injustice in that place, in that nation, in that continent. Leaders must give everyone the possibility of earning bread, because this ability to earn gives them dignity. Work is an anointing of dignity. And this is important...

Not enough consideration is given to the fact that work is an essential component of human life and even a path of holiness. Work is not only a means of earning a living; it is also a place where we express ourselves, feel useful, and learn the great lesson of concreteness, which helps keep spiritual life from becoming spiritualism. Unfortunately, however, labor is often a hostage to social injustice and, rather than being a means of humanization, it becomes an existential periphery. I often ask

myself: With what spirit do we do our daily work? How do we deal with fatigue? Do we see our activity as linked only to our own destiny or also to the destiny of others? In fact, work is a way of expressing our personality, which is relational by its nature. Work is also a way to express our creativity. Each one of us works in our own way, with our own style: the same work but with different styles.

It is good to think about the fact that Jesus Himself worked and had learned this craft from St. Joseph. Today, we should ask ourselves what we can do to recover the value of work and what contribution we can make, as Church, (to ensure) that work can be redeemed from the logic of mere profit and can be experienced as a fundamental right and duty of the person, which expresses and increases his or her dignity.”

These challenging words from Pope Francis can overwhelm us and at the same time, lead us to gratitude and even solidarity with the human family. What talents has God blessed you with? How have these talents led you to be good at your work and serve others? In our relationships in the workplace and in our wider communities, we are called to be bold in our gratitude to God and to advocate, love and show God's mercy to all humanity. We are to make present the Kingdom of God in the here and now through our actions. Each of us are called to be Missionary Disciples of Jesus and no matter your specific job, you are called to be a leader by serving those you work with and your customers with the loving heart and hands of Jesus. The outcome is up to God, but living the selfless love of Jesus and allowing it to flow through us is how we participate in the mission of Jesus.



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Discussion Questions

- Allow the compassion of the Holy Spirit to stir your heart in this reading and without blame or trying to solve the situations, how is your heart moved with pity for humanity?
- How is your work an extension of your discipleship of Jesus and how can you live this in a secular culture in a way that serves God and humanity?
- How does the Eucharist strengthen and challenge you to serve others? What might this look like in your work and in the wider community?

Video Reflection

Take time to watch this session's video featuring Wade Gaynor. Use the space below to write down thoughts or something from the testimony that struck you.

Closing Prayer

Lord, you have blessed us in so many ways and we are humbled by the gifts you have showered upon us. We pray for our country, for our leaders and for the dignity of each person to be protected in our country and across the world. Fill us with your Holy Spirit and equip us to be your living presence in all the places our lives will take us this month, and, as we receive you as our food for the journey, transform us into your presence and send us on mission to accomplish your will. We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen



Photo by Riley Greif

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

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Session Seven: Care for our Common Home

Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead



THE ENVIRONMENT IS GOD'S GIFT TO EVERYONE, AND IN OUR USE OF IT WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE POOR, TOWARDS FUTURE GENERATIONS AND TOWARDS HUMANITY AS A WHOLE. . . OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE ENVIRONMENT ARE LINKED TO OUR DUTIES TOWARDS THE HUMAN PERSON, CONSIDERED IN HIMSELF AND IN RELATION TO OTHERS. IT WOULD BE WRONG TO UPHOLD ONE SET OF DUTIES WHILE TRAMPLING ON THE OTHER. Pope Benedict XVI, *Charity in Truth*, nos. 48, 51

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

God our Father, we gather in your name today and pause for a moment to reflect on the abundant blessings of our lives. The gift of living in a democratic country with freedoms and opportunities that many in our world do not have. You have blessed each of us with different gifts and have allowed those gifts to lead us to work that is satisfying and provides us with financial resources to live. Grant us the grace in this gathering to appreciate anew your blessings and to understand how you are calling us to a mission to bring your presence into our daily lives and to advocate for equity and human dignity in our world. All that we have is yours; teach us to be good stewards. We make our prayer in your son's name, Jesus. Amen.

Take time to share God Sightings with each other.

(See p. 9)



Photo by Rachel Hall

Session Reading

The 32 counties that make up the Diocese of Owensboro in western Kentucky are beautiful areas with abundant resources. Our forests, rich soil, rivers, Kentucky Lake, Lake Barkley and the natural beauty of our landscape is so evident. As we have journeyed through the winter season, life appears muted and dormant in creation. Now moving into Lent and then the Easter Season, new life will be happening before our eyes. Flowers begin to bloom, the powers that be decide it's time to refill the big lakes, and the fields and forests are radiant in amazing colors, smells, and beauty. Our common home of Kentucky is truly amazing.

If you have been fortunate enough to travel across America, you have seen the marvels of creation and that every place has beauty to offer. For those who have traveled the world over, there are marvels to behold on every continent and creation is a gift to humanity and all life to be treasured, enjoyed, and protected. In the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The world is charged with the Grandeur of God." Elizabeth Barrett Browning says, "Earth is crammed with heaven, and every common bush afire with God, but only those who sees takes off their shoes; the rest sit around and pluck blackberries."

As followers of Jesus, we need to live lives that treasure the gift of creation and spend time contemplating the gift of our earthly home for ourselves and all humanity past, present and future.

We are told “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28). We are stewards of creation, and, as disciples of Jesus, we must care for the earth.

As Americans, we have a unique context that colors our perspective and beliefs. As a world Church, with a global perspective, it can be challenging to consider how we are caring for the earth. Our efforts at recycling, avoiding the use of plastic water bottles and picking up litter are important, but there are larger issues to consider, which our Catholic social teaching asks us to reflect on as we seek to be in solidarity with the human family (see p. 44)

Here is an excerpt from Pope Francis in his encyclical titled *Laudato Si'*:

“Laudato Si, Mi’ Signore – Praise be to you, my Lord. In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common

home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us. ‘Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with colored flowers and herbs.’

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she “groans in travail” (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air, and we receive life and refreshment from her waters...”

(Laudato Si, Pope Francis, nos. 1-2.)

Our faith calls us to be aware of the plight of our planet and to live lives that care in small and big ways for our world. As the people of God, our Church is challenged to take a leadership role in addressing these issues for the health and well-being of our world.

Discussion Questions

- What aspects of creation do you appreciate about western Kentucky?
- How does spending time in nature refresh you spiritually?
- How has greed and progress led to an abuse of our planet and where do you experience these results?
- How does the Eucharist challenge you to take better care of the earth and the environment for future generations?



Photo by Rachel Hall

Video Reflection

Take time to watch this session's video featuring Sr. Amelia Stenger. Use the space below to write down thoughts or something from the testimony that struck you.

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, reveal your heart to us. How do you see the world you created? How do you want us to care for our planet and what directions do we need to take to care for the earth. Our home is with you for eternity in heaven and we pray that the values of your kingdom would also be present on earth, and we ask you to equip us to live your mission throughout our earthly lives and to be happy with you in our eternal home. Lead us this Lenten season to a deeper awareness of your love for all of creation. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

To learn more about Catholic Social Teaching visit <https://bit.ly/4eWSgcO> for a power point presentation

Announcements

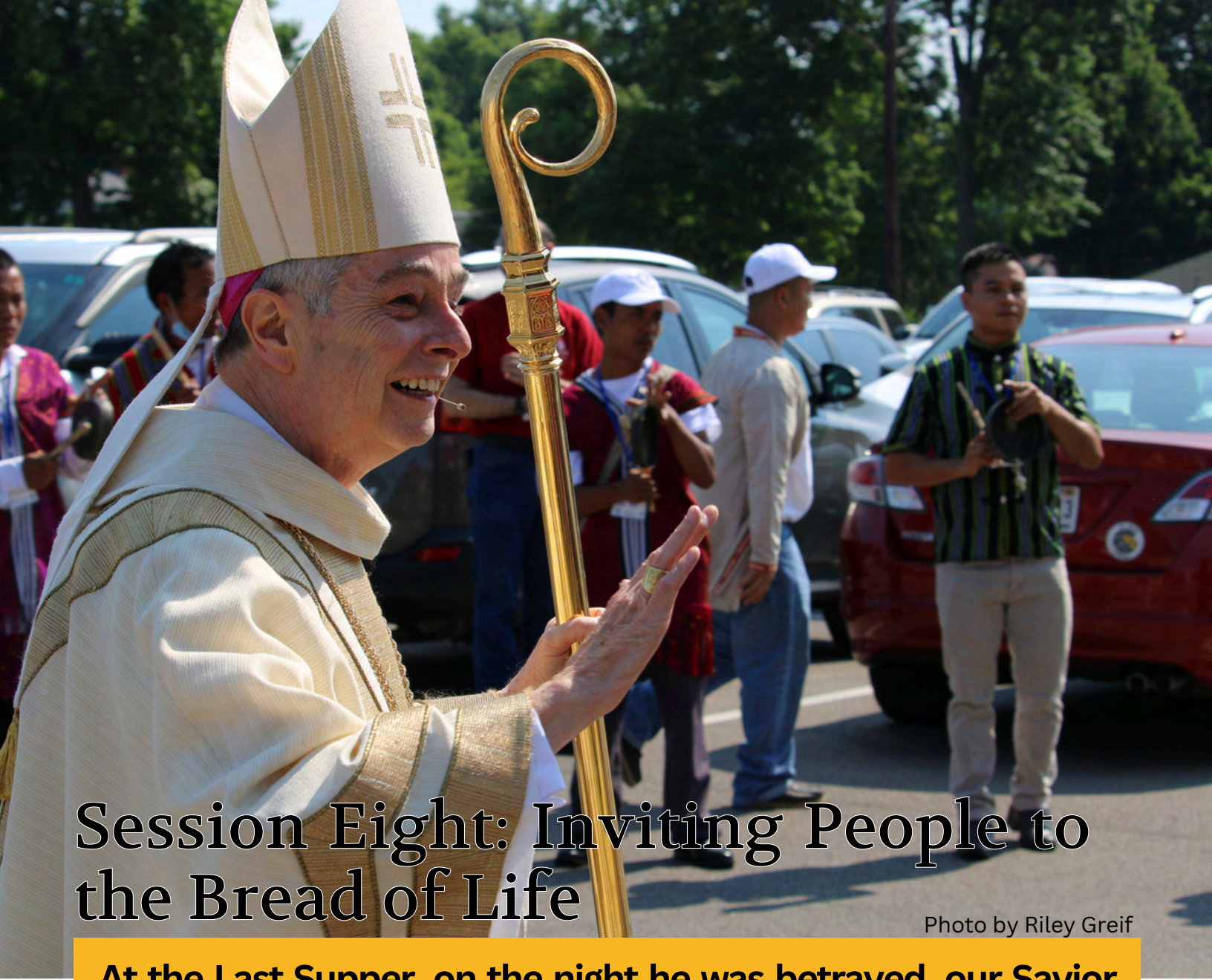
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Social Time

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Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead



Session Eight: Inviting People to the Bread of Life

Photo by Riley Greif

At the Last Supper, on the night he was betrayed, our Savior instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of his Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the centuries until he should come again, and so to entrust to his beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of his death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us Second Vatican Council, Sacrosanctum Concilium, no. 47

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, we are so humbled by your love for us and the miraculous ways you have provided for our daily needs. Forgive us for keeping the Good News of your love and daily provision to ourselves and for our fear in sharing it with others who do not know you. Set our diocese on fire with your divine love and help us to understand the mission you are entrusting to us, to make known your love and to invite others to the gift of your living presence in the Eucharist. Help us to be creative, kind, servant-hearted and willing to step out of our comfort zone to share your love in word and deed with all we meet. We love you and thank you for your presence with us at our gathering today. For what else should we pray? We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

**Take time to share God Sightings
with each other.**

(See p. 9)

**WE ARE BLIND
BEGGERS LEADING
OTHER BLIND
BEGGERS TO THE
BREAD OF LIFE**



Photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

Session Reading

There is a phrase that says, “We are all blind beggars leading other blind beggars to the Bread of Life.” As we reflect in humility and contemplation, it is not too difficult to see that our lives would be so different if it were not for God’s love and mercy. In fact, when we look over the whole of our lives, we see that if not for God’s grace, we too might have strayed farther than we have. Despite the mistakes in our lives, God led us to where we are today, and we can see the blessing of God’s care and provision throughout. Thinking of ourselves as blind beggars is a good starting point and leads us to be

humble people following our humble Creator.

On Holy Thursday each year, we celebrate the institution of the Eucharist when Jesus celebrated the Passover with his disciples and added the part of blessing, breaking, and sharing the bread and wine, saying “take and eat, take and drink, this is my Body given up for you.” The Church chooses to connect the institution of the Eucharist on Holy Thursday with the Eucharistic action of Jesus washing the disciple’s feet.

“Jesus took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciple’s feet and dry them with the towel around his waist... He said to them, “Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me teacher and master, and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do” (John 13:5, 12-15).

Our Eucharistic reception at Mass should lead to Eucharistic action in our lives. As we receive the self-giving love of Jesus into our bodies and become his body, the Church, we are sent out to be Christ’s self-giving love to the world through our actions.

We are called to follow in our master’s footsteps and share his divine love with the world.

It would be amazing to have all our family, friends, co-workers and even strangers receive the Eucharist and be transformed into Christ’s love. The first step is recognizing this transformation in our own lives. Let us all grow in our desire to worship God, receive Jesus in his Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity and then to live with



Photo by Rachel Hall



Photo by Riley Greif

Christ's love in our homes, workplaces, parish and beyond. Then we are ready for step two of inviting others.

Our lives are the best advertisement for the Gospel. As we love people, express care, concern for them and value them as God's children, people see our support and desire to be in relationship with us. The friendship grows. Over time, people will share things with us, and we can tell them we will pray for them, and even offer to say a prayer right there with them. As the relationship continues to grow, we can invite them to join us for a parish event that would be welcoming and offer them hope and support. Eventually, step two is that we invite them to Mass. Sure, they will need our explanation and gentle guidance throughout, but in step one,

we have gradually invested in growing a friendship and now they trust us and are open to considering our invitation. It is a process and quite honestly, not one we as Catholics have thought much about. Our faith is a very private part of our lives, but if we are going to invite people to the Bread of Life, it needs to be the most important thing in our lives -- and we need to see evangelization as a process of living joy-filled, servant-hearted lives that are selfless. And rather than this being a job for just priests, religious sisters, or Church leaders, we need to see that all of us, by our baptism, are equipped with the Holy Spirit to love people and allow them to see what makes our lives work.

Our world needs Jesus. We know Jesus, and might feel like a blind beggar ourselves, which is a good starting point, because Jesus picked very simple people to be his disciples and gave them the power of the Holy Spirit. The fruit of their lives has led to us knowing Jesus. May the fruit of our lives lead others to know Jesus and come to experience him in the reception of the Eucharist.

**OUR LIVES ARE
THE BEST
ADVERTISEMENT
FOR THE GOSPEL**

Discussion Questions

- How does the image of the blind beggar resonate with you?
- What are some examples of how you wash the feet of our families, friends, neighbors, strangers?
- How is the idea of Eucharistic reception leading to Eucharistic action a helpful concept?

Video Reflection

Take time to watch this session's video featuring Sarah Ford. Use the space below to write down thoughts or something from the testimony that struck you.

Closing Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, transform our human hearts more and more into the heart of God. Help us to cultivate a deeper relationship with you and to be willing to be instruments in your mission in the world. Equip all members of our Church to understand your mission to draw people to yourself and to lead them to life abundantly in the here and now and abundant life in eternity. Thank you for the gift of your presence and for the gift of your Church. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two-hour time frame.

Session Nine: Come Holy Spirit

PENTECOST 2025: ANOINTED FOR MISSION



Photo by Riley Greif

THOSE WHO ARE ANOINTED, SHARE MORE COMPLETELY IN THE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE FULLNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT WITH WHICH THEY ARE FILLED, SO THAT THEIR LIVES MAY GIVE OFF THE AROMA OF CHRIST Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1294

Opening Prayer

In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Risen Jesus, we gather in your name and pray for a new Pentecost in our lives. As we are reminded this Easter Season of the faith and growth of the early Church and hear their witnesses at Mass in the book of Acts, please help us to experience your Spirit in our time and to be your loving presence in all we say and do. We invite your Spirit to be present in our gathering and to inspire our hearts and transform us into missionary disciples serving the world. For what else should we pray? We pray in Jesus's name. Amen.

Take time to share God Sightings with each other.

(See p. 9)

**BY BAPTISM AND
CONFIRMATION, YOU ARE
ANOINTED FOR MISSION,
RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT
ANEW AND BE SENT!**

Session Reading

What if the Catholic Church was the fastest-growing church in the world? At one point, it was and today Christianity is the largest religion in the world. What would it take for the Catholic Church to draw back inactive/alienated members and attract the “spiritual, but not religious” folks into the Catholic family?

Jesus said, “I have come to cast fire upon the earth; how I wish it were already kindled” (Luke 12:49). His life and mission were one of selfless service, which revealed the very heart of God through his mercy, love, and attraction.

Fr. Stephen Bevans wrote an article titled “Pope Francis’s Missiology of Attraction,” volume 43, issue 1, on Sage Journal’s website. The article explains how a missiology of attraction is rooted in an “attractive message” of God’s mercy and tenderness. Such an understanding of God is embodied in an “attractive community” of an inclusive Church, a Church that offers an “attractive teaching” that is attentive to culture and context. It is an excellent article and fosters a sense of missional renewal for our Church. We can bemoan the decline, blame secular society, let the next generation figure it out, or we can embrace the Holy Spirit, be a prophetic Church and start

moving in a direction that offers an attractive message, community, and teaching. This is exactly what Jesus did: although not all were attracted at the time, it grew to the largest religion in the world, and we believe that Jesus is the fullest revelation of who God is. So, what can we learn?

Jesus' message was one of mercy, forgiveness, compassion, and frustration with religious people that could not make room for love. Unlike the religious leaders of Jesus' time, the common people found Jesus' words refreshing, kind and welcoming. He fed them and offered them hope, forgiveness and an experience of God's reign. It was a message that attracted so many. At the end of his life, even those who put him to death found little to accuse him of. His message was attractive.

An attractive community is one where people feel welcomed, cared for, and not judged. Where the people of the community are warm, friendly and there are special efforts to greet strangers and build friendships with new members. Jesus built community in the most unusual ways. Such as eating with tax collectors and sinners, who did not participate in the society's religious practices and felt outside God's love. Jesus must have had such a charisma about him, with a big smile, a kind word, and a loving care for each

person he met. As his disciples, following our master, we too must embody Christ's loving presence to all in our parish and beyond.

Finally, we need attractive teaching. Like the people of Jesus' time, people are tired of hypocrites. They are tired of "do what we say, not what we do" as so many might attend church, but not live generous, joy-filled lives because they do not really understand God's love. There is a lack of trust in Church leadership and plenty of painful examples of secrecy



Photo by Rachel Hall

and bad faith. Jesus understood the context of the people of his time, and he spoke to their needs. We, too, can become a Church after Jesus' heart, embodying his love to the world. People love stories of how God works in our lives. Let's learn to tell a better story and witness to the goodness of God and God's love for humanity. In the words of Billy Graham, "It is the Holy Spirit's job to convict, God's job to judge and my/our job to love."

"As soon as the apostles received the Holy Spirit, they immediately began to proclaim Christ to the crowd (Acts 2:4). Everyone who is baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has already within them the seed of the apostles' fiery enthusiasm for proclamation of the Gospel. The Holy Spirit – the Spirit of mission – guides and strengthens our witness to Christ; the same Spirit was the driving force in the life and mission of Christ himself" (USCCB, Teaching the Spirit of Mission Ad Gentes: Continuing Pentecost Today, 2005. See also Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity, no. 4).

Let us as the Catholic Church of western Kentucky in each of our local parishes, pray for a new Pentecost. May we be truly open to a renewal in our faith, which begins with an encounter with Jesus and leads to communities that attract people and make present the kingdom of God.



Photo by Rachel Hall

Discussion Questions

- Do you see motivation to grow our parish?
- How do you find this message challenging and/or exciting?
- Can you think of a time you felt the Holy Spirit lead you?
- In receiving the Eucharist, how do you receive the grace and gifting of the Holy Spirit as well?

Video Reflection

Take time to watch this session's video featuring Bishop Medley. Use the space below to write down thoughts or something from the reflection that struck you.

Closing Prayer

Almighty and ever Living God, we cannot thank you enough for the movement of your Holy Spirit in our diocese. Bless each of our 78 parishes, our priests, deacons and vowed religious, lay ecclesial ministers, and all 40,000 parishioners in our diocese. Anoint each one of us for the mission of your Son, Jesus, and fill us with a fresh outpouring of your Holy Spirit. Transform us and our diocese that we might come together to be co-responsible for your mission and make present your kingdom in our midst. We make our prayer in Jesus' name. Amen.

Announcements

Take a few minutes to share any upcoming opportunities in your parish or throughout the diocese.

Social Time

Each session ends with time for fellowship. Spend some time in each other's company. Share a dessert or other snack. Those who need to leave immediately can do so, but remember all are welcome to stay to share life and faith until the end of the two-hour time frame.

Appendix

Recommended Readings

Catechism of the Catholic Church, especially paragraphs 1322-1419 on the Eucharist. Available in pdf format at: https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

O'Malley, Timothy P., *Becoming a Eucharistic People: The Hope & Presence of Parish Life*. Ave Maria Press, 2022.

Recommended by Bishop Andrew Cozzens, Chairman of the National Eucharistic Revival.

USCCB. *Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization*. Available in pdf format at: <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/living-as-missionary-disciples/>

USCCB. *The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*. Available in pdf format at: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/mystery-eucharist-life-church>

Hahnenberg, Edward, *A Concise Guide to the Documents of Vatican II*. Franciscan Media, 2007

Upcoming Diocesan Events

September 18, 2024 - Rainbow Mass (Catholic Schools Celebration)

September 22, 2024 - DRF Commitment Sunday

December 3, 2024 - Advent Convocation for Parish Staff, Pastors, and Key Volunteers

February 8, 2025 - Women's Conference (Morganfield)

February 8, 2025 - Men's Conference (Owensboro)

April 15, 2025 - Chrism Mass

April 25-26, 2025 - Men's Ministry Retreat with John Edwards

TBD (Late Spring) - Acts 2:42 Small Group Celebration Gathering



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Year of Mission Eucharistic Revival

July 17, 2024 - June 8, 2025



Our bishops of the United States are calling for a three-year grassroots revival of devotion and belief in the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. They believe that God wants to see a movement of Catholics across the United States, healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist—and sent out in mission “for the life of the world.”

To learn more about the Eucharistic Revival in the Diocese of Owensboro, visit the webpage below or scan the QR Code



NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**



Or visit owensborodiocese.org/eucharistic-revival/

Diocesan Initiatives

Grace Marriage is an intentional, ongoing, parish-based, small group approach to marriage ministry where couples spend intentional time every 90 days in conversation focusing on their marriage. Each series includes four sessions, held once a quarter. This ministry has expanded over the years to serving over 150 couples throughout the diocese. To learn more and find a Grace Marriage group near your scan the QR code below!



Or visit owensborodiocese.org/grace-marriage/

 Office of Marriage & Family Life
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

support ministries

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." ~ Psalm 147:3



Scan the QR Code to find resources for counseling, marriage support, pregnancy support, and more

CAP

Counseling Assistance Program

Learn more
owensborodiocese.org/counseling/



Young Adult Ministries

Visit owensborodiocese.org/young-adult-ministry to learn more about young adult diocesan events. To learn about young adult movement in your area visit these Facebook pages:



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Keep up-to-date with all things Young Adult in Bowling Green!



Keep up-to-date with all things Young Adult in the Paducah-Lakes Area!



Keep up-to-date with all things Young Adult in Owensboro!



Want help starting Young Adult Ministry in your parish area?

Reach out to Charlie Hardesty, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Diocese of Owensboro!

charlie.hardesty@pastoral.org

Evangelization Workshops

The Encounter Love Retreat led many to ask the question, “How do I share my faith with others?” We need an engaging story that we know well and that reveals how much God loves us. Host this four-hour workshop in your parish to foster Adult Faith Formation and equip folks to tell their story! In this workshop we will explore the Bible as Story and learn what it means to evangelize and how to do it.



Highlighting the Great Commission and Pope Francis' call to live as a missionary disciple, Tell a Better Story is a four-hour event that uses a reflective Kerygmatic experience to bring participants into an encounter of God's love and catch a vision for lifelong discipleship. Scan the QR or follow the link below to learn how to bring this workshop to your parish.





Formation for adults working and volunteering in youth ministry, religious education, & catholic schools

8AM-12PM

Option 1: Saturday, Sept. 21
@ St. Mary High School Paducah, KY

Option 2: Saturday, Oct. 26
@ McRaith Catholic Center Owensboro, KY

SESSION 1

Gen Z and Gen Alpha
Every generation is shaped by the world they are navigating. In this session we will explore what we are learning about how Gen Z and Gen Alpha are experiencing the world.

SESSION 2

Relevant / 3 Big Questions
Once we better understand our audience, we have insight into creating ministry opportunities that speak to their needs and experience.

SESSION 3

Asking Better Questions for Engagement
The language of young people is relationship. This session will explore better strategies for engaging youth in conversation and faith reflection.

SESSION 4

Next Steps
This session will give you time with your team to create a plan to apply what we've talked about.

FREE

PLEASE REGISTER
HERE



owensborodiocese.org/engaging-youth-workshop/

Please contact the Office of Youth and Young Adult with questions.

270.683.1545 or

robin.tomes@pastoral.org



Gasper River is a summer camp and retreat center, operating within the Diocese of Owensboro, that seeks to engage young people in their faith by providing challenging activities, building faith communities, and teaching the tools of evangelization, so they can share their faith when they return home.



Learn more by scanning the QR Code or visiting www.gasperriverretreatcenter.org/



The Diocese of Owensboro invites all adults to prayerfully consider making a Cursillo retreat in 2025! There will be weekends in both English and Spanish. Check the website for updates: <http://www.cursillo-owensboro.org/>

The retreats are held at Gasper River Catholic Camp in Bowling Green. The cost is \$180, which includes a \$50 deposit when you register. Some financial help is available. The Cursillo Movement is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church. It helps people develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be fully Catholic by being fully Christian in order to exercise their mission as baptized Catholics. Come and experience God's love and power and find others on the same journey.

JOY, LAUGHTER, & HOLINESS

*Women's
Retreat*

FEBRUARY 8, 2025

ST. ANN CATHOLIC CHURCH PARISH HALL

304 S CHURCH ST

MORGANFIELD, KY 42437

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

KELLY JOINER (270) 952-0696 OR BETH

HENDRICKSON (270) 952-5692



STRENGTH AND DIGNITY ARE HER CLOTHING,
AND SHE LAUGHS AT THE TIME TO COME

-PROVERBS 31:25

LIVING THE MISSION OF JESUS

Join us with our speakers Dr. David Anders (Catholic Media personality & author of "The Catholic Church Saved My Marriage") & John Edwards (Founder & Executive Director of Pew Ministries) for a faith-enriching day.

- **Saturday Feb 8, 2025**
- **RiverPark Center**
101 Daviess Street
Owensboro KY 42303
- **Cost: \$30**
www.kycatholic.com



Dr. David Anders



John Edwards



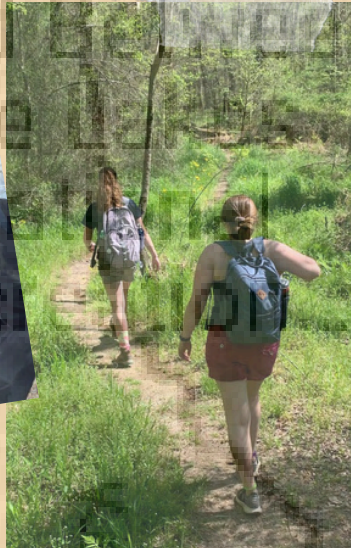
The Journey

Young Adult Hiking Retreat

2 NIGHTS/2 DAYS/23 MILES


Friday Evening-Sunday Afternoon

The North Trail at Land Between the Lakes



“Before going on this retreat I had never hiked or camped before. I discovered a vibrant community of young adults who not only practiced and lived their faith but also knew how to have an absolute blast! What surprised me most was how God chose to reveal Himself through the people around me. In the midst of our shared challenges, I witnessed the embodiment of Jesus in the actions of my fellow retreat participants. I can't help but encourage others, even those who may not consider themselves 'outdoorsy,' to sign up for this remarkable retreat.” -Meg Morrow

“Solvitur Ambulando
in walking, it is solved.”
ST. AUGUSTINE

 Office of Young Adult Ministry
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO



2024-2025 Dates

Oct. 18-20, 2024

(Registration now open!)

March 28-30, 2025

Join Us for the Disciples Response Fund Appeal Kick Off!

Commitment Sunday: September 22nd



The Diocese of Owensboro invites you to be part of something truly impactful. The Disciples Response Fund (DRF) is launching our annual appeal in all the parishes, and we need your support. Your generous contributions directly benefit our parishes, ministries throughout the entire diocese, empowering prayer groups, priest retirement and housing, and the Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp & Retreat Center, among other crucial initiatives.

Why Contribute? Your gift to the DRF enables us to strengthen our communities, provide essential resources, and foster spiritual growth. Together, we can make a profound difference in the lives of many.

How You Can Help: Join us for ***Commitment Sunday on September 22nd***, where you can prayerfully discern your contribution. Your support is deeply valued and appreciated.

For more information please contact:

Valeria Vessels, Director of Stewardship & Development, at 270-852-8348 or email valeria.vessels@pastoral.org

Thank you for your generosity for the Disciples Response Fund. Together, let's build a brighter future for our parishes, our ministries, priest retirement, Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp, and so much more.

Let Your Generosity Lead the Way.



Office of Evangelization & Discipleship
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

**To be missionary disciples of Jesus,
making present the kingdom of God!**

Contact the Director of the Office of Evangelization &
Discipleship with any questions:
Jeff Andrini, D.Min., 270-683-1545, Ext. 360 or
jeff.andrini@pastoral.org.

Join our Diocese of Owensboro Missionary Disciples Facebook
group



facebook.com/groups/2076958885928800/

Acts 2:42 Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for the wonderful example of the Early Church who continually devoted themselves to apostolic teaching, Christian fellowship, the breaking of bread, and to prayer. We ask that You:

Give us a hunger for your word – that our lives may be conformed to your teaching.

Give us a sincere love for one another – that we may seek opportunities to serve one another.

Give us a passion for unity – that we may set aside our differences and break bread together at your table.

Give us a lifestyle of prayer – that you may constantly be on our hearts and minds, guiding what we do and say.

Heavenly Father, we ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you, God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Prayer composed by Ed Calhoun, parishioner of St. Pius X in Owensboro



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NATIONAL
**Eucharistic
Revival**