



Parish-based
Mental Health Ministry
Spiritual Support Group
Facilitator Guide

**DEVELOPED BY:
THE APOSTOLATE FOR PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES- DIOCESE OF MADISON**



OUR MISSION

**THE APOSTOLATE WORKS TO PROMOTE
THE FULL INCLUSION OF PERSONS WITH
DISABILITIES IN THE LIFE OF THE
CHURCH. EVERY BAPTIZED PERSON,
REGARDLESS OF THEIR ABILITIES, HAS
RECEIVED A SPECIAL VOCATION TO
HOLINESS, AND WE STRIVE TO PROMOTE
THEIR PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL PARISHES
AND DIOCESAN EVENTS.**



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INTRODUCTION

All of God's children have a place at His table, including those who are struggling or are in various stages of recovery. Mental health exists on a continuum. We all have mental health, and can experience times of mental illness, some to more profound and debilitating extents. Our goal in this guide is to provide an opportunity for parishes to invite people with shared lived experiences into a deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. We can do this through dialog with one another, the opening up of the Scriptures, and prayer.



A Mental Health Ministry Spiritual Support Group provides the opportunity for faith sharing, personal growth in discipleship, and formation of community that allows for participants to be active members of their parish. We all strive to belong and to contribute. Take this opportunity to consider how each person you encounter can contribute along with being served. Follow Jesus' example of washing the feet of His disciples, and letting Mary Magdalene anoint His feet with oil, then wash them with her tears.

This group is not a replacement for professional therapy/counseling or taking prescribed medications. This group is for growing in faith. Our goal is that we each may leave each meeting with a better understanding and knowledge of the love that God has for us.

FACILITATOR GUIDELINES

Set a specific date, time, and place for meetings to happen, For example: "The first Tuesday of each month at 6 pm in the St. Dymphna Room of the parish center". Note that this may need to change due to participant availability.

Plan a meal or snack and beverage options. A meal is ideal because it extends hospitality and shows that the parish is interested in their physical and spiritual needs. It also can be a good if someone is needing a little extra incentive.

See ideas for easy food options on page 6.

Start and end with prayer. Invite the Lord in and keep Him a part of the discussions. End in prayer to send members forth with a reminder of the Lord's love for them.

Introductions with a "fun/interesting" question can help lighten the atmosphere. Page 5 has examples of some questions you can use, or you can get creative and come up with your own!

"High, Low, Buffalo" - Each person shares: something uplifting in the last day/week/since the last meeting (high), something that has been challenging (low), and something surprising or unexpected (buffalo: leave this open to interpretation and be a model if needed). Be sure to validate what is shared during this section. You can also simply do a check in by asking "how are you feeling today?".

"ICEBREAKER" QUESTION IDEAS

If you could have any one super power, what would you chose and why?

What is one fun or interesting fact about your name (first, middle, or last)?

What is your favorite food?

What book would you bring with you if you knew you were going to get stranded for a very long time on a desert island?

What is an activity that, while you are doing it, you lose track of time/get lost in?

What animal best fits your personality and why?

What color would other people use to describe you?

If you could go anywhere in the world, with no barriers, where would you go?

Who is a famous person, living or deceased, that you want to meet?

Who is your Confirmation Saint and why did you choose that Saint?

How many licks do you think it takes to get to the center of a Tootsie Pop?

Is a hotdog a sandwich?

What is your favorite way to pray?

Do you have siblings? If so, how many and where are you in the birth order?

What is your favorite mystery of the Rosary and why?

MEAL IDEAS

Not a cook? No problem, you can order food or buy pre-made meals. You could also ask people in the parish to volunteer to help you cook one part of the meal. For example, you could get the main dish and then ask others to prepare sides and a dessert. Keep it simple; people will appreciate the gesture.

Order take out/delivery: Take some time to figure out some places that have boxed meals, easily divided options such as sandwich variety packs, and pizza.

- In the Madison area, some easy ones are Jimmy Johns, Jason's Deli, Glass Nickel, HyVee, or Costco.

Buy a frozen meal or pre-made option from a grocery store such as lasagna, pasta dishes, ready to mix salads, anything you can put in the oven and pull out when it's done.

Visit the sites below for recipes for some of the suggestions on the next page:

thrivinghomeblog.com/20-easy-meals-ideas-for-a-group-of-people/

www.tasteofhome.com/collection/dinner-recipes-will-feed-crowd/

MEAL IDEAS

Meals that are easy to prepare in group sized quantities and allow people to add their own fixings:

- Sandwiches
- Chili
- Tacos
- Pulled Pork or Pulled Chicken
- Baked Potato bar
- Pasta bar - noodles, meat, veggies, sauces
- Assorted dips and appetizers
- Pot roast - meat, potatoes, carrots, onions
- Ham and cheese sliders
- Mac and cheese bar - chicken, veggies, sauces
- Meat loaf - mashed potatoes, rice, etc
- Chicken Pot Pie

If it doesn't make sense for your group to have a full meal together, you can do appetizers or snacks. And either way don't forget about dessert/something sweet!



These are some desserts made by a volunteer baker who made a different beautiful dessert each month with love and care.

UTILIZING DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Discussion questions provided are meant to be a guide. They do not all need to be asked, you may find some irrelevant, or find you don't have time to get through them all.

Types of Questions:

Observation Questions

These can often be a good place to start. Even though they can seem redundant, they help the group get on the same page and set the stage for conversation. Examples of these are: "Who is present in this story?", "What names are used for Mary in this prayer?" "Where does this take place?"

Understanding Questions

These are a good way to get a sense that the group all understands what is going on in the passage. They provide an opportunity to set the stage for discussion topics and provide context of the story. Examples of these are "What might Jesus have meant when he said....?" "During this time period, who were shepherds? What did they do on a daily basis?"

Application Questions

These refer to how we can apply this passage or prayer to our own lives. This can be an area of vulnerability, and asking/answering application questions will vary depending on how well the group knows each other and how much trust has been built.

OPENING STATEMENT

*The Mental Health Ministry serves to support, encourage and pray with and for people who live with mental illness. We come together to share our faith life and experiences with one another as we also seek to grow spiritually closer to our loving God.

We are people who strive to follow and imitate Jesus Christ in all we say and do. We are committed to what our Catholic Church believes and teaches about faith and morals in answer to our human search for truth and love and we are eager to share the good news of the Gospel. We offer prayer, and spiritual support and comfort in a group setting.

This meeting is not a group counseling or therapy session. We do not take on the roles of psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors or therapists. We do not provide diagnosis or prescribe medications. If anyone is under the care of a doctor and / or taking medications they need to continue doing so because this group is not a substitute for medical care or counseling.

The taking of any illegal drugs is a cause for removal from the group. Inappropriate or disruptive behavior, violence or abusive language is not permitted when participating in the group. If such an action occurs, the member may be asked to leave the group. During our meetings, we promise to respect one another by listening carefully to what is being said and by not carrying on side conversations.

We pledge ourselves to be open and honest in sharing information with one another. We promise to hold everything said in our meetings in strict confidence and will not share it with anyone outside of our group. The only exception is should anyone look to hurt either themselves or others, the team leader has a mandated obligation in accordance with the law to ensure that the member receives proper help and support.

GROUP NORMS

What is talked about in the group stays in the group.

We will respect other people's opinions.

Everyone will get an opportunity to talk, if they so choose.

Each person will keep their times of sharing, story telling, and input under 5 minutes.

We will show each person that they are a valuable member of the group by listening to what they have to say, not interrupting, and refraining from giving our opinions or advice when it is not asked for.

We will seek to understand each other.

We will come to this group to grow closer to the Lord and through Him, to one another.

GENERAL ORDER OF MEETING

Once everyone is gathered,

- Serve meal
- While eating do introductions and/or icebreaker questions.
- Have a place where dishes/silverware, etc can be set aside.
or move to meeting room location if meal is elsewhere.

Go into meeting materials,

- Begin with opening prayer.
- Follow guidelines at the beginning of each meeting section.



MEETING 1

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, You know us better than anyone knows us, even better than we know ourselves. We ask You to reveal to us the person you have created each of us to be. We know what You have promised: where two or three are gathered, You are here in our midst. Help us to see ourselves better through our relationships with one another. We ask You to heal what needs healing and trust that You carry our burdens with us. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

READING

Psalms 139 1-17

Lord, you have probed me, you know me:
you know when I sit and stand;
you understand my thoughts from afar.
You sift through my travels and my rest; with all my ways
you are familiar.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
Lord, you know it all.
Behind and before you encircle me
and rest your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,
far too lofty for me to reach.
Where can I go from your spirit?
From your presence, where can I flee?
If I ascend to the heavens, you are there;
if I lie down in Sheol, there you are.
If I take the wings of dawn and dwell beyond the sea;
even there your hand guides me, your right hand holds me
fast.
If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me, and night shall be
my light:
Darkness is not dark for you, and night shines as the day.
Darkness and light are but one.

You formed my inmost being,
you knit me in my mother's womb.
I praise you, because I am wonderfully made;
wonderful are you works!
My very self you know.
My bones are not hidden from you.
When I was being made in secret, fashioned in the
depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw me unformed; in your book all are
written down;
my days were shaped, before one came to be.
How precious are your designs, O GOD; how vast the
sum of them!



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.What stands out to you in this Psalm?
- 2.How well do you know yourself? Name three traits or interests that define who you are as a person and why you think those are the three most identifiable.
- 3.Have you ever tried or wanted to get away from Jesus? Why do you think that is?
- 4.Are there people in your life who know you better than anyone else does? How did this relationship come to be? Do you desire relationships like this?
- 5.Is there anyone who you think you know better than they know themselves? Why might that be the case?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, You know everything about us. You want us to see ourselves how you see us, with love and understanding. We ask You to give us the desire to do so. Help us to see ourselves as you see us, as your beautiful creations. Lord give us Your eyes when we look at others too. Help us to know their dignity as Your children. We also pray for anyone who is considering joining this group. Please remove any barriers that are not of You. We ask this through Christ our Lord, Amen.



St. Norbert Church in Roxbury, WI

MEETING 2

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit. Fill our hearts with Your gifts of understanding, knowledge, and wisdom. We open our lives to receiving these gifts. We ask all of this in Your Holy Name. Amen.

READING

Prayer Against Depression

O Christ Jesus
When all is darkness
And we feel our weakness and helplessness,
Give us the sense of Your Presence,
Your Love and Your Strength.
Help us to have perfect trust
In Your protecting love
And strengthening power,
So that nothing may frighten or worry us,
For, living close to You,
We shall see Your Hand,
Your Purpose,
Your Will through all things.

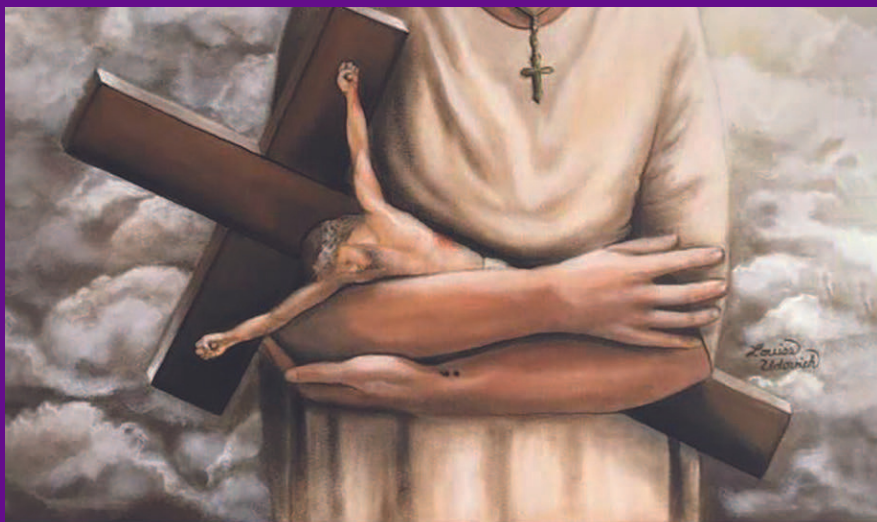
– St. Ignatius of Loyola

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of this prayer stands out to you and why?
2. Is it often easy or difficult for you to feel the presence of God? Think of a time when you have felt the presence of God: what was the situation and how did your body feel? What was happening in your body? In your mind? With your emotions?
3. Now think of a time when you have not been able to feel the presence of Christ in your life. What was going on in that situation, how did you feel? How did you respond? If you are able to safely and comfortably do so, mentally place yourself back in that situation, then place Jesus in the scene. Note where He is, where you are, and how you would have wanted Him to be present.

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, we ask you to help us, through the words of St. Ignatius, to see the ways you are present in everything in our lives. That not only are you present, but that you genuinely care about each one of us and want what is good for us. Come Holy Spirit, protect us. Amen.



The Pain is Real – but so is HOPE

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MEETING 3

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Christ Jesus, we invite you into this space with us today. We ask that you inspire us, that through the Holy Spirit, our words be your words, our thoughts be your thoughts, and we are able to see each other as you see us, worthy of the inherent dignity we have as your sons and daughters. We ask all of this in your Holy Name. Amen

READING

An Advocate's Prayer from NAMI FaithNet

O God of Light and Knowledge, -- we pray that darkness, fear and ignorance about serious mental illnesses might be dispelled by the light of knowledge.

We pray for Peace and Wholeness – for those with troubled minds and hearts, that broken lives and relationships might be mended.

We ask for Understanding -- that the walls of stigma, labels, exclusion and marginalization might be broken down through education and advocacy.

We pray for Healing -- for men, women and children living with mental illness, for better treatment, for steadier recovery, for greater opportunity to work and serve.

We ask for Faith and Hope – for those who feel no one cares. Dispel their despair through a cup of cold water, an outstretched arm, a listening ear, a committed advocate.

We offer our Thanks - for new discoveries in medical research, for faithful caregivers, for dedicated mental health professionals and persistent researchers.

Most of all, O God of Steadfast Love, we thank you for your Love -- that sustains the weary, that defends the weak, that sets the lonely in families, that brings beauty out of ashes, that brings a song in the night; that inspires courage to hope, to watch, to work for a new and brighter Day.

Amen.

Source from NAMI – National Alliance on Mental Illness

www.nami.org/Get-Involved/NAMI-FaithNet/Inspirational-and-Healing-Prayers/An-Advocate-s-Prayer

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stands out to you in this prayer?
2. Which of these things have you asked God for already? Which of them are you feeling called to ask God for today?
3. Is there anything that you are worried about asking God for in this list?
4. This is a prayer that we can use when praying for those who are struggling. Have you ever prayed for someone who has hurt you? For those who have helped you? Anyone and everyone in between? How do you approach praying for each of these different groups?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, we thank You for this time together. Help us to go forth with a prayerful approach to struggles, especially the struggles of others whom we encounter. Give us the ability to remember the truths about ourselves and others that we come to know through praying and reading Scripture together, that we may carry out what You have called us to do. In your Blessed Name, we pray. Amen.



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MEETING 4

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, you are the Good Shepherd and we are the sheep of your flock. We come to you today looking to feel Your protective gaze upon us. Help us in this time together to recognize times when You have found us in our wandering and to know that You are always paying attention to us. Holy Spirit, bring us into deeper community so that, through each other, we may know You better. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Amen.

READING

Luke 15: 4-10

What man among you having a hundred sheep and losing one of them would not leave the ninety-nine and go after the lost one until he finds it?

And when he does find it, he sets it on his shoulders with great joy

and, upon his arrival home, he calls together his friends and neighbors and says to them, "Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep."

I tell you, in just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance.

Or what woman having ten coins and losing one would not light a lamp and sweep the house, searching carefully until she finds it?

And when she does find it, she calls together her friends and neighbors and says to them, "Rejoice with me because I have found the coin that I lost".

In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where would you place yourself in this story?
2. Have you ever had an experience like the shepherd, or like the woman who lost something valuable? What did you do? How did you feel?
3. Why does the shepherd leave the ninety-nine, potentially putting them in danger, to find the one?
4. What do these parables say to you about God's relationship to us?
5. Picture Jesus picking you up and carrying you. How is he carrying you? What specific position are you in? Where are His arms? How does that feel?
6. What can we do to this week to cause rejoicing in heaven?

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God for always coming after us, for being our Savior, and for rejoicing over our repentance. We adore You and praise You, simply because of who You are. We ask that You continue to shepherd us towards Your Divine will. In Your Most Holy Name, we pray. Amen.



MEETING 5

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope.
To you do we cry, poor banished children of Eve.
To you do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears.
Turn then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us, and after
this exile show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary.
Pray for us, most Holy Mother of God,
that we may be worthy of the promises of Christ.

READING

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth,

to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David,
and the virgin's name was Mary.

And coming to her, he said "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you."

But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God.

And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is happening in this scripture passage?
2. What was Mary thinking and feeling when the Angel Gabriel first appeared to her?
3. Why might Mary have been hesitant? What were the consequences for her if it was discovered that she was with child before moving in with Joseph?
4. How does Mary's demeanor change over the course of this passage?
5. Mary's "yes", her Fiat, took a tremendous amount of faith in the Lord. Where could Mary have drawn this faith from?
6. What might the Lord be asking you to say "yes" to today? Like Mary, what questions do you have for God or His messenger that would help you to be able to make a fiat of your own? What fears or anxieties come up when you think about doing so?

CLOSING PRAYER

Memorare:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help or sought thy intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.



MEETING 6

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we ask that You be with us in our time together. Jesus, we know that You love us and that each and every person You have created is worthy of the love with which You created us. Help us to have Your eyes to see each other as You see us, Your ears to listen to one another as You listen to us, and Your words to speak that which You want us to hear. We ask all of this in Your Holy Name. Amen.

READING

Ephesians 4: 1-16

I, then a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says: "He ascended on high and took prisoners captive; he gave gifts to men." What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended into the lower [regions] of the earth? The one who descended is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ, so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, for their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming. Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the ways in which we are called to be “one”? Do any of these stand out to you and what does that particular one mean to you?
2. Reflect on what it means to say that Christ “descended into the lower regions of the earth”. Why did He do this? Where did He come from? Does it matter that Christ came to Earth?
3. What gifts have you personally been given for the building up of the Church?
4. How do you live the truth in love? What are ways you might be open to being called to do this?
5. How do you grow into Christ?
6. Do you feel like you are a part of something bigger, that you are a supporting ligament that holds the body together, allows other people to function to their full potential, bring about growth, and build the Church up in love?

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, we praise You, for You are our God. You know us so well, better than we can ever know ourselves or others. We thank You for this time together. We ask that we may have the courage to take what we've learned today about You, about ourselves, and about each other and use it for your will to be fulfilled. We continue to pray for anyone who is considering joining this group. Please remove any barriers that are not of You. We ask You to heal what needs healing and trust that You carry our burdens with us. We love You and we thank You. Amen.



Camp Gray, Reedsburg WI, photo credit: Kate Maciejewski

MEETING 7

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we praise You and we thank You. Give us the grace we need to enter into Your Word this day. We desire to encounter You through what we hear, discuss, and feel during our time together. I am sorry for times this week that I have not been a good listener and I ask You, Jesus, to guide my thoughts during this time so that I may learn from others, and be a steward of the parts of their life that they are sharing with us today. In Your Holy Name, we pray. Amen.

READING

Luke 2: 41-52

Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What locations does this passage take place in? Who is present throughout?
2. Why might both Mary and Joseph have assumed that Jesus was with the other parent? Why weren't they traveling together?
3. Have you ever been lost yourself? Where were you? How did you feel? What feelings come up now for you when you recall that time?
4. What do you think Mary and Joseph felt as they looked for Jesus? What do you think they did during their search? Pray? Run? Think about all the possibilities of what could have happened to Jesus?
5. Think about what you typically do when you are feeling lost or have lost someone/something precious to you. How do you feel? What emotions come up? Which of the things that came up for you has been helpful in finding what was lost or problem solving in these situations? Which are unhelpful?
6. Think of a time when you have felt relieved. Reflect on how your body felt at that moment. Let out a sigh of relief now and let your body visit that moment again. Would anyone like to share their experience with the group?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, when we are anxious or worried or scared, we turn to You. We know that You are always close to us, yet sometimes we feel like we are in the dark, searching, but not finding. We take time now to think of ways that we have seen Your presence in our lives. We resolve to think of these times more often so that when we encounter moments of loss we will have strategies in place to quickly find You and to run to You with our hearts open to Your love and mercy. Amen.



MEETING 8

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give instructions on how to pray a litany, be sure to explain that you pray the part in bold after each line. Decide if you are going to have a call/response format or one person reading both parts.
3. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
4. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Jesus, we trust in You. We believe that You are trustworthy and that You have given us reasons only to trust You. We know that there will be times that we may doubt in our ability to trust You, but we also know that You will be pursuing us even more in times like these. We trust in Your presence in our lives and in the lives of everyone else we encounter.

READING

Litany of Trust

From the belief that I have to earn Your love

Deliver me Jesus. (repeat after each of the following lines)

From the fear that I am unlovable

From the false security that I have what it takes

From the fear that trusting You will leave me more destitute

From all suspicion of Your words and promises

From the rebellion against childlike dependency on You

From refusals and reluctances in accepting Your will

From anxiety about the future

From the resentment or excessive preoccupations with the past

From restless self-seeking in the present moment

From disbelief in Your love and presence

From the fear of being asked to give more than I have

From the belief that my life has no meaning or worth

from the fear of what love demands

From discouragement

That you are continually holding me, sustaining me, loving me

Jesus I trust in you. (Repeat after each of the following lines)

That Your love goes deeper than my sins and failings and transforms me

That not knowing what tomorrow brings is an invitation to lean on You

That You are with me in my suffering

That my suffering, united to Your own, will bear fruit in this life and the next

That You will not leave me orphan, that You are present in Your Church

That Your plan is better than anything else

That You always hear me and, in Your goodness, always respond to me

That You give me the grace to accept forgiveness and to forgive others

That You give me all the strength I need for what is asked

That my life is a gift

That You will teach me to trust You

That You are my Lord and my God

That I am Your beloved one

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does the phrase "Jesus I trust You" or "Deliver me Jesus" resonate with you more today?
2. Which specific line/lines of this prayer stands out to you?
3. Have there times in your life when you have been able to put your full trust in the Lord? What allowed you to do so?
4. Have there been times when you have struggled to place your trust in the Lord? What may have been some reasons why it was difficult?
5. How might trusting the Lord be similar and how might it be different from trusting in other people?

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, we trust in You. Jesus, we love You. Jesus, we believe in Your presence in our lives. Thank you for this time together growing in our ability to trust in You individually and collectively.



MEETING 9

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Lord, we ask that You be with us in our time together. As we read the prayer of St. John of the Cross, we invite You, Holy Spirit, to come into this place and fill us with a burning love for You. We seek to see Your love in a new way, Lord. We ask this in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who is Love.

READING

The Living Flame of Love

O living flame of Love
That tenderly wounds my soul in its deepest center!
Since now You are not oppressive,
Now perfect me if it be your will:
Tear through the veil of this sweet encounter!

Oh, sweet burn! Oh, delectable wound!
Oh, soft hand! Oh, delicate touch
That savours of eternal life and pays every debt!
In slaying, thou hast changed death into life.

O lamps of fire! in whose splendours
The deep caverns of feeling,
Once obscure and blind,
Now give forth, so rarely, so exquisitely,
Both warmth and light to their Beloved.

How gently and lovingly
You awake in my heart,
Where in secret You dwell alone;
And in your sweet breathing, filled with good and glory,
How tenderly You swell my heart with love.

–St. John of the Cross

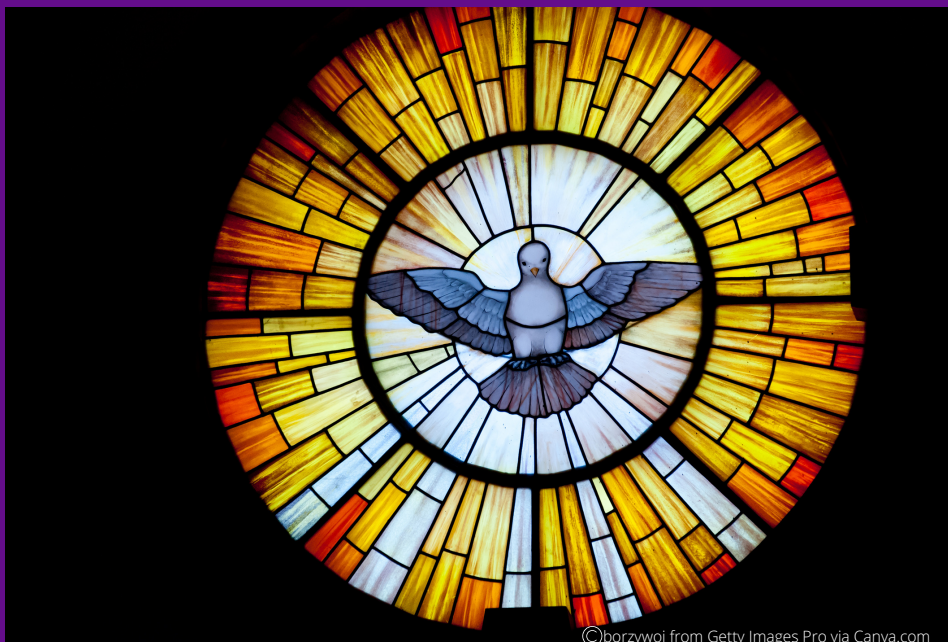
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is St. John of the Cross praying in this prayer?
2. This prayer is in the form of poetry. What stands out to you about the style in which it is written, and how that may affect how you read and/or interpret it?
3. How do you envision God as you read this prayer?
4. What attribute of fire do you feel the Lord is in your life today? His warmth? His light? His bright, flickering flames? His ability to burn and make new? Any others?
5. Think of areas in your life where you need some attribute of God's Flame of Love. What are some ways you may find that attribute? Who are people in your life that God may use to show His love to you? Who are you showing the love of God to or for whom might you try to do so?
6. What is one way you saw the love of God burning in the world today?

CLOSING PRAYER

Sacred Heart Prayer:

O most holy Heart of Jesus, fountain of every blessing, I adore You, I love You, and with a lively sorrow for my sins, I offer You this poor heart of mine. Make me humble, patient, pure, and wholly obedient to Your will.



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MEETING 10

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit! We praise You, Lord for who You are. We humbly ask that You forgive us for times that we have tried in vain to control, been prideful, or sought power. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we place our burdens and trust fully on Your shoulders, which You have offered to us. In this, may we be able to find the hope that St. Paul calls the Romans to find. We ask this with the power bestowed on us through the Holy Spirit by our Baptism and Confirmation. Amen.

READING

Romans 8: 24-26

For in hope we were saved. Now hope that sees for itself is not hope. For who hopes for what one sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait with endurance. In the same way, the Spirit too comes to the aid of our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.What is St. Paul encouraging the Romans to do in these verses?
- 2.What is hope? Where does it come from? What does it ask of us?
- 3.How do you view weakness? Do you think weakness can draw out strength? Why or why not?
- 4.What does the phrase "for we do not know how to pray as we ought" mean?
- 5.The gifts of the Holy Spirit are: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude (courage), knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord (wonder and awe). What are ways that each of them inspires hope through the Holy Spirit? Take time this coming week to look at each of these gifts in depth.
- 6.How can you, through the gifts and powers given to us through Baptism and Confirmation, have a deeper sense of hope, and guide others into that same hope?

CLOSING PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit! We thank You for this time together. We invite You into our lives more fully today than we ever have before. Help us to recognize the areas of our hearts and minds that we are holding back from You. In recognizing this, may we then open ourselves, little by little, to be able to place our trust in You and have hope in Your promise of eternal life. Amen.



MEETING 11

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we praise You, we thank You, we love You. We are grateful for this group and for the ability to share life with each other. We know that You are here with us and we each desire to recognize and feel Your presence in this moment here together. We ask for the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary during our time together as we pray, Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of death. Amen.

READING

Luke 10: 38-42

As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary [who] sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who is present in this story? Where does the story take place?
2. What is the difference in Martha's and Mary's actions during their time with Jesus?
3. Do you feel more like a Martha or a Mary today? Why?
4. Notice that Jesus didn't say that what Martha was doing was bad, it could have even been needed. Rather, he said that Mary had "chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her". What does Jesus mean by this?
5. Jesus says "There is need of only one thing.". What is that one thing in the context of this story? What is the one thing that the Lord is asking of you today that will bring you closer to Him?
6. Compare this passage in Luke when Jesus points out to Martha that she is anxious and worried about many things with the passage in Philippians that says "have no anxiety at all, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God, then the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus". How do these two passages connect and what can we take away from this message?

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of
your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow
love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not
so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to
eternal life.

Amen.



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MEETING 12

1. Read the passage/prayer out loud.
2. Give 5 minutes for everyone to look it over on their own and pray with it.
3. Open up discussion time. You can start out with the question "What stood out to you?" to get conversation flowing.

OPENING PRAYER

Thank You, Jesus, for bringing us together today. Open our hearts to Your everlasting love, our ears to Your voice, and our minds to Your inspiration. Come Holy Spirit, fill us with a deeper understanding of Your power and presence in our lives. Help us, like the Good Samaritan, to be Your hands and feet to others who are in need.

READING

Luke 10: 29-37

But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the helper in the story being a Samaritan?
2. Which person in the story do you identify with most and why?
3. Who do you consider to be your neighbors?
4. What barriers may have prevented the first two people from helping the robbers' victim?
5. The Good Samaritan not only got the robbers' victim to safety and out of their immediate danger, but provided for the continual care of them. How does that change the perspective of what type of neighbors we are called to be?
6. What might the robber's victim have been feeling before, during, and after their encounter with the Good Samaritan?

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus, we praise You and we thank You. Help us to be Good Samaritans in the world today. In noticing the needs of others, may we be true neighbors and friends to them. Help us especially to open ourselves to caring for and getting to know people who are different from us, that differences be less of a barrier and more of an opportunity to love like You.

RESOURCES

Resources vary significantly by location. Below are some national and/or specifically Catholic resources. Be sure to take some time to become acquainted with your area's mental health services so that you can refer as necessary.

Educational/Training Resources:

National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)
ncdp.org

Provides resources and education for spiritual and pastoral support.

The Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers
catholicmhm.org

Resources and trainings for starting or continuing a Catholic Mental Health Ministry at your parish.

Archdiocese of Chicago - Mental Health Ministry
www.catholicmhm.org/chicago

Dcn Tom Lambert and his team have developed resources to help start a mental health ministry and increase awareness in parishes.

Sanctuary Course for Catholics
On FORMED.org or sanctuarymentalhealth.org/catholics/
Offers companionship, supports recovery, and promotes wellbeing.

RESOURCES

Support Resources

988 - Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. 24-hour nationwide support line for mental health. It is an alternative option to dialing 911 that is streamlined specifically for mental health crises.

CatholicTherapist.com

www.catholictherapists.com

Search of Catholic Mental Health Professionals in your area.

ADRC - Aging and Disability Resource Center

This collaborative effort of the U.S. Administration for Community Living, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and the Veterans Health Administration, is designed to streamline access to long-term care.

PDF/electronic and large-print versions of facilitator and participant guides are available upon request.

Both guides are also available in Spanish

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