



A Formational Community
(Word / Education)

Opening Prayer

It is suggested that a prayer space be arranged for the meeting. This could consist of a cloth of the appropriate liturgical season, a candle, a cross, and a Bible. Also, place small tealights or other small candles on the perimeter of the prayer space. There should be as many candles as there are participants.

Opening Prayer: Good and Gracious God
You enkindle in us the fire of your love
And call us to spread the message
Of your enduring love to all.
Grant us strength each day
To be bold proclaimers of your Word
And faithful disciples to your call.

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-12

Ritual: *All are asked to think of one individual who passed on the faith to them in their own life. Each person is invited to light a candle for that individual and to say their name aloud. Then place the candle on the perimeter of the prayer space.*

Psalm Reading: I will open my mouth in story, drawing lessons from of old.
We have heard them, we know them; our ancestors have recited them to us.
We do not keep them from our children; we recite them to the next generation, the praiseworthy and mighty deeds of the Lord, the wonders He performed.

Faith-Sharing Question

All are invited to reflect on the following question and share their thoughts if they feel comfortable.

In what ways do you pass on faith to others?

This process is meant as a planning and brainstorming tool for Parish Pastoral Councils and parish members. If using this process to brainstorm objectives for a pastoral plan, it is suggested that you especially invite those members who are active leaders in the religious education life of the parish. Also, it is important to record substantial points of the conversation and/or insights by using newsprint or other means.

Reflecting on Church Teaching

Several individuals are asked to read the following statements for the group. After reading the quotes, discuss the reflection question in terms of the parish as a whole, making reference to the Pastoral Goals if possible.

“Continuing formation in the faith is directed not only to the individual Christian, to accompany them in their journey towards holiness, but also the Christian community as such so that it may mature also in its interior life of love of God and of the members as well as in its openness to the world as a missionary community. Approaching this ideal, little by little, demands of the community a great fidelity to the action of the Holy Spirit, the constant nourishment of the Body and Blood of Christ and continuing education in the faith, listening all the time to the Word.” (General Directory of Catechesis, 70)

“Catechesis is a process of formation in faith, hope, and charity; it shapes the mind and touches the heart, leading the person to embrace Christ fully and completely. It introduces the believer more fully into the experience of the Christian life, which involves the liturgical celebration of the mystery of the Redemption and the Christian service of others.” (Ecclesia in America, 69)

“The parish is, without doubt, the most important locus in which the Christian community is formed and expressed. This is called to be a fraternal and welcoming family where Christians become aware of being the people of God. In the parish, all human differences melt away and are absorbed into the universality of the Church. The parish is also the usual place in which the faith is born and in which it grows. It constitutes, therefore, a very adequate community space for the realization of the ministry of the word at once as teaching, education and life experience.” (General Directory of Catechesis, 257)

“The Catholic school is a most important locus for human and Christian formation. It is the special function of the Catholic school to develop an atmosphere animated by a spirit of liberty and charity, to enable young people to grow in that new life which has been given them at baptism, and to orient the whole of human culture to the message of salvation.” (General Directory of Catechesis, 259)

Reflection Questions

Recall a time when you participated in an educational or spiritual growth opportunity at our parish that really made a difference in your relationship with God. Tell the story of this experience.

In what ways does our parish provide continuing formation for all parishioners?

Brainstorming Objectives

At this point, the facilitator reads the goal which has been established around Word. The goal should also be clearly posted in the room somewhere so that all can reflect on it.

The focus now is for all members to brainstorm ideas to accomplish the stated goal. This begins by all individuals stating ideas that they have to accomplish the goals. These can be very specific.

All of these ideas are recorded on newsprint as people say them.

To get the conversation going, you may wish to have individuals talk with a partner first for a few minutes and then come together as a large group.



Finding the Common Threads

Take a moment to read the following passages. Then, based upon your conversation answer the following focus questions and make a record of any consensus beginning to emerge among the group regarding future actions.

“Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late.” (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

“It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new program’. The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. But it must be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. It is in the local churches that the specific features of a detailed pastoral plan can be identified – goals and methods, formation and enrichment of the people involved, the search for necessary resources – which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mold communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture. What awaits us therefore is an exciting work of pastoral revitalization – a work involving all of us.” (Novo Millennio)

“Christ has no body now on earth but yours; yours are the only hands with which we can do his work, yours are the only feet with which he can go around the world, yours are the only eyes through which his compassion can shine forth upon a troubled world. Christ has no body on earth but yours.” (attributed to St. Teresa of Avila)

Focus Questions

Of all the ideas that have been mentioned here, choose three that would enable us to foster and nurture more formation for all parishioners and accomplish our goal for the future. (This question is asked of all participants)

Are there specific ideas that are emerging as a clear consensus among the group? Which of the ideas are emerging as a consensus?

Which part of these common ideas can be brought to life? What resources will the parish need to achieve these goals? Who are the individuals and groups within our parish, our cluster and/or within the Diocese that need to be involved in making these goals a reality?

