



## A Welcoming and Caring Community (Community)

### 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 Bible as well as symbols of community.*

**Leader:** Come, Spirit of God!

**All:** Come with your power to transform us.  
Come, Fire of Love!  
Come with your wisdom to enlighten us.

**Leader:** Let us take a moment to quiet ourselves and be aware of the gift of God's Spirit dwelling within us and among our parish community as we gather to do God's work.

### Scripture Reading

**Reader 1:** "They devoted themselves to the teachings of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers." (Acts 2:42)

**Reader 2:** "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ...God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it." (1 Cor. 12:12,24-27)

**Reader 3:** "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt 18:20)

**Reader 4:** "For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13)

### Faith-Sharing Question

*All are asked to reflect on the following question with a partner. The leader then brings the group together and asks individuals to share with the entire group a thought which they were discussing.*

*In what ways do relationships among members of our parish show the active presence of Jesus Christ? How is this similar to, yet different from, relationships among people in other situations?*

*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.*

“Faced with a divided world which is in search of unity, we must proclaim with joy and firm faith that God is communion, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, unity in distinction, and that he calls all people to share in that same Trinitarian communion. We must proclaim that this communion is the magnificent plan of God the Father; that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Lord, is the heart of this communion, and that the Holy Spirit works ceaselessly to create communion and to restore it when it is broken. We must proclaim that the church is the sign and instrument of the communion willed by God, begun in time and destined for completion in the fullness of the kingdom.” (Lumen Gentium, 2)

“Before making practical plans, we need to promote a spirituality of communion, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are part of me.” This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship.” (Novo Millennio Ineunte, 43)

### Reflection Questions

*Recall a time at our parish when you experienced an inspiring moment of welcoming, a time when you felt that much care was being expressed. What did people say or do that created this moment?*

*In what ways does our parish foster an ongoing commitment to community and deeper relationships among parishioners?*

### Brainstorming Objectives

*At this point, the facilitator reads the goal which has been established around Community. 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 with all individuals stating ideas that they have to accomplish these 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 sense of community among 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?*

