

FAITH SHARING

BY
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PARISH RESOURCE SERIES



A RESOURCE FROM

ASCENSION PRESS

THE ORDER OF THE ASCENSION

The Order of the Ascension is an Anglican community of priests under a promise of stability, obedience and conversion of life and those who have chosen to share in the life and witness of that community as Companions and Associates.

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Ascension Press produces resources for parish development and oversight that are consistent with the mission and general orientation of the Order.

The Parish Development Institute is co-sponsored with the General Theological Seminary to provide substantial training for parish leaders in development and oversight. Two summer sessions, of two weeks each, are combined with a reading program and field work reports during the year. A brochure is available.

The Rev. Robert A. Gallagher, OA comes with a background which includes urban parish ministry, industrial mission work and nineteen years as a trainer and consultant in the field of Parish Development. Father Gallagher is presently part of a pastoral team for the parishes of St. Michael's and St. Andrew's in the city of Trenton, NJ. He was formerly the Congregational Development Officer for the Diocese of Connecticut. His publications include **Stay in the City**, and **Power from on High: A Model for Parish Life and Development**.

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THE USE OF FAITH SHARING

There are five primary results that parishes experience as they engage in organized faith sharing.

1. **Most people become more aware of their journey in Christ.** Sharing your own story and hearing the story of others can build a stronger sense of relationship with God and others. It is also likely to expand our view of how God works. The tendency to assume that how God has acted in our life is how he has acted in everyone else's life is challenged by the different experiences offered in faith sharing. It becomes clearer that we have a unique relationship with God — a journey of loving mystery in which we participate with God in the creation of our own identity and destiny.
2. **The parish's sense of community is built.** Sharing my story and hearing those of others is a means of supporting each other in the Christian life.
3. **A parish climate can be established in which it is acceptable to speak of and explore our spiritual life.** Faith sharing that is structured and guided is a relatively non-threatening way to create behavioral norms that allow and even encourage discussions about our prayer life, ethics, and relationship with God and the Church.
4. **Many people increase their ability to share their own stories with others.** This is a support in the parish's evangelization ministry.
5. **Faith sharing is the base for communal discernment in the parish.** The capacity of the community to seek the working of the Holy Spirit in its decision-making is founded in a sense of Christian community, of being part of the People of God, of sharing in the divine life and purposes.

Faith sharing exercises have been used as part of new member classes; in each session of an adult foundations course in faith and practice; to begin vestry or guild meetings; and on retreats.

Guidelines for conducting faith sharing that will fit most situations include:

- Provide clear structure to reduce people's anxiety. Most of us can focus our attention on the task at hand if the directions are clear and time boundaries are stated. A written handout is useful.
- Don't push individuals into participating. Be clear that the group's schedule includes faith sharing while explicitly saying, "Don't do it if you don't want to." We need to acknowledge that this may not be necessary for some at this time in their life while still keeping it available for the parish as a whole.
- Fit the amount of time given to faith sharing to the requirements of the situation. New members classes or foundations courses might allow 30 - 45 minutes. An overnight event could devote a whole morning to the same exercise. The group's size would usually be 3-4 people. That number of stories will usually maintain interest. Attempts to share in large groups make most sense if the group will be together over a significant period of time, when they will share a common life together, when the sharing can be spread over a number of sessions, and when the interest of participants can be maintained.

- Ask people to “share only what they want to share.” If trust is to be nurtured, the intimacy of the sharing should not stretch far beyond what the group can accept. If the dignity of participants is to be respected, there needs to be no sense of pressure to share more than you want to share.
- Participants should be asked to listen quietly, carefully and respectfully to each person’s sharing. There should be no interruptions. No response is necessary or usually appropriate. The person’s sharing does not require our approval, questioning or challenge. A group that has a high trust level, has done a good bit of faith sharing together and whose participants are of apostolic faith and practice might make an agreement to establish norms that allow for more exploration.
- If there is a facilitator of the session, that person usually needs either to share along with the group or to stay out of the group. “Listening in” without sharing will distract some people from the task.
- Some faith sharing exercises require more trust than others. Consider the emotional, intellectual and spiritual maturity of participants when selecting exercises.

Faith sharing is a process in which we relate the story of the People of God with our own story. We draw a connection between how God has acted — as seen in Scripture, creeds, liturgy and history — and how God is acting to draw me to himself in my life. My personal history; my relationship with the Church; my gifts and vocation; and the context of my life, with its relationships, responsibilities and opportunities, are reflected upon in faith sharing.

The exercises in this booklet may be copied and used as they are or in modified form. Please give proper credit. We hope you will move on to create faith sharing exercises to fit particular events and moments in your parish’s life.

FAITH SHARING: A PERSON

A. Individual Reflection

1. Scripture reading

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

(Hebrews 12: 1,2)

2. Identify a person who has been important in drawing you into a deep and lasting relationship with Christ and the Church. (The person may be living or dead, from the past or present, a person you have actually met or a person who has influenced you through books, etc.)

a. How did it happen?

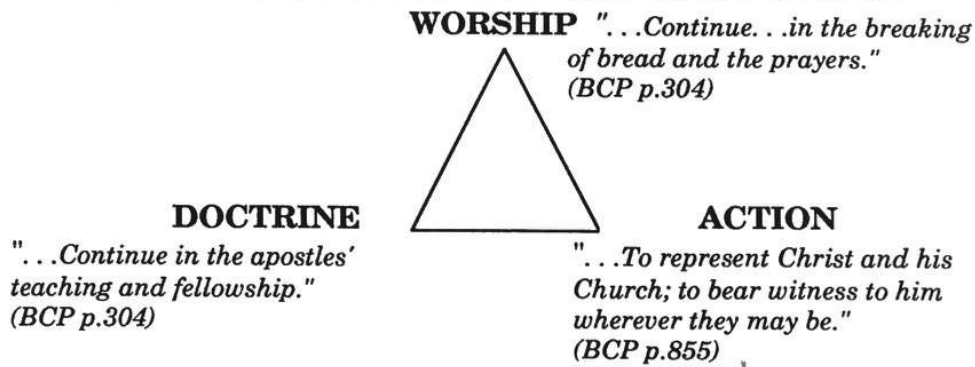
b. What was it that drew you?

c. What were significant events/stories?

B. Share in groups

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FAITH SHARING: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE



A. Individual Reflection

1. Prayer

Everliving God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (BCP p. 816)

2. Each person quietly identify:

- a. Which area of the Christian Life (worship, doctrine, action) has been the most comfortable for you? (easiest, most rewarding, related best to your gifts, etc.)
- b. Which area has been the most difficult for you? (one you have felt weak in, had problems with, needed the most support for, etc.)

B. **In the group, briefly share** the answers you want to share. There should be no response or comment; just prayerful listening.

+From **Faith Sharing**, by Mary Anne Mann and Robert Gallagher, Ascension Press. Based on framework in **Power from on High: A Model for Parish Life and Development**, Ascension Press.

FAITH SHARING: SPIRITUAL LIFE LINE

A. Individual work

Draw a line that represents your relationship with Christ and His Church from your birth to the present. (You may wish to use the back of this sheet to allow more space.)

-Note significant people, periods, events.

B. Share what you wish to with the group.

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FAITH SHARING: GIFTS

A. Meditate on Scripture

1. Begin with a prayer for guidance
2. In silence, alone. You may want to move to another location for this and step B.

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. . . If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. . . The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." . . . But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.

(From I Corinthians 12)

B. Answer a few of the following questions that you most respond to.

-In silence, alone.

1. What kinds of things in your life have you both **enjoyed doing** and **done well**?
2. What do other people most like, appreciate, respect about you?
3. Think of some difficulty you have faced in your life. What strengths did God "bring out" in you through that experience?

FAITH SHARING: BEING FED AND BEING SENT

Your task is to reflect on the ways in which Our Lord, in and through the parish, feeds and sends us for the commitments of our life.

A. Prayer

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(BCP p. 832)

B. Reflection

1. Read the following in silence.

FEEDING

-Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. . .

-Come to me, all who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me. For I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your soul.

(Matt. 11:28-29)

-Take, eat; this is my body...Drink of it all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant. . .

(Matt. 26: 26-27)

-Continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers. . . .Whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.

(BCP p. 304)

-Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament. . .

(BCP p. 363)

SENDING

-Thou shalt love thy neighbor. . .

-Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . .

(Matt. 28:19)

-For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

(Matt. 25:35)

-Proclaim by work and example the Good News of God in Christ. . . seek and serve Christ in all persons. . . strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

(BCP p. 305)

- . . .And serve you in unity, constancy, and peace.

(BCP p. 363)

2. How does our Lord, in and through the parish, feed and send us for the commitments of our Life? Identify some of the ways. Be as specific as possible.

3. How do we as a parish cooperate with and hinder our Lord's feeding and sending?

4. How might we as a parish become more faithful and effective at feeding and sending? Be as specific as possible.

C. Share

D. Prayer

As you finish your task pray for the parish.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

(BCP p. 832)

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FAITH SHARING: EVANGELIZATION

A. Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

(BCP p. 101)

B. Read and Reflect

Evangelization is God's ministry. It is also an expression of the Church's mission "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ" (BCP, p. 855). The General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 1973 defined evangelism as "the presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, in such ways that persons may be led to believe in Him as Savior and follow Him as Lord within the fellowship of the Church."

All of us, congregations and individual disciples, have a share in this aspect of the mission of the People of God.

We can see some of the depth of evangelization when we reflect on its meaning in relationship to three passages from the Scriptures.

And there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

(Luke 4:17-21)

Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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 lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

(Matthew 28: 18-20)

I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(Corinthians 11: 23-26)

C. **Answer** the following:

1. Which of the three scripture readings do you most respond to?
Which do you least respond to?

2. How has Jesus Christ been presented to you in each of the ways suggested in the scripture readings?

D. **Share** with others in your group.

E. **Prayer**

O God and Father of all, whom the whole heavens adore: Let the whole earth also worship you, all nations obey you, all tongues confess and bless you, and men and women everywhere love you and serve you in peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(BCP p. 124)

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FAITH SHARING: AN EXPERIENCE OF DRIFTING

A. One member of the group begins by **reading** the following:

Our heavenly Father sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved; that all who believe in him might be delivered from the power of sin and death, and become heirs with him of everlasting life.

(BCP p. 277)

B. **Silent Reflection**

a. Identify a time in your life when you found yourself drifting away from the life of your parish.

b. What was going on that affected your participation?

Inside you?

Inside the parish?

c. What response from the parish were you wishing for?

C. **Group members share** whatever they wish of their responses.

D. One member leads the group in the following **prayer**:

Merciful God, Creator of all the peoples of the earth and lover of souls: Have compassion on all who do not know you as you are revealed in your Son Jesus Christ. Let your Gospel be preached with grace and power to those who have not heard it; turn the hearts of those who resist it; and bring home to your fold those who have gone astray; that there may be one flock under one shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(BCP p. 280)

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FAITH SHARING: BONDING - PRIEST & COMMUNITY #1

The relationship between priest and the parish community can be seen as a process of working through two issues (the acceptance of the priest as a symbol and of the priest as a person) in three phases. Please fill in the chart based on your experience. Change the phases if you want. Share your reflection with others. A useful background article is "Should I Leave?" by Father Warner White in Alban Institute's January/February 1986 **Action Information**.

| PHASE | KEY EVENTS | SPIRITUAL LIFE ISSUES YOU FACED |
|---|------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Adoration/Dependence/ Illusion 1-2 years | | |
| 2. Disappointment/ Counterdependence/ Disillusionment 3-4 years | | |
| 3. Respect/Inter- dependence/ Realistic Love 4-6 years + | | |

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FAITH SHARING: BONDING - PRIEST AND COMMUNITY #2

A. Reflection

1. Begin with a prayer for guidance. Reflect on the questions and scripture below.
2. Think about priests you have known. Identify in your own history significant priests or pastors. What drew or attracted you? What put you off?
3. "And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them, and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly looking around they no longer saw any one with them but Jesus only."
(Mark 9: 2-8)
4. Assuming that a priest in a parish is both a person and a symbol, how did the priest you identified handle that? How did they make a distinction between themselves as person and their symbolic role?

B. Share with your group.

The Rev. Robert Gallagher, OA
Barbara Blodgett, AOA
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FAITH SHARING: THE INVITATION #1

A. Reflection

Take some time to reflect on this reading.

“This Lord has Himself given us the time and space necessary to learn and put into practice the service of love that He continues to teach us.”

The Prologue, **Rule of St. Benedict**

B. Continue your reflection as you respond to these questions:

1. How has the Lord given you the time and space that is necessary to learn? Focus on a specific time or person.
2. In relation to the above, how have you been able to put into practice His service of love?
3. In what ways do you experience Him continually teaching you?

C. With a group **share** thoughts that have come to you as you reflected.

(Developed for workshop on “Priest’s Spiritual Life and Parish Development”
by Barbara Blodgett, AOA, and Robert A. Gallagher, OA.)

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FAITH SHARING: THE INVITATION #2

A. Reflection

Take some time to reflect on this reading.

“This Lord has Himself given us the time and space necessary to learn and put into practice the service of love that He continues to teach us.

In this school of His let us hope that following faithfully His instructions nothing distasteful nor burdensome will be demanded of us, but if it has to be so in order to overcome our egoism and lead us into the depths of true love, let us not become disheartened, nor frightened and so ignore the narrow path in spite of its tight entrance - that path which leads directly to the fullness of life.”

The Prologue, **Rule of St. Benedict**

B. Continue your reflection as you respond to these questions:

- a. Identify a couple of periods in, or aspects of, your life in Christian community that you experienced (or experience) as distasteful and/or burdensome.

- b. What happened to you in response to these periods or aspects of community life? How did you experience the temptation to become fearful or disheartened? How did you experience the invitation to move beyond your own self-orientation and into “the depths of true love?”

C. Share what you want with others.

(Developed for workshop on “Priest’s Spiritual Life and Parish Development”
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FAITH SHARING: LISTENING FOR GOD'S WORD

A. Prayer (in silence)

B. Scripture reading and reflection

At that time Eli, whose eyesight had begun to grow dim, so that he could not see, was lying down in his own place; the lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down within the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. And the Lord called again, "Samuel!" And Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again." Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. And he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

(I Samuel 3: 2-9)

Reflection questions:

- a. What things have you heard/seen/thought, since you've been here, that disturb you?

- b. What have you heard/seen/thought that comforts/reassures/settles you?

- c. What is God's Word for you in it?

Option: Imagine one of the situations above. Who is the Christian who could best speak to you of God's Word in it? Imagine how/what they would speak to you now.

C. **Share** in small groups

D. **Closing Prayer:**

O God, by whom the meek are guided in judgment, and light rises up in darkness for the godly: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us do, that the Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and that in your light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(BCP 58, p.832)

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FAITH SHARING: STABILITY - STAYING, NOT RUNNING

A. Meditative Prayer

Calm steadfast love
still deep
within your peace
and keep
our fluctuating hearts;
our inability
anchor
in your stability
your changeless energy
of burning love.

+Ester deWaal, **Seeking God**
Liturgical Press

B. Scripture Reading:

And they went to a place which was called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; the son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

(Mark 14: 32-42)

C. Reflection

1. In what situations this week have I wanted to run?

2. Where/when did I run/distance myself? (from someone or myself)

3. Where did I find myself given in a half-hearted or grudging way?

4. In a situation when I wanted to run but did not, what did I do/what happened that helped me to stay present?

5. What factors in this situation/place/community have helped you have the base/undergirding to persevere at points of stress and strain?

D. Share

E. Closing Prayer: Collect - 5th Sunday in Lent.

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

(BCP p. 219)

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FAITH SHARING: STABILITY - GRUMBLING IN OUR HEART

A. Prayer (in silence)

Pray that you may see the choices of your life

B. Reflection:

Now the word of the Lord came to Jonah the son of Amit'tai, saying, "Arise, go to Nin'evah, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah rose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went on board, to go with them to Tarshish, away from the presence of the Lord.

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil which he had said he would do to them; and he did not do it.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed to the Lord and said, "I pray thee, Lord, is not this what I said when I was yet in my country? That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repentest of evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take my life from me, I beseech thee, for it is better for me to die than to live." And the Lord said, "Do you do well to be angry?" Then Jonah went out of the city and sat to the east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, till he should see what would become of the city.

And the Lord God appointed a plant, and made it come up over Jonah, that it might be a shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort. So Jonah was exceedingly glad because of the plant. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm which attacked the plant, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God appointed a sultry east wind, and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah so that he was faint; and he asked that he might die, and said, "It is better for me to die than to live." But God said to Jonah, "Do you do well to be angry for the plant?" And he said, "I do well to be angry, angry enough to die." And the Lord said, "You pity the plant, for which you did not labor, nor did you make it grow, which came into being in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I pity Nin'evah, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

(Jonah 1: 1-3, 3: 10 - 4: 11)

C. Reflection: My Choices

1. Respond to the following in terms of your experience in this gathering and/or a recent vocational experience.

- What situations have left you grumbling?
- What is supposed to happen that is not happening?
- What is something you have only been half-hearted about?
- When did you feel that your plans were interrupted - that you were interrupted?
- When did you give yourself to feelings of anger, resentment, boredom, or deadness?

2. In one (or more) of the above -

- a. Who was it that you expected to "make things right?"
- b. What was the choice you made at the time - external choice and internal choice?
- c. What choice could you make now to let go of any "grumbling in your heart?"

D. Share

- what you want
- with one other person

E. Close your sharing with prayer:

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

(BCP p. 219 - 5th Sunday of Lent)

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FAITH SHARING: OPENNESS TO OUR OWN TRANSFORMATION

A. **Prayer** (in silence) - That I may see my choices

B. **Scripture reading and reflection** (in silence)

By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept,*
when we remembered you, O Zion.

As for our harps, we hung them up*
on the trees in the midst of that land.

For those who led us away captive asked us for a song,
and our oppressors called for mirth:*
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion."

How shall we sing the Lord's song*
upon an alien soil? Psalm 137: 1-4

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brethren, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3: 12-14

1. What do you look for/hope for in this time together? As a Christian/person? In the special vocation you are pursuing in this context?
2. What is the death you must die in this setting? As a Christian and person? In your vocational life?
3. In that context, what is the preparation (mental, emotional, with others) to which you must give yourself?
4. In that context, how will you sing the Lord's song?

C. **Share** in small groups (3's or 4's)

D. **Closing Prayer** (in small group, together).

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy: Increase and multiply upon us your mercy; that, with you as our ruler and guide, we may so pass through things temporal, that we lose not the things eternal; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.
(BCP Proper 12, p. 231)

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FAITH SHARING: FRIENDSHIPS - BELIEF, ACTION, PRAYER

A. In preparing to go home, take a few minutes to **reflect** on each of the following:

1. **Belief** - What is a Christian teaching about friendship you would like to reflect on in the week ahead?
2. **Action** - Identify something you could do this week with a friend in which you acknowledge the specialness of the relationship, and/or your need for that relationship, and/or your investment in the long-term stability of the relationship. Seek a way to apply the belief you identified above.
3. **Prayer** - Identify a way to open yourself to God's grace - to open your heart and mind to true belief and to give yourself to faithful action. How to offer in prayer the belief and action you identified above?

B. **Share** with a few others.

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FAITH SHARING: RESPONDING TO PARISH HISTORY #1

A. Take time to be by yourself to use the following **prayer, scripture and reflection**. (Move around as you want. Be silent.)

1. Collect

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to thee, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly thine, utterly dedicated unto thee; and then use us, we pray thee, as thou wilt, and always to thy glory and the welfare of thy people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

(BCP p. 832)

2. Scripture: I Corinthians 12: 12-27

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the organs in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single organ, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we think less honourable we invest with the greater modesty, which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior part, that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

3. Reflection

What are the three things (patterns, events, personalities, movements, etc.) that strike you as most important about the history of your parish?

B. Gather with others to share

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FAITH SHARING: RESPONDING TO PARISH HISTORY #2

A. Take time to be by yourself to use the following **reading, reflection and prayer**. Move around as you want. Be silent.

1. Scripture:

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

(2 Corinthians 4: 5-11)

2. Questions for reflection:

a. What has God been doing in this parish?

b. What has been resisted?

c. What has been received?

3. Close with thanksgiving for whatever has been given during your reflection. You may want to use this prayer.

Most loving Father, whose will it is for us to give thanks for all things, to fear nothing but the loss of you, and to cast all our care on you who care for us: Preserve us from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, that no clouds of this mortal life may hide from us the light of that love which is immortal, and which you have manifested to us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

(BCP p. 216)

B. **Gather with others to share.**

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FAITH SHARING: LEADERSHIP AND FAILURE

A. Find a quiet comfortable spot in which to **reflect** on the following quotations and questions.

1. "Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth? They make much of you, but for no good purpose; They want to shut you out, that you make much of them. For a good purpose it is always good to be made much of and not only when I am present with you. My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you! I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you."

(Galatians 4: 16-20)

In your role as a church leader, have you experienced times of alienation from others because you have confronted them with the Gospel, the Church's faith and practice? How did that happen?

2. "For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brethren. What I mean is that each one of you says, 'I belong to Paul,' or 'I belong to Apollos,' or 'I belong to Cephas,' or 'I belong to Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

(I Corinthians 1: 12-13)

Have there been times when you have questioned whether your exercise of ministry has led people to you rather than to Christ? How did that happen?

3. "Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods, but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? . . . I am afraid I have labored over you in vain."

(Galatians 4: 8-9, 11)

Have there been times when you have felt that your labors have been in vain? How did that happen?

- B. Close your reflections with a **prayer** (perhaps this one) and return to your groups.

Almighty and everliving God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who work for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honor and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

(BCP p. 818)

- C. In groups **share** whatever of your reflections you wish to share.

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FAITH SHARING: ACCEPTANCE AND CHALLENGE

A. Individual Reflection

In his use of authority, in the formation of the community, Jesus both accepted and challenged/confronted people.

1. What stories/images in Scripture do you recall of:

a. **acceptance**

b. **challenge/confrontation**

2. Which is easiest and which is hardest for you?

Provide an example/brief story.

B. Share in groups

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FAITH SHARING: ST. PETER

A. Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to thee, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly thine, utterly dedicated unto thee; and then use us, we pray thee, as thou wilt, and always to thy glory and the welfare of thy people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

(BCP p. 832)

B. Find a quiet, comfortable spot in which to **meditate** on the following quotations and questions:

1. As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter and Andrew his brother. . . and he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

(Matthew 4: 18-20)

As you think of your calling into Christ and his Church what draws and excites you?

2. And Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, bid me come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water and came to Jesus; but when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink he cried out, "Lord, save me."

(Matthew 14: 28-30)

What is it that causes you, as a parish leader, to doubt or to be afraid as you seek to follow Jesus?

3. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

(John 21: 15)

How do you feel that Christ is calling you to "feed his lambs" out of love for him?

C. Return to your group and **share** what of your answers you wish to share.

D. Close with prayer

Almighty Father, who inspired Simon Peter, first among the apostles to confess Jesus as Messiah and Son of the living God: keep your Church steadfast upon the rock of this faith, so that in unity and peace we may proclaim the one truth and follow the one Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

(BCP p. 238)

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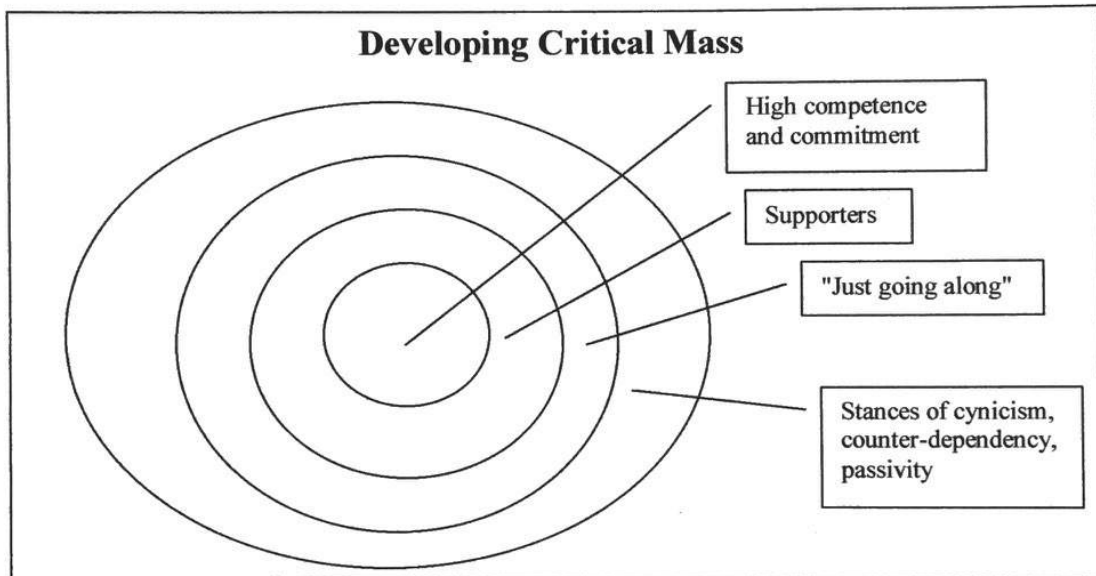
Faith Sharing: Nurturing Commitment and Competence

A. PRAYER:

*Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.*

(Collect for the Parish, p. 817, BCP)

B. REFLECTION: Using the model for developing critical mass, silently consider the following questions.



1. Where would you place yourself in the model? What keeps you in that place?
2. Think of a time in your life when you moved from one circle to another. Did you move *toward* the center or *away* from the center? What triggered this movement?
3. What diminishes your commitment, or hampers your competence?
4. What builds up your commitment and/or competence?

C. SHARE whatever you would like to share with your group.

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