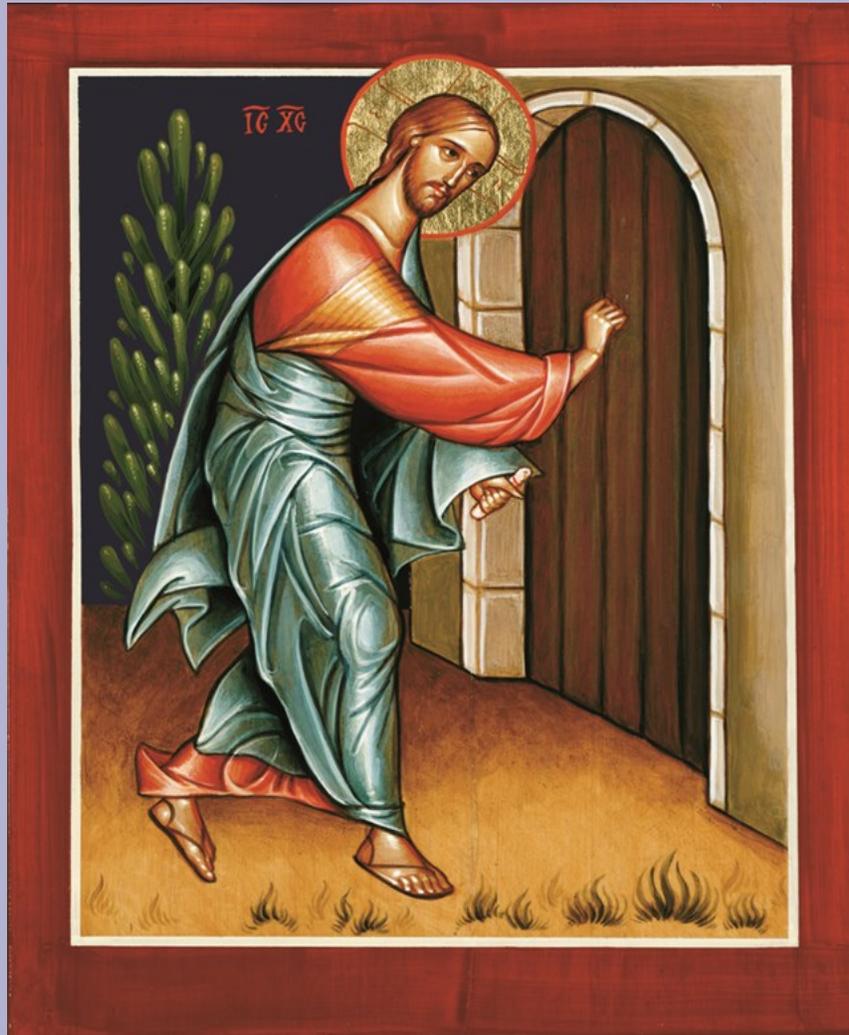


“TEACH MY PEOPLE TO PRAY”
A Five Part Study on Bishop Ricken’s Pastoral Reflection



Behold I stand at the Door and Knock.”

Icon courtesy of Br. Claude Lane, OSB, Mount Angel Abbey, Saint Benedict, Ore.



“The world needs Jesus Christ now more than ever. The world needs the church now more than ever”.

The Most Reverend David L. Ricken, DD, JCL

Teach My People to Pray

Small Group Study Facilitator's Guide

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you for leading this small group process. The small group model is a powerful way of engaging and forming parishioners through prayer, relationship building and faith sharing. Your ministry as a small group leader will help to draw people more deeply into Bishop Ricken's Pastoral Reflection *Teach My People to Pray*. The hope in creating this companion resource is that participants will encounter Jesus Christ through prayer and that it will be a stepping stone to deepening and building a continuing and lasting relationship with Jesus as a disciple so as to be a witness to others. Let us pray for each other as we begin this journey. Many blessings as you continue to minister as a member of the Body of Christ.

Julianne Stanz and Mary Ann Otto
Department of the New Evangelization
Department of Stewardship and Pastoral Services
Diocese of Green Bay

Preparation and Strategies for Teach My People to Pray Small Group Study

The role of the facilitator is to:

- Make initial call to members with details of time and location of session
- Greet members as they arrive
- Make weekly materials available
- Keep time each session and the group moving (key role)
- Encourage all members as active participants in the group
- Assure that room, nametags and hospitality are ready
- Be the contact for members to call for information or in an emergency
- Contact members if there is a change in plans (weather, emergency, etc.)

Time Frame: This small group sharing process is meant to be conducted in five (preferably weekly) sessions of 60-90 minutes each. Each section has a time allotment. Please keep your group moving.

Group Size: The ideal size would be eight members. If your group is larger, consider breaking into two small groups for "Reflect and Share" will help you stay within your 60-90 minute time frame.

Location: Your small group can be held at the parish or in private homes. Providing a welcoming and "cozy" environment adds to the friendly nature of the event.

Hospitality: Beverages should be provided at each session. A simple treat is a nice option which could be rotated by the members if they are in agreement.

Materials: Reproduce materials for participants either as a complete packet or one session at a time. Though it is not necessary, encourage members to prepare for the session prior to meeting to enhance the efficiency and depth of your discussion.

Suggestions for Facilitating a Small Group Discussion:

An effective facilitator accomplishes three tasks. The first is to provide a safe and confidential environment for faith sharing, the second is to encourage participation from all members and the third is to keep the conversation moving in an efficient way so as to complete the session in its entirety.

With this in mind, consider the following:

- At the first session, discuss the importance of confidentiality within the group.
- If you have eight or more participants, divide group into two small groups for discussion.
- When considering questions for reflection, go around in a circle for responses allowing members to “pass” if they choose.
- If you have extroverts who love to share, consider using a “two minute” per person option.
- If you have any introverts, be attentive to inviting them to share as they are comfortable.
- Be affirming with all responses. If an area causes confusion with a particular individual, offer to take some time following the session to explore that issue in more detail.
- Be aware of the time and gently give a two minute “moving on” warning.

Components of the Process

PRAYER

One of the most important components of a small group process is prayer. *Teach My People to Pray* offers a variety of prayer forms. Please be sure to use this time appropriately. When gathering any group, it is important to help them put aside the busyness and pressures of the day and to focus on the topic of the session. The call to prayer will help to open minds and hearts for the rest of the session.

BE INSPIRED

The sessions will offer other quotations from holy people or Scripture. If time permits, reflect upon the meaning of these quotes so as to encourage individual and group sharing.

CONTENT AND FAITH SHARING QUESTIONS

For your consideration:

- The content of each session can be read ahead of time or at the time of the gathering. Participants could also make notes for faith sharing ahead of time.
- If you are going to read aloud at the session, encourage those comfortable with reading to alternate paragraphs.
- As your group goes through the *Reflect and Share* section be sure that each person has an opportunity to answer each question before moving on to the next question.

REPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK AND CLOSING PRAYER

Wrap Up:

Set the date and time for the next session and distribute next session handouts

- Take care of any announcements and reminders
- Affirm the good work they did during the session
- Express your gratitude
- The closing prayers are also important in this process as a way of reminding everyone of the ongoing presence of Jesus.

Following Session Five:

- Thank everyone for sharing their lives with you in the past five sessions.
- Encourage them to keep their materials near as an ongoing reminder and inspiration.
- Ask if they would like to come together as a small group on another subject.
- Invite them to share these resources or lead a small group on “Teach My People to Pray” themselves.

Additional Ideas and Resources:

Marketing the Event:

- Invite small groups including parish leadership to pilot the resource.
- Encourage invitation by word of mouth.
- Send announcements, electronically as well as the more traditional methods.
- Publish a brief participant testimony in the bulletin, website or parish newsletter.
- Duplicate a sample session and have it available after masses for members to preview.
- Ask neighborhoods to form local group.
- Form small groups with couples (all ages) girlfriends, grandparents, fathers and sons, etc.
- Invite families and couples to share the material as a way to deepen their faith.

Bulletin Announcements:

Do you truly pray? Are you aware of how your prayer life not only deepens your personal relationship with Jesus but can also have an important impact on spreading the Good News to others? Are you interested in joining others in this important conversation? If your answer is “yes” to any of the above, consider forming a small group to study and reflect upon Bishop Ricken’s Pastoral Reflection *Teach My People to Pray*. Groups will meet for five sessions of 60-90 minutes each that include fellowship, prayer, information, conversation and encouragement in taking step in deepening your friendship with Jesus in prayer. For more information call _____ at _____.

Do you get up every morning and think “Is my prayer life meaningful?” or “Have I grown in my relationship with Jesus in the last five years?” If you have, consider refocusing by forming a small group to explore and reflect upon Bishop Ricken’s Pastoral Reflection, *Teach My People to Pray*. Come and discover the importance of personal and communal prayer as Catholics and how it can revitalize our lives And our Church. For more information, contact _____ at _____.

Would you like to enter into the Easter Season with a new mind and heart? Can you make time to meet with others for conversation and encouragement in becoming authentic disciples of Jesus through prayer? If yes, consider spending some of your Lenten journey with neighbors and friends in small group learning about and reflecting upon Bishop Ricken’s Pastoral Reflection *Teach My People to Pray*. If you would like to greet Easter morning with a new resolution to intentional and meaningful prayer, contact _____ at _____ for more information about this five week process.

Prayers of the Faithful:

- For all members participating in the small group study *Teach My People to Pray*, that they may grow in their understanding of prayer in order to deepen their relationship with Jesus and become a witness in the world to the Good News. We pray to the Lord.

Session 1

Teach My People to Pray

From Encounter to Joyful Witness

“Joy comes from living a life fully rooted in Christ so that “it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Gal 2:20) Pope Francis

Let Us Gather (5-8 minutes)

Welcome

Sharing:

What is one word that describes how I am feeling today?

What are my hopes for our small group?

Praying Together (10 minutes)

Loving God,

Today we begin this journey with you and with each other. We are grateful for your promise to be with us as we gather. (Pause)

Please help us to calm ourselves that we might be steeped in your sacred presence. (Pause)

As we read, reflect and pray not only in this session but in the sessions to come, please speak to our minds and hearts. (Pause)

We long to hear your will for us. (Pause)

Help us to deepen our relationship with you so we are able to be the of voice and witness to the Good News. (Pause)

Create in us a heart that can testify to your love. (Pause)

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, Our Savior.

Amen



Read (10 minutes)

What is Evangelization?

What does Paul tell the Romans?

“Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call upon him in whom they have not believed? How can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?... Thus faith comes from what is heard and what is heard from the word of God.” (Rom 10:13-14,17)

How do we Evangelize?

From Parishes: Called to be Holy, Fully Engaged, Fully Alive

Evangelization is helping people to come to know the love of God and drawing them into a deeper relationship with Christ and his Church. We open our hearts to God’s word, turn away from sin, and put the Gospel into daily practice. We joyfully share with others how God has touched us and welcome them to experience the Good News of Jesus Christ. We as individuals and as a parish accept this responsibility because of our baptism.

Reflect and Share

What does the word evangelization mean to me?

How can I share with others what the Gospel means in my life?

What is the New Evangelization?

Read (15 minutes)

Go and Make Disciples! Mt 28:16-20

Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go 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. An behold I am with you always until the end of the age.”

The New Evangelization is...a call for all to deepen his or her own faith, have confidence in the Gospel, and possess a willingness to share the Gospel. The New Evangelization is first and foremost an encounter with Jesus Christ; it is an invitation to deepens one’s relationship with Christ. It is also a call to each person to share his or her faith with others.

The New Evangelization is... *“Re-proposing Jesus Christ by living our daily lives following Christ, is what it means to live out the new evangelization. It also means reintroducing others to Christ, especially people we know: our family members, friends and others with whom we work, recreate, and share life.”*

The New Evangelization is... not just another Program– it is a way of life. As we become more deeply *Disciples on the Way*, being formed in prayer, discipleship and mission over the next six years, may this foundation lead us to be people of great love for Jesus Christ and His Church and may we be fully engaged and fully alive as disciples of the Lord. *Teach My People to Pray* Bishop Ricken

Reflect and Share

What is the challenge of the New Evangelization?

Where do the possibilities lie in my own life?

What steps can I take to reach out to those in my immediate family and circle of friends?

Be Inspired

Luke 4:18-19

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me; he has sent me to preach the Good News to the poor, to proclaim release for prisoners and sight for the blind, to send the downtrodden away relieved, and to proclaim, the Lord’s year of favor.

Acts 5:32

We are witnesses to these things, as so is the Holy Spirit who God has given to those who obey him.

Pope Benedict XVI

Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction .

Pope Paul VI

Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers and if it does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.

Pope Francis

I invite Christians, everywhere, at this moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not for him or her, since no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord. *The Joy of the Gospel* #3

Fr. Anthony De Mello S.J.

Disciple: “What’s the difference between knowledge and enlightenment?”

Master: “When you have knowledge you use a torch to show the way. When you are enlightened, you become the torch.” Taken from *All Saints* by Robert Ellsberg p.242

An invitation to Journey into the New Evangelization

We Are Disciples on the Way!

Read Together (20 minutes)

Bishop Ricken's Invitation

(Adapted from Disciples on the Way)

Bishop Ricken invites all of us on a “six year journey called *Disciples on the Way*. This journey will help us to grow in our faith in a way that will not necessarily call us to do more, but to be more; to be more like Jesus in all aspects of our lives, work and ministries.

Disciples on the Way is a journey into the New Evangelization which will assist us in “deepening our prayer life, of learning to be better disciples ourselves and of making disciples of others for the sake of the Kingdom of God.”

In the story of the Road to Emmaus, in St. Luke's Gospel, the disciples came to understand who the stranger was that was walking with them as he explained the meaning of the Word and as they broke bread together. You and I are now on the way of the New Evangelization, learning from our Lord, learning from Our Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Church what it means to be a disciple.

What does *Disciples on the Way* mean for you and me? **Every baptized Catholic is called through baptism to be a disciple of Christ and proclaim the Gospel by word and witness.** *Disciples on the Way* is an opportunity for each and every person to renew their baptismal call by living out the everyday moments of their life with gratitude, joy, faith hope and love.

This everyday witness is necessary for proclaiming the Gospel to family, friends, neighbors and society. This invitation from Bishop Ricken is an opportunity for all of us to strengthen our own faith so that you and I in turn, can reach out to others in faith.

Reflect and Share

What is my personal reaction to this intimate invitation?

Does my faith life impact my life? In my home? In my workplace? In the world?

What steps can I take in my life to be a more visible witness for Jesus?

The Mission Map for the Journey into the New Evangelization

Read Together (20 minutes)

Bishop Ricken has offered a “Mission Map” to help guide and direct us as we imitate the call to live the Gospel more deeply and to share it with others; especially over the next six years. It will teach us to reach out in confidence with the Good News of the Gospel and to share it with others. It also provides us with several thematic phases that will assist us in our endeavors.

Phase 1: Formation in Prayer and Holiness (2014-2016)

In this first phase, Bishop Ricken wants us to focus very clearly on renewing our prayer lives by establishing and deepening our relationship with Jesus Christ and His Holy Church. For example, this will mean spending more time as individuals and as families coming to love the Sunday Mass which is the heart of our life as Catholic Christians. In the end, we will deepen our own prayerful journey with our Lord and also teach others how to pray.

Reflect and Share

Currently, am I happy with the amount of time I spend in prayer? Do I truly love the Sunday Mass?

Phase II: Formation in Discipleship (2016-2018)

What does it mean to be a disciple? Pope Francis: “Being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.” Bishop Ricken asks us to prepare ourselves by first deepening our encounter with Christ through the Eucharist. This encounter in the Eucharist overflows in love and leads us to turn to Him in our daily prayers. The strength we gain through participation in the Mass and our daily prayer life will assist us inviting others to join us at Mass. We will also be more comfortable in spreading the Good News and encouraging others to invite Jesus more deeply into their lives.

Reflect and Share

Do I consider myself to be a disciple? What steps do I need to undertake to raise my level of discipleship?

Phase III: Formation in Mission (2018-2020)

In this third phase Bishop Ricken states: “We will strive to grow in our call to be missionaries. We will assist all those who have increased and ramped up their level of discipleship to reach out further beyond the boundaries to people they may not be familiar with Jesus. We will find ways to witness and share the Good News of the Holy Gospel; especially by engaging more actively in the corporal and spiritual Works of Mercy.”

Reflect and Share

Closing Prayer and Meditation (8-10 minutes)

All: Heavenly Father, Pour out your Spirit, so that I might be strengthened to go forth and witness to the Gospel in my everyday life through my words and actions. (Pause)

In moments of hesitation, remind me: If not me, then who will proclaim the Gospel? (Pause)

If not now, then when will the Gospel be proclaimed? (Pause)

If not the truth of the Gospel, then what should I proclaim? (Pause)

God our Father, I pray that through the Holy Spirit I might hear the call of the New Evangelization to deepen my faith, grow in confidence to proclaim the Gospel and boldly witness to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen!

(Adapted from the prayer for the New Evangelization, USCCB)

Reflect and Share:

What words or phrases speak to my heart?

How ready would I be if God answered my prayer today?

Session 2

TEACH MY PEOPLE TO PRAY

First Things First! Prayer and Holiness

Being a “*Disciple of the Way*” fully rooted in prayer is an opportunity for all of us to experience a conversion-to turn back to Jesus and enter into an ever deeper relationship with Him. Bishop Ricken

Let Us Gather (5 minutes)

Welcome

Share

What is the word that best describes my spiritual life today?

What is one insight I had on Session 1 since our last meeting?

Praying Together (10 minutes)

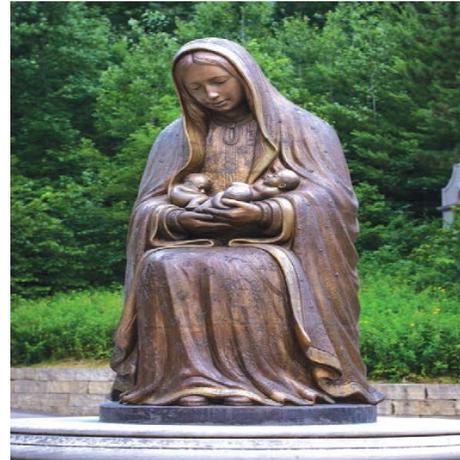
Good and gracious God, we are your children and you loved us into being. In our hearts we long for a relationship with you so we can live our lives doing your will and being a witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ for others.

Jesus, your Son was our perfect model of prayer. In the Gospel of Luke, we encounter you praying in the desert, on the mountain, in the morning and evening and in times of great joy and in his darkest hours. There are prayers of petition, praise and thanksgiving. We want to follow Jesus’ lead.

We ask that your Spirit embrace us today as we gather to share our faith. Guide us in understanding the words of Bishop Ricken’s Pastoral Reflection *Teach My People to Pray*. Open our minds and our hearts to all the possibilities for deepening our relationship with you. Help us to listen as well as speak.

Lord God, we love you and ask for all this in the name of Jesus our brother and Savior. Amen!

“He was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray just as John taught his disciples.’” (Lk 11:1)



Read (20 minutes)

“Teach My People to Pray”

“Teach My People to Pray” is Bishop Ricken’s Pastoral Reflection for Phase I of *Disciples on the Way* -Prayer and Holiness.

Bishop Ricken states in his Reflection: “The call of the first two years is to put first things first, which is all about establishing priorities centered around God; especially in our time, our talent and our treasure, our prayer, our service and our sharing. I would like to invite all...to take the next step in deepening our prayer lives.”

Bishop continues: “It strikes me as very important that we begin this journey to implement the New Evangelization by deepening our efforts and immersing ourselves in prayer. We need to accept this invitation articulated by the Second Vatican Council, by a generous response to the call to prayer and holiness. The Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* declared that “*All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of the Christian life and to the perfection of charity.*”

All are called to a life of holiness.

Each and everyone of us is called to be a person of prayer and action, to strive to live in a deep relationship with God and from this deep source of intimacy to respond to the message of the Gospel-by loving our neighbor and by spreading the Good News of God's mercy and love. As the Gospel of Matthew says: 'Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.' (Mt 5:48)



In my pastoral letter of 2011, I explained that in a world that “has become very secularized and is losing sight of God, it is incredibly important for all of us who are members of the Church to help satisfy the great hunger for holiness and for meaning in life through spirituality...we need to make space for Christ in our minds and hearts which are often too cluttered”.

We need to make space for the gift which is Jesus Christ himself for ‘*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.*’ (Hebrews 13:8)

Making Christ a priority in our lives means that we have to say “yes” to what Christ is asking of us and say “no” to the things of this world that pull us away from Him. Each one of us is called to conversion, turning away from habits and practices in our lives that pull us further from God's love and towards a closer relationship with Christ.

This conversion involves a *metanoia*— a profound and ongoing conversion of heart and mind to Christ, centered in prayer. *Teach My People to Pray*

Reflect and Share

What are the words or phrases that spoke to me from Bishop Ricken's Reflection? How would I describe the words “hunger for holiness”? What are some of the things that clutter my life today? What is Christ asking me to turn away from in my life?

As of today, what one thing can I do to strengthen my relationship with Christ?

What are three to five things I can do to put faith at the center of my life?

Be Inspired

“Let us learn to live our relationship with the Lord even more intensely as it were at a ‘school of prayer.’ We know well in fact that prayer should not be taken for granted. It is necessary to learn how to pray as it were, acquiring this art ever anew; even those who are very advanced in the spiritual life always feel the need to learn from Jesus to learn how to pray authentically.” Pope Benedict XVI. “A School of Prayer: The Saints Show How to Pray.”

Prayer is that plunge into the heart of God, attentive to his word and willing to do his will.” Bishop Emeritus Robert Morneau

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God . *Catechism of the Catholic Church no.27*

“I would like to ask ourselves the question : You, I, do we worship the Lord? Do we turn to God only to ask him for things, to thank him, or do we also turn to him to worship him? What does it mean then to worship God? It means learning to be with him, it means that we never stop trying to dialogue with him, and it means sensing that his presence is the most true, the most good, the most important thing of all.” Pope Francis

Be a Friend of the Friends of Jesus, the Saints

“For me, prayer is an uplifting of the heart, a glance toward heaven, a cry of gratitude and love in times of sorrow as well as joy. It is noble, something supernatural, that expands the soul and unites it to God.”

St. Therese of Lisieux

Read (20-25 minutes)

In *Teach My People to Pray*, Bishop Ricken invites us to remember those “holy people” who have gone before us. He states: “It is a good idea to have a favorite saint. Saints are disciples who have lived a vigorous life of virtue and witness in his or her own way to the values of the Gospel and to Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Those who we know are in the Kingdom of God officially are called the saints because the Church has canonized them. They are each different from one another in nationality, language, personality and in their approach to Christ and to His Father.

The saints are friends of Jesus who now share in eternal life with Him and all in the Kingdom of Heaven. We do not pray to the saints but we know they can be our friends and since they are in the heavenly court they like the Blessed Mother can intercede for us at the throne of God.

Consider the following quote from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: (CCC 1683)

“The witnesses who have preceded us into the kingdom, especially those whom the Church recognizes as saints, share in the living tradition of prayer by example of their lives, the transmission of their writings and their prayer today. They contemplate God, praise him and constantly care for those whom they have left on earth. When they entered into the joy of their Master, they were put ‘put in charge of many things’. Their intercession is their most exalted service to God’s plan. We can and should ask them to intercede for us and for the whole world.”

Along with our Mother Mary, we remember St. Joseph who intercedes for us and for the whole world, as our protector and guide. Likewise a close friend who is a saint, either the saint you received in the naming part of the ceremony at your baptism or confirmation or a saint with whom you have become a good friend over the years by reading his or her biography, can be a tremendous confidant and intercessor for your struggles and your journey in life.

They are friends of the Church on earth, sometimes called the “Church militant” as they enjoy the splendor of the Kingdom of Heaven “Church triumphant”. There are prayers and novenas one can pray everyday in order to stay close to the friends of Jesus.

Reflect and Share

Who is your favorite saint? Why? What have you learned from him/her?

What do you know about the saints you were named after?

Are you willing to allow your favorite saints to intercede on your behalf or behalf of the world?



Image: St Francis Xavier, Patron Saint of the Diocese of Green Bay

Praying Together

Read (10-15 minutes)

Mary: the First and Best of Disciples

“The mother of Jesus is the very first and the very best of disciples. She was the first to know him along with St. Joseph. (Pause)

She bore Him, gave birth to Him and raised Him. She taught and instructed Him but she also learned from him about the Father and the love of the Father. (Pause)

She was the first of disciples and our model of enduring love, patient self-sacrifice and joyful witness. She is the most effective of all witnesses since she from heaven is still leading people to her Son. (Pause)

I strongly urge those who do not feel very close to Jesus to cultivate a relationship with the Blessed Mother. (Pause)

Praying the rosary is a powerful way to restore order to your own spiritual life and a great booster to the quality of the spiritual life in the home when the entire family prays together. (Pause)

We entrust all of our efforts to Our Lady of Good Help who is so present to us in the Diocese of Green Bay. (Pause)

The Blessed Mother, as Pope Francis says is “*the woman of prayer and work in Nazareth, and she is also Our Lady of Help, who sets out from her town ‘with haste.’* (Luke 11:1) *to be of service to others*”. *Teach My People to Pray*

Reflect

Recall those persons in your life who were strong in their faith and role models to you. What faith memories do you particularly treasure from them? How do you pass those treasured memories on to others?

What have you learned from the Blessed Mother about faith and prayer?

How can your life be more fully transformed into a “school of prayer”?

Pray

Together: Hail Mary...

Amen!

Make a Pilgrimage!

The Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help is a place for all who seek help and healing through the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Whether you are Catholic or not, whether you believe or are still searching for faith, you are welcome at the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help.

For more information visit:

<http://www.shrineofourladyofgoodhelp.com/>

Session 3

Teach My People to Pray

The Greatest Prayer of All

Learning to Love the Sunday Mass

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. (Mt 26:26-28)

Let Us Gather (5 minutes)

Welcome

Share

*What is the word that best describes how I feel today?
What is one insight that I came to regarding Session 2 since our last meeting?*

Praying Together (10 minutes)

Loving and wonderful Lord, we have gathered today to pray, learn and share. *(Pause)*

Please bless each of us so that our time together may be fruitful. *(Pause)*

We are very grateful for the ways we are able to encounter you and experience the joy of your great love for us. *(Pause)*

Tonight as we explore our greatest prayer, the Mass, touch our hearts and open our minds. Assist us in becoming passionate stewards of this great gift. *(Pause)*

Help us to "keep Holy the Lord's Day" as we are commanded. *(Pause)*

Renew in us our love for this beautiful Sacrament so that others can see our joy and join us at your table. *(Pause)*

We thank you Lord and ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen.



Read (15 minutes)

Learning to Love the Sunday Mass

From Bishop Ricken "Teach My People to Pray"

"The greatest prayer of all is Mass and Sunday Mass is that special day of the week when the whole community comes together to give honor and glory and praise to God. This is "**Thee**" day of the week. It is the first day of the week and not the end of the weekend. It is the day of rest and recreation. It is the one day when we especially rejoice in the gift of the Eucharist which is the food for the journey. Sunday is the day we go to Church and come together as Church to give public witness in thanksgiving for all the blessings of the week that has just passed and ask God for his blessings on the week ahead.

I remember as a child that we all prepared well for Sunday. Mom and Dad dressed up for Sunday Mass and made sure we did as well. We sat in the front pew so that I would behave and we would pay attention to the actions of the Mass and come to understand it.

In many ways, the seed to my own vocation to the priesthood were sown in going to Mass with my family on Sundays. The Mass was in Latin in those days. Now the Mass is in the vernacular and we are able to study and pray over the readings before going to Mass. The Sunday Mass is a time to give of the substance of our time, talent and treasure to the community and to the causes of great need, and opportunity to share care and give as we move out of our own particular little world and into the communal, universal and eternal world. Sunday can and ought to become the center point to our discipleship as individuals, as families and as parishes and faith communities. Part of the purpose of the New Evangelization is to invite our family members and friends to return to active practice of the faith by attending Sunday Mass.”

Reflect and Share (10 minutes)

“I want us all to focus very clearly on the call to renew our prayer lives by establishing and deepening our relationship with Jesus Christ and His Holy Church. This will mean spending more time as individuals and as families, coming to love the Sunday Mass which is the heart of our life as Catholic Christians. It will also mean praying for anyone among our families, our friends and our parishioners who have drifted away from regular practice of the Catholic faith, and praying for their return to regular nourishment at the table of God’s Word and the table of the Eucharist.” *Disciples on the Way*

As I truly consider my feelings on Sunday Mass, can I say that I “truly love “ Mass? What steps might I need to take to deepen my love of the Sunday Mass.

Who in my family and in my circle of friends am I particularly concerned about who have drifted away from the Catholic Church? Write their names upon your heart and take a moment of silence to offer them up in prayer.

Be Inspired

Bishop Banks:

“Here I am receiving communion, year after year, Sunday after Sunday, but there seems to be no change in me. Ah, but there is a change. The person who receives communion regularly is a person who gets used to the feeling that Jesus is close. Not just someone up there, but someone very close”.

Fr. Alfred McBride:

“The Church at worship is the haven and mother of prayer. In communion with the faith of God’s people, we see the devotion of the worshipers and the richly moving rituals of Word and Sacrament in the celebration of the Eucharist. Above all, we learn in such prayer the movement of adoration to the Father; through the Son, in the Holy Spirit.”

Read (15 minutes)

“The Sunday Mass is the anchor of our Christian lives and it is a great privilege to hear the Word of God every Sunday and every day if we wish. This is a powerful nourishment of our mind, our soul, and our daily activities. As we strive to follow Jesus better every day and every week, to receive Him body, blood, soul and divinity is an unfathomable privilege!

Sometimes people think they are excommunicated because they are divorced. If you are divorced but not remarried and are living in a state of grace, you should receive Holy Communion. For those divorced who are remarried, yet without the benefit of an annulment, I invite you to still come to Sunday Mass. While you may not receive communion, you may certainly make a “spiritual communion” and work with a priest or an advocate to assist you in preparing an annulment request. **As your Bishop, I want you to be present, to feel welcomed and to feel loved.**



As a disciple, each of us has a responsibility to reach out the way Pope Francis does, especially to the hurt, the marginalized, the broken hearted, the rejected, and the “little ones.” Anytime we ask someone to return to the Church, we need to be prepared by praying for that person, asking the Lord in our prayer for the right time to ask them to come back home, to provide answers to their questions and to persevere in reaching out to them when they reject our offers. Sometimes it takes many, many outreaches and prayers before a person returns.

I encourage all of you to love the Sunday Mass and to “keep Holy the Lord’s Day” as the Lord has commanded. For those of you who already love Sunday, deepen your love of this weekly event and invite others to join you as you share the wealth of your faith!” *Teach My People to Pray*

Reflect and Share (10 minutes)

Do I see the Sunday Mass as an “unfathomable privilege?” If so, how would I explain this to another person?

Think about the people in your life who are not attending Mass. What reasons do they give for not attending? How might you reach out to them so that they feel comfortable attending?

How do I understand the marginalized and broken hearted in the midst of my parish? What steps could I take to be more inclusive and loving?

Ten Great Reasons to Attend Sunday Mass

By Bishop Ricken

1. The best way to encounter Jesus.
2. The best way to keep Holy the Lord’s Day.
3. The best way to put “first things first”.
4. The best way to keep your marriage and family together and the best gift to give your children.
5. The best way to be a grateful and generous person.
6. The best way to experience healing and hope.
7. The best way to keep your priorities straight in a confusing world.
8. The best way to build friendships and community.
9. The best way to taste heaven on earth.
10. The best way to change the world.

Closing Meditation and Prayer (15-20 minutes)

By Faith: The Apostles Follow their Master

By faith, the Apostles left everything to follow their Master. *Peter began to say to him, "We have given up everything and followed you."* (cf. Mk 10:28).

By faith they went out to the whole world, following the command to bring the Gospel to all creation: *He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature."* (cf. Mk 16:15) and they fearlessly proclaimed to all the joy of the resurrection, of which they were **faithful witnesses**:

By faith, the disciples formed the first community, gathered around the teaching of the Apostles, in prayer, in celebration of the Eucharist, holding their possessions in common so as to meet the needs of the brethren: *They devoted themselves to the teachings of the apostles and to communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers...*(cf. Acts 2:42)

Reflect

The first disciples gathered in community and celebrated Eucharist for strength and support so they could a testimony to Jesus in the world. When I attend Mass is that also my goal?

When was the last time you shared your faith with others? How might those moments increased or be improved with the strength and support of the community and Eucharist?

Praying Together

Gracious God,

As your modern day disciples, help us to truly appreciate our parish community and inspire us to play an active role in bringing others to Jesus. Draw us close as a family so that everyone's need are met and others may know we belong to you by our love.

Instill in us a passion for your Word! As we listen to the Holy Scriptures proclaimed at Mass, touch our minds and hearts with your message for us. Move us to live and share your message with others.

Gather us around your table and help us to experience the Eucharist for what it truly is; the Bread of Life and nourishment for the journey. Renew us and help us to radiate the joy found in this special gift of our Church. Help us to draw others to this sacred meal.

Lord, just as the early disciples lived by faith, we too want to be your faithful witnesses in our day. We seek your wisdom and Spirit so we might be a beacon of your love in today's world.

We ask this through Jesus your Son and our Savior. Amen.

The Christian is someone who can decrease so that the Lord may increase in his heart and the heart of others.

Pope Francis tweeted August 7, 2014

Session 4

Teach My People to Pray

What is a Holy Family?

Households of Prayer

“The family that prays together, stays together.” *Fr. Patrick Peyton*

Let Us Gather (5 minutes)

Welcome

Sharing:

What is one word that describes my prayer life today?

What is one insight that I had on Session 3 since our last meeting?

Praying Together (5 minutes)

Before we begin, let us offer up to God—either aloud or silently, not only our own families, but those who are close to us and those in our neighborhoods and parish.

Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Savior, you have made us your sons and daughters in the family of the Church. (Pause)

May your grace and love help our families in every part of the world be united to one another in fidelity to the Gospel. (Pause)

May the example of the Holy Family, with the aid of your Holy Spirit, guide all families, especially those most troubled, to be homes of communion and prayer and to always seek your truth and live in your love. Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.** (Pause)

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, pray for us!

(Adapted from the Prayer for the World Meetings of Families-Philadelphia 2015)



Read (20 minutes)

“The Home, a Church in Miniature”

“Each family is a domestic Church which means that each home has a noble purpose, meaning and special place in the Body of Christ. The home is a church in miniature. My mother used to say that a house is just a house until it firmly invests love in it, then it becomes a home. I would ask you seek ways that you can pray together as a family and grow to love the Lord and the Church as a family unit.”

(Teach My People to Pray)

Reflect and Share

Reflect upon the following quote:

“Holiness is not something that we look for after we have finished making a living and raising a family. Holiness is putting God at the center of the way we earn a living, raising a family, and live our lives.”

(Bishop Emeritus Robert Banks)

What was my experience as a child? Did I grow up in a household of love and prayer?

What traditions have I maintained in my own family?

What have I changed?

“Please make sure that you have religious articles like a crucifix and a statue of the Sacred Heart or of the Blessed Mother in your home so that your children feel comfortable with these sacred signs.”
(Teach My People to Pray)

R: *What are my favorite images and religious articles in my home? Do I need to update them or include more?*

“Let us make part of our evangelization commitment as families of faith to teach our children to sign themselves with the sign of the cross, to memorize the essential prayers, to attend Sunday Mass as a family and to have fun doing it!”
(Teach My People to Pray)

R: *What practices of faith do I intentionally pass on to others? What are my favorite prayers? Do I attend Mass faithfully? Do I see Mass as a celebration?*

“Husbands and fathers, I would ask you to be a spiritual father of your domestic church, your own family. Make this your number one priority and work together with your wife to provide for your children's faith formation and attendance at Sunday Mass.”

“Research shows that when the father leads by going to Sunday Mass with his wife and family, the children are more likely to persevere in going to Church and in keeping holy the Lord's day.

Wives and mothers, I would ask you to be a spiritual mother of your domestic church, your own family. Just as my own mother did, you help the house to become a home through your loving kindness and attentiveness to the needs of your family.”

Reflect and Share: (5 minutes)

What is my response to the terms of “spiritual mother” and spiritual father?”. How would I apply these terms to my family life?

Read (20 minutes)

The following words from Pope Francis remind us of the sacrifices that many mothers make for their children, *“I think of the steadfast faith of those mothers tending their sick children who, though perhaps barely familiar with the articles of the creed, cling to a rosary; or of all the hope poured into a candle lighted in a humble home with a prayer for help from Mary, or in the directed gaze of tender love directed toward Christ crucified.”*

Ten Tips for Building a Holy Family (with children and grandchildren)

1. Speak of God and Jesus with joy and certainty.
2. Include stories of Jesus, from the Bible, and of saints in your storybook collection. Have older children read to younger children
3. Attend Mass and other special prayer and social events at the parish as a family.
4. Celebrate holy days with Mass and a special meal and discuss holy days.
5. Volunteer together as a family serving those in need in your community.
6. Let your children “catch” you praying! Pray with and pray over your children. Be sure to pray together consistently at meals, bedtime, etc.
7. Use religious symbols and images in your home. Take advantage of special seasons to tell the story of Jesus using liturgical signs and symbols.
8. Attend the Sacrament of Reconciliation regularly and talk with your children about its importance.
9. Manage your schedules to “keep Holy the Lord's Day.”
10. Take advantage of movies of faith, watch and discuss over popcorn.

May each family rediscover family prayer, which helps to bring about mutual understanding and forgiveness.

Pope Francis tweeted July 31, 2014

You are instrumental in sustaining, nourishing and encouraging the faith of your children.

In many instances, both the dad and mom are employed and working to make ends meet. This makes for a very full and hectic life. Make sure that you as a parent take the time to give your children the best gift of all- the gift of a strong faith and prayer life.

This is a gift that will sustain your children throughout the storms of this life and one which will prepare them for the next. Thank you for the gift of your motherhood.” (Teach My People to Pray)

Servant of God, Fr. Peyton, known popularly as the “Rosary Priest” said it so well, so many years ago:

“The family that prays together stays together.”
(Teach My People to Pray)

Reflect and Share (10 minutes)

What is your family dynamic? How does your immediate family interact with your extended family? Parish family? Community?

Reflect upon the following quote:

“The perfect family doesn’t exist, nor is there a perfect husband or a perfect wife, and let’s not talk about the perfect mother-in-law! It’s just us sinners...A healthy family requires frequent use of three phrases: ‘May I? Thank you, and I’m sorry’ and never, never, never end the day without making peace.”

(Pope Francis’ meeting with engaged couples, February 14, 2014).

Despite our imperfections, how does our family show love for one another?

Being in love means saying three phrases more often than not. They are: **May I? thank you and I’m sorry.”**
Pope Francis.

Pope Francis’ Top Ten Tips for Happiness

In an interview published in part in the Argentine weekly "Viva" July 27 2014, Pope Francis listed his Top 10 tips for bringing greater joy to one's life:

1. Live and let live.
2. Be giving of yourself to others.
3. Proceed calmly in life.
4. A healthy sense of leisure.
5. Sundays are for the family.
6. Find innovative ways to create dignified jobs for young people.
7. Respect and take care of nature.
8. Stop being negative.
9. Don't proselytize; respect others' beliefs.
10. Work for peace.

Reflect upon these tips and ponder ways to bring more joy into your life and the life of your family.



Lord Jesus Christ, please provide me with the discipline to set aside daily prayer time for my friendship with You, that I may grow in deeper communion with You, become the person You created me to be, and thus live in that complete joy You promised—witnessing to Your generosity, mercy and glory in the world.
Amen.

Closing Meditation (15-20 minutes)

Love Is Our Mission

The Family Fully Engaged, Fully Alive In Faith

Passages taken from *Love is Our Mission –The Family Fully Alive*, Preparatory Catechesis for the World Meeting of Families, Philadelphia 2015, The Pontifical Council for the Family, Archdiocese of Philadelphia

Praying Together

All: (Please read and pause after each paragraph)

God created man in his own image and likeness: calling him to existence through love, he called him at the same time for love. God is love and in himself he lives a mystery of personal loving communion. (p.21)

At its best, the family is a school of love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, mutual respect, patience and humility in the midst of a world darkened by selfishness and conflict.

Through that love, marriage is meant to be fertile and to welcome new life. Children shape the future, just as they themselves are shaped in their families. Children reared with love and guidance are the foundation for a loving future.

The God we meet in Jesus Christ loves us, and call us to love as he does. If we understand that love is our mission in our marriages, our families, our children, and our parishes, then we have learned a basic truth that will shape many other areas of life. (p.109)

Saint John Paul II exhorted, “Family, become what you are,” and his words have lost nothing of their vibrancy; their urgency has only intensified in the face of the many challenges that families experience today. (#197)

When the family embraces its missionary identity, the family becomes what it meant to become. (#197)

The Christian family is called to deepen, reflect upon, and witness to the love and life that are already basic to being a family. (#198)

Reflect and Share

Consider the above statements. Reflect upon them in silence and then, if you are comfortable offer your thoughts to the group on any of the following questions:

Which ones spoke to your heart today? Why?

Was there any statement that was difficult for you?

Why?

What are some of the challenges that families face today?

How can faith help to overcome these challenges?

Closing Prayer

God of love and life, you have created families to shine for you in the world. We want to use the gift of our family to honor and serve you in the world. Surround us with your love and inspiration to help make you the foundation of our lives.

Help us to set and keep priorities that are Christ-centered. Be with us on our joy-filled days as well as in our time of struggle and sadness.

We ask this through Jesus.

Amen

Session 5

Teach My People to Pray

Wrap Yourself in the Word of God

Lectio Divina

“The diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart. If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church -- I am convinced of it -- a new spiritual springtime” Pope Benedict XVI

Let Us Gather (5 minutes)

Welcome

Sharing:

What is one word that describes my relationship with God today? What is one insight that I had on Session 4 since our last meeting?

Praying Together (5 minutes)

All: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love,
(Pause)

Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created.
(Pause)

And You shall renew the face of the earth. (Pause)
Let us pray.

Lord, by the light of the Holy Spirit You have taught the hearts of Your faithful. (Pause)

In the same Spirit, help us to grow what is truly right and always to rejoice in Your consolation.
(Pause)

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

“The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those to believe in him “to go forth.” Abraham received the call to set out for a new land (cf. Gn12:1-3). Moses heard God’s call: “Go, I send you” (Ex 3:10) and led the people toward the promised land (cf. Ex 3:17)...In our day Jesus’ command to “go make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and we are called to take part in this new missionary “going forth.” Pope Francis *The Joy of the Gospel* #20



Read (25-30 minutes)

What is Lectio Divina?

“*Lectio Divina*, is a Latin word, which means "divine reading" or more often translated as “spiritual reading” and describes a way of reading the Scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us. This type of prayer is actually done with the Bible and is a great way to stay in contact with the living Word of God and a way to become very familiar with the Bible as a book and as **The Book**- the inspired Word of God.

Comprised of four steps, the reader first selects a passage from Scripture. I highly recommend one of the readings from the upcoming Sunday as a way to begin. After selecting the text, the reader 1) reads (*lectio*) the text, out loud preferably.

Then, the reader 2) meditates (*meditatio*) on the text. Here the text can be studied and one can picture oneself in the actual scene from the Bible watching, listening, observing.

Then, the reader 2) meditates (*meditatio*) on the text. Here the text can be studied and one can picture oneself in the actual scene from the Bible watching, listening, observing. Following the reading of the text the pray-er 3) prays (*oratio*) to the Lord about the text. This involves listening and speaking about the context of the text with the Lord and applying it to oneself personally. And lastly the reader 4) contemplates (*contemplatio*) which is resting in the conversation with the Lord and in the presence of God more deeply entered into through this process.

The Steps Involved In Lectio Divina:

Lectio- Reading

Meditatio- Meditation

Oratio- Praying

Contemplatio- Contemplation

Step 1: Lectio: Reading

Select a passage from Scripture.

Read through this passage a few times and allow the words to capture your attention and your being. In this way, you begin to listen as God speaks to your heart

Step 2: Meditatio: Meditation

During this phase you seek to acquire the mind of Christ and learn what He wants to reveal to you.

As you read, certain words, phrases or even thoughts might have jumped out at you. Take some time during this stage to consider why these phrases and words might have jumped out at you.

You might imagine yourself as an observer in the Scripture passage, reflecting on what you see, hear, taste, touch and to what and whom you are drawn to. Consider how the words relate to your life today.

Step 3: Oratio: Praying

During this phase you pray from your heart and respond to what Jesus has spoken to you in the Holy words of Scripture.

Allow the grace of these words, images and thoughts to move you to a heartfelt prayer. During this time, you personally ask Jesus for help, guidance, insight, direction and find yourself talking to Him naturally.

Step 4: Contemplatio: Contemplation

During this time you find yourself resting with and in the Lord. Rest in His presence so that the very core of your being is stilled.

Center your attention on God.

Allow the Word to stir within you the courage, strength, energy and guidance for a fresh start and a new beginning.

Reflect and Share

What part of the process are you naturally drawn to?

What part of the process are you already doing in some way?

What might be the challenges and the special gift of the process?

Reflect: Wrap Yourself In the Word (25-30 minutes)

We will now have a chance to practice *Lectio Divina* with the following Scripture passage. Relax your breathing, focus on the Word and try to get into as comfortable a position as you can. Using the WRAP method make a note of your thoughts, feelings and ideas.

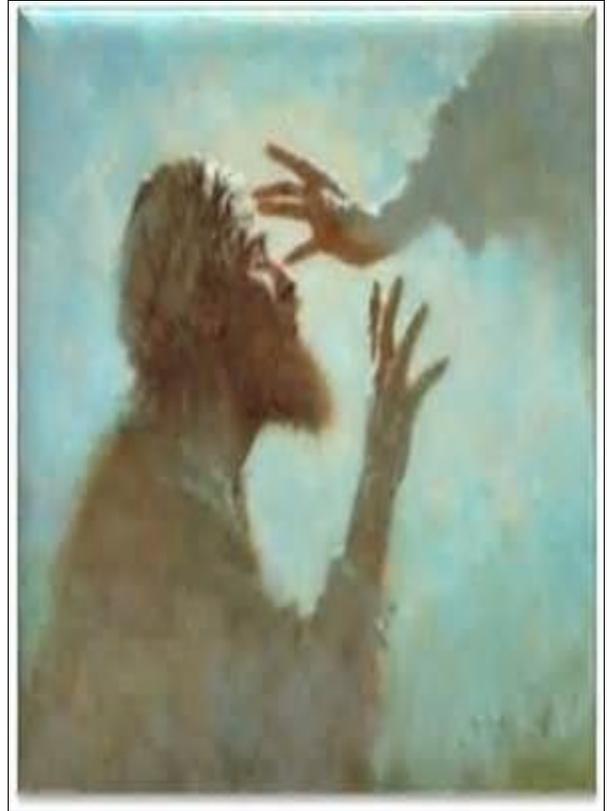
Blind Bartimaeus- Mark 10: 46-52

They came to Jericho. And as he was leaving Jericho with his disciples and a sizable crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind man, the son of Timaeus, sat by the roadside begging.

On hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, son of David, have pity on me." And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he kept calling out all the more, "Son of David, have pity on me."

Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." So they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take courage; get up, he is calling you." He threw aside his cloak, sprang up, and came to Jesus.

Jesus said to him in reply, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man replied to him, "Master, I want to see." Jesus told him, "Go your way; your faith has saved you." Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.



The WRAP METHOD

W- Write- Make a note of the sentences or words that speak to you.

R- Reflect- Make a note of the truth/principle of the Scripture passage.

Looking for the truth will help you to stay grounded in the meaning of the Scripture passage. What do you hear? What do you feel? What do you see? What is the Lord calling you to be attentive to? Engage your mind, your imagination and all of your senses.

A-Apply-Consider the principle you have reflected upon in your life.

Ask Jesus for concrete guidance to help you with this. Note any ways that you might be called to apply these words.

P-Pray/Praise- Write a praise thanking the Lord for your time together.

Thank him for the messages that He brought to you today in Scripture. Thank him for speaking to you and loving you. In your own words you might want to express what it was from the Scriptures that touched you.

At the end of your prayer, stop writing and speaking. Focus on the Lord, rest in Him and enjoy being close to him in love.

Reflect and Share (10-15 minutes)

*What was the experience of **Lectio Divina** like for me?*

Would I like to share any specific part of the process that was powerful?

Could I see myself using this process regularly?

Closing Questions and Prayer (5-10 minutes)

How has my understanding and experience of prayer changed in the last five sessions?

How do I understand the relationship between prayer and evangelization?

In what way am I willing to increase my commitment to prayer in the days ahead?

Praying with Bishop Ricken: The Wyoming Prayer

“Lord, help me to do your will.

Nothing more, nothing less.

Lord, help me to do your will.

Not a moment sooner.

Not a moment later.

Than you will it.”

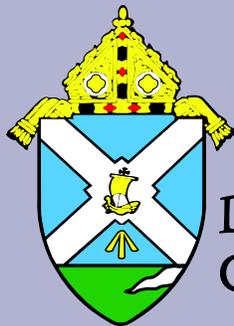
Amen!

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