

Parish Small Group Resources
Office of Catholic Education and Faith Formation
Archdiocese of Indianapolis

Small groups can be great opportunities to grow in our love of God and neighbor. The Word of God is a springboard for sharing our beautiful Catholic faith with the sisters and brothers our heavenly Father has given us. Both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition help guide us on our journey—lighting our path with God’s Word of Truth and Love.

Sacred Scripture

The Holy Bible and its message of salvation from sin and death by the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus speaks powerfully to us in many ways, on many levels. Solidly Catholic Scripture-study resources make the connection between Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition clear. Since the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* became available in the mid-1990s several helpful Catholic Bible-study resources have been revised or written anew to help you on your journey—a journey often enhanced by participation in a parish small group. Here are but a few examples:

The Great Adventure and other resources from Ascension Press: www.ascensionpress.com

Catholic Scripture Study International: www.cssprogram.net

From Genesis to Jesus and other resources from the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology
www.salvationhistory.com

Our Father’s Plan and other resources from Ignatius Press: www.ignatius.com

Agape Bible Study: www.agapebiblestudy.com

The Kingdom Series and other resources from Emmaus Road: www.emmausroad.org

Sacred Tradition

Simply put, at this time the most recent, authoritative and relevant articulation of Sacred Tradition in our great country is the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, available at www.usccb.org. This local catechism for the USA includes discussion questions and has a companion reader’s journal with great reflection and life application material. Audio and Spanish versions are also available.

Small Group Materials

Here are a couple to consider:

The Discipleship Series from Novo Millennio Press: www.novomill.com

The Mass: Four Encounters With Jesus That Will Change Your Life and other resources from My Catholic Faith Ministries: www.mycatholicfaith.org

Tips for Parish Small Groups
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Parishes have a large number of small groups up and running at any given point. From committees through staffs to Bible studies each meeting or gathering at a Catholic parish is an opportunity for at least a bit of faith formation. Here are some tips for starting and sustaining parish small groups as well as sprinkling a dash of evangelization and faith formation on the meetings of groups that naturally exist in many parishes.

Starting a Parish Small Group

- Identify potential leaders who are enthusiastic about our Catholic faith, articulate when sharing their faith but also adept at listening and facilitating constructive discussions.
- Regarding discussion, help leaders and participants know that much of what's shared in small groups is simply individuals expressing how God is present in their life—how He makes His presence known amidst their joys and struggles or even how God may seem distant at times. I.e. discussions aren't debates or mini-lectures (fun though they may be).
- Consider encouraging participants to take turns facilitating sessions once the group gets off the ground. A good example of additional tips appears here:
www.diocese-of-sioux-falls.org/AdultFormation

Sustaining Parish Small Groups

- Touch base with group members occasionally to ask how their small group experience is going. How is their Catholic faith being affirmed and enlivened by participating in this group?
- Encourage and affirm members' ongoing participation in their parish small group. Drawing on group leaders and effective facilitators to help mentor newer groups can breathe new life into these veterans—energizing them to sustain their own group more successfully.
- Pose the question "When someone asks about Church teaching who answers the question and what is the basis for the answer?" Be sure leaders are aware of the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* and make yourself available for guidance as well.

Making All Groups within Your Parish Places of Faith Formation

- Ask each member of all groups to commit to praying daily for the group's work and all who are involved with it. (This sets a tone and leads to...)
- ...Establish an expectation that the first 12 ½ minutes of all parish meetings will feature members sharing the fruits of their prayer and reflection. Reflection can be based on brief readings (Bible, Catechism etc.) at or between each meeting.
- As members express appreciation and enjoyment for sharing their Catholic faith in this way, encourage them to consider expanding their parish small group involvement to a group more specifically focused on learning, growing in love of God and neighbor, and faith-sharing.