### Opening Prayer Service

#### Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus, from the very beginning of your public ministry, you gathered a group of disciples around you. You described your relationship with them as a vine with its branches. They received life from you.

Today, as your Church, we gather together to learn and grow closer to you. We too receive life from you. Open our hearts and minds to your Word. Give us the strength to follow you and to love another as you have loved us. Amen.

(Invite the selected people to come forward and stretch the yarn or string across the whole assembly.)

#### Listen

John 15:1-12 (Vine and Branches)

#### Respond

Lord, help us to meet you in our service to the poor.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in the Eucharist where bread and wine become your

body and blood.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in each other and in our faith community.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in the people who provide care and comfort to us in times of

difficulty, sickness, and sorrow.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in those who proclaim your Good News and share their faith with us.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

Lord, help us to meet you in those who teach the teach the Catholic faith and help us to live it in our daily lives.

Respond: Lord, may we abide in your love.

#### Go Forth

Lord, we know that you are the vine and we are the branches,

that without you we cannot bear fruit but will wither and die.

Help us to abide in your love in the midst of this faith community.

Help us to recognize you in the life of the Church and grow as faithful disciples. Amen.

### Handout #1.

### The Ministries of the Church Journal

#### Community Life

“You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people.” (1 Peter 2:9)

“The Church is the body of Christ. Through the Spirit and his actions in the sacraments, above all the Eucharist, Christ, who once was dead and is now risen, establishes the community of believers as his own Body. In the unity of this Body there is a diversity of members and functions. All members as linked to one another, especially to those who are suffering, to the poor and persecuted” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 805-806).

“As a community, the parish discloses Christ’s enduring, loving presence. We can see this disclosure reflected in the ways that members of the parish are called upon to care for one another. They are challenged to continue Christ’s priestly work of transforming the world into a more graced fellowship. For this reason the parish fosters personal relationships among its members; these relationships are necessary if parishioners are to become brothers and sisters in the Lord. There is little in human experience that lies beyond this concern of parish people for their brothers and sisters”

(United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Parish—A People, A Mission, A Structure*, Washington, DC: USCCB, 1980, p. 7).

**How do we see the Church living out the ministry of community life in the parish?**

#### Evangelization

. . . the Lord gave us yet another reason to evangelize: our love for every person, whatever his or her situation, language, physical, mental, or social condition. Because we have experienced the love of Christ, we want to share it. The gifts God has given to us are not gifts for ourselves. Like the large catch of fish or the overflowing measure of flour, faith makes our hearts abound with a love-filled desire to bring all people to Jesus’ Gospel and to the table of the Eucharist. As Jesus wanted to gather all Jerusalem, “as a hen gathers her young,” so also do we want to gather all people into God’s kingdom, proclaiming the Gospel even “to the ends of the earth” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples*, Washington, DC: USCCB, 1993, 33).

“Embracing all the activity of the parish is a basic vocation and commitment to evangelization. This means not only calling active believers to every deeper faith, but also bringing the message of Christ to alienated Catholics, inviting people to join in the church’s belief and worship, and making the Gospel real by applying it to the issues and conditions of our lives. The witness of the Gospel of Jesus acquires power from the continual reflection on faith and its demands to which parishioners devote themselves. Although the parish undertakes special efforts to bring the Gospel of Christ to those not active in the church community, it realizes that the most effective instrument of evangelization is the parish’s visible hospitality, its vitality, and its own faithfulness to Christ” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Parish—A People, A Mission, A Structure*, Washington, DC: USCCB, 1980, p. 11-12).

**How do we see the Church living out the ministry of evangelization in the parish, community, and world?**

#### Justice and Service

“Our faith calls us to work for justice; to serve those in need; to pursue peace; and to defend the life, dignity, and rights of all our sisters and brothers. This is the call of Jesus, the challenge of the prophets, and the living tradition of our Church.

“Across this country and around the world, the Church’s social ministry is a story of growing vitality and strength, or remarkable compassion, courage, and creativity. It is the everyday reality of providing homeless and hungry people with decent shelter and needed help, of giving pregnant women and their unborn children life-giving alternatives, of offering refugees welcome, and so much more. It is believers advocating in the public arena for human life wherever it is threatened, for the rights of workers and for economic justice, for peace and freedom around the world, and for ‘liberty and justice for all’ here at home. It is empowering and helping poor and vulnerable people to realize their dignity in inner cities, rural communities and in lands far away. It is the everyday commitment of countless people, parishes and programs, local networks and national structures—a tradition of caring service, effective advocacy, and creative action” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Century of Social Teaching*, Washington, DC: USCCB, 1990, p. 1).

**How do we see the Church living out the ministry of justice and service in the parish, community, and world?**

#### Liturgy, Sacraments, and Prayer

“Great is the mystery of faith!” The Church professes this mystery in the Apostles’ Creed and celebrates it in the sacramental liturgy, so that the life of the faithful may be conformed to Christ in the Holy Spirit to the glory of God the Father. This mystery, then, requires that the faithful believe in it, that they celebrate it, and that they live from it in a vital and personal relationship with the living and true God. This relationship is prayer (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #2558).

“Most important to the parish is its sacramental quality. The parish, in all its life, is sacramental: through it, God acts. Furthermore, the sacraments are specially graced events of God’s action and our response.

“It is in the Eucharistic liturgy that the parish expresses its deepest communion. Here it most fully unites all the various priestly efforts with the priesthood of Jesus. The Eucharistic celebration, therefore, calls for great care, and hope, and beauty; the preaching of the Word, for great enthusiasm and conviction. Parish worship and preaching are designed to express the incarnation of God’s life in human life.

“. . . In all its celebrations of the sacraments, the parish makes every effort to attend to the mystery of God’s action, to open itself to the power of the sacramental symbols, and to show care for the people engaging in these rites” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *The Parish—A People, A Mission, A Structure*, Washington, DC: USCCB, 1980, p. 9-10).

**How do we see the Church living out the ministry of liturgy, sacraments, and prayer in the parish and wider Church?**

#### Pastoral Care

The ministry of pastoral care is a compassionate presence in imitation of Jesus' care of people, especially those who were hurting and in need. Pastoral care is most fundamentally a relationship—a ministry of compassionate presence. This was Jesus' caring stance toward all people, especially those who were hurting or in need. Pastoral care enables healing and growth to take place within individuals and their relationships.

The Sisters of Bon Secours, USA express the Church’s ministry of pastoral care through their mission statement and ministries, especially through their Catholic hospitals.

“Through the love of God present in the Sisters of Bon Secours, we are called by God and sent by the Church to help people to wholeness; to alleviate human suffering of all forms, especially in the poor and dying; to help others to an awareness of the redemptive meaning of suffering and death—and to an awareness of their relationship with God by…reproducing in ourselves Christ healing…Christ consoling…Christ loving…Christ always aware of the needs of others.

“Our mission is to participate in Jesus' mission of revealing God's compassion, healing and liberation to all whom we meet and serve.

We care for the sick.
We pray with the dying.
We comfort the lonely.
We listen and respond to the cries of the poor and aged.
We cry with those who mourn.
We help people return to health and wholeness.
We embrace them in their joys and sorrows.
We support them in their search for God and in their struggle to experience the redemptive meaning of suffering.”

**How do we see the Church living out the ministry of pastoral care in the parish, community, and world?**

#### Teaching/Catechesis

“Teaching was central to the ministry of Jesus. He was sent by the Father to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God and to draw humanity into communion with the life of the Holy Trinity. The Father identified himself with Jesus, favored him, and commended his teaching to those to whom he was sent. ‘This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.’ Jesus was anointed by the Spirit “to bring glad tidings to the poor . . ./ to proclaim liberty to captives / and recovery of sight to the blind, / to let the oppressed go free, / and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.’ He taught with authority; and people from every walk of life and from every age and circumstance followed him into synagogues, up hillsides, through towns and villages, and to the seashore. He taught them in places familiar to them, and he taught them according to their capacity to understand his message. He taught them that the Kingdom he came to announce was intended for all, especially the poor and vulnerable. And he commissioned his disciples to continue his teaching ministry ‘for all time’”

 (*National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 185-186).

“Quite early on, the name *catechesis* was given to the totality of the Church’s efforts to make disciples, to help people believe that Jesus is the Son of God so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life, thus building upon the body of Christ” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 4).

“Catechesis aims to bring about in the believer an ever more mature faith in Jesus Christ, a deeper knowledge and love of his person and message, and a firm commitment to follow him” (*National Directory for Catechesis*, p. 54).

**How do we see the Church living out the ministry of teaching/catechesis in the parish, community/world, and wider Church?**

### Handout #1A.

### Ministries of Church “Passport” Booklet

As you visit each ministry of the Church, place an image or symbol in the space below the title to remember your visit. Or you can obtain signatures from the leaders of each ministry.

#### Community Life – The Church is the Body of Christ

Place image, symbol, or signature here.

#### Evangelization—Because we have experienced the love of Christ, we share it.

Place image, symbol, or signature here.

#### Justice and Service—We are called to serve those in need, to pursue peace, and to defend all our sisters and brothers.

Place image, symbol, or signature here.

#### Worship, Sacraments, and Prayer—Celebrating the Sacrament is God’s action and our response.

Place image, symbol, or signature here.

#### Pastoral Care—We seek to imitate Jesus as we care for those who are hurting and in need.

Place image, symbol, or signature here.

#### Teaching—the Church helps people understand and believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Place image, symbol, or signature here.

### Handout #2.

### Developing the Church of the Home (Families)

#### 1. Images of Church

As a family discuss:

* When you think of Church what images come to mind? What key words or “pictures” would you use to describe this image? Where did these images come from?
* What did you learn from the presentation on the “Church in Action” in the opening activity of the session? What was new? What did you already know?
* In what ministries or activities are you involved in your faith community?

One of the most powerful images of Church from Vatican II was the Church as the People of God. When we speak of the Church, we are talking about ourselves: people gathered together by the Risen Jesus to celebrate his presence among us and to continue his mission in the world. We are God’s community.

Read the description of the first Christian community in Acts 2:42-47 to your family:

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:42-47).

Ask family members if they have ever thought of your family as a church?

The United States Catholic Bishops, in a pastoral letter to families, describe the family as a domestic church or church of the home. What might it mean that your family is a church of the home? Discuss this as a family.

The United States Catholic Bishops write:

Jesus promised to be where two or three are gathered in his name (cf. Mt 18:20). We give the name *church* to the people whom the Lord gathers, who strive to follow his way of love, and through whose lives his saving presence is made known.

A family is our first community and most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us and acts in the world. The early church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a *domestic church* or *church of the home*.

. . . The point of the teaching is simple, yet profound. As Christian families, you not only belong to the church, but your daily life is a true expression of the church.

Your domestic church is not complete by itself, of course. It should be united with and supported by parishes and other communities within the larger church. Christ has called you and joined you to himself in and through the sacraments. Therefore, you share in one and the same mission that he gives to the whole church. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Follow the Way of Love*, Washington, DC: 1994. p. 8)

#### 2. Nurturing Faith at Home

So, how do you create a faith-filled family. Let’s begin with how your family uses time.

We use our time for what is really important in life. Think about how your family currently spends time in a typical week. Identify the number of hours your family spends on typical daily activities. Use your Family Time Chart to draw a picture of how your family uses time. Use a typical week in your family as an example. See the example as a guide.

Together as a family complete the “Family Time Chart.” Create a pie chart with lines indicating the amount of time. Write in the type of activity and the amount of time (see example).

Think of a typical week and indicate the amount of time each day that you spend on:

* school or work
* sleep
* activities/sports/leisure
* entertainment/TV
* family meals/family activities
* religious activities
* other activities

After you have completed the chart, discuss the following questions:

* What are your family’s most important priorities based on your use of time?
* Are there important activities you must make more time for?
* How might you make more time for these important activities?

**Family Time Chart**

Together as a family complete the “Family Time Chart.” Think of a typical week and indicate the amount of time each day that you spend on: school or work, sleep, activities/sports/leisure, entertainment/TV, family meals/family activities, religious activities, other

After you have completed the chart, discuss the following questions:

* What are your family’s most important priorities based on your use of time?
* Are there important activities you must make more time for?
* How might you make more time for these important activities?

**Sample Daily Family Time Chart**

School or Work:

8 hours

Sleep:

8 hours

Activities:

2 hours

Family Time:

1 hour

Entertainment:

2 hours

Other

(3 hours)

#### 3. Growing in Faith Now

So, how much time does your family typically spend on faith activities in a week or month? Below our five ways family grow in faith. Use these following examples of family faith activities to help you identify the things your family does. Work together to identify things you do now.

##### Learning

* reading the Bible and telling Bible stories
* reading and talking about the Sunday Scripture readings
* discussing religious issues
* reading value-oriented books and watching value-oriented movies

*What do we do as a family?*

##### Celebrating Rituals

* attending Sunday Mass or services
* participating in Church year feasts in the parish such as Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, and Good Friday
* celebrating Church year seasons at home (e.g., Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter) with activities such as an Advent Wreath, Christmas crèche,
* celebrating the religious significance of family milestone events at home such as sacramental celebrations (e.g., Baptisms, First Eucharist), birthdays, and wedding anniversaries
* celebrating Mother’s Day and Father’s Day

*What do we do as a family?*

##### Praying

* morning and bedtime prayer
* daily prayers for the Church year season (e.g., Advent and Lent)
* prayer before meals
* praying the Rosary and traditional Catholic prayers
* praying for people in need, for peace and justice in our world

*What do we do as a family?*

##### Serving and Working for Justice

* collecting food and clothing for those in need
* preparing and serving a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter
* visiting the elderly at a nursing home
* caring for the environment (e.g., recycling, cleaning parks, planting trees)
* giving generously to those in need at home and abroad
* participating in parish service projects

*What do we do as a family?*

##### Enriching Relationships

* spending time as a family doing things together (e.g., watching a movie, playing games)
* holding regular family meetings
* participating in parish social events
* participating in community events

*What do we do as a family?*

##### Discuss Together

* How do we feel about our family’s faith activities?
* How can we find time for faith sharing activities at home?
* What changes do we need to make in our Family Time Chart to include time for faith activities at home and in the parish?

#### 4. Becoming a Faith-Filled Family

Take a minute to review the family faith activities on Handout #3: learning, praying, celebrating rituals, serving, and enriching family relationships. Consider using these activities as you create your family plan.

Think about the many opportunities for faith activities in your family’s weekly life—at home and in the parish. Use the chart as a guide for planning your week. What will you include in your typical week? Think of learning activities, service projects, rituals, prayer, and family enrichment. Turn to the weekly calendar on the next page

Think about the many opportunities for faith activities throughout the year. Use the chart as a guide for planning your year. What will you include in your annual calendar? Think of learning activities, service projects, Church year rituals and family milestone celebrations, prayer times, and family enrichment activities. Add your family’s faith activities into this annual calendar.

Display your completed calendar on the refrigerator (or other prominent place in the house). Together as a family review your success at the end of the week, month or season and identify new faith activities to add to your calendar. Keep a record of your family’s faith calendar.

Write on colored Post-It notes two or three faith activities—at home or in the parish—that your family will initiate in the coming weeks. Hold onto these for the closing prayer.

#### Our Weekly Faith Calendar

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Sunday** | **Monday** | **Tuesday** | **Wednesday** | **Thursday** | **Friday** | **Saturday** |
| **Morning** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Afternoon** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Evening** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

#### Our Annual Faith Calendar

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Calendar Activities**  | **Family Faith Activities**  |
| **December** | AdventChristmas |  |
| **January** |  |  |
| **February** |  |  |
| **March** | Lent |  |
| **April** | Holy WeekEaster |  |
| **May** | PentecostMother’s Day |  |
| **June** | Father’s Day |  |
| **July** |  |  |
| **August** |  |  |
| **September**  |  |  |
| **October** |  |  |
| **November**  | All Saints DayThanksgiving |  |

### Handout #3.

### Family Faith Activities

#### Learning

Here is a simple process you can use to take the message of the Sunday Gospel reading or any Gospel passage and apply it to your lives as individuals and families.

Light a candle recalling its symbolism of the presence of Jesus, Light of the World, in our midst and then pray:

*As we light this candle let us pray. Lord Jesus Christ, you came among us to show us how to live. Your words and deeds are recorded in the Scriptures and have been passed on to us through the ages by people of faith who have gone before us and by the traditions that we practice. We believe that you are with us now. Help us to be open to your Word today so that we may hear the message that you intend for us. May we be both affirmed and challenged by your Word. Amen.*

Read the Sunday Gospel reading. Ask each person to repeat words or phrases that struck them as they listened. Think about what Jesus might be saying to you in this passage. Is God affirming you in some way? Is God giving you a challenge? After a few minutes, share your reflections.

What actions can you as individuals and as a family take during the coming week to put into practice the message of Jesus found in the Gospel reading? Decide upon individual and household actions that you will take.

Pray the Our Father and then conclude with the following prayer of thanksgiving.

*Lord, God, we thank you for giving us your Holy Spirit to lead and guide us according to your Word. Be with us as we strive to put into practice the example you gave us by your life.*

#### Celebrating Rituals: Birthday Rituals

Birthdays can be an important time for individuals and families not just to honor the actual birth date of the person, but to mark new family relationships, honor the aging process, remember the birth parents, reconnect when there has been loss, and just have fun. During birthday celebrations, we use the well-accepted symbols of birthday cake and candles to symbolize our progress through the lifecycle toward death.

##### Family Unbirthday Days

Unbirthdays came from the Mad Hatter in Alice in Wonderland when everyone was wished a “Happy Unbirthday” at the tea party. Like the Mad Hatter, families too can celebrate anytime. A party can be given on any of the days of the year which are not a person's birthday. You could have a surprise celebration for any day of the week: children's day, grandparents’ day, report cards, first day of school, etc. Be creative and remember, these celebrations help you to remember and rejoice in life itself.

##### Baptismal Anniversaries and Name Days

Many families celebrate baptismal anniversaries and name days by marking the time on their calendar and remembering to burn the child's baptismal candle and have a special dinner. On name days, the life of the patron saint is read. This is a good practice since everyone needs heroes/heroines, and good ones are hard to come by these days. What more suitable ones can we propose to children than those who have served God so faithfully?

##### Ritualizing Birthdays

* Family members awaken the birthday person with a lighted candle and serenade him/her with “Happy Birthday.” For the rest of the day the birthday person has no chores to do and is served whatever he/she wants for any of the meals. In this way the birthday person feels special and family relationships are affirmed.
* Families wrap presents in three or four layers of paper or boxes before the opener finally gets to the present.
* Families set up treasure hunts for the presents complete with clues.
* Families allow the birthday person to pick the menu for the birthday meal.
* Families have a special “birthday plate” that is placed on the table to remind everyone of the specialness of the person.
* The day after the birthday, the birthday person is allowed to have a piece of cake for breakfast.
* Single adults invite their friends to a birthday gathering and ask them to bring or do something that was particularly celebrated in their own family around birthdays.
* When separated and divorced parents have worked out a cooperative relationship, the party is done together. When the two parents live in two locations, two parties might be given in the different locations or one might be a family party and the other a party with the child's friends. Some families choose to plan only one party with one parent.
* Purchase a book with blank pages and paste in photographs for each birthday. Write the important events that happened in the child's past year.

##### Generational Connections

* Give gifts to parents to acknowledge your gratefulness to them for the gift of life. Thank them for their love and care. Prepare a book of photographs with captions from a trip taken earlier, and/or a copybook with short stories and songs sung by the parent(s).
* Create a video from photographs and/or video tape the party so it can be shared later with other generations.
* Make a cake for your parents on the birthday of one of your siblings when he/she is far away.
* Audio tape everyone's voice in the family and ask each member how they feel and what was significant about the past year.
* Get together on the deceased person's birthday to exchange gifts that remind family members of the deceased person, gifts the deceased would have picked out or made for others.
* If you recall a particularly unhappy birthday, especially one that feels like it marked a turning point for you, such as a childhood birthday that became fused with a parental divorce or was ruined by parental alcoholism, you may want to consider ways to redo that birthday in your adult life. In other words, throw a party for yourself. Use this ritual to close off old hurts and orient yourself to new possibilities.
* Make a surprise birthday hat. Each family members could choose and design a symbol or word phrase that would tell of their wish for the birthday person for the year. Place symbols/words on the hat. Give everyone a bell to ring. Stand around the lighted birthday cake. In ceremony, place birthday hat on family member and pray:

*We thank God for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and for his/her presence in our family. As we place this hat on his/her head, we ask God for a special blessing upon \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the coming year.*

* If your family has one primary ritual maker for birthdays, (often this is the mother), try thinking of ways to put a different structure in place for celebrating his/her day.

##### Birthday Ritual

*Sign yourself with the Sign of the Cross and recite this prayer.*

In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God, (I/We) come today to give thanks to you for creating the life of (name). I/We ask your blessing on (name), that he/she may continue to honor and praise you by using the gifts and talents you have given him/her. We ask that (name) continue to grow in age, wisdom and grace - as Jesus grew.

**Scripture Reading**

Be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Letter of Paul to the Colossians.)

Through Baptism, (name) entered God's special life of love. On this special day of remembrance we ask that (name)

may be faithful to God's love and trust;

may make good choices in life;

may continue to grow in age, in wisdom and in grace as Jesus grew.

Light a candle and say: Let this light symbolize the light of Christ renewing the life of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (name).

#### Prayer

##### Bedtime Rituals

In every culture, parents create bedtime rituals for babies and young children to ease separation from the parent and the passage from the waking state to the sleeping state. Such rituals may include a playful bathing, a bedtime snack, telling or reading a story, saying prayers, singing songs, holding and cuddling. The familiar repetition of such bedtime rituals marks and defines the parent-child relationship as one where comfort, reliability, and safety are available.

##### Make-Up Time

The world is imperfect; families fight. But it really is a good idea not to go to bed mad. Try to make sure that wrongs between family members are righted before everyone goes to sleep. Talk together about what went wrong and what might help. If you don't feel you can say it, write a note to apologize, or make a gesture that clearly says you want to start over. If the bad feelings have to do with someone not present, it may help to talk out loud, to say what's in your heart and on your mind, as though the person were there.

##### Bedtime Talks

Take time for a little chat every evening. Invite children to tell what they did during the day, their excitements and disappointments. Talk about anything that's troubling them, or something they want to do. Keep the lines of communication open. Make this a relaxed time so that there is not that feeling of being rushed. Make it a privilege and a delight to be together.

##### Prayer

When teaching your child to pray, hold the child on your lap (facing forward). Be sure that you are relaxed and serene and able to communicate lovingly. Ideal places are in front of a fireplace, a quiet garden or wherever there are not too many distractions. Perhaps you might consider a special space where you and your child have had enjoyable times together.

##### A Parent's Prayer for a Child

Lord, bless this child.

As you have filled his/her day with sights and sounds, activities and relationships, bless his/her night with restful sleep and pleasant dreams.

May he/she be strengthened by tonight's sleep for the new life and growth that tomorrow is sure to bring.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

##### A Bedtime Prayer for Parents

Thank you, God for the gifts of daytime:

For the sun that warms,

For the breeze that cools,

And for the rain that refreshes.

Thank you, too, for family and friends

For work and for relaxation,

For the comfort of daily routine,

And for the challenge of new ideas and relationships.

With daytime at a close, we thank you too for the gifts of nighttime:

For shadows that dance in the light,

And stars that glow in the darkest night.

For the chance to rest and to prepare ourselves

For another day of comfort and challenge.

Thank you God, for today and for tonight. Amen.

#### Justice and Service Action Projects

1. Prepare and serve a meal at a soup kitchen or homeless shelter.
2. Collect food for the local food bank. Distribute items at a food bank or the local shelter.
3. Donate clothes to those in need, like winter coats, hats, and mittens for children. Many agencies conduct clothing collections. Winter coat collections are popular in colder climates. Identify a community organization that is collecting winter coats, publicize the project throughout the parish, collect the clothes at weekend liturgies or in person at people’s homes, and then deliver them to the sponsoring agency. Another idea is to develop a “hats and mittens” collection for a childcare center or children’s service agency in a poor community.
4. Create “essentials kits” for those in need, such as a *Shelter Kit* for the men, women, and children at a local homeless shelter. The kits could contain such items as sheets, blankets and towels, new underwear, socks, T-shirts, pajamas, toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, shaving cream, disposable razors. A *School Kit* for children could contain notebooks, pencils, pens, markers, crayons, and a calculator. A *Care Package* for new parents could contain disposable diapers, baby wipes, baby shampoo, lotion, baby powder, baby soap, baby blanket, pacifier, bottles, infant toys, and a guide for new parents. A *Special Days Kit* for children or teens has items for celebrating a birthday or holiday in a shelter or detention center. A *Kitchen* *Package* for families in need might include a coffeemaker, cutting boards, pots and pans, utensils, and so on. A Prisoner’s Kit for prisoners who have no family or friends includes an assortment of candy, magazines, books, socks, underwear and other items. You can ask prison officials what inmates can receive.
5. Involve the children in organizing a “Clean Your Desk Campaign” for the children of Nicaragua through Quest for Peace. Here’s how it works: gather funds and simple school supplies such as pencils and erasers, paper and notebooks, art supplies, crayons and markers, scissors and rulers, musical instruments, basketballs, baseballs, etc. (No books or anything battery operated.) Pack the supplies in sturdy boxes and ship them to Quest for Peace in Maryland. See the Quest for Peace project description and website for more information.
6. Focus on the needs of the elderly in your community:
* Visit the elderly or work at a senior citizen facility or nursing home.
* Create a network of people to drive elderly persons to church, the grocery store, and so on.
* Do fall and spring housecleaning for the homebound.
* Write letters for nursing home residents who can no longer write.
* “Adopt a grandparent” by visiting one particular nursing home resident regularly.
1. Focus on the needs of children in your community.
* Tutor children at a local school, Boys Club, Girls Inc., YMCA, or YWCA.
* Get involved in a recreation or arts and crafts program for children.
* Help with summer programs through your church or community.
* Be a Big Brother or Big Sister.
1. Weatherize, repair, and paint homes for those in need.
2. Sponsor a child, elderly person, or family with the necessities of life.
* Adopt-a-Family programs match sponsors and families in need during the Christmas season, providing a list of what families need and asking sponsors to provide the items.
1. Provide financial support to organizations that work directly with those in need.
* To find projects to support financially see the specific project descriptions for Catholic Relief Services, Heifer Project, Habitat for Humanity, Food for the Poor, Christian Foundation for Children and Aging, Simply Smiles, and Quest for Peace. Go online to their web sites.
1. Focus on people with disabling conditions.
* Work with Special Olympics or programs for the developmentally challenged.
* Read for the blind.
* Offer a shuttle service to help disabled people get to worship services, the grocery store, shopping center, and so on.
* Undertake projects to make your church facility accessible for all.
* Help people with disabilities write letters.
1. Focus on the environment in your local community.
* Conduct an awareness campaign to make lifestyle changes that will help protect the environment.
* Plant trees in your community through the Global Re-leaf Program and National Arbor Day Foundation programs. See the environment project descriptions below.
* Organize a “clean-up the community day” and mobilize teams of people to clean-up litter and junk in specific areas of the community.
* Participate in local Earth Day activities (April).
* Adopt a piece of the planet through the Nature Conservatory’s “Adopt an Acre” and “Rescue the Reef” programs, or through the Rainforest Alliance’s “Adopt-a-Rainforest” program. See the environment project descriptions below.
* Protect endangered species and their habitats through the World Wildlife Fund’s variety of projects. See the environment project descriptions below.
* Set up a community improvement program that can engage young people in your parish to do things such as repair sidewalks, clean-up vacant lots and streams, clean-up litter, improve stream beds, repair homes or abandoned buildings, add playground equipment to parks, paint over graffiti, and adopt highways.

#### Family Enrichment: Making Mealtime Special

Traditionally, the family mealtime has been a symbol of communication. Experts say if you want to know how a family really interacts, watch them at the table. Is everyone present? Are they engaged in conversation or preoccupied with newspapers and the television? They say that the majority of family conversations happen either in the car or at the table. It's true for us; is it true for you?

Eating is an important part of family life, no matter how busy we are. The busier we are, the more important it is that we make sure there is special family time. It is not enough to think family is important; it must be important. What we do is the visible expression of our real values. What we do, however, does not have to be done to someone else's time clock. Eating together on a regular basis and making it special provide a marvelous opportunity to celebrate family time.

Making meals special doesn't mean bringing in circus acts. It means creating an atmosphere of blessing and communication. Here are some ways that families have made mealtime a special family time:

##### Blessings

Use mealtime prayers as a way of teaching your children to recognize that God is the creator and sustainer of life. Prayers can be ones you write as a family, a traditional favorite, a spontaneous one, or a song. Mealtime prayers provide an opportunity for children to practice praying publicly. Try rotating the leadership role. Don't hesitate to pray when guests are present; rather, welcome them into your family's rituals.

##### Home Alone

Pick a regular night once a week when everyone will be present for dinner with no guests invited. This means making a family commitment to not working late, attending meetings or after school activities. Make sure everyone has a task to perform in the planning, preparation and/or cleaning.

##### Centerpieces

Create table centerpieces. They can be made of anything such as flowers, an arrangement of small toys or dolls, or an art project. If possible, create them together from family activities such as nature walks.

##### Weekend Cook-off

Can't get together for supper? Create a Saturday or Sunday morning cook-off. Prepare a full meal (such as a casserole, muffins, and dessert) or a couple of main dishes to be eaten later in the day and/or week. Select recipes and ingredients in advance. Make sure everyone has a task in the planning, preparation, and/or cleaning. Consider ending with a brief blessing of the food. That spaghetti sauce eaten alone after soccer practice will taste “better” if it’s prepared at the Cook-off.

##### Weekly Rituals

Whether its Friday Pizza Night or Tuesday Sundaes, they're fun to look forward to! One family we know, short on preparation time and cooking skill, uses restaurants as a regular place to catch up on each other's lives.

##### Feed the Hungry

If food is important to your family, then you can understand the feelings of those who go hungry. Many of us participate in programs to feed the hungry during the holidays but it is especially important to support these programs in the “off season”. Many churches offer opportunities for families to help prepare and serve a meal at a local meal program. How about at your next family get-together asking families to bring canned goods for each member of their family? Later take the food to a local food bank or shelter. Another suggestion is to make a simple supper, eliminate dessert or those Sunday donuts, and as a family determine a local charity to donate the money.

### Handout #4.

### Creating the Ideal Church (Adolescents)

#### 1. Understanding the Church

Below you will find brief descriptions of the Church. They give you a variety of ideas about what the Catholic Church is. If someone asked *you* to describe the Catholic Church to them, which of the descriptions would you use? Which of these statements best describe your understanding of the Church? Place a in front of the descriptions you would use.

**The Catholic Church is…**

* a place where we worship God at Mass on Sunday.
* the Pope, bishops, and priests.
* people who believe in Jesus Christ and do his work in the world today.
* a human organization that deals with religious issues.
* a sign of Jesus Christ present to us today.
* a group of people who care about and accept each other.
* a group of people who serve the needs of others just as Jesus did.
* a community who proclaim the Good News of Jesus.
* people teaching others what it means to live as Catholics.
* people living their faith at home with their families, at school, and at work.
* people listening to God’s Word in the Bible.

**What would you add to these statements?**

* How do these images and descriptions connect with your own images?
* How do these images clarify your own understanding of the Church?
* Consider the implications/challenges of viewing the Church in these three ways:
* for individual Catholics
* for the parish community
* for the Church universal

##### Images of the Church

 “The word ‘Church’ (Latin ecclesia, from the Greek ek-ka-lein, to ‘call out of’) means convocation or an assembly. It designates the assemblies of people, usually for a religious purpose. Ekklesia is used frequently in the Greek Old Testament for the assembly of the Chosen People before God, above all for assembly on Mount Sinai where Israel received the Law and was established by God as his first holy people. By calling itself ‘Church,’ the first community of Christian believers recognized itself as heir to that assembly. In the Church, God is ‘calling together’ his people from all the ends of the earth”(CCC 751).

“The parish is where the Church lives. Parishes are communities of action, and of hope. They are where the gospel is proclaimed and celebrated, where believers are formed and sent to renew the earth. Parishes are the home of the Christian community; they are the heart of our Church. Parishes are the place where God’s people meet Jesus in world and sacrament and come in touch with the source of the Church’s life” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Communities of Salt and Light*, Washington, DC: USCCB, 1993, p. 1).

There are many images that Catholics have used over the centuries to describe the Church. Three images of Church stand out among this variety: People of God, Mystery or Sacrament, and Body of Christ.

**The People of God**

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

“Once you were not a people,

but now you are God’s people;
once you had not received mercy,

but now you have received mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

“When we speak of the Church, we are talking about ourselves: people gathered together by the Risen Jesus to celebrate his presence among us and to continue his mission in the world. The *Catechism* repeats some memorable, ancient words describing the Church and its relationship to Christ and his Spirit. The Church is ‘like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun,’ the Risen Jesus (CCC 748). Or again: The Church is the place ‘where the Spirit flourishes’ in the midst of God’s people (CCC 749)” (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*).

**The Church as a Mystery of Faith—A Sign of God’s Presence and Action in the World**

The Church is a sacrament. “A sacrament is a visible sign of God’s presence and action in the world. Christ, then, is the Great Sacrament of who God is and what God is. The Church is the visible post-Resurrection sign (sacrament) of Christ’s presence among his people and their union with him and each other. The Church, then, is the sacrament of universal salvation, the sign and instrument of communion between God and humanity” (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*).

Simply put, the Church is a sacrament because it makes Christ present in our world. Through what we believe and how we live as Catholics, we reveal that Christ is present in us and the Church, and Christ acts through us to bring his Good News to the world. Christ works through us, his followers, to continue his mission in the world today.

**The Body of Christ**

“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 in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

“Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many”

(1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

“Jesus from the very beginning of his public ministry, associated with his disciples. He describes his union with them as a vine with its branches. They receive life from him. It was Paul who used the beautiful image of the “Body of Christ” to express the union of life between Christ and his disciples (see 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4). There is an inexpressible oneness of life in the Church that comes from Christ through his Spirit and flows to all the members – a union of *life*” (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*).

##### 2. Mission and Ministries of the Church

The Church is first called and then sent. In other words, the Church is a community, or an assembly, with a mission. The Church is both a sign and an instrument of the Kingdom of God. The Church, as the People of God, seeks to continue Christ’s mission on earth. Like Christ, the Church “receives the mission to proclaim and establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God” (*Lumen Gentium* 5).

First, the Church is sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God by *word*, that is, in preaching, teaching, and catechesis. Second the Church is sent to participate in Christ’s *worship* of the Father, in and through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church does this especially in the Eucharist. The Church also celebrates and anticipates the coming kingdom in the other sacraments and in its general prayer life. Third, the Church is sent to offer *witness* to the world of what it proclaims and celebrates. Because the Church is a sacrament, it has to practice what it preaches. It is not enough to be the Body of Christ; it must look and act like the Body of Christ. It must look and act like a community permeated with God’s saving presence. Finally, the Church is sent to provide *service* to those in need, both inside and outside the Church. The Church must follow the example of the Lord himself who ministered to the sick, the poor, the handicapped, the oppressed, the socially ostracized, the sinners, and the dying.

The mission of the Church is expressed and lived through six fundamental ministries:

* Community life
* Evangelization
* Justice and service to those in need
* Liturgy, sacraments, and prayer
* Pastoral care
* Teaching/catechesis

Each of these ministries has its roots in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

##### 3. Creating an Ideal Church

Your mission is to create a picture of an ideal, “perfect” Church that is living out its mission in the world today. Your task is to describe what the Church will do and why it is doing those things. Each group will focus on one of the following important actions (ministries) of the Church: community life, evangelization, justice and service, pastoral care, teaching/catechesis, and liturgy, sacraments and prayer. You will use information from New Testament Scripture passages on Handout 6 and quotes from Church documents on Handout 1, as well as the opening activity, “Church in Action.” The picture you paint should focus on the parish, but include actions of the wider Church, locally and globally.

Read one of the Scripture passages for your ministry. Divide the passages among group members. If there are less than six young people in a group, ask people to take an additional Scripture passage. Each person reads the passage and then answers the question: *What can we learning from this Scripture passage about the importance of our ministry and what an “ideal Church” looks like?*

* Evangelization: Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:16-21; Luke 9:1-6; Acts 1:22-24, 32-42; Acts 2:43-47
* Community Life: Acts 2:43-47; Acts 4:32-37; Romans 12:1-18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Colossians 3:12-17; Ephesians 4:1-6, 14-16
* Justice and Service: Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 4:16-21; Luke 16:19-31; John 13:12-17; Acts 4:32-37; James 2:14-17
* Liturgy, Sacraments, and Prayer: Matthew 6:5-14, 7:7-11; Luke 5:18-26; Luke 22:14-20; Luke 24:13-35; Acts 2:37-47; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
* Pastoral Care: Matthew 4:23-25; Luke 5:12-15; Luke 8:43-48; Luke 9:37-43; Luke 18:35-43; Acts 5:12-16
* Teaching/Catechesis: Matthew 5:1-12, 7:24-29; Matthew 22:34-40; Matthew 13:3-23; Matthew 13:24-43; Luke 24:13-35; Romans 1:1-6, 16-17

Share your reflections on the Scripture passages by briefly summarizing the passage and share their responses to the question: *What can we learning from this Scripture passage about the importance of our ministry and what an “ideal Church” looks like?* Have one person write the responses of group members on newsprint.

Review the quotes from Church documents for your ministry on Handout 1 (“The Ministries of the Church Journal”). Review the presentation from the session’s opening activity to identify what the Church is doing in your ministry. Discuss the following question as a group: *What can we learning from the Church quotes and the ministries presentation about the importance of our ministry and what an “ideal Church” looks like?* Have one person write the responses of group members on newsprint.

Create your portrait of an “ideal Church” living out your ministry area. Complete the following questions to develop your presentation:

* In an ideal Church our ministry is important because . . .
(Consider Scripture, Church teaching, needs of people, etc.)
* In an ideal Church our ministry would be doing . . .
(Be specific! Give examples of what your ministry would be doing.)

There are a variety of ways to present your “ideal Church.” Here are several examples:

* Create a parish bulletin of the future describing all of the things your ministry area is doing. Include specifics you would find in the bulletin such as announcements of projects, dates, how to get involved or use a service, and people to contact.
* Create an advertisement (poster, billboard, sign) that can be display at church or in the community promoting your ministry projects.
* Create a poster with artwork and text announcing your ministry in action. Use magazines for photos or illustrations.

##### 4. Called to Continue Christ’s Mission

Every Christian is called by their Baptism to take responsibility for continuing Christ’s mission and service today. By virtue of baptism and incorporation into the Body of Christ, all the faithful are called to work together in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and one another to continue Jesus’ mission on earth through lives of service.

*How do you and can you take responsibility for continuing Christ’s mission today?* Take a few moments to think of ways you can contribute to the building up of the ideal Church? Where can you use your God-given gifts and talents to continue Christ’s mission?

Write on a Post-It note one way you can contribute your gifts and talents to continue Christ’s mission in the parish or the broader Church. Save the Post-It Note for closing prayer.

Conclude by sharing one way you can contribute and get involved.

### Handout #4.

### Exploring the Church and its Ministries (Adults)

#### 1. Images of the Church

* When you think of Church what images come to mind? What is your primary image of Church today? What key words or “pictures” would you use to describe this image?
* Where did this image come from?
* How does your image influence your view of Church and your active participation in the life of the Church community?

**Reflections**

There are many images that Catholics have used over the centuries to describe the Church. Three images of Church stand out among this variety: People of God, Mystery or Sacrament, and Body of Christ.

**The People of God**

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

“Once you were not a people,

but now you are God’s people;
once you had not received mercy,

but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)

“When we speak of the Church, we are talking about ourselves: people gathered together by the Risen Jesus to celebrate his presence among us and to continue his mission in the world. The *Catechism* repeats some memorable, ancient words describing the Church and its relationship to Christ and his Spirit. The Church is ‘like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun,’ the Risen Jesus (CCC 748). Or again: The Church is the place ‘where the Spirit flourishes’ in the midst of God’s people (CCC 749)” (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*).

**The Church as a Mystery of Faith—A Sign of God’s Presence and Action in the World**

The Church is a sacrament. “A sacrament is a visible sign of God’s presence and action in the world. Christ, then, is the Great Sacrament of who God is and what God is. The Church is the visible post-Resurrection sign (sacrament) of Christ’s presence among his people and their union with him and each other. The Church, then, is the sacrament of universal salvation, the sign and instrument of communion between God and humanity” (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*).

Simply put, the Church is a sacrament because it makes Christ present in our world. Through what we believe and how we live as Catholics, we reveal that Christ is present in us and the Church, and Christ acts through us to bring his Good News to the world. Christ works through us, his followers, to continue his mission in the world today.

**The Body of Christ**

“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 in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

“Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many” (1 Corinthians 12:12-14).

“Jesus from the very beginning of his public ministry, associated with his disciples. He describes his union with them as a vine with its branches. They receive life from him. It was Paul who used the beautiful image of the “Body of Christ” to express the union of life between Christ and his disciples (see 1 Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4). There is an inexpressible oneness of life in the Church that comes from Christ through his Spirit and flows to all the members – a union of *life*” (William Shannon, *What is the Church?*).

These three images attest to the Trinitarian dimension of the Church. “First, the Church is the work of the Father, since the Father elects us to be his new people. If, in the Old Testament, God makes a covenant with Israel, in the New Testament her chooses us to be the people of the new covenant. This image is beautifully expressed in 1 Peter 2:9-10. . . Second, the church is the work of Christ. Paul develops a beautiful Christ-focused image of the church. He tell us that we are the body of Christ—Christ is the head and we are the members: ‘Just as the body is one and has many members of the body, 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’ (1 Corinthians 12:12-13). . . Third, the church is the work of the Spirit. For example, Paul calls the church the temple of the Holy Spirit: ‘Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?’ (1 Corinthians 3:16). In other words, individual Christians bear the Spirit within themselves—as does the community. John Says that in the new messianic era, we are to worship in Spirit and in truth. The Christian community has replaced the Temple of Jerusalem and the church is now God’s temple, filled with the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit” (John O’Donnell, S.J., *A Faith You Can Live With*).

As a group discuss the following questions:

* How do these images and descriptions connect with your own images?
* How do these images clarify your own understanding of the Church?
* Consider the implications/challenges of viewing the Church in these three ways:
* for individual Catholics
* for the parish community
* for the Church universal

#### 2. When You Think of the Church . . .

Below you will find brief descriptions of the Church. They give you a variety of ideas about what the Catholic Church is. If someone asked *you* to describe the Catholic Church to them, which of the descriptions would you use? Which of these statements best describe your understanding of the Church? Place a check in front of the descriptions you would use.

The Catholic Church is…

* a place where we worship God at Mass on Sunday.
* the Pope, bishops, and priests.
* people who believe in Jesus Christ and do his work in the world today.
* a human organization that deals with religious issues.
* a sign of Jesus Christ present to us today.
* a group of people who care about and accept each other.
* a group of people who serve the needs of others just as Jesus did.
* a community who proclaim the Good News of Jesus.
* people teaching others what it means to live as Catholics.
* people living their faith at home with their families, at school, and at work.
* people listening to God’s Word in the Bible.

What would you add to these statements?

As a group discuss the following questions:

* How adequate is your own understanding of the Catholic Church? Where do you need to grow?
* How comfortable are you in describing the Catholic Church to others?

#### 3. Mission and Ministries of the Church

If you had to summarize the mission or purpose of the Church, what would you say? Think about why the Church does what it does. Review all the actions and projects of the Church that you saw at the beginning the session. Why does the Church do these things? Then share your answers with you group

The mission of the Church is . . .

Consider these points about the Church’s mission:

The Church is first called and then sent. In other words, the Church is a community, or an assembly, with a mission. The Church is both a sign and an instrument of the Kingdom of God. The Church, as the People of God, seeks to continue Christ’s mission on earth. Like Christ, the Church “receives the mission to proclaim and establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God” (*Lumen Gentium* 5).

First, the Church is sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God by *word*, that is, in preaching, teaching, and catechesis. Second the Church is sent to participate in Christ’s *worship* of the Father, in and through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church does this especially in the Eucharist. The Church also celebrates and anticipates the coming kingdom in the other sacraments and in its general prayer life. Third, the Church is sent to offer *witness* to the world of what it proclaims and celebrates. Because the Church is a sacrament, it has to practice what it preaches. It is not enough to be the Body of Christ; it must look and act like the Body of Christ. It must look and act like a community permeated with God’s saving presence. Finally, the Church is sent to provide *service* to those in need, both inside and outside the Church. The Church must follow the example of the Lord himself who ministered to the sick, the poor, the handicapped, the oppressed, the socially ostracized, the sinners, and the dying.

The mission of the Church is expressed and lived through six fundamental ministries:

* Community life
* Evangelization
* Justice and service to those in need
* Liturgy, sacraments, and prayer
* Pastoral care
* Teaching/catechesis

Each of these ministries has its roots in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Read and Reflect on the Scriptural Basis of Your Ministry

Each person in the group should read and reflect on the Scriptural basis for one of the Church’s ministries (see Handout #6) and review the quotes from Church documents on the “Ministries of the Church Journal” (Handout #1) for that ministry. If there are more than six people, team-up to form six subgroups.

Read the Scripture passages and the quotes on the “Ministries of the Church Journal” in your ministry and then reflect on the following questions:

* What insights into the importance of our ministry have we identified by reading these Scripture passages and Church quotes?
* Why is this ministry important for the Church and its members?

Community Life

* Acts 2:42-47
* Romans 12:9-18
* 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
* Colossians 3:12-17

Evangelization

* Matthew 28:18-20
* Mark 1:14-15
* Luke 9:1-6
* Acts 1:22-24, 32-42

Justice and Service

* Matthew 25:31-46
* Luke 4:16-21
* John 13:12-17
* Acts 4:32-35

Liturgy, Sacraments, and Prayer

* Luke 22:14-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26
* Luke 5:18-26
* Acts 2:37-42

Pastoral Care

* Matthew 4:23-25
* Luke 5:12-15, Luke 8:43-48, Luke 9:37-43 or Luke 18:35-43 (select two)
* Acts 5:12-16

Teaching/Catechesis

* Matthew 5:1-12, 7:24-29
* Matthew 22:34-40
* Matthew 13:3-23
* Luke 24:13-35

Each person or team shares with the group the passages they read and their responses to the questions:

* What insights into the importance of our ministry have we identified by reading these Scripture passages and Church quotes?
* Why is this ministry important for the Church and its members?

Together as a group discuss how the Church is currently living out all six ministries. Review what you learned from the presentation of Church ministries in the session’s opening activity. What would you add?

#### 4. The Ministries of the Parish Community

Each Church ministry traces its origin to the mission and ministry of Jesus and the early Church. *The Code of Canon Law* (Canons 528-529) spells out what the Church considers the basic pastoral work (ministries) in a parish community. Use these descriptions to identify the strengths of your parish community. Based on your own experience and knowledge of the parish’s ministries, rate each of the six ministries from 1-4: 1—needs lots of work, 2—fair, 3—good, 4—excellent.

**Community Life 1 2 3 4**

* practices methods of acquaintance with parishioners, the welcoming of newcomers, home visiting, efforts at building community
* fosters the growth of Christian life in the family
* recognizes and promotes the specific role which the lay members of the parish have in the mission of the Church
* fosters in parishioners concern and works which promote the community of the parish and that helps them feel themselves to be members of the diocese and the universal Church

**Evangelization 1 2 3 4**

* ensures that the word of God is proclaimed in its entirety to those living in the parish
* brings the Gospel message to those who have given up religious practice or who do not profess the true faith (outreach to inactive Catholics)

**Justice and Service 1 2 3 4**

* works which promote the spirit of the Gospel, including its relevance to social justice
* demonstrates concern and care for the poor, the suffering, the lonely, those who are exiled from their homeland, and those burdened with special difficulties

**Liturgy, Sacraments, and Prayer 1 2 3 4**

* promotes the Eucharist as the center of the parish assembly
* celebrates the sacraments, especially Eucharist and penance (including programs of sacramental life and preparation)
* nourishes the prayer life of parishioners, especially within families
* promotes active participation of parishioners in the liturgy

**Pastoral Care 1 2 3 4**

* cares for the sick and especially the dying

**Teaching/Catechesis 1 2 3 4**

* instructs the community in the truths of faith, especially by means of the homily and by catechetical formation
* provides Catholic education of children and youth

Together as a group, share your rating of each ministry, one-by-one. When you have completed all six ministries, discuss the following questions:

* What are our strongest ministries in the parish?
* What ministries does the parish need to improve?
* What new ideas or projects should we initiate to improve our parish’s ministries?

#### 5. Called to Continue Christ’s Mission

Every Christian is called by their Baptism to take responsibility for continuing Christ’s mission and service today. By virtue of baptism and incorporation into the Body of Christ, all the faithful are called to work together in cooperation with the Holy Spirit and one another to continue Jesus’ mission on earth through lives of service.

Take some time to reflect on your involvement in the mission and ministry of Jesus as it is being carried out by your parish and the broader Church (diocesan, national, and international). How do you and can you take responsibility for continuing Christ’s mission today.

* **In what ministry am I currently involved?**
* **If you are not currently involved, in what ministry do you want to participate? Where can you use your God-given gifts and talents to continue Christ’s mission?**
* **What does your parish or the broader Church need you to do today?**

On a Post-It note write one way you can contribute your gifts and talents to continue Christ’s mission in the parish or the broader Church. Save the Post-It Note for closing prayer.

Conclude by discussing your reflections with the entire group.

### Handout #5.

### Scripture Passages for Church Ministries

#### Community Life

**Acts 2:42-47**

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**Acts 4:32-35**

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**Romans 12:9-18**

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

**1 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 in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to 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 were to 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 the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 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.’ On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

**Colossians 3:12-17**

As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**Ephesians 4:1-6, 14-16**

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people’s trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.

#### Evangelization

**Matthew 28:18-20**

And 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’

**Mark 1:14-15**

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.’

**Luke 4:16-21**

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:
‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
   because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
   and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’
And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

**Luke 9:1-6**

Then Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money—not even an extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there, and leave from there. Wherever they do not welcome you, as you are leaving that town shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.’ They departed and went through the villages, bringing the good news and curing diseases everywhere.

**Acts 1:22-24, 32-42**

‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,
“The Lord said to my Lord,
‘Sit at my right hand,
    until I make your enemies your footstool.’ ”

Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.’

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

**Acts 2:42-47**

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

#### Justice and Service

**Matthew 25:31-40**

‘When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, “Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

**Luke 4:16-21**

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
   because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
   and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.’
And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

**Luke 16:19-31**

‘There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. He called out, “Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.” But Abraham said, “Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.” He said, “Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house—for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.” Abraham replied, “They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.” He said, “No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.” He said to him, “If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

**John 13:12-17**

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

**Acts 4:32-35**

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**James 2:14-17**

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

#### Liturgy, Sacraments, and Prayer

**Luke 22:14-20**

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

**1 Corinthians 11:23-26**

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, 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.

**Acts 2:42-47**

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**Luke 5:18-26**

Just then some men came, carrying a paralyzed man on a bed. They were trying to bring him in and lay him before Jesus; but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, ‘Friend, your sins are forgiven you.’ Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, ‘Who is this who is speaking blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ When Jesus perceived their questionings, he answered them, ‘Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, “Your sins are forgiven you”, or to say, “Stand up and walk”? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins’—he said to the one who was paralyzed—‘I say to you, stand up and take your bed and go to your home.’ Immediately he stood up before them, took what he had been lying on, and went to his home, glorifying God. Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, ‘We have seen strange things today.’

**Acts 2:37-42**

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what should we do?’ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.’ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.’ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

**Matthew 6:5-14, 7:7-11**

‘And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

‘When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

‘Pray then in this way:
Our Father in heaven,
   hallowed be your name.
   Your kingdom come.
   Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
    Give us this day our daily bread.
    And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
    And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.
For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you;

(Matthew 6:5-14)

‘Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:7-11)

#### Pastoral Care

**Matthew 4:23-25**

Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

**Luke 5:12-15**

Once, when he was in one of the cities, there was a man covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground and begged him, ‘Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.’ Then Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, ‘I do choose. Be made clean.’ Immediately the leprosy left him. And he ordered him to tell no one. ‘Go’, he said, ‘and show yourself to the priest, and, as Moses commanded, make an offering for your cleansing, for a testimony to them.’ But now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and to be cured of their diseases.

**Luke 8:43-48**

Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. Then Jesus asked, ‘Who touched me?’ When all denied it, Peter said, ‘Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you.’ But Jesus said, ‘Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me.’ When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, ‘Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.’

**Luke 9:37-42**

On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. Just then a man from the crowd shouted, ‘Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It throws him into convulsions until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.’ Jesus answered, ‘You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and bear with you? Bring your son here.’ While he was coming, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

**Luke 18:35-43**

As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.’ Then he shouted, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’ Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ He said, ‘Lord, let me see again.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.’ Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

**Acts 5:12-16**

Now many signs and wonders were done among the people through the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. None of the rest dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, great numbers of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he came by. A great number of people would also gather from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all cured.

#### Teaching/Catechesis

**Matthew 5:1-12, 7:24-29**

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

‘Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

‘Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

‘Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

‘Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

‘Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

‘Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!’

Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

**Matthew 22:34-40**

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ‘Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?’ He said to him, ‘ “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

**Matthew 13:3-23**

And he told them many things in parables, saying: ‘Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!’

Then the disciples came and asked him, ‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’ He answered, ‘To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. The reason I speak to them in parables is that “seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.” With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:
You will indeed listen, but never understand,
   and you will indeed look, but never perceive.
For this people’s heart has grown dull,
   and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes,
   and listen with their ears,
and understand with their heart and turn—
   and I would heal them.”
But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. 17Truly I tell you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it.

‘Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.’

**Matthew 13:24-30, 34-43**

He put before them another parable: ‘The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, “Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?” He answered, “An enemy has done this.” The slaves said to him, “Then do you want us to go and gather them?” But he replied, “No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.” ’

Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. 35This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:
‘I will open my mouth to speak in parables;
   I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.’

Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, ‘Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field.’ He answered, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!

**Luke 24:13-35**

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, ‘What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?’ They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, ‘Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?’ He asked them, ‘What things?’ They replied, ‘The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.’ Then he said to them, ‘Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?’ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, ‘Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.’ So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?’ That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

**Romans 1:1-6, 16-17**

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, 5through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘The one who is righteous will live by faith.’

### Closing Prayer Service

#### Gather

When Jesus walked the earth, he chose apostles and disciples to help him proclaim God’s word, heal and care for people, serve those in need, teach people how to live as his followers, pray and worship God. Jesus is calling us to help him do these same things today. He is calling us to use our special gifts, talents, and abilities. I invite you now to show your willingness to join with the entire Church in continuing Jesus’ mission.

Adolescents and adults place their Post-It notes on the Body of Christ posters.

#### Listen

**1 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 in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to 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 were to 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 the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 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.’

On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this.

But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

#### Respond

For all those who work for justice and serve the needs of the poor and vulnerable

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those who lead the community in prayer and the celebration of the sacraments

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those who return people to health and wholeness, care for the sick, and comfort the dying

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those who proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ and invite people into a loving relationship with the Lord

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those who teach the Catholic faith and guide people in living the Catholic way of life

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

For all those who welcome us into the parish community, make us feel at home, and share their faith with us

Respond: Lord, bless our efforts to continue your mission.

#### Go Forth

Lord Jesus,

help us to recognize that we are members of your Body.

Teach us how to respect the unique gifts each of us has.

Teach us how to care for each other.

Teach us how to rely upon each other for support.

Teach us how to work together as members of your Body.

Amen.