



# People of God: Four Models of Church

## Core Community Meeting

### Aim

To provide an opportunity—through prayer, reflection, presentation of information, and sharing—to accomplish the following:

- Reflect on Church as community.
- Discuss personal experiences of Church as community.
- Find ways to foster within our parish a greater understanding and love for the Church.

### Leader’s Instructions:

The intention of this material is to provide everything a Core Community needs to run a Core meeting, reflecting on the topic “People of God: Four Models of Church.”

Included in these materials are the Core Handout (to assist with the Opening and Closing prayers and the faith sharing at the meeting) and a proposed Business Meeting Agenda.

Choose readers as required for the Opening and Closing prayers.

Before beginning the Closing Prayer, divide the group into two sides that will alternately read the verses. You may want to ask a volunteer to lead the Closing Song.

### Opening Prayer

### (Core Community Meeting Handout)

#### Call to Silence

**Leader:** Let us take a moment to quiet ourselves. Close your eyes. Place your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands on your lap. Breathe in deeply. Relax. In this moment of silence, allow any tension you may have from the day to flow out of your body.

*Enjoy a few moments of silence.*

**First Reader:** Our opening reflection is a reading from the document of Vatican Council II entitled *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*:

“It has pleased God, however, to make people holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness” (9).

*Pause.*

**Leader:** Let us pray.

**All:** We praise you, God, for bonding us together as a people. We ask for the wisdom and courage to support one another as we strive to live as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people God has claimed. Amen.

**Second Reader:** A reading from the First Letter of Peter.

**Reading**     1 Peter 2:9-10

## Leader's Reflection

### The Church Is Community

The Israelites were formed into the "chosen people," a unique community. The early Christians also perceived themselves as "a people," a community.

All four gospels tell of Jesus gathering a group around him as he began his ministry. These disciples learned from Jesus how to be community. They accompanied him in his travels, received special instruction, observed his miracles, and were witnesses of his death (most at a distance!) and resurrection.

As Trinity, God is a community. Likewise, we cannot truly reflect God's divine image unless we, too, form community. Furthermore, even on a human level, it is impossible to develop our unique personality, talents, and skills independently of others. It is no surprise, therefore, that community is at the heart of the life of the Church. In fact, community serves as the primary setting for our relationship with God. No matter how personal one's relationship with God might be, it cannot exist totally independent of the community.

In recent times, there has been a re-emphasis on the Church as community, especially in the theology and writings of the Vatican Council II and, more recently, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.<sup>1</sup>

Vatican Council II states: "It has pleased God, however, to make people holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness."<sup>2</sup>

As a final note, we recall again the significant impact small Christian communities have made in developing the Church as community. They have "enabled believers to develop a more profound union with God and one another. They have also been a means for renewing and expanding the church." And as they do so, they "offer greater hope than ever that Christians will deepen their love for God, for one another, and for all of creation...."<sup>3</sup>

## Small Group Sharing

- Describe a situation in which you experienced the Church as community.
- To grow as a community requires individuals and small Christian groups to go forward with the mission of the Church. Name someone you admire for his or her commitment to the Church's mission. Why do you admire that person?

## Business Meeting Agenda

1. Review previous meeting's minutes and actions.

2. Decide upon possible actions to introduce this topic to the parish (and/or small Christian communities):

- Arrange for a follow-up session to assess in which direction the Core wants to move following this experience. Some suggestions:
  - 1) Plan a reflection series using the topics presented in “People of God: Four Models of Church.” (See [www.ParishLife.com](http://www.ParishLife.com); or Core chooses topics specifically.);
  - 2) See *At Home in the Catholic Church* (IMPACT Series; download Sample Session 2: <http://www.renewintl.org/Resources/Pages/free.html>)
- Provide a guest speaker and evening of reflection on Church and its meanings.
- Build up resources on models of Church in the parish library.
- Consult with RENEW International regarding this topic.
- Research your diocesan Religious Education Department to learn about adult formation programs on the topic of Church.
- Become involved in the parish Religious Formation program to assist the teaching of this topic.
- Download the RENEW International workshop “People of God: Four Models of Church” from [www.ParishLife.com](http://www.ParishLife.com).
- What additional ways can we name to assist the parish in promoting a greater understanding and love for the Church? Which of these ways would be best?
- Consult with others parishioners who are interested in or working in the area of Church.

**Note:** a) If we want to introduce this topic to the parish (or small Christian communities), we should first consider how and to what extent the parish or small communities experience a need for such a topic. This may take some informal assessment.

b) If a decision is made to introduce this topic, the following may be helpful in implementing the decision:

- How are we going to go about introducing the topic?
  - By combining a number of small groups into large groups?
  - By going with small groups alone?
- Who will we call upon to be hosts?
- Should we ask RENEW International to send us a small Christian community consultant to help us organize a workshop and/or run it? (Contact Mike Fabian: [SCCServices@renewintl.org](mailto:SCCServices@renewintl.org)); (908) 769-5400 ex 144.)

3. Assign tasks to individual members or groups.

4. Other action items to be discussed as part of normal business of the Parish Core Community.

## Closing Prayer

### Call to Prayer

**Leader:** The Acts of the Apostles presents a picture of the Church as a community united in love, preaching the gospel, open to new members, celebrating the Eucharist, and gathered under the authority of the apostles.

- Leader:** O God, who brings forth the community called Church, hear our prayer.
- All:** And strengthen our bonds with one another.
- Leader:** Let us share this reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 4:32–35; 2:42, 46–47):
- Side 1:** 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.
- Side 2:** With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.
- Side 1:** 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.
- Side 2:** They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.
- Side 1:** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
- Side 2:** Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home.
- Side 1:** They ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.
- Side 2:** And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## Closing Song

Song: "Gather Your People" (Bob Hurd, audiotape: *Renewing for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR, 97213-3638, 1-877-596-1653, [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org))

(Or another appropriate song may be sung.)

---

<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of the Church, refer to Vatican Council II: *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium)*; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 748 through 975. These inspiring documents merit prayerful reflection.

<sup>2</sup> *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen gentium)*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> Excerpt from *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Revised and Updated* by Thomas A. Kleissler, Margo A. LeBert, and Mary C. McGuinness. Copyright © 1997 by RENEW International. Used by permission of Paulist Press. [www.paulistpress.com](http://www.paulistpress.com), p. 7.



## People of God: Four Models of Church

### Opening and Closing Prayers

#### Opening Prayer

##### Call to Silence

**Leader:** Let us take a moment to quiet ourselves. Close your eyes. Place your feet flat on the floor. Place your hands on your lap. Breathe in deeply. Relax. In this moment of silence, allow any tension you may have from the day to flow out of your body

**First Reader** Our opening reflection is a reading from the document of the Second Vatican Council entitled *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*:

“It has pleased God, however, to make people holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges Him in truth and serves Him in holiness” (9).

*(pause)*

**Leader:** Let us pray.

**All:** We praise you, God, for bonding us together as a people. We ask for the wisdom and courage to support one another as we strive to live as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people God has claimed. Amen.

**Second Reader:** A reading from the First Epistle of Peter.

**Reading** 1 Peter 2:9–10

#### Leader’s Reflection

#### Small Group Sharing

- Describe a situation in which you experienced the “Church as community.”

- To grow as a community requires individuals and small Christian groups to go forth in the mission of the Church. Name someone you admire for their commitment to the Church's mission. Why do you admire that person?

## Closing Prayer

### Call to Prayer

**Leader:** The Acts of the Apostles presents a picture of the Church as a community united in love, preaching the gospel, open to new members, celebrating the Eucharist, and gathered under the authority of the apostles.

**Leader:** O God, who brings forth the community called Church, hear our prayer.

**All:** And strengthen our bonds with one another.

**Leader:** Let us share this reading from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 4:32–35; 2:42, 46–47):

**Side 1:** 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.

**Side 2:** With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.

**Side 1:** 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.

**Side 2:** They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**Side 1:** They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

**Side 2:** Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home.

**Side 1:** They ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.

**Side 2:** And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

## Concluding Song