



Christian Spirituality: Becoming Holy

Core Community Meeting

Aim

To provide an opportunity—through prayer, reflection, presentation of information, and sharing—for the Parish Core Community to grow in community and in new understanding of Christian spirituality and its rich varieties and traditions.

The specific goals of this meeting are

- to assess the needs of the parish (or small Christian communities) to grow in the understanding of Christian spirituality
- to create plans, hold workshops, invite speakers, and so on, to meet these needs
- to decide whether the Day of Reflection, “Christian Spirituality: Becoming Holy,” may meet these needs

Leader’s Instructions:

Begin with setting a tone of relaxation. Even if the Parish Core Community has been meeting together for some time now, there may be some anxiety about sharing around this personal topic.

- a) Provide soft music in the background; have beverages and snacks available—ways in which to help set this tone.
- b) An informal setting is important, such as a living room rather than a classroom. In a central, visible place have a table with a candle and a Bible open to the Colossians reading. The setting should convey an atmosphere of prayer and reflection.
- c) Begin with a song—a way to come together that provides energy and support.
- d) The leader’s remarks at the beginning are very important. The leader must try to be welcoming.
- e) In the faith-sharing section, you may want to use the option “My friend Chris has a wonderful spirituality” to alleviate possible anxiety for those who struggle with sharing personal material.

Opening Prayer

Song (optional) Use a version of the *Sanctus* used at parish masses or Holy Ground by Geron Davis WOW Worship Orange 2000 <http://www.worshipmusic.com/17232.html>

Leader's Introduction

Let's take a moment to pray and share with one another about the meaning of Christian spirituality in our personal lives and small community experiences.

As we continue our journey together as a Core Community, let us allow God to take the initiative, and trust that the Lord's abiding presence will guide us and provide us with all we will need for that journey. Through prayer, reflection, and sharing we will be renewed in faith and guided in all we do by the Spirit! God's grace strengthens and enables us to remain faithful to our prayer and faith sharing.

Leader: We gather today in your presence, Lord Jesus. Gracious God and Father, hear our prayer and anoint us with your Holy Spirit.

All: Be with us, Lord Jesus, and strengthen us for our journey.

Reading Colossians 3: 1–4; 12–17

Leader's Reflection

St. Paul emphasizes that in order to be spiritual, Christians must follow a twofold call, one that invites and embraces two opposites within us:

1. to "set our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth"; in other words, to be contemplative
2. to "clothe ourselves with love" and "do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus"; in other words, to be active

We are exhorted to live out the "Dynamic Life Cycle,"¹ which calls us to a) gather in a small Christian community setting during the week, b) to be nourished at Sunday Eucharist, and c) to live Christian values during the week.

In other words, we are to be both contemplative and active in our Christian lives. We cannot live out one without the other—a recurring theme in Paul's writings. This truth endures today. Lift up your hearts so that you can lift up the world (others) is usually the way we think of it—and in that order.

As we participate in small Christian community, however, we sense God's call for mutuality. As we are lifted up by the presence of others, we are given intimate support and courage to grow spiritually—especially in those moments of great spiritual dryness!

A well-balanced spirituality is necessary to achieve community, while efforts to build small communities usually result in people living a well-balanced spirituality. A strong emphasis on the spiritual and a quest for deeper union with Jesus Christ are necessary to arrive at true Christian community. At the same time, efforts made in developing small Christian communities offer a unique opportunity for the Church in helping many more people to grow spiritually and experience holiness.

"Our focus on spirituality will keep in mind these dual aims: the development of small communities with a solid spiritual base and small communities as a means of great spiritual enrichment for the body of the church."²

Individual Reflection and Prayer

Leader's Instructions:

Allow a few moments of silence for individual reflection and prayer.

Faith Sharing

Leader: To the extent you feel comfortable, share on one or two of the following, realizing how important it is for us to be in touch with our own spiritual experience.

1. What does holiness mean to me? What does Christian spirituality mean?
2. How can I grow spiritually? What have I tried that has been particularly helpful to my growth?
3. How have we experienced the "Dynamic Life Cycle" in fuller ways since making a commitment to a small Christian community?
4. Conversion is at the heart of spiritual life. What are some ways I (or we) have continued to experience conversion?

Business Meeting Agenda

1. Review previous meeting's minutes and actions.
2. Decide upon possible actions to introduce the topic of holiness to the parish (or small Christian communities):
 - Provide spiritual friends (good listeners who are prayer companions) or spiritual directors (persons experienced and knowledgeable in leading people in their spiritual life).
 - Provide a guest speaker and evening of reflection on the topic of growth in prayer and its various forms.
 - Establish a parish library of books and tapes on prayer, or increase the number of volumes in an existing library.
 - Consult with RENEW International to receive advice about how to present this topic.
 - Consider downloading the RENEW International Day of Reflection, "Christian Spirituality: Becoming Holy," from www.parishlife.com. What additional ways can we name to assist the parish with regard to growth in prayer and its various forms? Which of these ways would work best for the parish?
 - Consult with others in the parish that are interested in or working in the area of growth in prayer.

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 out to each small group?
 - Who will we call upon to be hosts?

- Should we consult RENEW International to help us organize a workshop and/or run it? (Contact Michael Fabian: 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

Leader: Let us offer spontaneous prayers of gratitude and praise to God. For example: Thank you, Jesus, for... (Name one thing, event, or person at a time. Let a few others pray aloud before you pray a second time.)

All:

Gracious God and Father,
 aware and appreciative
 of a growing sense of spirituality in our world,
 we thank you again for our Christian way
 of coming to know and love you.
 Bless us in our spiritual growth.
 May we have a sense of balance
 that empowers us to be contemplative and active.
 May we know and practice a prayer that leads us
 ever more closely to you, into our communities and out to our world.
 May we faithfully reflect upon our spiritual experience
 so we may better understand both you and ourselves,
 so we may love, as Jesus taught us:
 God,
 others,
 and ourselves.
 We make our prayer through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

¹ Excerpt from *Small Christian Communities: A Vision of Hope for the 21st 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, p. 46.

² *Ibid*, p. 35.