



Christian Spirituality: Becoming Holy

What the Small Communities Need to Know

1. Christian spirituality is relational and grounded in the Trinity. At its core, it is about relationship with Jesus and, through him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This relationship grounds and nurtures all other relationships—with others and the world. The Word of God, the sacramental life of the Church, and virtuous living give shape to the Christian spirit.
2. Christian spirituality involves ongoing conversion, a process to become more like Jesus Christ the Savior whom we follow. Although this is a lifelong struggle, we believe that the Spirit enables us to strive continually for greater integrity and wholeness in us, in our relationships, and in the communities of which we are a part.
3. Christian spirituality struggles on behalf of the reign of God—for love, justice, peace, mercy, and compassion. “Spirituality necessarily includes works that serve justice... Justice is not only a constituent dimension of the gospel, it is a constituent dimension of religious education and spirituality.”¹
4. Christian spirituality integrates the inner and outer life. The model of this integration is, of course, Jesus himself—the Jesus we see in the gospels—praying in the desert, in the hills, in the garden of Gethsemane. This Jesus, who is totally focused on fulfilling his Father’s desire, is intensely active on the streets and in the villages, relating with multitudes of people.
5. Christian spirituality is marked by hope. Hope flows throughout our faith life. God the Father created us in love, personally knows us, and values us. Our belief in the risen Christ gives us hope. The Holy Spirit teaches us to pray in hope. The prayer of the Church and our own personal prayer nourish hope in us.
6. Other considerations (to assist learning):
 - a) Small Christian communities need to discuss the importance of silence and of being contemplative in their personal spiritual lives. This is especially true for those who are busy and interacting a lot with others—even in small Christian community—and especially for the more introverted in the group! Balance is essential in our spiritual lives; the more involved we become (and surely this is the Christian call) the more we need to attend to our personal spirituality. It will be very meaningful to the group as members bring forward experiences of trying to balance contemplation and action in their lives.

b) Members can read classic and contemporary authors on Christian prayer and journaling (reflecting) upon that experience, and they can also share these readings from time to time in their meetings. (Some may want to undertake a series of meetings on the topic of spirituality.) See the RENEW website or the “Links and Resources” page for information about the IMPACT Series of booklets: *Awakening the Mystic Within: Graced Vision* (<http://www.renewintl.org/Resources/Pages/awakeimp.html>) and *At Prayer with Mary* (<http://www.renewintl.org/Resources/Pages/atprayerimp.html>)

c) Small communities need encouragement to build in the component of prayer in each meeting and to be creative about this, taking careful (prayerful) time to prepare this component.

d) The small communities may be interested in making a mini-retreat on a regular basis.

7. Talk with parish and/or diocesan/archdiocesan staff for additional ideas on the topic. Also, there is a Day of Reflection, “Christian Spirituality: Becoming Holy,” that can be downloaded from www.ParishLife.com.

¹ Maria Harris, *Proclaim Jubilee: A Spirituality for the 21st Century* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), p. 76.