



A Compassionate Heart: Ministry of Presence

Facilitator's Guide

Dear Friends in Christ,

Thank you for your consideration in using *A Compassionate Heart: Ministry of Presence*. This small group process is designed to be used in engaging parishioners to explore their baptismal call of compassionate service to those in their parishes and in their communities. It will also benefit those who are interested in enhancing their compassionate side and is ideal as a recruitment tool for parish volunteers. We become modern day witnesses of the love that God extends to each of us through our prayer, care and concern for others. It is our hope that those participating in the small group process will deepen their understanding of compassionate service and what it means to be the "body of Christ". May you experience the joy of service as you continue in your lay pastoral care ministry.

Department of Stewardship and Pastoral Services
Diocese of Green Bay

Preparation and Strategies for A Compassionate Heart: Ministry of Presence

The role of the facilitator is to:

- Make the initial call to members with details of time and location of session
- Greet members as they arrive
- Make weekly materials available
- Keep time for each session and keep the group moving (key role)
- Encourage all members to be active participants in the group
- Ensure that room, media player, nametags and hospitality are ready
- Be the contact for members to call for information or in an emergency
- Contact members if there is a change in plans (weather, emergency, etc.)

Time Frame:

This small group sharing process is meant to be done in six (preferably weekly) sessions of 90 minutes each.

Group Size:

The ideal size would be eight members. If your group is larger, breaking into two small groups for "Questions for Reflection" will help you stay within your 90 minute time frame.

Location

Your small group can be held at the parish or in private homes. Providing a welcoming and "cozy" environment adds to the friendly nature of the event.

Hospitality:

Beverages should be provided at each session. A simple treat is a nice option which could be rotated by the members if they are in agreement.

Materials:

Reproduce materials for participants either as a complete packet or one session at a time. Though it is not necessary, encourage members to prepare for the session prior to meeting to enhance the efficiency and depth of your discussion.

You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Matt 22:37-39



Suggestions for Facilitating a Small Group Discussion:

An effective facilitator accomplishes three tasks. The first is to provide a safe and confidential environment for faith sharing, the second is to encourage participation from all members and the third is to keep the conversation moving in an efficient way so as to complete the session in its entirety. With this in mind, consider the following:

- At the first session, discuss the importance of confidentiality within the group.
- If you have eight or more participants, divide group into two small groups for discussion.
- When considering questions for reflection, go around in a circle for responses allowing members to "pass" if they choose.
- If you have extroverts who love to share, consider using a "two minute" per person option.
- If you have any introverts, invite them to share.
- Be affirming with all responses.
- Be aware of the time and gently give a two minute "moving on" warning.

Components of the Process

Prayer:

The first 30 minutes of the small group time is spent in welcome and prayer. Please be sure to use this time appropriately. When gathering any group, it is important to help them put aside the busyness and pressures of the day and to focus on the topic of the session. The call to prayer through scripture, music and reflection will help to open minds and hearts for the rest of the session.

Prayer Environment:

A prayer area with a candle, bible, cross, or cloth of the liturgical season, is a wonderful idea. Additional symbols for the prayer area would be:

- (Session 1) a copy of *Co-Workers in the Vineyard*, USCCB, can be downloaded, picture of vineyard
- (Session 2) flowers, prayer journal, book of prayers, prayer shawl
- (Session 3) rosary, Book of Psalms or Book of Job, green plant
- (Session 4) articles or pictures of pastoral visitation, books on listening, candle
- (Session 5) small water fountain, colorful flowers, pictures from parish celebrations
- (Session 6) the words: compassionate service, repeat one item from sessions 3, 4, and 5

Songs:

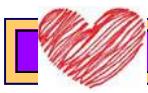
The "suggested" songs are familiar to most people and are found in many parish liturgical songbooks. If you have someone who is comfortable leading, ask them to lead the group in song. An instrumental or a contemporary song on CD would also be an option.

Quotation for Silent Reflection:

This component of prayer is an additional opportunity to encourage thought and conversation on the topic of compassion. Use in a way that best suits the needs of your group.

Scripture for Inspiration:

Be sure to have a copy of the New American Bible available so that the Word of God can be proclaimed during prayer. Perhaps assign the reading to someone at the end of the previous session so that they can prepare. All the participants can be invited to bring bibles or you can provide one for each if feasible.



Content and Faith Sharing Questions

Consider This:

- The content pieces found on pages 2 and 3 of each session can be read ahead of time or at the time of the gathering.
- If you are going to read aloud at the session, encourage those comfortable with reading to alternate paragraphs.
- Complete reading the pieces on both page 2 and 3 before considering the *Questions for Reflection* so that all material is covered during the appropriate time frame.
- As your group goes through the *Questions for Reflection* be sure each person has an opportunity to answer each question before moving on to the next.
- The last question of each *Question for Reflection* on page 3 encourages the participants to consider an action step based on what they read and their discussion. A lively sharing of ideas, if possible, would benefit the entire group.

Following the Path of Jesus

Take Action and Commitment:

- Continuing the same line of thought from the previous page, go through and discuss some of the suggestions for action found on page 4.
- Using ideas from this list or from the prior group discussion on page 3, ask members to prayerfully commit to an action step for the upcoming week.
- Consider playing some instrumental music while people are discerning.
- The participants can be invited to share their commitments aloud or write them on a slip of paper to place in a basket.

Closing Prayer and Preparation for Next Week

Wrap Up:

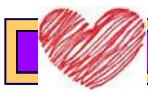
- Set the date and time for the next session and distribute next session handouts.
- Take care of any announcements and reminders.
- Assign the Gospel Reading for the next session.
- Point out the *Additional Scripture Passages and Resources* if they are interested.
- Affirm the good work they did during the session.
- Express your gratitude.

Closing Prayer:

- Be sure to take time to close each session with the provided prayer.
- If there is extra time, allow members to express what they were particularly grateful for about the session.

Following Session Six:

- Thank everyone for sharing 540 minutes of their lives with you in the past six sessions.
- Encourage them to keep their materials near as an ongoing reminder and inspiration.
- Ask if they would like to come together as a small group on another subject.



Additional Ideas and Resources

Utilizing the resource

- Invite small groups to pilot the resource. Some groups might be: Parish leaders, youth groups or families engaged in service ministry, hospital visitors, residential facility visitors, care ministers, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, pastoral council members, and other committee members in your parish.
- Encourage invitation by word of mouth.
- Send announcements, electronically as well as the more traditional methods.
- Publish a brief participant testimony in the bulletin, website or parish newsletter.
- Encourage those in helping professions to form small groups to reflect on ministry in the workplace.
- Duplicate a sample session and have it available after masses for members to preview.

Bulletin Announcements

Have you been told by others that you are a kind, caring person or that you are a good listener? Have you thought about visiting the sick or homebound? Would you like to be more active in your parish? Join us to reflect on what it means to be a person of compassion in everyday life. Consider gathering your friends and forming *A Compassionate Heart: Ministry of Presence* small group that meets for six sessions of 90 minutes each that include prayer, information, conversation and encouragement in taking steps to becoming more authentic disciples of Jesus. For more information call _____ at _____.

How do we follow Jesus' life of compassion in our contemporary world? How do we reach out to others especially when we have limited time and multiple commitments of our own? Have you ever thought about visiting the sick or homebound but weren't certain where to begin? Would you like to be more engaged in the life of your parish? If you have pondered these questions, consider forming or joining *A Compassionate Heart: Ministry of Presence* small group and discover what Scripture and the Catholic Tradition have to say about compassionate service. For more information, contact _____ at _____.

Have you ever thought about how work, home, friendships, and volunteer service provide us with endless opportunities to be ambassadors for Jesus? Would you approach each day differently if you saw your work as a ministry? Meeting with others for conversation and encouragement in a small group is a wonderful opportunity to explore such topics as true joy, faith-filled prayer, compassionate service, and the healing power of listening from the perspective of Scripture and the Church. If you would like to awaken each morning with a new resolve to be a joy-filled disciple, contact _____ at _____ for more information.

Prayers of the Faithful

- For all members participating in *A Compassionate Heart: Ministry of Presence*, that they may grow in their understanding of joy-filled service bringing a renewed sense of care and concern to all that they meet. We pray to the Lord.
- For all small groups participating in *A Compassionate Heart: Ministry of Presence* for the next six weeks, that God may bless their time together as they pray, reflect, and share conversation so that they grow in their understanding and practice of compassionate service. We pray to the Lord.

