

Pastoral Council Prayers and Faith Sharing

**Lent – Pentecost 2023
Cycle A**

AN INVITATION TO PRAY WITH YOUR PASTORAL COUNCIL

These opening and closing prayers have been prepared to help your pastoral council become what it is intended to be: a *leadership body* in *communion* with God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and focused on enabling the community to carry out the *mission* of the Church (to proclaim the Gospel, to worship God, to form community, and to serve especially those in need). As stated in the “Parish Pastoral Council Guidelines” of the Diocese of Rochester, the specific purposes of the pastoral council are:

- to develop a common vision and purpose, actively advocate for the poor and the powerless, and to extend Christian commitment to the surrounding neighborhoods and communities;
- to orchestrate a statement of mission for the parish community and become the reference point for activity in the parish;
- to provide recommendations for priorities, directions, and policies through pastoral planning for worship, evangelization, outreach, stewardship, etc.;
- to promote communication, understanding, and collaboration among parish organizations and between the parish, the diocese, and the universal Church.

In our rush to “get the business of the council done” we may forget that we are challenged to ongoing renewal through prayer, study, listening, and dialogue. Because of our familiarity with secular boards of directors, we may forget that we are a body of church leaders engaged with our pastor or pastoral administrator in discerning the ways God is speaking to this community in this time and place. For our actions to be imbued with the wisdom of God, they must begin with prayer, followed by listening to one another in faith and love and listening to the larger community of parishioners in similar faith and love, and end again in prayer.

And so you are invited and encouraged to set aside time at the beginning and end of your pastoral council meetings to use these prayers. We are confident that the quality of your relationships with one another and the community at large and the quality of your decisions will be enhanced as you take time for shared prayer in God’s presence.

Peace and Blessings,

Shannon Kilbridge, Ph.D.
Associate Director
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Hints for the Prayer Leader

It may be helpful to designate a different person on your council to lead prayer for each meeting. In this way, more and more of the leaders of your community will gain experience with leading prayer in small groups.

Preparation before the Pastoral Council meeting

1. Read through the prayer session for the Sunday following your meeting. Become familiar with it.
2. Make enough copies of the prayer for all you expect to attend the meeting. You may distribute these at the beginning of the meeting or send them out to members ahead of time along with the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting.
3. If a visual image is suggested for this particular prayer session, bring it to the meeting if possible. Having an image in the center of the gathering will help members remember throughout the evening that the meeting unfolds in God's presence.

A Walk Through the Prayer Outline

Prayer at the beginning of the meeting (allow 10-15 minutes on your agenda):

1. Invite those present to become quiet and remember that they are in the presence of God. After a brief pause, begin the *Invitation to Prayer*.
2. Either read the *Scripture* passage yourself or have someone else do so (ask them before the meeting begins).
3. Allow several minutes for *silent reflection* and consideration of the faith sharing questions.
4. Invite those present to respond (in groups of two or three or in the larger council group) to any of the suggested *questions for faith sharing* out loud. People may also choose to share how the reading spoke to them in general. All do not need to respond but allow silent pauses so that people can reflect comfortably.
5. Go on to the beginning of your meeting's agenda.

Prayer at the end of the meeting (allow 5 minutes on your agenda):

1. Begin the *intercessory prayers* as written in the prayer session.
2. Invite others to share their own prayers aloud.
3. When all who choose to share prayers are done, say "For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts."
4. Begin the *closing prayer*.

Notes

1. The intercessory prayers may be moved to the end of the “prayer at the beginning of the meeting” or offered in the middle of the meeting—as well as at the end as suggested in the prayer sessions.
2. These prayer sessions, while designed for pastoral councils, can be used at the meetings of the parish staff and other parish committees with minor adaptation.

Faith Sharing Guidelines

Each person is led by God on his or her personal spiritual journey. Faith sharing refers to shared reflections on the action of God in one’s experience as related to Scripture and faith. Faith sharing is not discussion, problem solving, or scripture study. The purpose is an encounter, between a person in the concrete circumstances of life and the Word of God, which leads to a conversion of heart. The entire faith sharing process is seen as prayer, i.e. listening to the Word of God as revealed in scripture and in each other’s experience.

1. Participants are given time to reflect before sharing begins, and a period of comfortable silence might occur between individuals sharing. Silence is a vital part of the total process of faith sharing.
2. Sharing is optional. Each person shares at the time and on the level where he or she feels comfortable.
3. There is no set order for sharing (you do not need to go in a circle around the group).
4. Listen respectfully and openly. If someone does not hear the sharing or does not understand, he or she can ask for clarification.
5. There is no discussion or commenting on what is shared. An appropriate response from the prayer leader or group might be a smile, a nod, or a “thank you.”
6. The prayer leader and group are not there as “problem solvers” or “advice givers.”
7. Participants are encouraged to share in the first person (I feel...I believe...etc.).
8. Anything that is shared in the group is confidential and does not leave the group. It is meant to be a gift for this group only.

First Sunday of Lent
February 26, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

All: Loving God, we gather at the beginning of this Lenten Season, knowing that the days ahead are a gift and an opportunity. Help us, each day, to make choices that will reflect our gratitude for the gift of life and our desire to use the precious gift of time to love our families and to reach out to those in need. We pray this in the name of Jesus, who died and rose that we might live. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Matthew 4:1-11

At that time, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply: "It is written: one does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone." Jesus answered him: "Again it is written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test."

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve." Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Silent reflection

Questions for faith sharing:

1. What special practice have I chosen for this Lent that I hope will strengthen my faith and prayer life?
2. How is God's grace urging our pastoral councils towards choices that will help us to be more sensitive to the needs of the poor and those most vulnerable?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: O God, you have planted the seed of your Word in our hearts. Let it shape our lives and be the source of our choices and decisions, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)

For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

All: God of all time and all generations, may the gift of your life within us show itself in visible ways, so that we may make clear with our lives the good news of Jesus, who is our brother, our savior, our God, our companion, our friend. Inspire us with new ways to serve you and one another. Let all that we do reflect our faith and trust in your promises, as together we strive to live in the unity of our God, who is Creator, Word and Holy Spirit, one God forever. Amen.

Second Sunday of Lent
March 5, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: God of hope, in the midst of new pathways and uncertain roads,
we place our trust in you.
Lead us to move in the ways you would have us go,
to create the community you would have us be,
to make your kingdom alive in our midst.
We ask this in the name of Jesus.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Genesis 12: 1-4a

The Lord said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.
"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you;
I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.
I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.
All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you."
Abram went as the Lord directed him.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two for faith sharing)

1. In times of uncertainty and doubt in my own life, how have I known that God was leading me forward? What lessons have I learned from such experiences?
2. How can we, as pastoral council members, lead our people forward into the uncharted territory of the future as Abraham did for his people?
3. What are the assurances we bring with us that God remains with us and guides our actions?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: Let us turn to our loving God with our hopes and concerns for our community and our world.
That our church might remain faithful to the message of love and life that has been entrusted to us, we pray:

All: Lead us, O Lord.

Leader: That world leaders might move bravely forward to provide justice, peace and prosperity for all peoples, we pray:

All: Lead us, O Lord.

(Leader may add or invite prayers that address the concerns dealt with in this meeting.)

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...
(When all who choose to share are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts, we pray:

All: Lead us, O Lord.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pray as individuals, but also as a community asking for God's guidance and expressing our trust in God's direction for us and for our people:

**All: My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following
your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you,
and I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.
And I know that if I do this, you will lead me by the right road
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always.
Though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death,
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.**

Thomas Merton

Third Sunday of Lent
March 12, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

All: Faithful God, open our hearts to the grace of the moment, the grace of our time together, and deepen our hope so that we may be “grace givers” to those who thirst for you. Amen.

Scripture Reading: Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8

Brothers and sisters:

Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God.

And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For Christ, while we were still helpless, died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die.

But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. During the past week where have I witnessed hope in our faith community?
2. What is the grace we desire for the pastoral council during this meeting?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: Name a circumstance or person for whom you desire God's grace...

After a few moments of silence, in a litany form, persons name their circumstance or person in turn. After each person speaks, the group responds:

All: We hope in you, O God.

Closing Prayer

**All: Loving God, as we continue our journey through this Lent,
let us be hope and look for hope in one another. Amen.**

Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 19, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Lord God, our Light and our Salvation,
it is our deepest desire to follow you in all your ways.

All: Not our will but yours be done.

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 16: 1b,6-7, 10-13a

The Lord said to Samuel: “Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem, for I have chosen my king from among his sons.”

As Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, “surely the Lord’s anointed is here before him.”

But the Lord said to Samuel: “Do not judge from his appearance or from his lofty stature, because I have rejected him. Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart.”

In the same way Jesse presented seven sons before Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen any one of these.” Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

Jesse replied, “There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said to Jesse, “Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here.”

Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance.

The Lord said, “There—anoint him, for this is the one!” Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed David in the presence of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. When was a time in my life when God's will for me was quite different from my own desire?
2. When faced with important decisions as a council, how do we discern what God's will might be?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: O God, your reign extends throughout the universe.
May we always seek to live our lives in harmony with the world you create.

All: Lord, help us to live in your light.

Leader: Jesus, our Redeemer, shepherd us along the way.

All: Lord, help us to live in your light.

Leader: Holy Spirit, strengthen our resolution to be rooted always in the will of God.

All: Lord, help us to live in your light.

Leader: For what else shall we pray...

(When all who choose are finished voicing prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Lord, help us to live in your light.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us pray together in the words that Jesus taught us.

All: Our Father...

Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 26, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.
All: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.
Leader: Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.
All: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.
Leader: Be attentive and hear our call.
All: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.
Leader: Grant us mercy and forgiveness, O Lord.
All: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.
Leader: For our souls long for you.
All: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.
Leader: And in your word we hope.
All: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.
Leader: For it is in your steadfast love that we find our true redemption.
All: With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

Scripture Reading: John 11:1-45

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and dried his feet with her hair; it was her brother Lazarus who was ill. So the sisters sent word to him, saying, "Master, the one you love is ill." When Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not to end in death, but is for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that he was ill, he remained for two days in the place where he was. Then after this he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you, and you want to go back there?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in a day? If one walks during the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. But if one walks at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him." He said this, and then told them, "Our friend Lazarus is asleep, but I am going to awaken him." So the disciples said to him, "Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved." But Jesus was talking about his death, while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep. So then Jesus said to them clearly, "Lazarus has died. And I am glad for you that I was not there, that you may believe. Let us go to him." So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go to die with him." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away. And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to comfort them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; but Mary sat at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. "But even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise." Martha said to him, "I know he will rise, in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus told her, "I am the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this?"

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose two or three for faith sharing)

1. What are the “troubles” that disturb us in our parish and in our community?
2. Take one of the concerns mentioned above...What would Jesus’ way to respond be like?
3. How is our Pastoral Council a living sign of Jesus’ forgiveness, healing and redeeming love for our faith community?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In faith, we bring our needs and concerns to our gracious God.
For each of us on Pastoral Council, may we be inspired to respond as instruments of God’s merciful compassion to those we meet who are in need of forgiveness or healing, we pray...

All: Jesus, show us the way.

Leader: Please offer any other needs or concerns so that we may pray for them...
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Jesus, show us the way.

Closing Prayer

**All: God of abundant mercy,
renew the landscape of our hearts this night.
Look not upon the sins of our past,
and lift from our hearts the failures that weigh us down.
When we rise in the morning,
may we experience refreshment and new life
in your loving forgiveness.
We make our prayer through Jesus who is our Way. Amen.**

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion
April 2, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: God our Father, your son Jesus Christ was obedient to you, accepting death on a cross. Help us in our obedience to your loving and life-giving will. May we always accept our crosses and proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
something to be grasped..
Rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness;
and found human in appearance,
he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to the point of death,
even death on a cross.

Because of this, God greatly exalted him
and bestowed on him the name
which is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that
Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. Where have we seen death and resurrection in our community?
2. What are our hopes for our community?
3. How does the Pastoral Council reflect the attitude of Jesus?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.

For all who serve others in any capacity, that they do so humbly and with loving kindness, we pray to the Lord...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)

For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

All: God of mercies, you have given us an example of unselfish love in the sufferings of your only Son. May we continue to receive your countless blessings through our service of you and our neighbor. Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY

April 9, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

(Suggestion: have some water or holy water available in a dish and candle. This will be used at the end of the prayer beginning the meeting.)

Invitation to Prayer:

Leader: In this week we call “holy,” let us pray in silence
that we may be holy and faithful
in all of the dyings and risings in our lives.....*[pause for silent prayer]*

**All: God of Life,
by raising your son Jesus, you conquered the power of death
and opened to us the way to eternal life.
Let our Easter celebration raise us up and renew our lives
by your Spirit that is within us and among us.
Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Scripture Reading: John 20: 1-9

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they put him.” So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

The Gospel, the Good News of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing:

1. During Lent, has there been any “stone” removed in my life? Or have I tried to remove any stone or barrier?
2. Mary ran to tell the News, and Peter and the other disciple ran to the tomb. How can I be excited to share the Good News? How can we as a council inspire others to share the Good News?

Pass around the water & make the sign of the cross on oneself or each other.

All: Be with us, God, as we gather. Bless our hearts and lives, that we may be faithful servants, working in your name to spread your Word. May we be positive signs of your ongoing presence in our world, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers:

Leader: For all still searching for God or for new life and reason to believe, we pray...

All: Roll back the stone so we may live your new Life!

Leader: For our parish, that we may lead others to Christ by our words and the way we live and act, we pray...

All: Roll back the stone so we may live your new Life!

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...

(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Roll back the stone so we may live your new Life!

Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer...

**Second Sunday of Easter (or Sunday of Divine Mercy)
April 16, 2023**

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

All: So we are called not only to believe that Christ once rose from the dead, thereby proving that he was God; we are called to experience the Resurrection in our own lives by entering into this dynamic movement, by following Christ who lives in us. (Fr. Thomas Merton)

Scripture Reading: Acts 2: 42-47

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need.

Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. What are the resurrection stories in our community?
2. How can we as leaders bring joy to the community? How can we inspire others to share their gifts?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: Let us give thanks for our oneness in Christ.

All: Lord, hear our prayer

Leader: Let us remember our suffering brothers and sisters.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: And for what else shall we pray...
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Lord, hear our prayer

Closing Prayer

**All: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, his love is everlasting.
Alleluia!**

Leader: Let us share a sign of peace with one another.

Third Sunday of Easter
April 23, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: God of life, in you is our salvation, in you, our hope.
During this Easter season, renew us and strengthen us,
enliven our hearts and stir up our souls so that we might joyfully proclaim
your victory to all. We ask this in the name of Jesus.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Luke 24: 13-35

That very day, the first day of the week, two of Jesus' disciples were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred. And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?"

They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?"

They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see."

And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the Scriptures. As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.

With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened the Scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. The disciples found Jesus in the least likely place--on the road and at table in a simple country inn. When have I had a similar experience, finding Jesus in an unlikely person or place in my own life?
2. When have I felt the presence of Christ unexpectedly in our parish community?
3. How can we help our people to identify Christ in those we meet along the paths of life? How can we encourage them to stir up the embers of faith?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: God, you are the unexpected one--coming to us in an innocent babe, walking alongside us on the road, approaching us in the guise of the poor and lonely in our midst. We ask you to hear the prayers we now offer..

All: God who walks with us, hear our prayer.

Leader: For our church, that we might be ever vigilant for the presence of Christ in our midst and ever open to his word, we pray:

All: God who walks with us, hear our prayer.

Leader: For our nation and our world, that all might learn to seek you in unexpected places and offer you kindness, hospitality, and compassion in every person they meet, we pray:

All: God who walks with us, hear our prayer.

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...
(When all who choose to share are finished offering prayers)

For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts, we pray:

All: God who walks with us, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

**All: Good and gracious God,
Make us ever more aware of your presence in our lives.
May we truly burn with love for you.
Let us seek to put our love into action by serving your people.
We ask this, as we ask all things
+in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

Fourth Sunday of Easter
April 30, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

All: You shepherd us in all our ways, O God. Open our hearts and minds to hear your Voice in our midst so that we may bring our community to trust and love. Amen.

Scripture Reading: John 10: 1-10

Jesus said:

"Amen, amen, I say to you,
whoever does not enter a sheepfold through the gate
but climbs over elsewhere is a thief and a robber.
But whoever enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep.
The gatekeeper opens it for him, and the sheep hear his voice,
as the shepherd calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
When he has driven out all his own,
he walks ahead of them, and the sheep follow him,
because they recognize his voice.
But they will not follow a stranger;
they will run away from him,
because they do not recognize the voice of strangers."
Although Jesus used this figure of speech,
the Pharisees did not realize what he was trying to tell them.

So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you,
I am the gate for the sheep.
All who came before me are thieves and robbers,
but the sheep did not listen to them.
I am the gate.
Whoever enters through me will be saved,
and will come in and go out and find pasture.
A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy;
I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. What are the characteristics of the real Shepherd?
2. Do we recognize the voice of our Shepherd?
3. In what ways do we help others to learn to know His voice?

Prayer at the End of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: Give us the grace to listen for the Voice of the Good Shepherd as He calls to us....

All: Let us hear Your voice, oh Lord.

Leader: Open our hearts to the hunger in others to hear the Voice of the Shepherd...

All: Let us hear Your voice, oh Lord.

Leader: For what else shall we pray...
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Let us hear Your voice, oh Lord.

Closing Prayer

All: Our Father....

Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 7, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Loving God, you are the Faithful One.
In all of history there is none like you.
You sent forth Jesus into this world so that we would be assured you are
with us through the whole of human experience.
You continually demonstrate your concern for the needs of your people.

**All: Loving God, pour out your Spirit upon us so that we may worthily
and fittingly serve each other in the name of Jesus
and, in doing so, serve you who are deserving of all our faith and love.**

Scripture Reading: Acts 6: 1-7

As the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said,
“It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Therefore,
friends, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and
wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to
prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

The proposal was acceptable to the whole community, so they chose Stephen, a
man filled with faith and the Holy Spirit, also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon,
Parmentas, and Nicholas of Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them. The
word of God continued to spread, and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem
increased greatly; even a large group of priests were becoming obedient to the
faith.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing (choose one or two for faith sharing)

1. Am I concerned about the pastoral care of any particular segment of the congregation that seems to have fallen through the cracks as our community has gone through changes?
2. Who is responsible for pastoral care within our community? Is it clear to all parishioners whom to contact when pastoral care is needed?
3. How do we bless and support those who are called forth to serve in works of pastoral care?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: O God our Father, you shower upon us the holy love of father and mother. You created us in your image. Guide us in the ways of your love.

All: O God, give us caring hearts and the will to serve.

Leader: Beloved Jesus, you called us friends and commanded us to love one another as you loved us. Teach us the way of your love.

All: O God, give us caring hearts and the will to serve.

Leader: Holy Spirit, send forth the fire of your divine love that we may be recreated. Renew the life of your people.

All: O God, give us caring hearts and the will to serve.

Leader: For what else shall we pray...

(When all who choose are finished voicing prayers)

For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: O God, give us caring hearts and the will to serve.

Closing Prayer

**All: Jesus, you are the way, the truth, and the life.
Because we know you, we know the works of the Father.
You promised, "Whoever believes in me will do the works that I do."
Lord, we believe. Amen.**

Sixth Sunday of Easter
May 14, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer

Leader: Let all the earth cry out with joy to the Lord!
All: Let all the earth cry out with joy to the Lord!
Out of the depths we cry to you, O Lord.
Let all the earth cry out with joy to the Lord!
Be attentive and hear our call.
Let all the earth cry out with joy to the Lord!
Grant us mercy and forgiveness O Lord.
Let all the earth cry out with joy to the Lord!
For our souls long for you.
Let all the earth cry out with joy to the Lord!
And in your word we hope.
Let all the earth cry out with joy to the Lord!
For it is in your steadfast love that we find our true redemption.
Let all the earth cry out with joy to the Lord! (Psalm 66)

Scripture Reading: 1 Peter 3:15-18

Beloved:
Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.
Always be ready to give an explanation
to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope,
but do it with gentleness and reverence,
keeping your conscience clear,
so that, when you are maligned,
those who defame your good conduct in Christ
may themselves be put to shame.
For it is better to suffer for doing good,
if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

For Christ also suffered for sins once,
the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous,
that he might lead you to God.
Put to death in the flesh,
he was brought to life in the Spirit.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. What does it mean to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts?
2. How do we prepare ourselves as a community to always be ready to give an explanation for the hope within us? Do we do it with gentleness and reverence?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In faith, we bring our needs and concerns to our gracious God.

For our Pastoral Council, give us your grace to truly know that Christ is the Lord of our hearts...

All: Christ, be Lord of our hearts, we pray.

Leader: Show us ways to help the parish community celebrate and express the great hope and joy that our Faith gives us.

All: Christ, be Lord of our hearts, we pray.

Leader: Please offer any other needs or concerns so that we may pray for them...
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts...

All: Christ, be Lord of our hearts, we pray.

Closing Prayer

**All: Faithful God, who gives us all good things:
Fill our hearts with the firm knowledge that Christ is Lord.
Help us to find the desire and confidence to share this hope with others.
Give our parish community the joy and love that draws others to ask about the hope within us.
In Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen.**

Seventh Sunday of Easter
May 24, 2020

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to prayer

Leader: Lord God, maker of all that is good, help us to hear your call to holiness that we may put our lives in your loving hands and, without fear or trepidation, seek the light of your truth.

All: Amen.

Scripture Reading: Psalm 27:1, 4, 7-8

Women: I believe that I shall see the good things of the Lord
in the land of the living.

Men: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?
The Lord is my life's refuge; of whom shall I be afraid?

Women: One thing I ask of the Lord all the days of my life,
that I may gaze on the loveliness of the Lord and contemplate his temple.

Men: Hear, O Lord, the sound of my call; have pity on me, and answer me.
Of you my heart speaks; you my glance seeks.

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing

1. What fears do the members of our parish have?
2. What do we ask of the Lord as a Pastoral Council?
3. What are the major questions that face the Council as this year draws to an end?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers

Leader: In confidence we now offer God our prayers and our needs.

For all who serve others in any capacity, that they do so humbly and with loving kindness, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...
(When all who choose are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts.

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

All: Almighty God, reaching from end to end of the universe, and ordering all things with your mighty arm: for you, time is the unfolding truth that already is, the unveiling of beauty that is yet to be. Your Son has saved us in history by rising from the dead, so that transcending time he might free us from death. May his presence among us lead to the vision of unlimited truth and unfold the beauty of your love. Amen.

Pentecost Sunday
May 28, 2023

Prayer at the Beginning of the Meeting

Invitation to Prayer:

Leader: Let us pause to pray for openness to the power of the Spirit....

All: (Prayer/Song)
Come Holy Ghost, Creator blest!
And in our hearts, take up Thy rest.
Come with Thy grace, and heavenly aid,
to fill the hearts which Thou hast made,
to fill the hearts which Thou hast made.

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:1-4

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled,
they were all in one place together.
And suddenly there came from the sky
a noise like a strong driving wind,
and it filled the entire house in which they were.
Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire,
which parted and came to rest on each one of them.
And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in different tongues,
as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.
Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in
Jerusalem.
At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd,
but they were confused
because each one heard them speaking in his own language.
They were astounded, and in amazement they asked,
“Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?
Then how does each of us hear them in his native language?
We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites,
inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia,
Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,
Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene,
as well as travelers from Rome,
both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs,
yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues
of the mighty acts of God.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Silent Reflection

Questions for Faith Sharing:

1. How can/does the Spirit of God kindle in us the Fire of Love?
2. Where are our hearts on fire with the Spirit?
3. In what ways does our world, our parish, or I, myself need to be more on fire with God's love?

Prayer at the Conclusion of the Meeting

Intercessory Prayers:

Leader: As members of Christ's Body, we pray for our needs and the needs of the world...

For all those who live in our neighborhoods and within our parish boundaries, that we might extend to them the love of God and pay attention to their needs and hopes, we pray...

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: Please offer any other needs so that we may pray for them...
(When all who choose to share are finished offering prayers)
For these prayers and all those we hold deep in our hearts, we pray:

All: Lord, hear our prayer.

Closing Prayer

**All: Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in us the fire of your love!
Send forth your Spirit, and we will be re-created
and you will renew the face of the earth!**

**God of light, every good gift comes from you.
Every flame that relieves the darkness is carried by your Spirit.
Loosen our tongues to sing your praise
in words beyond the power of speech.
Bless us and all we try to do,
Source and Gift and Spirit of all living. Amen!**