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Foreword

In recent years, the Diocese of Saint Cloud restructured 131 parishes into 29 Area Catholic Communities (ACCs) to provide for the pastoral and spiritual needs of its 123,475 baptized Catholics. Priests, deacons, lay ecclesial ministers and the lay faithful have been eager and hard at work to foster this new model with a culture of co-responsibility. This requires a substantive shift and expansion in mindset. What is forming is not merely an Area Catholic Community with more programs, but rather an Area Catholic Community that is a learning community with a vision of thriving, and a capacity to live into that vision. In this transition, the Area Catholic Communities are diligently creating a sense of unity for pastoral staff and parishioners.

In pastoral planning, strategic thinking is vital. You hold in your hand the pastoral planning workbook *Community*, that provides a vision and template for assessing community life through the lens of the domestic church, Area Catholic Community, worshiping community and the neighborhood. This workbook focuses on possibilities rather than problems. Possibilities are about the future, focusing on what is strong and building upon them. As you proceed through the workbook, you will notice the need for data collection and sorting, both numbers and people's experiences and faith stories. This provides for a strong discernment process for pastoral planning. No two parishes, no two Area Catholic Communities are exactly alike; they are all unique. The planning process in this workbook provides the resources of our Catholic Tradition, faith sharing and lived experiences and data. Therefore, your pastoral planning process will include a discovery process to determine your uniqueness and sensing God's invitation into a thriving mission.

A pastoral planning process becomes clearer when you have accurate information and a sense of God's leading for the future. This spiritual discernment will lead to increased clarity. Each parishioner's future horizon for an Area Catholic Community is shaped by their unique set of cultural influences. This makes pastoral planning powerful: you get a much wider shared horizon when you collaborate with people who have different cultures from you. The more people we talk with and listen to, the wider our shared horizon becomes. But collaboration is something you must choose. We naturally assume we see everything there is to see—it is an act of will to admit we have a limited horizon. We naturally assume our ideas take everything into account—it is an act of will to gather with others, honestly consider their ideas, and add your ideas to the group. We naturally gravitate toward people who are like us—it is an act of will to intentionally cross cultures with people who are different from us. It is how we become community.

ON THE COVER

The cover illuminates Acts 4:32-35.

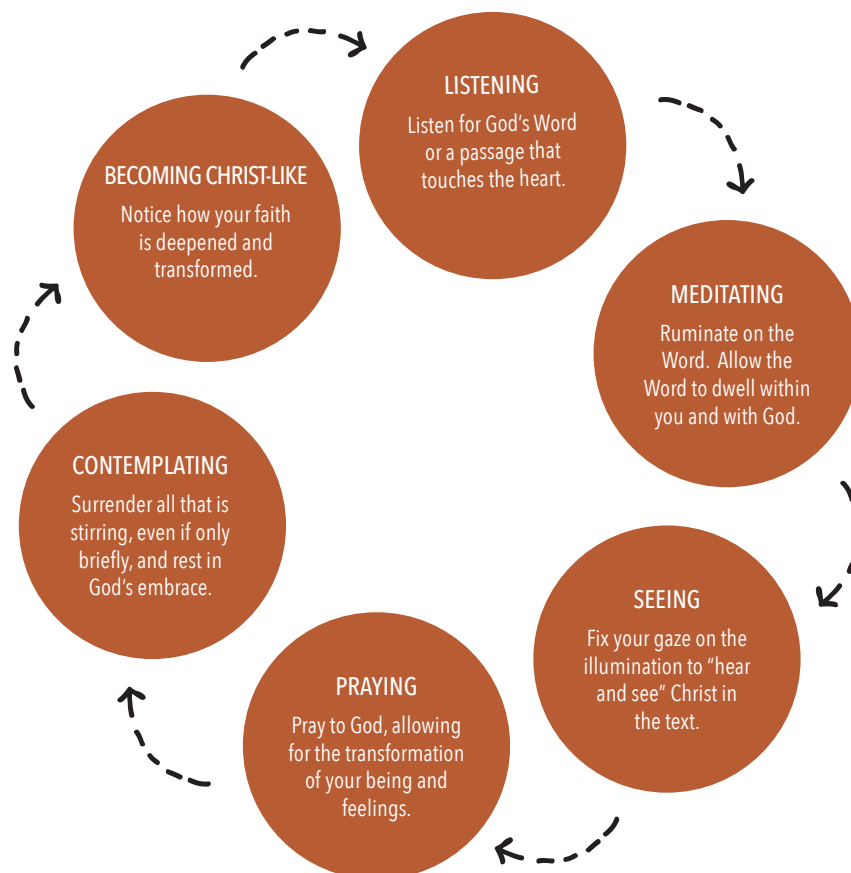
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Workbook guide

This workbook is divided into sections:

1. *Lectio divina* and *visio divina* on an illumination of *The Saint John's Bible*.
2. My Experience provides sacred space for where two or three are gathered and a guide to hear each person's story about community.
3. The Church's Tradition provides a brief overview of the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on community, including the worshipping community, the domestic church, the neighborhood and our ecumenical brothers and sisters. Consider one section at a time. Read the Church's Tradition with a rhythm of *lectio divina*. Provide time for each person to journal their responses to the questions before you share as a group.
4. The final process is to move into developing goals and a pastoral plan. Be attentive to this as a Pastoral Plan for the Area Catholic Community.

When praying with the illumination on the front cover, *Life in Community*, use the process of *lectio divina* and *visio divina*. This diagram describes the rhythm of *lectio* and *visio divina*.



After praying with the illumination, move to a topic in the workbook. Read the Church's Tradition aloud. People can take turns reading the passages aloud as others follow along. The readings of the Church's Tradition is followed by at least two minutes of silence after which another person reads the passage again. In the silence that follows the first reading of the Church's Tradition, invite the group to reflect on what they have heard. Some questions to guide this reflection might include:

- What have you heard in this passage that is new?
- What teaching do you hear in these words?
- What do you wonder about as you hear these words?
- What do you see or hear that is new?

Listen to one another with respect and avoid turning the sharing into a theological debate. Then provide private journaling time and then group sharing with the prompts in "Where Two or More are Gathered." The workbook may take several sessions to complete. Trust the process of becoming a thriving learning community.



The Community Gathered

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Thus, they [the faithful] are to shun any appearance of individualism or division, keeping before their eyes that they have only one Father in heaven and accordingly are all brothers and sisters to each other" (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 95).

"Once he [the homilist] has come to know the customs, mores, practices, history, and religiosity of a people, a homilist can draw on that richness in order to make his presentation of the faith fresh and enlivening. Moreover, by examining a culture or Catholic ritual tradition other than his own, he can learn different expressions of the one Catholic faith, and this can only enhance his own appropriation of the faith and his presentation of it to others" (*Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily*, p. 37).

"Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction" (*God is Love*, 1).

"As sharers in the role of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, the laity have their work cut out for them in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within the Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness. In the manner of the men and women who helped Paul in spreading the Gospel (cf. Acts 18:18, 26; Rom. 16:3) the laity with the right apostolic attitude supply what is lacking to their brethren and refresh the spirit of pastors and of the rest of the faithful (cf. 1 Cor. 16:17-18). Strengthened by active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they are eager to do their share of the apostolic works of that community. They bring to the Church people who perhaps are far removed from it, earnestly cooperate in presenting the word of God especially by means of catechetical instruction, and offer their special skills to make the care of souls and the administration of the temporalities of the Church more efficient and effective" (*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, 10).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. Recall an encounter at a Church event or with another person outside your established group of friends and family. In what ways did a new horizon emerge for you? How did you build a bridge?



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The Christian community should draw from this central, ongoing encounter with Christ and seek to combat racism with love, recalling the insight of Pope Francis that "if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?" With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this wellspring of strength and courage must move us to act. Consequently, we all need to take responsibility for correcting the injustices of racism and healing the harms it has caused" (*Open Wide Our Hearts, The Enduring Call to Love: A Pastoral Letter Against Racism*, p. 23).

"The Eucharistic assembly that gathers Sunday after Sunday is a rich and complex phenomenon. Even in parishes that are more or less uniform in ethnic, social, or economic background, there is great diversity: men and women, old and young, the successes and failures, the joyful and the bereaved, the fervent, and the halfhearted, the strong and the weak. Such diversity is a constant challenge to the preacher, for our words can all too easily be heard as excluding one or the other segment of the congregation" (*Fulfilled in Your Hearing*, p. 5).

"It is essential that all forms of liturgy be completely accessible to persons with disabilities, since these forms are the essence of the spiritual tie that binds the Christian community together. To exclude members of the parish from these celebrations of the life of the Church, even by passive omission, is to deny the reality of that community" (*Pastoral Statement of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on Persons with Disabilities*, p. 6).

"We would like before all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while 'every sign of unjust discrimination' is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence" (*The Joy of Love*, 250).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. How are new people welcomed, empowered and integrated into the liturgical celebrations?



2. What role does hospitality play in welcoming the faithful in our Area Catholic Community? How do we tell the story of our becoming an Area Catholic Community?



3. In what ways does the community build bridges with those who are different?



Where Two or More are Gathered

Area Catholic Community planning requires accurate information to determine a solid foundation upon which to plan and build a community. The first step in any planning process should be information gathering. This is important for the same reasons you look both ways before you cross the street. Strengthening the unity of parishes in an Area Catholic Community requires periodically gathering basic information about their environment. It is essential to know which areas are thriving and which need more attention. You've got to know where you are before you can make a plan toward where you sense God is leading.

1.

Review your weekend liturgy attendance for each church in your Area Catholic Community. Using the chart below, record the seating capacity in each worship space (24 inches/person). What is the recent July 1 and Oct 1 Mass attendance? What is the percentage of seating capacity reached at each Mass? Using the chart below, record the seating capacity in each worship space. If you have chairs in the worship space, simply count the number of chairs. If you have pews, calculate the seating capacity using the figure '24 inches per person' to determine the number of people who can fit comfortably in a pew. A typical church pew is 20 feet long and typically seats 10 people.



% Seating Capacity = Mass Attendance divided by Seating Capacity

Mass Times	Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of July	%Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of October	%Seating Capacity
EXAMPLE	560	240	42%	263	46%

Church Name: _____

Mass Times	Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of July	%Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of October	%Seating Capacity
Saturday					
Sunday:					
		Total		Total	

Church Name: _____

Mass Times	Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of July	%Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of October	%Seating Capacity
Saturday					
Sunday:					
		Total		Total	

Church Name: _____

Mass Times	Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of July	%Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of October	%Seating Capacity
Saturday					
Sunday:					
		Total		Total	

Church Name: _____

Mass Times	Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of July	%Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of October	%Seating Capacity
Saturday					
Sunday:					
		Total		Total	

Church Name: _____

Mass Times	Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of July	%Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of October	%Seating Capacity
Saturday					
Sunday:					
		Total		Total	

Church Name: _____

Mass Times	Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of July	%Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of October	%Seating Capacity
Saturday					
Sunday:					
		Total		Total	

Church Name: _____

Mass Times	Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of July	%Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of October	%Seating Capacity
Saturday					
Sunday:					
		Total		Total	

Church Name: _____

Mass Times	Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of July	%Seating Capacity	1st Sunday of October	%Seating Capacity
Saturday					
Sunday:					
		Total		Total	

2.

Calculate the percentage of parishioners in attendance for each church. Use this formula for calculating:

% Parishioners in attendance = Total weekend attendance divided by #Registered parishioners

Church Name	Total weekend attendance	# Registered parishioners	% Parishioners in attendance

3.

In what ways does the number of people in church build a sense of a worshipping community?

4.

In what ways is the stewardship of human and financial resources impacted by Mass schedules and attendance?

5.

In what ways have the Mass schedules been adjusted to support both varying Mass attendance and the declining number of priests available to serve the ACC?

6.

What can we do better together as an ACC rather than as separate parishes? How would that create unity?



The Domestic Church

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Christian spouses, in virtue of the sacrament of Matrimony, whereby they signify and partake of the mystery of that unity and fruitful love which exists between Christ and His Church, help each other to attain to holiness in their married life and in the rearing and education of their children. By reason of their state and rank in life they have their own special gift among the people of God. From the wedlock of Christians there comes the family, in which new citizens of human society are born, who by the grace of the Holy Spirit received in baptism are made children of God, thus perpetuating the people of God through the centuries. The family is, so to speak, the domestic church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children; they should encourage them in the vocation which is proper to each of them, fostering with special care vocation to a sacred state" (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 11)

"To be holy does not require being a bishop, a priest or a religious. We are frequently tempted to think that holiness is only for those who can withdraw from ordinary affairs to spend much time in prayer. That is not the case. We are all called to be holy by living our lives with love and by bearing witness in everything we do, wherever we find ourselves. Are you called to the consecrated life? Be holy by living out your commitment with joy. Are you married? Be holy by loving and caring for your husband or wife, as Christ does for the Church. Do you work for a living? Be holy by laboring with integrity and skill in the service of your brothers and sisters. Are you a parent or grandparent? Be holy by patiently teaching the little ones how to follow Jesus. Are you in a position of authority? Be holy by working for the common good and renouncing personal gain" (*On the Call to Holiness in Today's World*, 14).

"The Church is called to cooperate with parents through suitable pastoral initiatives, assisting them in the fulfillment of their educational mission. She must always do this by helping them to appreciate their proper role and to realize that by their reception of the sacrament of marriage they become ministers of their children's education. In educating them, they build up the Church, and in so doing, they accept a God-given vocation" (*The Joy of Love*, 85).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. In what ways do you observe families living as the domestic church? What resources are provided for the domestic church to grow in holiness?



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Parishes, movements, schools and other Church institutions can help in a variety of ways to support families and help them grow. These might include meetings of couples living in the same neighborhood, brief retreats for couples; talks by experts on concrete issues facing families, marriage counseling, home missionaries who help couples discuss their difficulties and desires, social services dealing with family problems like addiction, infidelity and domestic violence, programs of spiritual growth, workshops for parents with troubled children and family meetings. The parish office should be prepared to deal helpfully and sensitively with family needs and be able to make referrals, when necessary, to those who can help. There is also the contribution made by groups of married couples that provide assistance as part of their commitment to service, prayer, formation and mutual support. Such groups enable couples to be generous, to assist other families and to share the faith; at the same time they strengthen marriages and help them to grow" (*The Joy of Love*, 229).

"I thank God that many families, which are far from considering themselves perfect, live in love, fulfill their calling and keep moving forward, even if they fall many times along the way. The Synod's reflections show us that there is no stereotype of the ideal family, but rather a challenging mosaic made up of many different realities, with all their joys, hopes and problems" (*The Joy of Love*, 57).

"We must also remember the great number of single persons who, because of the particular circumstances in which they have to live—often not of their choosing—are especially close to Jesus' heart and therefore deserve the special affection and active solicitude of the Church, especially of pastors. Many remain without a human family often due to conditions of poverty. Some live their situation in the spirit of the Beatitudes, serving God and neighbor in exemplary fashion. The doors of homes, the 'domestic churches,' and of the great family which is the Church must be open to all of them. 'No one is without a family in this world: the Church is a home and family for everyone, especially those who 'labor and are heavy laden.'" *(Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1658).*

"The pastoral activity of the Church must help everyone to discover and to make good use of the role of the elderly within the civil and ecclesial community, in particular within the family. In fact, 'the life of the aging helps to clarify a scale of human values; it shows the continuity of generations and marvelously demonstrates the interdependence of God's people. The elderly often have the charism to bridge generation gaps before they are made: how many children have found understanding and love in the eyes and words and caresses of the aging! And how many old people have willingly subscribed to the inspired word that the 'crown of the aged is their children's children' (Prv. 17:6)!" (*On the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World*, ,27).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. In what ways are faith formation programs accessible and welcoming to families with members who are visually or hearing impaired, physically disabled, struggling with mental health issues or adverse childhood experiences, or have academic difficulties? How can they be improved?



2. Describe the different kinds of family structures manifested by persons who participate in the life of the community (i.e., single parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, mixed families, single, never married adults, elderly, widows and widowers, etc.).



3. In what ways has the Area Catholic Community adapted to be more inclusive of all families in community life?



4.

The rewards, challenges, and spiritual tasks of the family develop and change throughout the family life cycle. Different life situations cause us to pause and ask new questions about life and our relationship with God and our community. Consequently, pastoral care changes throughout the life cycle of a family. What support has the Area Catholic Community provided the domestic church during these different stages?



Stage	Reward	Challenge	Spiritual Task
Courtship and Marriage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Couple time • Romance • Freedom • Intimacy/belonging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emancipation from family of origin • Adjustment to living together: sex, marital chastity, money, lifestyle, friends, work, religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing couple spirituality • Discuss, detect faith differences • Finding or forming church
ACC Support			
First Child in Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generativity • Joy in watching child develop • Enriched identity as a family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less couple time • Less personal freedom • New roles • Develop new relationship to extended family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand to family spirituality • Develop religious traditions/rituals • Re-evaluate church membership • Awareness of vocations of parenting
ACC Support			
Last Child enters school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared responsibility in the home • Parents' world expands • Joy in watching child develop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities pulling family apart • Responsibility of being primary faith educators • Adults dealing with mid-life issues, perhaps addictions or family of origin issues • Unexpected illness and disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass on faith to children through traditions/rituals/prayers/stories • Plug into larger church community • Making peace with family of origin
ACC Support			

Stage	Reward	Challenge	Spiritual Task
Adolescence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joy in watching child develop • Beginning new kind of relationships in family • Increasing independence and competence in children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge to parental authority • Less time with extended family • Continued mid-life challenge in marriage relationship and with extended family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letting go of children while maintaining family unity and values. • Tap into the larger church for adolescent faith development programs (TEC, Castaways, National Youth Conference). • New forms of family prayer and recreation. • Assist in vocational discernment.
ACC Support			
Letting Go	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship with adult children • Entry of caretakers into new arenas • More time with spouse, friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-negotiating couple relationship • Caring for own parents • Extra financial burdens • Breaking continuity of family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letting go, "healing the dream" • Redefining spirituality of couple
ACC Support			
Empty Nest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom: finances and time • Children settling in • Grandchildren • Back to couplehood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loneliness • Children returning home • Letting go – pain of loss (evaluating self as parent) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize personal spirituality • Exploring new opportunities • Wisdom, acceptance, trust
ACC Support			
Aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fulfillment in life • Decrease in tasks, free time • New relationships with widows, widowers, friends • Grandchildren 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Still maintaining generativity despite loss of energy, work, identity, health, spouse, and friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance • Emphasize personal spirituality • Wisdom, acceptance, trust • Reflecting on changing time of life
ACC Support			

Adapted and used with permission from *The Leadership in Parish Family Ministry Training Manual*, Family Life Office, Archdiocese of Omaha, 1991, 1997.

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. What methods does your Area Catholic Community use to support the following issues for engaged or married couples?



Issue	Discussion or Support Group	Printed materials/ media	Retreat/Day of Reflection	Family Centered Activities	Peer Ministry	Other
Improving communication skills						
Intimacy issues						
Keeping romance alive						
Budgeting & financial issues						
How to handle stress						
Sharing values & beliefs						
Regaining equilibrium after first baby						
Marriage sexuality						
Blended families						
Mixed (Ecumenical) marriage Catholic marrying a baptized non-Catholic						
Interfaith marriage Catholic marrying a non-baptized non-Christian						
Conflict resolution skills						
Couple spirituality						
Family of origin issues						
Understanding marriage as a vocation						
Humor in marriage						
Newly married adjustments						
Sharing of responsibilities						
Relationship commitment						

Where Two or More are Gathered

1.

Families are not all alike. What diverse structures appear in your Area Catholic Community? This information can usually be found in parish records.



Area Catholic Community Record

_____ Number of registered households in the Area Catholic Community

_____ Sunday Mass Attendance

_____ Families away or alienated from the Church

1. *Diversity of family structure*

_____ "Traditional" families – at-home mom, employed father

_____ Both parents employed outside the home

_____ Single-parent household

_____ Blended families (remarried households)

_____ Couples without children

_____ Multiple generation households

_____ Those living alone – singles, widowed, divorced

_____ Older adults

_____ Other

2. *Families with difficult situations?*

_____ Death within the household/extended family (past 1-5 years)

_____ Chronic illness

_____ Unemployment, short-term or long-term

_____ Underemployment insufficient salaries

- _____ Birth of child with disabilities
- _____ Wheelchair or assisted mobility device user
- _____ Deaf or hard of hearing
- _____ Onset of disabilities in child
- _____ Onset of disabilities in adult
- _____ Blind or visually impaired
- _____ Eldercare
- _____ Birth by unmarried adolescent or young adult
- _____ Other

3. Cultural, ethnic or religious heritage

- _____ Refugees and immigrants
- _____ Hispanic/Latinos
- _____ Asian
- _____ African/Black
- _____ Native American
- _____ White/Caucasian
- _____ Mixed marriages
- _____ Interfaith marriages
- _____ Other



Call to Family, Community and Participation

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42).

"Each generation of a family is challenged to leave the world a more beautiful and beneficial place than it inherited. You can do this, for example, when you deliberately pass on your wisdom and the faith of the Church, providing countercultural messages about poverty, consumerism, sexuality, and racial justice—to name a few" (*Follow the Way of Love*, 19).

"Love for God and neighbor is the first and greatest commandment. Sacred Scripture, however, teaches us that the love of God cannot be separated from love of neighbor: 'If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself...Love therefore is the fulfillment of the Law' (Rom. 13:9-10; cf. 1 John 4:20). To people growing daily more dependent on one another, and to a world becoming more unified every day, this truth proves to be of paramount importance" (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, 24).

"Christian families should never forget that 'faith does not remove us from the world, but draws us more deeply into it... Each of us, in fact, has a special role in preparing for the coming of God's kingdom in our world.' Families should not see themselves as a refuge from society, but instead go forth from their homes in a spirit of solidarity with others. In this way, they become a hub for integrating persons into society and a point of contact between the public and private spheres" (*The Joy of Love*, 181).

Where Two or Three are Gathered




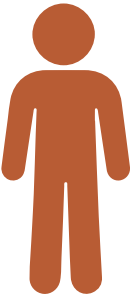
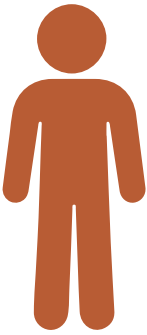
1. Write a prayer request for the families of your church.



2.

In what ways do our Area Catholic Communities help parents prepare their children and youth for community life and to leave the world a better place? (countercultural messages, love of neighbor, mutual forgiveness, common good and a passion for justice, etc.).

✓

				
Birth - 4 years	5 -10 years	11 - 13 years	14 - 18 years	19 - 21 years
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THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (John 13:34).

"As a profoundly ecclesial process of evangelization and communion the Encounter process is committed to engaging Catholics in a process of intentional listening. Such listening, in this particular process, is defined by the location where it takes place: The peripheries of family, Church and society. Millions of Catholics live in those peripheries. The Encounter process is a process that empowers Catholics, who already come to our parishes, lay ecclesial movements, and other Catholic organizations, to 'go out' to the peripheries where many Catholics live, feeling abandoned, unheard, desolate, and often times disaffected. The Encounter process is an evangelizing process that prepares missionary disciples in the Church to listen attentively, engage people's lives, and acknowledge hopes and frustrations" (*Creating a Culture of Encounter*, p. 3).

"...the current Parish model no longer adequately corresponds to the many expectations of the faithful, especially when one considers the multiplicity of community types in existence today. It is true that a characteristic of the Parish is that its rootedness at the centre of where people live from day to day. However, the Parish territory is no longer a geographical space only, but also the context in which people express their lives in terms of relationships, reciprocal service and ancient traditions. It is in this 'existential territory' where the challenges facing the Church in the midst of the community are played out. As a result, any pastoral action that is limited to the territory of the Parish is outdated, which is something the parishioners themselves observe when their Parish appears to be more interested in preserving a nostalgia of former times as opposed to looking to the future with courage. It is worth noting, however, that from a canonical perspective, the territorial principle remains in force, when required by law" (*The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church*, 16).

"Healing the rupture between society and its elderly members requires a major effort to change attitudes as well as social structures. In undertaking this task, we are not simply meeting the demands of charity and justice. We are accepting our own humanity, our link with the past and future and, thereby, our link with the Creator" (*Society and the Aged*, 52).

"From this it follows that a truly Eucharistic community cannot be closed in upon itself, as though it were somehow self-sufficient; rather it must persevere in harmony with every other Catholic community" (*On the Eucharist and the Church*, 39).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. What elements of our Area Catholic Community profoundly reflect a commitment to community and the common good for all people?



2. Describe some of the important dynamics to keep in mind when collaborating across cultures with neighbors.



3. Visualize the people in your neighborhood and on the peripheries of your neighborhood. As you think about your neighborhood, who are some people different than you (whether because of age, race, sexual orientation, or class, etc.) that you could imagine discussing your neighborhood with? Write their names here.



4. In what ways is your Area Catholic Community looking to the future with courage?





Ecumenical/Interfaith Relations

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:1-6).

"It happens for example that, in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, Christians of one confession no longer consider other Christians as enemies or strangers but see them as brothers and sisters. Again, the very expression 'separated brethren' tends to be replaced today by expressions which more readily evoke the deep communion – linked to the baptismal character – which the Spirit fosters in spite of historical and canonical divisions" (*On Commitment to Ecumenism*, 42).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. In what ways does our Area Catholic Community affirm, promote, and advance a deeper understanding of the common baptism of all Christians?



2. How is our Area Catholic Community pastorally sensitive to people in mixed (Catholic marrying a baptized non-Catholic) and interfaith (Catholic marrying a non-baptized non-Christian) marriages?



- a. During the process of Christian initiation (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist)
- b. Preparing for marriage
- c. Enrolling in faith formation or Catholic school
- d. In celebrating faith shared through common baptism

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature. . . In recent times more than ever before, He has been rousing divided Christians to remorse over their divisions and to a longing for unity. Everywhere large numbers have felt the impulse of this grace, and among our separated brethren also there increases from day to day the movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians" (*The Decree on Ecumenism*, 1).

"Catechesis, above all in the contexts which divisions among Christians are most visible, is to take care:

- to affirm that division is a grave wound that contradicts the Lord's will, and that Catholics are called upon to participate actively in the ecumenical movement, above all with prayer;
- to expound clearly and with charity the doctrine of the Catholic faith 'respecting in a particular way the order of the hierarchy of truths and avoiding expressions and ways of presenting doctrine which would be an obstacle to dialogue';
- to present in a correct manner the teaching of the other Churches and ecclesial communities, showing what unites Christians and explaining, including with brief historical citations, what divides.

Moreover, because of its educational significance, catechesis has the task of eliciting a desire for unity within those being catechized, helping them to live in contact with persons of other confessions while cultivating their Catholic identity in respect for the faith of others" (*Directory for Catechesis*, 345).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. How does our Area Catholic Community help foster Christian unity (e.g., Bible study, shared worship service at Thanksgiving, during Christian Unity Week, or Holy Week)?



2. In what ways is ecumenism incorporated into the curriculum for catechesis and ongoing faith formation?





The Goals

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Dear brothers and sisters, the Church loves you! Be an active presence in the community, as living cells, as living stones" (*Homily of Pope Francis, Sixth Sunday of Easter, 2013*).

"Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor" (*The Joy of the Gospel, 187*).

"Parishes manifest the face of the people of God who opens himself to all, without preference of persons. They are 'the usual place in which the faith is born and in which it grows'" (*Directory for Catechesis, 299*).

"We, the people of God of the Diocese of Saint Cloud, in union with the Universal Church, believe in and proclaim the presence of Jesus Christ in our world. Our mission is to be His heart of mercy, voice of hope, and hands of justice" (*Mission Statement, Diocese of Saint Cloud*).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. Choose five statements that represent the strength of our ACC. Check (✓) those statements and put the letter **S** next to those checked statements. Then choose the five statements that most need to be overcome to become a stronger ACC. Check (✓) those statements and put the letter **O** next to it.



- _____ Most members of our assembly recognize the communal dimension of Eucharist or they are growing in fuller appreciation of what it means to be one body as we share in the one bread and one cup.
- _____ Most members of our assembly have a sense of being sent forth from Mass to carry on the mission of Christ.
- _____ Provides models of faith-sharing for singles, families, and ministry groups.
- _____ Provides mentoring programs and resources for newly married couples.
- _____ Provides renewal and retreat opportunities for married couples.
- _____ Provides resources and models for family prayers, retreats, rituals, and traditions.
- _____ Provides models of faith sharing for singles, families, and ministry groups.
- _____ Promotes the value of families celebrating Sunday liturgy together.

- _____ Promotes ways for parishes and schools to be sensitive to the need for family time.
- _____ Mindful of the diversity of family life in the ACC in planning.
- _____ Assist children and adults of minority cultures as they adjust to different traditions.
- _____ Educates the dominant culture about the traditions of other cultures.
- _____ Promotes training in making adaptations for people in all formation settings.
- _____ Identifies strengths, opportunities, and challenges unique to single adults.
- _____ Provide support programs for children of divorced, separated, and widowed individuals.
- _____ Encourage parish activities and events that are family-centered as opposed to those that separate members of the family.
- _____ Programs that minister to the sick, bereaved, and homebound are ongoing.
- _____ Outreach and hospitality to the poor, the newcomer, and the disabled is ongoing.
- _____ Works to honor the cultures of all the members by providing education and encounters with the various cultures in the ACC.

2. What is the core factor that gives vitality and life to this community – the one thing that is important for us to retain, to bring with us as we move into the future?



3. Choose a motivating symbol that helps you express and renew your best hopes for community life.



4. Make three wishes for the ACC that would enable us to foster and nurture community life.



5. What part of the dream are you able to bring to life? What resources and supports will you need?



6. In your ACC, how can you move toward greater cooperation and collaboration? Among whom? What are opportunities for shared planning?



Write down the common threads that you hear in the stories shared. Put an asterisk (*) beside the ones on which you want further inquiry e.g., family-centered catechesis, find print or other media resources regarding the thread, or ask for a consultation/training regarding the thread.

[illegible]



The Pastoral Plan

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but "to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to be nourished, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands" (*Preparatory Document: Synod for a Synodal Journey*, 32).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

In writing a goal, make it **SMART**:

- **S**pecific: Well-defined, detailed, and clear.
- **M**asurable: Are you able to tell when you plan to reach your goal?
- **A**chievable: Can you reach the goal, taking into account your available time, skills, and financial resources?
- **R**ealistic: Is your goal realistically achievable within the time frame and with the available human resources?
- **T**imely: Set a start and finish date for your goal.

GOAL

How does this goal contribute to a thriving mission and building bridges?

WHAT IS THE FIRST MAJOR STEP?

Action/Task	Who	Target Date

WHAT IS THE SECOND MAJOR STEP?

Action/Task	Who	Target Date

WHAT IS THE THIRD MAJOR STEP?

Action/Task	Who	Target Date

WHAT ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE NECESSARY FOR THIS GOAL?

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO DUPLICATE AS NEEDED



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This workbook has been created through a partnership with Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary, Diocese of Saint Cloud and Saint John's Abbey's Center for Latino Ministry. It is funded by the Lilly Endowment's Thriving Congregations Grant. For more information, contact Barbara Sutton, Director, *Bridge-Builders for a Thriving Mission*, Saint John's School of Theology and Seminary, Collegeville, MN.

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