

A COMPANION GUIDE

Radical
hospitality
Benedict's Way of Love

By Lonni Collins Pratt with Father Daniel Homan, OSB

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Let us know how you are using this Companion Guide and the book Radical Hospitality. We want to know how you are developing radical hospitality personally and for your community.

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Introduction

The Diocese of Saint Cloud joins the universal Church fostering holy growth by--the Synod on Synodality, the Eucharistic Revival and the Bridge Building for a Thriving Mission initiative--that provide opportunities to listen to the faith experiences of people, renew our Eucharistic spirituality, and build-bridges within an Area Catholic Community and their neighbors. Why? We know instinctively and through stories that the Church is hurting, and many are seeking a way back to their faith community. We must begin again. These three movements hold the possibilities to bounce back from past hurts, shattered dreams and the pandemic. Opportunities for prayer, dialogue, and holy action ground these movements. There is a deep hope that the Church will pause for renewal and innovation. The three movements are:

1. FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH 2021-2023

The practice of living as a Synodal Church means:

- The conversations lead to conversion to Christ and commitment to active participation in the mission given by Christ—**Communion**.
- The people of God talk with one another and listen to one another about questions that matter—**Participation**
- The communion exists for a common purpose, mission flows naturally from the experience of communion—**Mission**

2. EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL 2022-2024

Strategic Pillars

1. Foster encounters with Jesus through kerygmatic proclamation and experiences of Eucharistic devotion.
2. Contemplate and proclaim the doctrine of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist through the Truth of our teaching, Beauty of our worship, and Goodness of our accompaniment of persons in poverty and those who are vulnerable.
3. Empower grassroots creativity by partnering with movements, apostolates, parishes, and educational institutions.
4. Reach the smallest unit: parish small groups and families.
5. Embrace and learn from the various rich intercultural Eucharistic traditions.

3. BRIDGE-BUILDERS FOR A THRIVING MISSION 2021-2026

The Initiative

Co-responsibility in the changing context of parish life and ministry helps to nurture the mission of the newly formed Area Catholic Communities (ACC's), strengthen intercultural sensitivity and develop emerging pastoral leaders. The ultimate purpose is to strengthen community life so we can help people deepen their relationships with God and enhance their connections with each other and neighbors.

A Book Companion on Radical Hospitality

This companion guide centers the ancient Christian spiritual practice, radical hospitality as common ground for renewal in the faith. It is an accompaniment to the book *Radical Hospitality* by Lonni Collins Pratt with Father Daniel Homan, OSB. Read this book alone or with a small group. Use your church centers or an online platform such as ZOOM. Our Church depends on people like you and me finding it and living it and inviting others to join. Invite people widely to join you!

Each session begins with *lectio divina* and *visio divina* for an illumination of The Saint John's Bible. You will find instructions for this Christian practice in the appendix.

Guide for Individual Study

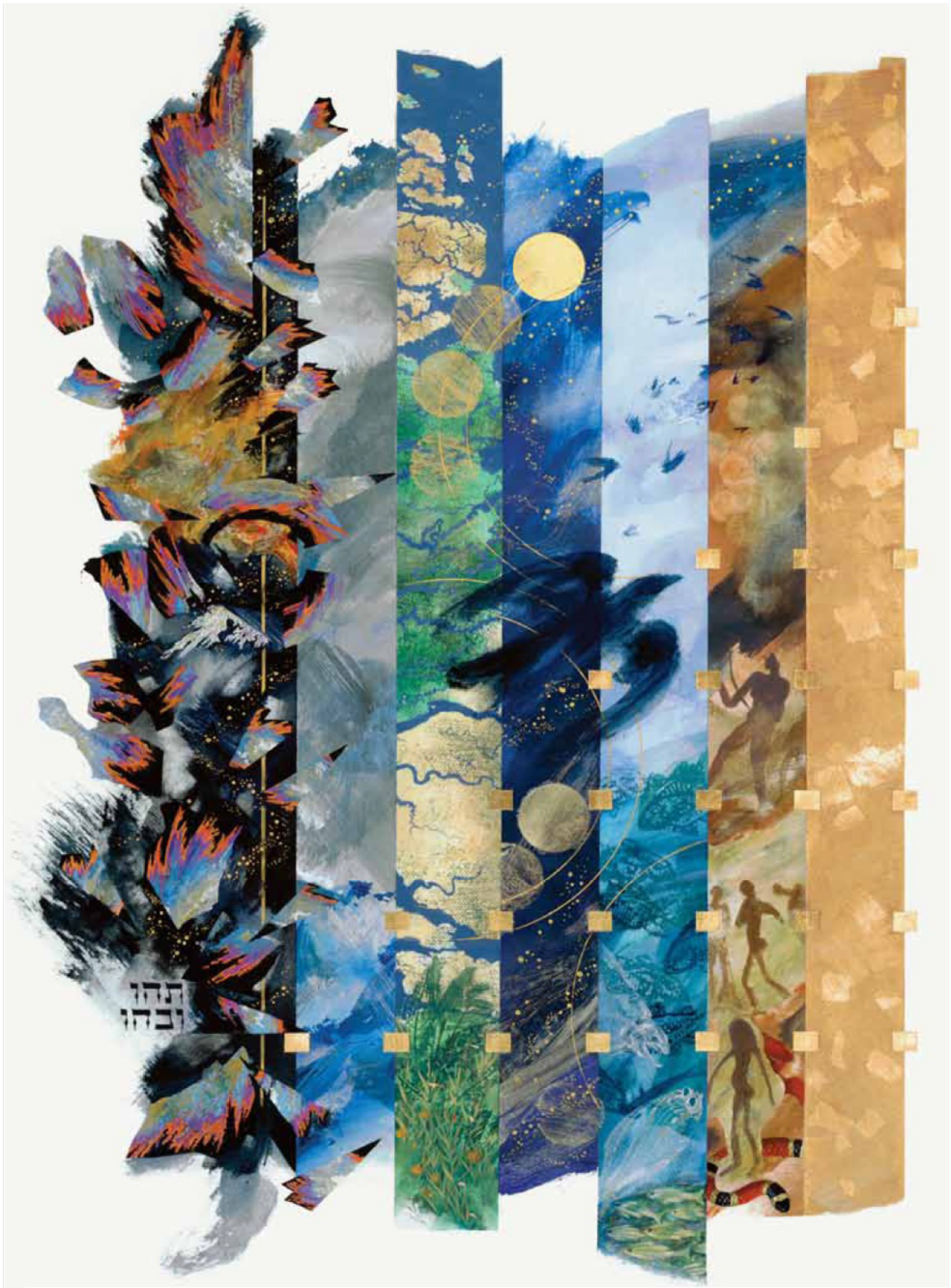
Commit a week to reading one chapter at a time. Praying with the illumination and reflecting on the accompanying study guide will provide time to ruminate on the theme and content. Before responding to the questions, pray for guidance and insight. When a response arrives, write this in the Bridge Notes of this Companion. This will help you recognize what stirred you and how it led you in the growth of radical hospitality.

Guide for Group Study

Group gatherings strengthen the study of radical hospitality by kinship—joining a “common cause” and sharing the enriching benefit of one another's insights after a week of individual study. When each week is completed, the following design for group's gathering could be used:

- Begin with a reflection on the illumination of The Saint John's Bible.
- Discuss the past week using the Study Guide.
- Have quiet time to allow the richness of the sharing to be absorbed.
- Check to see if there are any further input from anyone in the group.
- Conclude with the prayer for a Synodal Church.

For more information please contact Barbara Sutton, Director, *Bridge-Builders for a Thriving Mission* at bsutton@csbsju.edu or 320-363-3052



Chapter 1

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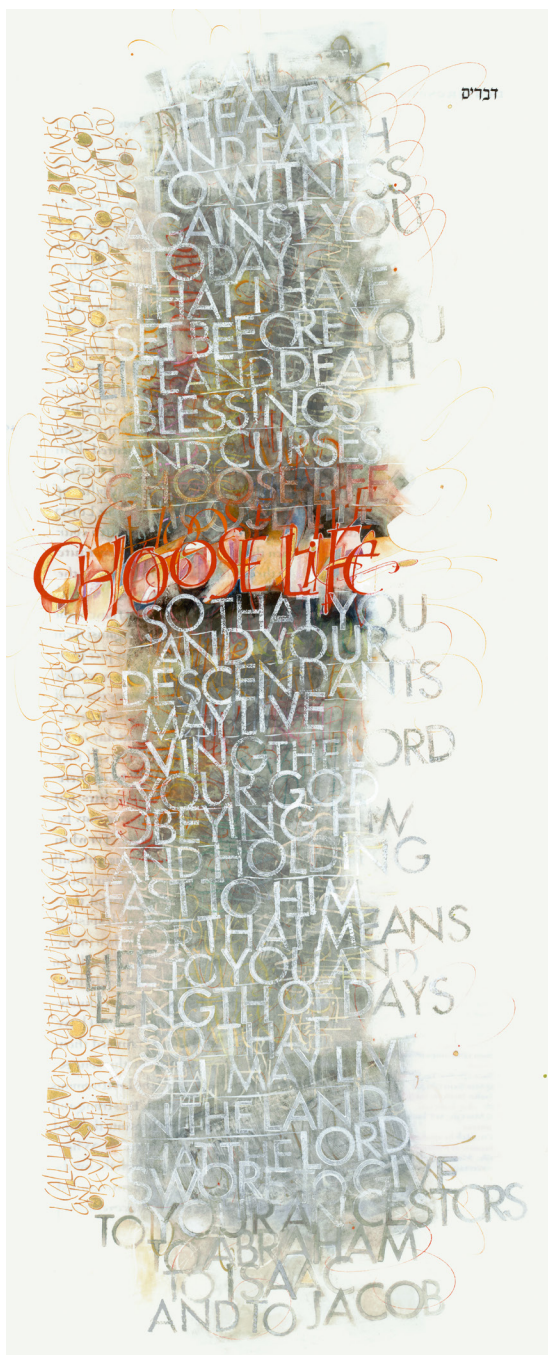
One To Make a Beginning

The Synodal Journey

“You have your own reasons for being interested in the subject of welcoming others, and it may or may not have anything to do with spirituality...Real hospitality isn’t about what we do—it’s about who we are” (p. 4).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “Benedict understood that guests are crucial to the making of a monk. At the same time, we dare not view the guest as a tool in our spiritual development. Never, ever is the monk to understand hospitality as utilitarian; he should always see it as welcoming of the Christ among us” (p. 5). What is your definition of hospitality? How does this present definition challenge that idea? Is there a time when another human being showed you God’s presence without saying anything about God?
2. “The *rule* is something of a problem for us. We automatically resist rules. It is a symptom of contemporary life. Try thinking of it this way: A rule is nothing more than a set of ideas to help you determine the kind of person you will be and the course of your life.... By your rule, you make choices about how you will spend time and resources; you make choices about how you will spend yourself” (pp. 8-9). What shapes your life? Write a short list of things that you do and that shape your life.
3. “It would never have occurred to Father Noel to be suspicious of the young men. While many people would have considered them intruders, his welcome could not have been more sincere. He was delighted to see the children of God enjoying the expansive grounds” (pp. 14-15).
4. “On the other hand, the monk, to be a monk, needs people. He grows through encounters with others. He learns about himself as he is loved, annoyed, grieved, respected—all in community and with the guest. To think of the monk as only a solitary is a mistaken notion. There is a great truth to the monk as a solitary, as one who lives alone with God, but that aloneness is not lived apart. It is lived in community” (pp. 18-19). What is your natural reaction to close yourself off from those around you? What risks do you take in opening up?



Chapter 2:

Deuteronomy 30: 19-20

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The Synodal Journey

“We probably will never have to build a secret room in our homes to save the lives of people we don’t know—but can we carve out a small place in our hearts for others? That is the true meaning of hospitality” (p. 13).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “Somewhere, sometime, you were excluded. Remember what that was like. Some people live with the experience constantly” (p. 3). Reflect on a time when you were not chosen or accepted into a group. What happened? What did you feel at that time? What are your feelings now?
2. “The horror of September 11, 2001 did not create bigotry against Muslims; it incited existing bigotry. It fed a silently held bigotry already alive in a dark corner of our hearts. It uncapped a quietly seething suspicion” (p. 8). Reflect on this assertion about bigotry toward Muslims in the aftermath of September 11th. Where in your life have you had to struggle with bigotry or suspicion of others?
3. “Hospitality has two meanings with most people today. It either refers to hotels or cruise ships, or it is connected to entertaining friends and family... One model makes it an industry.... The other model relegates it to the domain of entertainment and housekeeping, generally considered women’s work” (p. 10). How have these meanings shaped your understanding of hospitality? What are some of the flaws in these definitions?
4. “When I consider the stranger, I am faced with my worst fears. I can’t deny that I am afraid and that I don’t even always like people” (p. 15). How does this sentiment reflect your own feelings?
5. “Hospitality is born in us when we are well loved by God and by others. Hospitality is the overflowing of a heart that has to share what it has received” (p. 20). Think of a recent moment where you experienced hospitality from God or another person. What happened? How did you react?
6. “Merely being nice to people does not fulfill the deep requirements of Benedictine hospitality. We must let the person stir us; we must connect” (p. 21). What about this definition challenges you? Disturbs you? Directs you in a current situation.



Chapter 3

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Three Hospitality Begins Inside

The Synodal Journey

“Here is the core of hospitality: May I know you better? Will you come closer, please? No, it will not be easy, But...your life depends on this saving stranger coming to you and stretching your tight little heart” (p. 16).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “Because hospitality always involves giving something of ourselves to others, it is a spiritual practice. Spirituality is about relationship...Remembering that spirituality is about relationships will bring us back to basics” (p. 34). Reflect on one relationship that you treasure. What did you receive that made the relationship valuable? What did you give?
2. “Genuine spirituality is not cozy, and seldom makes you comfortable. It challenges, disturbs, unsettles, and leaves you feeling like someone is at the center of your existence on a major remodeling mission” (p. 35). How do you respond to the authors’ assertion that genuine spiritual growth “challenges, disturbs, and unsettles...”? how is this assertion valid? What evidence do you have in your life that God has been on a “major remodeling mission”?
3. “Hospitality...is something you enter. It is an adventure that takes you where you never dreamed of going. It is not something you do, as much as it is someone you become...This is how we grow more hospitable—by welcoming one person when the opportunity is give to you” (p. 38). Do you prefer the status quo predictability of life, or do you like the unfolding of an adventure to somewhere unknown? How does your life reflect both aspects?
4. “In most situations we get ourselves into trouble by what we do: adultery, lying, stealing, jealousy, and so on. Not so in hospitality: Our error comes through what we fail to do... We become less by what we omit doing” (p. 41). Where have you passed up the opportunities to be hospitable that have been presented to you recently? Why is this type of shortcoming particularly damaging to developing a ministry of hospitality?
5. “We fear bonding and we fear detachment, and we seldom know how to strike a healthy balance between them...The need to belong and the need to be alone are both normal and do not exclude the other” (p. 46). Do you see yourself as more of a bonding or a separate/detached person? Why does hospitality demand that we develop both aspects?

6. “The essence of hospitality is receiving the stranger while letting them remain a stranger...We welcome them to be heard and understood, we accept what they choose to reveal of themselves, and we accept them if they reveal little or nothing” (p. 50). Think of a person who is a close friend. How does this relationship reflect the definition of hospitality? In terms of this definition, what is one thing you might do to be more hospitable.



Chapter 4

Luke 7: 36-50

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The Synodal Journey

“By opening ourselves up to new people, we gain new ideas. We discover the world is filled with people who are nothing like us—and it is a delightful thing. The stranger helps us locate our favorite lies. The stranger helps us see the absurd in our culture and ourselves. The stranger opens our eyes” (p. 112).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “Let’s consider what it means to be the ‘other.’ The other is the one who is not like me. She is the liberal if I am the conservative, and rich if I am poor...the other is the person from the neighborhood I avoid; the guy I don’t want him sitting next to me on the plane” (p. 101).
2. “We all tend to surround ourselves with people who agree with us on the vital issues, people who look like us, smell like us, have similar backgrounds, and hold similar convictions. It is natural to do this” (p. 102). If you could spend a day with three adults who are not family members, who would they be? How would these people be similar to you? How do your choices reflect the authors’ promise?
3. “When we create a life surrounded by people just like ourselves, it is a very narrow life. We will not be challenged by such a life. We cave in on ourselves; our minds and spirits shrink to the pea-size of our world...Letting ourselves believe that our experience constitutes normality...is delusional and dangerous” (p. 104). What about your life is stretching and forcing you to enter into the world and understanding of another? In what ways is your life predictable and based on your own set of realities? Would you characterize your world as narrow or broad?
4. “In relating to the person, we must offer them room to feel what they feel, rather than assuming that we know what they feel. Even if we think we have been through exactly the same experience ourselves, we cannot know what another is feeling” (p. 109). What risks does this manner of relating present? Think of a conversation you had recently with a person who was a stranger to you. Analyze your responses in light of the above description. How did you fare? 4) “When we hold tightly to a worldview in which our own experience is at the center, we live small lives...We can easily slip into suspicion, misunderstanding, and prejudice of strangers—those who do not meet our standard of ‘normal’” (p. 110). When have you recently been suspicious in a relationship? How did your reaction cause you to misjudge or misinterpret the other person?



Chapter 5

Acts 4: 32-35

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The Synodal Journey

“We need time alone (cloister), we need time with those closest to us (community), and we need to open ourselves to those who are not one of us (hospitality)” (p. 127).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “The hardest thing can be carving out time for silence. Our contemporary lives are hectic and noisy. We are driven by devices and surrounded by machines. We have grown comfortable with the background noise...It [noise] keeps life at a distance and also keeps us from noticing what is going on inside us” (pp. 128-129). What is your attitude toward silence? What role does it play in your life? What noises do you lean on in order to keep silence out?
2. “If you stay with solitude, you discover that this inner void is your friend. It is your true hunger. It has God’s name on it. It tells you the truth about yourself, once you are able to push aside all the garbage that initially erupts out of it” (p. 130). Have you ever felt silence to be your friend? If so, describe when this happened. What do you truly hunger for? What are some of the distractions that you battle when you find moments of silence?
3. “Solitude...propels us outward and opens us up. It is from hours spent alone that a monk comes to cherish relationships. It is from the silence that he learns to listen. It is in the deep, empty place inside himself that the monk finds God” (p. 132). What do you learn in this passage about the role of silence that bothers you? Helps you? Appeals to you?
4. “Companions give us the support we need to go on. They provide the tenderness of friendship and are a source of stability, wisdom, and growth. We need other people. Some of our companions we choose, such as friends or a spouse. But we are born with a whole set of relationships, for better or worse” (p. 135). When recently did you experience your need for the support of others? What did another person supply that you needed and could not do for yourself?
5. “We need hospitality in those closest of relationships. Every now and then you get so tired that you just want to be with people who don’t require an explanation. Family can be that” (p. 138). What role does family play in your life? What do you like to do when you are with “people who don’t need an “explanation”?”
6. “We also need others, including people who are not close to our heart or hearts. We need simpler, uncomplicated relationships with others. Hospitality expects that we share ourselves, some part of ourselves at least... ‘Benedictine spirituality is intent on the distribution of self for the sake of the other...’” (p. 142). Think about others who are not close to your “heart of hearts.” Why are these people important to your wholeness? Why do you need them?



Chapter 6

Luke 22: 14-20

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The Synodal Journey

“In genuine hospitality we work to make our entire existence a welcoming table, a place prepared for others to be at ease, to receive from us comfort and strength” (pp. 147-148).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “The lesson is that we must take seriously our receiving of others. Whether we are cooking a meal, mowing the grass, scouring the sinks, or painting a wall, we are preparing for the Sacred to come to us” (p. 149).
2. “The deep meaning of hospitality involves our entrance into the mess of things; it means we run right into the chaos if that is what it takes. If we do this, there is a slow, mysterious something that happens, transforming the riot into something good” (pp. 151-152). How do you react when you become involved in a chaotic, disorganized situation? Where in your life has God brought order out of confusion? Where is there a chaotic situation in your life that needs your involvement?
3. “In Latin, the word companion literally means to ‘break bread’ together. No wonder the Eucharist has such power. It is founded in our food experience, and our earliest experience of that is associated with warmth and touching. Food is powerful. It says, ‘You belong here.’ It comforts” (p. 153). What was your experience of mealtimes growing up? In what way did you have a sense of belonging? Did you sense estrangement? How does the Eucharist communicate to you how God feels about you?
4. “Our ability to make room for others, and the joy we do or do not find in such activity, depends largely on our experience of being accepted or not. We build shelter for others because somewhere along the way someone sheltered us and thereby taught our hungry heart how to love” (p. 156). Who in your childhood showed you acceptance? How did that person demonstrate that he or she loved you? How can this example help you relate to others?
5. “In human labor an astonishing thing happens: God shows up. As we prepare a place for others, something happens inside of us: We are prepared also. The Benedictine motto is ‘Pray and work.’ Benedictines consider work holy. Human labor is a reflection of divine work” (p. 162). Describe your attitude toward work. Do you see it as a “God shows up” endeavor? Is it something you expect to do without God’s aid? How can you be more receptive to God in the work you do?
6. “The monks...have chosen to care for others on a daily basis just as they care for themselves. To do so is to be human. As we wash our bodies and fold our clothing and shovel the driveway, we indicate that we have accepted our role and life, as it exists. We are making peace with ourselves and all the others around us” (pp. 164-165). What have you learned about the importance of attending to the details of daily life? How does attention to detail reflect your care for others? What is your attitude towards details?



Chapter 7

Luke 24: 13-36

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The Synodal Journey

“We need relationships of depth, but we also need companionable relationships in which we listen to the other, show that we care, and are present to another person, even when tired or cranky. This kind of companionship is a healing thing for both the giver the receiver, but it is not easy. It means we put our own feelings aside. Sounds easy until we have to do it” (p. 170).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “It is impossible to exaggerate the number of people who never feel heard, even by friends, family or spouse. Being a person of hospitality involves getting out of myself for long enough periods that I can hear other people, really hear them, and pay attention to what they might need at this moment” (p. 170). When have you sensed recently that another person heard you? Describe what happened and how you know that you had connected with that person. When have you tried to communicate and were unsuccessful?
2. “Emulating someone is a good way to learn hospitality. Find a hospitable person and spend time with them. Listen to them. Do not look for methods or tips from them. Just be together and you will be astonished at what happens” (p. 171). Think about someone whom you consider a hospitable person. What qualities and actions reflect their openness and care toward you? How have you benefited from this relationship?
3. “Most of us will have intimate relationships, but we make a mistake if we think that intimacy is all we need. We also need companions, we need good fun, we need the brief and tender moment when a stranger scoops to collect the clutter that has dropped to the floor” (pp. 175-176).
4. “Intimacy does not consist of a constant level of relating; instead, it simply happens when it needs to if people are open and able to enter the moment” (p. 176). Reflect on one relationship where you feel there are times of transparency between you and the other person. What were the events that enabled this to happen? What made you open to intimacy? How has the relationship between vulnerability and normal life?
5. “We have lost completely the awareness that relationships come in degrees. We don’t know how to move from casual to intimate and back again. We have forgotten that we ought to pour ourselves out sometimes and hold back at other times...Hospitality is not a call to unquestioning intimacy with the whole world” (p. 178). How does this statement speak to you about the relationships in your life? In what ways do you move from casual to intimate?
6. “Intimacy happened in America when every American we knew was sitting in front of a television watching the events of September 11 unfold...We experienced a brief period of knowing we are part of one another, and we belong to each other. That was an experience of intimacy we shared with strangers, the people next door, and our best friends” (pp. 182-183). In what ways did September 11 create an intimate moment for you? Why was it intimate? What other event brought you into intimacy with both friends and strangers? Describe what happened?



YOUR
FAITH
HAS
MADE
YOU
WELL

ONLY
BELIEVE

Chapter 8
Mark 5:25-43

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The Synodal Journey

“We need other people to help us grow. Sometimes it is the one who is most difficult to be around that we need the most. Sometimes we are the most difficult to be around, and then we need grace and acceptance. Without the defying and difficult presence of others we would not try as hard, because we would not have to. It is an incredible reality that our relationships are the soil from which we grow a heart capable of caring” (pp. 190-191).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “You are becoming something. You are becoming more patient, more loving, more angry, more selfish—there is some fundamental person at the root of it all. It may be a person of love, or a person of selfish indifference. Every day we make choices that take us toward becoming one or the other” (pp. 196-197). Look back over the last twenty-four hours. How do you see persons, both loving and selfish, coming through the events of your life? What choices were significant in encouraging you to be more loving?
2. “Our ability to accept others begins with whether or not we are in touch with our dark side. As we have said, monks live with themselves without blinking at the dark side, and this is what allows them to be as accepting as they are. They are able to accept strangers without expecting them to be perfect” (pp. 197-198).
3. “A realistic understanding of the self allows us to better accept others. If we can forgive ourselves, we become better at forgiving others. When we have searched hard for the best that is inside of ourselves, it becomes easier to find the best in others” (p. 198). What is the best of what is inside yourself? When you observe another, does it flow out of sense of your flaws or your self-compassion?
4. “Gratitude is at the center of a hospitable heart. It keeps everything in perspective. Often, we allow day after gifted day to come and go without one sigh of gratitude for the beauty of it all. We don’t slow our breath to hear the song of the wind or taste the miracle of an apple...What an arrogant life we lead” (pp. 200-201). Reflect on your last twenty-four hours and list all the ‘gifted’ moments that occurred in your day. In what ways can you recognize your arrogance? How does gratitude contrast with arrogance?
5. “You really cannot make it happen; gratitude, like faith, is given to you...Gratitude happens most often during suffering, loss, and other really hard stuff. It is the leading edge of joy. It happens when the big reality hits you. You have not more right to be loved than anyone else” (p. 202). How do you respond to the authors’ assertion that gratitude grows out of hardship? How is the transition from suffering to gratitude to joy reflected in the life of someone you have admired?
6. “Anxiety makes you ready for gratitude. So, does having enough courage not to dull the anxiety with alcohol, or spending, or eating, or whatever your usual escape might

be. Shut the door, experience the anxiety, and you are ready for gratitude...Try to force gratitude and you end up with guilt instead” (p. 202). What issues in your life are causing you to be anxious? How would you normally try to dull this anxiety? Practically, what might it mean to “shut the door and experience the anxiety” in one area of your life?

7. “What is the secret of people who seem always to feel grateful without being prompted...? The secret is these people have courage...Courage takes us past thinking and talking about hospitality into the realm of the will. Courage is the power of the heart, and it resides not in the emotion, but in the will and the power to choose” (p. 205). How would you define courage in the life of someone you admire? How did they act courageously? Why does courage come down to a choice and not an emotion? Where in your life do you need courage?

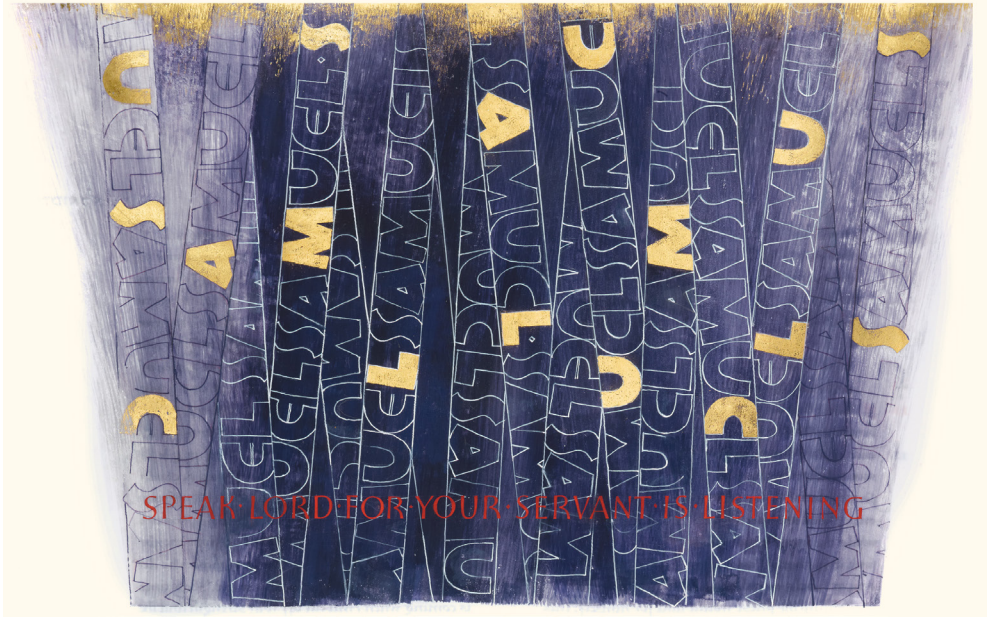
Reviving a Eucharistic Community

“Our ability to care is more than we know. Prayer will expand it. Courage will expand it. Risk will expand it. Caring, the tiny little- bit of it we can manage, will expand as we give ourselves more chances to say yes to others” (p. 212).

Bridge-Building Exercise

- **R E F L E C T** on what makes a person you know difficult. How do that person’s emotions affect you?
- **L I S T E N** to how you can respond to that person differently by not getting hooked into their emotions.
- **I M A G I N E** that you are encountering that difficult person and you are spiritually prepared. How will you be different?
- **C O M M I T** yourself to acting differently next time you encounter a difficult person.

My Bridge Notes



Chapter 9

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The Synodal Journey

“Denying what we really and truly need, in some misunderstood notion about being hospitable toward others, or loving with others, is simply bad for you. You need time to yourself. You need respect” (p. 218).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “The family he came from had not taught him to respect other people or to insist that others respect you. The real meaning of boundaries is the insistences that I will not be violated by your selfishness” (pp. 214-215).
2. “Being a person with strong and wise boundaries does not make you selfish. It is refusing to let others have boundaries that makes you selfish; it is insisting that others must make you the center of their lives that is selfish” (p. 217). When have you recently crossed over the boundary line of another person? When has another person crossed your boundaries?
3. Boundaries do not exclude the other; in fact, if you become a person with actual boundaries, you are better able to give to other people because you do not feel diminished by it. Giving is a joy because you want to give, and not because someone has manipulated you and you gave in” (p. 281). What kind of boundaries have you set for yourself? How have they proven helpful to you?
4. “You’re also distinctive. You must remain who you are and allow yourself to grow more yourself every day. Hospitality will help that happen...but you must remain freely yourself. If you lose your distinctiveness, the world has lost something it will never see again—you” (p. 224). Make a short list of what is distinctive about you. What are you doing to maintain your distinctiveness and follow your loves? What has threatened your distinctiveness?
5. “The part of us that we give to others, to the stranger you might say, is our outer self...With the outer self we give attention. We listen. We offer genuine concern...We appreciate the person, and give them something of ourselves, without expecting them to become a friend. We don’t necessarily share secrets, inner feelings, dreams, or ambitions and passions” (pp. 224-225). Reflect on both your outer and inner self. In what ways over the last week have you seen the contrast between the two? What can you learn from the above quote about offering the one and protecting the other?
6. “It can be emotionally draining to give yourself to someone who has the neediness of a child. These are the people who are most likely to push against your boundaries, and they rarely have boundaries of their own. They are also the most in need of a simple gesture of acceptance” (p. 226). When have you attempted to befriend another person who had many needs and found yourself drained after each encounter? How did this person push against your boundaries? How did you respond? What simple gesture of acceptance did you offer, or what might have you offered?



Chapter 10

Ruth 1: 16-18, Ruth 2: 2-23

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The Synodal Journey

“We don’t have to have all the answers to companion the hurting. Actually, people who try to offer answers are not particularly comforting... Forget answers. Be available with eyes wide open. Know it is going to interrupt your well-planned life” (p. 246).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “We don’t deal with the hard realities, such as beautiful children suffering, unless we are forced to. We get through life with some peace of mind by not looking at the hungry children, the dying children, the bombed children...It takes a whole lot of courage to do otherwise” (pp. 232-233). How do you respond when you are confronted with the realities of suffering? Do you seek peace by avoiding an awareness of suffering, or have you found peace in the midst of suffering? Apply this to a stressful situation in your family or among your friends.
2. “I don’t know how I would have survived without Linda...She became the face of God to me when God seemed gone. I could not find a way to pray or believe in a good God. I could not get past the anger and doubt, but I could hold onto this woman...I didn’t have to give back anything...it was the hardest time I’ve ever known...” (pp. 235-236). How does this testimony speak to you about the role of others in times of suffering? How can you identify with the woman who gave this testimony?
3. “When people are bent over with the weight of suffering, they need from us only our presence. If we give them that, truly give them that, we become for them the presence of God in a most tangible way. That is hospitality...Few of us will ever be involved in such a life-shattering situation. But we can be present in everyday ways to those who hurt and those who are shunned. We can make a pot of chili...offer to babysit...” (p. 236). How is hospitality described in these sentences? How do we disqualify ourselves when we consider ourselves unable to be of assistance? How has someone cared for you by doing simple things that mattered?
4. “You can’t engage with human pain and remain unchanged. But that is the beauty of it. It will cost you everything and you will gain everything...God is present in the awful things—not as its origin, but as the One who even in the most skin-crawling and torturous of events, offers the miraculous possibility of healing and a new beginning” (p. 237). What challenge does suffering present to all of us? Where have you experienced suffering as a transforming and enriching influence in your life? How does this picture of God instruct and challenge the image of God that you know?
5. “Most people can simplify life by just being honest with themselves and deciding what matters most...[M]aking promises and keeping promises will free us to be more open to others. Commitment brings with it a great deal of freedom because, by its nature, it closes

down options. We have become a people of too many options” (p. 245). List the seven things you do that matter most to you. Where can you simplify this list? What promises have you made that you need to keep? How do you react to the statement, “Commitment brings with it a great deal of freedom”?

6. “Commitment means we are going to show up tomorrow for work and will keep the same spouse we live with today. The more committed we are to our family, friends, and our convictions, the freer we become to be open to others. Commitment settles us down... By closing up some options, commitment frees you to live in peace with yourself. It quiets the struggles” (pp. 245-246). What basic commitments have you made? How have they brought you peace? How have they brought you freedom? Are you struggling inwardly? What commitment are you being asked to make?

Reviving a Eucharistic Community

“In taking on the pain of others we act in the transformation of the world. We ourselves are changed, and we make a small push against the darkness. We make a difference” (p. 240).

Bridge-Building Exercise

- **R E F L E C T** on how God has shown up as the unexpected stranger in your life. What has God interrupted your plans?
- **L I S T E N** to others when they talk about the goodness and love of God that arrived in unforeseen situations.
- **I M A G I N E** that God is calling you to let Him enter some tightly controlled area or relationship in your life. What would it be?
- **C O M M I T** yourself to following God’s leading in a new direction that you would not otherwise have chosen.

My Bridge Notes



Chapter 11

John 20: 1 - 23

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The Synodal Journey

“Faith crushes me sometimes, because I have found God to be maddening and inescapable. Hope is my response to this Divine Passion that chases me down when I run. Hope is the title of the truce between God and me” (p. 252).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “The difference between doubting when your heart believes and doubt for the experience of doubt itself is that a believer’s doubt does not lead to despair; it leads us back to God. Before that happens, it may strip us of all we ever believed about God, all our pet theologies and notions” (pp. 251-252).
2. “God is not an insurance policy. God is not a benefit package. You can take God as is, or you can ignore God. The minute you begin to morph God into something tamer, you end up with less than God. You end up with an alter-ego. It takes great faith to look squarely at the state of what is and still trust in the goodness of God” (p. 254).
3. “Welcoming God into my life is a daily exercise in faith and hope. When I extend hospitality to this baffling, enticing God, I also open myself to love the unlovable. To love God is to love the wild wind, the shaker of the universe, the fury of the stars, the broken child, the tortured captives; it is to find God where we don’t want to look and to walk where even devils flee. Can we really look up at the crossed beams on Good Friday and think otherwise” (p. 256)?



Chapter 12

Acts 1:6-11; 2: 1-47

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“Listening is always involved in hospitality. The most gracious attempts we can muster are meaningless if we do not actually hear the stranger. Listening is the core meaning of hospitality. It is something we can give anyone and everyone, including ourselves. It takes only a few minutes to really listen” (p. 262).

Towards a Thriving Mission

1. “. . .listening is not the same as intellectual comprehension. Listening, as Benedict understood it, is a special kind of deep attentiveness to all of life. . .we can live in ways that either dull or sharpen this attentiveness. Rule is a guide to sharpening the ears of the heart” (p. 257).
2. “Everything changes when you hear the screams in the night. You can’t be the same after that—and if that doesn’t make you cross the street with a bowl of chili and a heart ready to listen, nothing will” (p. 260).
3. “Hospitality is a way to counter the thousands of times another human being has felt less than human because others didn’t listen. Listening is the power of hospitality; it is what makes hospitality the life-giving thing it is. When you listen, you get past yourself too. That is something we all need to do a little more. In the listening stance, the focus switches from the self to others” (p. 264).

Prayer for the Synod: *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder,
do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,
who is at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
Forever and ever.

Amen.

LECTIO DIVINA AND VISIO DIVINA

For this process, read the Word aloud. Return to the Word often to hear it again. Hearing the word aloud from men and women of different ages, ethnicities, and varying abilities impacts the proclamation as well as the hearing for the listener.



For Additional Resources

For A Synodal Journey 2021-2023

Diocesan Contact: David Fremo and Brenda Kresky

Email: synod@stcdio.org

Synod 2021 – 2023 - Diocese of Saint Cloud (stcdio.org)

Synod 2021-2023 | USCCB

Eucharistic Revival 2022-2025

Diocesan Contact: Kristi Anderson

Email: kbanders@gw.stcdio.org

<https://stcdio.org/2021/06/25/bishop-kettler-my-hopes-for-a-teaching-document-on-the-eucharist/>

National Eucharistic Revival Flier | USCCB

Bridge-Builders for a Thriving Mission 2021-2026

Contact: Barbara Sutton

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