

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	1
At the Intersection of a Synodal Journey and a Eucharistic Revival.....	2
Workbook Guide.....	3
My Experience.....	4
The Vision.....	6
Eucharist as Source and Summit.....	9
The Role of the Assembly.....	11
Liturgical Ministries.....	13
Ancient Christian Practices.....	14
Conversatio Morum.....	15
Radical Hospitality.....	20
Discernment.....	22
Lectio Divina.....	25
Visio Divina.....	27
The Goals.....	28
The Pastoral Plan.....	32
Gratitude and Kindness Journal.....	34
Bibliography.....	36

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 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. Bishop Donald J. Kettler speaks to this, "Everyone has a role in this venture. . . . Every person in the pews has a part in helping to build strong communities that nurture discipleship."

The Church's mission has its source in liturgical worship and aims toward the flourishing of life in community. This pastoral workbook provides a vision of the Church's communal worshiping life as well as tools for deepening our personal and communal prayer lives. In pastoral planning, strategic thinking and listening are vital. 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 listening, 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 an understanding of the Church's tradition, faith sharing and naming and interpreting the worshiping practices of the Area Catholic Community. This will give you the opportunity to pull together the various threads of conversations, building on their strengths and the new awareness gained from the listening and discernment process. The Goals and Pastoral Plan section (pp. 28 - 33) most likely will yield a culture of co-responsibility for the mission in the changing context of Church life here in the Diocese of Saint Cloud.

This pastoral workbook is divided into two-parts. The first section (pp. 4-13) is for communal worship. The second section (pp. 14-35) is designed for individuals to nurture the ancient Christian practices of radical hospitality, discernment, *lectio divina*, *visio divina* and *conversatio morum*. These are journal pages to both describe the practices through the lens of the Church's tradition and then your personal practices. Gather a small group of people to share your reflections and gain support from one another.

ON THE COVER

The cover illuminates Luke 24: 13-36.

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At the Intersection of a Synodal Journey and a Eucharistic Revival

In the Diocese of Saint Cloud, we are at the intersection of two spiritual processes: *The Synod For a Synodal Church* (2021 – 2023) and *Eucharistic Revival* (2022 – 2024). The synod calls us to prayer in these ways:

- Ask for the gift of discernment.
- The patience to accept the slowness of those who walk with more effort.
- The conversion of the heart that opens to true listening.
- The courage to take the first step towards those who are furthest away from us.
- The humility to ask forgiveness for the wounds we have inflicted on our path.

The *Eucharistic Revival* envisions a renewal to rediscover the source and summit of our faith through a deep commitment of prayer, pilgrimage, and worship on the part of the Church in the United States for the life of the world. There are five pillars:

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

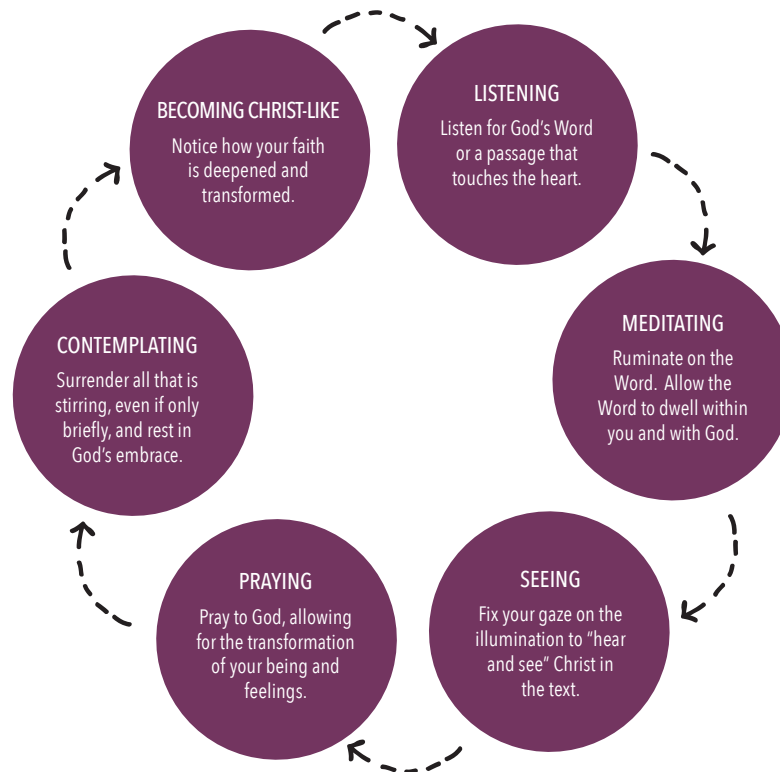
This pastoral workbook provides an opportunity to gather in small groups to pray and prepare over the next two years for renewed hearts and a thriving vision for our Area Catholic Communities.

Workbook guide

This workbook is divided into sections:

- *Lectio divina* and *visio divina* on the illumination of *The Road to Emmaus* from *The Saint John's Bible* on the front cover.
- *My Experience* provides sacred space for *Where Two or Three are Gathered* and a guide to listen to each person's story and experience of worship and prayer.
- Each section is rooted in the *The Church's Tradition* and provides a brief overview of the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on worship and prayer. Consider one section at a time. Read *The Church's Tradition* with a rhythm of *lectio divina*. For example, listen to *The Church's Tradition* read aloud, meditate on the words, images and metaphors in the reading and share aloud what draws you into *The Church's Tradition*. Then read *The Church's Tradition* aloud again. Hold silence to reflect on what *The Church's Tradition* calls you to in word and action. Provide time for each person to journal their responses to the questions before sharing in the group. Share aloud with the group.
- *Ancient Christian Practices* provides personal reflection space on the Church's tradition. It also includes exercises to strengthen these ancient Christian practices. A small group of people may want to do these reflections in groups and strengthen their will for personal prayer.
- 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.
- At the end of the workbook, you will find a reproducible journal page for encouraging and journaling your daily practices of gratitude and kindness.

When praying with the illumination on the front cover, *The Road to Emmaus*, use the processes of *lectio divina* and *visio divina*. This diagram describes the rhythms of *lectio divina* and *visio divina*.





My Experience

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can people preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring [the] good news'" (Romans 10:13-15).

"The purpose of the sacraments is to sanctify people, to build up the body of Christ and, finally, to worship God. Because they are signs they also belong in the realm of instruction. They not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it. They do, indeed, confer grace, but in addition, the very act of celebrating them is most effective in making people ready to receive this grace for their profit, to worship God duly, and to practice charity" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 59).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. Looking back at the Sunday celebrations of the Eucharist in our Area Catholic Community, remember a Sunday in which you felt most alive, most fulfilled, or most excited. Describe the liturgy in detail. ✓

a. What made it happen?

b. What part did you play?

c. Who else was involved?

d. How did you feel?

2. What do you value most about yourself as a baptized member of our Area Catholic Community?



3. Name the graces you receive through your worship and prayer experiences.



4. What is the most important thing our Area Catholic Community has contributed to the wider community?



5. What do you consider the core ingredient in our Area Catholic Community's makeup, without which the Area Catholic Community would not be what it is?





The Vision

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Nevertheless, the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper. The liturgy in its turn moves the faithful, filled with 'the paschal sacraments,' to be 'one in holiness;' it prays that 'they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by their faith;' the renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and man draws the faithful into the compelling love of Christ and sets them on fire. From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, as from a font, grace is poured forth upon us; and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their end, is achieved in the most efficacious possible way" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 10).

"Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people' (1 Pet. 2:9; cf. 2:4-5), is their right and duty by reason of their baptism. In the restoration and promotion of the sacred liturgy, this full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before all else; for it is the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit; and therefore, pastors of souls must zealously strive to achieve it, by means of the necessary instruction, in all their pastoral work. Yet it would be futile to entertain any hopes of realizing this unless the pastors themselves, in the first place, become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy, and undertake to give instruction about it" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 14).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. This week when you attend your Area Catholic Community's liturgy notice the gathering practices, the engagement practices, the listening, the response, the processions and leaving practices. What do you notice?



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Faith grows when it is well expressed in celebration. Good celebrations can foster and nourish faith. Poor celebrations may weaken it" (*Sing to the Lord*, 5).

"By faith Moses was hidden by his parents for three months after his birth, because they saw that he was a beautiful child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he chose to be ill-treated along with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasure of sin" (Hebrews 11: 23-25).

"Accordingly, the faithful's participation in the liturgy increases to the degree that as they listen to the word of God spoken in the liturgy they strive harder to commit themselves to the Word of God made flesh in Christ. They endeavor to conform their way of life to what they celebrate in the liturgy, and then in turn to bring to the celebration of the liturgy all that they do in life" (*General Introduction to the Lectionary*, 6).

Where Two or More are Gathered

2. Describe the best features of the liturgy in our Area Catholic Community. How does the liturgy nourish faith?



3. Tell or write your memories of belonging in your church community? Was there a time when you noticed your relationship with the community strengthening? Describe it.



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"At Mass, that is, the Lord's Supper, the People of God is called together, with a priest presiding and acting in the person of Christ, to celebrate the memorial of the Lord, the Eucharistic Sacrifice. For this reason Christ's promise applies in an outstanding way to such a local gathering of the holy Church: 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst' (*Mt 18:20*). For in the celebration of Mass, in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated, Christ is really present in the very liturgical assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and continuously under the Eucharistic species" (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 27*).

"A fully Christian life is inconceivable without participation in the liturgical services in which the faithful, gathered in a single assembly, celebrate the paschal mystery" (*Directory for Masses with Children, 8*).

"It must likewise be kept in mind that the liturgy and its signs and symbols do not exercise merely a teaching function. They also touch and move a person to conversion of heart and not simply to enlightenment of mind" (*Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship, 26*).

Where Two or More are Gathered

4. Christ is really present in the very liturgical assembly gathered in his name, in the person of the minister, in his word, and indeed substantially and continuously under the Eucharistic species. How does this impact the conversion of hearts as a gathered community? Where does this bear fruit in daily living?





Eucharist as Source and Summit

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"It is through the sacraments and the exercise of the virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation. Incorporated in the Church through baptism, the faithful are destined by the baptismal character for the worship of the Christian religion; reborn as sons of God they must confess before men the faith which they have received from God through the Church. They are more perfectly bound to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation, and the Holy Spirit endows them with special strength so that they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ. Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It. Thus both by reason of the offering and through Holy Communion all take part in this liturgical service, not indeed, all in the same way but each in that way which is proper to himself. Strengthened in Holy Communion by the Body of Christ, they then manifest in a concrete way that unity of the people of God which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most august sacrament" (*Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, 11).

"Liturgical services are not private functions, but are celebrations of the Church, which is 'the sacrament of unity,' namely, 'the holy people united and ordered under their bishops.' Therefore, liturgical services pertain to the whole body of the Church. They manifest it and have effects upon it. But they also touch individual members of the Church in different ways, depending on their orders, their role in liturgical services, and their liturgical participation in them. It must be emphasized that rites which are meant to be celebrated in common, with the faithful present and actively participating, should as far as possible be celebrated in that way rather than by an individual and quasi-privately" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 26-27).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. How does the priestly community, shaped by its baptismal character, manifest unity? What liturgical actions support this?



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"How many there are who still say, 'I want to see His shape, His image, His clothing, His sandals.' Behold, you do see Him, you touch Him, you eat Him! You want to see His clothing. He gives Himself to you, not just to be seen but to be touched, to be eaten, to be received within ..." (Saint John Chrysostom).

"The Eucharist is the full realization of the worship which humanity owes to God, and it cannot be compared to any other religious experience.... The risen Lord ... calls the faithful together to give them the light of His Word and the nourishment of His Body as the perennial sacramental wellspring of redemption. The grace flowing from this wellspring renews mankind, life, and history" (*On Keeping the Lord's Day Holy*, 81).

"The personal and moral transformation that is sustained by the Eucharist reaches out to every sphere of human life. The love of Christ can permeate all of our relationships: with our families, our friends, and our neighbors. It can also reshape the life of our society as a whole. Our relationship with Christ is not restricted to the private sphere; it is not for ourselves alone. The very solidarity or communion in Christ's self-giving love that makes the Church and makes us members of the Church orders us beyond the visible community of faith to all human beings, whom we are to love with that very same love that forms our communion with the Lord. Otherwise, if we do not love all human beings in this way, our communion with the Lord is impaired or even contradicted. This love extends particularly and 'preferentially' to the poor and the most vulnerable. We all need to be consistent in bringing the love of Christ not only to our personal lives, but also to every dimension of our public lives" (*The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church*, 35).

Where Two or More are Gathered

2. The celebration of all the sacraments plays a central part in shaping a community's faith and values. Is the entire assembly invited to celebrations of the sacraments? When and how are they invited to participate and celebrate?



3. Listen to how God is getting your attention regarding one attitude that has kept you from being more open to others. How would your life be if this attitude were healed?





The Role of the Assembly

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"To promote active participation, the people should be encouraged to take part by means of acclamations, responses, psalmody, antiphons and songs, as well as by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes. And at the proper times all should observe a reverent silence" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 30).

"In the celebration of Mass the faithful form a holy people, a people whom God has made his own, a royal priesthood, so that they may give thanks to God and offer the spotless Victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him, and so that they may learn to offer themselves. They should, moreover, endeavor to make this clear by their deep religious sense and their charity toward brothers and sisters who participate with them in the same celebration" (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 95).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. How attentive is our Area Catholic Community to the importance of gesture, movement and silence in the liturgy? Describe ways that our Area Catholic Community forms and assists the assembly in this dimension of prayer.



2. How do our preparations for the liturgy and the exercise of the liturgical ministries engender a sense of prayerfulness at worship? How does it endeavor charity toward our brothers and sisters?



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Participation in the Sacred Liturgy must be 'internal, in the sense that by it the faithful join their mind to what they pronounce or hear, and cooperate with heavenly grace.' Even when listening to the various prayers and readings of the Liturgy or to the singing of the choir, the assembly continues to participate actively as they 'unite themselves interiorly to what the ministers or choir sing, so that by listening to them they may raise their minds to God.' 'In a culture which neither favors nor fosters meditative quiet, the art of interior listening is learned only with difficulty. Here we see how the liturgy, though it must always be properly inculturated, must also be counter-cultural'" (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, 12).

"Participation must also be external, so that internal participation can be expressed and reinforced by actions, gestures, and bodily attitudes, and by the acclamations, responses, and singing. The quality of our participation in such sung praise comes less from our vocal ability than from the desire of our hearts to sing together of our love for God. Participation in the Sacred Liturgy both expresses and strengthens the faith that is in us" (*Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship*, 13).

"One of the most important teachings of Vatican II in regard to preaching is the insistence that the homily is an integral part of the Eucharist itself. As part of the entire liturgical act, the homily is meant to set hearts on fire with praise and thanksgiving. It is to be a feature of the intense and privileged encounter with Jesus Christ that takes place in the liturgy. One might even say that the homilist connects the two parts of the Eucharistic liturgy as he looks back at the Scripture readings and looks forward to the sacrificial meal" (*Preaching the Mystery of Faith: The Sunday Homily* p. 17).

Where Two or More are Gathered

3. In what ways do we assist members of our Area Catholic Community in keeping the Sunday Mass as the source and summit of their week?



4. In what ways do we promote reading the Sunday scriptures before coming to the liturgy?





The Liturgical Ministries

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Servers, lectors, commentators, and members of the choir also exercise a genuine liturgical function. They ought, therefore, to discharge their office with the sincere piety and decorum demanded by so exalted a ministry and rightly expected of them by God's people. Consequently, they must all be deeply imbued with the spirit of the liturgy, each in his own measure, and they must be trained to perform their functions in a correct and orderly manner" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 29).

"It is necessary that those who exercise the ministry of reader, even if they have not received institution, be truly qualified and carefully prepared so that the faithful may develop a warm and living love for Scripture from listening to the sacred texts read" (*General Introduction to the Lectionary*, 55).

Where Two or More are Gathered

1. How are liturgical ministers called, prepared, and provided with ongoing formation?



	How are they called to this ministry?	How are they prepared?	What types of ongoing formation have you received?
Presider			
Presider of non-Eucharistic liturgies			
Deacon			
Readers			
Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion			
Hospitality Ministers/ Ushers			
Altar Servers			
Music Ministers			



Ancient Christian Practices

*Thus says the LORD: Stand by the earliest roads, ask the pathways of old,
"Which is the way to good?" and walk it; thus you will find rest for yourselves.*

Jeremiah 6:16

There is a widespread demand for spirituality, a demand that expresses itself in large part as a renewed need for prayer. At the beginning of this millennium, Pope John Paul II implored our Christian communities to become genuine "schools of prayer." This is not a 911 call to God for help; rather it includes thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening, and ardent devotion, until the heart falls in love with God and our brothers and sisters. In our *Synod for a Synodal Church* we have listened to stories of hope as well as stories of brokenness, alienation, injustice and grief in families, churches, and the community. Some feel alienated because they are "different" and "don't fit in." Hearing these stories demands a high degree of emotional and pastoral intelligence. Listening and bridge building is the responsibility of all God's people. In addition to prayer, qualities essential to bridge building are respect, humility, trustworthiness, gratitude, and kindness.

With our *Synod for a Synodal Church* and the Eucharistic Revival we have an opportunity to begin again. These movements are causing all of us, the Church gathered, to prayerfully re-examine and embrace the character and practices of our ancient elders, apostles, prophets and leaders in faith, women and men alike.

Love is kind. 1 Corinthians 13:4

This section is a pathway for individuals to begin again the road towards ancient Christian practices. The focus is on Benedictine practices: *conversatio morum*, discernment, *lectio divina*, radical hospitality, and *visio divina*. Reflect once again on the Church's tradition and gently reflect on your life and how you practice your Catholic faith. In addition to these ancient practices is a necessity of modeling through words and action respect, humility, trustworthiness, gratitude, and kindness. On page 34 is a reproducible journal page for you to observe the ways you are integrating gratitude and kindness into your life. There are spiritual and emotional benefits to cultivating kindness and gratitude. These practices help sustain life, connect and reconnect with others, raise self-esteem, inspire confidence, offer security and support, solve problems, and make decisions that promote well-being and human thriving—both in ourselves and for others. At the end of our life, we will be able to join God in love.



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"I will show you a more excellent way" (1 Corinthians 13).

"...so we to might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

"...who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:4).

"...you are no longer walking according to love" (Romans 14:15).

"...we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

"...walk by the Spirit" (Galatians 5:16).

"...walk in good works" (Ephesians 2:10).

"...walk in ...love" (Ephesians 5:2).

"...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:10).

"Follow the way of love" (Corinthians 14:1).

"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Galatians 5:6).

"With His preaching on the Kingdom of God, Jesus opposes a religiosity that does not involve human life, that does not question the conscience and its responsibility in the face of good and evil. ... Jesus wants to go beyond a religion understood only as external and habitual practice, which does not affect people's lives and attitudes" (*Angelus address*, Pope Francis, September 27, 2020).

"[God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God" (Micah 6:8).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. In the New Testament, Paul writes about the practice of faith as an expression of love between a person and those around them. How would this conversion of life (*conversatio morum*) change the way you interact with people at home, at work, in traffic or at the grocery store? For example: "...walk in a manner worthy of the Lord" (Colossians 1:10).



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"... there is no path to holiness without some renunciation and without spiritual combat...to fight for the good, to fight not to fall into temptation, to do what we can on our part, to come to live in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes... Conversion is a grace for which we must always ask for: 'Lord, give me the grace to improve. Give me the grace to be a good Christian'" (Angelus address, Pope Francis, September 27, 2020).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

2. Reflect on these contemplative practices of turning toward Christ to live the peace and joy of the Beatitudes. How were you taught these practices as a child? What practices have you maintained as an adult? How do you think these spiritual practices could aid you toward developing the depth of character you desire? Journal your reflections in the space provided.



Practices	Reflections
Forgive those who wrong us	
Showing hospitality to strangers—or "the other"	
Praying for the sick	
Not judging but showing mercy and compassion	
Confronting evil, seeking to overcome it with good	
Serving	
Listening	
Associating with the lowly	
Speaking truth in love	

Practices	Reflections
Practicing neighborliness, including toward enemies	
Preferring the poor rather than showing favoritism to the rich	
Speaking and working for justice	
Proclaiming the good news in word and deed	
Giving to the poor	
Throwing parties for people who are poor and forgotten	
Walking to the other side of the street to serve those in need	
Showing empathy	

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Is it not one of the 'signs of the times' that in today's world, despite widespread secularization, there is a *widespread demand for spirituality*, a demand which expresses itself in large part as a *renewed need for prayer*. ... Our Christian communities must become *genuine 'schools' of prayer*, where the meeting with Christ is expressed not just in imploring help but also in thanksgiving, praise, adoration, contemplation, listening and ardent devotion, until the heart truly 'falls in love'. Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan" (*At the Beginning of the New Millennium*, 33).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

3. What do you desire most from your prayer practice?



4. Review the descriptions of contemplative practices below. Check (✓) the practices with which you have had the most experience. Mark (-) those with which you have had the least experience. For those which you would like more experience, mark them with a cross (†).



✓ - †	Contemplative Practices
	Solitude, Sabbath, and Silence: Resting in the presence of God, without work or speech, so one becomes more aware of the companionship, grace and love of God than the companionship, demands, and duties associated with other people.
	Spiritual Reading and Study: Exercising the mind to love God through the reading and study of Scripture and other spiritual literature.
	Spiritual Direction or Spiritual Friendship: In privacy and confidentiality, opening one's inner life to a mentor or peer to gain guidance, accountability, and encouragement in the spiritual journey.
	Practicing God's Presence: Learning to be aware of God as constant companion, staying in constant contact with God, living with one's spiritual windows and doors open to God.
	Fixed-Hour Prayer: "Stealing away," as the old songs say, at certain points in the day to be in contact with God through common prayers.

√ - †	Contemplative Practices
	Prayer Journaling: Writing prayers and keeping them for future review.
	Contemplative Prayer: Practicing a kind of prayer that culminates in silent attentiveness to God, a prayer that is about listening and receiving rather than speaking and expressing.
	Service, Secrecy, and Generosity: Serving and giving to others anonymously so that, in the spirit of “your left hand not knowing what your right hand is doing,” (Matthew 6:3), those being served don’t know who served them, and they receive a true gift—one that carries with it no strings of obligation to say thanks and repay the favor. These gifts are given for the benefit of the person in need, but also to God, who counts kindness to the poor and needy as kindness done to God.
	Simplicity and Slowness: Resisting the pull of complexity, acquisition, consumption, and hurry through deliberately choosing a simple and slow life—in dress, eating, transportation, technology, speech, and so on.
	Fasting and Self-Denial: Reducing the consumption of food or other pleasures as a way of strengthening spiritual health and resolve—often on certain days imbued by the faith community with certain meanings.
	Feasting and Celebration: Increasing the consumption of food or other pleasures as a way of strengthening spiritual health and joy—often on certain days imbued by the faith community with certain meanings.
	Holy Days and Seasons: Observing special days and seasons that interrupt the normalcy and regularity of daily life with intensity. These special days or seasons stimulate the remembering of special events or meanings and provide members of a faith community with a special encouragement to engage in specified spiritual practices.
	Submission: Decisively accepting the limitations set by fallible human being or an unpleasant situation as a way of weakening self-will and pride.
	Gratitude: Counting one’s blessings and resisting the tendency to turn blessings into entitlements or take blessings for granted, through table grace and other forms of prayer.
	Meditation and Memorization: Holding a truth in the mind through non-anxious concentration so that it can be savored and rooted deeply and accessible to memory in the stress and struggle of daily life.

Adapted from Brian D. McClaren, *Finding Our Own Way Again: The Return of the Ancient Christian Practices*.
Thomas Nelson, December 27, 2010



Radical Hospitality

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matt 25:35). Proper honor must be shown to all, especially to those who share our faith (Gal 6:10) and to pilgrims. Once a guest has been announced, the superior and the brothers are to meet him with all the courtesy of love" (*Rule of Benedict*, 53:1-3).

"Listen: this is the key word. Do not forget! And we must not forget that in the house of Martha and Mary, Jesus, before being Lord and Master, is a pilgrim and guest. Thus, his response has this significance first and foremost: "Martha, Martha why do you busy yourself doing so much for this guest even to the point of forgetting about his presence? – A guest of stone! – Not much is necessary to welcome him; indeed, only one thing is needed: listen to him – this is the word: listen to him – be brotherly to him, let him realize he is among family and not in a temporary shelter" (*Angelus address*, Pope Francis, July 17, 2016).

"Then he said to the host who invited him, "When you hold a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or your wealthy neighbors, in case they may invite you back and you have repayment. Rather, when you hold a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind; blessed indeed will you be because of their inability to repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:12-14).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. A demanding house guest, a smoker near you, an office mate who does not recognize personal space often make hospitality difficult. It isn't always easy. Describe a time when you have struggled with hospitality. What feelings did you experience both emotionally and physically? What did you learn about yourself from the experience?



2. Reflect on what breaks people's hearts. Listen to how people have felt less than human, not heard, or not seen. Imagine forming bonds with the broken-hearted. Be receptive, stop speaking and take an open stance, patiently waiting for the real self to be revealed. In what ways are you able to commit yourself to raising each other up in dignity and looking right into one another's eyes? In what ways can you help each other make it to places that have been formerly closed?



3. Reflect on how God has shown up as the unexpected stranger in your life. How has God interrupted your plans?



4. In what ways do you notice practices of radical hospitality in your family? At work? In your Area Catholic Community?





Discernment

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him "to go forth". Abraham received the call to set out for a new land (cf. *Gen* 12:1-3). Moses heard God's call: "Go, I send you" (*Ex* 3:10) and led the people towards the promised land (cf. *Ex* 3:17). To Jeremiah God says: "To all whom I send you, you shall go" (*Jer* 1:7). In our day Jesus' command to "go and make disciples" echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church's mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary "going forth". Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the "peripheries" in need of the light of the Gospel" (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 20).

"While trying the spirits to see if they be of God, priests should uncover with a sense of faith, acknowledge with joy and foster with diligence the various humble and exalted charisms of the laity" (*Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 9).

"Then they prayed, 'You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this apostolic ministry from which Judas turned away to go to his own place.' Then they gave lots to them, and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was counted with the eleven apostles" (*Acts* 1:24-26).

"Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give" (*Matthew* 10:8).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. In what ways have you felt called to service? Has your response ever taken you out of your comfort zone? Or was there resistance? What was that like for you?



2. In what ways is discernment utilized in the recruitment and placement of parishioners for various ministries? How do you choose your YES or NO to respond to invitations to serve? How are your gifts celebrated in the Area Catholic Community?



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

“Samuel answered, ‘Speak, for your servant is listening’”(1 Samuel 3:10b).

“To this end, we need to make our own the ancient pastoral wisdom which, without prejudice to their authority, encouraged Pastors to listen more widely to the entire People of God. Significant is Saint Benedict’s reminder to the Abbot of a monastery, inviting him to consult even the youngest members of the community: ‘By the Lord’s inspiration, it is often a younger person who knows what is best.’ And Saint Paulinus of Nola urges: ‘Let us listen to what all the faithful say, because in every one of them the Spirit of God breathes’ (*At the Beginning of the New Millennium*, 45).

“We must remember that prayerful discernment must be born of a readiness to listen: to the Lord and to others, and to reality itself, which always challenges us in new ways. Only if we are prepared to listen, do we have the freedom to set aside our own partial or insufficient ideas, our usual habits and ways of seeing things. In this way, we become truly open to accepting a call that can shatter our security, but lead us to a better life” (*On the Call to Holiness*, 172).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

3. There are levels of listening, such as listening to words for content and meaning, identifying the symbols within the words, noticing your own emotional response, noticing patterns and interpreting silence. When we listen, we affirm and empower the other. When we don’t listen, we fail to hear the Spirit being revealed through others. What level of listening do you find yourself using when listening to another parishioner, to a homily, to the choir, to the finance council, to a younger person, to families, to a blog post or a podcast, to nature, to demographic data? When is it a real challenge for you to listen?



4. When was a time when you truly felt listened to? Recall the incident and identify what helped create the listening climate. What does this experience say to you about developing your own skills and attitudes of listening?



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"As part of his mysterious love for humanity, God furnishes the totality of the faithful with an instinct of faith – *sensus fidei* – which helps them to discern what is truly of God" (*The Joy of the Gospel*, 119).

"How can we know if something comes from the Holy Spirit or if it stems from the spirit of the world or the spirit of the devil? The only way is through discernment, which calls for something more than intelligence or common sense. It is a gift which we must implore. If we ask with confidence that the Holy Spirit grant us this gift, and then seek to develop it through prayer, reflection, reading and good counsel, then surely we will grow in this spiritual endowment" (*On the Call to Holiness*, 166).

"Spiritual discernment does not exclude existential, psychological, sociological, or moral insights drawn from the human sciences. At the same time, it transcends them. Nor are the Church's sound norms sufficient. We should always remember that discernment is a grace. Even though it includes reason and prudence, it goes beyond them, for it seeks a glimpse of that unique and mysterious plan that God has [for us] ... which takes shape amid so many varied situations and limitations" (*On the Call to Holiness*, 170).

"As often as anything important is to be done in the monastery, the abbot shall call the whole community together and himself explain what the business is; and after hearing the advice of the brothers, let him ponder it and follow what he judges the wiser course. The reason why we have said all should be called for counsel is that the Lord often reveals what is better to the younger" (*Rule of Benedict*, 3:1-3).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

5. What are your questions about discernment as a personal prayer practice?



6. What difference would discernment as a personal prayer practice make in your life?





THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Yet the greatest attention was paid to *lectio divina*, which is truly 'capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God's word, but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living word of God'. I would like here to review the basic steps of this procedure:

1. It opens with the reading (*lectio*) of a text, which leads to a desire to understand its true content: *what does the biblical text say in itself?* Without this, there is always a risk that the text will become a pretext for never moving beyond our own ideas.
2. Next comes meditation (*meditatio*), which asks: *what does the biblical text say to us?* Here, each person, individually but also as a member of the community, must let himself or herself be moved and challenged.
3. Following this comes prayer (*oratio*), which asks the question: *what do we say to the Lord in response to his word?* Prayer, as petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise, is the primary way by which the word transforms us.
4. Finally, *lectio divina* concludes with contemplation (*contemplatio*), during which we take up, as a gift from God, his own way of seeing and judging reality, and ask ourselves: *what conversion of mind, heart and life is the Lord asking of us?* In the *Letter to the Romans*, Saint Paul tells us: 'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect' (12:2). Contemplation aims at creating within us a truly wise and discerning vision of reality, as God sees it, and at forming within us 'the mind of Christ' (1 Cor 2:16). The word of God appears here as a criterion for discernment: it is 'living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart' (Heb 4:12).
5. We do well also to remember that the process of *lectio divina* is not concluded until it arrives at action (*actio*), which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity" (*On the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*, 87).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. What value or impact do you think the practice of *lectio divina* holds for you?




THE CHURCH'S TRADITION


The Church "forcefully and specifically exhorts all the Christian faithful... to learn the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ, by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 133).

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105).

"Probe me, God, know my heart; try me, know my thoughts. See if there is a wicked path in me; lead me along an ancient path" (Psalm 139:23-24).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

2. What is your rhythm of reading scriptures? Slowly reading, skipping over words, or a fast read? What would it be like for you to carry a word or phrase from scripture with you each day? 

3. How does *lectio divina* connect you to Sunday worship? 



THE CHURCH'S TRADITION


"God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (Genesis 1:27).


"God looked at everything he had made, and found it very good" (Genesis 1:31).

"May the eyes of [your] hearts be enlightened" (Ephesians 1:18a).

"Let us open our eyes to the light that comes from God, and our ears to the voice from heaven that every day calls out this charge: If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts (Ps 94 [95]:8). And again: You that have ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev 2:7)" (*Rule of Benedict*, Prologue: 9-11).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. Are there ways in which your eyes could be renewed to see the world more deeply? 

2. *Visio divina* is a means of transforming ourselves to see the beauty of God. With the distractions we have in our lives, some days it is hard to find our spiritual senses. Imagine the world if we could transform ourselves to see the beauty in all things, big or small, better or worse, in sickness and health, and be able to say with God that it is good. How might this be for you? 



The Goals

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"[The Eucharistic Liturgy] is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the source from which all its power flows" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 10).

"But in order that the liturgy may be able to produce its full effects, it is necessary that the faithful come to it with proper dispositions, that their minds should be attuned to their voices, and that they should cooperate with divine grace lest they receive it in vain. Pastors of souls must therefore realize that, when the liturgy is celebrated, something more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebration; it is their duty also to ensure that the faithful take part fully aware of what they are doing, actively engaged in the rite, and enriched by its effects" (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 11).

"So if you want to understand the body of Christ, listen to the apostle telling the faithful, You, though, are the body of Christ and its members (1 Cor 12:27). So if it's you that are the body of Christ and its members, it's the mystery meaning you that has been placed on the Lord's table; what you receive is the mystery that means you. It is to what you are that you reply Amen, and by so replying you express your assent. What you hear, you see, is the body of Christ, and you answer, Amen. So be a member of the body of Christ, in order to make that Amen true" (Saint Augustine, *Sermon 272*).

"It shall come to pass I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even upon your male and female servants, in those days, I will pour out my spirit" (Joel 3:1-2).

Where Two or Three are Gathered

1. Assess the current worship and prayer practices in our Area Catholic Community (ACC).
Scale: 4 = a real strength in our ACC; 3 = current efforts are effective, but can be enhanced; 2 = current efforts need development and/or improvement; 1 = currently lacking (**Circle one**)



Prayer within the Sunday Liturgy

Ratings

A. The Sunday Eucharist is a priority in the life of the ACC.

4 3 2 1 Don't know

B. Prepared individuals are responsible for every aspect of liturgical celebrations.

4 3 2 1 Don't know

C. Quality of music enables the assembly to participate in sung prayer.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
D. Liturgical ministers are trained and effective in their ministry.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
E. The worship space allows for the celebration of the rites of the Church in a dignified and liturgically suitable manner.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
F. Sacraments are celebrated regularly with attention given to making them true expression of the life of the ACC.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
G. Parishioners serve in many liturgical roles in the liturgy.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
H. Preaching is directly related to the scriptures.	4 3 2 1 Don't know

Prayer life outside the Sunday Liturgy

Ratings

A. Our ACC offers a variety of prayer experiences.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
B. Our ACC experiences a life of prayer through works of charity and justice.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
C. Our ACC encourages a personal prayer life.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
D. Our ACC offers retreat opportunities for our community.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
E. Our ACC has a variety of prayer groups.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
F. Our ACC provides a variety of prayer resources - digital, pamphlets, books, etc.	4 3 2 1 Don't know
G. Our ACC provides information regarding retreats and other prayer opportunities that happen outside the ACC.	4 3 2 1 Don't know

2. 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.



- The liturgical life of our ACC incorporates the diversity of the people of God – especially those who are new, physically challenged, minorities, marginalized, older, children, and single people.
- The environment is barrier-free for those with hearing, visual, and physical disabilities.
- There is effective invitation, training, and ongoing formation for liturgical ministries.
- The worship environment inspires and enhances worship, yet also identifies the ACC as one that is active “in the world.”
- Worshipers understand that liturgical symbols – water, bread, wine, assembly, word, light, cross, and oils – have a social dimension, deepening our communion.
- We are actively involved in forming all generations to be full, conscious, and active participants in worship.
- The ACC’s community calendar of events reflects and supports the seasons and feasts of the liturgical year.
- Our processions move with a measured gracefulness that speaks the importance and prayerful nature of the ritual act rather than a walk through the motions.
- The music expresses the prayer of those who celebrate, while at the same time guards against the imposition of private meaning on public rites.
- The Liturgy of the Word is celebrated with a careful and reflective style and pacing while the assembly listens attentively.
- The proclamation of the Word, over time, effects the life of our community.
- We have the opportunity to commune under both species (consecrated bread and wine) on a regular basis.
- Different forms of prayer are taught and encouraged.
- A variety of prayer groups are hosted by the ACC and welcome all.
- Retreats take place at various times throughout the year.
- Silence is incorporated well into all liturgies and prayer experiences.

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



4. Describe a dream or make three wishes for our ACC that would enable us to become even more vibrant and truly the sort of place in which our worship and prayer life is celebrated, believed, and lived throughout the church year.



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





The Pastoral Plan

THE CHURCH'S TRADITION

"Before making practical plans, we need to *promote a spirituality of communion*, making it the guiding principle of education wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons, and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are being built up. A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart's contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as 'those who are a part of me.' This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a 'gift for me'. A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to 'make room' for our brothers and sisters, bearing 'each other's burdens' (*Gal 6:2*) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, 'masks' of communion rather than its means of expression and growth" (*At the Beginning of the New Millennium*, 43).

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



Gratitude and Kindness Journal

SAMPLE JOURNAL PAGE

Begin the gratitude practice by being grateful for two aspects of life—the people in your life and then everything else. It could be your health, your work, possessions, successes, etc. Note one or two people for whom you feel grateful.

Date:

Today I am thankful for...

my sister Janice

Today I feel grateful to...

the people in my book club

Personal note: *It is heartwarming to have both my sister and those who seem like sisters in my life.*

Today I'll be extra kind to... (fill in one or more). Check (✓) if you were able to extend kindness.

A neighbor

A close friend

My niece, Kelsi

Myself

Examples to whom you can show kindness.

My pet

My child

Myself

A close friend

An elderly person

My supervisor

A neighbor

A telemarketer

A close friend

My spouse

A difficult client

My assistant

My waiter

A lonely person

A rookie driver

A caregiver

A new hire

A person with disability

Someone feeling discriminated

A super competitive colleague

Financially challenged

Someone depressed

A person I dislike

Someone physically ill

My grandchild

My in-laws

An annoying relative

A forgetful colleague

A co-passenger

An insecure teenager

Grocery store clerk

The environment

Personal notes:

Begin the gratitude practice by being grateful for two aspects of life—the people in your life and then everything else. It could be your health, your work, possessions, successes, etc. Note one or two people for whom you feel grateful.

Date:

Today I am thankful for...

Today I feel grateful to...

Personal note: .

Today I'll be extra kind to... (fill in one or more). Check (✓) if you were able to extend kindness.

Personal notes:



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