



Relationship with GOD More than just SUNDAY

“Where Two or Three are Gathered in My Name”

I have been a member of my parish for many years. What has bonded me to this community in a really significant way is being a part of a study group that meets once a week. This experience has proven to me that ongoing study and reflection with other Catholics is a necessary component of the Christian life.

Two years ago I joined a small group at my parish to study an aspect of the Faith that interested me. Before that, the only time that I would go to my parish was on Sunday morning for Mass. As a result, there was no real sense for me that we were a family united under the spiritual fatherhood of our pastor. What I realized after meeting with this study group for eight weeks was that I had been lacking real fellowship with my parish. Toward the end of the eight sessions, it was a great gift to feel truly “connected” to my church community.

I have spent some time pondering my experience, to understand the importance of small groups of people who meet regularly to grow in their relationship with Jesus Christ. It is interesting to note that we have examples from the Bible. The Gospels reveal

that Jesus taught His disciples in small groups. Further, in the early Church, as spoken about in the Acts of the Apostles, small groups of Christians met in homes – in secret to avoid persecution – to pray and study the Scriptures or hear a teaching about the Faith.

For us today, what benefits are there in meeting regularly for a DVD program with discussion or other small group format? Here are a few of them:

- It builds community and the sense of belonging in your parish.
- It develops strong friendships in Christ.
- It provides a specific time to deepen your relationship with the Lord through greater understanding of the Faith.
- It strengthens you as you discover others with whom you can “walk” on the journey of life.
- It helps you to accept others and yourself as imperfect persons who are seeking God.

There are many excellent programs and resources available for study

groups. Dynamic Catholic has inexpensive books (\$3 each) specifically for this purpose that come with discussion questions. Ascension Press has numerous Bible Studies and Adult Faith Formation DVD Programs that include workbooks. If your parish has FORMED, many of these programs are available online, free and accessible to all parishioners. Contact the parish director or coordinator of the Faith Formation Program to see if the parish already has a program that interests you.

Lent is an ideal time to join a study group. Consider what is being offered at your parish, or get a few friends together to meet in your home. The most important thing is to find something that interests you and then be committed. It will be well worth your time!

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