

3. Table Facilitator Instructions



Parish Small Groups Series

Catch the Fire!

Catch the Love!

Table Facilitator Instructions

1. You wear two hats: Discussion *facilitator* and *participant*.

- Arrive early and welcome table members by name with a smile. Name tags should be provided.
- Gently guide the discussion, keeping it positive and encouraging, and graciously moving it along if it gets stuck.
- You are not expected to be a teacher or expert. Feel free to say, “I don’t know that answer to that, let me check with... (the pastor or associate, a deacon, or another expert).”
- Try to be open to the Holy Spirit and allow for spending time on aspects of the material that are strongly connecting with people.
- Recognize that it is normal to see different personality types in a group; stay positive and encouraging.

2. Helps for you:

- The videos and Participant Handouts are designed to assist you in your role, which is limited to the table discussions.
- Work with the Lead Organizer to keep to the time frame for each part.

3. Five steps:

- *For Sessions 1 (and 2 if there are new people)*, have a table member read aloud the “Group Discussion Guidelines” before the first discussion, included on page 3.
- *For Session 1, before the table discussion*, begin by reading aloud the “Process for Sharing.”

To open our table discussion, we will use the “Process for Sharing,” which offers everyone an opportunity to comment.

– The table facilitator will read the discussion questions out loud and pause for a moment to allow time for reflection, and then the facilitator will share first.

– After the facilitator is done, he or she invites another to share. You can invite anyone at the table, whether they are next to you or across from you. After that person has

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shared, they invite another. You will do this until everyone at your table has been asked to share.

- All are encouraged to share but no one should feel pressured to speak. If you don't want to share, simply say "pass," and ask another to share.
- We ask you to listen and not immediately respond to someone's sharing during this process. Listening is one of the greatest gifts we can give to each other.
- Please limit your sharing to a couple of minutes to allow time for all to share.
- As Table Facilitator, start the discussion by sharing first, and model the "Process for Sharing" as you do.
- Guide the process for sharing, actively listening and being ready to chime in if:
 - A member shares and forgets to invite the next person (simply remind them);
 - A member starts to comment right away on another person's sharing (gently remind the group of the practice of waiting till everyone has had a chance to share)
- Facilitate the Open Discussion period:
 - Start by thanking everyone for sharing, and then open up the remaining time for "any other thoughts people might want to share."
 - Encourage and affirm each person, looking at them as they speak.
 - If you encounter a difficult situation, keep it positive; use helpful body language as you redirect the discussion.

4. Important Tip:

- If there is a group member who tends to dominate the discussions, be prepared to quickly chime in when they pause. Thank them briefly for their contribution and then turn your body, eyes, and attention away from them, toward the rest of the group, asking if anyone wants to share on the topic. Or thank them and say something like, "we should probably move on to...." (whatever is next).

NOTE: For implementation in the Diocese of La Crosse, we have adapted these training and promotional materials for the Eucharistic Congress Parish Small Group series from those produced by the National Eucharistic Revival Team in collaboration with the Augustine Institute.

Group Discussion Guidelines

PARTICIPANT COPY

1. **Essential truths:** In small groups we will touch on many **essential truths**, which are a significant part of Church teaching. This is not a place to simply offer different personal opinions.

In order to interiorize these truths, we will examine and relate personal experience of real-life examples that are related to what has been taught. These **real-life examples will allow us to understand and remember the teaching better** so we can grow in our communication with Jesus Christ. Therefore, when relating or listening to personal experience, hold it with reverence but always ultimately compare it with the truth that was been taught by the presenter.

We will need to **keep the responses brief** so we can stay on track, respect other people's time, and benefit each member of the group. Each of us has knowledge and wisdom to offer, but it is important to notice your own personal way in which you tend to respond to questions asked.

When you have something to contribute, consider:

- Do you **jump in and want to talk in order to think out loud**?
You might need to rein yourself in and become a better listener.
- Do you tend to **listen more and take time to process your thoughts before responding**?
You may need to push yourself a bit and be willing to respond more quickly.
- Acknowledging both ways are helpful to the group, please respect the complementarity of these differing ways that can serve to the benefit of everyone.
- Identify the specific way that you tend to respond to questions in a group. How will you cooperate with God's grace to assure that you contribute to the group in the best way possible? If you feel comfortable, share this with the group?



2. **Personal Growth:** If we rely just on what we already know, we won't grow. So please, it is important that each person contribute to the conversation.
3. **Charity:** We are not here to bash others. Please do not talk about your spouse or anyone by name. Certainly you can tell stories, but be charitable.
4. **Confidentiality:** What is said in the group stays in the group. We should be able to talk freely and not worry about others talking about us or repeating what we said in the group.
5. **Ask questions:** Any question related to the content is a good question, no matter how simple. In fact, if we don't ask questions and pretend to know something, we will remain ignorant; so *please* ask. If it's not clear what the answer is, the facilitator will find out and get back to us. Each one of us is here to learn!
6. **Attend every session:** If there is (for example) a Scripture passage to pray with each day or some discussion questions to complete at home, please come even if you haven't had a chance to complete this part. It is far more important to at least be listening to the questions and answers than to just not show up. We need the groups to develop a strong bond where everyone pulls their own weight; but sometimes life gets in the way. We should not feel like we will be reprimanded. We are loved!