During this time of pandemic in our world, it has never been more evident that we need each other. In many ways, our church communities have been spread out. We miss our “normal” experience of the sacraments. We miss our friends. We find ourselves working harder to connect with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Now more than ever we need to support each other in our journey with Christ. This brings us to Emmaus.

Vision 2020 would like to encourage you to consider participating in a close walk with Jesus and a few other people. Just because we can’t be together in large groups doesn’t mean we can’t grow in our relationship with Christ and with others. The Emmaus initiative is here to provide an opportunity for us to experience the love of Christ through a handful of other people.

To help foster this encounter, we are sharing materials from “The Discipleship Quads” from The Franciscan University of Steubenville. The Discipleship Quads are interesting and exciting because:

- It provides the framework for meaningful engagement of a small group based around sound Catholic teaching.
- While material is provided, the true content of the program is generated through the relationships established with the small group participants.
- This program helps us realize the importance of our own experience in living life as a disciple of Christ and evangelizing to others.

Materials from the Discipleship Quads program will be made available to anyone interested. You will find that these materials outline very specific rules for composition of the groups, size of the groups and frequency of meeting. We ask you to consider the program as designed. The guidelines are not simply arbitrary recommendations but built through solid research on small group dynamics.

That said, we realize that these guidelines may not be for everyone. Vision 2020 wants to encourage your active participation sharing your faith with others on this small group scale. Your parish may have already established a small group program that is working great for you. We encourage you to provide flexibility to your parishioners to maximize participation while understanding that many of these programs are set up the way they are for a reason.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is “Emmaus” anyway?
A: Emmaus is a broad initiative from the Diocese of Davenport Vision 2020 committee designed to encourage Catholics across the diocese to take time to grow their relationships in Christ as part of a small group. We call it “Emmaus” because this experience should mirror the encounter with Jesus that we see in Luke’s gospel along the road to Emmaus. We want to foster a culture of small group participation in the body of Christ. This will help people learn more about their faith, more about themselves and more about their relationship with Christ and each other.

Q: “Why is Emmaus happening now and who is it for?”
A: The Covid 19 pandemic has put the brakes on a lot of what we normally do as a church. This type of small group encounter is always positive but seems more urgently needed in light of current events. Vision 2020 is presenting Emmaus to encourage parishes to provide small group opportunities for individuals to enrich their faith over the next year. Whether you are new to the church or a lifelong Catholic, we can all gain from investing in our relationship with Christ. The Discipleship Quad materials provide an experiential based exercise that will help you grow emotionally and spiritually while helping you build a community of support for your faith.

Q: “What is the Discipleship Quad?”
A: The Discipleship Quad is a new small group program from Franciscan University at Steubenville. The program is built around years of study that shows a small group of four people, meeting regularly, focusing on scripture and Catholic teaching, can help people grow significantly in their faith. The Discipleship Quad are also designed to provide tools for evangelization to friends and family. Vision 2020 is making Discipleship Quad materials available to anyone who wishes to try it. We also encourage individuals who would prefer something different than the Discipleship Quad to approach the program with some flexibility or look for other resources to engage in small groups within your community.
Q: “My spirituality is in a good place. Do I need this?”
A: Wherever your faith is, it can always grow. A positive growth focus means that if your relationship is struggling, it can be better. If your relationship with Christ is fantastic, it can still be better! Better is a relative term — we can all benefit if we invest in our faith. By journeying in faith with others, we not only grow ourselves, but we can help foster greater faith in Christ through one another. The benefit is mutual.

Q: “What is the format of the Discipleship Quad program?”
A: The Discipleship Quad program is designed for a group of four people to meet once a week for one year. The meetings last 60-90 minutes. Each person is an active participant with many opportunities to share within the group. Each meeting is followed with concrete assignments to dive deeper between sessions. These exercises help feed the discussion for the next meeting.

Q: “I looked at the Discipleship Quad program and I don’t think I can meet for 90 minutes at a time. I would like a mix of men and women. I would like a slightly larger group. Is there some flexibility?”
A: Your Emmaus journey is your own. The most important goal of the Emmaus initiative is to get people together discussing and growing their faith. If you need to make a few changes to make the Discipleship Quad model work, we encourage you to try it. Be mindful of the guidelines established by the program as you move forward. You might start meeting monthly and find that you really want to meet more often. You may decide you want six people instead of four. (We do recommend not getting more than 8 people together in one group.) Approach your experience with flexibility. The most important thing is that you make that first step to begin. Come to an agreement as a group as to what your parameters will be and stick to it. Don’t be afraid to make adjustments as needed. Skip a session if you must. Just keep at it! Make a commitment to each other and make it happen.

Q: “Could we do a monthly or bi-weekly meeting?”
A: We would advise that at a minimum your group should meet monthly. The Discipleship Quad program provides materials for 43 meetings. After a year, the participants are asked to move on and start another set of groups resulting in exponential growth in the community. You might choose to take the first few on a monthly pace and then decide you want to meet more often. You might look through the list and pick the 12 most interesting topics and go from there. It’s advisable to complete the first two lessons initially as they have important community building and story sharing built in. Then proceed as you see fit, again remembering that the format for weekly meetings in a group of four is there for a reason.

Q: “Why meet in groups?”
A: We can all benefit from being supported by men and women of faith. Within a small group, we can find an environment of safety, trust, and community. Small group process is used as a powerful tool to help people gain a sense of “I am not in this boat alone”; to gain encouragement and motivation from others; and to gain hope or inspiration from hearing others talk about things that are meaningful in their faith. Within the group, there is no confrontation, analyzing, or prescribing; each person speaks for themselves, sharing their own experience and giving others support and encouragement.

Q: “Who leads these meetings?”
A: Coordinators who are willing to share from their own experience will help organize groups. These coordinators are not “in charge” of the group but they will serve as the initial point person for disseminating materials, coordinating schedules, etc. During the meetings, they help model vulnerability, establish the climate of safety, openness, support, and sharing within the group. Coordinators come as full participants in the experience of growing their relationship, rather than as experts with all the answers. This coordinator will get things started. In the Discipleship Quad materials, you will see things mapped out so that each group member has time to work as the coordinator over time.

Q: “Who picks the groups?”
A: We hope the Holy Spirit will! You may have an existing group to journey with. We are asking parish leadership across the diocese to prayerfully consider starting an Emmaus group. Those leaders should then pray about who they would like to accompany through this journey in Christ. Previous small group experiences have taught us not to shy away from diverse groups. There is strength in shared experience, but there is also great richness in growing and sharing with new friends who have different perspectives than your own. There are good documents within the Discipleship Quad materials that will guide you on selecting groups.

Q: “I don’t know if our parish has the manpower to pull this together.”
A: The great thing about this initiative is it really doesn’t have to add anything to the already full plates of our parish staffs and priests. The materials for the Discipleship Quads are all provided in a turn key fashion so that other parish leaders can take the reigns on forming their own groups. We ask the parishes to help market the program and encourage parishioners to participate. Outside of that, nothing else is required of the parish teams to get this off the ground. We hope you’ll see the benefits in your parish and consider joining or starting a group of your own!
Q: “How are we supposed to meet in small groups during this pandemic?”
A: It is likely that your group will have to start by utilizing some sort of electronic communication. We are providing a document in the materials that helps you select a platform that is right for your group and get it all set up. Some groups may be able to meet in person depending on who is in your group. In that case, we ask you to stay informed on the latest social distancing recommendations as supplied by the diocese and follow those guidelines in your group.

Q: “Who should be participating in these small groups?”
A: We want anyone who is interested to get involved. Adults of all ages will find the Discipleship Quad program to be very valuable. While the materials were written with adults in mind, youth ministers might find the materials useful mainly for upper class high school students. It might be advisable to include a youth minister or adult mentor to walk with the youth through the program. We especially encourage groups across the diocese such as catechists, parish staff members (DREs, youth ministers, pastoral associates, etc.), V2020 mentors and evangelization teams, Catholic school teachers, parish councils, CEW communities, Knights of Columbus and other established parish organizations to promote and participate in the program wherever possible.

Q: “Does everyone in my group need to be Catholic?”
A: You don’t have to be Catholic to participate. The content provided is explicitly Catholic. Group members should know that going in and be comfortable with growing in their understanding of the Catholic faith. This may be an excellent opportunity to help someone follow a desire to experience the richness of our Catholic faith in a new way.

Q: “I think our Hispanic community would really enjoy this. Is it available in Spanish?”
A: All of the Discipleship Quad materials will be made available in English and Spanish at the Diocesan website.

Q: “This is awesome! I want to start/join a Quad. What now?”
A: All of the Discipleship Quad materials are available on the Diocese of Davenport website, www.davenportdiocese.org/emmaus. Please fill out the quick form found on the Davenport Diocese website www.davenportdiocese.org/emmaus-forms and let us know you’re getting started. We want to be here to lend you support and check in from time to time to see how it is going.