



## Faith-Sharing Group Guidelines

### Introduction:

Faith-sharing is a process by which we **give voice** to the movement of the Spirit in our lives, and our response to how God is working in our world. By doing so we gain depth of insight into our own encounters with grace, and we help to form our communal bonds as **we hear and receive** the experiences of one another. Faith-sharing has its roots in the proclamations of the Hebrew Prophets and the personal testimonies of the first disciples.

*Faith-sharing is not* a moment in which we simply show off our spiritual successes, or hide from our uncertainties or doubts. It is not a time to be correct, or to be corrected.

*Faith-sharing is* an opportunity for the honesty of heart – apart from any judgement. When we can speak from our heart, it is then that God can respond.

Two wonderful examples of this process in Scripture are Martha and Mary at the death of their brother Lazarus, and Thomas in his uncertainty of Christ's resurrection. All three followers of Christ first expressed deep emotions: anger, disappointment, and doubt. By doing so all three also came to find a much more profound answer to the longings of their hearts. All three make their proclamations in the midst of community, and yet all three find their answers from Jesus himself.



### **Guidelines for Sharing:**

- A faith-sharing group is first and foremost a “safe space.”
  - Everyone should be given an opportunity to speak.
  - No one is required to or forced to share.
  - What is said in the group stays in the group.
  - We accept what others say at face value. Even if we do not feel the same way about a situation as them, we trust their experience is valid.
  - We give one another the benefit of the doubt and presume the goodness of one another.
  
- A faith-sharing group is a place to be heard and a place to listen.
  - When others are speaking, we listen to and receive what they say. When we speak is our time to concentrate on what we desire to share.
  - Before additional thoughts are shared, or we engage in conversation, everyone should be given an opportunity to speak once.
  - No corrections, judgements, or opinions are to be shared in response to what others have shared.
  - We first ask permission to respond to what another person has shared.
  - We refrain from giving direct advice or “should-ing” on one another.
  - If we have a thought we wish to share in response to what another person shared, we use “I” statements.
  - We can share how our heart responds to the experience of the other.
  
- A faith-sharing group is a place to dialogue with God
  - We do not participate in faith-sharing in order to argue truths or debate problems.
  - We share faith so we may hear the voice of our own heart, and so that we may allow the lived experiences of others to touch us.
  - We do not come to solve one another’s problems.
  - We share faith so we may be in solidarity with the struggles each of us face and celebrate in one another’s joys.



### Process for Sharing:

- Select a facilitator
  - The facilitator is responsible for ensuring everyone has an opportunity for speaking, and for helping to move the conversation forward while maintaining the aforementioned guidelines.
- Open in prayer
  - Anyone in the group can offer the opening prayer. It can be a prayer from the heart asking the Holy Spirit to guide the conversation for the day. It can be a prayer of the Church that helps to focus the group.
- Greet one another
  - If not everyone in the group knows one another, it is good to share names, engage in icebreakers, or other ways to build some sense of familiarity.
- Encounter wisdom
  - The group may be reflecting on a passage from scripture, or other spiritual writings or sources. This should be reviewed together.
- Time in silence
  - It is good to spend some time together in silence before sharing. At least a minute if not more. This allows us to respond in our hearts to the context for reflection.
  - A selection of predetermined open-ended questions may be used to help begin the reflection process.
- Begin sharing
  - The floor can be opened to those who feel called to share their responses to the context for reflection.
  - Depending on the group, some may be more comfortable sharing in a particular order, others may prefer a “pop-corn” approach.
- Intercessory Prayer
  - After everyone who wishes to has shared, and any further conversation (as deemed appropriate) has concluded, all are invited to voice their prayers of intercession.
  - This helps us give voice to, and hear from one another, the realities that weigh upon us and focus our collective awareness on our dependency on and trust in God.
- Closing Prayer
  - A member of the group may close in prayer of thanksgiving. This may be a prayer from the heart or a common prayer of the Church.