



# SPX Small Groups

*Life is Better Together*



**Series Description** – New Year Resolutions. We've all made them. We look at the things about ourselves we don't like and resolve to change - to get in shape, reconnect with loved ones, get involved in church. To be spiritually healthy, you need to see yourself as God sees you. And God has 20/20 vision. When God looks at you he sees his child, filled with the Holy Spirit; a disciple of his Son called to share the Good News. In this series, discover how to live every day of this New Year seeing yourself as God does. Resolve to have 20/20 vision.

Hello SPX Small Groups,

Happy New Year! I pray your group will be a source of your personal growth in this New Year. Exciting things are happening in the world of small groups.

We are getting ready for **our next small group launch the weekends of January 25/26 and February 2/3**. We can use your help in two ways. First, if you can help with sign-ups in the back of church after masses those weekends, I'd love your assistance. Sign-up here: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/805094BAEA62EA7F94-help>. People who are in small groups are the best advertisements to join. Your authentic witness can really help someone on the fence to take a leap and actually sign up. It may not seem like a lot to say – “I get a lot out of my group” or “it is worth it to me to make some time for my spiritual life each week” or “my group members have helped me in ways I can't even describe.” But each of those statements will help a potential participant summon up the courage to sign up. Second, I will need leaders for some of these groups – training will be provided, but the best leaders are people who have been in small groups and understand how they work. If you would be willing to consider leading a new group, please let me know.

Also, **mark your calendars** for a small group event on Saturday February 15<sup>th</sup> from 9 AM – Noon. It will be good to get all the small groups together for some fun and spiritual replenishment. More information will come through your leaders, as the details become clear.

As always, I look forward to any feedback you have to share about this guide, and ask God's blessing on your group that it might be a fruitful place to grow.

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## Suggested Session Outline

Gather/Catch up: How was your week?

Opening Prayer: Make one up of your own or use the Examen together:

Some of our Church's great saints and spiritual writers encourage us to grow in faith by taking time each day to look at our lives - identifying a high and low. St. Ignatius of Loyola referred to this as a daily "Examen."

1. Begin by acknowledging God's presence.
2. Allow a few moments of silence to allow each member to briefly remember everything that happened in the past day.
3. Ask each member to reflect on these two questions:
  - For which moment of the day am I most grateful?
  - For which moment of the day am I least grateful?
4. Conclude by giving thanks to God for these moments and for any insights you gained. Ask God for grace for the day ahead.

Discuss: What did you take away from this week's message? Use the provided questions to dive deeper.

Resolutions: Is there anything you plan to do differently this week?

Closing prayer: Close your session with a prayer, making sure to find out whether anyone needs prayer in a specific area or for a specific person. Use this prayer if it is helpful:

*As we begin a new year, help us to see with your eyes. Let us see the blessings you set before us with eyes of wonder. Let us see others with eyes of compassion. Let us see ourselves with your 20/20 vision, so that we may embrace all that you call us to be in this new year. We ask all these things in Jesus Name. Amen.*

Week 1 – January 5 – Epiphany  
20/20 Vision - See the Newborn King

- 1) What kind of vision do you have? 20/20 or worse?
- 2) Did you make any New Year's resolutions this year? How convinced are you that they will succeed?
- 3) What is the longest a New Year's resolution you made ever lasted?
- 4) How would you explain the difference between how the world sees you and how God sees you?
- 5) The Magi saw the new star, and in response to gentle nudging by God, they left everything behind to seek out the newborn King. After they found him and offered him gifts, they went home by another way.
  - a. How did God nudge them?
  - b. How does God nudge you?
  - c. Have you ever ignored a nudge by God? What happened?
  - d. Why were the magi able to recognize something remarkable about this baby that so many others didn't see? What was it they saw?
  - e. Do you think the magi were changed by their encounter with Jesus?
  - f. How have you been changed by an encounter with Jesus?
- 6) What would you like to be spiritually different this year (in 2020)?
- 7) What did you hear in this week's message (or this discussion) that you need to work on? What steps can you take to move forward?

Since we **begin** a New Year with this series, please take a moment before you close to allow each person to share their thoughts on how this small group is going. Consider also taking a moment as a group to recommit to "show up, join in, and be real."

Week 2 – January 12 – Baptism of the Lord  
20/20 Vision - See the Son of God

- 1) If you could see better or hear better, which would you choose?
- 2) If you wear glasses, how did you realize you needed glasses?
- 3) Since Jesus was sinless, he had no need to be baptized. Why do you suppose he wanted to be baptized anyway?
- 4) After Jesus was baptized, a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Is it easy or difficult for you to imagine God saying the same thing about how you have lived out your baptismal calling? Why?
- 5) One of Satan's lies is that our sins aren't really all that bad so they are not a big deal. Why is that a lie? What is the best way to respond to a lie like that?
- 6) Temptation can be described as "when something we know is wrong is made to appear desirable or good." What temptations do you struggle with?
- 7) We live knowing we are both sinners and beloved sons and daughters of God, but occasionally we need to be reminded of one of these aspects of our lives. Which do you most need to be reminded of today?
- 8) Have you ever given much thought to your baptismal promises? Which of these baptismal promises is the easiest for you to fully live out? Which is the hardest?
  - Do you renounce sin, so as to live in the freedom of the children of God?
  - Do you reject the lure of evil, so that sin may have no mastery over you?
  - Do you reject Satan, the author and prince of sin?
  - Do you believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?
  - Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered death and was buried, rose again from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of the Father?
  - Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?
- 9) Why is it important to see both our positive attributes and our sinful side with the clarity of 20/20 vision? Are there ways this group can help you with that?

Week 3 – January 19 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time  
20/20 Vision - See the Lamb of God

- 1) What things do you tend to notice that other people don't see?
- 2) What is one thing people don't always see about you?
- 3) John the Baptist is able to recognize Jesus as the lamb of God because 'the spirit came down upon him like a dove and remained with him.'
  - a. What are some of the other ways people in the Gospels recognized that Jesus was divine?
  - b. How do you know that Jesus is not just one of us? When did you first really appreciate that Jesus was God?
  - c. What life aspects or events of Jesus' life are the most important to you in seeing Jesus clearly?
- 4) Do you think that people really experience signs from God? How can you be sure they really are from God?
- 5) How do you recognize a sign from God in your own life? What does it look like?
- 6) We tend to judge ourselves by our intentions and tend to be very forgiving (e.g., I was just trying to help, I didn't mean to do that). We tend to judge others by their results and tend to be very unforgiving (e.g., You didn't do something or your words were harsh).
  - a. How can we see our own actions more accurately?
  - b. How can we see others' actions more accurately?
  - c. If you had to judge using only one of these factors, would it be better to judge by intentions or results? Why?
  - d. Do you think God tends to judge us by our intentions, results, or both?
- 7) At the end of the Gospel, John is willing to testify that Jesus is the Son of God. What workings of God have you seen that you would be willing to testify about?
- 8) Are there ways that you could be more attentive to the movement of God in your life?

Week 4 – January 26 – 3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time  
20/20 Vision – See and Follow: Be My Disciple

In the gospel today, we see a pattern emerging – Jesus calls disciples, they leave everything they know behind, and join him – sharing in his work and learning from him. We are called to do the same.

- 1) Which do you like best – fishing, visiting an aquarium, or eating seafood?
- 2) Being a Christian involves both (a) understanding and following a set of beliefs and (b) friendship with and surrender to Jesus. Which aspect is the most essential to you?
- 3) When Jesus calls Peter and Andrew, he famously says “come after me and I will make you fishers of men.”
  - a. What does the term “fisher of men” mean to you?
  - b. If you were Peter or Andrew, would you have found that compelling?
  - c. How are you a fisher of men?
- 4) When Jesus calls James and John, they were working with their father in their boat, and they immediately leave him and the boat behind. Do you think their father was saddened by this or happy for them or was feeling something else?
- 5) Peter, Andrew, James and John pretty much left everything of life behind after meeting Jesus. Has God called you to leave anything behind? Did doing so help you serve his purpose or find your “mission in life”?
- 6) A disciple can be described as “someone who has encountered Jesus and surrendered their life to him.”
  - a. Using this definition, is there a difference between a practicing Catholic and a disciple? If so, how would you describe the difference?
  - b. Using this definition, would you consider yourself a disciple?
  - c. Sometimes we surrender parts of our life to Jesus, but hold back other parts. What parts have you surrendered? Are there any parts you are still holding onto?

Week 5 – February 2 – Presentation of the Lord  
20/20 Vision – See Your Own Salvation

- 1) Is there something that you long to do or a place you would like to visit before you die? What?
  - 2) In the Gospel, Simeon, who had been promised that he would not see death until he had seen the Christ, holds baby Jesus in his arms and says “for my eyes have seen salvation.” How would you understand salvation? Do you need it?
  - 3) Jesus is often described as our Lord and Savior. How is Jesus your Lord? How is he your savior?
  - 4) If Jesus is our savior, what are we being saved from?
  - 5) When we began this series (20/20 Vision), we said that to be spiritual healthy in the New Year, we need to see ourselves and others as God does. What have you learned about yourself in these past few weeks?
  - 6) Which of these statements are you comfortable with? Which do you struggle with?
    - I am beloved Child of God
    - I am a sinner
    - I am disciple
    - I am saved
    - I am watching and listening for God’s action in my life
    - I try to see others as God sees them
    - I have surrendered my life to Jesus (or am trying to do so)
    - I share in Jesus’ mission to be a fisher of men
    - I know my mission in life is to \_\_\_\_\_
  - 7) How would you describe your relationship (or desired relationship with Jesus)? How can this group help you develop or strengthen that relationship?
  - 8) Would you like to make any spiritual resolutions for 2020? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- How can this group help keep you accountable to those resolutions?

## WEEK ONE: Epiphany of the Lord

### Reading 1 IS 60:1-6

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come,  
the glory of the Lord shines upon you.  
See, darkness covers the earth,  
and thick clouds cover the peoples;  
but upon you the LORD shines,  
and over you appears his glory.  
Nations shall walk by your light,  
and kings by your shining radiance.  
Raise your eyes and look about;  
they all gather and come to you:  
your sons come from afar,  
and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see,  
your heart shall throb and overflow,  
for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you,  
the wealth of nations shall be brought to you.  
Caravans of camels shall fill you,  
dromedaries from Midian and Ephah;  
all from Sheba shall come  
bearing gold and frankincense,  
and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

### Responsorial Psalm PS 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13.

### Reading 2 EPH 3:2-3A, 5-6

Brothers and sisters:  
You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace  
that was given to me for your benefit,  
namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.  
It was not made known to people in other generations  
as it has now been revealed  
to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:  
that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body,  
and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

### Gospel MT 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea,  
in the days of King Herod,  
behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,

"Where is the newborn king of the Jews?  
We saw his star at its rising  
and have come to do him homage."  
When King Herod heard this,  
he was greatly troubled,  
and all Jerusalem with him.  
Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people,  
He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.  
They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea,  
for thus it has been written through the prophet:  
*And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
since from you shall come a ruler,  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.*"  
Then Herod called the magi secretly  
and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance.  
He sent them to Bethlehem and said,  
"Go and search diligently for the child.  
When you have found him, bring me word,  
that I too may go and do him homage."  
After their audience with the king they set out.  
And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them,  
until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.  
They were overjoyed at seeing the star,  
and on entering the house  
they saw the child with Mary his mother.  
They prostrated themselves and did him homage.  
Then they opened their treasures  
and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.  
And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod,  
they departed for their country by another way.

## **WEEK TWO: Baptism of the Lord**

### **Reading 1 IS 42:1-4, 6-7**

Thus says the LORD:

Here is my servant whom I uphold,  
my chosen one with whom I am pleased,  
upon whom I have put my spirit;  
he shall bring forth justice to the nations,  
not crying out, not shouting,  
not making his voice heard in the street.  
a bruised reed he shall not break,

and a smoldering wick he shall not quench,  
until he establishes justice on the earth;  
the coastlands will wait for his teaching.  
I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,  
I have grasped you by the hand;  
I formed you, and set you  
as a covenant of the people,  
a light for the nations,  
to open the eyes of the blind,  
to bring out prisoners from confinement,  
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

**Responsorial Psalm PS 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10**

**Reading 2 ACTS 10:34-38**

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Peter proceeded to speak to those gathered  
in the house of Cornelius, saying:  
“In truth, I see that God shows no partiality.  
Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly  
is acceptable to him.  
You know the word that he sent to the Israelites  
as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all,  
what has happened all over Judea,  
beginning in Galilee after the baptism  
that John preached,  
how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth  
with the Holy Spirit and power.  
He went about doing good  
and healing all those oppressed by the devil,  
for God was with him.”

**Gospel MT 3:13-17**

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Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan  
to be baptized by him.  
John tried to prevent him, saying,  
“I need to be baptized by you,  
and yet you are coming to me?”  
Jesus said to him in reply,  
“Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us  
to fulfill all righteousness.”  
Then he allowed him.  
After Jesus was baptized,  
he came up from the water and behold,

the heavens were opened for him,  
and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove  
and coming upon him.  
And a voice came from the heavens, saying,  
"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

## **WEEK THREE: Second Sunday of Ordinary Time**

### **Reading 1 IS 49:3, 5-6**

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The LORD said to me: You are my servant,  
Israel, through whom I show my glory.  
Now the LORD has spoken  
who formed me as his servant from the womb,  
that Jacob may be brought back to him  
and Israel gathered to him;  
and I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD,  
and my God is now my strength!  
It is too little, the LORD says, for you to be my servant,  
to raise up the tribes of Jacob,  
and restore the survivors of Israel;  
I will make you a light to the nations,  
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

### **Responsorial Psalm PS 40:2, 4, 7-8, 8-9, 10**

### **Reading 2 1 COR 1:1-3**

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Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,  
and Sosthenes our brother,  
to the church of God that is in Corinth,  
to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy,  
with all those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.  
Grace to you and peace from God our Father  
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Gospel JN 1:29-34**

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John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said,  
"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.  
He is the one of whom I said,  
'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me  
because he existed before me.'  
I did not know him,  
but the reason why I came baptizing with water  
was that he might be made known to Israel."

John testified further, saying,  
"I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven  
and remain upon him.  
I did not know him,  
but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me,  
'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain,  
he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'  
Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."

## **WEEK FOUR: Third Sunday of Ordinary Time**

### **Reading 1 IS 8:23—9:3**

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First the Lord degraded the land of Zebulun  
and the land of Naphtali;  
but in the end he has glorified the seaward road,  
the land west of the Jordan,  
the District of the Gentiles.  
Anguish has taken wing, dispelled is darkness:  
for there is no gloom where but now there was distress.  
The people who walked in darkness  
have seen a great light;  
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom  
a light has shone.  
You have brought them abundant joy  
and great rejoicing,  
as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,  
as people make merry when dividing spoils.  
For the yoke that burdened them,  
the pole on their shoulder,  
and the rod of their taskmaster  
you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.

### **Responsorial Psalm PS 27:1, 4, 13-14**

### **Reading 2 1 COR 1:10-13, 17**

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I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
that all of you agree in what you say,  
and that there be no divisions among you,  
but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.  
For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters,  
by Chloe's people, that there are rivalries among you.  
I mean that each of you is saying,  
"I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos,"

or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."  
Is Christ divided  
Was Paul crucified for you?  
Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?  
For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel,  
and not with the wisdom of human eloquence,  
so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.

### **Gospel MT 4:12-23 OR 4:12-17**

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When Jesus heard that John had been arrested,  
he withdrew to Galilee.

He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea,  
in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali,  
that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet  
might be fulfilled:

*Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,  
the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles,  
the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light,  
on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death  
light has arisen.*

From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say,  
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers,  
Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew,  
casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen.

He said to them,

"Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

At once they left their nets and followed him.

He walked along from there and saw two other brothers,  
James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John.

They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets.

He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father  
and followed him.

He went around all of Galilee,

teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom,  
and curing every disease and illness among the people.

## **WEEK FIVE: Presentation of the Lord**

### **Reading 1 MAL 3:1-4**

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Thus says the Lord God:

Lo, I am sending my messenger

to prepare the way before me;  
And suddenly there will come to the temple  
the Lord whom you seek,  
And the messenger of the covenant whom you desire.  
Yes, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts.  
But who will endure the day of his coming?  
And who can stand when he appears?  
For he is like the refiner's fire,  
or like the fuller's lye.  
He will sit refining and purifying silver,  
and he will purify the sons of Levi,  
Refining them like gold or like silver  
that they may offer due sacrifice to the Lord.  
Then the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem  
will please the Lord,  
as in the days of old, as in years gone by.

**Responsorial Psalm PS 24:7, 8, 9, 10**

**Reading 2 HEB 2:14-18**

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Since the children share in blood and flesh,  
Jesus likewise shared in them,  
that through death he might destroy the one  
who has the power of death, that is, the Devil,  
and free those who through fear of death  
had been subject to slavery all their life.  
Surely he did not help angels  
but rather the descendants of Abraham;  
therefore, he had to become like his brothers and sisters  
in every way,  
that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest before God  
to expiate the sins of the people.  
Because he himself was tested through what he suffered,  
he is able to help those who are being tested.

**Gospel LK 2:22-40 OR 2:22-32**

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When the days were completed for their purification  
according to the law of Moses,  
Mary and Joseph took Jesus up to Jerusalem  
to present him to the Lord,  
just as it is written in the law of the Lord,  
Every male that opens the womb shall be consecrated to the Lord,  
and to offer the sacrifice of

a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,  
in accordance with the dictate in the law of the Lord.  
Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon.  
This man was righteous and devout,  
awaiting the consolation of Israel,  
and the Holy Spirit was upon him.  
It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit  
that he should not see death  
before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.  
He came in the Spirit into the temple;  
and when the parents brought in the child Jesus  
to perform the custom of the law in regard to him,  
he took him into his arms and blessed God, saying:  
“Now, Master, you may let your servant go  
in peace, according to your word,  
for my eyes have seen your salvation,  
which you prepared in the sight of all the peoples:  
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,  
and glory for your people Israel.”  
The child’s father and mother were amazed at what was said about him;  
and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,  
“Behold, this child is destined  
for the fall and rise of many in Israel,  
and to be a sign that will be contradicted  
And you yourself a sword will pierce  
so that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”  
There was also a prophetess, Anna,  
the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher.  
She was advanced in years,  
having lived seven years with her husband after her marriage,  
and then as a widow until she was eighty-four.  
She never left the temple,  
but worshiped night and day with fasting and prayer.  
And coming forward at that very time,  
she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child  
to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.  
When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions  
of the law of the Lord,  
they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth.  
The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom;  
and the favor of God was upon him.