

RENEWAL *from the* HEARTLAND

Advent 2026
SMALL GROUPS

A small group faith-sharing resource, in four parts

THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

Made by the Archdiocese of KCK for the Archdiocese of KCK

INTRODUCTION

This four-session series is part of the archdiocesan Renewal from the Heartland pastoral planning process, which began in Lent 2026 with the Beatitudes from the Heartland small group faith-sharing series.

The four sessions for Advent 2026 draw from these past 10 months, most especially the Listening with the Heart synodal listening sessions and the results of an online survey.

Each session includes a Scripture passage, a section from Archbishop Shawn McKnight's pastoral letter on synodality, Renewal from the Heartland, and passages from papal documents.

The reflections are intended to encourage all Catholics to deepen their engagement in their faith and in their parishes, especially through participation in parish ministries and membership on parish councils.

All are invited to participate. This can include:

- New or established Bible study or faith-sharing groups.
- Members of a parish's pastoral, finance, stewardship and school advisory councils.
- Catechists, youth ministers or youth group leaders and teachers.
- Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, sacristans, lectors, hospitality ministers, choir members or others who fill a role for parish liturgies.
- Parish clergy and staff; and
- Anyone who wants to *grow in their faith*.

Based on the experiences of those who have participated in a series like this, if new small groups are formed, it is optimal for those groups to be composed of members who don't usually interact. For instance, a parish pastoral council member could form or join a small group of parishioners who are not part of the pastoral council or other ministries in which the pastoral council member is engaged. This encourages communication and planning across the entire parish.

Furthermore, those involved in ecclesial ministries and communities which overlap with our parishes are encouraged to promote and participate in this series. This includes religious communities, Catholic Charities, ministries for prisoners and their families, health care facilities, and communities organized around universities and high schools.

The content is similar and yet different from other small group faith-sharing material. Usually, faith-sharing groups exhibit five attributes: the members engage in prayer, faith sharing, learning, support and faith-directed action. The focus in these groups is typically on personal growth.

The sessions in this booklet support the five attributes given above. In addition, the content is intended to challenge each participant to go deeper into understanding their responsibilities as a baptized Catholic.

While participants can expect to grow personally in their faith, the goal is also to encourage a renewal and growth in the life and health of their parish, leading to a Renewal from the Heartland.

Learn more about Renewal from the Heartland at archkck.org/renewal-heartland.

How to use this program

To encourage healthy and Spirit-filled sessions, group members are encouraged to agree to abide by the following:

WELCOMING

- Prepare an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality to set the tone. Make sure the setting is comfortable (including the chairs) and that other activities or individuals will not interrupt the group.
- A welcoming and prayerful setting can also include a candle, Bible, crucifix and perhaps flowers, a table runner, an image or a prayer card to engender an atmosphere of recollection. **Simple is better than elaborate.**
- Encourage people to share something about themselves (if they do not know one another) as they gather initially.
- Keep the social and refreshment aspects to a minimum.
- Start and end on time. Each session should take 60-90 minutes.
- Plan for some "collection" time at the start of each meeting; allowing 5-10 minutes for all members to arrive, greet one another and settle in.
- Welcome members promptly. Don't let members visit too long. If anyone is causing a delay, gently remind them that they can continue their conversation after the meeting. Open your meeting in prayer. Use the "Opening Prayer" provided on pages 4-5.
- Close with the "Closing Prayer" on pages 5-6 at the end of each meeting.

SHARING

- Commit to coming prepared and being present at all sessions, except for emergencies. The group is lessened when a member is missing.
- Understand this is a "safe place" for people to share matters of the heart and soul. Respect others' need for confidentiality.
- Share honestly.
- Listen to others without "correcting," judging or attempting to preach at them. Ask questions to help you better understand another person's beliefs, opinions or knowledge.
- Help to ensure everyone who wants to speak has an opportunity to do so; do not interrupt others. Allow silence so those who are more hesitant may have the time to gather their thoughts.
- Help the group stay on topic.
- Pray for one another, your parish, the archdiocese and the universal Church between sessions.

Opening and Closing Prayers

Each of the four sessions uses the same opening and closing prayers.

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Let us begin with the sign of our faith: + In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In this season when we anticipate God becoming incarnate, becoming one with humanity, we pray together Mary's Fiat, joining Christians around the world who pray this every day in our Church's Liturgy of the Hours.

Leader recites the Antiphon for the appropriate Sunday:

- **First Sunday of Advent** (November 29, 2026): "To you, O Lord, I lift my soul; in you I trust, O my God."
- **Second Sunday of Advent** (December 6, 2026): "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."
- **Third Sunday of Advent** (December 13, 2026): "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!"
- **Fourth Sunday of Advent** (December 20, 2026): "The Lord is near; do not be anxious about anything."

All Together:

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior.

For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed.

The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him.

He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart.

He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly.

The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty.

He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.

(Luke 1:46-55)

All recite the Antiphon for the appropriate Sunday:

- **First Sunday of Advent** (November 29, 2026): "To you, O Lord, I lift my soul; in you I trust, O my God."
- **Second Sunday of Advent** (December 6, 2026): "Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths."
- **Third Sunday of Advent** (December 13, 2026): "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice!"
- **Fourth Sunday of Advent** (December 20, 2026): "The Lord is near; do not be anxious about anything."

All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Leader: As we gather to reflect on our personal journeys of conversion and our archdiocese's Renewal from the Heartland, we are mindful of St. John's words, which Archbishop Shawn McKnight used to open his pastoral letter on synodality: "[W]hat we have seen and heard, we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

All: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.

Leader: Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created,

All: and you shall renew the face of the earth. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Leader: We leave renewed by our time together reflecting on God's great blessings. What prayers of petition, thanksgiving or praise can we offer?

Spontaneous prayer, each ending with: ...Let us pray to the Lord.

Response: Lord, hear our prayer.

Leader: We conclude with our archdiocesan Prayer for Renewal from the Heartland.

All: O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus,
You know the hungers we cannot name,
and desire friendship with us.

Today we entrust to your Sacred Heart
a Renewal from the Heartland
for the people of the
Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas.

Teach us to listen with our hearts:
to hear your voice in silence,
to recognize your presence in one another,
and to discern the will of the Holy Spirit.

Bring about the conversion you desire in us.

Convert our relationships:
Where there is division, bring communion;
Where there is isolation, a sense of belonging;
Where there are wounds, healing and mercy.

Convert our processes for decision-making:
Free us from the temptation to begin with our own answers
and help us to discern together
where your Spirit leads us.
Form in us a true sense of co-responsibility,
where mutual respect
among the clergy, religious, and lay faithful
strengthens our ability
to be one Body in Christ.

Convert and strengthen the bonds between us:
Deepen our communion across parishes and deaneries,
and make us one Church,
walking together in mission.
Give us eyes to see those who are not yet with us,
ears to hear those whose voices we have not yet heard,
and hearts that desire to know them as you know them.

May all we discern and all that we do
transform our parishes
into centers of charity
and sanctuaries of mercy,
and make us missionary disciples,
with hearts aflame with your love.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus,
make our hearts like unto thine.
O Sacred Heart of Jesus,
have mercy on us.
Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us.

Amen.

MODULE I

THEME: Magnificent Humanity

This session provides text from Scripture and Church teaching which recognizes that God has created each one of us in his image and likeness. This includes the teaching that we are created for community.

OPENING PRAYER (see pages 4-5)

The Leader can ask individuals to alternate reading these paragraphs or ask people to read silently together.

Luke 10:30-37

But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead.

A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.

Likewise, a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.

But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight.

He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him.

The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.'

Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?"

He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

***Renewal from the Heartland*: *a Pastoral Letter on Synodality*, nos. 10-11**

People long to be known; they want a place where everyone knows their name. This longing is not primarily about being recognized at the local coffee shop or store, or for the priest to say one's name as they are leaving Mass. It is something more, something deeper. It is the longing of someone to know, even before a crisis arrives, that the Church will be there for them: The farmer who can't make ends meet; The mother who receives a terminal diagnosis; The veteran returning home from far away; The student who fears sitting alone in the cafeteria, or the whispers in the hallway; The immigrant struggling to support their family; The prisoner in despair, apart from family, church, and community.

What each of them, and each one of us, needs is the feeling of belonging to the Church and that we are known by the Church. While moments of personal crisis can be an opportunity for members of the Church "to proclaim glad tidings to the poor," our faith is stronger when that relationship exists prior to our moment of crisis.

Allow me to offer an example of how this desire for belonging was expressed by one participant in a listening session: "My wife had Alzheimer's. I was her sole caregiver. She got to the point where I could no longer get her to church. I put her name on the prayer list. For six months, we had no contact from anyone in our parish until 10 days before she died."

This is only one story that was shared. In hearing these stories as Catholics, we can pause and ask ourselves, "Is this not like the story of the Good Samaritan?"

***Magnifica Humanitas* (Pope Leo XIV), no. 50**

At the heart of the Christian understanding of the human person lies the great biblical affirmation that men and women are created in the image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-27) of the Triune God. Created for relationship, every human person is planned and willed by God to enter into communion with him, with others and with creation.

Human dignity does not depend on a person's abilities, wealth or position in life, nor on the right or wrong choices made; instead, it is a gift that precedes and transcends each person, endowed by God as an expression of his unfailing love. For this reason, the human person always remains the "way for the Church" and the heart of every authentic path of integral human development.

Reflection Questions:

1. Considering the parable of the Good Samaritan, do you have an experience where you received help from an unexpected person? Did you consider that person your neighbor?
2. Do I accept my limitations (of time, knowledge, fatigue) as a space that opens me to the help of God and others? Or do I seek, either through technology or a lifestyle where I can hire or buy to fulfill my needs, an "infinite power" that makes me believe I never need anyone? How does this attitude affect my commitment to my parish?
3. How do I know I "belong" to my parish or faith community? How can I help others know they "belong" to the church?

CLOSING PRAYER (see pages 5-6)

Go Deeper

- Make an intentional decision to ask for or accept help this week from another person. And make an intentional decision to reach out to someone you haven't communicated with recently, just to let them know you are thinking of them.
- To learn more about how people expressed their desire to belong to a faith community, read Archbishop McKnight's pastoral letter, Renewal from the Heartland, the synopses, by deanery, of the April Listening with the Heart synodal listening sessions and the online survey report at archkck.org/renewal-heartland.

MODULE II

THEME: Living as Missionary Disciples

This session draws from Scripture and Church teaching to reflect on what it means to be a missionary disciple, one who is constantly growing in one's understanding of God's love, mercy and justice.

OPENING PRAYER (see pages 4-5)

The Leader can ask individuals to alternate reading these paragraphs or ask people to read silently together.

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

All who believed were together and had all things in common;

they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need.

Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart,

praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Renewal from the Heartland: *a Pastoral Letter on Synodality*, no. 21

One of the clearest themes we heard across the archdiocese is the desire to move from a faith that is simply inherited or practiced by routine into a personal, lived relationship with Jesus Christ. Many people expressed deep gratitude for the formation they received as children, but they also named a real gap in ongoing adult formation. Some cradle Catholics said they practiced the faith for years out of habit or a sense of duty before they truly came to understand why the Church teaches what she teaches.

Converts and those who have gone through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) or the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) often describe how integrated adult formation changed their lives. And that has led many lifelong Catholics to ask for the same kind of formation for themselves: formation in Sacred Scripture, the Eucharist, Theology of the Body, apologetics, Church history, Catholic social teaching, and prayer.

Just as importantly, people told us that formation is most effective when it is relational and accessible. It cannot be limited only to formal lectures or preaching from the pulpit. It needs to happen in conversation, in small groups, and in settings where people can ask honest questions and grow together.

They also tell us it will mean offering formation at times that working adults, young parents, and busy families can actually attend. This second point goes back to how we understand making people feel welcomed and invited. Are we asking ourselves frequently enough, who is not here, and why not?

Even those who are physically present and trying to focus on their interior life realize that private prayer is not enough. Here's what one participant in a listening session said about prayer without works: "I can treat my faith like it's an individual thing. I go to Mass, and I pray, and I read the Scriptures, and I try to grow closer to Christ, and I just kind of have the temptation to keep to myself and keep my head down. Then I wonder why I feel so disconnected and lonely, and I feel like I don't have anyone to lean on."

We cannot find our way to heaven alone. Nor can we find it just by sitting in a pew and listening to a good homily. We need the Word of God to take flesh in our own lives.

Redemptoris Missio **(St. Pope John Paul II), no. 42**

People today put more trust in witnesses than in teachers, in experience than in teaching, and in life and action than in theories. The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission: Christ, whose mission we continue, is the "witness" par excellence (Revelations 1:5; 3:14) and the model of all Christian witness. The Holy Spirit accompanies the Church along her way and associates her with the witness he gives to Christ (cf. John 15:26-27).

The first form of witness is the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community, which reveal a new way of living. The missionary who, despite all his or her human limitations and defects, lives a simple life, taking Christ as the model, is a sign of God and of transcendent realities.

But everyone in the Church, striving to imitate the Divine Master, can and must bear this kind of witness; in many cases it is the only possible way of being a missionary.

The evangelical witness which the world finds most appealing is that of concern for people, and of charity toward the poor, the weak and those who suffer. The complete generosity underlying this attitude and these actions stands in marked contrast to human selfishness. It raises precise questions which lead to God and to the Gospel. A commitment to peace, justice, human rights and human promotion is also a witness to the Gospel when it is a sign of concern for persons and is directed toward integral human development.

Reflection Questions:

1. The description in Acts of the early Christian community is challenging to most Christians. What part of the passage that we read is challenging to me?
2. Who has helped me grow in my faith and my understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Christ? How do I accompany others on their journey of faith?
3. Do we plan parish activities that support people in their efforts to be missionary disciples? What opportunities for accompaniment are offered in support of the faith of parishioners? What areas can be improved?

CLOSING PRAYER (see pages 5-6)

Go Deeper

- Find one specific way you can align your behavior with the behavior of the Christians described in Acts.
- In keeping with the call of recent popes for Catholics to evangelize, the USCCB Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis developed in 2017 Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization (*www.usccb.org/committees/evangelization-catechesis/living-missionary-disciples*). This leadership resource provides principles of evangelization and missionary discipleship, with resources designed for pastoral leaders to develop, enhance, and review their own local strategies to create an evangelizing parish.

MODULE III

THEME: The Whole is Greater than the Sum of the Parts: The Common Good

The common good is an important teaching for Catholics. This session offers passages from Scripture and Church teaching which encourage a reflection on how individuals and faith communities can cause the common good to flourish.

OPENING PRAYER (see pages 4-5)

The Leader can ask individuals to alternate reading these paragraphs or ask people to read silently together.

Matthew 25:34-40

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.'

Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?

When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?

When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'

And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Renewal from the Heartland: *a Pastoral Letter on Synodality*, nos. 25-26

Let us be mindful that we use the word "poor" not only to describe someone who has little material resources. Scripture also raises up the "poor in spirit." Sometimes the poor look very much like us, family and neighbors who have much to teach us about the Gospel and its demands.

Many participants in Listening with the Heart shared painful experiences of judgment, loneliness, racial or language barriers, alienation after divorce or annulment processes, clerical scandals, or being told they weren't needed anymore as a volunteer.

Their witness calls the Church to take up a posture of mercy — to love first, to honor each person's dignity, to listen patiently, and to rebuild trust where wounds have been carried for a long time. This is especially the case for those who carry the trauma of abuse by those who held a sacred trust within the Church community.

We must understand that the full breadth of Catholic social teaching connects the Sunday Eucharist to the Monday workplace, to Friday evening socializing, and beyond. My hope for our archdiocese is that every parish becomes known for its integral Catholic community life. Not because we have the most programs or the finest facilities. Those things matter, but they are not what people remember when life becomes difficult. What they remember is whether the Church was there for them. Whether someone noticed. Whether someone listened. Whether, in the hour they most needed mercy, they discovered they had already been known.

This is what I mean when I speak of our parishes becoming centers of charity and sanctuaries of mercy. A center of charity is a community where the love of Christ is made visible through concrete corporal works of mercy. A sanctuary of mercy is a place where no one carries suffering alone, because the Body of Christ has already drawn near by the action of the Holy Spirit.

This kind of parish will never be built by the pastor working harder. It will be built when every ministry, every council, every budget begins with asking the same question: How will this help someone know that Christ knows them and loves them? It requires all of us to listen to the same Spirit, becoming the One Body of Christ for the world.

Caritas in Veritate **(Pope Benedict XVI), no. 7**

Besides the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of "all of us," made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society. It is a good that is sought not for its own sake, but for the people who belong to the social community and who can only really and effectively pursue their good within it. To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity. To take a stand for the common good is on the one hand to be solicitous for, and on the other hand to avail oneself of, that complex of institutions that give structure to the life of society, juridically, civilly, politically and culturally, making it the pólis, or "city." The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors, the more effectively we love them. Every Christian is called to

practice this charity, in a manner corresponding to his vocation and according to the degree of influence he wields in the pólis. This is the institutional path — we might also call it the political path — of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbor directly, outside the institutional mediation of the pólis. When animated by charity, commitment to the common good has greater worth than a merely secular and political stand would have.

Magnifica Humanitas (Pope Leo XIV), no. 61

In this sense, we can say that the whole is "greater than the sum of its parts" and that, for this very reason, "the mere sum of individual interests is not capable of generating a better world for the whole human family." Indeed, it is an illusion to think that simply pursuing one's own progress without caring for others is sufficient for contributing to the good of all. This view ignores the inherent and specific value of the common good, which is the result of an "interdependence" that creates a network of social good that expands and has an impact on people. The common good is a "plus," the result of interaction and mutual influence that connects various actions, initiatives, efforts and decisions. If we were to add up the individual goods, we could not explain the existence of this "plus" that transcends them and, at the same time, enriches them.

Reflection Questions:

1. When you interact with those who are less valued by others, how does that change your relationship with God?
2. Who are the "poor in spirit" in your community? What examples can you share about how people worked together to create something that truly created a "network of social good" for all?
3. What is needed in your parish to create a culture in which the common good can flourish?

CLOSING PRAYER (see pages 5-6)

Go Deeper

- Consider one way that your parish could deepen its work as a center of charity and sanctuary of mercy, as described by Archbishop McKnight. Have a conversation with a member of your parish's pastoral council about your idea.
- Pope Leo's first encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas* (Magnificent Humanity), is subtitled "On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence." The Holy Father begins with Genesis, then reflects on the New Testament, and provides a summation of Church teachings in the last century to show the common theme that God created mankind in his image and declared his creation to be "very good" (Genesis 1:26-31). www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html

MODULE IV

THEME: Discerning the Gifts of the Faithful

In this final session, passages from Scripture and Church teaching remind us of the great diversity of gifts and how all gifts are to be placed in service to the community.

OPENING PRAYER (see pages 4-5)

The Leader can ask individuals to alternate reading these paragraphs or ask people to read silently together.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit;
there are different forms of service but the same Lord;
there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.
To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit.

Renewal from the Heartland: a Pastoral Letter on Synodality, nos. 12-14

People shared that what helps them move from simply attending Mass to truly feeling connected are often simple, personal invitations and connections: Come join our small faith-sharing group or the men's or women's groups. Be with us on a retreat. Join me in this service opportunity. Repeatedly, people named these moments as the turning points where they stopped feeling anonymous and began to feel known.

At the same time, participants also reminded us that entering parish life can be hard. One parent told us how they enrolled their daughter, who attended public school, in a CYO track program as an intentional way to meet other Catholic families at their parish. She was the only public-school student on the team. After several meets, their daughter shared that the other parents from their parish did not cheer for her when she raced. Her sense of exclusion shaped her parents' perspective on families who send their children to Catholic schools.

Long-standing friendships, family networks, large parishes, small, tight-knit parishes, busy schedules — these can create barriers that insiders may not even

notice. Just like the parents who are focused on their own children, we don't consider how our behaviors may tell someone they aren't really a member of our team or our community.

For newcomers, converts, returning Catholics, single adults, childless couples, divorced persons, and non-Catholic spouses, and even the husband housebound with a wife with dementia, those barriers can feel overwhelming.

That is why hospitality cannot be only a greeting at the door. It must become ongoing accompaniment — personal follow-up, relationship-building, and the patient work of helping each person know they belong.

Evangelii Gaudium **(Pope Francis), nos. 130-131**

The Holy Spirit also enriches the entire evangelizing Church with different charisms. These gifts are meant to renew and build up the Church. They are not an inheritance, safely secured and entrusted to a small group for safekeeping; rather they are gifts of the Spirit integrated into the body of the Church, drawn to the center which is Christ and then channeled into an evangelizing impulse. A sure sign of the authenticity of a charism is its ecclesial character, its ability to be integrated harmoniously into the life of God's holy and faithful people for the good of all. Something truly new brought about by the Spirit need not overshadow other gifts and spiritualities in making itself felt. To the extent that a charism is better directed to the heart of the Gospel, its exercise will be more ecclesial. It is in communion, even when this proves painful, that a charism is seen to be authentic and mysteriously fruitful. On the basis of her response to this challenge, the Church can be a model of peace in our world.

Differences between persons and communities can sometimes prove uncomfortable, but the Holy Spirit, who is the source of that diversity, can bring forth something good from all things and turn it into an attractive means of evangelization. Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise up diversity, plurality and multiplicity while at the same time bringing about unity. When we, for our part, aspire to diversity, we become self-enclosed, exclusive and divisive; similarly, whenever we attempt to create unity on the basis of our human calculations, we end up imposing a monolithic uniformity. This is not helpful for the Church's mission.

Reflection Questions:

1. Who are those whose gifts are not acknowledged in our parishes? Who is routinely ignored, discarded or made invisible in our parish's work?
2. What is one thing that each of us could do to listen attentively to someone whose gifts may not be obvious or considered valuable by others?
3. What barriers could our parish remove so that people know their gifts and experiences are welcomed?

CLOSING PRAYER (see pages 5-6)

Go Deeper

- Consider composing a report from your group's discussions over the four sessions and presenting it to your pastor and pastoral council.

Learn more about Renewal from the Heartland at archkck.org/renewal-heartland.

NOTES



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