

Facilitating Small Groups/Communities

Forming Missionary Disciples!



V ENCUESTRO
DISCÍPULOS MISIONEROS: TESTIGOS DEL AMOR DE DIOS
MISSIONARY DISCIPLES: WITNESSES OF GOD'S LOVE

Logistics of Small Groups for V Encuentro

- **Parish Encuentro Team** oversees the groups/Facilitators
- Form groups now. What groups already exist? How will you invite? Sign ups? Locations?
- **All Catholics** of all backgrounds are encouraged and welcomed to be part of the V Encuentro process...parishes, movements, SCCs, schools, campus ministry, organizations...
- **Children** in groups if they can follow the conversation and participate – **Adaptations? Please share...**
- **5 Sessions** – weekly, biweekly, other
- Lent? Easter? **Complete first half of 2017**
- **7-12 members per group is ideal**
- Meet in homes, parish grounds, schools, prisons, offices, funeral homes, parks, community rooms, hospitals...
- **90 minutes per session**
- **Music** found at www.vencuentro.org



Responsibilities of Small Group Facilitators



1. Prepare the space for the group to meet.
2. Guide the conversation, ensuring that everyone is welcomed and has a chance to participate.
3. Procure and distribute the symbols and any other materials to be used for each of the sessions.
4. Keep records of who participated in the sessions, respecting privacy and confidentiality.
5. Submit a report to the Parish Encuentro Team (or coordinating team) at the end of the five session experience.



Facilitating a Small Group Conversation (Dialogue)

1. Create an inclusive environment

- Invite participants to introduce themselves.
- Share expectations for effective dialogue.
- Invite everyone to express their opinions and thoughts.
- Allow for the sharing of alternate views. *You're Invited!*
- Treat participants with respect and consideration.
- Be aware of barriers to sharing (cultural, social, experiential, etc.)
- Invite and encourage all participants to share at least once before inviting participants to share again.

Facilitating a Small Group Conversation (Dialogue)

2. Keep discussions constructive and positive

- Stay centered on the topic.
- Follow the process indicated for each session.
- Keep the group on task.
- If the group starts to veer in the direction of negativity and/or pointless venting, ask them how they would like to address this.
- Request respect if participants challenge others' ideas.
- Ask dominant participants to allow others to speak.
Did everyone get a chance to speak before I do again?



Facilitating a Small Group Conversation (Dialogue)

3. Encourage participation

- Do not be the first one to respond to a question!
- Invite the quiet participants to contribute without forcing them.
- Encourage others to add their reactions or ideas to build on previous comments.
- Revisit past contributions and incorporate them into subsequent discussions.
- Do not be afraid of silence. Allow for it.
- Rephrase questions, summarize sharing, ask:
What are you thinking? What are your feelings?



Session 1: Called to a Loving Encounter with Jesus in the Church

- Symbols and Supplies:
 - Nametags
 - Chairs in a circle
 - Image of a Path in center
 - **Blindfolds** (one for each participant)
 - Music and player/speakers (Resources/Music) www.vencuentro.org/v-encuentro-documents/music/
 - Prayer (Celebrate)
 - Blindfolds
 - Small pieces of paper and pens
 - Prayer on page 14 (Saint Teresa of Avila)
 - Music and player/speakers
 - **V Encuentro Mission and Consultation Journal**




Session 2: With Words and Actions: Do It!

- Symbols and Supplies
 - Nametags
 - Chairs in a circle
 - Image of a Path
 - **Bottle of Water** (for each participant)
 - Music and player/speakers
 - Prayer (Celebrate)
 - Clear bowl with water
 - Green plant with leaves
 - Containers that workers or immigrants use for water
 - Soft music sounds of water flowing
 - Bottle of water for each participant
 - Music and player/speakers





Session 3: Walking Together with Jesus

- Symbols and Supplies
 - Chairs in a circle
 - Image of the Path in the center
 - On a table
 - **Bible**
 - Basket with **V Encuentro Wristbands** (2 for each participant)
 - Music and player/speaker
 - Prayer (Celebrate)
 - Lit candles
 - Flowers
 - Incense
 - Table with Bible and wristbands
 - Music and player/speaker






Session 4: Bearing Fruits of New Life

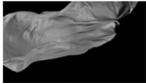
- Symbols and Supplies
 - Chairs in a circle
 - Image of a path in the center
 - **Candle**
 - Basket with **bread**
 - Music and player/speakers
 - Prayer (Celebrate)
 - A candle placed high
 - Basket with enough bread for all participants
 - Tea light candles for all participants
 - Music and player/speakers





Session 5: Celebrating the Joy of Being Missionary Disciples

- Symbols and Supplies
 - Chairs in a circle
 - Image of the Path in the center
 - Basket with the **V Encuentro Crosses**
 - Candle and Open Bible
 - Prayer
 - Large Cross
 - Side table with wreath of flowers and white cloth
 - White paper cross and pens
 - Tape





Leading a Group in Contemplative and Reflective Prayer

- **Reflection**
 - The **opportunity to pause, quiet ourselves and review what is before us and what is inside us**
 - **Non-judgmental way of perceiving** in which we **become more present to our Encuentro experience.**
 - We **listen to our experience**, paying attention to **how it is speaking to us** and to **what is occurring within us and the group.**



Leading a Group in Contemplative and Reflective Prayer



- **Prayer**
 - **A turning toward God through the words we are sharing with an open heart.**
 - In prayer, we **become more aware of God's presence in the Encuentro** and we **seek a deeper understanding.**
 - **Praying as a group also opens us to a great appreciation of God's presence in our ministry, and inspires us to act as a community.**

Leading a Group in Contemplative and Reflective Prayer



- **Contemplation**
 - **Clearing the mind of outside concerns** so that **God's voice may more easily be heard** and **be united with the movement of the Spirit within oneself and the group.**
 - **The necessary silence, waiting to and listening to hear from God.**

Leading a Group in Contemplative and Reflective Prayer

- **Role of the Spiritual Leader**
 - Leading Group **Contemplative/Reflective Prayer**
 - Prepare with **personal prayer.**
 - **Begin and conclude the gathering with prayer** as indicated.
 - The **first step is slowing down and refocusing attention.**
 - **Speak slowly and meaningfully.**
 - **Be open to being guided** into this by the Spirit.



Leading a Group in Contemplative and Reflective Prayer



- **Role of the Spiritual Leader**
 - Leading a Group in **Faith Sharing**
 - The role of the facilitator is one of **listening and encouraging** by inviting group members to participate.
 - The facilitator **does not provide answers to personal faith questions** participants might have.
 - The facilitator is **not a teacher** who instructs, **nor a judge** who renders verdicts, **or a counselor** who provides spiritual or moral guidance.
 - Remind all of the importance of maintaining **confidentiality** so that a trust level grows in the group and all are honored.

Facilitator Best Practices



- Spend time in prayer before each session.
- Read the entire content of each session before meeting with the small group. Answer questions for yourself and jot down ideas before meeting. Dream.
- Assign adequate time for the completion of each of the five moments of the session.
- Develop a strategy to facilitate the conversation.
- Confirm that the number of symbols to be handed out at each session matches that of the participants in your small group.
- Test media equipment before the session.

Facilitator Best Practices cont.



- Arrive at least 15 minutes before your small group meets to prepare the sacred space.
- Make sure that the meeting space is free of interruptions and noises that will distract.
- Offer a warm welcome to every participant in your small group. Nametags if needed.
- Make sure that the interaction among the group is always inviting, welcoming, respectful and affirming.
- At the first session, ask all participants for their preferred contact method (email, text, etc.).
- At the end of each session, thank all participants, and remind them of the day and time of the next meeting.

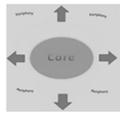
Missionary Activity

- The **V Encuentro** embraces a spirit of the New Evangelization and the vision of a Church that goes forth and reaches out.
- At the **end of each session**, all participants are invited to take part in a simple **missionary action**.
- This action is an opportunity to witness one's identity as a **missionary disciple** of Jesus Christ.
- Also, it is an invitation to go into the **peripheries** of our Church and our society.



The Periphery?

- Places where our sisters and brothers are vulnerable, excluded, treated as outsiders, living in fear, isolated, ignored, invisible.
- Pope Francis reminds us that as baptized Christians, Catholics must embrace the call from Jesus Christ “to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel.”
- Each community, each family, each person must identify the immediate peripheries and then go and meet people there with a message of love and hope in a spirit of accompaniment.
- Many Hispanic Catholics—as well as other Catholics—live in the peripheries of our Church and society.
- We are called to bring the light of the Gospel to all these groups.



12 Tips for Missionary Activities

1. Choose your missionary partner. The Lord sent his disciples in pairs (Lk 10:1).
2. If you are reaching out to people you know, contact them in advance of the visit.
3. If you are going to the periphery, engage people in a natural and polite way, showing authentic interest in getting to know them.
4. Pray for wisdom before going to visit someone. Pray in thanksgiving after returning.
5. Bring some information about your parish or faith community to share.
6. Missionaries should not visit or contact minors under the age of 18 without the presence of a parent or adult following Safe Environment Guidelines.




12 Tips for Missionary Activities cont.

7. Be natural and enthusiastic. Speak about what you know and what you have experienced as a Christian.
8. Be respectful. Avoid entering into controversies.
9. Use the questions in the *Mission and Consultation Journal*. **RESPECT** Then, listen... listen attentively and lovingly.
10. Keep the conversation short.
11. Write a few notes and respond to questions in the *Mission and Consultation Journal* after your return.
12. If you have any questions, consult with the leaders of the V Encuentro team in your parish or faith community.



Possible Scenarios - Visitation

- We are a new Catholic family in the area...
- I am no longer a practicing Catholic...
- I am angry at the Church because...
- I am too busy at this time to talk...
- I am not a Catholic and I practice my faith at...
- I do not go to any church...
- Why are you visiting me?



Mission and Consultation Journal

During the **first session** all participants in the five session experience will receive a **notebook** called **The V Encuentro Mission and Consultation Journal**.

This **Journal** will help you to:

- **Reflect** on your own experience of the V Encuentro Sessions
- **Engage** people in the peripheries, build relationships, and ask questions
- **Discern & Write** down new insights gained from this missionary experience and fill out the consultation form weekly