

Holy Eucharist Small Groups Facilitator Guidelines:

- The first session should remind members what Small Groups are about (Principles of Small Groups) and to look at the discussion guidelines on the next page – to include being respectful, honest, open, and confidential – each person interacts on their level of comfort.
- Small Groups are not a debate, problem solving or Scripture Study. They are an opportunity for an individual to encounter conversations and actions with others on their own discipleship paths and growing in relationship with each other and God. – at Holy Eucharist, they are the path for member care.
- Facilitators are for guiding the discussion not teaching. Encourage silence, reflection and interaction.
- Grow comfortable with silence – silence is a good thing. At each meeting, allow plenty of time for group members to consider possible personal application
- In discussions, incorporate connections, activity and events that are happening at the church. Let natural talks surround Father's homilies.
- Include sharing about the action commitment for the week. living the faith. This is the key to the spiritual growth for both individual and community.
- At the beginning of each meeting, take time to follow up on "living your faith" from the previous meeting – Where did you see God in your life? How did you live your faith this past week? At the end, pray that God will lead members to apply what they've learned
- Overcoming tangents or uncomfortable moment in a Small Group- **Acknowledge**: that you hear the person (ex: "You certainly feel strongly about this"). **Affirm**: validate the person for who he or she is (ex: "I can see why you feel that way".) **Redirect**: Show how the issue should not and cannot be addressed in the faith-sharing session (ex: "we're not trained counselors" or "at this session we are not going to be able to change the Church's/media/society's position") **Refocus**: get the group back on track (ex: even though this is hard to resolve, we can look at what Jesus is calling us to learn from the material") **If there is a sensitive topic that requires professional need, encourage this next step privately (Priest, Deacon, Counselor, etc)**
- As facilitators, aim to pray for your group, and reach out to those who aren't interacting in the group – be sure they are comfortable. Also reach out to those who missed a session or two. Consider the environment that the group is gathering in as well – ex: light a candle; have a Bible accessible. During groups, make sure cellphones are on silent...and turn the TV off unless needed.

Groups are about member care and encouraging disciple growth through prayer, faith sharing, mutual support, learning and action in our daily lives. Disciples are made by other disciples. it's not primarily about digesting information but spending time with those becoming like Christ.

Individuals in groups are meant to grow deeper together, but we encourage the time to grow "wider" – this includes discerning when to grow outward and seeking another group or even leading a new group – are stories becoming predictive, is action becoming stagnant, is an individual unable to make a scheduled time? Encourage in these moments what a member should consider – The Small Group Committee can support a facilitator and member in these moments.

Holy Eucharist General Discussion Guidelines for Small Groups:

This document should be encouraged at every first meeting

General guidelines

- Allow everyone the chance to speak.
- Do not interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
- What is shared in the discussion circle, stays in the discussion circle. Keep confidential any personal information that comes up in the conversation.
- Embrace the silence – Participants should be given some time to reflect.
- This is sacred time. We enter into our discussions deliberately, as a community that has chosen to faith share together.
- We greet each other, we become aware that we are in the presence of God, and we pray for the grace to grow in faith.

As you listen to other participants...

- Listen carefully and respectfully, without interrupting.
- Be aware that tone and body language are powerful communicators. Show respectful listening by facing and looking at the speaker, making eye contact, staying quiet, nodding, etc.

When it is your turn to speak...

- Share briefly from your own experiences.
- Use “I” statements to state your views.
- Build on others’ comments. Acknowledge them, even if you disagree.
- Be careful not to generalize about people and/or experiences.

Speaking up...

- If you think something is missing from the conversation, do not wait for someone else to say it; say it yourself.
- If you find another’s statement to be problematic, do speak up.
- Try not to silence yourself out of concern for what others will think about what you say.

When interacting with other participants...

- Commit to learning, not debating.
- Challenge or criticize ideas, not individuals.
- Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language.
- Be careful about putting other participants on the spot. Do not demand that others speak for a group that you perceive them to represent.