



Touching the Heart: prayer in parishes

Workbook

With Archdeacon Paul Feheley

(This booklet may be copied for workshop participants)

Produced by:
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1. Visiting St. Bridget's

Focus: establishing a realistic benchmark for prayer as it currently is in your parish.

Personal: Have you ever been in the position of Sam and Sally seeker? Where have you gone to find out about prayer? What responses did you get? What was helpful and what was not helpful?

Parish: If Sam and Sally Seeker came into your parish today, what would they learn about prayer?
How do you think the responses would be similar to those on the tape? How would they be different?

What would they learn? What would they find out about prayer? Would anything important be missing? If yes, what?

2. Strategy for Prayer (atmosphere for prayer)

Focus: to begin creating "an atmosphere for prayer" in your parish.

Personal: What do you think is meant by creating an "atmosphere for prayer"? How has prayer affected your life? What do you think would bring others to join you in prayer?

Parish: What activities currently go on in the parish? Is prayer incorporated into each of these? If yes, how? If not, why not?

Is there an "atmosphere for prayer" in your parish life? If not, how could you create the atmosphere of prayer that is being talked about in this section?

Have we made resources available for people? What are the resources and are they being used? Are they helpful and effective in terms of the overall life of the parish?

How could prayer permeate the life of the parish?

3: Developing Prayer in the Parish **(5 P words)**

Focus: Discuss each aspect of prayer represented by the 5 "P" words and use them as threads for conversation regarding prayer. Discuss each from both personal and parish perspective.

Personal (relationship) How is a personal relationship with God reflected in prayer in your life and parish?

Purpose (focus) What is the focus of prayer in your life and parish? How do we move our focus in prayer towards God, while still interceding for ourselves or others?

Passion (intimacy with God) How do our prayers reflect intimacy with God?

Priority (importance) How do we make prayer our priority, or do we allow other issues of life to push prayer way down our list of priorities?

Permanent (place) How sustainable is prayer in your life and the life of your parish?

What's the discipline of prayer in your life and the life of the parish

What do you think begins to happen when prayer becomes real in these 5 areas? (individually and corporately)

By the end of this session, you should have a fairly realistic picture of the prayer life of your parish. This is an important part of this workshop.

4: What is Prayer?

Focus: Individualizing a response to the question "What is prayer?" and discussing issues that come up.

Discuss what prayer is and what it isn't.

When you begin to practice prayer, what are the questions that come up?

Why don't people pray? Are they afraid they won't have the words? Do they find it too personal? Do they want their privacy respected? Are they afraid of others knowing their hurts and needs? What impedes our own prayer life?

These are the thoughts or questions that were discussed in this section.

"You don't have to be an expert."

"Unfortunately, intercession can become, too often, a forum for gossip."

"Liturgical prayer can become praying by rote."

"What is the role of prayer chains?"

Are any of these questions and concerns your questions or concerns?

What are the questions about prayer that arise from your own personal experience and/or from your group/parish? Please discuss the questions/concerns that people in your group have and work towards answers.

5: Prayer from the Heart

Focus: To continue discussion on questions that arise regarding prayer especially the issues of "prayer from the heart" and "staying focused in prayer".

Personal: How has prayer affected your life, or moved your heart?

1. How do we know a prayer comes from the heart? Is it in the language? Is it the emotions we feel? What is the meaning of touching the heart in prayer for you?

Discuss any questions that have come up in your experience of prayer, and when you have truly felt that prayer has touched your own heart, or prayed for someone truly from the heart. How did you know this? What happened when prayer came from the heart?

2. Discuss staying focused in prayer. Have you ever felt the Holy Spirit nudging you to pray for someone? Have you ever been truly distracted while trying to pray? What helps you to stay focused? How do you determine if you're just distracted, or if the Holy Spirit is prompting your thoughts?

Parish: Are there any other issues that have come up in your parish, that haven't been explored in these last two sections? Please discuss and seek answers from your group.

6: Revisiting St. Bridget's.

Focus: to establish "an atmosphere for prayer" in your parish and link personal and parish prayer.

Personal: Thinking back to the opening: Please feel free to reflect on and share if you wish, your own experiences of seeking prayer.

What was good about your experiences? What would you change?

Parish: Just as in the first section Sam and Sally seeker have come to your parish. What are the answers that you would give them now?

Please have a person in your group pick each one of the roles and answer Sam and Sally's query about prayer as that person.

1. In the roles: If you were the rector/organist/church school leader/prayer group coordinator etc. what would you now say to Sam and Sally?

2. As yourself: There are many seekers who may come to your church. What would you yourself say to the seekers who come to your church? How could you be open to seekers outside the church setting?

How is your parish going to be different now that you have had this workshop? Is there anything you would change about prayer in your life, or the life of your parish as a result of these workshops?

What changes would you like to see in your parish with respect to prayer? How do we meet people where they're at?

What would be the ideal answers your parish could give Sam and Sally seeker if they came to your church a year from today?

What would you need to do between now and next year to reach this ideal?

What resources for prayer could you begin to make available in your parish?

"God our sustainer, helper and redeemer, we come to you with grateful and open hearts, to hear your voice speak to our hearts, minds and spirits. We welcome your work in our midst. Bring us into communion with you. Heal our hearts. Call forth your good gifts in this parish of _____, that we may be known as a place where your people walk in your presence and where all hearts may come to be healed."

"Loving God, source of all light and goodness. Lead us now as we go forth from this place, so that we may walk in your wisdom. Let your Holy Spirit guide each of us, so that your light may touch others through us."



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