

INTRODUCTION

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were..., Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you."

» JOHN 20:19

TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, COMMUNAL PRAYER CAN BE DIFFICULT THESE DAYS. Many of us are unable to gather in large groups and so must attempt to pray together through video conferencing software not designed to facilitate liturgy. Even if we are able to gather, we're distanced, perhaps unable to sing, and limited in our traditional ways of interacting both with ritual action and with one another.

But despite these difficulties, we can (and must) still pray together. Good prayer is still possible and, indeed, more important than ever. Just as Jesus appeared to the disciples though they were locked away in hiding, we know that Christ can and will be present when we convene—virtually or socially distanced—and call upon his name.

As with all good prayer, planning must be intentional, holistic, and inclusive. For more information on prayer planning, including suggested techniques, practices, and other support resources, consult *A Future with Hope: Complete Leader's Guide*.

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You will find suggestions below for planning prayer for two different circumstances: gathering for virtual prayer and gathering for socially distanced prayer. In both situations, the most important item to remember is this: prayer will be different from what you would normally have experienced, and that's okay! For those of us who plan and lead prayer, the changes that we must implement can be heartbreaking and frustrating. But lamenting what is lost closes us off to the opportunities for what might be. It also causes us to give in to the temptation to try to stuff the prayer experience we usually would use into a new format. This rarely works, as the prayer itself is either incompatible with the realities of virtual or distanced gathering or it does not acknowledge and incorporate these new realities.

The Way: The Call to Discipleship

Opening Prayer

- Morning/Evening Prayer from the Breviary
- Lord, Teach Us To Pray from *A Future With Hope* (pages 21-26)
- Plan your own: *A Future With Hope* (pages 50-62) offers guides and resources for planning liturgical prayer with and for youth.

Greeting

At the conclusion of prayer, introduce yourself (if necessary) and provide a brief outline of how the retreat is structured. You might ask participants questions about their goals for the retreat and/or engage them in an ice-breaker activity.

Readings

Students should be assigned the following readings *in advance* of Session 1: [Matthew 5:13–16](#)

[Jesus Tells Us To Become Fire](#)—Jessie Bazan

Ask a participant to read the passage from the Gospel of Matthew aloud. At the conclusion, allow for a period of silent reflection.

DISCUSSION

- *What lines struck you from either the Matthew Scripture or the Bazan article? Why?*
- *What ideas are you finding challenging?*
- *How might you “claim your flame”? What are you currently hiding under a basket? How can you let that light shine?*

- *If everyone were to live the fire of their baptism, what would it mean for this confirmation class? Our community? Our world?*

Video

Participants should watch the following video as a group: [**Pope Francis—Recognize Your God-given gifts!**](#)

DISCUSSION

- *Upon first hearing, it might seem like Pope Francis' opening remarks are at odds with what we read in the Bazan article. What does Pope Francis mean when he says one cannot figure out on their own what their charism is?*
- *What are the gifts and talents that have been identified by your community? How have you used these gifts in service to your community?*
- *Let's talk more about the difference of using one's gift for one's self versus for the good of the community. Can you share some examples of either approach?*


Testimonies

Two or three participants may be invited to offer personal testimonies on the following topic:

The Discernment of Gifts

Sample prompts for this testimony:

- What gifts of the Spirit do I most strongly identify with?
- What gifts have my community recognized in me?
- When do I feel most like myself?
- What challenges have I overcome in trying to serve others?
- How can I better use my gifts in service to the community?

 **NOTE:** *Participants may offer their support and affirmation to those offering testimonies. However, testimonies should NOT serve as topics of group discussion.*

Closing Prayer

All recite the Prayer of the Holy Spirit

Together, let us pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful.
And kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
And you will renew the face of the earth.

Lord,
by the light of the Holy Spirit
you have taught the hearts of your faithful.
In the same Spirit
help us to relish what is right
and always rejoice in your consolation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Homework and Journaling Assignments

In the time before the next group session, participants should be assigned the following:

Readings

[John 4:4–42](#)

[Potato-Draining Wisdom](#)—S. James Meyer

Journaling Prompt

After discussing the words of Matthew, Jessie Bazan, Pope Francis, and your peers, reflect on the relationship between your gifts/talents/strengths and your call to discipleship. Do these things intersect? Do you want them to? Have you ever thought about your talents in this way before?

SAMPLE
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Publications