Table of Contents

[PARISH COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES 3](#_Toc432679129)

[Times of Transition 4](#_Toc432679130)

[COMMUNICATION ISSUES CHECK LIST 9](#_Toc432679131)

[PARISH COMMUNICATION SAMPLES 11](#_Toc432679132)

[PRAYER SERVICES 15](#_Toc432679133)

[November 1st - Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time 16](#_Toc432679134)

[November 8, 2015 - Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time 17](#_Toc432679135)

[November 15, 2015 - Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time 18](#_Toc432679136)

[November 22, 2015 - The Solemnity of Christ the King 19](#_Toc432679137)

[November 29, 2015 - First Sunday of Advent 20](#_Toc432679138)

[December 6, 2015 - Second Sunday of Advent 21](#_Toc432679139)

[December 13, 2015 - Third Sunday of Advent 22](#_Toc432679140)

[December 20, 2015 - Fourth Sunday of Advent 23](#_Toc432679141)

[December 27 2015 - The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph 24](#_Toc432679142)

[January 3, 2016 - The Epiphany of the Lord 25](#_Toc432679143)

[January 10, 2016 - The Baptism of the Lord 26](#_Toc432679144)

[OPENING PRAYER 26](#_Toc432679145)

[January 17, 2016 - Second Sunday in Ordinary Time 27](#_Toc432679146)

[OPENING PRAYER 27](#_Toc432679147)

[January 24, 2016 - Third Sunday in Ordinary Time 28](#_Toc432679148)

[OPENING PRAYER 28](#_Toc432679149)

[January 31, 2016 - Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time 29](#_Toc432679150)

[OPENING PRAYER 29](#_Toc432679151)

[February 7, 2016 - Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time 30](#_Toc432679152)

[OPENING PRAYER 30](#_Toc432679153)

[February 14, 2016 - First Sunday of Lent 31](#_Toc432679154)

[February 21, 2016 - Second Sunday of Lent 32](#_Toc432679155)

[February 28, 2016 - Third Sunday in Lent 33](#_Toc432679156)

[March 6, 2016 - Fourth Sunday in Lent 34](#_Toc432679157)

[March 13, 2016 - Fifth Sunday in Lent 35](#_Toc432679158)

[March 20, 2016 - Palm Sunday 36](#_Toc432679159)

[March 27, 2016 - Easter Sunday 37](#_Toc432679160)

[April 3, 2016 - Second Sunday of Easter 38](#_Toc432679161)

[April 10, 2016 - Third Sunday of Easter 39](#_Toc432679162)

[April 17, 2016 - Fourth Sunday of Easter 40](#_Toc432679163)

[Sunday April 24, 2016 - Fifth Sunday of Easter 41](#_Toc432679164)

[May 1, 2016 - Sixth Sunday of Easter 42](#_Toc432679165)

[May 8, 2016 - 7th Sunday of Easter 43](#_Toc432679166)

[SAMPLE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS 45](#_Toc432679167)

[ADDITIONAL PRAYER RESOURCES 47](#_Toc432679168)

***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT***

**PASTORAL PLANNING FOR THE**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**

# PARISH COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

**Information to Be Communicated**

Any of the information can be used in bulletin inserts or news releases to local media or parish websites.

Archbishop Tobin continued the initiative began by Archbishop Buechlein called ***Connected in the Spirit*** a parish planning process structured to have parishes plan for the future in concert with other parishes. The Archbishop’s over-all goal is to enhance the vibrancy of parish life in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis so that parishes will be signs of faith, hope and love to all God’s people. Due to demographic shifts, the diminishing number of priests, and the financial situation of many parishes, a process was needed to lessen stress and remove obstacles so all parishes could be strong ones. Given the availability and leadership of the current priests and of well-educated deacons, sisters and lay people, the Archbishop thought that this is the right time to be good stewards of our human and financial resources and discover ways to reorganize parishes, so that current parishioners and future ones may be well served.

In the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process all parishes in the archdiocese will be involved in working with neighboring parishes to assess their strengths, name their concerns, and explore how they can work together to better serve the People of God. They will be asked to suggest a future model of parish life from four that also are used in many places in the country: linkage (sharing a pastor); merger or consolidation (2 or more parishes form a new parish); partnership (2 or more parishes work closely together at times sharing staff and programs or in-services, etc). The last model is one where a team of priests serves three or more parishes. The priests are supported by deacons, sisters and lay ministers in serving the parishes.

A Planning Commission re-appointed by Archbishop Tobin made up of priests, deacons, sisters and lay people will review the suggestions and evaluative material presented from the cohorts of parishes, make a preliminary recommendation with a rationale back to the cohort and ask for a response with a rationale. After studying the responses across the archdioceses and considering demographic data and parish data, the Planning Commission will make final recommendations to the Archbishop. He in turn will consult with the Presbyteral Council and other consultative bodies before making a decision for each cohort. Once the decisions are made each cohort of parishes will begin implementation according to the Archbishops directives.

## Times of Transition

By their very nature, times of transition are unsettling. Some will believe that the decisions are already made and their voice does not count. Some will feel that, if only the archdiocese had the correct information, they would see how great their parish is. Because of these misperceptions, effective communication is vitally important. Those involved with change, both directly and indirectly, need accurate and consistent information regarding the future of the parish and the reasons for change. We have developed the following guidelines to assist parish leaders and anyone helping to facilitate the parish planning process, ***Connected in the Spirit.***

When people experience tension, lack of communication is typically cited as a primary source of the stress. We must not underestimate the positive impact of effective communication — and the negative results when communication is lacking. Communication is more than simply putting forth information; it is a dynamic, a two-way process.

Please make every effort to communicate with the various groups in your area with sensitivity to appropriate timing and procedure, and remember that people need to hear information multiple times in order to process it. Help your parishioners to keep in focus the Archbishop’s goals for ***Connected in the Spirit.***

In these pages you will find:

1. Communication Goals
2. Audiences
3. Communication Strategies
4. Communication Tools
5. Tips for Working with the Media
6. **Communication Goals**
* Help people recognize and understand the reasons for change
* Update the parish community *regularly,* sharing accurate and appropriate information in a timely manner.
* Communicate the same information to all parishes in the cohort.
* Correct misinformation and control rumors.
* Manage the communication process effectively.
1. **Audiences**

Be aware of the various groups concerned with your parish situation:

- Staff - Parishioners

- Volunteers - Neighboring cohorts

- Neighboring church leaders (both Catholic and other denominations)

- Neighborhood - Civic community

- Elected officials - Others of importance to your parish

- Media

1. **Communication** **Strategies**
* Respect for people should guide all communication efforts. *How* y*ou* *communicate* *is* *as important as* *what* *you* *say.* Openness to those whose opinions differ from yours is critically important.
* Keep a positive attitude and help parishioners and staff through the various stages of the planning and implementation process
* Maintain a calm presence. Your ability to do so will diminish the impact of rumors and can assuage fears.
* Receive critical comments simply as information that may be helpful to the process. Try to understand the reasons prompting the criticism, and do not take it personally.
* Show respect for the community's history while calling people forward to build the future together. Build on the image of ***Connected in the Spirit***
* Listen to people's concerns: calm fears when possible: help people see their importance to the new community.
* State facts accurately and clearly explain procedures. Information shared clearly and directly will help to reduce the tendency toward "power plays."
* Recognize that premature information sharing, before decisions are actually made or before those most closely affected have been informed, may thwart the planning process and cause divisiveness within the community. It is important for parish leaders to maintain confidentiality until the *agreed-upon* *time* to share information.
* Remember that appropriate information sharing needs to be ongoing. It is important not to assume that, since you have put forth information once, people have understood it. Not everyone is at the same "readiness" level, and we need to respect people's need to hear information many times in order to truly process it. Regular and repeated updates help people feel more grounded and secure amidst transition.
* Avoid the tendency to think that because the core team knows what is happening, communication has taken place. Sharing information with each of the audiences listed in section 2 needs to be carefully planned and implemented.
* Communicate important information directly to parishioners, staff, and anyone else personally affected by a situation *before* *the* media reports it

No matter the audience, specifically target information.

* Determine the most appropriate timing and sequence for sharing information with particular individuals and/or groups.
* Identify the best ways to share information. A few possibilities include:

Letters

Town hall meetings

Question/answer sheets

Individual/small group meetings

Newsletters

Media releases, etc.

Web Site updates

Parish Bulletins

You know your community better than anyone. Draw upon the wisdom and power of people within the parish to help you determine the most effective ways to communicate with different groups. **When you are working as a cohort, be sure the same information goes to all parishes in the cohort at the same time.**

* Be consistent in the information you give to various individuals and groups. Having a single point person to whom people may address their questions is helpful.
* Be aware of individuals and/or groups who may have their own agenda.
* Help people recognize that pushing individual agendas harms the entire community.
* Have a back-up plan for combating rumors and addressing information leaks.
1. **Communication** **Methods**

Again, draw upon the wisdom of your own community to help you. Here are a few examples to assist you.

* Speak from the pulpit about the planning process and update parishioners about the progress of the plan.

**Include regular bulletin announcements to reinforce your pulpit messages. When more than one parish is involved, use the same announcements in all bulletins, if the information affects both parishes. (See samples which follow)**

* Pray in the general intercessions for the mission of the church and for the Holy Spirit's guidance throughout the parish's planning process. (See samples which follow)
* Make sure all parishioners actually have the recommendation and rationale.
* As you hold parish meetings, routinely draw people's attention to the reality of parishes in transition throughout the archdiocese and in archdioceses all over the country.
* On a weekly basis insert one section of Goals or Criteria in the parish bulletin: Sacramental life; Evangelization, Catechesis and Catholic Schools; Stewardship and Justice; and Effective Administration. Add a question for reflection appropriate to your parish. Use these for all parish meetings, section by section as feasible. (See samples which follow)
* If common questions surface regarding your parish's situation, compile a question and answer sheet for inclusion in the bulletin, or for mailing to all parishioners, if this will be more helpful. It is important that people continue to feel informed and to know that they have accurate, updated information.
* Provide up-dated information on your parish Web site, if appropriate.
* Send a letter to denominational leaders of your area or gather them together to discuss the planning process affecting your parish. Request their prayers and support during the planning process and for the parish community.
1. **Working** **with** **the** **Media**

Parishioners, staff*,* and anyone else personally affected by a situation should receive important information directly from you or from another appropriate source *before* the media reports it. Nonetheless, newspapers, radio and TV reporters can play an important role in communicating messages about the parish's planning process. The keys to working with the media include; 1) understanding them, 2) developing a good relationship, 3) delivering a solid message.

Understand the Media

* Know your area reporters and editors and the deadlines they face. The Archdiocese can help you identify them.
* If you are the designated “media person” and are not the pastor or PLC, please consult either of them before your work with the media. Remember that you are in charge, even if a reporter becomes aggressive.
* If reporters inquire about a situation which parishioners are yet unaware of, remind them of your need to respect the parishioners' right to hear information directly from you. Statements such as "it's an internal matter at this point…" or no decisions have yet been made... " are appropriate.

Develop a Good Relationship with Reporters

* Generally it is better to work with the media than to be non-responsive. "No comment" can portray you or the parish as being uncooperative.
* Designate the pastor, PLC or one individual spokesperson and instruct anyone who may receive media inquiries to route questions to the spokesperson. Make sure you return phone calls promptly.
* Ask what information reporters need and when their deadline is. Rather than feeling pressured to respond immediately, indicate you'll get back to them. It is important then to follow-up prior to the deadline.
* Depending upon the circumstance, you may wish to have available names and phone numbers of others to suggest for media interviews, so reporters don't randomly approach parishioners or council members. Help those to be interviewed prepare their thoughts.

Deliver a Solid Message

* Don't be afraid to ask reporters what aspect of the issue they want to cover or if they are talking to others. This will help you anticipate questions and prepare for the answers.
* During the interview, state clearly and calmly what you believe to be most important. Find opportunities to address your main points, even if the reporter's questions do not elicit them directly.
* Deliver a quotable "sound bite." Be brief but informative. Use specific examples, analogies, and relevant statistics or attributed quotes.
* Flag your answer: "The most important thing is..." or "It all boils down to..."
* Be honest. Don't feel pressured to respond if you don't know the answer. Replies such as "we haven't worked out the details," "we don't know yet," or "we haven't given thought to that" are reasonable.

It is important to help all involved to recognize the dangers of using media to push one's own agenda. Taking issues to the media that would better be dealt with internally destroys trust and impedes the process of working through difficulties. Trying to use the media in personal battles often backfires. Feel free to consult with archdiocesan communication staff for ideas in dealing with media or regarding other communication issues. We will be happy to assist you.

**Conclusion**

Implementing a sound communication strategy with your various parish audiences is the best way to assure a successful planning process. By taking time from the outset to explain the issues and offer opportunities for feedback, you will lay the groundwork for building a cohesive faith community.

***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT***

**PASTORAL PLANNING FOR THE**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**

# COMMUNICATION ISSUES CHECK LIST

 **Action Person(s) Responsible**

 1. Consulted with leaders within the parish to determine the Pastor or delegate

 most effective ways to communication with various groups.

Date(s)

 2. Created effective ways to communicate with significant Pastors or delegates groups within the parish and between parishes.

*Staff* What: When:

*Volunteers* What: When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Youth* What: When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Others* What: When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 3. Created effective ways to communicate with other groups. Pastor or delegate

*Neighboring church leaders and parishes*

What: When:

*Civic community* What: When:

 *(Funeral Homes, Hospitals*, *Nursing facilities*, *Prison/jail facilities)*

*Elected officials* What: When:

*Media* What: When:

*Others*  What: When:

 4. Identified a point person to whom people may address Pastor

questions as they arise.

Name: Date:

 5. Held town hall meetings, giving people the opportunity to Pastor

express concerns and ask questions.

Moderator(s): Dates

 6. Communicated the same information to people of all Pastor or delegate

parishes involved (same bulletin announcements

or newsletters, same pulpit announcements, etc.).

Date(s):

 7. Kept information confidential until the agreed-upon time Pastor or delegate

to share it.

Date(s):

 8. Repeated important information in multiple settings, under- Pastor or delegate

standing that people need to hear things more than once.

What: When:

 9. Provided regular updates to parishioners regarding the Pastor

***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT*** process.

What: When:

 10. Established a plan to address information leaks and control Pastor or delegate

rumors.

Keeper of the plan:

Date:

 11. Made efforts to establish a good relationship with local Pastor or delegate

reporters.

Who : When:

 12. Sought help from the archdiocese regarding Communi-

cation when necessary.

When:

Comments:

***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT***

**PASTORAL PLANNING FOR THE**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**

# PARISH COMMUNICATION SAMPLES

**INTRODUCTION**

Being part of ***Connected in the Spirit*** provides many opportunities for good communication with all parishioners and the community as a whole. Some ideas which follow will aid in letting all members of the parish know what ***Connected in the Spirit*** is and what the parish is doing as part of it.

**BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS OR MATERIAL FOR THE PARISH NEWSLETTER**

Please adapt all the material that follows to your local circumstances. These are not recipes, but rather ways to save you time, so you do not have to reinvent the wheel to begin your communications campaign! All announcements do not have to be used and the order can be changed depending upon how your parish is participating in ***Connected in the Spirit.***

**Bulletin Announcements do not take the place of face-to-face meetings such as town hall meetings and other more personal vehicles for communication.**

**Announcement 1**

***Connected in the Spirit***

Archbishop Tobin has asked us to be part of the current cycle of parish planning related to the ***Connected in the Spirit***. His expectation is that each parish will find neighboring parishes with whom to plan in order to:

1. Share more resources with each other and with parishes in need;
2. Avoid unneeded duplication of services; and
3. Fill in the gaps where service and ministry have not been available.

The parishes with whom we hope to work include:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Announcement 2**

***Connected in the Spirit***

The goals of the ***Connected in the Spirit*** process promoted by Archbishop Tobin include:

1. To enhance the vibrancy of parish life in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.
2. To foster an appreciation for and participation in Sunday Eucharist and the Sacraments.
3. To promote good stewardship so that parishes are financially viable now and into the future.
4. To maximize the availability of quality Catholic School education throughout the Archdiocese.
5. To ensure that all parishioners have opportunities for quality lifelong Christian Formation, including supporting new initiatives for youth and young adults and promoting vocations to ordained and lay ministry.
6. To strengthen service to those who are marginalized.
7. To build a greater sense of unity among the many cultures in the Archdiocese.
8. To realign parishes considering the number of priests available to serve, financial resources and demographics.
9. To increase collaboration among all entities in the local, national and universal Church.
10. To advocate for peace and justice in the Church and in the world.

As our Core Team begins to organize itself, it will be keeping these goals in mind and alerting you to how well we are doing in meeting the goals.

**Announcement 3**

***Connected in the Spirit***

The following people are on the Core Team to do parish planning as part of the ***Connected in the Spirit***: (Name people.) The Core Team attended a training session on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_date to become acquainted with the materials we will be using to assess our parish ministries.

The Core Team will be overseeing the evaluation of parish ministries based on the Criteria for Planning. The Criteria are divided into four categories: Sacramental Life of the Parish; Evangelization, Catechesis and Catholic Schools; Stewardship and Justice; and Effective Administration.

**Announcement 4**

***Connected in the Spirit***

The Core Team oversaw the parish evaluation of the Criteria for Sacramental Life of the Parish and found that our strengths included\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Our hopes for the future include \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, ­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you have any comment about these, please contact \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Repeat this kind of announcement for each of the other areas **(**Evangelization, Catechesis and Catholic Schools; Stewardship and Justice; and Effective Administration.)

(Announcement 5-8)

Announcement 9

***Connected in the Spirit***

The Core Team and Parish Pastoral Council finished our parish evaluation according to the Criteria for Planning and have come to the following conclusions: (Highlight the good things happening and the hopes for the future, or any other pertinent information.)

Announcement 10

***Connected in the Spirit***

As part of our planning for the future, The Core Team analyzed some of the demographic trends that are part of our parish’s life. We thought you would be interested in the following: (Include what is appropriate.)

Announcement 11

***Connected in the Spirit***

The Core Team has begun meeting with the cohort(s) parishes to do some joint planning to look at models for working together. The models presented by the Archdiocesan Planning Commission include linking parishes, where two or more parishes share a pastor; merging parishes, where two or more parishes become one; partnership parishes where two or more parishes share programs and sometimes staff, and a team approach to priestly and lay ministry.

Announcement 12

***Connected in the Spirit***

The Core Team invites you to a meeting to accomplish two things: 1) to hear about its deliberations on a model of working with other parishes in the future; 2) and to solicit your input. We would appreciate your attendance and participation. The meeting is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_time, place, date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Announcement 13

***Connected in the Spirit***

The parish Core Team working with the Core Teams in the cohort have submitted a Suggestion to the Archdiocesan Planning Commission on how the cohort might work together in the future. We suggested working on Model (designate linkage, merger, partnership, team) which for our parish would mean\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . The Archdiocesan Planning Commission will consider our work and make a recommendation back to us. At that time we will be asked to respond to their recommendation.

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS (THESE MAY BE USED IN ANY ORDER.)**

Week One

**For the success of *Connected in the Spirit****,* **that all parishes will faithfully participate under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to look at how they can best build the Reign of God, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Two

**That our Core Team will be blessed and strengthened as it participates in the *Connected in the Spirit****,* **let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Three-Nine

**That the Holy Spirit may continue to guide our Core Team as it evaluates our ministries of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Sacramental Life, Evangelization, Catechesis, and Catholic Schools, Stewardship and Justice, Effective Administration, etc.) let us pray to the Lord. Response… (Use as appropriate.)**

Week Ten

**For our Core Team as it looks for ways to suggest good stewardship practices for our parish and cohort, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Eleven

**That the Holy Spirit will continue to be with the *Connected in the Spirit*** **as our parish cohort prepares its suggestion to the Archdiocesan** **Planning Commission, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Twelve

**For all those in the *Connected in the Spirit*** **who are discerning plans for their future, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Thirteen

**That the *Connected in the Spirit*** **will generate attitudes and actions of sharing across the Archdiocese and the larger Church, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Fourteen

**That the *Connected in the Spirit*** **will renew parish life across the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, we pray to the Lord. Response…**

ANNOUNCEMENTS AT LITURGY

**Besides the bulletin announcements suggested above, it is a good idea to have members of the Core Team give a brief up-date on the *Connected in the Spirit*** **at least once a month during the announcement time at liturgy. This will make the work of the Core Team come alive for the parish community.**

**PLEASE NOTE THE COMMUNICATION CHECK LIST IN THIS SECTION (PAGE 8 & 9) WHERE YOU WILL BE ASKED TO REPORT ON HOW YOUR PARISHIONERS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS.**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**

# PRAYER SERVICES

***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT***

**Connected in the Spirit**

Eternal God,

you are without beginning or

end, and you sustain us every

day with your Providence.

As we discern where you are

guiding the Church in central

and southern Indiana, grant us

wisdom and strength.

Through the “Connected in the

Spirit” process give us vibrant

parish communities that will

enable us to serve you with all

our hearts.

Bring comfort, healing and hope

to those who are being lead

through a difficult transition,

and unite us all more fully with

you and with one another.

We ask this through Christ our

Lord.  Amen.   PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS

## November 1st - Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, you have given us many blessings among them are your law and your love. May you continue to give us blessings as we journey like your people of old to create new parishes and new communities full of hope and love. Be with us, especially in the things that are unknown to us. Teach us to love you with our whole heart and mind and body. We ask this through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

**Reading: Deuteronomy 6:2-6**

Moses spoke to the people, saying: "Fear the LORD, your God, and keep, throughout the days of your lives, all his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you, and thus have long life.

Hear then, Israel, and be careful to observe them, that you may grow and prosper the more, in keeping with the promise of the LORD, the God of your fathers, to give you a land flowing with milk and honey.

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone! Therefore, you shall love the LORD, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words which I enjoin on you today."

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

What words particularly spoke to you when you heard this passage now?

What did Christ add to these words?

What does this reading do for us as engaged in the ***Connected in the Spirit*** process?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

* That we may realize in new ways that we exist to honor, love and praise our gracious God, we pray…
* That our country and our Church may realize the many blessings they have received and continue to honor God as the giver of all good things, we pray…
* That in our planning process we continue to care for those who are hungry and who suffer, we pray…
* For what else should we pray…?

**CLOSING PRAYER**—The Lord’s Prayer

## November 8, 2015 - Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, help us to be generous in giving of ourselves, our talents, our resources to help those in need. Give us strength to go the extra mile for those in need. Give us the courage to plan for vibrant parishes, that may reflect your care for all, especially the vulnerable. We ask this in the name of Christ our brother through the power of the Holy Spirit. All: Amen

**Gospel Reading: Mark 12:41-44**

Jesus sat down opposite the treasury

and observed how the crowd put money into the treasury.

Many rich people put in large sums.

A poor widow also came and put in two small coins worth a few cents.

Calling his disciples to himself, he said to them,

"Amen, I say to you, this poor widow put in more

than all the other contributors to the treasury.

For they have all contributed from their surplus wealth,

but she, from her poverty, has contributed all she had,

her whole livelihood."

The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you today in the reading?
2. What parts of the reading do we need to focus on as we continue our work on the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* That we may learn from the widow how to give all we have, let us pray…
* That we renew our efforts to be generous and promote good stewardship in our cohort, we pray…
* Heal the lonely and brokenhearted we pray…
* Strengthen our commitment to almsgiving we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

**CLOSING PRAYER – Hail Mary**

## November 15, 2015 - Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, you gave us the Christ who showed us how to live and how to forgive. Empower us to contribute to your forgiving and living presence amongst us. Strengthen us to be living examples of love and care and forgiveness as we model our lives after the life of Jesus, the Christ. We ask this through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus, our savior and brother. Amen

**Reading: Hebrews 10:11-14, 18**

Brothers and sisters:

Every priest stands daily at his ministry,

offering frequently those same sacrifices

that can never take away sins.

But this one offered one sacrifice for sins,

and took his seat forever at the right hand of God;

now he waits until his enemies are made his footstool.

For by one offering

he has made perfect forever those who are being consecrated.

Where there is forgiveness of these,

there is no longer offering for sin.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading?
2. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross made it possible for us to live lives of love and perfection. What sacrifices are we called to make today through this planning process which will positively affect generations to come?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* Give strength to our Church, our parishes and this committee as we continue to make sacrifices and live out the Paschal Mystery, we pray…
* Free us from the bonds of sin which are restricting us from making bold decisions to be vibrant parishes, we pray…
* Help us to stand in the shoes of others to understand their concerns and losses, we pray…
* Let us pray in thanksgiving for the many blessings you have bestowed on us this past year, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Lord hear all the prayers of your faithful people. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - The Lord’s Prayer**

## November 22, 2015 - The Solemnity of Christ the King

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, Jesus Christ showed us how to be an effective servant leader, to sacrifice, to give all we have to others, to be supportive, kind and loving. Empower us to be the kind of leader Jesus was and to see the big picture of your reign on earth as we deal with change and the details involved in the many changes that will affect our parishes. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our brother, savior and friend and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen

**Gospel Reading: John 18:33b-37**

Pilate said to Jesus, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you say this on your own or have others told you about me?" Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom does not belong to this world. If my kingdom did belong to this world, my attendants would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not here." So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth.

Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you as you heard God speaking through this reading?
2. What are some things we are doing to build the reign of God on earth through the planning process?
3. What sacrifices are we making for the “good of the whole?”

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* Let us let go of our selfish desires and work for the good of the whole cohort, we pray…
* Calm our fears and strengthen us to move forward, even knowing we will experience resistance to change, we pray…
* Heal those who are sick, lonely and without hope, we pray…
* Give us the energy and courage to reach out to those in need, we pray…
* For what else should we pray?

Loving God, hear our prayers, those spoken and unspoken. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - The Lord’s Prayer**

## November 29, 2015 - First Sunday of Advent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious and loving God fill our hearts during this time of longing and waiting for the coming of Jesus anew, with a sustaining hope that encourages and nourishes us during these dark nights of cold and uncertainty. Increase our longing for Christ and give us light to see him in those with whom we interact each day. We ask this in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16**

The days are coming, says the LORD,

when I will fulfill the promise

I made to the house of Israel and Judah.

In those days, in that time,

I will raise up for David a just shoot;

he shall do what is right and just in the land.

In those days Judah shall be safe

and Jerusalem shall dwell secure;

this is what they shall call her:

"The LORD our justice."

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you today?
2. What elements of justice are in our planning process? How will these affect the parishes, dioceses, world?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer

* Bring to fruition the many and diverse gifts of your people so that they may build a more just world, we pray…
* Help us to focus on the great gift and mystery of your incarnation during this busy and sometimes distracting season, we pray…
* Empower us to be aware of the need to continually increase the vitality of our parishes so they will be welcoming shelters for those seeking union with you and a more peaceful world, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God, hear these prayers of your people who are journeying to establish deeper relationships with you and others on the path of peace and justice. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - Hail Mary**

## December 6, 2015 - Second Sunday of Advent

**OPENING PRAYER**

God of power and mercy, open our hearts to receive anew the presence of Jesus, our brother and savior. Prepare us to be able to see amidst the darkness the radiance of your son’s presence in the world. Give us the energy to focus on the “heart of the matter”—the reception of Jesus, the Christ into our lives with new vitality.

**Reading: Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11**

Brothers and sisters:

I pray always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And this is my prayer:

that your love may increase ever more and more in knowledge and every kind of perception,

to discern what is of value, so that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. What good work has been begun in you during the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?
3. As you have been engaged in the planning process, what values have you discerned are most important for the increased vitality of parishes in your cohort?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* Strengthen your Church to be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, we pray…
* Help us to discern what is really important as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, we pray…
* Protect all who live in the midst of political turmoil, we pray…
* Heal those who suffer from physical and mental illness that they may experience the love and care of the Christian community, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God, hear our prayer and grant them through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - Glory be…**

## December 13, 2015 - Third Sunday of Advent

**OPENING PRAYER**

God of power and mercy, open our hearts to receive anew the presence of Jesus, our brother and savior. Prepare us to be able to see amidst the darkness the radiance of your son’s presence in the world. Give us the energy to focus on the “heart of the matter”—the reception of Jesus, the Christ into our lives with new vitality.

**Reading: Philippians 4:4-7, 8-11**

Rejoice in the Savior always! I say again: Rejoice! Let everyone see your forbearing spirit. Our Savior is near. Dismiss all anxiety from your minds; instead, present your needs to God through prayer and petition, giving thanks for all circumstances. Then God’s own peace, which is beyond all understanding, will stand guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, my sisters and brothers, your thoughts should be wholly directed to all that is true, all that deserves respect, all that is honest, pure, decent, admirable, virtuous or worthy of praise.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. What good work has been begun in you during the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?
3. Where in the planning process have you experienced “God’s own peace?”

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* Strengthen your Church to be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, we pray…
* Help us to discern what is really important as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, we pray…
* Protect all who live in the midst of political turmoil, we pray…
* Heal those who suffer from physical and mental illness that they may experience the love and care of the Christian community, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God, hear our prayer and grant them through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - Glory be…**

## December 20, 2015 - Fourth Sunday of Advent

**OPENING PRAYER**

God of power and mercy, open our hearts to receive anew the presence of Jesus, our brother and savior. Prepare us to be able to say “I am here to do your will.” Give us the energy to focus on the “heart of the matter”—the reception of Jesus, the Christ into our lives with new vitality.

**Reading: Hebrews 10:5-7**

And this is what Jesus said, on coming into the world:

“You who wanted no sacrifice or oblation prepared a body for me.

In burnt offerings or sacrifices for sin you took no pleasure.

Then I said, just as it was written of me in the scroll of the book,

‘God, here I am!

I have come to do your will.’”

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. What good work has been begun in you during the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?
3. What values have you discerned are most important for the increased vitality of parishes in your cohort?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* Strengthen your Church to be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, we pray…
* Help us to discern what is really important as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, we pray…
* Protect all who live in the midst of political turmoil, we pray…
* Heal those who suffer from physical and mental illness that they may experience the love and care of the Christian community, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God, hear our prayer and grant them through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - Glory be…**

## December 27 2015 - The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God of families, open our hearts to continually receive anew the presence of Jesus, our brother and savior. Prepare us to be able to see your presence in the world and in our family interactions.. Give us the energy to focus on the “heart of the matter”—the reception of Jesus, into our family lives with new vitality. We ask this in his name and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Reading: Colossians 3:12-17**

Because you are God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt compassion, with kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive whatever grievances you have against one another – forgive in the same way God has forgiven you. Above all else, put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect.

Let Christ’s peace reign in your hearts since, as members of one body, you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ, rich as it is, dwell in you. Instruct and admonish one another wisely. Sing gratefully to God from your hearts in psalms, hymns and songs of the Spirit. And whatever you do, whether in speech or in action, do it in the name of Jesus our Savior, giving thanks to God through Christ.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. What good work has been begun in you during the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?
3. What values have you discerned are most important for the increased vitality of parishes in your cohort?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* Strengthen your Church to be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, we pray…
* Help us to discern what is really important as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, we pray…
* Protect all who live in the midst of political turmoil, we pray…
* Heal those who suffer from physical and mental illness that they may experience the love and care of the Christian community, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God, hear our prayers and grant them through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - Glory be…**

## January 3, 2016 - The Epiphany of the Lord

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, you have revealed your presence to us through the life of Jesus, our teacher and brother. Empower us to be signs of your presence in our homes, work places and in the world. Assist us by your grace to be witnesses to your presence and the abundance of the gifts you have bestowed on us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our brother and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6**

Brothers and sisters:
You have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace
that was given to me for your benefit,
namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.
It was not made known to people in other generations
as it has now been revealed
to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:
that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body,
and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. What are some new “revelations” about the Church in our cohort that you have experienced in the planning process?
3. What values do you think are the most important to help people deepen their awareness of God’s presence in their lives?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* Strengthen your Church to be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, we pray…
* Help us to discern what is really important as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, we pray…
* Protect all who live in the midst of political turmoil, we pray…
* Heal those who suffer from physical and mental illness that they may experience the love and care of the Christian community, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God, hear our prayer and grant them through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - Glory be…**

## January 10, 2016 - The Baptism of the Lord

## OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, you gave us Jesus as a model for how we are to live. We have been baptized into your very life and experience your graciousness and compassion in our daily endeavors. Help us to live in a way that we too will hear, “you are my beloved and with you I am well pleased.” We ask this through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

**Gospel Reading: Luke 3:15-16, 21-22**

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, “I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.”

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying,
heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove.
And a voice came from heaven,
“You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to your Lord Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. What do you think God would find most pleasing about your work in ***Connected in the Spirit?***
3. What parish ministry do you think Jesus would be most pleased?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* Strengthen your Church to be more pleasing to our loving God, we pray…
* Help us to discern what is really important as we prepare to work with other parishes, we pray...
* Protect all who live in the midst of political turmoil, we pray…
* Heal those who suffer from physical and mental illness that they may experience the love and care of the Christian community, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God, hear our prayer and grant them through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER—THE LORD’S PRAYER**

## January 17, 2016 - Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

## OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, in your graciousness you have given us many gifts. Help us to respect the gifts of others and use them in connection with our own gifts to build your reign on earth. Empower us to seek unity among the gifts of all so that your presence may be acknowledged to a greater degree because of the unity the community reflects. We ask this in the name of Jesus our model and our brother and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11**

Brothers and sisters:
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. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another, the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another, mighty deeds; to another, prophecy; to another, discernment of spirits; to another, varieties of tongues; to another, interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit produces all of these, distributing them individually to each person as he wishes.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. What gifts of the Spirit have you discovered during the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?
3. What efforts do we need to take to promote unity among all the gifts?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: We are grateful loving God**

* For the gifts of understanding and patience, we pray...
* For the gifts of faith and a sense of justice, we pray...
* For the gifts of each other as we continue, **Connected in the Spirit**, we pray...
* For those who are discovering their gifts, we pray...
* For the Church that she, as a body, will recognize and use wisely the gifts of the Spirit, we pray...
* For what else should we pray?
* For all the prayers in our hearts, we pray

Hear our prayers loving God as we continue our journey to everlasting life with you. Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER—Glory Be...**

## January 24, 2016 - Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

## OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, you have called us to be one body, united through the Spirit. Empower us to recognize our connections to each other and people across the globe. Help us to be determined to work well with each other to make a greater positive impact on all people and the earth which helps sustain us. We ask this in the name of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27**

Brothers and sisters:
As a body is one though it has many parts,
and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body,
so also Christ.
For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body,
whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons,
and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.
Now the body is not a single part, but many.
You are Christ’s body, and individually parts of it.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. What evidence in your parish do you find of people working together as one body?
3. What are the challenges you find in working together as one body?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: Gracious God, be our strength.

* Bless our parishes as we strive for unity, we pray...
* Gladden our hearts as we get to know each other better, we pray...
* Strengthen your Church as it continues its journey toward greater unity, we pray
* For what else should we pray?
* For all the prayers in our hearts, spoken and unspoken, we pray...

God of strength, hear us as we continue to build your reign on earth. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER—Hail Mary**

## January 31, 2016 - Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, continue to be patient with us as we discover and rediscover the power of love, love in our families, in our relationships, in our Church and in the world. Lead us to respect our differences and see them as invitations to greater understanding of the faith, hope and love with which you have gifted us. We ask this in the name of Jesus our brother and model and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:4-13**

Brothers and sisters:
Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury,
it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face.
At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. With which of the descriptions of love, do you most identify?
3. Which descriptions do you find lived out in ***Connected in the Spirit?***

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, help us to be more loving**

* Strengthen our faith, hope and love so that we reflect in a deeper way your presence in the world, we pray...
* Protect us from false or superficial “love” so that we may understand love as self-giving, we pray
* Send your Spirit of Love to strengthen us in this planning process, we pray
* For what or who should we pray?
* For all the prayers in our hearts, those spoken and unspoken, we pray...

**CLOSING PRAYER—Glory Be ...**

## February 7, 2016 - Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

## OPENING PRAYER

God, our Creator and source of life, we have received not only life, but the model of Jesus who showed us how to live. Grant that we may conform our lives to the values reflected in the life of Jesus as we strive to continue to build your reign on earth. We ask this through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 11**

Brothers and sisters,
I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures; that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living,
though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.
Last of all, as to one abnormally born, he appeared to me. Therefore, whether it be I or they,
so we preach and so you believed.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. Of all the elements of faith that have been passed on to you, which one do you find most valuable during the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?
3. If you could only pass on one aspect of your faith, what would it be? Why this particular aspect?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Loving God, hear our prayer**

* Receive our thanks for all the kindnesses we have experienced today, we pray...
* Show mercy and compassion to all who call upon you, we pray...
* Heal divisions we experience at home, work, with neighbors or in the larger world, we pray...
* For what else or whom else should we pray?

Hear all the prayers in our hearts and grant them in your mercy. Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER—The Lord’s Prayer**

## February 14, 2016 - First Sunday of Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, let us be like Christ, willing to sacrifice for the good of all. Strengthen us to believe with our hearts all you have called us to be. Diminish our fears as we strive to implement the plans for the future which we believe will have a positive long term effect on the Church in our area. Support us when we are discouraged. Grant this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **ALL:** Amen

**Reading: Romans 10:8-13**

Brothers and sisters: What does Scripture say? The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart *—*that is, the word of faith that we preach*—*, for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. For the Scripture says, No one who believes in him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

The Word of the Lord. All**:** Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly struck you in this reading? Why?
2. What relationship do you see between professing in your heart that “Jesus is Lord” and implementing the Bishop’s Directives?
3. How does the phrase “there is no distinction” between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is the Lord of all, apply to us today?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* That we may be willing to endure loss and suffering and trust in God’s care for us to diminish our anxieties, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may be strengthened to give focused energy to the planning of ***Connected in the Spirit*** to the Lord…
* That we may look beyond our parishes, beyond our cohort to help enrich and support the broader Diocesan Church, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may strengthen our outreach to the poor, the lonely, the hungry and homeless, let us pray to the Lord…
* Please add your own intentions

Lord, hear our prayers, those spoken and those embedded in our hearts. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL:** Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER: The Lord’s Prayer**

## February 21, 2016 - Second Sunday of Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, you have given us the power to help transform the Bishop’s Directives into action so that people will become more aware of your presence and put greater energy into building your reign on earth.. Strengthen us to be focused on worldly things. Lead us by the example of our lives to proclaim the Gospel. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever..

**ALL:** Amen**.**

**Gospel Reading: Luke 9:28b-36**

Jesus took Peter, John, and James and went up the mountain to pray. While he was praying his face changed in appearance and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were conversing with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his exodus that he was going to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep,
but becoming fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

As they were about to part from him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good that we are here;
let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” But he did not know what he was saying. While he was still speaking, a cloud came and cast a shadow over them,
and they became frightened when they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my chosen Son; listen to him.” After the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.
They fell silent and did not at that time tell anyone what they had seen.

The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. Where do you think the Holy Spirit is leading you in the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?
2. In what ways does the planning connect people to the past, present and future?
3. How do we cherish the gifts we have been given to help with ***Connected in the Spirit?***

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* That we may be strengthened to see the connections to the past as we plan for the future, let us pray to the Lord.
* That we may be open to new insights from the Spirit, let us pray to the Lord
* That we may plan for vibrant parishes formed by the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord
* That we may show in our planning that we care for those in need, whether neighbors or strangers, let us pray to the Lord

For all these petitions, those spoken and unspoken, we ask you Lord to be mindful of us and present to us. We ask this in the name of Christ our Lord.

ALL: Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER: Doxology**

## February 28, 2016 - Third Sunday in Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, you have given us loving hearts, great faith and enduring hope which will not disappoint. Strengthen us with these gifts as we continue to implement the bishop’s directives founded in a “Future Full of Hope.” We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

**ALL: Amen**

**Reading: Romans 5:1-2, 5-8**

Brothers and sisters: Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in hope of the glory of God. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. For Christ, while we were still helpless, died at the appointed time for the ungodly.

Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you?
2. Reflect on “we boast in hope of the glory of God. And hope does not disappoint.” How are the phrases related to ***Connected in the Spirit*?**
3. What difference in your life does it make to “have peace with God?”

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* That we may grow in appreciation for the love that God has for us, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may be more conscious of the enduring gift of hope, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may be strengthened to be more forgiving, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may pray for hope during difficult times in the planning process, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may not forget the hungry, lonely and homeless who often see God’s presence through us as we try to meet their needs, let us pray to the Lord…
* For what else should we pray…?

For these and all the prayers in our hearts, please hear us Lord, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL**: Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER: Doxology**

## March 6, 2016 - Fourth Sunday in Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, you have given us the wonderful gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He has shown us how to reach out to others in reconciliation. As we plan for the future, let us be reconcilers so all can experience the “new creation.” Please continue to strengthen us as we strive to grow to be ambassadors of the way Jesus taught us to live. Empower us to live more consciously in union with you so that we will not be blind to your will. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

**ALL: Amen.**

**Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21**

Brothers and sisters: Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away;
behold, new things have come. And all this is from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ and given us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as if God were appealing through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God in him.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What phrases struck you in this reading? Why?
2. What are some areas in need of reconciliation to create renewed parishes?
3. What are some ways where we can be real ambassadors for Christ?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* That we may grow in the love of God by being reconciled to our brothers and sisters, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may appreciate all that Christ has done for us, let us pray to the Lord…
* That our plans for our parish and cohort may reflect our faithfulness to the Word of God, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may make Christ’s presence known as we become ambassadors who care for the poor, the underserved, the lonely and depressed, let us pray to the Lord…
* For what else should we pray?

For these and all the yearnings in our hearts we ask God to hear our petitions in the name of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL: Amen**

**CLOSING PRAYER: The Lord’s Prayer**

## March 13, 2016 - Fifth Sunday in Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, you have given us the great blessing of your love by giving us your son, Jesus Christ. May you continue to give us blessings as we journey like your people of old to create new parishes and new communities full of hope and love. Be with us, especially in the things that we are losing as we move forward. Teach us to continually grow in our knowledge of Jesus and how God is calling us through him. We ask this through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

**ALL: Amen.**

**Reading: 2 Philippians 3: 8-14**

Brothers and sisters: I consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God,
depending on faith to know him and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity,

but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead,
I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God’s upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you when you heard this passage?
2. What kind of losses do you think Paul was referring to? What are some losses you are experiencing?
3. What does this reading do for us as we continue to plan for ***Connected in the Spirit***?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* That we may realize in new ways that we exist to honor, love and praise our gracious God, we pray to the Lord…
* That our country and our Church may realize the many blessings they have received and continue to honor God as the giver of all good things, we pray to the Lord…
* That in our plans we continue to care for those who are hungry and who suffer, we pray to the Lord…
* For what else should we pray to the Lord…?

Gracious God, hear our prayers and continually make your presence be known to us. We ask this in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit. **ALL:** Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER – The Lord’s Prayer**

## March 20, 2016 - Palm Sunday

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, help us to be generous in giving of ourselves, our talents, our resources even when we experience resistance. Give us strength to go the extra mile when we do not feel appreciated, knowing that Jesus gave his life for us, so that we might have a more abundant life. Give us the courage to plan for vibrant parishes, that may reflect your care for all, especially the vulnerable. We ask this in the name of Christ our brother through the power of the Holy Spirit. **ALL:** Amen

**Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7**

The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary
a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard, my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame. The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you today in the reading?
2. In what ways have you felt “rebuffed” or resisted in the planning process?
3. Isaiah as a prophet was discerning God’s will for the people. In what ways are you contributing to the prophetic mission of the Church?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* That we may learn from Isaiah how to be steadfast in listening to and responding to the Word of God, let us pray…
* That we renew our efforts to be generous and promote good stewardship in our parish and cohort, we pray…
* That through celebrating this holiest of weeks, we may deepen our understanding of the Paschal Mystery and how we are currently experiencing it, we pray…
* That we may strengthen our commitment to building vibrant parishes in our diocese, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God hear our prayers in the name of Jesus our savior and brother and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL**: Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER – Doxology**

## March 27, 2016 - Easter Sunday

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, you raised Christ from the dead as a sign that we too as his disciples will be raised from the dead and enjoy new life in union with you. Empower us to contribute to Christ’s forgiving and living presence amongst us. Strengthen us to be living examples of love and care and forgiveness as we model our lives after the life-death-resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. We ask this through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus, our Savior and brother. **All:** Amen

**Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8**

Brothers and sisters: Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? Clear out the old yeast, so that you may become a fresh batch of dough, inasmuch as you are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading?
2. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross made it possible for us to live lives of love and perfection. What sacrifices are we called to make today through this planning process which will positively affect generations to come?
3. What is the new leaven called for in the planning process?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* Give strength to our Church, our parishes and this committee as we continue to make sacrifices and live out the Paschal Mystery, we pray…
* Free us from the bonds of sin which are restricting us from making bold decisions to be vibrant parishes, we pray…
* Help us to stand in the shoes of others to understand their concerns and losses, we pray…
* Let us pray in thanksgiving for the many blessings you have bestowed on us during Lent, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Lord hear all the prayers of your faithful people.

**ALL**: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - The Lord’s Prayer**

## April 3, 2016 - Second Sunday of Easter

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, Jesus Christ called us to be believing even when we “cannot see” the truth or wisdom surrounding an issue. Empower us to be believers in the wisdom that is bringing about changes in our parish life, even though we may have doubts like Thomas did. We ask this in the name of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. **ALL:** Amen

**Gospel Reading: John 20:19-31**

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.”
Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nail marks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, though the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.” Thomas answered and said to him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed.” Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name. The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What does “…and that through this belief you may have life in his name” mean to you?
2. Why do you think Jesus’ favorite greeting after his resurrection was “Peace?” What does it mean to you when through the Word of God, you hear, “Peace be with you?”

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* Gracious God help us to let go of our hesitancy and disbelief and be believers, we pray…
* Calm our fears and strengthen us to move forward, even knowing we will experience resistance to change, we pray…
* Heal those who are sick, lonely and without hope, we pray…
* Give us the energy and courage to reach out to those in need, we pray…
* For what else should we pray?

Loving God, hear our prayers, those spoken and unspoken. **ALL:** Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - The Lord’s Prayer**

## April 10, 2016 - Third Sunday of Easter

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious and loving God fill our hearts with courage as we continue the planning process. Sustain us in hope and strengthen us to be viable witnesses to Jesus, the Christ. Increase our faith to stand up for what we believe as we continue as your Easter people, believing in the life-death-resurrection of Jesus our savior and brother. We ask this in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL:** Amen.

**Reading: Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41**

When the captain and the court officers had brought the apostles in and made them stand before the Sanhedrin, the high priest questioned them, “We gave you strict orders, did we not, to stop teaching in that name? Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man’s blood upon us.” But Peter and the apostles said in reply, “We must obey God rather than men. The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree.
God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.”

The Sanhedrin ordered the apostles to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, and dismissed them.
So they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name. The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you today?
2. What elements of courage are in our planning process?
3. How will our courage affect the parishes, dioceses, world?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* Bring to fruition the many and diverse gifts of your people so that they may build a more just world, we pray…
* Help us to focus on the great gift and mystery of Jesus’ life-death and resurrection during this springtime of our renewed parishes, we pray…
* Empower us to be aware of the need to continually increase the vitality of our parishes so they will be welcoming shelters for those seeking union with you and a more peaceful world, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God, hear these prayers of your people who are journeying to establish deeper relationships with you and others on the path of peace and justice. **ALL**: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - Doxology**

## April 17, 2016 - Fourth Sunday of Easter

**OPENING PRAYER**

God of power and mercy, open our hearts to receive anew Jesus as our Good Shepherd.. Prepare us to be able to hear his voice amongst all the voices that compete for our attention. Give us the energy to focus on the “heart of the matter”—the reception of the risen Jesus, the Christ into our lives with new vitality. We ask this in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL:** Amen.

**Gospel Reading: John 10:27-30**

Jesus said:
“My sheep hear my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.
I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish.
No one can take them out of my hand.
My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all,
and no one can take them out of the Father’s hand.
The Father and I are one.”

The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in today’s reading?
2. When you think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, what elements of the image inspire you and give you strength?
3. As you have been engaged in ***Connected in the Spirit,*** what values have you discerned are most important for the increased vitality of parishes in your cohort?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* Strengthen your Church to recognize and respond to the Good Shepherd, we pray…
* Protect all who live in the midst of political turmoil, we pray…
* Heal those who suffer from physical and mental illness that they may experience the love and care of the Christian community, we pray…
* For what else shall we pray?

Gracious God, hear our prayer and grant them through the power of your Holy Spirit.

**ALL:** Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER - Doxology**

## Sunday April 24, 2016 - Fifth Sunday of Easter

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, you gave us Jesus as the ultimate sign of your love for us. Give us the courage to be signs of his love for one another and for the world. Strengthen us as we continue to plan for vibrant parishes so that we design ways that we are more affective witnesses to the love you have for us and that Jesus has for us. We ask this in his name, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL**: Amen.

**Gospel Reading: John 13:31-33a, 34-35**

When Judas had left them, Jesus said,

“Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him.

If God is glorified in him,

God will also glorify him in himself,

and God will glorify him at once.

My children, I will be with you only a little while longer.

I give you a new commandment: love one another.

As I have loved you, so you also should love one another.

This is how all will know that you are my disciples,

if you have love for one another.”

The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in the reading?

2. How do you witness in your everyday life to the commandment: Love one another?

3. What are some signs in your cohort that you are taking this commandment seriously so that people will recognize you as those who love one another?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

**•** Strengthen your Church to fully embrace the paschal mystery, we prayer …

• Calm our fears and anxieties as we try to create a vibrant future for our cohort, we pray …

• Transform our hearts to truly love one another, we pray …

• Gather your people into one body of loving disciples, we pray …

• Loving God, we pray that you hear our prayers.

**ALL:** Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER**

## May 1, 2016 - Sixth Sunday of Easter

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, strengthen us to keep the Word of your son, Jesus, and imitate his values and his life. We too pray that the Advocate, the Holy Spirit will be with us to guide us in the planning process. Take away our anxieties and give us glimpses of the vision you have for us as we revitalize our parishes to continue to build your reign on earth. We ask this in the name of Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

 **ALL:** Amen.

**Gospel Reading: John 14:23-29**

Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

“I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, ‘I am going away and I will come back.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe. The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words spoke to you especially as you heard the Gospel proclaimed today?
2. Which words are most comforting? Why?
3. What do you think Jesus had in mind when he spoke these words to the disciples?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* That we may experience the peace of Christ in our daily lives, we pray…
* That we may have courage to move forward during difficult times, we pray…
* That we may be joyful as we build for the future of our parishes, we pray…
* That the Advocate may be with us encouraging us to be prophetic and caring, we pray
* That those who are homeless, hungry, lonely and forgotten may be comforted by the Christian Community, we pray
* For what else should we pray?

Gracious God, hear our prayers and walk with us into the future.

**ALL:** Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER—Hail Mary**

## May 8, 2016 - 7th Sunday of Easter

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, you gave us your son, Jesus Christ, to be a sign of unity between you and all of us. Strengthen us as we strive to build united parishes which reflect the values of the Gospel. Help us to understand even at a deeper level that we are loved and cherished by God as much as Jesus was. Let us appreciate that we too are a gift to Jesus. We ask this in Jesus’s name through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL:** Amen.

**Gospel Reading: John 17:20-26**

Lifting up his eyes toward heaven, Jesus prayed saying, “Holy Father, I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me.

And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.

Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.” The Gospel of the Lord. All: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you today?
2. What is the most powerful idea in this reading for you? Why?
3. Why do you think unity was so important to Jesus? What are the implications for us?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* Strengthen your Church to fully recognize and respond to the life-death-resurrection of Jesus Christ, we pray…
* Cast out fear that brings about disunity, we pray…
* Stir our hearts to be people of peace and unity, we pray
* For those who suffer from illness and addictions, we pray…
* For what else should we pray?

Loving God, hear our prayers as we strive to fulfill Jesus’ dreams for us and the world.

**ALL:**  Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER—Doxology**May 15, 2016 - Pentecost

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, you have sent the Holy Spirit to us as a great gift of unity. Empower us to be unified in heart and mind as we continue to build your reign on earth. Allow us each to use the gifts of your Spirit to make your presence known and appreciated throughout the world. Help us to reach out to all people knowing that it was you who created them, redeemed them and continues to sanctify them, along with each one of us. We ask this in the name of Jesus, the Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit. All: Amen.

**Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13**

No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. 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.

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you today?
2. What are some of the gifts needed in parishes today in order to reflect the Spirit’s presence?
3. What are the three most important gifts you have to share with others that build God’ reign on earth?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Spirit of God be with us**

* Through your power break through the prejudices which divide us, we pray…
* Through your generative love help us to recognize, use and develop the gifts you have given us to build your reign on earth, we pray…
* Guide your Church to eliminate its biases and recognize that all are created in the image and likeness of God and all equally can contribute to making your presence known and loved in this world, we pray…
* Help us to use wisely the resources of the earth so all may share in them, we pray…
* That justice and peace may reign on earth as in heaven, we pray…

Gracious God, we implore you to hear our prayers.

**ALL:** Amen.

**CLOSING PRAYER—Doxology**

# SAMPLE GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

*During Ordinary Time*

For our Diocese, that we may invite others in Christ’s name to “Come and see,” we pray to the Lord.

For ourparishes, that a true poverty of spirit will guide our planning efforts so that we may rely wholeheartedly on God, we pray to the Lord.

For a bountiful harvest that will nourish our changing Parishes, we pray to the Lord.

For our parishioners that they may have the courage and patience to live into the changes called for in ***Connected in the Spirit***, we pray to the Lord.

*During Advent*

For all in our Diocese, that we may be ready messengers of the Lord, always seeking to prepare a way for Him, we pray to the Lord.

For all in our Diocese, that like Mary we may open ourselves fully to God’s mysterious plan, we pray to the Lord.

For our parishes*,* that through ***Connected in the Spirit*** we may seek the Lord and prepare for his return, we pray to the Lord.

For all our parishes, that our shared conversations for ***Connected in the Spirit*** will help us prepare the way of the Lord, we pray to the Lord.

For our parishes*,* that in our planning efforts we will welcome each other as Christ has welcomed us, we pray to the Lord.

For all our people,that we may follow the model of Saints Mary and Joseph and place our trust in God, we pray to the Lord.

*During Christmas*

For all parishes in our Diocese, that with the angels we may proclaim God’s glory as we joyfully announce the news that Christ is in our midst, we pray to the Lord.

For the people of our Diocese, that we may offer ourselves as gifts to God, we pray to the Lord.

For all our parishes*,* that this Christmas may be a time of joy and unity, we pray to the Lord.

For all parishioners,that we may bring glad tidings as we bear the news that Christ is born, we pray to the Lord.

For everyone in our parish communitiesthat this Christmas brings us closer together in Christ Jesus, we pray to the Lord.

*During Lent*

For our Diocese, that this Lent may be a time of purification from all that divides, we pray to the Lord.

For all in our Diocese, that we may seek and accept God’s will with faith, we pray to the Lord.

For all our parishesthat we may always give witness to God’s mercy, we pray to the Lord.

For the parishes of our cohort*,*that the radiance of Christ may show forth in our communites, we pray to the Lord.

For the people of our parishes,that we may see others through the eyes of faith, we pray to the Lord.

*During Easter*

For our Diocese, that we may boldly proclaim Christ, risen and radiant, we pray to the Lord.

For our Diocese, that this Easter season may be a time of renewed faith, hope and love, we pray to the Lord.

For all in our Diocese, that we may earnestly seek the Holy Spirit, we pray to the Lord.

For the people of our parishes,that our hearts may burn as we hear the Lord’s word, we pray to the Lord.

For the people of our parishes,that God may use us as living stones to build a renewed community of faith, we pray to the Lord.

For all parishioners,that the Holy Spirit will enliven our worship of God and love of neighbor, we pray to the Lord.

# ADDITIONAL PRAYER RESOURCES

If you need more prayer services than those provided and would like to create your own, consider using the following template.

1. PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT WITH A BIBLE, A CRUCIFIX, AND A LIGHTED CANDLE, IF POSSIBLE
2. HAVE COPIES OF MUSIC TO BE SUNG BY ALL
3. OPENING PRAYER
4. CHOOSE A READING FROM THE SUNDAY LECTIONARY
5. REFLECTION AND FAITH SHARING

 Sample questions:

What words spoke to you especially today in these readings?

What actions flow from the readings for you?

How were you changed by the readings? New insights? Motivations to change something in your life?

1. GENERAL INTERCESSIONS
2. LORD’S PRAYER
3. SIGN OF PEACE