

Forming Catholic Disciples

Session 2:

Putting Encounter in the Center

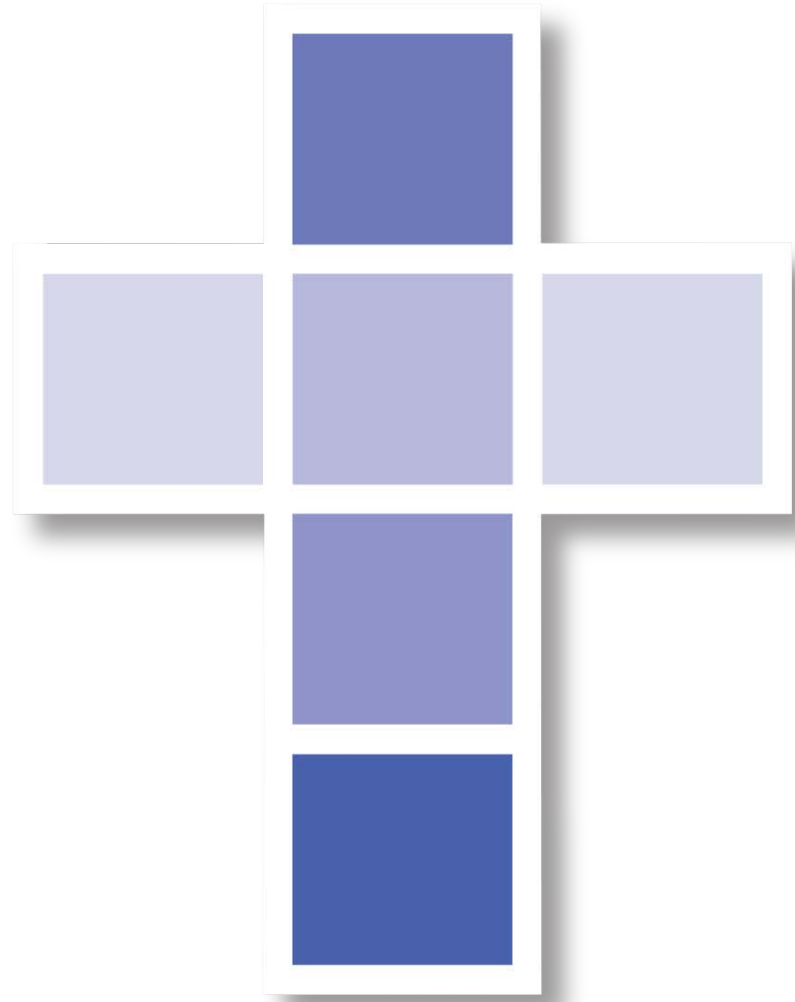


Opening Prayer

O Holy Spirit of God, take me as your disciple. Guide me, illuminate me, sanctify me. Bind my hands that they may do no evil. Cover my eyes that they may see it no more. Sanctify my heart, that evil may not dwell within me. Be my guard. Be my guide.

Wherever you lead me I will go. Whatever you forbid me, I will renounce. Whatever you command me, in your strength I will do. Lead me, then, to the fullness of your truth. Amen.

(Henry Edward Cardinal Manning, 1809-1892)



Unit 4: Relationship



Relationship

We have always thought that the problem was that things were not connected to each other, and we had to work hard to put those things into contact with each other.

That we are basically unconnected.



Isolation

- ▶ The example of the breakup of marriage
 - ▶ 40% of marriages end in divorce.
- ▶ The divisions between groups of people:
 - ▶ Political, racial, cultural, and economic
 - ▶ The 1% v. the 99%; the 10% v. the 90%
- ▶ Divisions within our families
 - ▶ Children develop different “cultures”
 - ▶ Children separate from parents



Connectedness

What if all of this is an illusion? What if the whole assumption that we are separate and isolated, and therefore have to struggle to come together, is a distortion of the human, and earthly, reality that we are profoundly connected? What if, at the heart of our deepest human truth, we are radically bound together? What if no one is able to be him- or herself without being profoundly connected to others and to the earth?

(p. 24)



Bound to Each Other

- ▶ Children as the genetic blending of fathers and mothers
- ▶ Children growing only with their ongoing bondedness to their parents
 - ▶ For food and shelter
 - ▶ For language
 - ▶ For basic values and attitudes in life
- ▶ Great threats show how much we are bound together
 - ▶ World Wars I and II
 - ▶ The September 11th attacks
- ▶ Covid-19



God

- ▶ The involvement of God in human history has been to bring people together, to overcome their divisions.
- ▶ Jesus' greatest ministry was to bring people together—he attracted those most isolated physically, emotionally, and socially.
- ▶ Jesus gathers people and sends them to “the ends of the earth” so that “all the nations” might become disciples.
- ▶ Jesus shows us that God is the relationship that grounds all other relationships, the love and the life that begins everything in creation, and the fullness of love and life that will be the fulfilment of everything in the Kingdom of God.



Poll

Which Statement Seems Most Correct to You?

1. Most Catholics do not have a sense of relationship with God or Jesus.
2. A lot of Catholics have a sense of relationship with God or Jesus, but a lot of Catholics do not.
3. Almost all Catholics who faithfully attend Church and pray have a sense of personal relationship and connection with God.
4. Almost all Catholics have a sense of relationship with God but need help in articulating it.



Moses

*“The Lord used to speak to Moses face to face,
as a person speaks to a friend.”*

(Exodus 33:10)

Do you ever feel that you have an intimacy
with God like the one that Moses had?

What are the moments when you have felt this?



God as Trinity

- ▶ To say that God is Trinity is to say that the very being of God is relationship.
 - ▶ God the Father lives for God the Son.
 - ▶ God the Father and the Son express their life through the Holy Spirit who is the bond of love between Father and Son.
 - ▶ This relationship is infinite and dynamic, the ground from which everything comes, the model behind all creation.
- ▶ God as Trinity=God as Relation=God as the foundation of all relationship in existence.



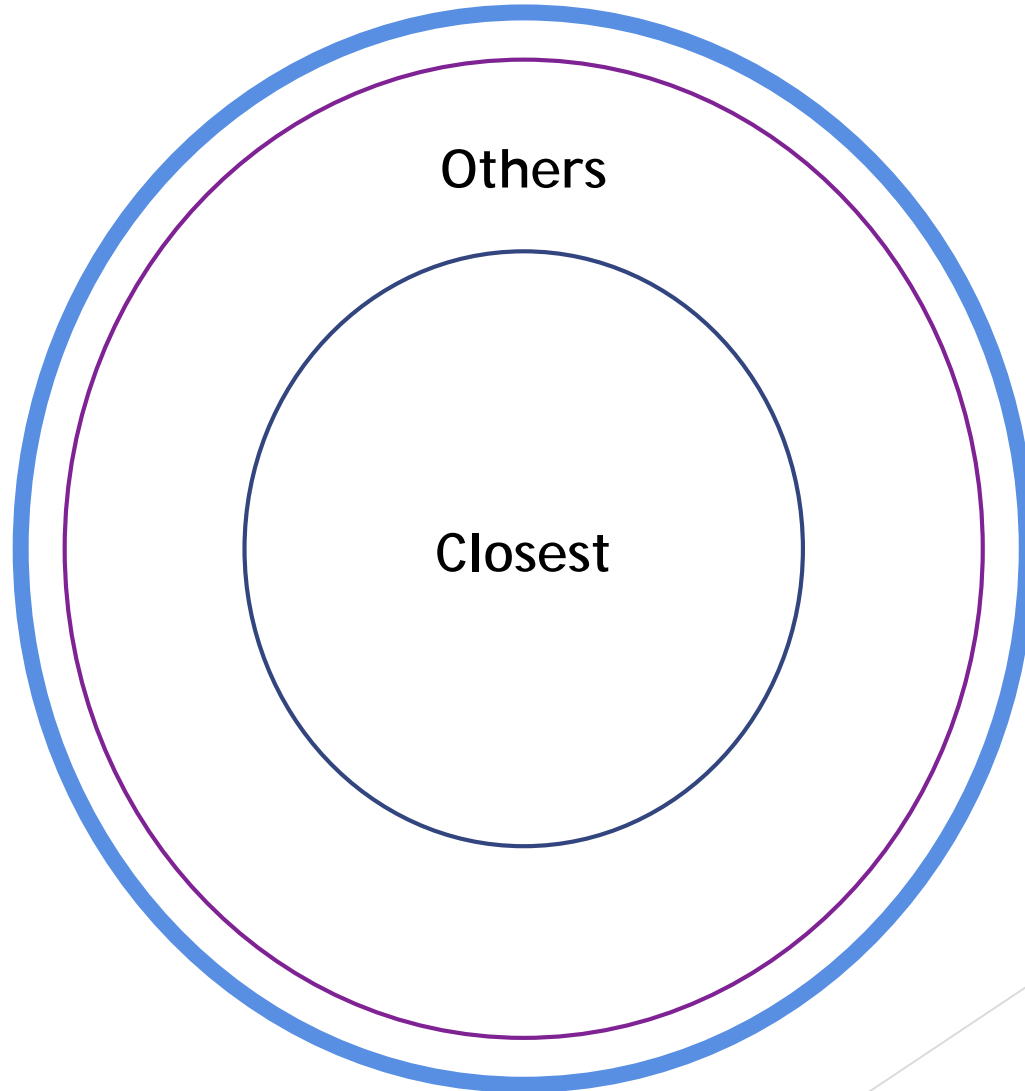
Spiritual Exercise

God

Others

Closest

Write those closest to you in the inner circle and the others in their lives in the outer circle. Note who you are remembering, particularly non-family members who are close like family.



Catholic Discipleship

Pope Pius XII, who died in 1959, loved to talk about the Church as the “Mystical Body of Christ.” This language tried to capture the breadth and depth of the relational basis of a disciple’s life, that we are one with Christ and one in Christ— because Christ’s very life, in the Spirit, flows in all of us.

We are not individuals, somehow trying to connect with other individuals, and occasionally making contact. Rather, existence interconnects us all—with nature and creation, with each other, and with God—and discipleship becomes a way to grasp this truth, live this reality, and find divine love at the center of everything.



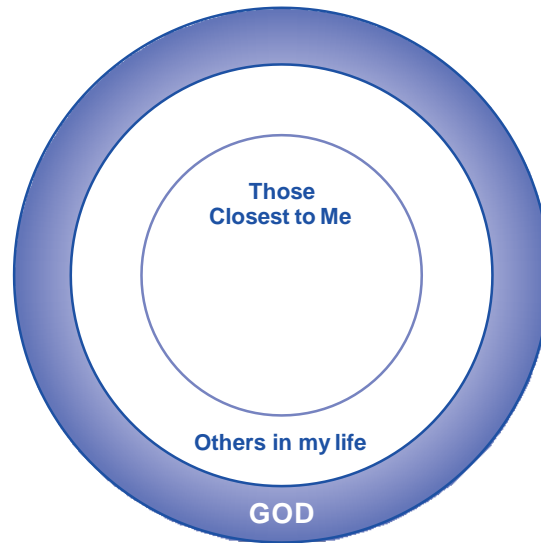
Spiritual Exercise

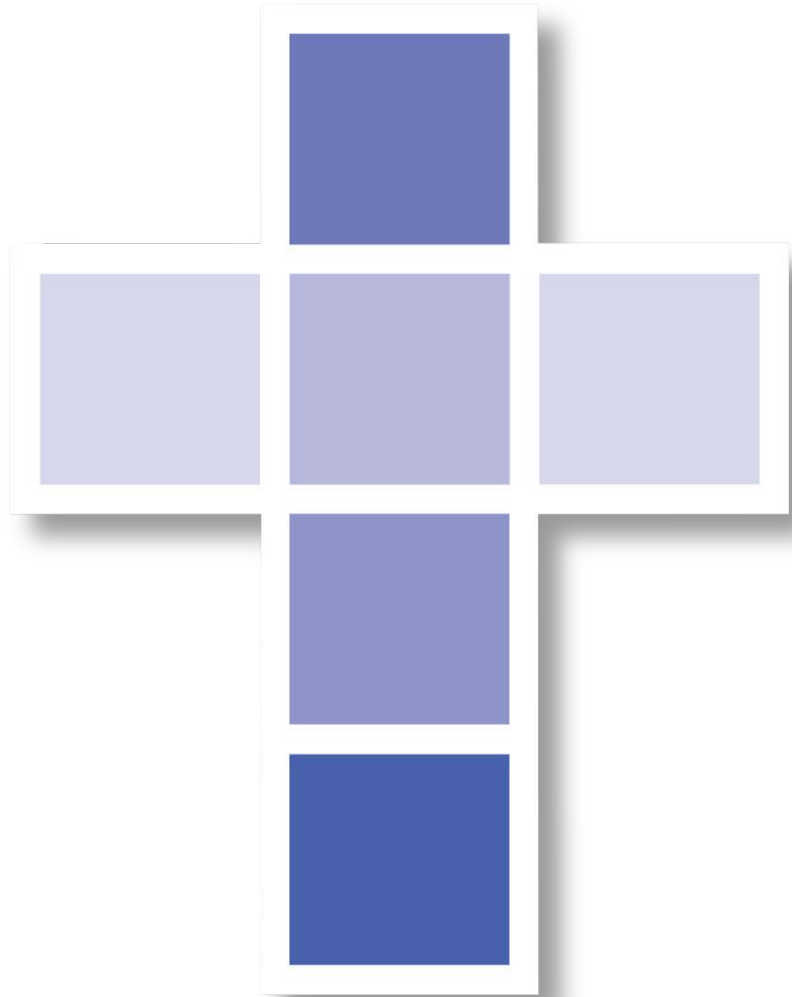
Think about the people in your life this past week.

Draw a circle. Put yourself in the middle and encircle this image of yourself with those people with whom you have interacted this week. Draw a dotted line from your center image toward people who connected with you incidentally; draw a very thick line for the people you see every day, the ones who are closest to you. Note what this drawing is saying about your life.

Now draw a circle around all these connections you have depicted. Write “God” on that circle.

Now pray in thanksgiving to God for the people who surround you and for the way God continues to be revealed in those who surround you. Write down your prayer.





Unit 5: Revelation



Some Principles

- ▶ Revelation, the process by which God communicates with humankind, is one unified whole.
- ▶ It begins with creation itself, for nature speaks of God's love and life.
- ▶ It expands with the emergence of religion and takes on particular force with the revelation made through the Jewish people which began 3,500 years ago.
- ▶ This Jewish revelation was brought to completion with the revelation that was Jesus Christ, God's definitive Word spoken to humankind.
- ▶ The Jewish Scriptures contain a record of God's revelation through Jewish history; the Christian Scriptures contain a record of Jesus' revelation to his first followers, through the Holy Spirit. Together, these compose the Christian and Catholic Bible.



Poll

Let's take a poll. How many of you have:

- Read from the Bible apart from what we heard in church last Sunday in the past two weeks
- Reflected on the Bible selections before Mass on Sunday
- Felt comfortable talking about the Bible with others
- Felt you can look up a passage in the Bible when given the reference
- Have been part of a Bible sharing group

(Answer all that apply)



Fear

Are Catholics afraid of the Bible?

Two perspectives:

1. Catholics have never gotten use to the Bible and are very uncomfortable talking about it.
2. Catholics, in fact, have become very comfortable with Bible passages and, if they go to Mass regularly, are mostly familiar with important passages.



Misreading the Bible

- ▶ The Bible is not primarily a history book, although it has historical matter. History doesn't come in scientific form in the Bible.
- ▶ The Bible is not a science book describing chemistry or physics.
- ▶ The Bible is not a sociology book, or a psychology book, although it has observations about human interactions and human motives.

The truth of the Bible is how it reveals God's relationship with us, and our relationship with God, and with each other because of God.



Tools for Revelation

God inspires the Jewish people to use the words and categories of their culture and experience to reveal the truth about God's relationship to humankind.

- ▶ Poetry
- ▶ Legend
- ▶ Song
- ▶ Ritual
- ▶ Wisdom sayings
- ▶ Traditions



Two Steps

- ▶ The Hebrew Scriptures cover almost two-thousand years of experience. Written material would not have started until there was a stable kingship, about 1,000 years BC. Final editing would not have taken place for parts of the Hebrew Scriptures until a few hundred years before Christ.
- ▶ The Christian Scriptures cover only 100 years of experience, capturing the first reception of Jesus' message and the first two generations of Christians. Writing would have started soon after Jesus' Resurrection (around 34 AD) and for 90-100 years.



Two Realizations

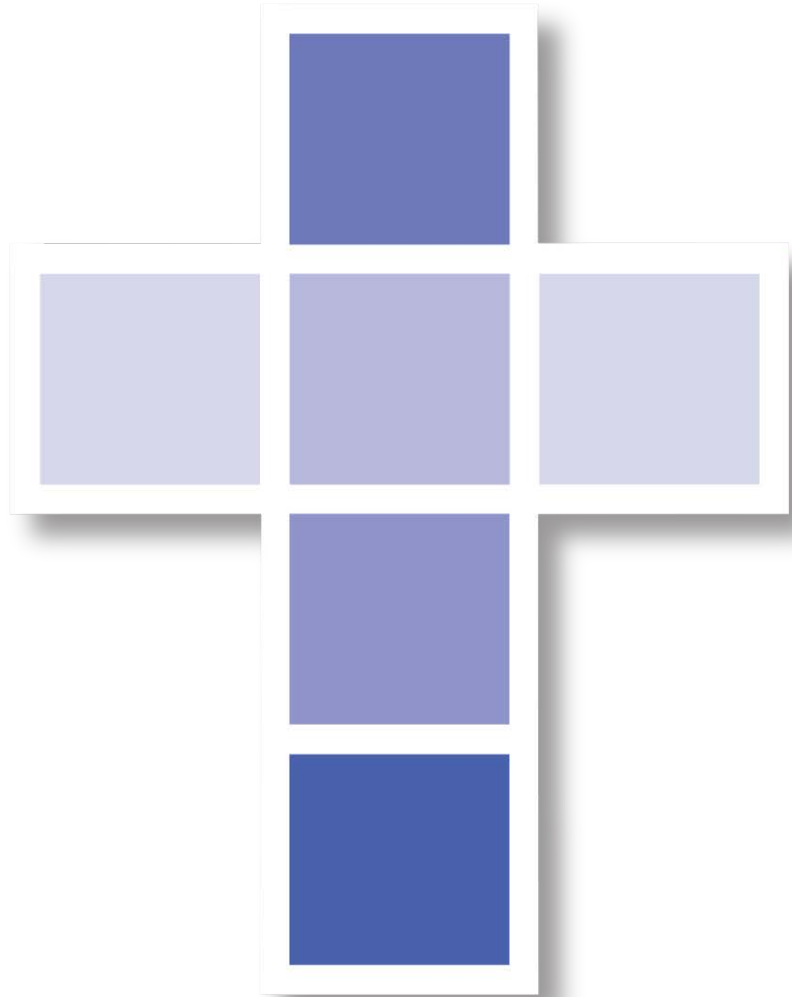
- ▶ The Bible is composed by many “pens”—many humans inspired over centuries, using a variety of types of literature to communicate God’s revelation. This is also true of the New Testament which contains songs, parables, poetic imagery, and carefully crafted narratives.
- ▶ The Bible has, in fact, had many uses in Christian history, and these different uses can help us approach the Bible from several different angles for our own spiritual growth. (See next slide.)

We cannot read the Bible the way we read any other book!



Uses of the Scripture

Use	Meaning	Application
Calling to Conversion	The Scriptures have played a decisive role in calling people to conversion.	How do I let the Scriptures call me to change?
Initiation	The Scriptures develop our deeper connection with God.	How do I let the Scriptures transform me over time?
Study	The Scriptures help us integrate our human knowledge with faith.	How do I commit myself to studying the Bible?
Liturgy	The Scriptures provide the primary language for our worship.	How do I pray with and through the Bible?
Theology	The Scriptures lead us to questions and deeper intellectual understanding.	How do I use the Scriptures to help me come to a deeper intellectual understanding of my life and world?



Unit 6:

Mt. Sinai



The Old Testament

- ▶ Covers more than a millennium of Jewish experience, from the time of their nomadic life, the establishment of the Kingdom, and their exile. (1250-500 BC)
- ▶ Presents a wide variety of people, circumstances, stories, and historical change to communicate God's love.
- ▶ Uses idea of "covenant" to organize much of its stories and themes. Covenant is a way to understand an "agreement" between God and God's people, through which each is bound to the other.



The Old Testament (cont.)

- ▶ Adam demanding to have everything in the Garden
- ▶ Abraham taking a risk
- ▶ Moses struggling for freedom
- ▶ A wandering Jew not sure whether or not to trust God
- ▶ An exultant people entering a new land
- ▶ A king who serves his people
- ▶ A king who uses his people for himself
- ▶ A prophet crying out on behalf of God
- ▶ A rebel trying to silence a prophet's message
- ▶ A people in exile
- ▶ A people awaiting redemption



The Big Picture

About 1250 years before Christ, God led the Jewish people, who were slaves in Egypt, out of Egypt and into a new dwelling place, through the leadership of Moses.

About 1000 years before Christ, the Jewish people, settle in their new dwelling place, developed a Kingdom which flourished for 100 years and then split into two rival kingdoms, each of which was captured and taken into exile.



Mount Sinai—the Covenant

1. What led up to Mt. Sinai
2. What was involved in Mt. Sinai
3. What flowed from Mt. Sinai



Leading up to Mt. Sinai

- ▶ The “pre-history” stories in Genesis 1-11 showing the growth of sin and the dysfunction of relationship with God and between people
- ▶ The call of Abraham (Genesis 12), the Patriarchs and their spouses, Isaac and Jacob (Genesis 12-36).
- ▶ The stories of Joseph and Jewish migration to Egypt (Genesis 37-50).
- ▶ The birth and call of Moses (Exodus 1-3) and the subsequent liberation of the Jewish people.



What Was Involved with Mt. Sinai

- ▶ Liberation of the Jewish People from Egypt
 - ▶ This is told in the first half of the Book of Exodus, containing the outline of the plagues, the Passover, the leaving of Egypt and the pursuit of Egyptians (Exodus 1-18).
 - ▶ The Passover was a traditional feast that became associated with the Exodus.
- ▶ The Covenant on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19)
 - ▶ I will be your God, and you will be my people.
 - ▶ All the people say “Yes” to following the covenant.
- ▶ The Commandments (Exodus 20)
 - ▶ These are the ways the Jewish people will embody their faithfulness to God.



What Flowed From Sinai

- ▶ The Jewish people make their way into the Holy Land (under Joshua) and set up tribal systems (Judges) as they adjust to their sometimes-hostile environment.
- ▶ The Jewish people, under Samuel, establish a Kingdom with three initial kings (Saul, David, Solomon), after which the Kingdom splits into North (Israel) and South (Judah)—1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings.
- ▶ As the Jewish people respond to outside threats and internal divisions, prophets arise to remind the people of God's fidelity (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), especially when driven into Exile.
- ▶ After the Exile, wisdom writings are collected to help guide daily life.



Kings and beyond

1000 BC

Saul-David-Solomon

720 BC

Northern Kingdom
(Samaria) destroyed

500 BC

Return from Exile,
Collection of Bible

Babylon

Greece

900 BC

Kingdom of North and South

580 BC

Southern Kingdom in Exile in
Babylon

150 BC

Maccabean Revolt

Seleucids

Romans



Spiritual Exercise

Turn to p. 42 in your booklets and use that page to list the stories from the Old Testament that are important to you... the ones you remember the most, the ones that help you spiritually.

As you write them down, say briefly what they mean to you spiritually.



Catholic Discipleship Prayer

Lord, God, through our baptisms you have made us disciples, followers of Jesus who attend to his Word, pray and worship in his Spirit, experience love in his community of the Church, and are sent to serve by helping others as he did. Lead us, Father, more fully into your Kingdom, which Jesus came to begin and fulfill. Help us, through his Spirit, to adhere to him and bring his Good News to all we encounter. We pray this in his name. Amen.

Our Father...



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