

# **Journeying Home**

**Small Group Resource for Young Adults**

**Diocese of Rochester**



Written by Shannon Loughlin

## Introduction

Several years ago I had the pleasure of meeting and working with a priest from Australia named Fr. Desmond O’Neil. By the time Fr. Des and I met he was well into his seventies and knew he would most likely not return home again. It always struck me that he did not seem overly disturbed by that fact, which is not to say that he did not love his home. In fact he spoke of Australia often and fondly, trying to teach the community the Aussie lingo (to no avail) and describe the unique features of his far off home. Fr. Des also spoke of his family, whom he loved deeply and obviously missed.

For all that he loved and missed his home and family, however, Fr. Des always understood himself as a servant of God. In following God’s call, he had found himself half a world away from where he began his journey, ministering to the students at a college in rural upstate New York. His experiences of his home in Australia had certainly help shape his view of the world, but it was his understanding of his true Home that I believe made him free enough to follow God’s call anywhere. Fr. Des lived his life with a freedom that showed the depth of his love for his true Home – the kingdom of our Lord. He knew where he was going, and for every story he had about his home thousands of miles away, he had two for the Home he carried in his heart. When he died, it was those stories that I held most closely in mine.

I may never leave my rural home, to live and serve half a world away. But knowing Fr. Des helped me and everyone around him understand, that when you know where you Home is, you can follow the Lord to the ends of the earth.

## Young Adults and Going Home

The theme of home is one that resonates with young adults in particular. The age range of young adults is wide, going from 18 – 40. “Younger” young adults tend to be working on changes in their understanding of home: how do they, as emerging adults, relate with those who are “home” (parents, siblings, or friends), what does it mean to leave home (or return home), or how do you have a “home” when you move every year or two. “Older” young adults may be working to establish their own home, and have their own set of concerns: where will they settle, what will their priorities be, how will they structure their time, how will they raise their children, etc.

Engaging in the challenges of young adulthood as a disciple adds an important foundation to the questions of home, though. Disciples like Fr. Des point to a way of living that gives perspective and hope in the midst of many changes. Our understanding of our final Home helps us live more freely in our daily lives. The first movement of *Spirit Alive!*, Spiritual Renewal in the Diocese of Rochester, calls us to deepen our relationship with Jesus. This resource will use the life and teaching of Jesus and his disciples to help young adults explore their relationship with Jesus and how their final Home impacts their lives in the world today.

This small group resource uses the important theme of “home” as the basis of five sessions. It is geared towards young adults, but could be used by anyone. The first session explores the early life of Jesus and his experience of “home.” The second session explores Jesus’ beginnings in

ministry and his baptism as part of his beginning the journey Home to God. The third session looks at following God's call as a disciple of Jesus. The fourth session explores the gift of the Eucharist as food for our journey. The final session offers time to reflect on living a life of freedom as a disciples journeying to our final Home.

Each session includes four sections:

<b>Read</b>	A scripture passage is given
<b>Reflect</b>	A brief reflection is offered
<b>Respond</b>	Questions for discussion are given
<b>Represent</b>	Ideas are offered for how to give witness to the Good News as disciples in the world

These sessions can be used as a **small group resource**, or use as part of individual **spiritual journaling**.

### **Small Group Resource:**

Small group faith sharing can be an enriching experience. To ensure that everyone in the group enjoys the sessions, a leader should be designated (this can be the same person for all sessions or rotate from session to session). The leader's role is to create a hospitable environment, help make introductions between participants, maintain the ground rules, invite participants to be readers, keep the conversation moving, and be sure that no one person monopolizes the sharing.

It might be helpful to try "mutual invitation" as a way to welcome people into sharing. In mutual invitation, the first person volunteers to share, then invites someone who has not spoken to share next. That person then invites the next person, and so on. If at any time someone does not want to share they may "pass," and invite someone else.

Before beginning, participants should agree on ground rules for their conversation. Some examples include:

- make it clear that conversations are not considered confidential, unless the whole group would like to make that a ground rule
- no one is required to share and everyone should share only at the level they feel comfortable
- no one should criticize the opinions of others by using derogatory comments. Participants can certainly disagree with others in the group, but should do so by focusing on their own perspectives and not by demeaning others.

- commit to all sessions and to be on time
- commit to ending on time

Other ground rules can be decided upon at the first session by all of the participants.

## **Spiritual Journaling:**

This resource can also be a source for individual spiritual journaling. Spiritual journaling is more than a daily log of the events in your life. It is an opportunity to focus in a particular way on God's presence in your life, where you are being called to grow as a disciple, and discern how moments in your spiritual life are connected. It might include where you saw God in your day, scripture passages that touch your heart in a particular way, prayers that you hold for yourself or others, etc. This resource, for example, could serve as the foundation for spiritual journaling over the period of five weeks.

To begin journaling use the opening prayer offered, or say a prayer for guidance and insight. Use the "respond" questions as the starting point for your journal entry. Be sure to include how you "represented" the Good News since your last entry. At the end of the last session, consider doing a "summary" entry. Share your insights with friends or family.

## **Session One: Beginning at Home**

### **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, Son of God,  
as we begin this journey with you,  
we ask for your blessing and your Spirit  
to fill our hearts and minds  
and to show us your will for your people.

We pray this in your name and through your Spirit. Amen.

### **Read *Luke 2: 39 – 52***

When they had fulfilled all the prescriptions of the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Each year his parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him.

After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced (in) wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

### **Reflect**

We know very little of how Jesus spent the first thirty-three years of his life. We know that he grew up in Nazareth and that our tradition teaches that, "the home of Nazareth is the school where we begin to understand the life of Jesus"

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(*Catechism*, 533). But it can seem strange to imagine Jesus, our God Incarnate, as a child or as needing to learn anything. Yet, our tradition also firmly holds that Jesus was truly God and *truly human* (*Catechism*, 464).

Our scripture reading from Luke stresses this in its reference to the child Jesus growing over the years. We can assume that as he grew in his home in Nazareth, he learned much about the world from Mary and Joseph. He learned their values and dreams, he learned how to interact with people and to show love and respect to people. Even in the story of the temple, where we see the young Jesus begin to assert his independence, we see a young man who has learned about his faith and his place in the world through the experiences of home. As he continued to grow after his encounter in the temple, we hear that he advanced in wisdom and God's favor.

Our homes from our childhood offer the foundation from which we form our own futures. The values and beliefs that we learn as children become the springboard for our own values and beliefs. Sometimes as we grow we decide that we will continue to live out the same values of our childhood, sometimes we decide to challenge those values and go a new way. One of the major tasks of emerging adulthood is to enter into that process and integrate new ways of understanding our home, our relationships with family, and our own independence.

## **Respond**

What values and beliefs do you recall from your childhood home?

What values and beliefs have you chosen as your own, the same or perhaps different from those of your childhood?

How do your experiences as a young adult change your relationships with those you love?

How do they change your relationship with Jesus?

## **Represent**

Since the core of this session is about "home" and our origins of "home" consider representing the Good News in the world by:

- volunteering at a homeless shelter to be with those with no home
- committing to visiting a nursing home for those who are in their last home on earth

- supporting a home for women and children impacted by domestic violence, for those who are searching for a safe home

How else could you share the Good News in the world?

## Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, Loving Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ,  
Touch our Hearts

Lead us, Guide us, Refresh us, Heal us, Forgive us,  
Give us new life.

We make this prayer for ourselves and all the people of our Diocese

Be with us in these months with your life, your love and your encouragement.

Holy Spirit, Touch us, Be with us Always.

We pray, through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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## **Session Two: Entering the Journey**

### **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, Lamb of God,  
as we seek to live out our baptism more fully,  
help us to understand and live  
all of the love that you have for your people.

We pray this in your name and through your Spirit. Amen.

*Before you begin with this session's reading, take a moment to discuss how you "represented" the Good News in the world since the last session.*

### **Read *Matthew 3: 13 – 17***

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened (for him), and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove (and) coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

### **Reflect**

This scripture passage from Matthew describes Jesus' baptism, which marked the beginning of his public ministry. Our tradition teaches that in allowing himself to be baptized, Jesus accepts and begins of his mission as God's suffering Servant (*Catechism, 536*). It is Jesus' public "yes" to entering into a new way of following God's will, even though Jesus, as fully human, does not know exactly all that is to follow. Jesus enters into a time of transition with this public "yes" that will lead him to the cross, and to our salvation.

The young adult years are also times of great transition. Some days it may seem like every part of the life of a young adult are in transition! There may be new jobs, new friends, new schools, new apartments or homes – and just because

something is settled “for the moment” doesn’t mean it might not change tomorrow! And yet, even during these huge changes it can be of some comfort to know that Jesus went through momentous times of transition himself. He shows us that it is possible, with God’s grace and love, to say “yes” even when we are not sure what that might mean.

In our own baptism we are “sacramentally assimilated to Jesus,” (*Catechism*, 537). We, as disciples of Jesus, enter into the great mystery of salvation in our own rebirth in Christ. We are shown that there is more to come than the home of our childhood and the transitions in life. Even if we are not able to see the exact path before us, we are challenged to say “yes” over and over again.

## **Respond**

If you were baptized as a child, what does saying “yes” to God in these times of transition mean to you today? If you were baptized as an adult, how does that influence the way you say “yes” as a disciple?

How does your baptism call you into a deeper relationship with Jesus?

How do you live out your baptism in your everyday life?

## **Represent**

The theme of this session is on transition and living out our baptism during times of transition. Consider “representing” the Good News in the world by:

- introducing yourself to new neighbors, or others in transition, and helping them connect with you community
- reaching out to new people at work and helping them understand their new environment
- if you are married, inviting a newly married couple over to dinner

How else could you share the Good News in the world?

## Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, Loving Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ,  
Touch our Hearts  
Lead us, Guide us, Refresh us, Heal us, Forgive us,  
Give us new life.

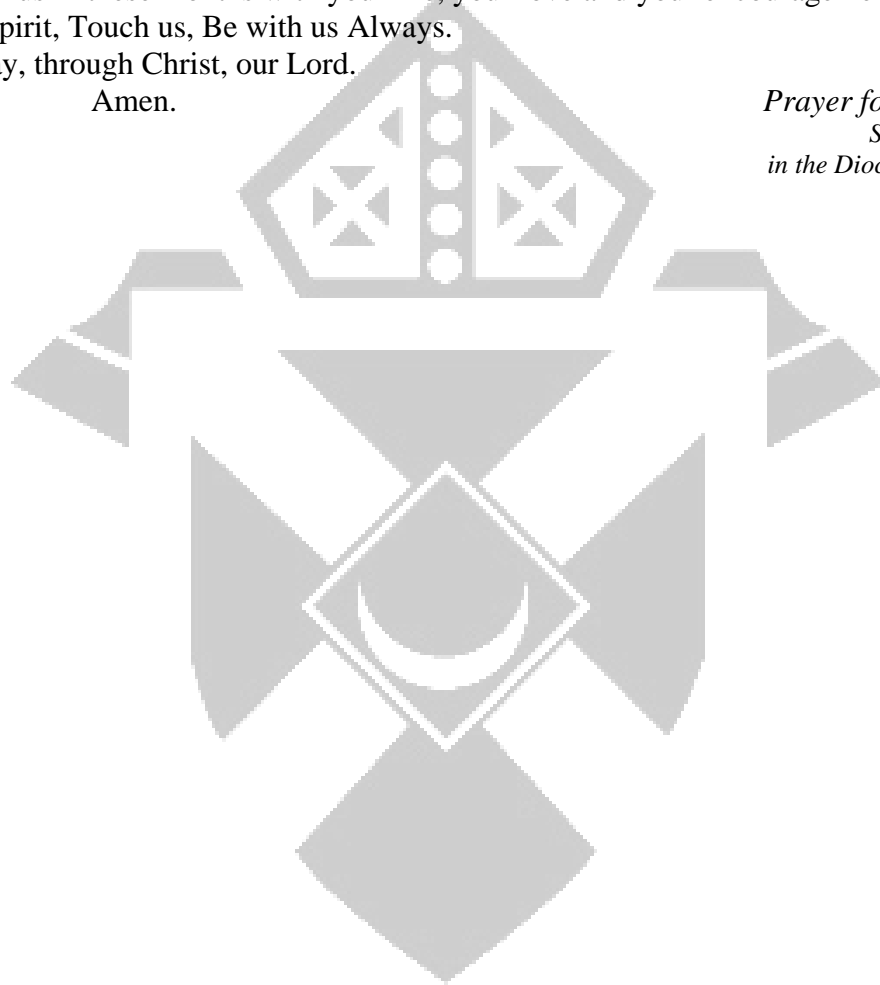
We make this prayer for ourselves and all the people of our Diocese  
Be with us in these months with your life, your love and your encouragement.

Holy Spirit, Touch us, Be with us Always.

We pray, through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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## **Session Three: The Call of Jesus on the Journey**

### **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace,  
As we explore how we are to be light  
In the world,  
Help us to see and experience your Light and love more fully.

We ask this in your name and through your Spirit. Amen.

*Before you begin with this session's reading, take a moment to discuss how you "represented" the Good News in the world since the last session.*

### **Read *Matthew 5: 14 – 16***

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

### **Reflect**

The words of the scripture passage from Matthew are those of Jesus calling his disciples to live out their discipleship in the world for all to see. The gift of God's love is so bright and burning that it can scarcely be contained. It is meant by its very nature to be shared with others. Jesus offers these words to his disciples while he himself is living out that light and love. He is a long way from the home of his childhood, and yet he knows that the Kingdom of God has begun. The gift of God's love has transformed the world, and those who follow Christ are called to participate in that transformation using the unique gifts that have been given to them by their Creator.

As we journey on our own path we must discern the ways, large and small, that we are called to grow and share in our gifts. Of course, the first step is to identify our gifts. This is a life long process, which calls us to continuously evaluate ourselves. Our gifts may be aspects of our personality, or perhaps skills that we acquire over time. As we grow in our lives and have new experiences, we may

identify new gifts as well. As we do, we must also discern how we are to use those gifts in the world to better participate in its transformation.

Living out our gifts in the world also involves choosing a particular vocation. Some will choose to be priests or women religious, but most will live out their vocation as a member of the laity. The laity live as disciples in the world, seeking “the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God’s will” (*Catechism*, 898). In each way of life, disciples must discern to the best of their ability how to use their unique combination of gifts and experiences to fulfill God’s will.

## **Respond**

What are some of your gifts?

How did you identify your gifts? Are there other ways to identify new gifts?

How do you use your gifts to transform the world? How do you help others do the same?

## **Represent**

This session is about using our gifts on the journey home. Consider “representing” the Good News in the world by:

- using one of your own gifts in a new way
- when you are speaking with people, identify one of their gifts (“You really have a gift for helping people see things in a positive light...”)
- explore a new skill or gift to see if you might have more to offer

How else could you share the Good News in the world?

## Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, Loving Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ,  
Touch our Hearts

Lead us, Guide us, Refresh us, Heal us, Forgive us,  
Give us new life.

We make this prayer for ourselves and all the people of our Diocese

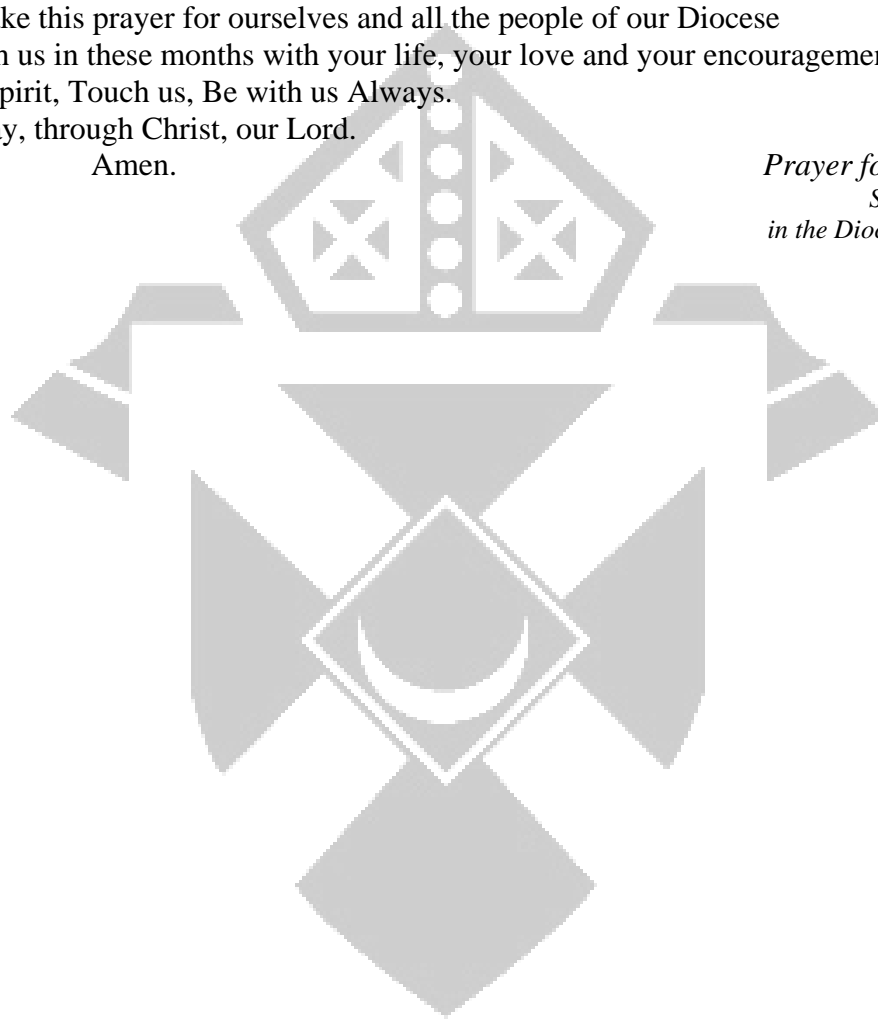
Be with us in these months with your life, your love and your encouragement.

Holy Spirit, Touch us, Be with us Always.

We pray, through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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## **Session Four:** **Eucharist as Food for the Journey**

### **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, our Messiah,  
you call us into communion with you and each other.  
help us to understand the special gift you have given to  
us in the Eucharist,  
and to share that gift as a Eucharistic People.

We pray this in your name and through your Spirit. Amen.

*Before you begin with this session's reading, take a moment to discuss how you "represented" the Good News in the world since the last session.*

### **Read *Luke 22: 14 – 20***

When the hour came, he took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for, I tell you, I shall not eat it (again) until there is fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I tell you (that) from this time on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you."

### **Reflect**

As Jesus' journey in his public ministry draws to its conclusion, he offers his disciples the gift of the Eucharist, which we continue to celebrate today. The church describes this gift as the source and summit of the Christian life (*Catechism, 1324*). All of the sacraments, as well as the ministries of the church and the work of all Christians, are "bound up" with the Eucharist and oriented towards it. In Luke, Jesus describes himself as eager to share in this gift with his followers. That eagerness continues with us today.

In the Eucharist, we come together as the People of God, those called to be part of the Body of Christ. We experience the Real Presence of our Lord and carry that

presence as a Eucharistic People into the world. As a people, we work to bring about the fulfillment of the Kingdom.

On our journey, there will be times when we need strength and courage, and perhaps even a challenge. We cannot do such a journey alone. Not only do we need the Eucharist to sustain us, but we also need the community to carry us, and to allow us to carry others, as well. Being a part of a people gives us the perspective of generations who have come before us and who continue to be a part of our church in the Communion of Saints. The challenge of being connected to Jesus and to others so fully keeps us from compartmentalizing our lives. Sharing in the Eucharist and living as a Eucharistic people, with all of its challenges and opportunities, helps us to integrate the Good News into every part of who we are.

## **Respond**

How does participating in the Eucharist challenge or sustain you as a disciple?

How do you help challenge or sustain others in the world?

How does connecting with a community change how you understand discipleship?

## **Represent**

The theme of this session is the gift of Eucharist and the importance of community on the journey. Consider “representing” the Good News in the world by:

- reaching out to people who are outside of your usual community
- working with a migrant center to connect with people who are on the fringes of your community
- introducing yourself to someone new within your usual community
- offering to bring the Eucharist to someone who is homebound

How else could you share the Good News in the world?

## Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, Loving Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ,  
Touch our Hearts  
Lead us, Guide us, Refresh us, Heal us, Forgive us,  
Give us new life.

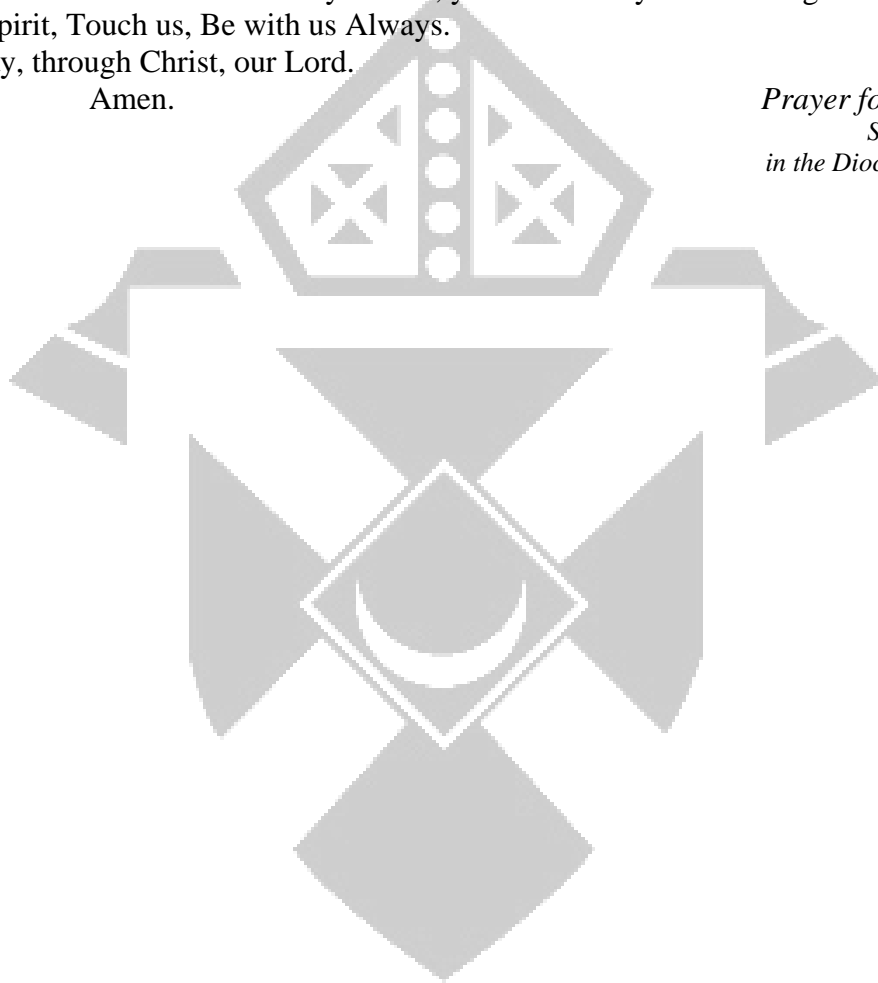
We make this prayer for ourselves and all the people of our Diocese  
Be with us in these months with your life, your love and your encouragement.

Holy Spirit, Touch us, Be with us Always.

We pray, through Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

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## **Session Five: The Kingdom as our Home**

### **Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, bearer of the Kingdom,  
help us to live as those who know  
that their true home is with you  
and to share the truth of that home  
with all you bring in our path.

We pray this in your name and through your Spirit. Amen.

*Before you begin with this session's reading, take a moment to discuss how you "represented" the Good News in the world since the last session.*

### **Read 2 Corinthians 5: 6 – 9**

So we are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord. Therefore, we aspire to please him, whether we are at home or away.

### **Reflect**

In Jesus, the Kingdom of God was begun, a kingdom where all are called to enter (*Catechism, 544*). Yet, we are also waiting for its final fulfillment. We are in an "in between time," on our own personal journey and on a journey towards the fulfillment of the Kingdom. There lies our true home, in the fullness of God's grace. Paul writes to the Corinthians in our scripture passage about that home, our home with the Lord. Until that time, when we are called home, we are to live by faith and with courage.

What does that mean, to live with courage? There is a freedom that is a part of being a disciple. We are free because we know whose we are and where we are going. We can make decisions that are based on our faith, instead of on fear. Fear of instability, fear of poverty, or fear of the opinions of others, do not need to rule our lives as disciples. That is not to say those fears are not a part of our reality, but the greater reality of the Kingdom of our Lord emboldens us.

The courage to live by our faith takes a lifetime to cultivate. Our continuous attention to our relationship with our Lord and the Kingdom that he began, and will fulfill, gives us the freedom to live in the world as disciples. That freedom is a beacon to others thirsty for more from life.

## Respond

How do you live your life as someone who is free?

What struggles or fears keep you from fully living as someone whose home is the Kingdom?

What else would you like to do on your journey as someone whose home is with God?

## Represent

This final session focuses on the Kingdom as our Home and what that means for us as disciples set free. Many in the world are enslaved, in a variety of ways. Consider “representing” the Good News in the world by:

- working with those who are imprisoned through addiction
- advocating for legislative changes which benefit the poor
- committing to organizations which combat human trafficking

How else could you share the Good News in the world?

## Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, Loving Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ,  
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