



INTRODUCTION



Welcome to *The Word on the Go!* People of all ages and life experiences are discovering their voice in the Church through small Christian communities. The small community is an opportunity for you to bring your own experiences into dialogue with your faith. It enables you to connect your faith to your relationships, your work, and your world in a profound and concrete way.

We invite you to initiate your journey as a small community by praying and sharing through the sessions in this volume. The Scripture selections parallel the Church year, and invite you to journey with Jesus through his life, ministry, death and resurrection. Part of the power of the Scriptures for us today, although they were written thousands of years ago, is the way we can see the story of our life reflected in the stories of those who walked the earth so many years ago. The details change, of course, but the struggles and choices, the successes and insights, resonate now as then. The stories of Scripture offer us a little guidance, a little encouragement that we are not alone as we face the challenges the world presents us.

The texts of the Gospels are infinitely richer than any effort to interpret them and apply their message to our needs. As we grow in our own spiritual lives and as the parish to which we belong and the entire Church grapple with new issues, we should return to the Gospel for insights to guide us. Many passages of the Gospel, such as the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-11), point to the Paschal Mystery, the death-and-resurrection of Jesus, so in context have a deeper meaning for the Church.

Open yourself to the presence of God as you journey through these next few weeks—God who is already with you, waiting for your response.

OVERVIEW

Each session should have an appointed leader who is familiar with the content and process. This leader should obtain the passage and have read and reflected on both the Scripture passage and the session content. The leader is encouraged to be creative in preparing an appropriate setting for sharing and prayer, eliminating distractions as much as possible. The session itself is designed to be flexible within the allotted timeframe. The meeting should be about one hour, but can be shortened or lengthened appropriately.

SESSION OUTLINE

At the first meeting or whenever new participants attend, all are invited to introduce themselves by sharing something significant.

At other times, the first few minutes of each meeting might be used for sharing the experiences that resulted from specific action decisions from the previous meeting.

Opening Prayer

The leader brings the group together and allows a few moments for appreciating God's presence.

The leader may start with the recommended prayer, prepare another brief prayer, or invite a participant to pray aloud to begin the time together.

Faith in Action

Each session, a Faith in Drive response (see next page) is recommended. After the first week, the leader will invite people to share briefly how they carried out their action responses from the previous session.

Scripture

Next, the Scripture passage is proclaimed. It is suggested the passage be proclaimed twice—each time by a different group member. This means it has been prepared. The leader should foresee this and select good readers who will prepare. If necessary for understanding, the reader might give the context of the Scripture passage in a sentence or two, so that all may appreciate the meaning of this Gospel.

Settling In With the Word

After the reading, the leader invites everyone to take a few moments to savor a word, a question, or a feeling that arises. The leader then asks those who wish to share this aloud.

Reflection

The leader can either suggest the Scripture reflection be read thoughtfully in silence, or ask one or two people to read different sections for the entire group.

Questions for Reflection

Following the reflection, the leader continues by introducing the questions for reflection. The questions are designed to provide a guide for input—there is no need to complete the questions or to stop a good discussion that has gone outside the scope of the questions. The focus is faith sharing

that centers on how each person experiences the action of God's Word in daily life. The leader needs to bring each person gently into the sharing and not allow one person to dominate. All sharing is confidential.

Faith In Drive

The leader decides the appropriate conclusion time to this sharing and moves on to talk about choosing a specific action that flows from this sharing. Each session offers some ideas for an action; however, these are only suggestions and may nourish other creative ideas. It is important that group members select an action that is both measurable and realistic. Each may choose an individual action or the group may want to do a common action.

When choosing individual actions, the leader will ask the members to share their decision with the group. When choosing a group action, the leader will moderate the assignments and responsibilities for different aspects of the action.

At the beginning of the next session, the leader will invite people to share briefly how they carried out their action responses (Faith in Action).

Closing Prayer

The sharing is concluded with prayer.

The leader or someone he/she invites is responsible for the closing prayer. Each session includes a closing prayer. The leader or participants may want to add or choose their own closing prayer.

SMALL GROUP PROCESS

Small group/community sessions are a very important part of the participants' spiritual growth and development process. These small groupings provide a rare opportunity for the people of God to share faith, to listen more closely to the Spirit, and to witness that God calls, touches, and heals individuals and community members.

Understanding and respecting the human learning process is an essential part of small faith-sharing groups. It is important that the atmosphere be comfortable, warm, and friendly. Ambiguity and difference of opinion are to be expected and welcomed. Each person is given the opportunity to express feelings and thoughts, examined in light of the rich scriptural tradition of our faith. Being accepted and listened to are essential ingredients of a good faith-sharing experience. There should be a true desire to listen to another's experience. A sense of humor is always helpful!

The leader/facilitator is the person who has responsibility for guiding the group through the faith sharing and prayers (or assigning it to one of the members) of the small group session. Leaders of the small groups must be well-trained for the task. By demonstrating charity and flexibility, a facilitator can effectively help the group to stay on the topic, gently include hesitant members, and develop a warm, accepting, open climate, and group cohesiveness.

Leaders do not provide preambles or prologues to questions; they do not frighten, shame, or argue with participants by word, gesture, expression, voice tone, or note taking. Participants may have questions about specific elements of our faith. Rather than trying to answer all questions, the facilitator may refer

some persons with questions to resources beyond the group.

A leader listens carefully to the participants and asks questions only when necessary to keep the sharing moving or keep it on focus. The leader needs to be prepared by understanding beforehand the "questions" and the "background" provided in the text. However, the leader need never feel bound to a set of questions or texts, but should be able to adapt to what is needed for the sharing as it moves along.

When two or more Christians share faith, we are assured that Christ is in our midst and that the life of God and gifts of the Spirit are at work in us. Through the small group/community sessions, we are in a very vital way opening ourselves to the Spirit's working in us and through us.

FAITH-SHARING PRINCIPLES

In an effort to keep your group/ community consistent with its purpose, we offer the following Faith-Sharing Principles.

Theological Principles

- Each person is led by God on his/ her personal spiritual journey. This happens in the context of the Church.
- Faith sharing refers to shared reflections on the action of God in one's life experience as related to Scripture and the Church's faith. Faith sharing is not necessarily discussion, problem solving, or Scripture study. The purpose is an encounter between a person in the concrete circumstances of one's life and the Word of God which leads to a conversion of heart.
- Faith sharing is meant to serve our union with Christ and his Church and thereby with one another. With the help of God's Spirit we contribute vitality to the whole Church. From the Church's leadership, we receive authoritative guidance. We are nurtured in the sacramental life. We are supported by a community of believers for our mission in the world.
- The entire faith-sharing process is seen as prayer, i.e., listening to the Word of God as broken open by others' experience.

Small Group Guidelines

- Constant attention to respect, honesty, and openness for each person will assist the group or community's growth.
- Each person shares on the level where he/she feels comfortable.
- Silence is a vital part of the total faith-sharing process. Participants are given time to reflect before any sharing begins, and a period of comfortable silence might occur between individual sharings.
- Persons are encouraged to wait to share a second time until others who wish to do so have contributed.
- The entire group is responsible for participating and faith sharing.
- Confidentiality is essential, allowing each person to share honestly.
- Reaching beyond the group in action and response is essential for the growth of individuals, the groups, and the Church.

How to Identify the Sessions for Each Week

The faith-sharing sessions for *The Word on the Go* are arranged according to the Seasons and special days of the Church year (the Liturgical Year). These are Advent, Lent, Easter, Ordinary Time, and Solemnities and Feasts. Each of the Seasons celebrates a different aspect of the mystery of Christ, such as his birth, his mission, and his passion, death and resurrection. Solemnities and Feasts honor special moments

and events in Christ’s life; the life of Mary, and some of the saints.

The way the Lectionary is organized is to assign the Gospels in Ordinary Time to one of the Synoptic Gospels [Matthew, Mark, or Luke]: Year A is the Year of Matthew; Year B is the Year of Mark, and Year C is the Year of Luke. John’s Gospel is used principally during the Seasons of Lent and Easter.

In order to determine the order of the sessions for this volume of *The Word on the Go*, you will need to refer to

the Liturgical calendar for Year A, this Year, and the beginning of the Liturgical Calendar for Year B for the Advent sessions. The calendar is found below.

To determine the appropriate session on which to faith share, just use the calendar to find the date of the Sunday that follows your planned meeting, and you will find it indicates which is the Sunday or Feast that be the focus of your sharing. The example below shows that February 22, 2009 is the 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

LITURGICAL Calendar

Year B	2009	2012	2015	Year B	2009	2012	2015
Baptism of the Lord	Jan. 11	Jan. 11	Jan. 11	Easter	Apr. 12	Apr. 8	Apr. 5
2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jan. 18	Jan. 15	Jan. 18	2nd Sunday of Easter **	Apr. 19	Apr. 15	Apr. 12
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time	Jan. 25	Jan. 22	Jan. 25	3rd Sunday of Easter	Apr. 26	Apr. 22	Apr. 19
4th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Feb. 1	Jan. 29	Feb. 1	4th Sunday of Easter	May 3	Apr. 29	Apr. 26
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Feb. 8	Feb. 5	Feb. 8	5th Sunday of Easter	May 10	May 6	May 3
6th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Feb. 15	Feb. 12	Feb. 15	6th Sunday of Easter	May 17	May 13	May 10
7th Sunday in Ordinary Time	Feb. 22	Feb. 19	- - -	Ascension ***	May 21	May 17	May 14
8th Sunday in Ordinary Time*	- - -	- - -	- - -	7th Sunday of Easter	May 24	May 20	May 17
1st Sunday of Lent	Mar. 1	Feb. 26	Feb. 22	Pentecost	May 31	May 27	May 24
2nd Sunday of Lent	Mar. 8	Mar. 4	Mar. 1	Trinity Sunday	June 7	June 3	May 31
3rd Sunday of Lent	Mar. 15	Mar. 11	Mar. 8	Body and Blood of Christ	June 14	June 10	June 7
4th Sunday of Lent	Mar. 22	Mar. 18	Mar. 15	9th Sunday in Ordinary Time *	- - -	- - -	- - -
5th Sunday of Lent	Mar. 29	Mar. 25	Mar. 22	10th Sunday in Ordinary Time *	- - -	- - -	- - -
Palm Sunday	Apr. 5	Apr. 1	Mar. 29				

*Because Lent and Easter are moveable seasons, fixed by the date of Easter [the first Sunday after the first full moon which follows the spring equinox] each year, some Sundays in Ordinary Time may not be celebrated in a particular year.

**Divine Mercy Sunday is celebrated on the Second Sunday of Easter.

***Ascension is celebrated on the proper Thursday in Boston, Hartford, New York, Newark, Philadelphia and the State of Nebraska. All other U.S. ecclesiastical provinces celebrate on the 7th (Seventh) Sunday of Easter.