

Small Group Discipleship in the Amazing Parish Movement

How to create dynamic parishes focused on Evangelization and Discipleship.
<http://amazingparish.org>

Since the earliest days of the Catholic Church, most of the ministry that occurs takes place in small groups of disciples where people come to know and love one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. A pastor and his staff of volunteers cannot possibly provide the majority of outreach and fellowship that parishioners need, nor should they because to do so would deprive them of the opportunity to be disciples for one another. A parish does have the responsibility, however, for helping small groups of disciples form and grow. A few ideas and resources for building an active small group community of disciples in your parish.

1. Why Small Groups?

The justification for small groups within the context of a parish is undeniable. When the *Bible* says “they will know we are Christians by our love for one another,” it means that others will see how we minister to one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. A parish provides one of the most effective avenues for followers of Jesus to care for one another. And without small group ministry, a parish can easily become a place for theoretical faith without the practice of it in community.

Community is essential for people to become disciples of Christ, the kind who will go out and tell others about Him. This is the essence of the Great Commission, and it begins, and is ultimately manifest, in intimate relationships between people – small groups. None of this is a fad, and it’s certainly not un-Catholic. The early Christian Church was made up of people who, in addition to worshipping God in the Mass and Sacraments, lived in small groups and ministered to one another. Today, many Catholics who have left the Catholic Church cite their attraction to small group communities that they encounter in evangelical churches. It is time for Catholic parishes to help its parishioners rediscover the beauty and importance of small group discipleship.

2. How Do We Start?

Of course, it all begins with prayer — that God will prepare the hearts and minds of people who will lead and participate in small groups. Beyond that, here are a few key ingredients to launching small groups in your parish.

Pastor support – The first and most important step in making small groups work in a parish is having the pastor declare his desire to have as many parishioners as possible participate. He must be on board to the importance of small groups ministries, mentioning them constantly — in homilies, testimonials, prayers of the faithful at Mass, and meetings. The question they should

pose to parishioners is not “if” they will participate, but rather “which” small groups they will choose. In an amazing parish, people will see small groups as an essential part of their experience there.

Simple pilot programs – It is important that parishes, and especially the leaders of the parish – dive in and do small groups first. This will allow them to embrace the concept themselves, and identify and address any issues that need to be resolved before launching the programs to the entire parish. The steps for building a small group pilot program are pretty straight-forward:

- Designate a small group coordinator or team—leadership is key
 - Choose a group to pilot the program during a “short season” – Lent or Advent
 - Pick a simple topic, perhaps based on the Sunday readings or another basic source
 - When a session is over, assess what worked well, what needs to change, and make a plan
- Now, choose a curriculum or program for the larger parish, choose facilitators and move into action.

3. Different Kinds of Small Groups

There are many kinds of small groups, each designed for the different needs of parishioners. Below are a listing of various types along with resources for each.



General Resources



Small Group Basics

Ideas for starting & maintaining small groups



Find the Right Study for Your Group

Determine what you should study & what format to use



Symbolon

Program supporting all catechesis efforts - versatile & adaptable



Great Adventure Bible Study

Bible study resources, blog, and "The 10-Minutes Study"



Catholic Scripture Study

Ideal programs for groups/individuals, inspiring Bible study with many topics



Called & Gifted Workshop

Workshop for discerning spiritual gifts / charisms



The Better Part & Guide to Christian Meditation

[To meditate, absorb, and apply the Gospels to our lives, by Fr. John Bartunek \(bundle\)](#)



Alpha for Catholics

[Introduce people to a personal encounter with Christ](#)



Renew International

[Small groups faith sharing resources](#)



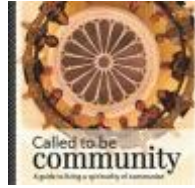
Rebuilt Podcast

[Podcast about small groups](#)



Life After Sunday

[26 discussion topics for small groups](#)



Called to Be Community: A Guide to Living a Spirituality of Communion
[Focolare helps parishes deepen the Gospel life](#)

Men's Groups



Crossing the Goal

[Spiritual fitness 'workouts,' based on professional football best practices, help men of holiness.](#)



National Fellowship of Catholic Men
[Resource for establishing men's groups](#)



That Man Is You

[Resource to become a man after God's own heart](#)



Men of St. Joseph

[Catholic men dedicated to being the spiritual leaders of their families](#)

Women's Groups



Walking with Purpose
Enabling women to know Christ through Scripture



WINE-Women in the New Evangelization
Invigorating Catholic parishes by encouraging, supporting, & nurturing women to be intentional disciples.



Endow
Understanding the nature & dignity of women



Women of Grace
Study programs, retreats, & more



Momnipotent
Reclaim the vocation of motherhood with this brand new study