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 Christiam Church was made up of people who, in addition to worshiping God in the Mass and Sacraments, lived in small groups and ministered to one another. Today, many Catholics who have left the Catholi 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 Groups](SmallGroups.com)

**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