

Lent Small Group Initiative Sample Homily for Sign-Up Sunday

As Lent approaches, our parish is preparing for new opportunities for spiritual renewal. You have been hearing about our new initiative, [program name], in the bulletin, intercessions, and announcements. Our parish is committed to this process, and today is the day for you to consider committing to a valuable Lenten experience that will help you to grow in faith.

Please pick up a sign-up card located in your pew and follow along as I explain the many opportunities to participate in our parish's Lenten experience.

[Program name] is a small group experience. As Christians, we are part of a community of believers who need others to support us along the way. A number of families have graciously agreed to host small groups in their homes once a week for the six weeks of Lent. You are being invited to join a small group, to make a commitment to set aside just 90 minutes each week to grow in faith and in relationship with your small group.

You can sign up to be assigned to a group randomly, or you can sign up for a group you might share something in common with. For example, we have a group for "empty-nesters," another for married couples, one for high school teens, and more. You can also choose a group based on your availability, as we anticipate having a group that will meet each day of the week to accommodate most anyone's schedule.

It is our hope that all of our parish family, the many different generations and the rich diversity of our parish, will come together to participate. We hope you will use this Lent to assess your relationship with God and your neighbors, to realign your priorities, to make more room for God in your life, and to go forth to do good works from your experience.

Small groups for adults and teens will meet once each week during Lent. Our parish has already selected and trained small group leaders to facilitate the groups. The participants will learn about and discuss themes drawn from the Sunday Scripture readings throughout Lent. You will also meet and learn about one another and grow in relationship with those you see each week here at Mass.

[It will be helpful if the homilist can give a short witness at this point to the benefits he has received from a similar small group experience. The testimony may convince some parishioners that they too will benefit from participating in a small group.]

Please sign up today to participate in a small group for our parish's [program name] experience. [Hold up a copy of the sign-up card.] Notice that you can sign up for a morning, afternoon, or evening group. Simply fill out the information on the sign-up card in your pew, and then drop the card in the collection basket during the offertory or see a team member after Mass. [Name], our small group coordinator will notify you of the place, day, and time your group will meet. There is no cost to participate in one of these groups [or indicate that group members will be asked to make a free-will offering for the materials as a way to support the parish.] We have pencils in the pews so you can sign up right now. Please go ahead and do so at this time. [Pause here for about two minutes to allow people to fill out their cards.]

If you have any questions, please talk to a member of our [program name] team who will be in the vestibule of the Church today. They will be happy to speak with you after Mass.

I also want to extend a special invitation to the teens of our parish to participate in a small group during Lent. Too often, teens can feel left out of parish life. This is a great opportunity for you to participate in a parish-wide experience with members of your own age group. Teens can fill out a card now, or you can speak to a person from our youth ministry program after Mass today for more information. You are an important part of our parish family so please don't miss this opportunity.

[Describe the resource that your parish will be using for the small faith groups to reflect on and discuss the Sunday Scripture readings.]

I encourage all adults and teens in the parish, whether you are participating in a small group or not, to pick up a copy of this resource after Mass at the start of the Lenten season.

Today we often hear about the New Evangelization, the need for each of us to invite others to encounter Jesus Christ. You may know a neighbor who has drifted away from the parish or a Catholic who is not active in their faith who may just respond to an invitation to participate in a small group. Please invite them to join your group. Take this opportunity to be a friend who leads another to experience Christ again. Please take a sign-up card and give it to these people this week. Tell them you will be happy to return their sign-up card and pick up the materials for them, if that is most convenient.

If you cannot decide today, please take a brochure and card home with you. Pray about your participation. Hopefully, you will return it next week.

Our parish is a community of faith. Through [program name], we can grow in our faith in Jesus Christ and live more fully as his disciples. I am excited about beginning this process with you! I ask for your full participation and for your prayers for God's blessing on our parish as we prepare for Lent. God bless you.