

Meeting Two: Participants' Agenda

OPENING PRAYER

Gathering Prayer

Pause for a brief moment of quieting and then pray an adaptation of the first verses of A Prayer of Spiritual Longing.

All **Loving God and Father, we long for you.
We long for deeper meaning in our lives,
for a wider love than we now experience.
We yearn to know we belong
and are connected to you and all creation.**

Leader As we gather to plan ways to publicize and promote the *Longing for the Holy* process in our parish community, help us to be open to the creativity among us as we form ourselves into a small Christian community to carry out this important task of our ministry.

All **Help us to dream of engaging ways
to motivate members of our parish
to learn more about the *Longing for the Holy* process
as a means through which they can begin to unmask
the deeper longings at the root of their lives.
This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.**

FAITH SHARING

The Challenge of Our Culture

Lifting Our Hearts ...

... in Song

Play Track 2 of the CD: "Everyday God."

... in the Quiet

Pause for a moment of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

... in the Word

Read aloud Colossians 1:9-14.

Take a few minutes to ponder a word, a phrase, a question, or a feeling that rises up in you. Reflect on this quietly; then share it aloud.

(Even if no one wishes to reflect aloud, permit sufficient time for silent reflection.)

Encountering Wisdom for Life

Our culture is part of where and how we are. We have much to be grateful for, much to celebrate. However, many things in our culture can militate against us channeling our desires in life-giving ways. We get caught up in surface longings, and our focus becomes scattered and fragmented. What might be some of the cultural reasons for this?

Naïveté. Wherever we turn there are advertisements that seduce us, telling us that we have to be beautiful, admired, happy, and fulfilled. TV, magazines, video games, and films glamorize casual sex and violence of all kinds. We are pressured to taste it all and drink it all in.

Spirituality is about recognizing that our deep energies come to us from God and are given to us for the flourishing of God's good world, not about shutting ourselves down. We must not be naïve about the power of our energies.

Narcissism. Our culture tends to encourage narcissism. We do like to look out for Number One: we do want to be the center of attention; we are obsessed with winning and with self-gratification. In contrast, a true and healthy self-love is open to others, gives as well as receives, and seeks the common good. Love for self must be rooted in a deep reverence for life itself, not based on unattainable ideals of perfection, or a fragile, inflated self-centeredness.

Pragmatism. We are enamored of practical results, with efficiency, the bottom line. While our pragmatism may serve us well in some areas, it makes us forget that the value of a person is not discovered in his or her capacity to produce, but in the simple fact of being.

Restlessness. What kind of restlessness are we speaking of? Not the God-given prompting to seek more deeply, love more truly, or live more graciously, but the restlessness that is edged with anger and contempt and born of our frantic search for more and more superficial stimulation and sensation. We may have a hard time being content with simple joys as our culture encourages us to feel dissatisfied.

Each culture offers its own challenges to the spiritual life. The way *we* tend to be in the culture where *we* find ourselves doesn't always make it easy to be spiritual or to channel our fiery, energetic desire in life-giving ways. The point is not to feel guilty or discouraged about ourselves, but to come to a clear assessment of where we are. God's grace will find us there.

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Longing for the Holy: Planning Your Spiritual Journey Together

Sharing Our Faith

What positive aspects of advertising can I use to encourage the members of my parish to participate in *Longing for the Holy*?

EXPLORING PROMOTIONAL OPTIONS FOR LONGING FOR THE HOLY

BREAK

MAKING YOUR PROMOTIONAL PLAN

NEXT STEPS

CLOSING PRAYER

Prayers of Petition

Response Lord, hear our prayer.

Concluding Prayer

Close with the following (final three verses of A Prayer of Spiritual Longing):

Leader Let us pray.

All **May we embody the Christ life
in this our moment and place in history.
May the communion of saints surround us
and companion us on our journey.
May your Holy Spirit empower us to be holy
for the good of the world
and for your honor and glory.
We ask this through the risen Christ,
our brother and friend. Amen.**