



Leaders Manual

Thank you for your willingness to lead a small group! You are making a difference in the lives of those who participate and as well as to the vibrancy and growth of St. Mary's Parish. Small groups are an important way of helping one another deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ.

At St. Mary's we call our small groups, 2:42 Groups. This comes from the Acts of the Apostles 2:42: *"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers."*

This is the earliest glimpse we have about the life and activity of the first parishes in the Church. When living this way, we are told in verse 47 "every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved." This teaches us that if we live our mission and purpose we are then cooperating with the will of God and truly living as his disciples.

These first disciples understood that their journey of faith required the help of others. They learned from one another, encouraged one another and lovingly challenged one another in living the Gospel in their daily lives.

A 2:42 Group is a small group of 4-6 individuals that gather on a regular basis to help one another on the journey of faith and grow deeper in faith and love of Jesus Christ.

A typical session:

- :00 Social
- :10 Prayer
- :15 Win and Challenge from the past week
- :45 Scripture Reading/Video and Discussion
- :15 What can we take and apply to our lives now?
- :25 Closing Prayer

So now what?

Once you have your list of interested group members, reach out to them and learn the following:

- How do they prefer to be contacted? Email, phone, text?
- Confirm the days/times they are available to meet on a regular basis.
- Learn why they expressed interest in a small group?
- If online, ask about their technology. Do they plan to use a desktop, laptop, tablet? Do they have any familiarity with video chat options like Zoom, FreeConferenceCall, GoogleHangouts?

Once you have an 'inventory' of your group members preferences, create a group email and introduce them to one another. Confirm the date and time of your first meeting and then let them know which video chat tool you've chosen. If they need to establish their own log in credentials for the method you've chosen, give them very specific details on how to sign up. Ideally, give them a one-week lead time before your first meeting to get set up and offer to schedule a "test" connection with you in advance. Investing this one on one-time up front, will ensure a much smoother start when you begin your recurring meetings - we promise!

Your Meetings

In person meetings usually begin with fellowship over light refreshments. Online small groups need "fellowship" time, as well. As group members are joining the online chat, it's very beneficial to spend that time following up with them on what's new in their lives

When everyone's ready to begin, open with a prayer. Then proceed to the Win and challenge from the past week. Most sessions these may be based on what the individuals had set up as a goal for themselves since the last session, but it doesn't have to be. This time may trigger a discussion as members seek to offer support and advice or it may go by rather quickly.

Next will be the focus of the session. This involves reading the Scriptures from the previous Sunday, perhaps watching a video of the homily and utilizing the questions based on the homily series. Some questions will prompt more discussion than others and it may take time for the group to feel comfortable sharing their personal feelings and experiences. Some questions require more time for people to compose their thoughts, so don't be concerned if there's not an immediate response when you pose a question. On the other hand, don't dwell on a question if the group doesn't seem to

be able to relate to that particular question. You are simply guiding a conversation - sometimes that discussion is very "spirited" while other times, it can be more reflective. As the group becomes more comfortable with one another, they'll take it wherever they want it to go, and may very well build on experiences shared in prior sessions. There's no "right" or "wrong" way to guide the discussion – just strive to hear from each person at least once per session.

Once you've reviewed all the questions, ask the group what is it from their time together at that session that they can take and apply to their lives during the upcoming week.

To conclude the session, it's helpful to ask a group member to volunteer to offer a closing prayer. Rotating this aspect of the session gives everyone a chance to summarize the group thoughts and helps strengthen the bonds.

Thank you!