

Meeting One: Participants' Agenda

OPENING PRAYER

Gathering Prayer

As we prepare to share faith and ministry together as a parish team, we 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 begin to implement
the *Longing for the Holy* process
in our parish community,
help us to be open to our different voices
as we form ourselves into a small Christian community
to carry out the responsibilities of our ministry.

All **Help us to provide a strong parish effort
that will excite parish members
about being offered an invitation
to live more consciously
and joyfully in your presence,
and to channel the longing at the core of their being
with deep, expanding hope.
This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.**

FAITH SHARING

Spirituality: Channeling Our Life-Giving Energy

Initial Sharing

Beginning with the Team Coordinator, each participant should introduce him/herself and briefly share why he/she accepted the invitation to be a member of the Longing for the Holy Team

Lifting Our Hearts ...

... in Song

Play Track 1 of the CD:

"Gathered in the Love of Christ."

... in the Quiet

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

... in the Word

Read aloud Psalm 33:6-9, 13-15, 20-22.

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

Go into any bookstore today. Lining the shelves of at least one section you will find all sorts of books grouped under the title “Spirituality.” Self-help, pop-psychology, health and wellness, esoteric practices are all mixed in with the sacred texts and classic writings of the religions of the world. What, we wonder, is spirituality? Or perhaps we wonder: What does Christianity have to do with all this? Father Ronald Rolheiser, a Canadian Oblate of Mary Immaculate and author of *The Holy Longing* and *The Shattered Lantern* can give us some insight. He helps us to explore the question “What is spirituality?” and the allied questions, for example, “What prevents me from living a deeper spiritual life?”

Father Rolheiser begins by prompting us to pay attention to the deepest currents of our lives. In each human being, he suggests, there is an energy, a life force that is most often experienced as desire or longing. We long for many things, we feel restless, we seem compelled out of ourselves toward something more.

Some ancient Greeks used to say that we are fired into life with a sort of madness that comes from the gods and that this divinely endowed energy is the root of all love, hate, creativity, joy, and sorrow. Father Rolheiser suggests something similar. Each of us has this deep, driving desire, this longing for *more*. This energy is so powerful that it can, if we are not mindful, overpower us. Our fiery life force needs to be channeled to be life-giving, not life-consuming.

A healthy spirituality is one that, in Father Rolheiser’s eyes, does two things: it keeps us energized and it keeps us glued together. In other words, a healthy spirituality gives us zest and hope; it allows us to experience life as beautiful and worth living. It works against the cynicism, despair, and bitterness that can paralyze us. A healthy spirituality is also integrative; it gives us a sense of coherence and order, a sense of who we are, where we are going, and how life is full of meaning.

Sharing Our Faith

What hopes do I have as I prepare to channel my energy and fire in facilitating the *Longing for the Holy* process in my parish or with my group?

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Longing for the Holy: Planning Your Spiritual Journey Together

BREAK

OVERVIEW OF THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LONGING FOR THE HOLY TEAM

BEGINNING TASKS

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.**