

Meeting Three: 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 prepare to invite parishioners
to participate in *Longing for the Holy*,
help us to communicate the heart of this process
in the strategic plans we undertake for
Sign-Up and Prayer Commitment Sundays.

All **Help us to be vibrant inviters
as we hold open the doors of our Church
to inspire parish members to accept the call
to live more consciously
and joyfully in your presence.
This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.**

FAITH SHARING

Spirituality in a Christian Context: Love of God and Love of Neighbor

Lifting Our Hearts ...

... in Song
*Play Track 3 of the CD
"Anthem."*

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

... in the Word
Read aloud Psalm 100.

*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

We've had some time now to reflect on the fact that as human beings we each have an energy, a life force most often experienced as longing, that needs to be channeled in life-giving ways. Additionally, we have named for ourselves some of the challenges that our particular culture poses to working on that task.

The next step is to explore the *how* of this task. All the great religious traditions of the world have attempted to guide their adherents toward life-giving beliefs and practices.

What about us as Christians? We need to look closely at the ways that Jesus Christ and the community that claims discipleship in his name have framed the task of directing the deep longing that insistently tugs at each of us. This involves much more than asking, "What would Jesus do?" It involves an understanding of the deepest meaning of the Christian story. The story is first and foremost, a love story.

In *The Holy Longing*, Father Rolheiser explores the spiritual implications of the Christian story. Having been loved with infinite tenderness, having discovered that God is both the source and end point of our deepest longing, we make a response. Our spirituality is about how we love in return. Father Rolheiser suggests that there are several components necessary for any spirituality that takes the love story of the triune God and humanity seriously. These components are rooted firmly in the biblical witness. Here are two of the essentials for a healthy spiritual life.

Personal Prayer and Morality. Jesus asks us to "pray in secret" (Matthew 6:6), to have a personal relationship with him, and through him, with God. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Christianity is not merely about specific external behaviors or abstract ideas; it is about a dynamic engagement with the living God. Such an engagement asks that we take our faith to heart, so that it becomes a part of the fabric of our daily life.

Social Justice. Jesus' teaching on our obligation to create justice so that the poor must be raised up is as much an essential component of his teaching as is personal prayer and morality. He picks up the theme of the Jewish prophets who taught that the quality of people's faith can be measured by how the most vulnerable—widows, orphans, strangers—are treated.

Love of God and love of one another—these are the commands that outline the sure path that can help us direct the energy that burns inside us. We are, so to speak, to see what God sees and to love as God loves.

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Longing for the Holy: Planning Your Spiritual Journey Together

Sharing Our Faith

What suggestions can I make for ways to incorporate the theme of Love of God and Love of Neighbor into our invitational strategies?

INVITING PARISHIONERS TO PARTICIPATE IN LONGING FOR THE HOLY

LONGING FOR THE HOLY: PREPARING FOR SIGN-UP SUNDAY

BREAK

PREPARING FOR PRAYER COMMITMENT SUNDAY

OTHER INVITATIONAL EVENTS

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.**