

## JustFaith Catholic Commissioning Retreat: From New Perspectives to New Journeys

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[www.justfaith.org](http://www.justfaith.org)  
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## Retreat Note to Co-Facilitators

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*“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.  
The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”  
“Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.”  
Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.  
Mark 10: 51-52*

This Commissioning Retreat offers an opportunity to both look back at the journey you have travelled together and look ahead to the road yet to be followed. This document will guide you step-by-step through the retreat process, allowing you to personally engage in the retreat as you facilitate. Please review this document thoroughly as you make your preparations. Since it is tailored specifically for JustFaith, please be faithful to the flow and the format of the retreat as it is outlined.

### Scope and Focus

The retreat marks the formal conclusion of the first four phases of your JustFaith journey. Some members of your group hopefully have committed to the optional – and highly recommended – fifth phase of discernment. Since it is possible that not all the members of your group are continuing with this fifth phase, this retreat allows time for everyone, together, to participate in a celebration, blessing, and sending forth.

The five goals for the commissioning retreat are:

- To revisit your JustFaith journey as a way of defining your purpose from a new perspective
- To express gratitude for struggles shared, lessons learned, and gifts given
- To celebrate both your journey and your small community of faith
- To open your hearts to some next steps as you look at the road that lies before you
- To receive a blessing and send each other forth **Note:** See the web Resource Page for information about the optional Certificates of Completion and JF medallions.

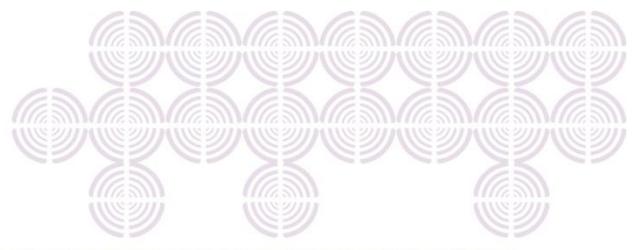
Minimally, the retreat is presented as a one-day (9-hour) event, scheduled to fit within a 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. timeframe. You can expand this timeline to include a shared breakfast and an evening meal and/or Mass together. Alternatively, groups might decide to reframe this outline to incorporate an overnight component, allowing more space between activities for personal reflection and solitude. However you decide to frame it, be sure to include a celebration to mark the end of this part of your journey.

### Date and Location

Schedule this retreat to take place within or **immediately following** the conclusion of Phase Four (ideally after Session 24) and **before** you enter into the Discernment Phase of the process. As with the Opening Retreat, you can locate this event at a retreat center, at your parish, or in a spacious home.

### Environment

Set up the room with a circle of chairs around a small, central prayer table. Cover the table with a cloth and a large piece of paper that people can write on. Add a Bible, a small crucifix, and a large pillar candle. Use flowers, plants, or other decorations to help create a reflective environment. If possible, utilize floor lamps for indirect lighting, and include comfortable chairs or sofas. Enhance prayers and rituals with reflective music and/or familiar songs the group can sing easily, with or without instruments.



Immediately following the retreat, communicate with the participants who are continuing on to Phase 5 to ensure everyone knows the date(s) and time(s) for the Discernment Phase.

## Tasks and Timeline

✓	Task	Timeline
	<b>Identify and confirm retreat location.</b>	Three to four weeks ahead
	<b>Co-facilitators meet to allocate preparations.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the retreat outline thoroughly.</li> <li>• <i>Optional:</i> Order JF medallions</li> </ul>	Two to three weeks ahead
	<b>Inform participants of arrangements.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide travel directions (if needed).</li> <li>• Discuss timeframe.</li> <li>• Arrange meal preparation, snacks, and refreshments.</li> </ul>	Two weeks ahead
	<b>Copy materials and identify music.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Copy and cut attachments.</li> <li>• Copy lyrics for selected songs (as needed).</li> </ul>	One week ahead
	<b>Final Preparations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather supplies (see below).</li> <li>• Re-read the retreat document together and allocate responsibilities.</li> <li>• Select reflective music and songs for prayer.</li> <li>• <i>Optional:</i> Prepare and copy Certificates of Completion</li> </ul>	One week ahead
	<b>After the Retreat</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Announce the date(s) of the Discernment Phase.</li> <li>• Send the Discernment Phase Notes to Participants.</li> </ul>	Within 3 days after the retreat



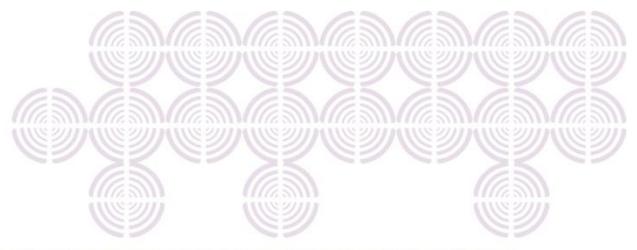
## Retreat Supplies

✓	Needs	Brought By
	Small prayer table	
	Cloth for prayer table (flowers and other décor, as needed)	
	Matches and a pillar candle (one which is easy to pass safely hand to hand.)	
	Bible	
	Small crucifix or cross	
	Music player (CD player, iPod, etc.)	
	DVD player and TV	
	JustFaith Ministries DVD: “Inspiring a Compassionate Commitment”	
	Meditative music and prayer songs (as needed)	
	Pens or pencils	
	Flipchart paper and markers	
	A large sheet of white paper big enough to cover most of the prayer table	
	A small glass or ceramic bowl	
	Tea lights or votive candles (at least two for each group member)	
	A box of tissues	
	Refreshments (snacks and drinks, as needed)	
	Meals and eating utensils (as needed)	
	Copies of Participant Handouts A, B, and C	
	Handout D – Blessing Cards, copied and cut so that each person can write on a separate card for each participant	
	<i>Optional:</i> Certificates of Completion and JF medallions	



## Overview

<b>Saturday Morning</b>		<b>1. Looking Back and Looking Ahead</b>	
8:30 a.m.		Breakfast (Optional)	
9 a.m.		Looking Back: Bartimaeus - I Want to See!	
10 a.m.		BREAK	
10:15 a.m.		New Possibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discernment vs Decision Making</li> <li>• Part Two: <i>Inspiring a Compassionate Commitment</i> (DVD), “Energy for the World’s Needs”</li> </ul>	
11:45 a.m.		Lunch (Allow the group to determine whether to bring their own lunch or to share in a potluck.)	
<b>Saturday Afternoon</b>		<b>2. Listening for the Call</b>	
1:00 p.m.		The Body of Christ	
1:45 p.m.		Lessons, Struggles, and Gifts	
2:45 p.m.		Crafting our Blessings	
<b>Saturday Evening</b>		<b>3. Blessing And Sending</b>	
4 p.m.		Commissioning Rite	
6 p.m.		Dinner and Celebration (Optional)	
<b>Sunday Morning</b>		<b>4. Coming to the Table (Optional)</b>	
		Where possible, plan to attend Saturday or Sunday liturgy together.	



## 1. Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Items needed:	Cloth for the prayer table, pillar candle, large piece of paper (to be used later in the retreat) to place under the candle on the prayer table, Bible, pens or pencils. Flipchart paper
Symbols:	An empty bowl; candle
Environment:	A circle of chairs around a central prayer table. Play reflective background music as participants gather in the prayer space.

Welcome people as you invite them to take a place in the circle of chairs.

When everyone is seated, pick up the pillar candle. Offer these or similar words, alternating lines with a fellow facilitator:

**Together, we have come full circle.**

**Sitting beside our companions, we gather to honor our journey.**

**Looking back, we see the struggles, new perspectives, and gifts  
that punctuated our path...**

**Looking ahead, we see an abundance of possibilities.**

**We ask these questions of ourselves and one another:**

**What has happened to each of us?**

**How will the world know?**

### **Looking Back: *I want to see!* (9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.)**

For the meditation that follows, invite participants to close their eyes and sit in a receptive posture, perhaps with palms upturned and resting on their laps. If desired, play soft, reflective music.

Slowly and prayerfully share this meditation, an adaptation of Mark 10:46-52, the story of Bartimaeus. With each paragraph, alternate voices between facilitators.

**Just imagine...you are sitting alone on the side of a dusty, well-traveled road. Your eyes are veiled, so you cannot see what is around you, but this is a familiar place. Feel the warm sun on your shoulders and forehead. The day is hot. Smell the clay soil, the dry air. The familiar hustle and bustle of travelers making their way along the path reaches your ears. You listen to the squeak of cart wheels and the clamor of goods, smell the wafts of exotic spices and perfumes the pilgrims carry. Your eyes, blind to all, remain dark.**

(Long Pause)



Suddenly, down the road, a burst of chatter: children laughing; men loudly talking together; women singing. You incline your ear, trying to grasp the source of the commotion. As the crowd draws nearer, you realize something important is happening.

(Long pause)

You begin to decipher words amid the clamor. The crowd is calling out, “Rabbi! Jesus!” Your heart skips—Jesus! You have heard this prophet’s name many times along the road, spoken by people inspired by his many good works. You have listened in astonishment as travelers recount not just his mercy, but the *miracles* that have happened right before their eyes: water turned to wine, sick people healed, and the dead raised to life. As the noise grows louder, you wonder if you would believe it, even if you could see it.

(Long Pause)

“Rabbi! Jesus!” The crowd continues to cry out. Abruptly, a sense of loneliness washes over you; you feel isolated and separated. Here you are, alone on the side of the road, blind and disconnected, while Jesus is surrounded by a congregation of companions. What would that be like, that sense of community? You have never felt like a part of something bigger than yourself. Your world has stayed very small, a limited perspective from your little space on the street. Your heart aches amid the laughter and song. Could this Jesus help you?

(Long Pause)

Slowly you get to your feet. You turn toward the place you think Jesus must be standing—the crowd is almost there. You yell out: “Rabbi! Jesus!” At first your voice is swallowed by the clamor, but the din quiets as you speak louder and louder:

“Rabbi! Jesus! Heir of David, have pity on me!”

The crowd stops. The jubilation quiets to suspicious mutters. You hear people whispering amongst themselves, “What could she need? Let’s move on.” “How dare he approach the Teacher?” A few yells seem to be directed to you: “What do you want? Be quiet!”

(Long Pause)

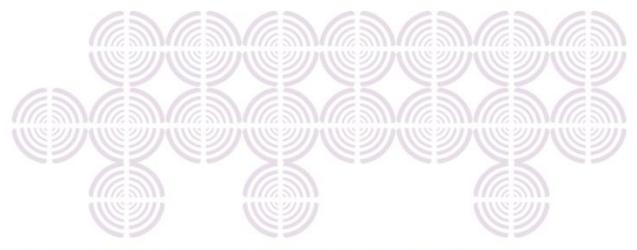
You hear a calm, gentle voice from the center of the circle asking people to make way. Your heart leaps – you know instantly: this is Jesus! You feel the warmth of his presence amid the cool crowd of onlookers. “Have pity on me,” you beg quietly, sensing he is coming nearer. You feel vulnerable as you realize all eyes are surely on you.

Another harsher voice exclaims, “Oh, let’s move on! Just look at this person. Well looked after, comfortable...there’s no need for us to give any attention. Why should we bother?”

Silence. Then, the gentle voice: “Call her here.”

(Long Pause)

The crowd softens, and you feel light hands tugging on your arm, inviting you to step forward. You walk into the crowd. You sense the crowd parting as you walk through. At



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once, you know he is there before you. Warm hands rest on your shoulders. Peace fills your heart.

Jesus whispers to you, leaning in: “What do you want me to do for you?”

(Short Pause)

“Rabbi,” you begin, but wonder how to continue. You long for connection. You long to be seen differently in the eyes of those whom you have ignored along the road.

(Long Pause)

Finally you speak, holding in your heart your needs and longings: “Teacher, I want to see.”

In one transcendent moment, you feel your eyes open to the world. You blink and look, taking it in with wonder, and finally see Christ...everywhere.

(Long Pause)

You see Christ as a small child held in her mother’s arms. You see Christ as her mother. You see Christ in the old man walking with a cane. You see Christ in the merchants and the tax collectors. You see Christ in the beggar, and the one passing by him. You see Christ in the young and old, the poor and the rich, people both familiar and foreign, those forgotten and those held close.

Between each person and yourself, thin threads of connection are pulsing. In each person you see, Christ shines forth.

You now deeply know that light also pours from your own being.

Your sight finally focuses on the man in front of you, who is gazing at you with such kindness. You understand that this is Jesus. He smiles and rests his hands on your shoulders. “My child,” he whispers, “your faith has saved you.”

You walk alongside him. The crowd envelops you as, together, you embark along the road.

(Long pause)

Invite participants to open their eyes. Continue with these words:

**Our faith first brought us to this JustFaith circle.**

**On our journey, others came into our field of vision:**

**people who pick our crops, stitch our clothing, assemble our cell phones –**

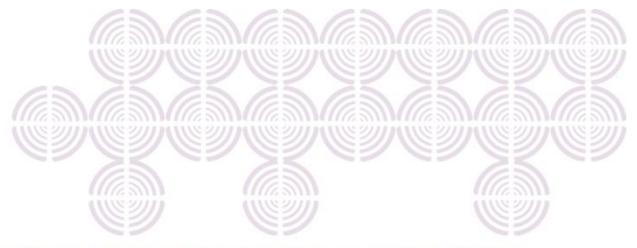
**those touched by poverty, racism, violence –**

**overlooked and forgotten people, hidden behind the veil of our material wealth and comfort,**

**calling us to open our eyes, look deeper, and see with a broader field of vision.**

**In so doing, we began to recognize our own blindness; we began to pay attention...**

**and recognized how we live outside of the Divine realm of relationship with “the other.”**



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**We received a glimpse of God's dream,  
revealed as connections between people who love one another.  
Jesus stands before us, begging: "What do you want me to do for you?"  
How will you respond?**

Take a moment of silent reflection.

Use the next 15-20 minutes for participants to share an insight or response to the two questions.  
After everyone has had a chance to share, hold up the small, empty bowl and introduce the ritual with these words:

**We make of ourselves an offering before God,  
who invites us to be emptied like this bowl  
and asks us to fill it anew with God's love.  
In humility and reverence for the Mystery of God's love,  
we offer up our doubts and our fears of "What's next?"  
and receive what God is offering us *here and now*.**

Pass the empty bowl around the circle. Invite each participant to hold the bowl for a moment in silent contemplation of the question:

**What is next for me?**

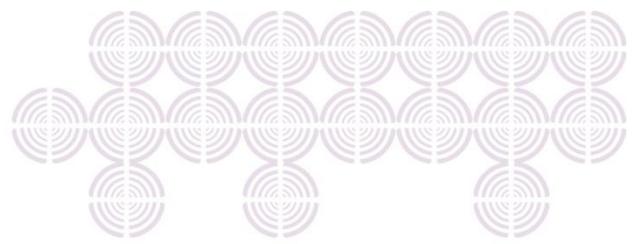
Once the bowl has gone around the circle, replace it in the center of the prayer table and close the prayer with the following:

**God of the journey,  
We have had our eyes opened.  
Our hearts have been moved by the cries of your people  
How will we respond?  
Give us the grace and the space to discern your will.  
Amen.**

**BREAK** (10 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.)

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Provide coffee, tea, and light refreshments so that break times can be opportunities for fellowship.



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**New Possibilities** (10:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.)

**Part 1: Discernment vs. Decision Making** (45 minutes)

Gather the group and again invite everyone into a moment of prayerful silence. Then offer the following:

**As we start to consider new possibilities for our lives, let us**

**Take the time to say a prayer ... for all!**

**Take the time to hear the plea ... of all!**

**Take a stand for peace and justice ... for all, in every land.**

Give everyone a copy of **Participant Handout A, Discernment vs. Decision Making**. Ask two people to read the first two paragraphs of the handout. Then read the following instructions for this segment, adjusting them as needed to fit your group's participation in Phase 5.

**Some of us will end our JustFaith journey with this retreat.**

**Others of us will continue with Phase 5.**

**All of us are called to discern what we will do with what we have heard, seen, and discussed.**

**In a world eager to hand us easy answers and quick fixes, God invites us to linger a bit...  
to make the time and find the space to hear the Voice of God...**

**to discover new ways of being.**

**We might find that God invites us to places we could never have anticipated.**

**Once again, let us find a quiet place to silently read and reflect on the questions.**

After 25-30 minutes, invite everyone to return to the circle.

**Part Two: *Inspiring a Compassionate Commitment* (DVD)** (45 minutes)

Play the segment, "Energy for the World's Needs," of the DVD, *Inspiring a Compassionate Commitment* (the first segment was played during Session 24; the third segment will be played during Phase 5). After viewing this three minute segment, ask participants to share their responses to these two questions:

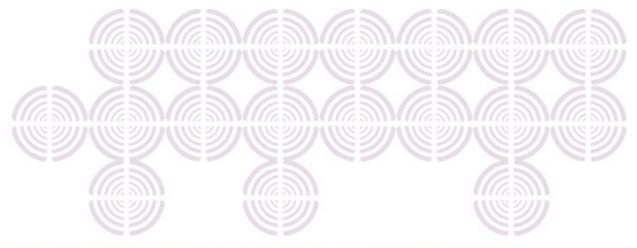
***Where does your purpose meet the world's needs?***

***How can you share it with others?***

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**Lunch** (11:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.)

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## 2. Listening for the Call

### **The Body of Christ** (45 minutes)

Have a CD, iPod, YouTube set to play the song, “One Bread, One Body.”

Begin by asking someone to read I Corinthians 12:12-25. Then, play “One Bread, One Body.” If possible, have the lyrics available and invite everyone to sing.

Following the song, give everyone a copy of **Participant Handout B, *Opportunities for Involvement in Social Ministry***. Ask participants to take the next 25-30 minutes for journaling and silent reflection. Encourage everyone to especially note and reflect on those things that spark their own questions, curiosity, or excitement. Ask participants to be totally open and honest in their reflection and journaling, stating that they will not be asked to share anything they write.

After 30 minutes, gather back in the circle.

### **Lessons, Gifts, and Struggles** (60 minutes)

If possible, darken the room. Place a lit pillar candle in the center of the prayer table on top of the large white sheet of paper. Have pens, pencils, or markers available. Call the group to stillness and invite everyone to focus on the candle in the center of the circle. Begin with these words:

**At the Opening Retreat, we started our journey by opening our hearts to Psalm 139.**

**Now, as our JustFaith journey is drawing to a close, we revisit Psalm 139, modified to reflect our journey, modified to reflect the new lens through which we are asked to look.**

Give everyone a copy of **Participant Handout C, Psalm 139 (modified)**. Read the first paragraph and then go around the circle asking participants to read a paragraph until the whole Psalm is read.

**Reader:**

**God, you have searched us, and you know us.**

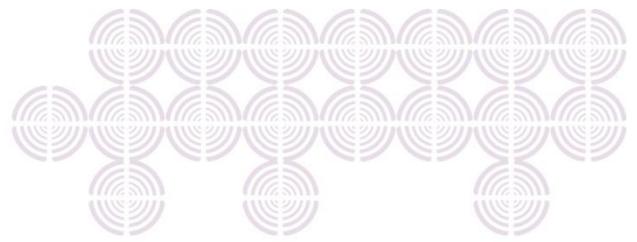
**Each time we gather, You are there.**

**As we journey, You walk with us;**

**You know us completely.**

**Near or far, You discern the worries and wishes of our hearts.**

(Pause)



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**Reader:**

It was You who laid out the path before us.  
And whether we resist or while we are at rest,  
You are familiar with all of our ways.  
(Pause)

**Reader:**

In every discussion,  
through all our whispering, questioning, or complaining,  
before even the words leave our lips,  
already you hear and understand.  
For You fathom us.  
Behind and before us, You encircle us all.  
and You lay your hand upon every one of Your beloved children.  
(Pause)

**Reader:**

Despite all our knowing, our searching and our wondering,  
You remain beyond us,  
Your wisdom too wonderful, Your mysteries too deep,  
heights and depths we could not hope to attain.  
(Pause)

**Reader:**

So wide is Your boundless love,  
that we could never escape Your presence,  
that always precedes us.  
(Pause)

**Reader:**

We meet You as we contemplate the infinite wonder of the universe;  
And when we dwell in depths of destruction and despair  
here too we find You, waiting.  
(Pause)



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**Reader:**

As we consider stories and struggles in faraway places,  
and venture across the ocean, far beyond the horizon of our experience,  
even there Your hand guides us, Your love holds us fast.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

Should we invite impenetrable darkness to cover us,  
and fall into in the darkest night of despair,  
to You the night is bright as day, Your grace breaks through,  
for darkness is a light to You.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

For it is You who gives shape and form and essence to every life.  
In the deep recesses of the womb, You knit us together.  
That is why we praise You,  
who have made every one of us so awesome and wonderful.  
How wonderful are all Your works!

(Pause)

**Reader:**

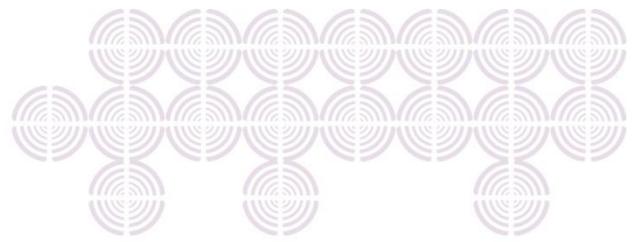
When, in secret, we were conceived,  
intricately woven together in the depths of the earth,  
our shape and form was not hidden from You.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

You saw us when we were yet an unformed glimmer.  
Before any of us existed you knew the number of our days,  
all the stories yet to come.

(Pause)



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**Reader:**

**How vast is Your mind, O God!  
Your thoughts are immeasurable, more than the grains of desert sands.  
Search us, Holy One, and know the caliber of our hearts;  
Try us and know our thoughts.  
See if there is wickedness in us,  
and guide us, Your faithful people, in the way everlasting.**

Invite the group to sit in silence for a moment.

Continue with the following statements and questions. (Facilitators might want to have the questions posted on flipchart paper.) Allow about 45 minutes for this segment.

**Take a few minutes to silently reflect on the following four questions:**

**What word or phrase captures what the JustFaith has journey been for you?**

**What have you struggled with?**

**What will you remember?**

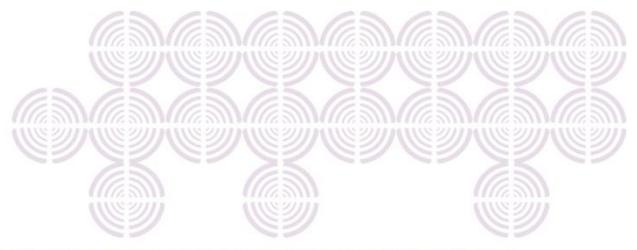
**What are you grateful for?**

After a minute or two of silent reflection on their JustFaith experience, invite each participant to share aloud a brief summary of their struggles, memories, and gratitude.

As each person finishes sharing, ask him/her to write a summarizing word or phrase on the white paper under the candle using the markers provided. As possible, ask them to write their word or phrase around the candle so that, as each thought is added, the journey unfolds as a spiral.

Close with these words of blessing:

**It was You who laid out the path before us.  
Whether we resist or while we are at rest,  
You are familiar with all of our ways.  
In every discussion,  
through all of our whispering, questioning, or complaining,  
You hear and understand.  
You lay your hand upon every one of your beloved children.  
Amen.**



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## Crafting Our Blessings (2:45 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.)

Continue with these or similar words:

**As companions on this journey, we have *seen* one another.  
We have witnessed the particular blessing of each one in this circle...  
and, because we have been blessed by one another, we become a blessing for the world.**

Give everyone a pen or pencil and copies of the blessing cards from **Participant Handout D, Blessings** (cut so that each participant has one card for every other participant). Ask participants to find a space to quietly honor the gift and blessing of one another, and to write these blessings on the cards provided, creating one card for each person.

You might want to offer these suggests (maybe even provide these as a handout along with the blessing cards) before sending participants off to reflect and write on their cards:

- Consider the wisdom each person has shared. What have you learned from each companion? How have they graced your journey?
- Recall the times each person has struggled with difficult questions or stretched their hearts. How have your companions been an inspiration?
- Send each person off with a personal insight that you hope they will remember.

Facilitators should also craft blessings for everyone, including each other, during this time.

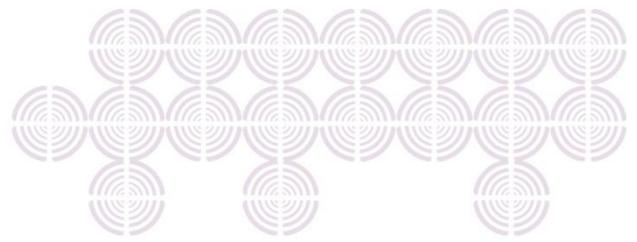
### 3. Blessing and Sending

Items needed:	Cloth, pillar candle, Bible, box of tissues, votive candles for each participant, music player set to play “City of God”, and Certificates of Completion and JF medallions (see Resource webpage) if you are planning using these
Symbols:	A circle of holy hands
Environment:	Set a circle of chairs around a central prayer table with one chair set off to the side of the prayer table. Play reflective background music as participants gather in the prayer space.

The amount of time needed for sharing blessings will depend on the size of your group. Do not rush this process; and, if it ends before the time allotted, encourage the group to continue to celebrate one another and the journey you have shared.

### Commissioning Rite

Call everyone to bring their blessings cards and to sit in a circle around the prayer table. Open with this reflection:



**We come to the end of a journey only to find that we are arriving at the start of another. As we still ourselves to listen, and listen longer, our perspective can begin to expand outward. Let the many people, places, and happenings that led us to this moment, this place and time, come into view. Let us look beyond the horizon and see glimmers of new imaginings that will carry us forward.**

**With our expanded perspective, God becomes our constant companion. God unfolds a path that leads us to ourselves, to the people we must become if we are to transform ourselves and our world.**

**We never walk alone. God shines in each of us. God's light shone brightly each time we carried one another's struggles and sufferings, one another's joys and enlightenments. We have been present to one another, maybe even a healing presence to one another.**

**Together, we can be a healing presence in the world.**

**In gratitude, let us open space to name ways in which our lives have been blessed by the gift of each person.**

Model the blessing process by standing and placing a hand on the participant being blessed. Invite that person to sit with their hands open and ready to receive the blessing cards. Share *one* sentiment from your blessing card for that participant (either how s/he has been a gift or a witness or what wish you would like to offer). Then place your blessing card for that participant in their open hands.

Invite the next participant to do the same. Continue around the circle of participants until each person has verbally shared his or her blessing and also gifted the individual with a card. When everyone has offered a blessing for the individual receiving the group's blessings, conclude with everyone stating, **Amen!**

Repeat this process until all participants, including facilitators, have taken a turn to be blessed by the group.

Pause for a moment of silence.

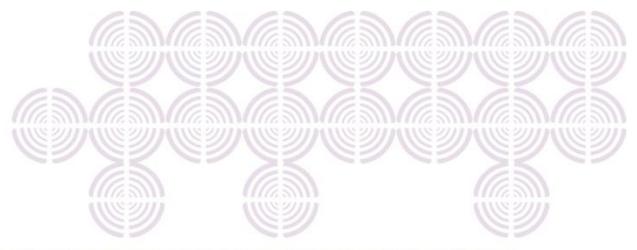
Conclude the commissioning rite with the following invocation and litany. Be sure to have enough votive candles available. Co-facilitators alternate reading the litany of names.

**We are the witness-bearers of our age, preceded by others who have paved our way.**

**We call on them now to guide our feet along the path of God's love.**

**As we say each witness-bearer's name, respond with, "Pray for us."**

Mary and Joseph...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
John the Baptist...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Abraham and Sarah...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Mary Magdalene...	<b>Pray for us.</b>



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Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Francis of Assisi...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Vincent de Paul...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Martin Luther King, Jr...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Mother Theresa...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Oscar Romero...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Scrappy and Greg Boyle...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Fannie Lou Hamer...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Izzeldin Abuelaish...	<b>Pray for us.</b>
Pope Francis...	<b>Pray for us.</b>

**Invite participants, if they feel moved, to speak aloud** the name of a person who has inspired them. With each name, ask participants to light a votive candle and place it on the prayer table. Respond as a group with “Pray for us.”

(Pause)

Continue with the following:

**The vastness of God meets the restrictions of our own humanity and we are changed. We found the joy of the Gospel, met the expansive heart of God, and now ask to be granted the will to engage the journey ahead.**

**Let us respond with “Hear our prayer.”**

Give us wisdom...	<b>Hear our prayer.</b>
Give us courage...	<b>Hear our prayer.</b>
Give us understanding...	<b>Hear our prayer.</b>
Give us faith...	<b>Hear our prayer.</b>
<i>Give us devotion...</i>	<b><i>Hear our prayer.</i></b>
Give us prophetic vision...	<b>Hear our prayer.</b>
Give us justice...	<b>Hear our prayer.</b>
Give us peace...	<b>Hear our prayer.</b>

(Pause)



## Blessed and Sent

Invite participants to hold hands as you share this final blessing:

**Feel the warmth of the hands in yours, the life that pulses through them...  
fragile, mysterious life, gifted by God.**

**These hands may have borne suffering. These hands may have been stung by violence.  
These hands may have inflicted pain.**

**These hands may be calloused by rejection and indignity.**

(Pause)

**These hands have been anointed. These hands have brought consolation. These hands have  
offered and received tenderness. These are strong, gentle, healing hands.**

**These are the hands that caress, feel, bring people together, and hold others carefully.**

**If you wish, speak the name of a person or situation in our world that cries out  
for a healing presence.**

(Pause for participants to offer their petitions.)

**God of the journey, God of day and night, God of justice and peace, bless these – YOUR holy  
hands – for the holding, the healing, and the forgiving work of the Gospel.**

Invite everyone to gently release their neighbor's hands. Continue with this commissioning:

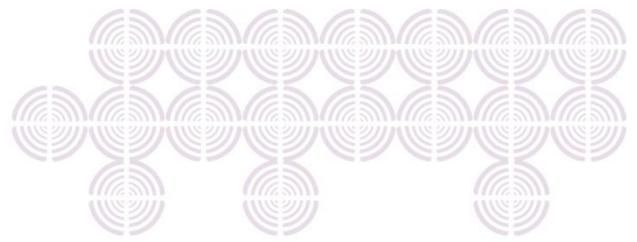
**As we have been blessed by one another,**

**so we serve as extensions of the Body of Christ to bless the world.**

**May we go in peace to truly and deeply love and serve the world and one another!**

*Optional:* Give everyone their Certificate of Completion and JF medallion if you have chosen to use these.

Then distribute copies of the Discernment Exercise (sent as a separate PDF). Share with everyone that this exercise is designed for them to do when they have some quiet time and space. Tell those who are continuing on with Phase 5, this exercise is to be completed before the start of Phase 5. Invite everyone to review their response to the ten *Opportunities for Involvement in Social Ministry* as they respond to this Discernment Exercise.



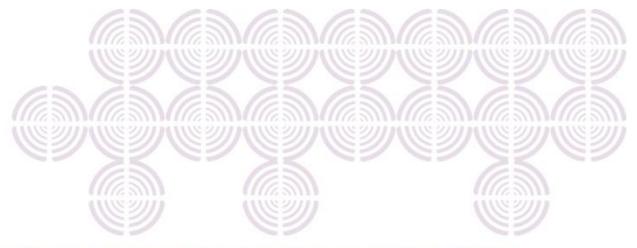
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Conclude by singing *City of God* (or another familiar, inspirational song or hymn).

End with a sign of peace and your own words of thanks and blessing.

#### **4. Coming to the Table (Optional)**

Where possible, invite the group to extend the commissioning celebration by sharing the evening meal together. Sharing Mass together before/after the meal or the following day can be a perfect conclusion.



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## Participant Handout A

### Discernment vs. Decision Making

“...Christian discernment is not the same as decision making. Reaching a decision can be straightforward: we consider our goals and options; maybe we list the pros and cons of each possible choice; and then we choose the action that meets our goal most effectively. Discernment, on the other hand, is about listening and responding to that place within us where our deepest desires align with God’s desire. As discerning people, we sift through our impulses, motives, and options to discover which ones lead us closer to divine love and compassion for ourselves and other people and which ones lead us further away.

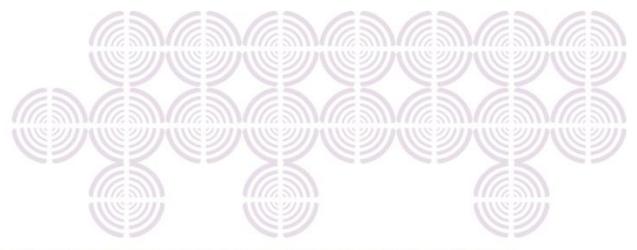
Discernment reveals new priorities, directions, and gifts from God. We come to realize that what previously seemed so important for our lives loses its power over us. Our desire to be successful, well liked, and influential becomes increasingly less important as we move closer to God’s heart. To our surprise, we even may experience a strange inner freedom to follow a new call or direction as previous concerns move into the background of our consciousness. We begin to see the beauty of the small and hidden life that Jesus lived in Nazareth. Most rewarding of all is the discovery that as we pray more each day, God’s will – that is, God’s concrete ways of loving us and our world – gradually is made known to us.”

*(Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life by Henri Nouwen,  
ed. Michael J. Christensen and Rebecca J. Laird, page 17)*

Consider these questions as you begin to discern next steps. Write your reflections on the back of this page.

1. What in my life have I begun to see more clearly – from a new perspective?
2. Which realities, people, places are difficult for me to look at?
3. How have I changed? What would those who know me share *with* me, *about* me?
4. What do I want to say to the person I am today? What does this person have to say to me?
5. Where am I going next?
6. What do I now see as my purpose?





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**Participant Handout B (continued)**

**Opportunities for Involvement in Social Ministry**

1. Direct Action/Service - *Working to meet immediate needs: for example, volunteering at a soup kitchen, homeless shelter, emergency assistance facility, Habitat for Humanity, etc.*  
Ask yourself: Are you tugged to work with people one-on-one? In what context? What skills and gifts do you bring to this kind of ministry?
2. Legislative Advocacy - *Endeavoring to influence city, state, or national policy by communicating with legislators and/or representatives on key issues or joining a network or group to work for policy changes.*  
Ask yourself: Do you feel drawn to political engagement, promoting structural change or influencing public policy? What draws you? How can you imagine yourself involved? Is there an organization that particularly appeals to you?
3. Justice Education - *Educating others on social justice issues and opportunities for action, promoting JustFaith, leading a youth group in using the JusticeWalking program, or starting Engaging Spirituality, JustMatters, or GoodNewsPeople in your community.*  
Ask yourself: Do you have an interest in providing educational opportunities for others? How might this happen? With adults, teens, or children? How can you promote justice formation through a JustFaith Ministries program or some other program at your church? How can you support promotion of a program?
4. Community Organizing - *Joining with a grassroots organizing group to support their efforts to change structures and policy.*  
Ask yourself: In what ways can you get involved with promoting structural change through a community organizing group? How can you get others from your parish to accompany you?
5. Leadership - *Participating in or taking a leadership role on justice-related committees or project work.*  
Ask yourself: Are you being called to lead a group or a project or to become part of the social ministry leadership group within your church? Are you being called as a facilitator for a JustFaith group? If so, what leadership skills do you bring?
6. Simpler Living - *Making lifestyle changes that reduce consumption and use of resources.*  
Ask yourself: What ways can you simplify your life, use fewer resources, change your buying habits, and/or change how you use your free time?



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7. Financially Supporting Justice Work - *Contributing monetarily to groups or organizations that do justice work on a local, national, or international level.*

Ask yourself: Are there projects or causes that you are drawn to support? List these. How can you discover and support other organizations that are working on structural changes in areas you are interested in?

8. Public Witness/Demonstrations - *Joining others in a public demonstration focused on a justice issue.*  
Ask yourself: Under what circumstances would you consider being part of a peaceful protest or demonstration? What issues would compel you to do so?

9. Continued Formation - *Continuing to learn about justice issues through reading, educational events, or participating in a small faith community; continuing the JustFaith program with others in your parish; engaging in other JustFaith Ministries programs ([www.justfaith.org](http://www.justfaith.org)).*  
Ask yourself: How can you continue your formation in social ministry and the church's social teaching?

10. Global Solidarity - *Working on projects and legislation that impact people in other countries; building relationships with people in other parts of the world.*

Ask yourself: What global solidarity projects are you interested in? What projects is your church already involved in? What news stories or personal experiences in another part of the world have tugged at your heart or continue to resonate with you even after the story has dropped out of the news?



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## Participant Handout C

### Psalm 139 (modified)

**Reader:**

O God, you have searched us, and you know us.  
Each time we gather, You are there.  
As we journey, You walk with us;  
You know us completely.  
Near or far, You discern the worries and wishes of our hearts.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

It was You who laid out the path before us.  
And whether we resist or while we are at rest,  
You are familiar with all of our ways.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

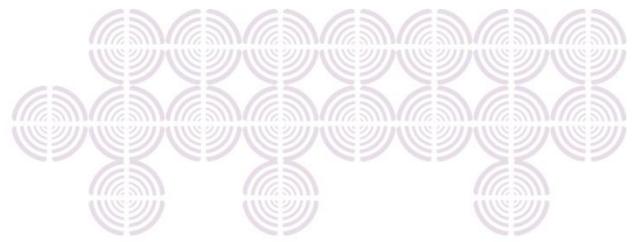
In every discussion,  
through all our whispering, questioning, or complaining,  
before even the words leave our lips,  
already you hear and understand.  
For You fathom us.  
Behind and before us, You encircle us all.  
and You lay your hand upon every one of Your beloved children.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

Despite all our knowing, our searching and our wondering,  
You remain beyond us,  
Your wisdom too wonderful, Your mysteries too deep,  
heights and depths we could not hope to attain.

(Pause)



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**Reader:**

So wide is Your boundless love,  
that we could never escape Your presence,  
that always precedes us.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

We meet You as we contemplate the infinite wonder of the universe;  
And when we dwell in depths of destruction and despair  
here too we find You, waiting.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

As we consider stories and struggles in faraway places,  
and venture across the ocean, far beyond the horizon of our experience,  
even there Your hand guides us, Your love holds us fast.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

Should we invite impenetrable darkness to cover us,  
and fall into in the darkest night of despair,  
to You the night is bright as day, Your grace breaks through,  
for darkness is a light to You.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

For it is You who gives shape and form and essence to every life.  
In the deep recesses of the womb, You knit us together.  
That is why we praise You,  
who have made every one of us so awesome and wonderful.  
How wonderful are all Your works!

(Pause)



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**Reader:**

When, in secret, we were conceived,  
intricately woven together in the depths of the earth,  
our shape and form was not hidden from You.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

You saw us when we were yet an unformed glimmer.  
Before any of us existed you knew the number of our days,  
all the stories yet to come.

(Pause)

**Reader:**

How vast is Your mind, O God!  
Your thoughts are immeasurable, more than the grains of desert sands.  
Search us, Holy One, and know the caliber of our hearts;  
Try us and know our thoughts.  
See if there is wickedness in us,  
and guide us, Your faithful people, in the way everlasting.

## Handout D: Blessing Cards

To: \_\_\_\_\_

You are a gift... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

You are a witness... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My heartfelt hope for you... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*JF*

Much peace,  
\_\_\_\_\_

To: \_\_\_\_\_

You are a gift... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

You are a witness... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My heartfelt hope for you... \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*JF*

Much peace,  
\_\_\_\_\_