



Engaging the World Together

What Now?

DISCERNMENT

What Next?

COMMUNITY



Continuing Your Journey

Congratulations on completing a JustFaith Ministries (JFM) process. As you have discovered along the way, the transformation of mind, heart, lifestyle, and community does not begin or end within an eight-week, twelve-week, or even twenty-four-week timeframe. As individuals, families, and communities, we are always on the continuum of lifelong pilgrimage toward ongoing conversion, growth, and renewal. While one stage is now over, another door, pathway, or invitation awaits.

How to use this resource...

This document invites you and your companions to respond to the Gospel call to continue together toward God's horizon – a world made new. You are encouraged to use this document for personal reflection as well as a discernment tool with your JFM group. Whether it is built into your JFM experience or not, it is strongly recommended that your group reconvenes three to six weeks after the completion of your JFM process. The following individual and group discernment outlines and links to resources will be helpful as you plan your group reunion and attend to the movement of the Holy Spirit in your life.

A Message from JustFaith Ministries

“The Reign of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once the farmer goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.”

Mark 4:26-29

The essence of Gospel justice is aptly described as entering into right relationship with all of life. While this invites our collaboration, the parable above reminds us that the source of creativity and productivity is the Holy Spirit, present and active in our lives.

The Gospel clearly suggests organic images that measure and honor the many seasons of growth and allow for the mystery of the Holy Spirit's transformative interaction. All of these seasons reflect some kind of growth, even though that growth may not always be easy to measure.

We invite you to pause, reflect, and discern how you might describe the season of your own personal journey and the season of your heart at this time. Consider these seasons...

breaking the ground... tilling the soil...
planting the seeds... sprouting new life...
tending to the tender new sprouts...
harvesting... gleaning...
clearing the ground... cutting back...
time for lying fallow.

As you juggle the demands on your life with your desire to live your faith by addressing the needs of this wounded world, hold the following questions in your heart:

What needs and hopes do I hold for myself at this season in my life?

What spiritual gifts are evident or lacking in this season?

How might I, together with others, engage in the work of the Gospel?

Blessings on your journey – wherever it takes you!

Engaging the World Together

“Were not our hearts burning within us...?”

Luke 24: 32

After our JustFaith Ministries (JFM) experience, many of us are eager to help transform this blessed-broken world and personally connect with our vulnerable brothers and sisters. Engaging the world together can take many and varied shapes: with family, with colleagues, within the parish, and with those who are interested in a shared ministry. Becoming leaven for change, especially systemic change, is a long-term commitment. Working with a small group of like-minded people is vital to sustaining us in this work of the Gospel.

As we explore next steps beyond our JFM experience, let’s consider making a deeper commitment to one another. The following pages offer tools to help us discern the next steps on the path of living a more authentic Christian life and becoming a small community of faith committed to compassionately engaging the world together.

What Now? Discernment.

“We are called to transform our hearts and our social structures to renew the face of the earth.

We cannot celebrate a faith we do not practice. We cannot proclaim a Gospel we do not live.”

A Century of Catholic Social Teaching, U.S. Catholic Bishops

Our experience of journeying together as a small community of faith has stretched our hearts and perhaps even left us all wrestling with some additional and enduring questions.

- What is God’s heart’s desire for this world and my life?
- Where do I find support to embrace the changes I need to implement in my life?
- How do we stay connected to the realities we have investigated?
- To whom am I committed and where are WE called to go?

We are strongly encouraged to enter a period of discernment, of deep listening, alone AND with one another. Discernment – or holy listening – is not the same as deciding, selecting, or choosing. More than weighing costs and benefits, discernment is an ancient prayer practice that involves opening our hearts and minds to embrace questions, invoking the Holy Spirit, attending to the deeper tugs and nudges, and heeding the counsel of others. **Discernment takes time.** It is a deliberate process that involves two distinct stages: **prayerful listening** and **consultation with others.**

STEP ONE: Personal Discernment

There are many ways to walk the holy ground of personal discernment. The following process is to be done alone. It invites you to practice *lectio divina*, sacred reading on the gospel passage outlined below.



Directions

Go to a quiet, prayerful space and light a candle. Center yourself in the present moment.

Be aware of your breathing as you rest in God's presence. Invoke (call upon) the Holy Spirit.

Slowly, line by line, pray the words of the gospel story below.

Pause and reflect on a word or phrase that strikes you. Let this word or phrase echo in your heart.

Pause before re-reading the passage. This time, be attentive to any images that arise from the story.

Pause before a third prayerful reading of the text. Listen for a question that surfaces within you.

Reading

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch people."

So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him."

Luke 5:4-11

Questions to Consider

- Where do you find yourself in this story?
- How does it reflect your recent experience and the world in which we live?
- What does this story say about Christ's invitation to work together as "catchers of people?"

Soundings

Make a note of your responses to this Gospel.

Consider its challenge to live more deeply and love more broadly.

Reflect on its implications about being a community that does justice together.

Share your insights and questions with a close friend and invite their feedback and counsel.

After your personal discernment, invite your JFM group into Step Two.



STEP TWO: Discerning Together

At a follow-up meeting or reunion of your JFM group, take time to practice sacred reading together using the gospel passage below. Following the directions for *lectio divina* outlined in Step One, prayerfully read the passage below aloud three times and then, as a group, share a word, an image, and a question that resonates with us.

Following this *lectio divina* reading and sharing, discuss the questions below together with the material in the “What Next?” sections in order to make the transition from discernment to being workers in the field.

Reading

Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We also will come with you.”

When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

Jesus said to them, “Children, have you caught anything to eat?” They answered him, “No.”

So he said to them, “Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something.”

So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish.

So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.”

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea.

The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish.

John 21: 3-8

Questions to Consider

- Where do we find ourselves in this story?
- How does it reflect our recent experience and the world in which we live?
- What does this story teach us about going deeper and responding enthusiastically and gratefully to the work of the Gospel?
- What other questions or suggestions come to light?

Soundings

Share responses to this Gospel. Consider its challenge for us to work together.

Listen to one another as we share our insights and challenges.

Keep in mind that the transformation of social systems in light of gospel justice takes a significant commitment of time and energy. It can be frustrating when our efforts seem to yield so little. Such difficult work is not to be done alone. Participation in community – with people who are supportive, understanding, and committed – will help us keep the passion burning and hope alive.

What Next? Mission Based Community...

God has planted deep within us a yearning for community that is integral to our humanity, the locus of our faith, and the way Christianity is meant to be expressed. We engage the world together as community. We call this a **mission based community** (MBC), and it includes the following four touchstones.

1. Commitment to Intentional Community

In community, we learn to love and care for each other and the world. Throughout his life, Jesus brought people together to learn, to pray, to care for each other, and to care for the most vulnerable. Community is our gateway into the Reign of God.

Mission based communities are not circumstantial groups, formed for convenience. They are deliberate, intentional communities formed around caring relationships, characterized by a deep commitment to each other.

Through your JFM group, you already have begun to establish trusting relationships with one another. Forming an MBC with your group is a powerful way to continue your journey together.

2. Discerning a Mission Focused on Those Who Are Poor

Being “good news to the poor” – committing our lives to a mission for and with poor and vulnerable people – is how Christians restore God’s world together. When we read about poverty, racism, solidarity, and nonviolence, many of us ask, “So what can I do about these things?” An MBC responds to this question by engaging in focused outreach and supporting one another.

3. Deepening Prayer and Spiritual Development

Personal and shared prayer sustains and empowers us for the work of justice, especially in tough times. Spirituality exposes us to God’s heart-intention for us and our world. A disciplined commitment to focused listening, attending to the Spirit in prayer, is life-breath to a community of faith.

Guiding questions for shared prayer in an MBC:

- Who are the afflicted in my town, in this nation, and in our world?
- What local, national, and international organizations can we hold in the light of prayer?
- What efforts great or small can we lift up?

Guiding questions for shared spiritual deepening of an MBC:

- How is God’s Spirit present and active in our lives?
- What is God calling out of us at this present moment?
- How do we integrate the gospel message into our lives?

4. Ongoing Formation

We are a pilgrim people on a journey into the heart of God. Deliberate, ongoing formation keeps our hearts and minds open to emerging opportunities for personal and social transformation.

Ongoing formation leads us into life-giving activities of our church and activities beyond the church walls. Grounded spiritual formation inevitably leads to engagement - to the work of social ministry, to the transformation of unjust structures, to legislative activity, and to organizing for social change.

Integrated spiritual formation includes these components:

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| dialogue | immersion experiences |
| guest speakers | spiritual reading |
| book discussion | reflection on church teaching |
| prayer vigils | public presentations |
| community organizing outreach to those who are vulnerable | |

In addition, an MBC group could register for a topical *JustMatters* module. Each of these six- to eight-week programs focus on a specific topic of social concern and include: prayer, study, reflection, immersion experiences, and action steps. A listing of currently available *JustMatters* modules is available on the JFM website

What Next?... Additional Approaches

*What if... ..we are not ready for a full-blown Mission Based Community?
...some or all in our JFM group are not planning to continue meeting regularly?*

1. Other Forms of Community

Perhaps participants could all continue to meet together. Perhaps some could meet with like-minded friends and parishioners who have completed other JFM formation programs and processes for the purpose of prayer and mutual support. However participants decide to continue, they can commit to...

- standing in solidarity with those who are poor and vulnerable,
- praying alone and with others, and
- informing and reforming their lives through relationships, outreach, and education.

2. Being Involved

The culminating message of JFM is that, as Christians, we are called to love our neighbors. Not to *like* them, but to *love* them! Not merely to give our money, but also to give our time to those who are poor and vulnerable. All Christians must expand their commitment to social ministry within a faith community. This is how we become agents of God's compassion and healing in our wounded world.

3. Other JustFaith Ministries Activities

Members of the group may decide to promote and/or facilitate other JFM groups. Use the JustFaith Ministries website to explore the JFM program offerings and resources.