



# JustFaith Catholic

## Sample Session

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[www.justfaith.org](http://www.justfaith.org)  
(502) 429-0865

In partnership with





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## Session Overview and Materials

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### Orientation and Participant Introductions

Section	Timing
Opening Prayer	15 minutes
Personal Introductions	50 minutes
BREAK	15 minutes
Business Items	10 minutes
Program Introduction DVD	20 minutes
Compassion Dialogue	35 minutes
Closing Prayer	5 minutes

#### Checklist for the Group:

- Small bowl of water
- Large pillar candle
- Bible
- Reflective music
- DVD: JustFaith Catholic Program Introduction
- DVD player and TV
- Snacks (optional)
- Snack sign-up sheet (optional)
- Name tags (optional)

#### Checklist for each participant:

- Books for Phase 1
- Catholic Social Teaching card
- Session Planner (if you have the Phase 1 Opening Retreat and Immersion Experience dates set)
- Phase 1 Notes to Participants



## Session Notes for the Co-Facilitators

Greetings and blessings! Thank you for your generosity in taking on the role of co-facilitator and the tasks of co-facilitation.

JustFaith unfolds in the context of a small faith community. It is essential, therefore, to create an environment in which trust and respect between members can flourish so that participants can journey together into what may be some difficult discussions. This is accomplished through the prayers, retreat, group guidelines, active listening, and dialogue. As a co-facilitator, your efforts will help foster this gradual and important process of community building.

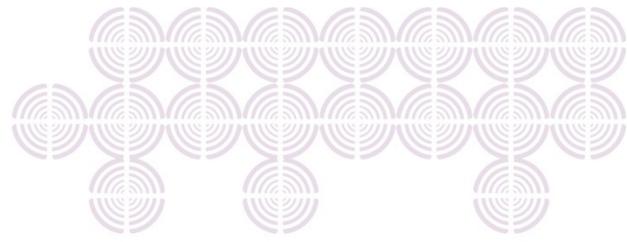
Throughout the program, participants will be challenged to see the world, their faith, and those living on the margins from a new perspective. Participants also will be asked to be open to new and creative choices for living a more compassionate, faith-filled life.

Each session of the syllabus will include a note for co-facilitators to help you prepare for that session. You can use the words suggested for different parts of the session or create your own script using the general content that is provided. It is important for facilitators to read through each session well in advance and to take time to be well prepared for each session. It is also important to remember that you are a facilitator-participant and are not expected to be an expert on any topic or to have answers to questions that come up during dialogue.

The JustFaith Journey is designed to give participants time to reflect, listen and dialogue. Do not feel compelled to ask all of the questions provided. Additionally, the opening and closing prayers are not to be rushed as they help create the space and atmosphere for building trust and building community.

When participants in your group gather for the first time, many of them may be strangers to each other; therefore, this first session includes personal introductions. You may want to use name tags for the first couple of sessions if most people are new to one another.

The JustFaith Ministries staff is most grateful for your commitment to the role of facilitator. We are available to assist you by phone and email. We look forward to working with you throughout the program. Please feel free to contact the office at any time.



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## Welcome and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

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Arrange chairs in a circle around a small table. Place items to be used during prayer on the table.

Items needed: A small bowl of water, a pillar candle, matches, two copies of the meditation for the co-facilitators to use, and a Bible marked at Luke 4: 14-21

Symbols: Fire – a lit pillar candle; water - a small bowl of water

Environment: Lower the lights in the room. Play reflective background music as people arrive. Place the symbols on the prayer table. Co-facilitators should sit side-by-side; one of the facilitators may read the Scripture reading or ask one of the participants.

Welcome everyone warmly with these or similar words:

**During this first meeting, the group will spend time getting to know each other and learning more about the JustFaith journey. Let us begin with prayer.**

### *Introduce the Symbols*

Light the candle. Hold up the candle and introduce the symbol with these words:

**Fire - light and heat, passion and pain, danger and fear...Pentecost.**

Replace the lit candle on the prayer table. Hold up the bowl of water and offer these words:

**Water - life and death, drought and flood, beginnings and endings...Baptism.**

### *Call to Prayer*

Dip your fingers into the bowl of water and make a silent sign of the cross. Pass the bowl and invite everyone to repeat the gesture. As the bowl moves around the circle, slowly pray these words:

**Jesus, in your name we gather. You are here in our midst.**

**In the presence of your Spirit, we become your body,  
to listen... to share... to learn... to care... and to pray for one another.**

**Move within us. Move among us.**

**Spirit of Compassion, bind us to one another.**

**Propel us out into your world to be your compassionate justice.**

Return the bowl to the prayer table.



**Scripture Reading**

Read Luke 4:14-21 slowly and reflectively. Pause for brief reflection.

Repeat verses 18-19. Pause briefly.

Re-read verse 21. Pause briefly.

**Meditation – The Fire of Peace\***

Read this meditatively (slowly, pausing between sections), alternating voices with another facilitator.

Reader A: **To pray is more dangerous than throwing a torch into a dry woodland.**

Reader B: **In a burning forest, you can run for cover...but if you begin to pray, there is no escape, no place you can hide from the raging fire of God.**

Reader A: **That is what happened to the saints when they prayed. All of them will testify that their encounter with God was like gold being tested in a furnace, seven times refined.**

Reader B: **St. Teresa of Avila warns: “authentic prayer changes us...unmasks us...strips us.”**

Reader A: **What she means is that sitting in the presence of a passionate God purges away all the dross, all the impurities of selfishness, pride, falsehood, hypocrisy, meanness, until only pure gold remains.**

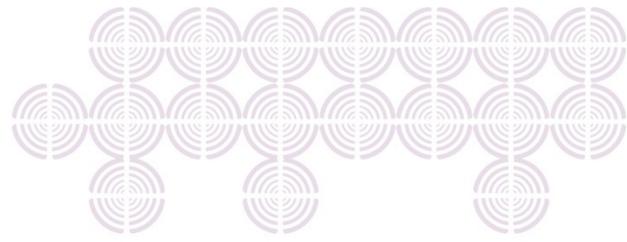
Reader B: **It’s no wonder, then, that many kneel just outside the furnace door—close enough to keep warm, far enough to keep from getting consumed—and call it prayer. Certainly, this is a comforting and consoling exercise, but it is not prayer.**

Reader A: **The ancient desert elders said it this way: “Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said, ‘Abba, as much as I am able, I practice a small rule, all the little fasts, some prayer and meditation, remain quiet, and as much as possible I keep my thoughts clean. What else should I do?’**

**The old man stood up and stretched out his hands toward heaven, and his fingers became like torches of flame. He said, ‘If you wish, you can be turned into fire.’”**

Reader B: **And there’s the crux: Do you wish? Do you wish to be turned into fire?**

**By praying this prayer, you have already stepped into the furnace. But to melt into pure gold, you must hold fast as the temperature inside continues to rise.**



- Reader A: **To be turned into fire, you must believe that if you knock, God will answer.**
- Reader B: **To be turned into fire, you must move toward a forgiving heart, working through any legitimate anger against those who have hurt or harmed you.**
- Reader A: **To be turned into fire, you must be patient and persistent, knowing that God will give you what God knows you need in God's good time.**
- Reader B: **To be turned into fire, you must pray for daily bread.**
- Reader A: **To be turned into fire, you must spend time with God, getting to know and love what God fashioned in your mother's womb.**
- Reader B: **To be turned into fire, you must give without counting the cost, "good measure, pressed down and running over."**
- Reader A: **To be turned into fire, you must act on what you pray; your life must be consistent with the word of God. You cannot pray to be forgiven, but harbor resentment; you cannot pray that God's reign may come on earth, but fail to do all in your power to eradicate poverty, stand against injustice, and protect human rights.**
- Reader B: **How do you know if you're becoming fire? How do you know if you're melting into pure gold?**
- Reader A: **Blessed are the pure ones, Jesus said, for they shall see God. And Saint Mechtild of Magdenburg said, "The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw all things in God, and God in all things."**
- Reader B: **Turning into fire, melting into pure gold, then, has something to do with seeing God in every man and woman, in all created things, and transforming into a person so transparent that others see the flame of God shining through you.**
- Reader A: **May each of us dance in the flames of love until we become burning love itself.**

*\*Adapted from "Introduction" in The Fire of Peace, by Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB; Pax Christi, 1992. Used with permission from Pax Christi USA for use in the JustFaith syllabus only.*

Pause for a moment of silent reflection.



***Prayer of the Heart***

Leader: **Let us take this prayer from Psalm 95 to heart. Echo this simple prayer, line by line. Then echo the whole prayer.** *(Adapted from Psalm 95:8)*

Leader:

**Oh that today...**

**You hear God's voice,**

**Harden not your heart.**

Participants:

Oh that today...

You hear God's voice,

Harden not your heart.

Leader: **Oh that today you hear God's voice, harden not your heart.**

All respond: Oh that today you hear God's voice, harden not your heart.

Leader: **May this prayer echo in our hearts.**

***Rite of Blessing*** Invite participants to follow you as you mark a cross on your forehead, lips, and heart, mimicking the gesture we make before the Gospel reading:

**Bless with me the thoughts, the words, and the stirrings of our hearts that we will share in dialogue:**

(Cross forehead) **Holy Spirit, inspire our thoughts...**

(Cross lips) **May we speak your truth...**

(Cross heart) **May our hearts be opened.**

**AMEN.**

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**Personal Introductions (50 minutes)**

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Invite each person to briefly share his or her responses to the questions in the Welcome Letter. Offer an approximate time for sharing based on the size of the group, and keep close track of time. Assure participants that this is only an introduction and that the group will have plenty of time to share more throughout the program. You may want to post the questions on flipchart paper as well.

- Please spend one minute giving some background information on your family and work.
- Briefly describe one of your most joyful experiences.
- Briefly describe one of your most difficult experiences.
- Why did you decide to participate in JustFaith this year?
- What would you hope to get from this experience?



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## BREAK (15 minutes)

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Provide refreshments, if desired.

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## Business Items (10 minutes)

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Each session will include a list of business items for the following session and week.

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## Program Introduction and Discussion (20 minutes)

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Have the TV and DVD player set up and ready to show the JustFaith Catholic Introduction DVD.

Introduce the DVD with these or similar words:

**This DVD provides an inspirational view of JustFaith, a journey designed to help us explore the importance of being a people of great love and compassion and a people who live simply, nonviolently, and in solidarity with others, especially with those who are poor.**

Afterward viewing the DVD, invite participants to share their responses to the DVD. Depending on time, you might ask them if they have any new thoughts or comments related to the two questions asked in their introductions:

- Why did you decide to participate in JustFaith this year?
- What would you hope to get from this experience?

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## Compassion Discussion (35 minutes)

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A co-facilitator reads aloud slowly:

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. (Matthew 9:36)*

Another co-facilitator reads aloud, slowly:

*The word compassion generally evokes positive feelings. We like to think of ourselves as compassionate people who are basically good, gentle and understanding. We more or less assume that compassion is a natural response to human suffering. Who does not feel compassion for a poor old man, a hungry child, a paralyzed soldier, a fearful girl? It seems almost impossible to imagine that compassion does not belong among our most self-evident human qualities. Do we feel deeply offended when someone accuses us of lacking compassion? Does that sound as if we are accused of a lack of humanity? Indeed we immediately identify being compassionate with being human. An uncompassionate human being seems as inconceivable as a nonhuman human being.*



*But, if being human and being compassionate are the same, then why is humanity torn by conflict, war, hatred, and oppression? Why, then, are there so many people in our midst who suffer from hunger, cold and lack of shelter? Why, then, do differences in race, sex or religion prevent us from approaching each other and forming community? Why, then are millions of human beings suffering from alienation, separation, or loneliness? Why, then, do we hurt, torture and ill each other? Why, then, is our world in such chaos?*

*(Compassion, Nouwen, McNeil, Morrison, Image, 8 1982, page 3)*

In groups of two or three, take turns sharing your response to these three questions (20 minutes):

- When you hear the word “compassion” what faces, places or images come to mind?
- What is the role of compassion in our social lives?
- Is it practical, possible or even preferable for a community or a nation to be governed by compassion?

In the large group, ask for a few responses from each small group.

Conclude by sharing that a key theme of the JustFaith journey is compassion and what it might mean to live more compassionately.

## **Closing Prayer (5 minutes)**

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Invite participants to stay after prayer to share refreshments (if prepared). Remind everyone to pick up their books and handouts as they leave. Invite a minute of silence before closing in prayer.

### ***Return to the Symbols used in the Opening Prayer***

Hold up the lit candle and share these words:

**Spirit of Jesus, kindle in us a passion for your Peace.**

Replace the candle on the prayer table. Hold up the bowl of water and share these words:

**Heart of Christ, deepen in us a thirst for your Justice.**

Replace the bowl of water on the table.

### ***A Circle of Prayer***



Invite the group to stand, form a tight circle, and link hands.

In these words, invite any participants who have a prayer, a concern or a request to briefly share it with the group:

**We are disciples on a journey.**

**We are the body of Christ, broken for the world.**

**We hold one another as we carry the concerns and intercessions of our neighbors.**

**If you feel moved, please share your prayer aloud.**

***Words to Live By***

Leader: **Let us again take the Psalm to heart. Repeat this prayer after me:**

**Oh, that today you hear God's voice...**

All: Oh, that today you hear God's voice....

Leader: **...harden not your heart.**

All: ...harden not your heart.

Leader: **May this prayer echo in our hearts throughout the week  
as we walk, while we work, as we rest, and when we pray for one another.**

***A Sign of God's Peace***

Leader: **Now we share in the peace for which our world hungers.**

**With a sign of peace we affirm one another for the journey ahead.**

**May we extend God's peace to all!**

Invite participants to exchange a sign of peace with one another.