



BEACONS OF LIGHT

Love in Action Leadership Team Retreat

This retreat is designed for the leadership teams of newly formed Families of Parishes as a way to come together for prayer and reflection, especially those involved in Love in Action ministries. It may even serve as a directional, first gathering for these groups.

A Phase 1 activity for each Family is having a Love in Action Coordinator designated by the pastor. The coordinator should invite a representative number of people from each parish in the Family to participate in the retreat, such that there are as close to equal numbers from each parish as possible.

Staff of Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio, Catholic Social Services Miami Valley, and the Pastoral Center offices involved in Love in Action will facilitate the retreats. If there is a group that might require multiple facilitators, a training could be done for members of the Parish Family.

To schedule a retreat, contact Mary Anne Bressler, Parish & Community Engagement Coordinator at Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio, 513-672-3714, mbressler@ccswoh.org.

Goals of This Retreat

1. Create an opportunity for persons/committees involved in Love in Action ministries (outreach, respect life, social justice) within a Family of Parishes to get acquainted.
2. Prayerfully reflect on the gifts each parish brings to the family within the Love in Action pathway, principles, vision and parameters.
3. Establish positive communications between these groups to facilitate future collaboration

Materials Needed

1. Parishes to provide refreshments, nametags, candles
 - Candles needed: 1 taper (or maybe small votive) for each participant, and 1 large pillar in a central location—on a table with appropriate décor, such as a tablecloth and perhaps flowers, a Bible, etc. to help create a central focus of the prayer
2. Host location to arrange one table per parish (or more, if needed).
3. Post-it notes, paper and pens should be placed at each table.
4. Each parish should provide their participants with copies of their respective Love in Action Parish Inventory, which lists all of the parish's outreach and social justice activities.
5. The Love in Action facilitator will provide a poster-size copy of the Love in Action Family Combined Inventory and handouts of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' "Two Feet of Love in Action" and "Principles of Catholic Social Teaching."

Introduction

The staff facilitator will introduce the goals of the retreat and summarize the agenda for the day.

Opening Prayer (1/2 hour)

1. Opening Scripture Reading: (options will be provided by facilitator when planning the retreat)
2. Parish Family Love in Action coordinator lights the main candle and everyone sings. (Music options will be discussed by the Love in Action facilitator and Family Love in Action coordinator.)
3. Prayer: A designated lector (or perhaps more than one person) slowly read the 6th principle and the five Vision Points:
 - **The Love in Action Principle:** *Families of Parishes will be communities of charity and justice, serving those most in need and working to change systems that oppress and marginalize.*
 - **Human Dignity:** The Families of Parishes seek ways to recognize the human dignity of each person, who is created in the "image of God." (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, nos.12-32) This demands special attention to the poor and vulnerable, including the unborn and their parents; the stranger; persons who are elderly, sick, poor, imprisoned, and marginalized; persons with disabilities; and persons of all races and cultures. This also entails urgently protecting the integrity of Creation, which has its own intrinsic value and is humanity's common home. (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, no.139)
 - **Formation:** Families of Parishes educate and form parishioners, staff, and clergy – utilizing the rich history of Catholic Social Teaching and Scripture – on what it means to be a community of "salt and light" in today's world. (Mt.5:13-16) The Families are nurtured through liturgy and formation to grow as a people who model mercy, grace, and forgiveness and who accompany the marginalized on their journeys towards empowerment.
 - **Belonging:** The Family of Parishes actively facilitate the inclusion, affirmation, and meaningful participation of all Catholics in the community of faith.
 - **Charity and Justice:** Families of Parishes exercise the ministries of charity and justice, which flow necessarily from our sacramental life and radiate as an indispensable expression of the Church's very being. (Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no.25) Significant numbers of parishioners engage in activities of both direct service to the vulnerable and public advocacy to protect all human life and dignity from conception until natural death.
 - **Presence and Solidarity:** Families of Parishes inspire all community members to go beyond regular Mass-goers and their buildings to be the light of Christ and to encounter Christ in all, both locally and across the globe. Parishioners practice a firm and persevering determination to commit themselves to the common good, recognizing that "we are all really responsible for all." (St. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 38)

4. Silence should follow to meditate on the Love in Action principle and vision points. Each participant is asked to think of a parish Love in Action ministry that she/he is especially proud of.
5. After silence for each participant to reflect, all are invited to share a petition, expressing what she/he hopes for during today's meeting and coming months as we develop Beacons of Light. *No one is obligated to share.*
6. End with a brief prayer:
God of life, we lift our prayers for the success of the Beacons of Light process in our archdiocese. May this be a time for us to grow in faith, hope and love. Send your Spirit upon us as we move forward this morning and into the future.

Description of Activities

The facilitator will explain that the rest of the morning will be spent in reflection on the gifts that the individual parishes are bringing to the Parish Family as a first step in the process of organizing a fully coordinated Love in Action Ministry by the end of the 5 phases of the Beacons of Light process. The facilitator will briefly explain that the Vision Points were drawn from the "Principles of Catholic Social Teaching" as well as the model of the "Two Feet of Love in Action." (Handouts of these will be provided at the tables.)

Establishing Ground Rules for Respectful Conversation

In order to facilitate an opportunity for deep listening, the following ground rules will be employed for this session:

- Open-Mindedness: Listen to and respect all points of view.
- Acceptance: Suspend judgment as best you can.
- Curiosity: Seek to understand rather than persuade.
- Discovery: Question old assumptions, look for new insights.
- Sincerity: Speak for yourself about what has personal heart and meaning.
- Brevity: Go for honesty and depth but don't go on and on.
- Confidentiality: Respect and honor the rights and privacy of all participants.

The facilitator asks that those present assent to these ground rules before proceeding.

Activity 1: Naming Gifts (20 minutes)

Participants will be seated with other members of their parish. A poster-sized printout of the Family Combined Inventory tool will be posted on the wall.

1. Together the group will review their parish inventory of ministries that has been provided at each table.
2. The group will use post-its to write down each ministry, assigning one or more individuals to post them on the Parish Family Combined Inventory poster.
3. After each parish has posted their gifts, parish by parish, these gifts will be shared.

Activity 2: Where Are We Now? (approx. 30 minutes +/-)

The facilitator provides an overview of what the Love in Action principle asks of the families as they come together and the ways in which Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio, Catholic Social Services Miami Valley, Respect Life, Catholic Social Action and Mission offices can assist in this process. The sample organizational charts from the Love in Action Phase 1 will be either projected (if technology allows) or posted on the wall. The facilitator will explain that these models are based on the US Conference of Catholic Bishop's documents *Communities of Salt & Light: Reflections on the Social Mission of Parish* and *Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities* and are possible ways in which the Families could organize their ongoing Love in Action Ministry.

1. Members of different parishes will be paired together for one-on-one sharing of their thoughts and/or feelings as the process begins. Prompts: What is an opportunity of the Beacons process? What is a challenge? (5 minutes)
2. These pairs will then be combined into a few larger groups depending on total number in attendance, but no more than 8/table. (A note-taker needs to be designated for each table.) At these groups, the results of the pair-share will be shared. Notes will be taken to provide to the pastor. (15-20 minutes)
3. This section ends with a ritual of "Leaving it on the Altar"—an opportunity for each participant to write a brief prayer expressing his/her specific needs at the moment: What do I need to turn over to God? In what way do I seek God's assistance? The prayers will be collected in a basket and placed on the prayer table with the following prayer.
4. Concluding prayer:

Good and gracious God, we entrust to you our cares and concerns, our hopes and ambitions as we enter this new phase of parish life. We ask your grace to move forward together as a people united in love and service. (5 minutes)

Activity 3: Moving forward together (half hour or a few hours)

1. Introduce with reading of Ezra 3:8-13.
2. The facilitator will invite a short period of reflection on this reading, inviting participants to consider how it applies to the present moment.
3. In small groups discuss: What did you hear today that made you hopeful or excited? What did you observe that the parishes have in common? (10-15 minutes)
4. Joint service project OR Commitment to action:
 - a. Option 1: Planning group for retreat will determine some type of volunteer activity as the culmination of the retreat. If the parish planners want to organize a service project, they will be provided contact information for the office heads (Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio, Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley, Catholic Social Action, Respect Life, Mission) and instructed to contact the office to see what can be arranged.
 - b. Option 2: Participants will be asked to determine a project to do as a next step (e.g. consider hosting at a later date Catholic Social Action Office presentation on Love in Action, Catholic Charities' Discovering Mercy presentation, service project tied to Catholic Charities Southwestern Ohio, Catholic Social Services Miami Valley, one of

the Pastoral Center offices, or with another organization.). The facilitator can provide information on these options.

Closing ritual—done at end of event if no service follows or as the last item before departing for service

1. A passage of Scripture is read. (This could be the same one as in the opening prayer or a new one suggested by facilitator.)
2. After the reading of the Scripture, the coordinator will light a taper (or votive) candle from the light on the prayer table. coordinator will then pass the light to one person at each table, and the light is then passed from person to person. As this happens, the person lighting the next candle will say, "Let us share the light of Christ."
3. After all of the candles are lit, the facilitator offers the closing prayer:
Gracious Father,

You are a family all by yourself. You love family so much that you created us in order to grow your family.

You have seen us through cooperation and in turmoil throughout the ages.

Your word says that, "we can have no good thing apart from [You]".
Oh Lord, we need you now to join us together as a new family.

Help us to see one another as you see us.
Help us to value all of the unique gifts you have given us.

Help us to be quick to listen and slow to anger.
Join our hearts together in service and love.

Let all that see us know that you are alive and well living through us.

Lord prompt our hearts to change where needed
and to hold fast to the strengths we have.

In this world where many families are fractured and dysfunctional,
let us come together in unity and bear evidence of your love.

We are in you, oh Christ and you have made us a new creation!

The old has passed away. Help us embrace the new.

In Your Holy Name,
Amen