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***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT***

**PASTORAL PLANNING FOR THE**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**

# PARISH COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

**Information to Be Communicated**

Any of the information can be used in bulletin inserts or news releases to local media or parish websites.

Archbishop Tobin continued the initiative began by Archbishop Buechlein called ***Connected in the Spirit*** a parish planning process structured to have parishes plan for the future in concert with other parishes. The Archbishop’s over-all goal is to enhance the vibrancy of parish life in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis so that parishes will be signs of faith, hope and love to all God’s people. Due to demographic shifts, the diminishing number of priests, and the financial situation of many parishes, a process was needed to lessen stress and remove obstacles so all parishes could be strong ones. Given the availability and leadership of the current priests and of well-educated deacons, sisters and lay people, the Archbishop thought that this is the right time to be good stewards of our human and financial resources and discover ways to reorganize parishes, so that current parishioners and future ones may be well served.

In the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process all parishes in the archdiocese will be involved in working with neighboring parishes to assess their strengths, name their concerns, and explore how they can work together to better serve the People of God. They will be asked to suggest a future model of parish life from four that also are used in many places in the country: linkage (sharing a pastor); merger or consolidation (2 or more parishes form a new parish); partnership (2 or more parishes work closely together at times sharing staff and programs or in-services, etc). The last model is one where a team of priests serves three or more parishes. The priests are supported by deacons, sisters and lay ministers in serving the parishes.

A Planning Commission re-appointed by Archbishop Tobin made up of priests, deacons, sisters and lay people will review the suggestions and evaluative material presented from the cohorts of parishes, make a preliminary recommendation with a rationale back to the cohort and ask for a response with a rationale. After studying the responses across the archdioceses and considering demographic data and parish data, the Planning Commission will make final recommendations to the Archbishop. He in turn will consult with the Presbyteral Council and other consultative bodies before making a decision for each cohort. Once the decisions are made each cohort of parishes will begin implementation according to the Archbishops directives.

## Times of Transition

By their very nature, times of transition are unsettling. Some will believe that the decisions are already made and their voice does not count. Some will feel that, if only the archdiocese had the correct information, they would see how great their parish is. Because of these misperceptions, effective communication is vitally important. Those involved with change, both directly and indirectly, need accurate and consistent information regarding the future of the parish and the reasons for change. We have developed the following guidelines to assist parish leaders and anyone helping to facilitate the parish planning process, ***Connected in the Spirit.***

When people experience tension, lack of communication is typically cited as a primary source of the stress. We must not underestimate the positive impact of effective communication — and the negative results when communication is lacking. Communication is more than simply putting forth information; it is a dynamic, a two-way process.

Please make every effort to communicate with the various groups in your area with sensitivity to appropriate timing and procedure, and remember that people need to hear information multiple times in order to process it. Help your parishioners to keep in focus the Archbishop’s goals for ***Connected in the Spirit.***

In these pages you will find:

1. Communication Goals
2. Audiences
3. Communication Strategies
4. Communication Tools
5. Tips for Working with the Media
6. **Communication Goals**

* Help people recognize and understand the reasons for change
* Update the parish community *regularly,* sharing accurate and appropriate information in a timely manner.
* Communicate the same information to all parishes in the cohort.
* Correct misinformation and control rumors.
* Manage the communication process effectively.

1. **Audiences**

Be aware of the various groups concerned with your parish situation:

- Staff - Parishioners

- Volunteers - Neighboring cohorts

- Neighboring church leaders (both Catholic and other denominations)

- Neighborhood - Civic community

- Elected officials - Others of importance to your parish

- Media

1. **Communication** **Strategies**

* Respect for people should guide all communication efforts. *How* y*ou* *communicate* *is* *as important as* *what* *you* *say.* Openness to those whose opinions differ from yours is critically important.
* Keep a positive attitude and help parishioners and staff through the various stages of the planning and implementation process
* Maintain a calm presence. Your ability to do so will diminish the impact of rumors and can assuage fears.
* Receive critical comments simply as information that may be helpful to the process. Try to understand the reasons prompting the criticism, and do not take it personally.
* Show respect for the community's history while calling people forward to build the future together. Build on the image of ***Connected in the Spirit***
* Listen to people's concerns: calm fears when possible: help people see their importance to the new community.
* State facts accurately and clearly explain procedures. Information shared clearly and directly will help to reduce the tendency toward "power plays."
* Recognize that premature information sharing, before decisions are actually made or before those most closely affected have been informed, may thwart the planning process and cause divisiveness within the community. It is important for parish leaders to maintain confidentiality until the *agreed-upon* *time* to share information.
* Remember that appropriate information sharing needs to be ongoing. It is important not to assume that, since you have put forth information once, people have understood it. Not everyone is at the same "readiness" level, and we need to respect people's need to hear information many times in order to truly process it. Regular and repeated updates help people feel more grounded and secure amidst transition.
* Avoid the tendency to think that because the core team knows what is happening, communication has taken place. Sharing information with each of the audiences listed in section 2 needs to be carefully planned and implemented.
* Communicate important information directly to parishioners, staff, and anyone else personally affected by a situation *before* *the* media reports it

No matter the audience, specifically target information.

* Determine the most appropriate timing and sequence for sharing information with particular individuals and/or groups.
* Identify the best ways to share information. A few possibilities include:

Letters

Town hall meetings

Question/answer sheets

Individual/small group meetings

Newsletters

Media releases, etc.

Web Site updates

Parish Bulletins

You know your community better than anyone. Draw upon the wisdom and power of people within the parish to help you determine the most effective ways to communicate with different groups. **When you are working as a cohort, be sure the same information goes to all parishes in the cohort at the same time.**

* Be consistent in the information you give to various individuals and groups. Having a single point person to whom people may address their questions is helpful.
* Be aware of individuals and/or groups who may have their own agenda.
* Help people recognize that pushing individual agendas harms the entire community.
* Have a back-up plan for combating rumors and addressing information leaks.

1. **Communication** **Methods**

Again, draw upon the wisdom of your own community to help you. Here are a few examples to assist you.

* Speak from the pulpit about the planning process and update parishioners about the progress of the plan.

**Include regular bulletin announcements to reinforce your pulpit messages. When more than one parish is involved, use the same announcements in all bulletins, if the information affects both parishes. (See samples which follow)**

* Pray in the general intercessions for the mission of the church and for the Holy Spirit's guidance throughout the parish's planning process. (See samples which follow)
* Make sure all parishioners actually have the recommendation and rationale.
* As you hold parish meetings, routinely draw people's attention to the reality of parishes in transition throughout the archdiocese and in archdioceses all over the country.
* On a weekly basis insert one section of Goals or Criteria in the parish bulletin: Sacramental life; Evangelization, Catechesis and Catholic Schools; Stewardship and Justice; and Effective Administration. Add a question for reflection appropriate to your parish. Use these for all parish meetings, section by section as feasible. (See samples which follow)
* If common questions surface regarding your parish's situation, compile a question and answer sheet for inclusion in the bulletin, or for mailing to all parishioners, if this will be more helpful. It is important that people continue to feel informed and to know that they have accurate, updated information.
* Provide up-dated information on your parish Web site, if appropriate.
* Send a letter to denominational leaders of your area or gather them together to discuss the planning process affecting your parish. Request their prayers and support during the planning process and for the parish community.

1. **Working** **with** **the** **Media**

Parishioners, staff*,* and anyone else personally affected by a situation should receive important information directly from you or from another appropriate source *before* the media reports it. Nonetheless, newspapers, radio and TV reporters can play an important role in communicating messages about the parish's planning process. The keys to working with the media include; 1) understanding them, 2) developing a good relationship, 3) delivering a solid message.

Understand the Media

* Know your area reporters and editors and the deadlines they face. The Archdiocese can help you identify them.
* If you are the designated “media person” and are not the pastor or PLC, please consult either of them before your work with the media. Remember that you are in charge, even if a reporter becomes aggressive.
* If reporters inquire about a situation which parishioners are yet unaware of, remind them of your need to respect the parishioners' right to hear information directly from you. Statements such as "it's an internal matter at this point…" or no decisions have yet been made... " are appropriate.

Develop a Good Relationship with Reporters

* Generally it is better to work with the media than to be non-responsive. "No comment" can portray you or the parish as being uncooperative.
* Designate the pastor, PLC or one individual spokesperson and instruct anyone who may receive media inquiries to route questions to the spokesperson. Make sure you return phone calls promptly.
* Ask what information reporters need and when their deadline is. Rather than feeling pressured to respond immediately, indicate you'll get back to them. It is important then to follow-up prior to the deadline.
* Depending upon the circumstance, you may wish to have available names and phone numbers of others to suggest for media interviews, so reporters don't randomly approach parishioners or council members. Help those to be interviewed prepare their thoughts.

Deliver a Solid Message

* Don't be afraid to ask reporters what aspect of the issue they want to cover or if they are talking to others. This will help you anticipate questions and prepare for the answers.
* During the interview, state clearly and calmly what you believe to be most important. Find opportunities to address your main points, even if the reporter's questions do not elicit them directly.
* Deliver a quotable "sound bite." Be brief but informative. Use specific examples, analogies, and relevant statistics or attributed quotes.
* Flag your answer: "The most important thing is..." or "It all boils down to..."
* Be honest. Don't feel pressured to respond if you don't know the answer. Replies such as "we haven't worked out the details," "we don't know yet," or "we haven't given thought to that" are reasonable.

It is important to help all involved to recognize the dangers of using media to push one's own agenda. Taking issues to the media that would better be dealt with internally destroys trust and impedes the process of working through difficulties. Trying to use the media in personal battles often backfires. Feel free to consult with archdiocesan communication staff for ideas in dealing with media or regarding other communication issues. We will be happy to assist you.

**Conclusion**

Implementing a sound communication strategy with your various parish audiences is the best way to assure a successful planning process. By taking time from the outset to explain the issues and offer opportunities for feedback, you will lay the groundwork for building a cohesive faith community.

***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT***

**PASTORAL PLANNING FOR THE**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**

# COMMUNICATION ISSUES CHECK LIST

**Action Person(s) Responsible**

 1. Consulted with leaders within the parish to determine the Pastor or delegate

most effective ways to communication with various groups.

Date(s)

 2. Created effective ways to communicate with significant Pastors or delegates groups within the parish and between parishes.

*Staff* What: When:

*Volunteers* What: When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Youth* What: When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Others* What: When: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 3. Created effective ways to communicate with other groups. Pastor or delegate

*Neighboring church leaders and parishes*

What: When:

*Civic community* What: When:

*(Funeral Homes, Hospitals*, *Nursing facilities*, *Prison/jail facilities)*

*Elected officials* What: When:

*Media* What: When:

*Others*  What: When:

 4. Identified a point person to whom people may address Pastor

questions as they arise.

Name: Date:

 5. Held town hall meetings, giving people the opportunity to Pastor

express concerns and ask questions.

Moderator(s): Dates

 6. Communicated the same information to people of all Pastor or delegate

parishes involved (same bulletin announcements

or newsletters, same pulpit announcements, etc.).

Date(s):

 7. Kept information confidential until the agreed-upon time Pastor or delegate

to share it.

Date(s):

 8. Repeated important information in multiple settings, under- Pastor or delegate

standing that people need to hear things more than once.

What: When:

 9. Provided regular updates to parishioners regarding the Pastor

***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT*** process.

What: When:

 10. Established a plan to address information leaks and control Pastor or delegate

rumors.

Keeper of the plan:

Date:

 11. Made efforts to establish a good relationship with local Pastor or delegate

reporters.

Who : When:

 12. Sought help from the archdiocese regarding Communi-

cation when necessary.

When:

Comments:

***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT***

**PASTORAL PLANNING FOR THE**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**

# PARISH COMMUNICATION SAMPLES

**INTRODUCTION**

Being part of ***Connected in the Spirit*** provides many opportunities for good communication with all parishioners and the community as a whole. Some ideas which follow will aid in letting all members of the parish know what ***Connected in the Spirit*** is and what the parish is doing as part of it.

**BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENTS OR MATERIAL FOR THE PARISH NEWSLETTER**

Please adapt all the material that follows to your local circumstances. These are not recipes, but rather ways to save you time, so you do not have to reinvent the wheel to begin your communications campaign! All announcements do not have to be used and the order can be changed depending upon how your parish is participating in ***Connected in the Spirit.***

**Bulletin Announcements do not take the place of face-to-face meetings such as town hall meetings and other more personal vehicles for communication.**

**Announcement 1**

***Connected in the Spirit***

Archbishop Tobin has asked us to be part of the current cycle of parish planning related to the ***Connected in the Spirit***. His expectation is that each parish will find neighboring parishes with whom to plan in order to:

1. Share more resources with each other and with parishes in need;
2. Avoid unneeded duplication of services; and
3. Fill in the gaps where service and ministry have not been available.

The parishes with whom we hope to work include:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Announcement 2**

***Connected in the Spirit***

The goals of the ***Connected in the Spirit*** process promoted by Archbishop Tobin include:

1. To enhance the vibrancy of parish life in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.
2. To foster an appreciation for and participation in Sunday Eucharist and the Sacraments.
3. To promote good stewardship so that parishes are financially viable now and into the future.
4. To maximize the availability of quality Catholic School education throughout the Archdiocese.
5. To ensure that all parishioners have opportunities for quality lifelong Christian Formation, including supporting new initiatives for youth and young adults and promoting vocations to ordained and lay ministry.
6. To strengthen service to those who are marginalized.
7. To build a greater sense of unity among the many cultures in the Archdiocese.
8. To realign parishes considering the number of priests available to serve, financial resources and demographics.
9. To increase collaboration among all entities in the local, national and universal Church.
10. To advocate for peace and justice in the Church and in the world.

As our Core Team begins to organize itself, it will be keeping these goals in mind and alerting you to how well we are doing in meeting the goals.

**Announcement 3**

***Connected in the Spirit***

The following people are on the Core Team to do parish planning as part of the ***Connected in the Spirit***: (Name people.) The Core Team attended a training session on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_date to become acquainted with the materials we will be using to assess our parish ministries.

The Core Team will be overseeing the evaluation of parish ministries based on the Criteria for Planning. The Criteria are divided into four categories: Sacramental Life of the Parish; Evangelization, Catechesis and Catholic Schools; Stewardship and Justice; and Effective Administration.

**Announcement 4**

***Connected in the Spirit***

The Core Team oversaw the parish evaluation of the Criteria for Sacramental Life of the Parish and found that our strengths included\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Our hopes for the future include \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, ­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If you have any comment about these, please contact \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Repeat this kind of announcement for each of the other areas **(**Evangelization, Catechesis and Catholic Schools; Stewardship and Justice; and Effective Administration.)

(Announcement 5-8)

Announcement 9

***Connected in the Spirit***

The Core Team and Parish Pastoral Council finished our parish evaluation according to the Criteria for Planning and have come to the following conclusions: (Highlight the good things happening and the hopes for the future, or any other pertinent information.)

Announcement 10

***Connected in the Spirit***

As part of our planning for the future, The Core Team analyzed some of the demographic trends that are part of our parish’s life. We thought you would be interested in the following: (Include what is appropriate.)

Announcement 11

***Connected in the Spirit***

The Core Team has begun meeting with the cohort(s) parishes to do some joint planning to look at models for working together. The models presented by the Archdiocesan Planning Commission include linking parishes, where two or more parishes share a pastor; merging parishes, where two or more parishes become one; partnership parishes where two or more parishes share programs and sometimes staff, and a team approach to priestly and lay ministry.

Announcement 12

***Connected in the Spirit***

The Core Team invites you to a meeting to accomplish two things: 1) to hear about its deliberations on a model of working with other parishes in the future; 2) and to solicit your input. We would appreciate your attendance and participation. The meeting is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_time, place, date\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Announcement 13

***Connected in the Spirit***

The parish Core Team working with the Core Teams in the cohort have submitted a Suggestion to the Archdiocesan Planning Commission on how the cohort might work together in the future. We suggested working on Model (designate linkage, merger, partnership, team) which for our parish would mean\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ . The Archdiocesan Planning Commission will consider our work and make a recommendation back to us. At that time we will be asked to respond to their recommendation.

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS (THESE MAY BE USED IN ANY ORDER.)**

Week One

**For the success of *Connected in the Spirit****,* **that all parishes will faithfully participate under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to look at how they can best build the Reign of God, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Two

**That our Core Team will be blessed and strengthened as it participates in the *Connected in the Spirit****,* **let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Three-Nine

**That the Holy Spirit may continue to guide our Core Team as it evaluates our ministries of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Sacramental Life, Evangelization, Catechesis, and Catholic Schools, Stewardship and Justice, Effective Administration, etc.) let us pray to the Lord. Response… (Use as appropriate.)**

Week Ten

**For our Core Team as it looks for ways to suggest good stewardship practices for our parish and cohort, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Eleven

**That the Holy Spirit will continue to be with the *Connected in the Spirit*** **as our parish cohort prepares its suggestion to the Archdiocesan** **Planning Commission, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Twelve

**For all those in the *Connected in the Spirit*** **who are discerning plans for their future, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Thirteen

**That the *Connected in the Spirit*** **will generate attitudes and actions of sharing across the Archdiocese and the larger Church, let us pray to the Lord. Response…**

Week Fourteen

**That the *Connected in the Spirit*** **will renew parish life across the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, we pray to the Lord. Response…**

ANNOUNCEMENTS AT LITURGY

**Besides the bulletin announcements suggested above, it is a good idea to have members of the Core Team give a brief up-date on the *Connected in the Spirit*** **at least once a month during the announcement time at liturgy. This will make the work of the Core Team come alive for the parish community.**

**PLEASE NOTE THE COMMUNICATION CHECK LIST IN THIS SECTION (PAGE 8 & 9) WHERE YOU WILL BE ASKED TO REPORT ON HOW YOUR PARISHIONERS HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS.**

**ARCHDIOCESE OF INDIANAPOLIS**

**PRAYER SERVICES**

***CONNECTED IN THE SPIRIT***

ADVENT 2014-MAY 10, 2015

**Connected in the Spirit**

Eternal God,

you are without beginning or

end, and you sustain us every

day with your Providence.

As we discern where you are

guiding the Church in central

and southern Indiana, grant us

wisdom and strength.

Through the “Connected in the

Spirit” process give us vibrant

parish communities that will

enable us to serve you with all

our hearts.

Bring comfort, healing and hope

to those who are being lead

through a difficult transition,

and unite us all more fully with

you and with one another.

We ask this through Christ our

Lord.  Amen.

# PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS- 2014-2015

## November 30, 2014 - First Sunday of Advent

#### OPENING PRAYER

#### Blessed and gracious God, help us to wait with patience for your Son’s renewed coming into our lives. Lead us to be watchful and alert for the signs of your presence. Enable us to see that planning with *Connected in the Spirit* is preparing our parishes to be move vibrant and reflect your reign on earth. We ask this in Jesus name by the power of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen.

#### Reading: [1 COR 1:3-9](http://www.usccb.org/bible/1corinthians/1:3)

Brothers and sisters: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always on your account for the grace of God bestowed on you in Christ Jesus, that in him you were enriched in every way, with all discourse and all knowledge, as the testimony to Christ was confirmed among you, so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you firm to the end, irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, and by him you were called to fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **ALL:** Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. Why do you think God is faithful to us?
3. What is the relationship of faith and fellowship?
4. When Paul gives wishes of grace and peace to his readers, how do you think they felt? What would that have meant to them, do you think? What did it say about their relationships?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Loving God hear us**

* That we may grow in love for you as we patiently wait for you to continually make your presence known to us, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we learn to be watchful for your presence in our lives, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we join people of good will to work to prepare the world to recognize you anew, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may help people in need of food, shelter and clothing, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Loving God, hear the prayers we have shared and those still held in silence. We ask this in Jesus’ name by the power of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

#### PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS

## December 7, 2014 - Second Sunday of Advent

#### OPENING PRAYER

#### Gracious God you continue to comfort us in our trials and tribulations. Strengthen us as we hear anew the voice of John the Baptist to prepare the way of the Lord. Help us to be mindful that in our planning processes we are deepening our relationship with you and furthering your reign on earth. We ask this in the name of Jesus our brother and savior through the power of the Holy Spirit. All: Amen

#### Reading: Isaiah 40: 1-5

Comfort, give comfort to my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service is at an end, her guilt is expiated; indeed, she has received from the hand of the LORD double for all her sins.

A voice cries out in the desert prepare the way of the LORD! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God! Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low; the rugged land shall be made a plain, the rough country, a broad valley. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken. The Word of the Lord. **ALL:** Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. In what ways have your felt comforted by God? When?
3. What are you doing to “prepare the way of the Lord,” in anticipation of the celebration of the birth of Jesus?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Comfort your people, loving God**

* That we may be comforted amidst all the violence we witness in the world, let us pray to the Lord...
* That Church leaders strive to help all of us prepare for the celebration of Jesus’s birth and our salvation, let us pray to the Lord...
* That our planning efforts help make the presence of God in the world revealed, so all may recognize God’s presence, let us pray to the Lord...
* That those longing for peace and justice experience God’s love through us, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Gracious God, fill us with gratitude that you have revealed yourself to us. We ask this in Jesus’ name by the grace of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

#### PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS

## December 14, 2014 -Third Sunday of Advent

#### OPENING PRAYER

#### Loving God, we pray that your Spirit may come upon us as it came upon Jesus. Empower us to spread the Good News and to serve people who are poor and lonely and captured by self-doubt and hopelessness. As we prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus strengthen us to be joyful because of his life which modeled for humanity your goodness and gave hope to the world. We ask this in the name of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**Reading:** [**Isaiah 61:1-2A, 10-11**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/61:1)

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the LORD and a day of vindication by our God.   
I rejoice heartily in the LORD, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice, like a bridegroom adorned with a diadem, like a bride bedecked with her jewels. As the earth brings forth its plants, and a garden makes its growth spring up, so will the Lord GOD make justice and praise spring up before all the nations. The Word of the Lord. **ALL**: Thanks be to God

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why are these important?
2. Recall times when you have brought “good news” to people. What good news have you heard lately?
3. What aspects of the planning process will be good news to your parishioners?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response:** We rejoice in our loving God

* For all the blessings of good news that we have received, we pray to the Lord...
* For all the times we have been able to serve marginalized people, we pray to the Lord...
* For the times we have been released from the many oppressions we have experienced, let us pray to the Lord...
* For the generosity of being empowered to care for others and to heal them when they are brokenhearted, we pray to the Lord
* Please add your own intentions

Gracious God, grant us a sense of awe and gratitude that you have revealed yourself to us. We ask this in Jesus’ name by the grace of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS

## January 4, 2015 - Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

**OPENING PRAYER**

Heavenly God, you are the God of surprises. You chose us to do your work, to bring light to the darkness of our world. We praise you and bless you for giving us the courage to work with you in Connected in the Spirit. We can do this work and offer this prayer only through our Lord, Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

Reading: 1 [Isaiah 60:1-](http://www.usccb.org/bible/isaiah/60:1)6

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you; your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the Lord.

The Word of the Lord. ALL: Thanks be to God.

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. In what ways has the planning process excited you and made your heart overflow with gratitude?
3. What new light have you experienced in the planning process?

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Response: God, help us to bring light to the weary world

* That we more readily work with God to bring hope to our community, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may gratefully recognize the wealth given us and willingly share it, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may remember the hungriest and loneliest among us, let us pray to the Lord...
* That the peoples of the world suffering the ravishes of war and natural disasters, know the love of God through us, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions.

Loving God, we are confident that you hear our spoken and unspoken prayers, and so we ask them in Jesus’ name by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS

## January 11, 2015 - Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

OPENING PRAYER

Blessed and gracious God, your Son through words and actions showed us the creative power of great humility. Help us to follow him and seek your will not our own as we continue **Connected in the Spirit**. We ask this in Jesus’ name by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

Gospel: Mark 1: 7-11

Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?”

Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him. After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened for him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” The Gospel of the Lord. ALL: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. When during the process of Connected in the Spirit have you in all humility had the conviction that God is pleased with our work?
3. What other areas of your life have been enriched by your work in Connected in the Spirit?

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Response: God, we thank you for calling us your daughters and sons.

* That we may deepen our understanding that we are sisters and brothers to all the peoples of the world, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may work tirelessly for justice and peace, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we learn to use the waters of the earth as the sacramental signs God created them to be, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we help each other live our baptismal promises, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Lord, hear our confident prayers spoken and held in silence. We ask this through Jesus, our brother, by the power of his Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

#### PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS

## January 18, 2015 - Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, we hear you calling us through ***Connected in the Spirit***. Help us to heed that call in our daily lives as we strive to be faithful disciples of Christ. We ask this through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

**Gospel: John 1:35-42**

John was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God.” The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, Rabbi” — which translated means Teacher —, “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come, and you will see.”

So they went and saw where Jesus was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. The Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord, Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. Where have you heard God’s call in ***Connected in the Spirit***?
3. How can Connected in the Spirit foster evangelization in the parish and community?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: Holy God, send your Spirit upon us.

* That we open our ears to hear the call of the Lord, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we have the courage to live every day as a disciple of Jesus Christ, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we learn to preach more effectively good news to the poor, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Loving God, hear the prayers we have shared and those still held in silence. We ask this in Jesus’ name by the power of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## January 25, 2015 - Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving and gracious God, may we find new ways through ***Connected in the Spirit*** to proclaim the gospel to all the world. We ask this through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**Gospel: Mark 1:14-18**

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”  
  
As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. The Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. What signs of the kingdom of God do you see in ***Connected in the Spirit***?
3. How has this planning process deepened your connection to your parish and the Archdiocese?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

* That our work in ***Connected in the Spirit*** will strengthen our proclamation of the gospel, let us pray to the Lord...
* That our country be healed of divisions and injustice so that we catch a glimpse of the kingdom of God, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we will deepen our commitment to outreach and evangelization, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions.

Loving God, grant all our prayers, those shared and those hidden in our hearts. We ask this through our Brother and Savior by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## February 1, 2015 Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, free us from anxieties. Strengthen us as we continue to know that you call us to holiness and mission. Diminish our fears as we strive to implement the plans for the future which we believe will have a positive long term effect on the Church in our region. Support us when we are discouraged. Grant this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever..

**ALL:** Amen

**READING: I Corinthians 7:32-35 (Second Reading for the 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time)**

I should like you to be free of anxieties. An unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But a married man is anxious about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. An unmarried woman or a virgin is anxious about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy in both body and spirit. A married woman, on the other hand, is anxious about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. I am telling you this for your own benefit, not to impose a restraint upon you, but for the sake of propriety and adherence to the Lord without distraction.

The Word of the Lord **ALL:** Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly struck you in this reading? Why?
2. What anxieties are connected with the ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?
3. How are distractions and family life part of our call to be “Connected in the Spirit?”

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Loving God, hear our prayer**

* That we may take St. Paul’s advice and trust in God’s care for us to diminish our anxieties, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may be strengthened to give focused energy to the planning process, *Connected in the Spirit*,let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may look beyond our parishes, to help enrich and support the broader Archdiocesan Church, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may strengthen our outreach to the poor, the lonely, the hungry and homeless, let us pray to the Lord…
* Please add your own intentions

Lord, hear our prayers, those spoken and those embedded in our hearts. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL: Amen**

**CLOSING PRAYER:** - ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## February 8, 2015 - Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**OPENING PRAYER**

We give you thanks, gracious God, for your love that sustains us in difficult times. Strengthen us so that we may show your love and care to others. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

**Gospel: Mark 1:32-39**

When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons.  
The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases,  
and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him.

Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, “Everyone is looking for you.” He told them, “Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come.” So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee. The Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord, Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. What are some of the times in your life that you have felt the healing power of Jesus?
3. How will the parish become a healing force in the community through ***Connected in the Spirit***?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: God, let your love shine through us

* That we may be empowered to shine God’s love into the darkest corners of our community, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may be signs of God’s love to the forgotten of our society, let us pray to the Lord...
* That those struggling for peace and justice may see glimmers of God’s light, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Generous Lord, hear our prayers and answer our longings. We ask this through our Brother and through the power of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

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## February 15, 2015 - Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**OPENING PRAYER**

Source of all life, each day you bring us closer to yourself. With ***Connected in the Spirit***, help us to deepen our understanding of your deepest desire for us: Life in Jesus Christ united by the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

**Reading 2: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1**

Brothers and sisters, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Avoid giving offense, whether to the Jews or Greeks or the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in every way, not seeking my own benefit but that of the many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. The Word of the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. How is your work in ***Connected in the Spirit*** seeking the common good?
3. How does everything you do reflect the glory of God?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: God, write your commands on our hearts

* That our community may be a haven for those who feel the sting of discrimination in all its forms, let us pray to the Lord...
* That through ***Connected in the Spirit,*** we will seek the benefit of the many, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may live our lives as imitators of Christ, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Lord, hear our prayers shared and kept in silence. We ask this through Christ, our Lord by the power of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## February 22, 2015 - First Sunday of Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Loving God, you have given us your son, Jesus Christ as an example of one who was tempted to be unfaithful to you. Strengthen us to follow his example and to avoid the temptations to misuse power, to be greedy and to be focused on worldly things. Empower us to overcome temptation through the graces of Christ. Let us lead by the example of our lives to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever..

**ALL: Amen.**

**READING: Mark 1:12-15**

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. He was among wild beasts, and the angels ministered to him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God. “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **ALL: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ**

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. Where do you think the Holy Spirit is leading you in ***Connected in the Spirit*** planning process?
2. Jesus trusted the Spirit in the desert. In what ways are we being called to trust the Spirit and each other in this process? How is this manifested?
3. How do we proclaim the Gospel with our lives?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Lord, hear our prayer**

* That we may be strengthened to overcome the temptation to resist change that may be called for in the Archbishop’s directives which will follow Connected in the Spirit. let us pray to the Lord.
* That we may recognize as natural, that in any change process there is a wilderness— an in-between time, when we are not certain where we are or where we are going, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may rely on the Spirit’s presence as Jesus did, when confronted with evil and danger, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may show in our planning that we care for those in need, whether neighbors or strangers, let us pray to the Lord…

For all these petitions, those spoken and unspoken, we ask you loving God to be mindful of us and present to us. We ask this in the name of Christ the Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL: Amen**

**CLOSING PRAYER: - Connected in the Spirit prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section**

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## March 1, 2015 - Second Sunday of Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Most amazing God, when we sit quietly with you, you reveal your mystery to us. Help our resolve to use this Lenten season to deepen our prayer life and our gratitude for your magnificent gift of your only Son. We ask this in Jesus’ name.

ALL: Amen

**Reading: Romans 8:31b-34**

Brothers and sisters: If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son   
but handed him over for us all, how will he not also give us everything else along with him?  
  
Who will bring a charge against God’s chosen ones? It is God who acquits us, who will condemn? Christ Jesus it is who died—or, rather, was raised—who also is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. The Word of the Lord.

ALL: Thanks be to God

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. How do you experience Christ interceding for you?
3. How will Connected in the Spirit help us express our gratitude for the gift of Jesus?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: Mysterious God, help us to reveal your love for others

* That Church leaders strive to teach the mystery of God’s love in clear language of today, let us pray to the Lord...
* That all Catholics become so familiar with God’s Word that they evangelize through actions, let us pray to the Lord...
* That those longing for peace and justice experience God’s love through us, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Mysterious God, grant us a sense of awe and gratitude that you have revealed yourself to us in Christ. We ask this in his name by the grace of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## March 8, 2015 - Third Sunday of Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Holy God, we see how far we fall short in our own communities of reverence for and rejoicing in you. Increase in us the hope that ***Connected in the Spirit*** will deepen our sense of what is important for our parish and our community. We ask this in the name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**Gospel: John 2:13-21**

Since the Passover of the Jews was near, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. He found in the temple area those who sold oxen, sheep, and doves, as well as the money changers seated there. He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area, with the sheep and oxen,   
and spilled the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables, and to those who sold doves he said, “Take these out of here, and stop making my Father’s house a marketplace.” His disciples recalled the words of Scripture, Zeal for your house will consume me.

At this the Jews answered and said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.” The Jews said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it up in three days?” But he was speaking about the temple of his body. The Gospel of the Lord.

ALL: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. Jesus said that a place of worship is not a marketplace. What image would you use to describe our parish?
3. How will ***Connected in the Spirit*** unite our parish in deeper commitment to the work of the Church?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: God, fill us with hope for the future

* That all who struggle with conflict and division in the world will find the hope needed to keep on, let us pray to the Lord...
* That those striving for justice for the poor and working poor will feel the support of the Church, let us pray to the Lord...
* That ***Connected in the Spirit*** will make the parish a reflection of the promise of the Resurrection, let us pray to the Lord.
* Please add your own intentions.

Hear our cries and our whispered petitions, O gracious God. We ask this in confidence in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## March 15, 2015 - Fourth Sunday of Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

All-seeing God, help us to live the truth and so live in your light. Strengthen our resolve to rise up to join your work of Connected in the Spirit. Grant us this through Christ our Lord in the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**Gospel: John 3:16-21**

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the verdict, that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed. But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God. The Gospel of the Lord.

**ALL**: Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. Jesus is the light that came into the world. How have you “come toward the light” in your life?
3. What insights have you gained through ***Connected in the Spirit***?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: Lord, hear our prayer

* That we may turn away from darkness and toward the light, to live with renewed commitment to be followers of Jesus, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we bring the light of Jesus to the most vulnerable of our citizens, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may support and pray for all who struggle with faith, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Compassionate God, hear our prayers through the love of Jesus Christ and compassion of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## March 22, 2015 - Fifth Sunday of Lent

**OPENING PRAYER**

Caring God and creator, you have given us loving hearts to love you, our neighbors and ourselves. Strengthen us to have renewed hearts, as we continue to plan for the future of our Church in this region. Continue to inspire us as you did Jeremiah to be hopeful, forgiving and to be transformed by your love for us. We ask this through our Lord, Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever..

**ALL: Amen.**

**READING: Jeremiah 31:33-34** (**From the first reading for the 5th Sunday of Lent)**

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and kinsmen how to know the Lord. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more.

The Word of the Lord. **ALL: Thanks be to God.**

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. The law given to Moses was written on stone; the law that Jeremiah is speaking of is written in people’s hearts. What is the significance of that for you and your life?
2. St. Augustine said his heart was restless, until it rested in the Lord. He was referring to the “yearning for something more” in life—more than material things, more than influence, more than power. In what ways have you experienced the “yearning for more” that can only be satisfied by the Spirit of God?
3. God not only “forgives” but God “forgets our sins.” Why is it so challenging for us to “forget” our own sins and the offenses which have been committed against us?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Loving God, hear our prayer**

* That we may grow in appreciation for the love that God has for us, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may be more conscious of the law that God has written in our hearts, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may be strengthened to be more forgiving, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may ask for forgiveness when we have offended someone else, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may not forget the hungry, lonely and homeless who often see God’s presence through us as we meet their needs, let us pray to the Lord.

For these and all the prayers in our hearts, please hear us gracious God, in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** - ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## March 29, 2015 Palm Sunday

**OPENING PRAYER**

Creator of all, through Connected in the Spirit give us a spirit of welcome and celebration for the coming of your Son into our lives. And give us also a spirit of compassion so that true peace and justice may come in our time. We ask this in union with Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**Gospel: Mark 11:1-10**

When Jesus and his disciples drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately on entering it, you will find a colt tethered on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone should say to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ reply, ‘The Master has need of it and will send it back here at once.’” So they went off and found a colt tethered at a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. Some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” They answered them just as Jesus had told them to, and they permitted them to do it. So they brought the colt to Jesus and put their cloaks over it. And he sat on it.  
Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out: “Hosanna!  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come! Hosanna in the highest!” The Gospel of the Lord ALL: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. For what or for whom in your life would you shout, “Hosanna in the highest!”?
3. The exuberance of Palm Sunday is tempered by the knowledge of what is to come. How in your life do you combine a spirit of celebration with compassion for those who suffer injustice?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

Response: God, give us a share of your love and compassion for the world

1. That we welcome all in the same way we welcome Jesus, let us pray to the Lord…
2. That we may be a voice for the voiceless, let us pray to the Lord...
3. That we may have the courage to stand for justice no matter the cost, let us pray to the Lord...
4. That, enriched by ***Connected in the Spirit***, we are led to live lives of both celebration and compassion, let us pray to the Lord...
5. Please add your own intentions

Compassionate God, hear our prayers as we call to you in hope. We ask this as Christ’s body through the power of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## April 12, 2015 - Second Sunday of Easter Divine Mercy Sunday

OPENING PRAYER

God above and within us, bless us with the hope that Connected in the Spirit has enkindled in us. Motivate us to share our resources with all who need them. Help us stay the course so that our parish may celebrate the effects of the Resurrection. We ask this through the Risen Lord and the power of the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

Reading: Acts of the Apostles 4:32-35

The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common. With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all.  
There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale, and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need. The Word of the Lord ALL: Thanks be to God

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. Who makes Christ visible to you?
3. In your opinion who are the people or groups of people who most need to feel God’s mercy?

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Response: Merciful God, hear our prayer

* That we may be instruments of God’s mercy, let us pray to the Lord...
* That our personal resources and those of the earth be shared by all and used respectfully, let us pray to the Lord...
* That mercy be coupled with justice in our prison systems, let us pray to the Lord...
* That those languishing in refugee camps experience the mercy of God, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Merciful God, we cry out in hope knowing you hear our prayers. We call to you through Christ and his Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

**PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS**

## April 19, 2015 Third Sunday of Easter

**OPENING PRAYER**

Gracious God, you have given us the wonderful gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He has showed us how to live your commandments. Please continue to strengthen us as we strive to grow to be even more faithful followers of the way Jesus taught us to live. Empower us to live more consciously in union with your commandments so that the world will be more just and peaceful. We ask this through Jesus Christ, your son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

**ALL: Amen**

**READING: I John 2:1-5a**

My children, I am writing this to you so that you may not commit sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is expiation for our sins and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world. The way we may be sure that we know him is to keep his commandments. Whoever says, “I know him,” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps his word, the love of God is truly perfected in him.

The word of the Lord

**ALL: Thanks be to God**

**FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING**

1. What phrases struck you in this reading? Why?
2. What is the relationship between knowing God and following his commandments in the reading? How does this apply to your life?
3. How is the love of God being perfected in you?

**GENERAL INTERCESSIONS**

**Response: Gracious God, hear our prayer**

* That we may grow in the love of God by keeping God’s commandments, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may appreciate all that Christ has done for us, let us pray to the Lord…
* That our planning may reflect our faithfulness to the commandments, let us pray to the Lord…
* That we may faithfully follow the commandments of Christ to love God and neighbor, let us pray to the Lord.
* That we may make Christ’s presence known as we care for the poor, the underserved, the lonely and depressed, let us pray to the Lord…

For these and all the yearnings in our hearts we ask God to hear our petitions in the name of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**ALL: Amen**

**CLOSING PRAYER:** - ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS

## April 26, 2015 - Fourth Sunday of Easter

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, you filled the apostles and disciples with lively faith. You let them know of your great love for them. Empower us in our time to bring the love of the Gospel to our neighborhoods as we continue our planning--Connected in the Spirit. In Jesus’ name and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray.

ALL: Amen

Reading: I John 3:1-2

Beloved: See what love the Father has bestowed on us that we may be called the children of God. Yet, so we are.

The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

The Word of the Lord All: Thanks be to God

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. What support do you need to vigorously live your faith and touch the people around you?
3. What signs of hope do you see as we move forward in “***Connected in the Spirit***”?

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Response: Lord, teach us how to reveal your love

1. That we experience the joy of Easter throughout this holy season, let us pray to the Lord...
2. That our actions always preach the Good News, let us pray to the Lord...
3. That we face our need for God’s love, let us pray to the Lord...
4. That work for peace and justice continues unceasingly; let us pray to the Lord...
5. Please add your own intentions

Loving Shepherd, we know you hear our prayers whether we voice them or they remain hidden. We thank you in unity with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS

## May 3, 2015 - Fifth Sunday of Easter

OPENING PRAYER

Good and gracious God, as you called the apostles and disciples you call us. Enable us to be as courageous as Paul was and as understanding as the leaders in the early Church. Give us the grace to continue Connected in the Spirit. Strengthen us through our Lord, Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

**Reading: Acts of the Apostles 9:26-31**

When Saul arrived in Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. Then Barnabas took charge of him and brought him to the apostles, and he reported to them how he had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken to him,  
and how in Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus. He moved about freely with them in Jerusalem, and spoke out boldly in the name of the Lord. He also spoke and debated with the Hellenists, but they tried to kill him. And when the brothers learned of this, they took him down to Caesarea and sent him on his way to Tarsus.  
  
The church throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. How would you describe the courage you are exercising in ***Connected in the Spirit***?
3. How will Connected in the Spirit entice parishioners to serve within and outside the parish?

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Response: God, give us the grace to answer your call

* That we may be a people known for service, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may be open to continuously have a change of heart as Paul did--to be of service to the Gospel, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may have the courage and will to work for policies that support the poor and the working poor, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may have the spirit of evangelization as the early Church had, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Enlivening Spirit, hear the prayers we offer aloud and silently. We ask this through our Jesus, the Christ and by the Holy Spirit.

ALL: Amen

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

PRAYERS BASED ON LITURGICAL SCRIPTURAL READINGS

## May 10, 2015 - Sixth Sunday of Easter

OPENING PRAYER

Faithful God, empower us to love others as God has loved us. Strengthen us to reach out to understand and accept others, even when it is very difficult. Increase our understanding of and appreciation for all Jesus has done for us. We ask this in his name and through the power of the Holy Spirit. ALL: Amen

Reading: I John 4:7-10

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God;  
everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.  
Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.  
In this way the love of God was revealed to us:  
God sent his only Son into the world  
so that we might have life through him.  
In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us  
and sent his Son as expiation for our sins.

The Word of the Lord. All: Thanks be to God

FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

1. What words particularly spoke to you in this reading? Why?
2. How have you been able to be loving to others who have felt lonely or abandoned?
3. Share a time when you felt one with God or united with the Body of Christ?

GENERAL INTERCESSIONS

Response: Come, Holy Spirit, come

* That in Connected in the Spirit we seek ways to bring unity to our parish and neighborhood, let us pray to the Lord...
* That our nation may become a safe haven for those feeling abandoned by unjust economic systems and war, let us pray to the Lord...
* That our homes and neighborhoods may be violent-free zones, let us pray to the Lord...
* That we may open our hearts to the least welcomed members of society, let us pray to the Lord...
* Please add your own intentions

Loving God, because you sent us Jesus, we are confident that you hear our prayers and will empower us to act lovingly like he did. We implore you in Jesus’ name to give us power to be accepting and caring people.

**CLOSING PRAYER:** ***Connected in the Spirit*** prayer—see cover sheet of this Prayer Section

# ADDITIONAL PRAYER RESOURCES

If you need more prayer services than those provided and would like to create your own, consider using the following template.

1. PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT WITH A BIBLE, A CRUCIFIX, AND A LIGHTED CANDLE, IF POSSIBLE
2. HAVE COPIES OF MUSIC TO BE SUNG BY ALL
3. OPENING PRAYER
4. CHOOSE A READING FROM THE SUNDAY LECTIONARY
5. REFLECTION AND FAITH SHARING

Sample questions:

What words spoke to you especially today in these readings?

What actions flow from the readings for you?

How were you changed by the readings? New insights? Motivations to change something in your life?

1. GENERAL INTERCESSIONS
2. LORD’S PRAYER
3. SIGN OF PEACE