

# KNOWING AND LIVING OUR STRENGTHS



## Living Your Strengths Participant Guide

*I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.*

Philippians 4:13

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

	MY TOP 5 SIGNATURE THEMES
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

## ☞ Introduction

☞ **Each of us** is uniquely created in the image and likeness of God our Creator. We have been taught this and perhaps have even tried to believe it in the past. Most admit that has been pretty difficult to put into practice, however, until the Clifton StrengthsFinder©. StrengthsFinder, a research-based talent identification tool developed over the course of thirty-plus years and administered to over five million people to date, gives us the ability to discover our God-given talents, to explore and develop them, and to grow as good stewards of them. This discovery of talent touches us deeply as people, and when our parish is a place in which we are given the opportunity to experience this, we are changed, and so is our parish. That is why we offer this group process at our parish. As a parish, we recognize that forming a strong community in which every person is able to contribute with meaning will help each of us to grow as people, and as people of faith.

## ☞ Approach

This growth within individuals and the parish will be accomplished by getting to know and understand ourselves and others even better than we already do by using the Clifton StrengthsFinder© assessment and group discussions. This will allow us to take steps toward recognizing and fulfilling a calling by becoming increasingly aware of the talents God has given us – the ways in which we, as unique individuals, naturally think, feel, and behave.

## ☞ Overview

This Discussion Guide is designed to be utilized over five independent sessions, preferably weekly. These sessions are approximately 90 minutes in length.

## ☞ Course Outline

**SESSION ONE:** *Discovering and Accepting our Talents*

**SESSION TWO:** *Exploring and Expanding our Talents*

**SESSION THREE:** *Collaborating and Partnering Together*

**SESSION FOUR:** *Living Our Strengths as Disciples*

**SESSION FIVE:** *“With Glad and Generous Hearts”*

**PERSONAL COMMITMENT**

**Confidentiality** – *I agree what is shared within the group remains within the group.*

**Participation** – *I agree to actively join in group discussions and sharing.*

**Attendance** – *I agree to attend each session.*

**On Track** – *I agree to stay on topic while respecting session time constraints.*

**Develop** – *I agree to further enhance and utilize my God-given strengths.*

**Respect** – *I agree to honor and respect each member’s uniqueness.*

**Prayer** – *I agree to pray for group members that their strengths be fully utilized.*

**Listen** – *I agree to allow others to speak without interruption.*

**Enjoy** – *I agree to have some fun!*

*We trust you will enjoy this journey toward greater appreciation  
of your God-given talents and the talents of others!*

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## ☛ Strengths Development: A Four Step Process

Developing our talents into strengths is an ongoing process that is sometimes surprising, sometimes insightful, often filled with wonder and awe in God's presence, and can be filled with joy. The process includes four key steps. Throughout this group process, and hopefully throughout our lives, we will:

**Discover and Accept** our strengths and talents through the Clifton StrengthsFinder© and initial sharing with others;

**Explore and Expand** on our talents by consciously finding the ways we already use our talents and apply them in new situations;

**Relationship and Partnership** with others more effectively as we realize everyone has talents to contribute;

**Live in Mission**, as a good steward of our talents!

As we begin, let us offer our gratitude for the work of Dr. Donald Clifton and all those who have been involved in strengths research throughout the past fifty years. The group process in this guide provides material to foster discussion, reflection, and sharing with people who have done the Clifton StrengthsFinder© in one of the books available with this online questionnaire. We will be particularly referencing *Living Your Strengths*, by Albert L. Winseman, Donald O. Clifton and Curt Liesveld (New York, Gallup Press, 2003, 2006). Additional citations will appear as appropriate.

We are deeply indebted to Steve Engelman and the Inner Strengths Development team at Blessed Pope John Paul II Parish in Fort Myers, Florida. Much of the process in which you will participate was developed by them, and they have graciously offered this to others to help each of us benefit from strengths development.

# KNOWING AND LIVING OUR STRENGTHS



## Living Your Strengths Session One: Discovery and Acceptance

*“You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving these commands so that you may love one another.”  
(John 15: 16-17)*

## ☞ Session One: Discovery and Acceptance

### 1) OPENING PRAYER

*God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome.  
Thank you for giving each of us with unique talents.  
Help us to further develop them to become strengths.*

*Please guide us in using our strengths most effectively at home,  
with friends, within our parish, and throughout our community.  
Open our eyes to see and appreciate the unique strengths in others  
and provide the grace to partner with others  
so that each has the opportunity to contribute with meaning.*

*We are thankful that you have uniquely blessed each of us.  
Help us to serve you and to always know  
that we are part of your plan in building the kingdom of God. Amen.*

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To establish the foundation for successful group discussions.
- To meet and get better acquainted with other participants.
- To define and better understand the key elements of “Strengths” and how they apply to each of us.
- To initiate the process of understanding and further developing your God-given talents

### 2) OVERVIEW

We come together to begin something new and exciting. Each of us is likely to discover something about ourselves and others during the weeks ahead. We may deepen our relationship with God. Our relationships with family, friends, and co-workers will be influenced as well.

Some of us may discover new ways to apply ourselves in the activities that make up our lives at home, at work, in our parish, and throughout the community. We will also begin to accept the talents that God has given us, recognizing that each of us is uniquely created in God’s image. We will focus on the blessing of each of the themes of talent as we begin to explore these talents in our lives. We will share much together and through that sharing we will see God’s blessings in our midst.

We will also reflect on the ways our talents help us to recognize God’s presence in our lives and how He calls upon us to offer our talents in service to others.

**EPHESIANS 4:11-12** *“And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”*

### 3) INTRODUCTIONS:

Introduce yourself by responding to the following. Please note our Top 5 Signature Themes will be discussed later in this session.

- a. My name is \_\_\_\_\_
- b. I am originally from \_\_\_\_\_
- c. I am a (permanent/seasonal resident) and have been in this area \_\_\_\_years.
- d. I have been a member of this parish for \_\_\_\_\_years.
- e. I am participating in this discussion group because \_\_\_\_\_
- f. My expectations for these sessions are \_\_\_\_\_
- g. If involved in ministries, which ones?
- h. Something most people do not know about me is \_\_\_\_\_

4) "SIGNATURE" CHALLENGE

First Task	Second Task
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## 5) WHY FOCUS ON DEVELOPING STRENGTHS, NOT WEAKNESSES?

### Reading Comprehension Case Study

Years ago in Omaha, the Board of Education administered a reading comprehension test to their incoming freshmen. One group of freshmen showed they read at a rate of 90 words per minute with good comprehension. The other group had a reading comprehension rate of 350 words per minute. That is nearly 4 times better than the group who scored 90 words per minute.

The Board of Education did not know what to do with the information, so they brought it to the University of Nebraska, which unleashed a firestorm of opinions. After much debate, they decided to put some of the students who scored the 90 with some of the students who scored the 350 and provided them with additional reading skills using the Evelyn Wood Speed Reading course.

After 6 weeks, the students who scored 90 words per minute improved their score to 150 words per minute...a most respectable 67% improvement! What do you think happened to the students who originally scored 350? They increased their score to 2,900 words per minute! The only thing that slowed them down was turning the page! This clearly shows that those who scored 350 had a natural talent and with the additional knowledge and skills they were able to turn that talent into **Strength!**<sup>1</sup>

*Do you now see why we prefer to focus developing our strengths, not weaknesses!?*<sup>2</sup>

## 6) IDENTIFYING THE PIECES OF THE “STRENGTHS” PUZZLE

*Living Your Strengths* pages 7-9:

- “What is a Strength?”
- “Talents”
- “Skills”
- “Knowledge”

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<sup>1</sup> Liesveld, Rosanne and Jo Ann Miller, with Jennifer Robison, *Teach With Your Strengths*, New York, Gallup Press,

<sup>2</sup> Clifton, D.O, and Harter, J.K. (2003). *Investing in Strengths Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*

*“A theme is a category of talents, and your Signature Themes are the five categories in which your talents are greatest, as indicated by your responses to StrengthsFinder. A theme of talent is not a strength, in and of itself, even if it is one of your Signature Themes. Your Signature Themes are simply a starting point for discovering your greatest talents, and a strength – the ability to consistently deliver near-perfect performance in a specific task – is what you create when you add helpful knowledge and skills to your talents.”*

*[Living Your Strengths, pg. 64]*

## 7) STRENGTHS SUMMARY

**STRENGTH** – *The ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a given activity.*

**TALENT** – *A naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied.*

Talents exist naturally within you. They are spontaneous, top-of-mind, perhaps even subconscious, reactions to situations you encounter. Talents are what you do well “without even thinking about it.” Talent is your natural way of thinking, feeling, and behaving.

**SKILL** – *The capacity to perform the fundamental steps of an activity.*

Skill deals with aspects of an activity that are rational and predictable. It is the basic ability to progress through the fundamental steps of a task.

**KNOWLEDGE** – *What you know or are aware of.*

This may be purely factual knowledge or it may be how you make sense of what you know—your understanding.

**Building strengths is a process of pulling all this together:**

“While it may be possible, with a considerable amount of work, to add talent where little exists, our research suggests that this may not be the best use of your time. Instead, we’ve discovered that the most successful people start with dominant talent -- and then add skills, knowledge, and practice to the mix. When they do this, the raw talent actually serves as a *multiplier*.” Simply put:

**TALENT X INVESTMENT = STRENGTH<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> Rath, Tom, and Barry Conchie, StrengthsFinder 2.0, Gallup Press, 2007, 20

## 8) SIGNATURE THEMES

The Clifton StrengthsFinder© assessment is comprised of 34 themes, each of which contains several talents. Talents are natural, recurring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. The talents identified in your Signature Themes are things you do naturally, like breathing. It's practically impossible to stop doing them. You actually do them without even trying.

*Write your Top 5 Signature Themes here. Share with the group.*

- (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (2) \_\_\_\_\_  
(3) \_\_\_\_\_ (4) \_\_\_\_\_  
(5) \_\_\_\_\_

*As each group member shares their Top 5 Signature Themes refer to the following short descriptions to gain an initial understanding of their talents. Complete Table on page 15.*

**Achiever©** – People who are especially talented in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.

**Activator©** – People who are especially talented in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.

**Adaptability©** – People who are especially talented in the Adaptability theme prefer to “go with the flow.” They tend to be “now” people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.

**Analytical©** – People who are especially talented in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.

**Arranger©** – People who are especially talented in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to figure out how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.

**Belief©** – People who are especially talented in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life.

**Command©** – People who are especially talented in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.

**Communication©** – People who are especially talented in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.

**Competition**© – People who are especially talented in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.

**Connectedness**© – People who are especially talented in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links between all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has a reason.

**Consistency**© – People who are especially talented in the Consistency theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They try to treat everyone in the world with consistency by setting up clear rules and adhering to them.

**Context**© – People who are especially talented in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.

**Deliberative**© – People who are especially talented in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate the obstacles.

**Developer**© – People who are especially talented in the Developer theme recognize and cultivate the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from these improvements.

**Discipline**© – People who are especially talented in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.

**Empathy**© – People who are especially talented in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others' lives or others' situations.

**Focus**© – People who are especially talented in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, and then act.

**Futuristic**© – People who are especially talented in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.

**Harmony**© – People who are especially talented in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They don't enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.

**Ideation**© – People who are especially talented in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.

**Includer**© – People who are especially talented in the Includer theme are accepting of others. They show awareness of those who feel left out, and make an effort to include them.

**Individualization**© – People who are especially talented in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.

**Input**© – People who are especially talented in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

**Intellection**© – People who are especially talented in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

**Learner**© – People who are especially talented in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.

**Maximizer**© – People who are especially talented in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something strong into something superb.

**Positivity**© – People who are especially talented in the Positivity theme have an enthusiasm that is contagious. They are upbeat and can get others excited about what they are going to do.

**Relator**© – People who are especially talented in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.

**Responsibility**© – People who are especially talented in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

**Restorative**© – People who are especially talented in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.

**Self-Assurance**© – People who are especially talented in the Self-Assurance theme feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.

**Significance** © – People who are especially talented in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.

**Strategic**© – People who are especially talented in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.

**WOO**© – People who are especially talented in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection with another person. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Winseman, Albert L., Donald O. Clifton, and Curt Liesveld, *Living Your Strengths*, New York, Gallup Press, 2003, 2006

**TEAM SIGNATURE THEMES GRID**

NAMES												
	GROUP _____											TOTALS
Achiever												
Activator												
Adaptability												
Analytical												
Arranger												
Belief												
Command												
Communication												
Competition												
Connectedness												
Consistency												
Context												
Deliberative												
Developer												
Discipline												
Empathy												
Focus												
Futuristic												
Harmony												
Ideation												
Includer												
Individualization												
Input												
Intellection												
Learner												
Maximizer												
Positivity												
Relator												
Responsibility												
Restorative												
Self-Assurance												
Significance												
Strategic												
WOO												

## 9) REMINDERS & SUGGESTIONS

- a. Continue reading and referring to the *Living Your Strengths* book regularly.
- b. Commit to pray for each other that we may all maximize our God-given strengths.
- c. Reflect on your talents and observe how they affect your daily life. Think about the ways using your talents has given you joy, or in which you have experienced success as a result of applying one of your talent themes.
- d. Consider keeping a daily journal to capture the ways in which you apply your strengths.
- e. Be prepared to discuss “*Between Sessions*” tasks during next session.

## 10) INTENTIONS

## 11) CLOSING PRAYER

*Good and gracious God, we praise you and thank you!  
We know that your love knows no bounds, and for this we are grateful.  
We thank you in a special way for bringing us together,  
to explore the gifts you have given us in talents to be used for your glory.  
Help us to humbly embrace these gifts as signs of your mercy and  
care for us and for all in our world. We ask this as with all things,  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**“BETWEEN SESSIONS” - Please complete the following three pages and be prepared to share with the group at our next session.**

**PART 1 – PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF SIGNATURE THEMES**

Using the long descriptions for each of your Signature Themes, highlight...if you have not previously done so...the words and/or sentences that best describe you then answer the following questions.

a. What was your initial reaction to seeing your Top 5 Signature Themes?

b. Which of the Top 5 Signature Themes best describes you?

c. What in the report surprised you?

d. In a word or a phrase, summarize the real gift of each of your Top 5 themes of talent in your life. How is this talent a blessing?



**PART 2 – VERIFYING YOUR SIGNATURE THEMES**

*Share your Signature Themes Report with someone that knows you well. Ask them to read through the report and then ask the following questions. Record their answers.*

a. What in the report most accurately describes me?

b. What in the report surprised you about me?

c. Which of the Top 5 Signature Themes do you notice in me the most?

d. Provide examples of how and when you've seen these themes in me?

# KNOWING AND LIVING OUR STRENGTHS



## Living Your Strengths Session Two: Exploration and Expansion

*“Now as you excel in every respect, in faith, discourse, knowledge, all earnestness, and in the love we have for you, may you excel in this gracious act also.” (2 Corinthians 8:7)*

## ☛ Session Two: Exploration and Expansion

### 1) OPENING PRAYER

*God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome.  
Thank you for giving each of us with unique talents.  
Help us to further develop them to become strengths.*

*Please guide us in using our strengths most effectively at home,  
with friends, within our parish, and throughout our community.  
Open our eyes to see and appreciate the unique strengths in others  
and provide the grace to partner with others  
so that each has the opportunity to contribute with meaning.*

*We are thankful that you have uniquely blessed each of us.  
Help us to serve you and to always know  
that we are part of your plan in building the kingdom of God. Amen.*

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- Review Session One assignments to continue learning about the application of Strengths in our daily lives
- Further develop understanding of one's own Strengths through exploration of prior experience of talents
- Consider opportunities to build on past experience toward expanding the use of our talents in the future

### 2) OPEN DISCUSSION

Please share any strengths-related experiences you encountered since we last met. Have you found yourself using your natural talents differently? What have you observed about other's talents?

### 3) ASSIGNMENT REVIEW & DISCUSSION

- a. Personal assessment of Signature Themes
- b. Verifying your Signature Themes



### 5) GROUP EXERCISE -- TALENT IN A NUTSHELL

Using the grid you completed last week with the talent themes of the group and the words or phrases you used to capture the essence of each of your themes, create a brief word or phrase summary of the themes represented in the group. If a theme is represented more than once, allow the members of the group with that theme to discuss among themselves to capture their experience of the theme of talent in their lives. Remember “the person with the theme is the expert in the theme.” Also remember that each of us will have slightly different experiences of our talents, based on the other talents we have been given, our life experiences and circumstances, our interests, knowledge and skills.

For any themes that remain (themes that your group does not have in your Top 5), find other people who have these themes and invite them to give you a word or phrase that captures their experience of the theme in the week that follows this meeting. Bring your additions to the chart below at your next meeting for the growing understanding of all in your group.

Achiever	
Activator	
Adaptability	
Analytical	
Arranger	
Belief	
Command	
Communication	
Competition	
Connectedness	
Consistency	
Context	
Deliberative	
Developer	

Discipline	
Empathy	
Focus	
Futuristic	
Harmony	
Ideation	
Includer	
Individualization	
Input	
Intellection	
Learner	
Maximizer	
Positivity	
Relator	
Responsibility	
Restorative	
Self-Assurance	
Significance	
Strategic	
WOO	

## 6) EXPANDING OUR USE OF TALENTS AND BUILDING STRENGTHS

As we explore our prior experience of our talents, we also become aware of ways we can expand our use of our talents in the present and future. Now that we have summarized the essence of our experience of our Top 5, we can consider the ways in which we might effectively apply those talents in current or new situations. Help each other think of new ways to use the talents God has given each of you!

T A L E N T   T H E M E	Present or future new use of this talent
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

## 7) REMINDERS & SUGGESTIONS

- g. Continue reading and referring to the *Living Your Strengths* book regularly to learn more about yourself and others.
- h. Continue to pray for each other that we may all maximize our God-given strengths.
- i. Reflect on your talents and observe how they affect your daily life.
- j. Consider keeping a daily journal to capture the ways in which you apply your strengths.
- k. Be prepared to discuss “*Between Sessions*” tasks during next session.

## 8) INTENTIONS

*“From this point of view, to avoid your strengths and to focus on your weaknesses isn't a sign of diligent humility. It is almost irresponsible.*

*By contrast the most responsible, the most challenging, and, in the sense of being true to yourself, the most honorable thing to do is face up to the strength potential inherent in your talents and then find ways to realize it.”*

*Donald O. Clifton  
StrengthsFinder Developer*

## 9) CLOSING PRAYER

*God who fashions us and who transforms us each day,  
we give you thanks for the blessings of talent.*

*May we give you praise as we live each day in your image,  
created uniquely as your own. We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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<sup>6</sup> Clifton, Donald O., *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, The Free Press, 2001, 126-127



**“BETWEEN SESSIONS” – Strengths in Action Review** Make notes as you observe friends and colleagues in the next few days. Remain aware of individual strengths exhibited at home, work, or at stores, restaurants, community functions, etc. Which strengths affected you positively? How were the person’s talents a multiplier with the investment of time, attention, knowledge, or skill? If necessary, refer back to the individual descriptions in the *Living Your Strengths* book or Session One.

THEME	WITH INVESTMENT OF:	POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION
Achiever		
Activator		
Adaptability		
Analytical		
Arranger		
Belief		
Command		
Communication		
Competition		
Connectedness		
Consistency		
Context		
Deliberative		
Developer		
Discipline		
Empathy		

(Cont.)

THEME	WITH INVESTMENT OF:	POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION
Focus		
Futuristic		
Harmony		
Ideation		
Includer		
Individualization		
Input		
Intellection		
Learner		
Maximizer		
Positivity		
Relator		
Responsibility		
Restorative		
Self-Assurance		
Significance		
Strategic		
WOO		

# KNOWING AND LIVING OUR STRENGTHS



## Living Your Strengths Session Three: Collaboration and Partnership

*"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8: 28)*

## ☛ Session Three: Relationship and Partnership

### 1) OPENING PRAYER

*God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome.  
Thank you for giving each of us with unique talents.  
Help us to further develop them to become strengths.*

*Please guide us in using our strengths most effectively at home,  
with friends, within our parish, and throughout our community.  
Open our eyes to see and appreciate the unique strengths in others  
and provide the grace to partner with others  
so that each has the opportunity to contribute with meaning.*

*We are thankful that you have uniquely blessed each of us.  
Help us to serve you and to always know  
that we are part of your plan in building the kingdom of God. Amen.*

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To continue learning about the effect of strengths in our daily lives.
- To further explore our signature themes and how we can contribute to any activity.
- To discuss how our strengths interact with others and the importance of collaboration.

### 2) OPEN DISCUSSION

Please share any strengths-related experiences you encountered since we last met. Have you found yourself using your natural talents differently? What have you observed about other's strengths?

### 3) ASSIGNMENT REVIEW & DISCUSSION

- a. Strengths in Action review
- b. Additions to Talent in a Nutshell chart from last week

#### 4) COMING TOGETHER (1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-27)

*As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. Now the body is not a single part, but many. If a foot should say, "Because I am not a hand I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. Or if an ear should say, "Because I am not an eye I do not belong to the body," it does not for this reason belong any less to the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended. If they were all one part, where would the body be?*

*But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I do not need you," nor again the head to the feet, "I do not need you." Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy. Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it.*

#### DISCUSSION TOPICS

- a. How do you see this scripture relating to your strengths?
- b. Discuss the effects of working together.
- c. "If one part suffers..." How does this affect others?
- d. In what ways are we Christ's body?

## 5) TALENT THEME DOMAINS<sup>7</sup>

More recent research by Gallup demonstrates the benefit of building strengths based teams. The 34 themes identified by Gallup naturally align into four distinct categories, or *domains*, that can be used to better understand the interaction between members of groups or teams.

Through this categorization we can better assess and predict how people collaborating with each other will perform and the likelihood of successful accomplishments. The four Domains and their associated talent themes are:

*[1 OF 4] EXECUTING: “Leaders with dominant strength in the Executing domain know how to make things happen. When you need someone to implement a solution, these are the people who will work tirelessly to get it done. Leaders with a strength to execute have the ability to “catch” an idea and make it a reality.”<sup>8</sup>*

Achiever	Discipline
Arranger	Focus
Belief	Responsibility
Consistency	Restorative
Deliberative	

*What is your experience? Considering themes representing the Executing domain; discuss how each might contribute to “getting things done.”*

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<sup>7</sup> Rath, Tom, and Barry Conchie, *Strengths Based Leadership*, Gallup Press, 2008, 22-27

<sup>8</sup> *Strengths Based Leadership*, 24

[2 OF 4] INFLUENCING: “Those who lead by Influencing help their team reach a much broader audience. People with strength in this domain are always selling the team’s ideas inside and outside the organization. When you need someone to take charge, speak up, and make sure your group is heard, look to someone with the strength to influence.”<sup>9</sup>

Activator	Maximizer
Command	Self-Assurance
Communication	Significance
Competition	WOO

*What is your experience? Considering themes representing the Influencing domain; discuss how each might contribute to “reaching a broader audience.”*

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<sup>9</sup> Strengths Based Leadership, 25

**[3 OF 4] RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:** “Those who lead through Relationship Building are the essential glue that holds a team together. Without these strengths on a team, in many cases, the group is simply a composite of individuals. In contrast, leaders with exceptional Relationship Building strength have the unique ability to create groups and organizations that are much greater than the sum of their parts.”<sup>10</sup>

Adaptability	Includer
Connectedness	Individualization
Developer	Positivity
Empathy	Relator
Harmony	

*What is your experience? Considering themes representing the Relationship Building domain; discuss how each might contribute to “being the glue that holds a team together.”*

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<sup>10</sup> Strengths Based Leadership, 25



**[4 OF 4] STRATEGIC THINKING:** “Leaders with great Strategic Thinking strengths are the ones who keep us all focused on what could be. They are constantly absorbing and analyzing information and helping the team make better decisions. People with strength in this domain continually stretch our thinking for the future.”<sup>11</sup>

Analytical	Input
Context	Intellection
Futuristic	Learner
Ideation	Strategic

*What is your experience? Considering themes representing the Strategic Thinking domain; discuss how each might contribute to “enhancing decision making.”<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>11</sup> Strengths Based Leadership, 26

<sup>12</sup> Now, Discover Your Strengths, 80

## **BENEFITS**

The benefit of this analysis is identifying where specific strengths and talents assist and how they contribute to the accomplishment of tasks and the achievement of goals. Just as importantly, it also highlights what the group is missing where specific domains may not be sufficiently represented. By identifying the less represented domains, conscious decisions and specific actions can be taken by groups to overcome potentially ineffective outcomes.

For instance, if a group has significant representation within all Domains except "Executing" there may be a tendency to continually improve plans – in pursuit of perfection – without taking action. Strategy, relationship building, and influencing others matter little if the group is less effective in taking action through execution of their ideas, concepts, and plans. This scenario may be viewed as “ready... aim... aim... aim...” without getting to “fire.”


Conversely, if significant execution themes exist within a group there may be a greater tendency towards “ready, fire, aim” resulting from inadequate preparation and planning.

While individuals are not expected to be well-rounded, teams or groups working toward a shared common goal must be; or the members of the team should learn to leverage the strengths and talents they do have in order to accomplish what needs to be done.

By creating this awareness, group activities will become more efficient and greater successes achieved.

## **DISCUSSION**

- a. Refer to the *Team Domain Table* representing this discussion group.  
(Moderator may have prepared or group can create using the chart on this page)
- b. If this group assumed responsibility for accomplishing a specific task where would we excel?
- c. Are some domains sparsely represented? Who might have talents to leverage in other domains to fill the less-represented domains? Who might this group need to include in order to accomplish a task (think about a ‘composite’ individual who has themes in a less-represented domain)?

	<b>ACHIEVER</b>	<b>ACTIVATOR</b>	<b>ADAPTABILITY</b>	<b>ANALYTICAL</b>
	<b>ARRANGER</b>	<b>COMMAND</b>	<b>CONNECTEDNESS</b>	<b>CONTEXT</b>
	<b>BELIEF</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	<b>DEVELOPER</b>	<b>FUTURISTIC</b>
	<b>CONSISTENCY</b>	<b>COMPETITION</b>	<b>EMPATHY</b>	<b>IDEATION</b>
	<b>DELIBERATIVE</b>	<b>MAXIMIZER</b>	<b>HARMONY</b>	<b>INPUT</b>
	<b>DISCIPLINE</b>	<b>SELF-ASSURANCE</b>	<b>INCLUDER</b>	<b>INTELLECTION</b>
	<b>FOCUS</b>	<b>SIGNIFICANCE</b>	<b>INDIVIDUALIZATION</b>	<b>LEARNER</b>
	<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	<b>WOO</b>	<b>POSITIVITY</b>	<b>STRATEGIC</b>
	<b>RESTORATIVE</b>		<b>RELATOR</b>	
<b>TEAM MEMBER</b>	<b>EXECUTING</b>	<b>INFLUENCING</b>	<b>RELATIONSHIP BUILDING</b>	<b>STRATEGIC THINKING</b>

## 6) REMINDERS & SUGGESTIONS

- a. Consider any groups you are involved with. How well do they actually function.? Do you see the effects of individual talents in the group?
- b. Continue reading and referring to the *Living Your Strengths* book regularly to learn more about yourself and others.
- c. Continue to pray for each other that we may all maximize our God-given strengths.
- d. Reflect on your own strengths and observe how they affect your daily life.
- e. Be prepared to discuss “*Between Sessions*” tasks during next session.

## 7) INTENTIONS

## 8) CLOSING PRAYER

*Creator God, you have fashioned us as your own,  
giving us talents to be used for your glory.  
Open our hearts, you who are greater than our hearts.  
Reawaken in us a desire to serve you above all others.  
Transform us, so that we may more fully be a sign in  
our world of your love for all.  
This we ask, this we seek, through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## **BETWEEN SESSIONS - COMPLEMENTARY PARTNERS**

*Assume you are working with a partner to perform each of the following tasks. What strengths would you like the person to have for that particular task? Why? How do they complement your strengths?*

a) Planning and hosting a surprise birthday party with 100 people attending.

b) Increasing membership and participation in a ministry.

c) Comforting a friend who recently experienced loss.

d) Developing and teaching a course on the Gospels.

e) Conducting a fund-raising activity.

f) Preparing a five-year financial plan for the parish.

g) Buying a new car.

h) Changing the culture of an organization.

# KNOWING AND LIVING OUR STRENGTHS



## Living Your Strengths Session Four: Living Our Strengths as Disciples

*“Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.” (Romans 12: 2)*

## ☞ Session Four: Living Our Strengths as Disciples

### 1) OPENING PRAYER

*God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome.  
Thank you for giving each of us with unique talents.  
Help us to further develop them to become strengths.*

*Please guide us in using our strengths most effectively at home,  
with friends, within our parish, and throughout our community.  
Open our eyes to see and appreciate the unique strengths in others  
and provide the grace to partner with others  
so that each has the opportunity to contribute with meaning.*

*We are thankful that you have uniquely blessed each of us.  
Help us to serve you and to always know  
that we are part of your plan in building the kingdom of God. Amen.*

#### OBJECTIVES:

- To further develop and enrich your signature themes from a spiritual perspective
- To assess the effects of your signature themes on humility and discipleship
- To continue exploring your personal strengths and those of others.

### 2) OPEN DISCUSSION

Please share any strengths-related experiences you encountered since we last met. Have you found yourself using your natural talents differently? What have you observed about other's strengths?

### 3) ASSIGNMENT REVIEW & DISCUSSION

- Complementary Partners



#### 4) CHANGING CULTURE

Recall the final topic from last week's *Complementary Partners* assignment; "Changing the culture of an organization."

If changing a culture is indeed altering how people think, feel and act, isn't this precisely what Jesus was doing?

How do you believe Jesus did this in his life, ministry, passion, death and resurrection?

#### 5) GOSPEL READING (*John 13: 12-18, 20*)

*After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."*

##### COMMENTARY

What an image of the sort of love Christ calls us to, this washing of feet! Jesus knows that his self-giving way is difficult to put into words; every circumstance of life calls for a response that is Christ-directed, and that calls on the greatest of who we are and what we can do. So, in washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus provides a stark image of what this self-giving love and service "looks like."

Jesus has walked and talked and shared much life with this group of disciples at this point in his earthly ministry. He knows them. He knows their gifts and passions, and their human tendency to fail. Remember, on this same occasion, as he institutes the Eucharist, the ultimate gift of God for us in Christ, he tells the disciples that he knows they will not always be faithful to him – one will betray, one will deny, many will flee...

Christ knows us, too. Still, Jesus says, "Follow me." Christ calls us, knowing that it takes each of us offering ourselves to re-create the world in love. It will take each person offering our gifts generously, as our finest model and teacher, the Lord himself gives, to truly transform our homes, workplaces, parish, city, and world.

"Jesus not only calls people to him but also forms them and sends them out in his service. Being sent on a mission is a consequence of being a disciple. Whoever wants to follow Christ will have much work to do on his behalf – announcing the Good News and serving others as Jesus did. Je-

sus' call is urgent. He does not tell people to follow him at some time in the future but here and now – at this moment, in these circumstances. There can be no delay.”

### **THEMES & INSIGHTS**

The themes of this Gospel are *Humility and Discipleship*. Humility, being the opposite of pride; or dying to one's self; is necessary to give and receive unconditional, sacrificial love. Jesus even washed Judas' feet as an act of complete humility!

Giving and sharing of our talents and strengths transforms us interiorly and draws others to Christ. In so doing, our hearts and minds change from being self-seeking to self-giving.

Christ teaches us how to be a servant, steward, and shepherd for our neighbor.

Jesus calls all of the baptized to be his disciples.

A disciple is a learner, a student of Christ. One of the greatest gifts from God is his Word, which Christ is and reveals to us. Reflection is to listen, to read, and to study the Word of God. Then the Holy Spirit will form and guide us in sharing Christ's love with our family, friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ.

In our weakness we put things off and delay answering Jesus's call to discipleship. We do not feel a sense of urgency to follow him by serving others. How much time do we have in our lives to answer His call? What is holding us back?

***a. What are your thoughts regarding the washing of feet as described in the gospel reading? How do you view humility and discipleship?***

**GROUP ACTIVITY – RELATING STRENGTHS TO HUMILITY AND DISCIPLESHIP**

- Using the following form, enter your Top 5 Strengths in the center column.
- Reflect on the gospel readings and discussions regarding humility and discipleship.
- How do your particular strengths *support* being humble and living a life of discipleship. Write notes in the first column next to the corresponding strength.

HOW STRENGTH SUPPORTS HUMILITY & DISCIPLESHIP	TOP 5 THEMES AND YOUR STRENGTHS
	(1) _____
	(2) _____
	(3) _____
	(4) _____
	(5) _____

Considering your unique strengths and talents, what actions can be taken to grow as a disciple of our Lord?

## 6) REMINDERS & SUGGESTIONS

- f. Continue assessing how your strengths affect humility and discipleship.
- g. Continue to pray for each other that we may all maximize our God-given strengths.
- h. Reflect on your own strengths and observe how they affect your daily life.
- i. Be prepared to discuss “*Between Sessions*” tasks during next session.

## 7) INTENTIONS

## 8) CLOSING PRAYER

*Dear Heavenly Father, my parish is composed of people like me;*

*I help make it what it is.*

*It will be friendly, if I am.*

*Its pews will be filled, if I help fill them.*

*It will do great work, if I work.*

*It will make generous gifts to many causes, if I am a generous giver.*

*It will bring other people into its worship and fellowship, if I invite and bring them.*

*It will be a parish of loyalty and love, of fearlessness and faith, and a parish with a noble spirit, if I, who make it what it is, am filled with these same things.*

*Therefore, with your help, O God, I shall dedicate myself to the task of being all things that I want my parish to be. Amen.<sup>13</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Diocese of San Diego, adapted. Original: [www.diocese.sdiego.org/Stewardship/stewardshipprayer.htm](http://www.diocese.sdiego.org/Stewardship/stewardshipprayer.htm)

## **BETWEEN SESSIONS**

- 1) Read pages 149-154 in *Living Your Strengths*.
  
- 2) Refer to pages 155-222 in *Living Your Strengths*. Answer the following for each of your Top 5 Strengths:
  - a. From your own perspective, select/highlight 2 or 3 of the statements you believe best describe opportunities for the particular strength.
  
  - b. Suggest 1 or 2 new statements for each of your Top 5 Strengths that can be added to the lists in the book.
  
- 3) Read pages 227-230 in *Living Your Strengths*. Answer the following questions on page 228:
  - a. If time and money were no object, what would you do for God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Where is your passion? What do you love to do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - c. What are your greatest talents? How could you combine your talents and your passions to fulfill your calling?



# KNOWING AND LIVING OUR STRENGTHS



## Living Your Strengths

### Session Five: Living Our Strengths with “Glad and Generous Hearts”

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden.*

*Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house.*

*Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” (Matthew 5: 14-16)*

## ☞ Session Five: Living in Mission

### 1) OPENING PRAYER

*God of power and mercy, open our hearts in welcome.  
Thank you for giving each of us with unique talents.  
Help us to further develop them to become strengths.*

*Please guide us in using our strengths most effectively at home,  
with friends, within our parish, and throughout our community.  
Open our eyes to see and appreciate the unique strengths in others  
and provide the grace to partner with others  
so that each has the opportunity to contribute with meaning.*

*We are thankful that you have uniquely blessed each of us.  
Help us to serve you and to always know  
that we are part of your plan in building the kingdom of God. Amen.*

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- To align stewardship and unique talents to the ways in which God calls you now, and into the future
- To discuss select scripture and relationships to strengths.
- To reflect on your strengths and opportunities to further develop and apply them.
- To discuss “what’s next.”

### 2) OPEN DISCUSSION

Please share any strengths-related experiences you encountered since we last met. Have you found yourself using your natural talents differently? What have you observed about other’s strengths?



### 3) ASSIGNMENT REVIEW & DISCUSSION

#2 from *LYS* pages 155-222

- a. From your perspective, select/highlight 2 or 3 of the statements...
- b. Suggest 1 or 2 new statements for each of your Top 5 Strengths...

#3 from *LYS* page 228:

- a. If time and money were no object, what would you do for God?
- b. Where is your passion? What do you love to do?
- c. What are your greatest talents?  
- How could you combine your talents and your passions to fulfill your calling?

#4 How does recognizing & accepting your talents help you see God's grace in your life?

#5 What difference would it make in your life to build on your talents rather than endlessly trying to fix your weaknesses?

### 4) WHAT IS STEWARDSHIP?

Derived from two ancient terms meaning "manage" and "house", the word steward (or stewardship) is defined as someone who manages someone else's house – or even more specifically, all the owner's possessions.

From a spiritual perspective, no one actually "owns" anything as God is ultimately the owner of all that exists. Therefore, the fundamental element of stewardship is that everything belongs to God and each of us is charged with managing His house.

### 5) WHAT IS A CALLING?

As stated by Frederick Buechner, American writer and theologian, a calling is "*the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep need meet.*"<sup>14</sup> With our unique God-given gifts, comprised of the natural talents, skills and knowledge we possess, we are called to serve where we are most effective and able to perform at our best. After all, isn't this when we truly experience a sense of joy and fulfillment?

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<sup>14</sup> Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973, 95

## 6) SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Reflecting on our individual talents leads us to think about the ways in which we are a community of people who are each given particular gifts to be used in service for others. Let us turn our thoughts to how we act in partnership with others.

### ***Ephesians 3:14-21 and 4:1-6***

*For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and the length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

*I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

### **COMMENTARY**

That we may be filled with all the fullness of God. Imagine! What is it to be filled with all the fullness of God? Could it be that when we allow ourselves to surrender to God's love and mercy, to accept the talents and blessings we have been given, and to allow the Spirit of the Lord to work through us as we offer those gifts and blessings in service, we will know the "breadth and the length and height and depth... the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge"?

The mission Jesus handed over to his disciples, the blessings he gave them, and the promises he made them are precisely the same blessings he offers to us and challenges he asks of us. Two thousand years have passed, but God has not changed, nor have his hopes or expectations for his followers. God called them and he calls us. God walked with them and he walks with us. God empowered them and he empowers us, no matter how unlikely that sounds. Incredible things are asked of us and incredible things are absolutely possible, whenever we act in God's name (in other words, in a faithful way) and tap into his power.

We are one in Christ's Spirit, empowered to live as God's love poured out, together in community. Being in communion, in community, with God and with each other strengthens us to use our talents in ways difficult for any of us as an individual person. We are strong when we are together. God's "power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine!"

**THEMES & INSIGHTS**

*Love and Unity* are the key themes of this reading. These two letters of St. Paul are prayers that Christ's love will dwell within our hearts and that this love has no bounds and surpasses all knowledge. The power of this love is able to accomplish more than we could ever imagine.

This is also a call to unity as Disciples of the Body of Christ. The seven unities that unite us as a community of believers in Christ are:

***One Church      One Spirit      One Hope      One Lord***  
***One Faith      One Baptism      One God***

Our inner strengths are God's gifts of love for us to use to further His Kingdom on earth. We can only fully experience this love by sharing these gifts. Love is indeed a mystery in that the only way we can keep it is by losing it again and again.

**GROUP DISCUSSION** – Considering the above scripture and commentary:

- a. With whom do you partner in service?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. How do you draw on each other's strengths to most effectively be a sign of Christ's presence in our world?

## 7) GOSPEL PASSAGE [Mark 8:5-8]

*Jesus asked them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven." Then he ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves, and after giving thanks he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute; and they distributed them to the crowd. They had also a few small fish; and after blessing them, he ordered that these too should be distributed. They ate and were filled; and they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.*

### COMMENTARY

Jesus uses what his disciples have to offer, and a feast is produced! The hungry are fed, and people see the glory of God in their midst. Disciples are asked to offer all they are and have and will be as faithful stewards.

Continue reflecting on the above gospel passage while reading the following extracts from the *U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Letter on Stewardship*. Consider your call as a disciple who is now even better prepared to live your strengths.

"Mature disciples make a conscious, firm decision, carried out in action, to be followers of Jesus Christ no matter the cost to themselves. Beginning in conversion, change of mind and heart, this commitment is expressed not in a single action, nor even in a number of actions over a period of time, but in an entire way of life. It means committing one's very self to the Lord. Stewardship is an expression of discipleship with the power to change how we understand and live out our lives.

"The Christian vocation is essentially a call to be a disciple of Jesus. Stewardship is part of that. Even more to the point, however, Christians are called to be good stewards of the personal vocations they receive. Each of us must discern, accept, and live out joyfully and generously the commitments, responsibilities, and roles to which God calls him or her."

"Every person should walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of a living faith which arouses hope and works through charity."

"The Christian vocation is essentially a call to be a disciple of Jesus ... Jesus' call is urgent. He does not tell people to follow him at some time in the future but here and now – at this moment, in these circumstances. There can be no delay."

"Becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ leads naturally to the practice of stewardship. These linked realities, discipleship and stewardship, then, make up the fabric of a Christian life in which each day is lived in an intimate, personal relationship with the Lord."

“Refracted through the prisms of countless individual vocations, this way of life embodies and expresses the one mission of Christ: to do God’s will, to proclaim the good news of salvation, to heal the afflicted, to care for one’s sisters and brothers, to give life – life to the full – as Jesus did.”

“Following Jesus is the work of a lifetime. At every step one is challenged to go further in accepting and loving God’s will.” Do you believe that you are called? What experiences in your life have reinforced or validated your faith in that call?

### **THEMES & INSIGHTS**

*Community and Stewardship* are the key themes of this gospel passage and commentary.

The multiplication of loaves and fishes is the only miracle included in all four gospels. Therefore, its message is very important.

When we are united and in communion with others, Christ will produce abundant fruit through us. He will magnify and multiply our offerings (prayers, service, time, stewardship) and efforts. A good example is Mother Teresa.

The community of the church is the place where we learn of the gifts and blessings bestowed upon us by God and how best to share them. This ministry is to help us discover our God-given strengths/talents and guide us in sharing and serving others with these gifts in our parish to make it more Christ-like and to further God’s Kingdom here on earth.

### **THE POWER OF BEING CALLED** *[PAGES 229-230 in the Living Your Strengths book]*

#### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

- a. Reflecting on your increased awareness and understanding of the unique gifts God blessed you with, what will you do differently when ministering to others in our parish or at home, work, or in the community?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Which ministries best align with the strengths you possess? Why?

## 8) WHAT'S NEXT?

- Continue to pray we all maximize our God-given strengths.
- Continue exploring and developing your unique gifts.
- Serve as strengths group Moderator
- Stewardship opportunities
- Watch for future events
- Complete survey

## 9) CLOSING PRAYER

*Lord, you have called us to be stewards  
and to form stewards.*

*Send your Spirit into our lives  
that we might better recognize  
and share the gifts  
you have lavished upon us  
and lead others to discover  
and share their gifts.*

*May we continue to look for ways  
to strengthen our ties with those  
who have already embraced stewardship  
and to discover ways to reach out to those  
for whom stewardship is not yet part of their lives.*

*And when, like the Apostles,  
we have labored through the night  
and caught nothing,  
help us to heed your call to set out into the deep  
and uncharted waters  
that our nets might be filled.*

*In all that we do,  
help us to remember that as your disciples  
we are called to do your will.  
Amen.*

**As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another  
as good stewards of God's varied grace.**

***1 Peter 4:10***

## **APPENDIX A: FINDING THE RIGHT FIT**

*Use the information below to help yourself or someone you know discern ways to more fully serve in Christ's name.*

### ***Recall Your Experiences and Observations***

If you have never participated in ministry before, or have only done so occasionally and are ready to deepen your involvement, it may be helpful to think about the ways you have experienced or have been inspired by the ministry of others. How can you learn to grow as a servant from others?

### ***Who Needs You?***

- The poor, sick, lonely, young and old.
- Those who need compassion, listening or attention
- The homebound, the disabled, those who need education or companionship.
- The grieving.
- Your parish.

### ***Where Do You Feel Called? What Talents or Strengths Can You Offer?***

- Talk to someone at the parish who knows current ministry needs.
- Think about the areas that call to your heart, or seem to need you.
- Reflect on your talents, skills and knowledge.

### ***Remember to Focus on your Talents and Strengths***

- Look to your strengths, what your passion is, and what you love to do.
- What kinds of activities are you naturally drawn to?
- What kinds of activities do you seem to pick up quickly?
- In what activities did the “steps” just come to you automatically?
- In what activities do you “lose track of time?”
- During what activities have you had moments when you asked yourself “how did I do that?”
- What activities provide joy and fulfillment and either while doing them, or immediately after finishing, you say “when can I do that again?”
- Dare to dream, if time and money were no object, what would you do?

### ***Continue Learning More about Your Strengths to Further Affirm Your Talents***

- Get a glimpse of how others see your talents & strengths in ways you may not.

### ***Understand the Value of Your Active Participation in Ministry***

- Each of us has gifts to offer; each has talents upon which to draw.

### ***How Might You Serve?***

- Refer to the ministry list on the following page.

## Ministry List Example

From Blessed Pope John XXIII Parish

### **FAITH FORMATION**

- BAPTISM PREPARATION TEAM
- CATECHIST (TEACHER) / ASSISTANT
- CHILDREN'S LITURGY – 9:15, 11:15 MASS
- EDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL (STUDENT)
- FAITH FORMATION K-5 (STUDENT)
- YOUTH PROGRAM (HIGH SCHOOL)
- YOUTH MINISTRY VOLUNTEER
- VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL VOLUNTEER

### **SACRAMENT PROGRAM**

- BAPTISM
- CONFIRMATION
- FIRST EUCHARIST & RECONCILIATION
- MARRIAGE
- HOW TO BECOME A CATHOLIC (RCIA)
- CATECHISTS & SPONSORS: RCIA/SACRAMENTS

### **ADULT EDUCATION**

- WEEKLY SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

### **WORSHIP**

- ALTAR SERVERS (ENGLISH, SPANISH, VIETNAMESE)
- GREETERS (ENGLISH, SPANISH, VIETNAMESE)
- LECTORS (ENGLISH, SPANISH, VIETNAMESE)
- USHERS (ENGLISH, SPANISH, VIETNAMESE)
- SACRISTANS (ENGLISH, SPANISH, VIETNAMESE)
- ART AND ENVIRONMENT

### **MINISTERS OF HOLY COMMUNION**

- CHURCH
- HEALTH CARE CENTERS
- HOMEBOUND
- HOSPITAL

### **MUSIC MINISTRY**

- CHOIR
- CANTORS
- INSTRUMENTALS

### **OUTREACH**

- BLESSED LITTLE ANGELS (PRESCHOOL)
- CARE GIVER SUPPORT GROUP
- CYBERPRAYER
- EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE
- HISPANIC MASS MINISTRY
- HOSPITALITY (WEEKEND)
- INNER STRENGTHS MINISTRY
- KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS
- LIBRARY MINISTRY
- MARRIAGE MINISTRY
- MEN'S GOSPEL FORUM
- MEN UNITE MINISTRY
- NEW PARISHIONER ORIENTATION & WELCOME
- RESPECT LIFE
- THRIFT STORE
- VIETNAMESE MASS MINISTRY
- WOMEN'S GUILD
- SOCIAL JUSTICE PROJECTS
- GARDENING MINISTRY
- COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY
- WOMEN'S FAITH SHARING

### **SOCIAL GROUPS**

- SINGLES CLUB (UNDER 50)
- SINGLES CLUB (50 +)

### **SPIRITUAL SERVICES**

- ARIMATHEAN  
(REPRESENT PARISH AT FUNERALS)
- GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP
- FUNERAL MINISTRY  
(HELP PLAN FUNERALS)
- PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY