

Template for a Listening Assembly on the *Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities* (CBRR)

If you plan to use this template in a group setting, please let us know of your plans by contacting ACC's National Coordinator, Sheila Peiffer at sheilapeiffer.acc@gmail.com.

RELATED ON-LINE DISCUSSION FORUM: We invite you to share your experience, feedback and questions on using this template. If not already a subscriber of the ACC Assemblies Community Network, you will be prompted to sign-up. Go to: <http://acn.americancatholiccouncil.org/forum/topics/cbrr-listening-sessions>.

INTRODUCTION: During the American Catholic Council held Pentecost Weekend (June 9-10), 2011 in Detroit, the gathered assembly unanimously adopted the document that had been worked on by many in the months leading up to the Council. The *Catholic Bill of Rights and Responsibilities* (CBRR) went through multiple revisions at the behest of input from Listening Assemblies that were held across the country. The final version met with universal acclaim. Now that the CBRR is promulgated we need you to put it into action!

We invite all Catholics, whether you held a session previously or not, to convene locally to discuss, digest and put into action the ramifications of the CBRR. The American Catholic Council (ACC) attempts to keep track of the results of these Listening Sessions/Assemblies. As you gather to reflect on the CBRR's meaning for you as local church, the ACC will not only provide you with the tools for the meetings, but we will also record your conclusions and help you network with hundreds of other groups like yours meeting throughout the country. Follow the steps outlined below to hold a Local Listening Assembly and promote change in our church!

OVERVIEW: Our current template is comprised of four 2-hour sessions on the CBRR.

Session 1: Relates to Self: #1 (Conscience), #4 (Expression) & #6 (Reputation);

Session 2: Relates to Community: #2 (Community) & #5 (Sacraments);

Session 3: Relates to Community: #7 (Governance), #8 (Participation) & #9 (Councils);

Session 4: Relates to Service: #3 (ministry) & #10 (social justice);

A forthcoming *Appendix* to this template will provide suggestions for longer or shorter frameworks, but four meetings seems to strike the right balance for full understanding and exploration without expecting undue time commitments from participants.

Meetings can be small enough to fit in a living room or large enough to warrant a hall. Generally, it will be best if there is provision for gathering in circles or at tables in groups no larger than eight, so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute. If your space is challenging, then improvise as you see fit! We have designed this for meetings with a minimum of two hours each. A full day session could cover the entire series at once, but this might prove to be a marathon. Be sure to get contact information, especially email addresses, of all the participants. You will want to be in touch with people to follow up on all the good ideas that you will be generating.

The leader/facilitator's feedback survey (not yet developed as of this writing) is an important part of the process. We very much want to know about your meeting, the ideas that surfaced, and possible forthcoming actions, so that we can share that experience with others across a wide spectrum. Hope and success thrive on hearing about the experiences of others!

Outline of the Meeting Format:

- A. Gathering Prayer (10 minutes)
- B. Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)
- C. Presentation on section of CBRR under discussion (concepts) (15 minutes)
- D. Small group discussion: Understanding the CBRR (30 minutes)
- E. Break (10 minutes)
- F. Presentation on section of CBRR under discussion (implications) (10 minutes)
- G. Small group discussion: Local action steps (30 minutes)
- H. Final wrap up and closing (10 minutes)

A. Gathering Prayer

Create any combination of scripture, song, reflection and prayer. Here are some suggestions to draw from:

Suggested Songs: *We are Called, All are Welcome, Gather Us I*

Suggested Scriptures: Ephesians 1: 15-23 (*Church as Christ's Body*);
John 14: 15-20 (*Abiding Presence of the Spirit*);
Romans 12: 3-8 (*Differing Gifts in One Body*);
Or, something seasonal

Suggested Prayers: The following are taken from the *Assemblies Communities Network* Prayer Blog. So see others, go to <http://acn.americancatholiccouncil.org/profiles/blog/list>

Litany for Gathering

O Gracious and Holy God, We join together in prayer for all who seek to reclaim the vision and spirit of Vatican II anywhere, and especially those here today. May we be anointed by your Spirit to share in divine creativity in solving the challenges of carrying out Vatican II's empowerment of the baptized; **Send forth your Spirit!**

May we benefit from the diversity of gifts you have bestowed on all your people and work toward recognizing and using those gifts fully and inclusively; **Send forth your Spirit!**

May we be open to Your grace and steadfast in the face of scorn, opposition and dismissal; **Send forth your Spirit!**

May we always remember all those who have gone before us, both blazing prophets and quiet souls, who have labored for freedom, truth and dignity for your people; **Send forth your Spirit!**

May we join our footsteps with those of your Risen Son, who lived among us, sharing in human trials; **Send forth your Spirit!**

May we always remember that in the grace and power of the God who binds us all together we can do more as one than any one of us dreams alone; **Send forth your Spirit!**

Prayer for a Meeting

O Holy and Hopeful Presence,
whose spirit moves quietly but surely in the fray of the world,

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we gather here in this moment linked by hope for change and the willingness to work for it.

Infuse your spirit into us so that we will be able to make hope visible. inspire us to stretch our hearts and minds in ways not yet attempted, so that we can discover *your* way for *your* church on earth as we strive to be one with you in our hope for change. Amen.

B. Welcome and Introduction

The main presenter should introduce him/herself and give an overview of the upcoming session (and whether or not there will be future meetings). It is not necessary to have each participant be introduced, unless the group is very small.

C. Presentation on the CBRR –*Concepts*

The leader will give a short presentation on the CBRR numbers under consideration in this session. The goal is to clarify what CBRR are under consideration and elucidate the main themes. The discussion questions in the small group will continue this process. The leader will draw on the background material provided at <http://americancatholiccouncil.org/bill-of-rights/>, the content that follows below under the “Leaders Guide” for each session, as well as one’s personal expertise.

D. Small Group Discussion on Concepts

Participants will divide into small groups and engage in discussion, using questions provided below for each of the main themes. Take care to respect group process guidelines (see last page), which can be reprinted and handed out or read aloud.

E. Break

F. Presentation on the CBRR –*Implications*

The leader will give a short presentation of the CBRR numbers under consideration in this session from the standpoint of their implications. The leader will draw on the background material provided on the website and the local situation.

G. Small Group Discussion on *Local Actions*

Participants will discuss the CBRR implications in terms of possible local applications. Care should be taken that the suggested local action steps are recorded and given to the Local Assembly leader, for submission to ACC and follow up.

H. Wrap-up and Closing

The leader will provide a suitable summary and closing, thanking people for participating and mentioning future meetings and/or follow up action steps. Be sure that contact information has been exchanged! The leadership team should submit their “Listening Assembly Report” within a week of the event. These results will be collected and action steps will be publicized on the Assemblies Community Network. The survey form and detailed directions will be posted to the Assemblies Community Network by late February, 2012.

Leader's Guide for Session 1: CBRR and Self

CBRR #1, 4 and 6 share a common theme relating to personal rights and responsibilities and therefore can fruitfully be considered together in a common session.

Presentation on Concepts: (Part "C" of Meeting)

1. **Primacy of Conscience.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to develop an informed conscience and to act in accord with it.

- ***Gaudium et Spes (Church in the Modern World) #16:*** "Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, tells him inwardly at the right moment: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. His dignity lies in observing this law, and by it he will be judged. (cf. Rom 2:15-16) His conscience is man's most secret core, and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths. By conscience, in a wonderful way, that law is made known which is fulfilled in the love of God and of one's neighbor. (cf. Mt 22:37-40; Gal 5:14) Through loyalty to conscience Christians are joined to other men in the search for truth and for the right solution to so many moral problems which arise both in the life of individuals and from social relationships. Hence, the more a correct conscience prevails, the more do persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and try to be guided by the objective standards of moral conduct."
- ***Dignitatis Humanae (Declaration on Religious Liberty) #2:*** "The Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and every human power so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions in religious matters in private or in public, alone or in associations with others. The Council further declares that the right to religious freedom is based on the very dignity of the human person as known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself."
- ***Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC):***
#1782: Man has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions. "He must not be forced to act contrary to his conscience. Nor must he be prevented from acting according to his conscience, especially in religious matters."

#1783 Conscience must be informed and moral judgment enlightened. A well-formed conscience is upright and truthful. It formulates its judgments according to reason, in conformity with the true good willed by the wisdom of the Creator. The education of conscience is indispensable for human beings who are subjected to negative influences and tempted by sin to prefer their own judgment and to reject authoritative teachings.

#1784 The education of the conscience is a lifelong task. From the earliest years, it awakens the child to the knowledge and practice of the interior law recognized by conscience. ...The education of the conscience guarantees freedom and engenders peace of heart.

#1790 A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself. Yet it can happen that moral conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed.

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4. **Freedom of Expression.** Every Catholic has the right to freedom of expression and the freedom to dissent.

- ***Canon law #212.2:*** The Christian faithful are free to make known to the pastors of the church their needs, especially spiritual ones, and their desires.
- ***Canon law #212.3:*** According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.
- ***CCC #907:*** (repeats Canon law 212.3)
- ***Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ:*** “Responsible dissent begins as an act of conscience and continues as part of a committed life in the church.” (*Commonweal*, vol...123, January 26 1996, pp. 8-10.)

6. **Reputation.** Every Catholic has the right to a good name and reputation.

- ***Code of Canon Law #220:*** No one is permitted to harm illegitimately the good reputation which a person possesses nor to injure the right of any person to protect his or her own privacy.
- ***Code of Canon Law #222.1:*** The Christian faithful can legitimately vindicate and defend the rights which they possess in the Church in the competent ecclesiastical forum according to the norm of law. ***#221.2:*** If they are summoned to a trial by a competent authority, the Christian faithful also have the right to be judged according to the prescripts of the law applied with equity.
- ***Code of Canon Law #212.2 and #212.3***
- ***NCCB 1972 resolution:*** “The promotion of adequate protection of human rights and freedoms within the Church is central to the bishops’ role of service to the people of God.” (“On Due Process”, Washington, D.C.: USCC, 1972)

Questions for Small Group Discussion: (Part “D” of Meeting)

- We hear much about the “right to act in conscience”, but that is always coupled with mention of a “well-formed” conscience. What do you think a person needs to do to provide the “education of conscience” referenced in the CCC #1783 and 1784?
- What do you think are the main barriers to the faithful making known their “needs and their desires” to their pastors?
- How much do you know about “due process” within the church? Do you feel that the bishops are providing “adequate protection of human rights and freedoms within the Church”?

Presentation on Implications of CBRR #1, 4 & 6: (Part “F” of Meeting)

To stimulate reflection and using the ideas below as a prompt, as well as others, the leader postures suggested implications and applications of these CBRR, setting the tone for the discussion that will follow.

1. Primacy of Conscience

- Church teaching would be grounded in the experience of all the baptized—regardless of gender or sexual orientation;
- Church pronouncements on Catholic life would be preceded by dialogue among all the faithful;
- Such pronouncements would take into account an analysis of the perceptions of Catholic people, in accord with sound scientific discipline and theological reflection;
- Catechetics, consistent with Catholic norms and practice, would focus on conscience formation and moral decision making;

4. Freedom of Expression

- Bishops would cease denying facilities to those who disagree with them on matters unrelated to the deposit of faith;
- Oaths of allegiance would be eliminated;
- Expression, discussion and open speech would be encouraged;
- Individuals would not be excluded from employment or ministry solely because of differing views on matters unrelated to the deposit of faith;
- All church employees have a right to due process in this regard;

6. Reputation

- Procedures to censure individuals (such as theologians and politicians) for specific acts or statements would be subjected to due process—particularly in that the accuser and the judge should not be the same person or panel;
- Bishops-would first seek to dialogue with those with whom they disagree before arbitrarily deciding that they are not “Catholic;”

Discussion on Action Steps: (Part “G” of Meeting)

The leader introduces this discussion by emphasizing that the purpose is for each group to come up with at least one some specific local application/action of the issues under discussion. The leader’s presentation in Section F (above) is more general and designed to stimulate the discussion in this part of the Listening Assembly, which should now try to be very focused on the local situation and the potential for some kind of action by the group or in the area.

- What would be different if we really educated people about the primacy of their consciences? Can you think of a local situation that would be affected?
- Is there a local situation where freedom of expression is being stifled? If so, what could be done about it?
- Can you name a situation where someone’s reputation has been unfairly affected by the Church’s authoritarian practice? How could faithful Catholics help those who suffer from such discrimination?
- Is there anything that comes to mind in relation to curtailment of personal freedom of expression or reputation in the local arena that should be considered by this group?
- List three action steps that your group has thought of;

Leader's Guide for Session 2: CBRR and Community

CBRR #2, #5, #7, #8, & #9 all relate to our rights and responsibilities within and through the community. We will break these communal CBRR into two sections, considering #2 and #5 together, and then #7, #8, & #9 in the next session. The focus of this session will be the sacramental community.

Presentation on Concepts: (Part "C" of Meeting)

2. **Community**. Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to participate in a Eucharistic community and the right to responsible pastoral care.

- ***Code of Canon Law #213:*** The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the sacred pastors out of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the word of God and the sacraments.
- ***Code of Canon Law #214:*** The Christian faithful have the right to worship God according to the prescripts of their own rite approved by the legitimate pastors of the Church and to follow their own form of spiritual life so long as it is consonant with the doctrine of the Church.

5. **Sacraments**. Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to participate in the fullness of the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church.

- ***Code of Canon Law #213:*** The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the sacred pastors out of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the word of God and the sacraments.
- ***CCC #1134:*** The fruit of sacramental life is both personal and ecclesial. For every one of the faithful on the one hand, this fruit is life for God in Christ Jesus; for the Church, on the other, it is an increase in charity and in her mission of witness.

Questions for Small Group Discussion: (Part "D" of Meeting)

- We tend to take the idea of a Christian community for granted (i.e. Everyone has a parish, right?!). What are ways in which this fundamental right to responsible pastoral care might be jeopardized?
- What kinds of things are included in the phrase "the fullness of the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church"?
- How do we balance respect for others' diverse personal needs in community with our own?

Presentation on Implications of CBRR #2 & #5: (Part "F" of Meeting)

To stimulate reflection and using the ideas below as a prompt, as well as others, the leader postures suggested implications and applications of these CBRR, setting the tone for the discussion that will follow.

2. **Community**

- Ministerial decisions would be based on the needs of communities for the "Word of God and the Sacraments" as a first priority;
- All the faithful would be involved in decisions relating to closing parishes;

5. Sacraments

- Sacraments would be viewed as grace-filled experiences, not “rewards” for certain conduct;
- Artificial barriers to sacraments would be abolished (e.g. divorced and remarried Catholics, LGBT Catholics etc);
- Sacraments would not be withheld from Catholics who intend to receive them in faith and good conscience;

Discussion on Action Steps: (Part “G” of Meeting)

The leader introduces this discussion by emphasizing that the purpose is for each group to come up with at least one some specific local application/action of the issues under discussion. The leader’s presentation in Section F (above) is more general and designed to stimulate the discussion in this part of the Listening Assembly, which should now try to be very focused on the local situation and the potential for some kind of action by the group or in the area.

- Do you know of examples of parish closings, dismissals of personnel or other actions affecting the liturgical community that have happened locally? If so, how was it handled? Is there something that could be done?
- Is Eucharist used as a weapon or punishment in your community? Are there any steps that could be taken about this?
- Does your church have a support group for people who tend to be discriminated against by the hierarchy? If so, how effective is it? If not, is there a need for one?
- List three action steps that your group suggests could help promulgate these communal rights;

Leader’s Guide for Session 3: CBRR and Community

This next session deals with CBRR #7, #8 & #9 which consider the Faithfull’s voice in the context of governance and participation in decision-making.

Presentation on Concepts: (Part “C” of Meeting)

7. **Governance.** Every Catholic and every Catholic community has the right to meaningful participation in decision making, including the selection of leaders.

- *Code of Canon Law #212.2 and #212.3*

8. **Participation.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to share in the interpretation of the Gospel and Church tradition.

- *Code of Canon Law #208: From their rebirth in Christ, there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality regarding dignity and action by which they all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ according to each one’s own condition and function.*
- *Code of Canon Law #214,216*

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- ***Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) #12:*** The whole body of the faithful who have an anointing that comes from the holy one (cf. 1Jn 2:20, 27) cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural appreciation of the faith (*sensus fidelium*) of the whole people, when, “From the bishops to the last of the faithful” they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals. By this appreciation of the faith, aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, guided by the sacred teaching authority (*magisterium*), and obeying it, receives not the mere word of men, but truly the word of God...The People unfailingly adheres to this faith, penetrates it more deeply with right judgment, and applies it more fully in daily life.

9. **Councils.** Every Catholic has the right to convene and speak in assemblies where diverse voices can be heard.

- ***Code of Canon Law #215:*** The Christian faithful are at liberty freely to found and direct associations for purposes of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world and to hold meetings for the common pursuit of these purposes.
- ***Code of Canon Law #216:*** Since they participate in the mission of the Church, all the Christian faithful have the right to promote or sustain apostolic action even by their own undertakings, according to their own state and condition...

Questions for Small Group Discussion: (Part “D” of Meeting)

- What is your understanding of the concept commonly referred to as “sensus fidelium”? Have you seen it in action?
- Are you aware of any undertakings of the faithful or “associations” that have been questioned or curtailed by church authorities?
- How do you think there could be greater participation in your local parish by the faithful?

Presentation on Implications of CBRR #7, #8 & #9 (Part “F” of Meeting)

To stimulate reflection and using the ideas below as a prompt, as well as others, the leader postures suggested implications and applications of these CBRR, setting the tone for the discussion that will follow.

7. **Governance**

- Parish councils and diocesan councils would be elected and would be deliberative and empowered, not advisory;
- The baptized faithful would be accorded realistic and meaningful input into the selection of pastors and bishops;
- The baptized faithful would have realistic and meaningful participation in rule making bodies (such as curial offices);
- Episcopal appointments to a diocese would normally be considered permanent (within the term limit) unless the people of the diocese elect otherwise—also suggesting that ladder climbing advancement within the hierarchy into different dioceses would be rare;
- Episcopal pronouncements must have at their heart a spirit of love and compassion, consistent with the Gospel;

8. Participation

- Assemblies and other forums to hear the voices of all the faithful, including those who are not ordained would occur regularly;
- Ecclesial pronouncements would take due regard of the life experience of all Catholics;

9. Councils

- Mechanisms will be developed for regularly gathering input and advice from theologians and all the baptized faithful;
- These assemblies of the faithful would be accorded the respect and influence their work deserves;

Discussion on Action Steps: (Part “G” of Meeting)

The leader introduces this discussion by emphasizing that the purpose is for each group to come up with at least one some specific local application/action of the issues under discussion. The leader’s presentation in Section F (above) is more general and designed to stimulate the discussion in this part of the Listening Assembly, which should now try to be very focused on the local situation and the potential for some kind of action by the group or in the area.

- Is there a meaningful parish council or other such body in your parish? If so, do you feel it is truly participative? If not, could one be established?
- Does your parish or diocese have any way of collecting information from the faithful? Is your opinion ever solicited in any meaningful way?
- Is there an area where you feel your expertise could especially benefit your church community? Have you tried to offer your service?
- List some action steps that your group suggests;

Leader’s Guide for Session 4: CBRR and Service

This final session considers CBRR #3 and #10, those that relate to service, both within the church and in outreach to the world.

Presentation on Concepts: (Part “C” of Meeting)

3. Universal Ministry. Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to proclaim the Gospel and to respond to the community’s call to ministerial leadership.

- **Code of Canon Law #211:** All the Christian faithful have the duty and right to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in every land.
- **Code of Canon Law #216:** Since they participate in the mission of the Church, all the Christian faithful have the right to promote or sustain apostolic action even by their own undertakings, according to their own state and condition. Nevertheless, no undertaking is to claim the name Catholic without the consent of competent ecclesiastical authority.

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- **CCC #3:** Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world. This treasure, received from the apostles, has been faithfully guarded by their successors. All Christ's faithful are called to hand it on from generation to generation, by professing the faith, by living it in fraternal sharing, and by celebrating it in liturgy and prayer.
- **CCC#900:** Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of the Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. ...Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it.

10. **Social Justice.** Every Catholic has the right and responsibility to promote social justice in the world at large as well as within the structures of the Church. and in the world at large.

- *The Beatitudes:* Matthew 5: 3-12
- *Gaudium et Spes (Church in the Modern World) #1:* The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well.
- *Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) #8:* Similarly, the Church encompasses with her love all those who are afflicted by human misery and she recognizes in those who are poor and who suffer the image of her poor and suffering founder. She does all in her power to relieve their need.....The Church, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal.
- **CCC #2423:** Any system in which social relationships are determined entirely by economic factors is contrary to the nature of the human person and his acts.
- *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis #40:* The "evil mechanisms" and "structures of sin" of which we have spoken can be overcome only through the exercise of the human and Christian solidarity to which the Church calls us and which she tirelessly promotes.
- *"Themes of Social Teaching",* United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Publication #5-315 and on the website, www.usccb.org.
- Documents too numerous to mention, including these encyclicals:
Rerum Novarum – 1891 (Leo XIII)
Quadragesimo Anno – 1931 (Pius XI)
Populorum Progressio – 1967 (Paul VI)
Sollicitudo Rei Socialis – 1987 (John Paul II)

Questions for Small Group Discussion: (Part “D” of Meeting)

- Think of examples of ways that ministry in your parish is not “universal”
- The Social Teaching of the Church has often been called its “best kept secret”. What do you feel deserves more publicity? How could social justice issues, both within and outside the church, be given more prominence?
- Do you know anyone who has been prevented from responding to a call to ministerial leadership? How does this affect the entire community?

Presentation on Implications of CBRR #3 & #10: (Part “F” of Meeting)

To stimulate reflection and using the ideas below as a prompt, as well as others, the leader postures suggested implications and applications of these CBRR, setting the tone for the discussion that will follow.

3. Universal Ministry

- **The Church will return to its earliest tradition of welcoming both married and celibate priests;**
- **Women would freely discern and test their calls and would be eligible for ordination alongside their brothers;**
- **Each community would have a meaningful voice in choosing married or celibate, women or men pastors;**

10. Social Justice.

- **The Gospel message of Jesus which focuses on the poor, the marginalized, and the sick would become the primary role of the Church;**
- **The “preferential option for the poor” would become the standard for judging decisions;**
- **The Church would refocus its attention on peace-making, equal justice for all, and real economic minimum standards for all;**
- **The Church would be a model of social justice within its own structures;**

Discussion on Action Steps: (Part “G” of Meeting)

The leader introduces this discussion by emphasizing that the purpose is for each group to come up with at least one some specific local application/action of the issues under discussion. The leader’s presentation in Section F (above) is more general and designed to stimulate the discussion in this part of the Listening Assembly, which should now try to be very focused on the local situation and the potential for some kind of action by the group or in the area.

- Where are some places where there could be an improvement in social justice standards within your parish operation?
- How can we promote awareness of women’s call to ministry within our local setting?
- Are there places where lay leadership would be more effective in your parish than the current arrangement of authority?
- List some action steps that could be taken;

Guidelines for Small Group Facilitators

Inspired by Sr. Sallie Latkovich

The role of the facilitator is literally to “make easy” the work of the small group. The facilitator creates an environment where open communication and faith-filled sharing can occur, and guides the work of the discussion.

Note that it is NOT the task of the facilitator to “preside” as teacher or answer-giver, but simply to evoke contributions from each member of the group.

Before meeting with your group:

Prepare your heart and soul to be the servant-leader of the group, and pray for guidance, wisdom, and grace.

During the small group discussion:

1. Be prepared! Know the focus questions and what is required for large group feedback and leave time for people to write in their answers to the focus questions.
2. Greet each individual in the group by name: be a welcoming, hospitable Christian presence.
3. Keep the discussion focused by encouraging each member of the group to participate: responding specifically to the topic “on the table.”
4. If one or the other person tends to dominate the discussion: thank them for their insights, but respond with something like “we want everyone to have a chance to speak.”
5. If one or the other person has not spoken at all, call them by name and simply ask if they’d like to say anything. A simple question like “what are you thinking about all of this” may be a good invitation.
6. Always, always, always honor the unique personalities, gifts, stories, and struggles of each individual.

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