

## LENTEN FAITH SHARING



### Week One

*"I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."*

#### Week One—Reading: John 15: 1-17

The Leader leads the participants through Centering and stillness before God and with one another.

#### 1. You may Begin with Centering Prayer or a prayer of choice.

##### CENTERING PRAYER

Sit comfortably and still with eyes closed.

You may want to choose a prayer word or short phrase such as Jesus, Savior, Holy Spirit Come!

To pray silently when distractions arise.

Breathe in and out with two or three deep breathes, inhaling and exhaling slowly and deliberately.

Breathe in through your nose and exhale through your mouth.

As you slowly inhale, image God breathing breath into your center.

As you exhale, let it be a moment of letting go of your anxieties, worries, anger, hatred, frustrations.

Repeat this practice several times.

As you inhale, pray 'create in me a clean heart.' as you exhale pray: 'renew a right spirit in me.' Or inhale: "abide in me, exhale: 'renew a right spirit in me.'

Let your intention be to simply remain open to the divine presence and content with a loving and peaceful attention to God for yourself and for the gathered Share Group

#### 2. Lectio Divina – Choose a Reader. The Leader leads the Lectio Divina

Read John 15: 1-17 slowly, while pausing between paragraphs for silence.

- Invite participants to rest in silence for a few moments.
- Invite participants to savor a word, a phrase or a feeling that rises in them while listening to the reading. Reflect on this quietly for a few moments.
- The Leader, after a time of silence can invite participants to share aloud the word or phrase that stirred in them as they listened to the proclamation of the word.
- The Reading is slowly read a **second time** by the Reader.
- Pause for silent reflection.
- The leader invites participants to share their experience using one or more of the Reflection questions below. Participants may want to respond only to one particular question. Allow the freedom to participants to do this.

#### 3. REFLECTION QUESTIONS

[Type here]

1. What in this reading stirred your heart?
2. What in your life appears to be barren and what in your life may need some fine pruning?
3. Did the message: *"You did not choose me, but I chose you,"* or *"As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love,"* speak to your life?
4. What message in this Scripture passage did you find to be most enlightening for you?

### **Commentary**

In John's Gospel we hear these words of Jesus spoken while celebrating the Last Supper with his Apostles. We hear Jesus declaring that he is the vine, and we are the branches. This Scripture passage parallels John's declaration in the previous discourse, *"I am the bread of life."* These two passages are used together to develop the eucharistic teaching of his gospel. Wine is the "fruit of the vine." Jesus is the power and energy source in which we live. Strongly emphasized is the point that **we live in him, and he lives in us**. Jesus is the source of supernatural, divine life in us. Without Jesus we would not have this life in him. In other words, if we become separated from him, the vine, we will die spiritually and cease to live a divine life. Through his words, Jesus is inviting us to a total immersion in the prayer of the Church, a steady communion with God. Jesus not only gives life to those who choose to follow him; he lives his life in them, so that they are fully united with him and live in him. Jesus compares himself to a wise vine-grower, who knows that a vine requires careful pruning to be fruitful. Vines that are not regularly pruned will produce smaller and smaller grapes as the vines gradually return to their wild state. The pruning which Jesus is speaking of represents the trials and suffering in the lives of those who unite their lives with the loving and total sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. The selfless love demonstrated by Jesus at the Last Supper and at his crucifixion calls us to offer our lives in union with his and to bear fruit of loving service as we attach ourselves to the vine and always cling to Jesus in our lives. This discourse on the Vine and Branches can also be calling us to participate in the sacraments – especially Confession and the Eucharist. Through the sacraments we stay close to the vine. We can also hear the message of Matthew Kelly in this discourse, for he says, those who believe don't leave. Believe what? Jesus is truly present in the Eucharist.

The Lord may be inviting us to take our barren and fruitful branches to prayer and allow the Lord to prune that which is barren to allow it to blossom again.

### **Action – Connect with the disconnected.**

How or what will you do to share your experience of Eucharist through the Scriptures and worship with someone who is not participating in the Eucharist?

Can you gently and lovingly, and without judgment, ask another what prevents them from coming to experience the Eucharist?

Listen! Listen! Listen! The Holy Spirit will provide the words you should speak.

## John 15: 1 - 17

1 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.

2 He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes\* so that it bears more fruit.

3 You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you.

4 Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me.

5 I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing.

6 Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned.

7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you.

8 By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

9 As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.

10 If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and remain in his love.

11 “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete.

12 This is my commandment: love one another as I love you.

13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

14 You are my friends if you do what I command you.

15 I no longer call you slaves, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I have called you friends,\* because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father.

16 It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give you.

17 This I command you: love one another.