

XI. PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL REFLECTION AT MEETINGS

Pastoral Council meetings differ from business or non-church committee meetings. Time set aside for prayer and faith sharing is **essential** to each meeting. This does not mean a simple opening prayer but a sustained time. Prayer time could be spent breaking open the readings for the coming Sunday or in some form requiring members to reflect and respond. It is a way of building the Council into a faith community. Ideally, the meetings of all parish groups would begin this way.

A PROCEDURE FOR BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

A different member should be designated to lead this reflection for each meeting. The leader should provide a copy of the Gospel for the coming Sunday for each person.

- Begin with the sign of the Cross;
- One person reads the gospel aloud;
- Invite members to share a word or phrase which spoke to them (*no comments from them or anyone else. It is fine if different people choose the same word or phrase*);
- A second person reads the gospel aloud; the group listens with this question in mind: ***What message does this reading have for me personally?***
- Share reflections among the group (*no comments on anyone else's sharing*);
- A third person reads the gospel aloud while the following question is pondered: ***What message does this have for us as a pastoral council? OR What message does this have for our parish in the circumstances***
All these reflections can be shared and discussed;
- Close with a spontaneous or formal (for example, Glory be...) prayer.

God's word is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.
Hebrews 4:12

In the sacred books the Father who is in heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them. ⁸

Ongoing formation and spiritual nourishment can be gained also by Breaking open the Word with a study resource for example, Caritas Lenten Reflection, papal document, or liturgy document before conducting the "business" of the meeting.

⁸ Paul VI (1965) *Dei Verbum Constitution on Divine Revelation* #21