INTENTIONAL SEEKERS
 Are Life-Giving

St. Dominic’s
 April 2015

The first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:45
Overview

What do you mean by Intentional Seeker?

Last year at St. Dominic's we focused on Intentional Discipleship. It was an opportunity to explore what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, and to become more intentional about discipleship. Let’s face it, before we can truly be disciples we must acknowledge and engage barriers that prevent us from starting the journey. We all have barriers! The question is not whether or not we have barriers, it is whether we are willing to seek ways to overcome those barriers. This series is a way we can all explore some of the most common barriers present in our own lives and in the lives of those around us.

What is asked of me?

First, pick up a booklet at St. Dominic's each month and follow along. If you can, attend one of the Explore sessions (everyone is welcome) offered each month. If you want to go deeper, sign up for a Small Christian Community. Small communities will meet twice a month to discuss. We hope to be able to offer committed small communities and drop-in small communities as we get a better understanding of people’s interested. Please see the back cover for specific dates.

When did the Intentional Seeker initiative start?

St. Dominic’s kicked off the Intentional Seeker initiative in September 2014. We are gradually rolling it out to the whole parish. We hope to be able to connect people whenever they learn about the initiative or are ready to get involved.

What if I’m not sure how much of this I’m ready to do?

Pick up a booklet, and try it out. Pray about it.

I’m interested, but I just don’t have the time.

We understand that this will not fit everyone’s interest or schedule. We would like to ask you to pray for this initiative in the parish.

Dear Jesus, grant your way to all who seek you,
your truth to all who want to know you,
and your life to all who share your love.
Format

Each month we’ll have a theme based around a common question or barrier. We’ll pick scripture passages and other writings that will help us explore this theme. We’ll spend the month going deeper and challenging ourselves. In September and October, we will roll this out to the parish. We will form several small communities. It is not too late to join one if you are interested (see the back cover). We plan to make this a yearlong initiative. Here’s the planned format for each month:

**Week 1 - Explore**
Break open the texts and explore the questions and barriers. Our goal here is to recognize that we not alone in our search. Many people today and many people throughout history have traveled this road. What are some of the answers that others have found? What insights speak to me? What difference would it mean in my life if I overcome this barrier? How can I help others who are struggling with this barrier?

You can explore the theme on your own through this book, or you can attend a presentation (see the upcoming schedule on the back cover).

**Week 2 - Share**
Consider joining a small community to discuss the themes and barriers in our lives. There is something powerful about gathering with others to explore our desires and our struggles.

If you can’t join a small community, you can take time each day to pray the texts and reflect on your own journey.

**Week 3 - Act**
This week we’ll challenged ourselves to take some practical step in our daily lives. We’ll do this on our own, so if you’re part of a small community, there will not be a meeting this week.

**Week 4 - Share**
Gather again in your small community or reflect on your own.
# Intentional Seekers Are Life-Giving

**Starter**

1. What is the value of life?

2. What things in this world are life-giving?

3. What things in this world are life-draining?

4. What does it mean to be a life-giving person?
We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

Declaration of Independence

Our Declaration of Independence enshrines three fundamental rights. As we look at these we recognize that they all hinge, in fact every right hinges, on the first one, life. Without life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness won’t get us anywhere. Life is the preeminent gift and our most foundational right.

Easter is a time to celebrate life. Jesus’ gift of his life for us is complete. The grasp of death broken. Our dignity exalted. Soon we will celebrate the outpouring of the Spirit, the moment when Jesus poured his own life into our lives. His grace building on our nature. We live in Easter time. Christ Is Risen! Truly, He Is Risen!

This Changes Everything! We cannot look at life the same way anymore. We cannot look at our lives the same way any more. We cannot look at any life the same any more.

This month we’ll explore the gift of life. What is the meaning and purpose of life? Do I value this gift? Do I recognize this gift in everyone I encounter? Am I a life-giving person?

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;
I have come that they may have life,
and have it to the full.

John 10:10
Think about the people and activities of your life:

1) Make a list of ones that are life-giving
2) Make a list of ones that are life-draining

____________________________  ______________________________
(1)                                                                         (2)

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What value do I place on the gift of my life?

How do I see the value of every person I encounter?

What does it mean to be a life-giving person?
Main Texts

Imagine The Dignity Of Life

Genesis 1:26-31

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground." 27 God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth." 29 God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; 30 and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food." And so it happened. 31 God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed-- the sixth day.

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?
Luke 24:1 But at daybreak on the first day of the week they took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. 2 They found the stone rolled away from the tomb; 3 but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 While they were puzzling over this, behold, two men in dazzling garments appeared to them. 5 They were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground. They said to them, "Why do you seek the living one among the dead? 6 He is not here, but he has been raised. Remember what he said to you while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and be crucified, and rise on the third day." 8 And they remembered his words. 9 Then they returned from the tomb and announced all these things to the eleven and to all the others. 10 The women were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary the mother of James; the others who accompanied them also told this to the apostles, 11 but their story seemed like nonsense and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb, bent down, and saw the burial cloths alone; then he went home amazed at what had happened.

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?
Be Life-Giving

John 10:7 So Jesus said again, "Amen, amen, I say to you, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who came (before me) are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. 10 A thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came so that they might have life and have it more abundantly. 11 I am the good shepherd. A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. 12 A hired man, who is not a shepherd and whose sheep are not his own, sees a wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away, and the wolf catches and scatters them. 13 This is because he works for pay and has no concern for the sheep. 14 I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. 17 This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have power to lay it down, and power to take it up again. This command I have received from my Father."

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?
Support Truly Human Life

At the same time, however, there is a growing awareness of the exalted dignity proper to the human person, since he stands above all things, and his rights and duties are universal and inviolable. Therefore, there must be made available to all men everything necessary for leading a life truly human, such as food, clothing, and shelter; the right to choose a state of life freely and to found a family, the right to education, to employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to appropriate information, to activity in accord with the upright norm of one's own conscience, to protection of privacy and rightful freedom even in matters religious. (Vatican II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church In The Modern World, 26)

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?
Key Insights

General
- Life is the essential gift.
- Do we receive our life as a gift?
- Do we encounter the lives of others as gift?
- Do our actions celebrate life?
- Are we life-giving people?
- Can we become more life-giving?

Imagine The Dignity Of Life
- Human beings are the capstone of creation in Genesis 1
- Given incredible dignity (created in likeness and image)
- Given dominion over creation
- This is a dignity that comes from God directly
- Not based on wealth, power, attractiveness, talent, etc.

Seek Life In The Right Places
- We often seek life in all the wrong places.
- Those places lead to unhappiness, desolation, and even death.
- What is life-giving?
- Am I open to what is life-giving?
- Where do I find what is life-giving?

Be Life-Giving
- Jesus is the example of a life-giving person
- He lived his life for us: gathering, shepherding, leading, healing, forgiving, protecting, and ultimately dying for us.
- Can we examine and reject the things in our lives that scatter?
- Can we focus ourselves on the one who leads us to abundant life?
- Can we become life-giving for others?

Support Truly Human Life
- As a society, can we honor the essence of life?
- Can we ensure that people have access to the fundamental requirements for life?
- Can we support the lives of others with our life?
- Can we make society more life-giving?
Extra Reading: Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel*

108. ...It is my hope that...they will realize that whenever we attempt to read the signs of the times it is helpful to listen to young people and the elderly. Both represent a source of hope for every people. The elderly bring with them memory and the wisdom of experience, which warns us not to foolishly repeat our past mistakes. Young people call us to renewed and expansive hope, for they represent new directions for humanity and open us up to the future, lest we cling to a nostalgia for structures and customs which are no longer life-giving in today’s world.

109. Challenges exist to be overcome! Let us be realists, but without losing our joy, our boldness and our hope-filled commitment. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of missionary vigour!

190. Sometimes it is a matter of hearing the cry of entire peoples, the poorest peoples of the earth, since “peace is founded not only on respect for human rights, but also on respect for the rights of peoples.” Sadly, even human rights can be used as a justification for an inordinate defense of individual rights or the rights of the richer peoples. With due respect for the autonomy and culture of every nation, we must never forget that the planet belongs to all mankind and is meant for all mankind; the mere fact that some people are born in places with fewer resources or less development does not justify the fact that they are living with less dignity. It must be reiterated that “the more fortunate should renounce some of their rights so as to place their goods more generously at the service of others.” To speak properly of our own rights, we need to broaden our perspective and to hear the plea of other peoples and other regions than those of our own country. We need to grow in a solidarity which “would allow all peoples to become the artisans of their destiny,” since “every person is called to self-fulfilment.”

228. In this way it becomes possible to build communion amid disagreement, but this can only be achieved by those great persons who are willing to go beyond the surface of the conflict and to see others in their deepest dignity. This requires acknowledging a principle indispensable to the building of friendship in society: namely, that unity is greater than conflict. Solidarity, in its deepest and most challenging sense, thus becomes a way of making history in a life setting where conflicts, tensions and oppositions can achieve a diversified and life-giving unity. This is not to opt for a kind of syncretism, or for the absorption of one into the other, but rather for a resolution which takes place on a higher plane and preserves what is valid and useful on both sides.
Recap & Prepare for Week 2

- Reread the text for this week.
  - Underline phrases that speak to your heart
  - Pick a phrase each morning, and write it on a slip of paper
  - Hold that theme in your heart throughout the day
  - At the end of the day, pray an Examen (below)
- Reflection questions:

What are some examples of how Jesus was life-giving?

What does it mean to me that Jesus is life-giving?

Who has been life-giving for me?

A Daily Prayer - The Examen

The Examen is an extremely fruitful daily prayer (set aside 5-15 minutes):

1. Take a moment to recognize that you’re in the presence of God
2. Thank God for the many gifts in your life
3. Invite the Spirit to walk back with you through your day, focusing on the specific theme of the day. Take the time to stop and really see that moment with new perspective.
4. Pray for God’s guidance for tomorrow.
Week 2 - Share

Individual Option
- Find 20-30 minutes where you won’t be interrupted.
- (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format (Lectio Divina) in the group exercise below.
- (10-20 minutes) Spend time reflecting on the questions outlined above.

Advice For Participating In Small Christian Communities
- The facilitator’s role is to guide the flow of the meeting. They are not in the group to be experts. Help the facilitators by following their lead.
- During the discussion period, there will be multiple questions or topic for conversation. It is best to take them one at a time (i.e., let everyone share about one before moving to the next).
- Don’t attempt to give the “right answer.” Just share your experience, insights, and perspective.
- Please stay on topic (the questions asked).
- Pay attention to time. Keep your answers on the shorter side. You can always add more later.
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to speak (i.e., give others a chance to speak before sharing a second time).
- It’s ok to not share if you don’t feel comfortable, but challenge yourself to share occasionally.
- Give your attention to the person speaking. Please don’t start side conversations.
- Avoid asking follow-up questions. Let people share what they want to share. It is always good to affirm others.
- Avoid answering other people’s questions (i.e., taking on the role of expert).
How To Pray The Scripture Using *Lectio Divina*

- **Goal:**
  - Engage one of the scriptures at a deeper level
  - Allow the Spirit to teach our hearts
  - Provide fruit to lead into the discussion and sharing

- **Steps (Should take 10-15 minutes):**
  - *Lectio* (Reading, 2-5 minutes)
    - A participant reads the scripture passage
    - 30-60 seconds of silence
    - A participant reads the scripture passage
    - As the scripture is being read, the participants are invited to find a word, phrase, image, or idea that resonates with them. We’ll call this the *focus*.
  - *Meditatio* (Meditate, 5-10 minutes)
    - Stay with the focus from above.
    - There are different ways to do this: Why does it resonate? What does it mean in my life today? Repeat it as a mantra. Imagine it. How is this connected to seeking God?
  - *Oratio* (Pray, 1-2 minutes)
    - Whatever comes up in meditation, form into a silent prayer offered to God.
  - *Contemplatio* (Contemplate, 1-2 minutes)
    - After speaking a prayer to God, sit and listen or rest in God's love.
  - This leads into discussion and sharing.
    - Start with insights from the prayer.
    - Transition to sharing about seeking God.

- **Tips**
  - There is no “right way,” do what works for you
  - Embrace the silence
  - Let God find you
Small Christian Community Process - First Meeting
(Suggested timing based on a 60/90 minute meeting)

- Welcome & Check In (5/10 minutes)

- Review Format (5/5 minutes)
  - Review the participant’s advice (page 15)
  - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
  - Review the prayer format: *Lectio Divina* (page 16)
  - Discussion will follow based on the prayer and the questions (page 18).

- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
  - Transition Passage: “The first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit.”
    *(1 Corinthians 15:45)*

- Discussion (30/45 minutes)
  - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
  - Discussing the reflection questions (page 14)

- Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
  - The practical exercise is listed on the next page
  - Participants can share thoughts and plans
  - Review date of the next group session
  - Participants can request prayers from the group
Revisit the exercise on page 6-7

Action for Easter:
Let go of something that is life-draining:

Embrace something that is life-giving:

Do one thing intentionally that is life-giving for another person:
Week 4 - Share

Preparing

- Continue to use the phrases you highlighted when you prepared for Week 2:
  - Pick a phrase each morning, and write it on a slip of paper
  - Hold that theme in your heart throughout the day
  - At the end of the day, pray an Examen (page 14)
- Week 3 exercise:
  - Plan to share something about your Week 3 exercise
  - If you were not able to do it, plan to share your barriers.

Individual Option

- Find 20-30 minutes where you won’t be interrupted.
- (10-15 minutes) Follow the prayer format (Lectio Divina) in the group exercise below.
- (10-20 minutes) Journal about the experience of the exercise from Week 3.

Small Christian Community Process - Second Meeting

(Suggested timing based on a 60/90 minute meeting)

- Welcome & Check In (5/10 minutes)
- Review Format (5/5 minutes)
  - Review the participant’s advice (page 15)
  - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
  - Review the prayer format: Lectio Divina (page 16)
  - Discussion will follow based on the prayer the Act exercise (page 18)
- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
  - Transition Passage: “Why do you seek the living one among the dead?” (Luke 24:5b)
  - Lectio Divina: John 10-7-18 (page 10)
- Discussion (30/45 minutes)
  - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
  - Discussing insights from the Act exercise
- Action/Request (5/10 minutes)
  - Review date of the next Explore session
  - Participants can request prayers from the group
Three Ways To Get Involved With Intentional Seekers

1. Pick up a booklet, and explore on your own. -or-
2. Attend an “Explore” session to learn about this month’s scripture. Everyone is welcome. - or-
3. Check out a Small Christian Community to join with others to go deeper.

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Upcoming “Explore” Sessions

Sunday, April 12, 10:30-11:30 AM, School Basement
Monday, April 13, 7:30-9 PM, Aquinas Room
Young Adults’ Session*, Wed., April 15, 7:30-9 PM, Parish Hall

* The Young Adults group is a community of single and married Catholic adults in our 20s and 30s; to find out more, visit: http://stdominics.org/youngadults

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Connect With a Small Christian Community

Contact Scott Moyer at scott@stdominics.org
or come to an Explore session to get connected