Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Luke 6:36
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.

*Because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace.*

Luke 1:78-79
How do you define “mercy”?

What does it mean that God is merciful?

How important is mercy to our lives as Christians?

What are some concrete actions we can take to show mercy?
Week 1 - Explore

Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'
I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.
Matthew 9:13

How do we learn the meaning of the word “mercy”? It’s not like we haven’t heard the word, but it is definitely a word we use less than other words we’ve explored like love, forgive, open, think, etc. This is an important question because our Christian faith considers mercy to be one of the primary characteristics of God.

It’s fair to say that we’ve grown a little distant in our modern world from the concept of mercy. Pope Francis, realizing this, has invited the Church to a jubilee year of mercy beginning this December. Pope Francis states, “we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father’s action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective.”

This month we’ll begin the process of gazing more attentively into the notion of mercy. How is this idea so intimately connected to God? How do we receive God’s mercy? How are we called to “become a more effective sign” sign of mercy? How can we “grow stronger and more effective”? Let’s not wait for December. Instead, let’s meet the Jubilee prepared to take in everything it offers us.

For the judgment is merciless to one who has not shown mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment.

James 2:13
Exercises

Think about your life:

1) Have I experienced mercy from another person?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2) Have I experienced mercy from God?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3) Have I shown mercy to another person?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
How do I define mercy?

Do I feel close or distant from the concept of mercy? Why?

What might it look like in my life if I showed more mercy to others?
Main Texts

Go And Do Likewise

Luke 10:25 There was a scholar of the law who stood up to test him and said, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read it?" 27 He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." 28 He replied to him, "You have answered correctly; do this and you will live." 29 But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead. 31 A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. 32 Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side. 33 But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight. 34 He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him. 35 The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, 'Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.' 36 Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers' victim?" 37 He answered, "The one who treated him with mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?
The Concept of "Mercy" Seems To Cause Uneasiness

The present-day mentality, more perhaps than that of people in the past, seems opposed to a God of mercy, and in fact tends to exclude from life and to remove from the human heart the very idea of mercy. The word and the concept of "mercy" seem to cause uneasiness in man, who, thanks to the enormous development of science and technology, never before known in history, has become the master of the earth and has subdued and dominated it. This dominion over the earth, sometimes understood in a one-sided and superficial way, seems to have no room for mercy. However, in this regard we can profitably refer to the picture of "man's situation in the world today" as described at the beginning of the Constitution Gaudium et spes. Here we read the following sentences: "In the light of the foregoing factors there appears the dichotomy of a world that is at once powerful and weak, capable of doing what is noble and what is base, disposed to freedom and slavery, progress and decline, brotherhood and hatred. Man is growing conscious that the forces he has unleashed are in his own hands and that it is up to him to control them or be enslaved by them."

- Pope Saint John Paul II, Dives In Misericordia, 2

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?
Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, “rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4), after having revealed his name to Moses as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Ex34:6), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the “fullness of time” (Gal 4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.

We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

- Pope Francis, Misericordia Vultus, 10 & 12

Read prayerfully: What thoughts arise out of this reading?
Joyful Call To Mercy

Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love. The Church “has an endless desire to show mercy”. Perhaps we have long since forgotten how to show and live the way of mercy....without a witness to mercy, life becomes fruitless and sterile, as if sequestered in a barren desert. The time has come for the Church to take up the joyful call to mercy once more. It is time to return to the basics and to bear the weaknesses and struggles of our brothers and sisters. Mercy is the force that reawakens us to new life and instils in us the courage to look to the future with hope...The Church’s first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.

- Pope Francis, *Misericordia Vultus*, 10 & 12

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

General

- We need to develop a definition and an understanding of mercy.
- Do we believe in a God of mercy?
- Mercy recognizes that it is within our power to judge and condemn
- Do we recognize God’s mercy towards us?
- What responsibility do we have to show mercy?
- How does mercy change the world?

Go And Do Likewise

- “The one who treated him with mercy.” Mercy is the answer!
- Seeing the individual and their needs
- Responding with compassion instead of judgement
- The power to lift up, to bind wounds, to care for another
- Jesus shares the path to eternal life

The Concept of "Mercy" Seems To Cause Uneasiness

- Why might we be opposed to a God of mercy?
- Why might we be opposed to the very idea of mercy?
- How does dominion over all things set us in opposition to mercy?
- What does our desire for control lead us to do?
- How do you view the dichotomies mentioned?

Constantly Contemplate The Mystery of Mercy

- “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy.”
- “mystery of mercy...wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace”
- “Mercy: ... reveals ... the Most Holy Trinity.”
- “Mercy: ... God comes to meet us.”
- “Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart ...”
- “Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man ...”

Joyful Call To Mercy

- “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life.”
- “The Church’s first truth is the love of Christ.”
- “The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love.”
- “Wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy”
Psalm 136

1 Praise the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endures forever;
2 Praise the God of gods; for his mercy endures forever;
3 Praise the Lord of lords; for his mercy endures forever;
4 Who alone has done great wonders, for his mercy endures forever;
5 Who skillfully made the heavens, for his mercy endures forever;
6 Who spread the earth upon the waters, for his mercy endures forever;
7 Who made the great lights, for his mercy endures forever;
8 The sun to rule the day, for his mercy endures forever;
9 The moon and stars to rule the night, for his mercy endures forever;
10 Who struck down the firstborn of Egypt, for his mercy endures forever;
11 And led Israel from their midst, for his mercy endures forever;
12 With mighty hand and outstretched arm, for his mercy endures forever;
13 Who split in two the Red Sea, for his mercy endures forever;
14 And led Israel through its midst, for his mercy endures forever;
15 But swept Pharaoh and his army into the Red Sea, for his mercy endures forever;
16 Who led the people through the desert, for his mercy endures forever;
17 Who struck down great kings, for his mercy endures forever;
18 Slew powerful kings, for his mercy endures forever;
19 Sihon, king of the Amorites, for his mercy endures forever;
20 Og, king of Bashan, for his mercy endures forever;
21 And made their lands a heritage, for his mercy endures forever;
22 A heritage for Israel, his servant, for his mercy endures forever.
23 The Lord remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endures forever;
24 Freed us from our foes, for his mercy endures forever;
25 And gives bread to all flesh, for his mercy endures forever.
26 Praise the God of heaven, for his mercy endures forever.
Extra Excerpts from Pope Francis, *Misericordia Vultus*

6. “It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way”. Saint Thomas Aquinas’ words show that God’s mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence. For this reason the liturgy, in one of its most ancient collects, has us pray: “O God, who reveal your power above all in your mercy and forgiveness ...” Throughout the history of humanity, God will always be the One who is present, close, provident, holy, and merciful.

“Patient and merciful.” These words often go together in the Old Testament to describe God’s nature. His being merciful is concretely demonstrated in his many actions throughout the history of salvation where his goodness prevails over punishment and destruction. In a special way the Psalms bring to the fore the grandeur of his merciful action: “He forgives all your iniquity, he heals all your diseases, he redeems your life from the pit, he crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” (Ps 103:3-4). Another psalm, in an even more explicit way, attests to the concrete signs of his mercy: “He executes justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (Ps 146:7-9). Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: “He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds... The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground” (Ps 147:3, 6). In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a “visceral” love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy.

7. “For his mercy endures forever.” This is the refrain that repeats after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God’s revelation. By virtue of mercy, all the events of the Old Testament are replete with profound salvific import. Mercy renders God’s history with Israel a history of salvation. To repeat continually “for his mercy endures forever;” as the psalm does, seems to break through the dimensions of space and time, inserting everything into the eternal mystery of love. It is as if to say that not only in history, but for all eternity man will always be under the merciful gaze of the Father. It is no accident that the people of Israel wanted to include this psalm – the “Great Hallel,” as it is called – in its most important liturgical feast days.

Before his Passion, Jesus prayed with this psalm of mercy. Matthew attests to this in his Gospel when he says that, “when they had sung a hymn” (26:30), Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. While he was instituting the Eucharist as an everlasting memorial of himself and his paschal sacrifice, he symbolically placed this supreme act of revelation in the light of his mercy. Within the very same context of mercy, Jesus entered upon his passion and death, conscious of the great mystery of love that he would consummate on the Cross. Knowing that Jesus himself prayed this psalm makes it even more important for us as Christians, challenging us to take
up the refrain in our daily lives by praying these words of praise: “for his mercy endures forever.”

8. With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity. The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness. “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8,16), John affirms for the first and only time in all of Holy Scripture. This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus’ entire life. His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially in favour of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion.

Jesus, seeing the crowds of people who followed him, realized that they were tired and exhausted, lost and without a guide, and he felt deep compassion for them (cf. Mt 9:36). On the basis of this compassionate love he healed the sick who were presented to him (cf. Mt 14:14), and with just a few loaves of bread and fish he satisfied the enormous crowd (cf. Mt 15:37). What moved Jesus in all of these situations was nothing other than mercy, with which he read the hearts of those he encountered and responded to their deepest need. When he came upon the widow of Nain taking her son out for burial, he felt great compassion for the immense suffering of this grieving mother, and he gave back her son by raising him from the dead (cf. Lk 7:15). After freeing the demoniac in the country of the Gerasenes, Jesus entrusted him with this mission: “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you” (Mk 5:19). The calling of Matthew is also presented within the context of mercy. Passing by the tax collector’s booth, Jesus looked intently at Matthew. It was a look full of mercy that forgave the sins of that man, a sinner and a tax collector, whom Jesus chose – against the hesitation of the disciples – to become one of the Twelve. Saint Bede the Venerable, commenting on this Gospel passage, wrote that Jesus looked upon Matthew with merciful love and chose him: miserando atque eligendo. This expression impressed me so much that I chose it for my episcopal motto.

9. In the parables devoted to mercy, Jesus reveals the nature of God as that of a Father who never gives up until he has forgiven the wrong and overcome rejection with compassion and mercy. We know these parables well, three in particular: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the father with two sons (cf. Lk 15:1-32). In these parables, God is always presented as full of joy, especially when he pardons. In them we find the core of the Gospel and of our faith, because mercy is presented as a force that overcomes everything, filling the heart with love and bringing consolation through pardon.

From another parable, we cull an important teaching for our Christian lives. In reply to Peter’s question about how many times it is necessary to forgive, Jesus says: “I do not say seven times, but seventy times seven times” (Mt 18:22). He then goes on to tell the parable of the “ruthless servant,” who, called by his master to return a huge
amount, begs him on his knees for mercy. His master cancels his debt. But he then meets a fellow servant who owes him a few cents and who in turn begs on his knees for mercy, but the first servant refuses his request and throws him into jail. When the master hears of the matter, he becomes infuriated and, summoning the first servant back to him, says, “Should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” (Mt 18:33). Jesus concludes, “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart” (Mt 18:35).

This parable contains a profound teaching for all of us. Jesus affirms that mercy is not only an action of the Father, it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are. In short, we are called to show mercy because mercy has first been shown to us. Pardoning offences becomes the clearest expression of merciful love, and for us Christians it is an imperative from which we cannot excuse ourselves. At times how hard it seems to forgive! And yet pardon is the instrument placed into our fragile hands to attain serenity of heart. To let go of anger, wrath, violence, and revenge are necessary conditions to living joyfully. Let us therefore heed the Apostle’s exhortation: “Do not let the sun go down on your anger” (Eph 4:26). Above all, let us listen to the words of Jesus who made mercy an ideal of life and a criterion for the credibility of our faith: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt5:7): the beatitude to which we should particularly aspire in this Holy Year.

As we can see in Sacred Scripture, mercy is a key word that indicates God’s action towards us. He does not limit himself merely to affirming his love, but makes it visible and tangible. Love, after all, can never be just an abstraction. By its very nature, it indicates something concrete: intentions, attitudes, and behaviours that are shown in daily living. The mercy of God is his loving concern for each one of us. He feels responsible; that is, he desires our wellbeing and he wants to see us happy, full of joy, and peaceful. This is the path which the merciful love of Christians must also travel. As the Father loves, so do his children. Just as he is merciful, so we are called to be merciful to each other.

... 12. The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person. The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behaviour after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception. In the present day, as the Church is charged with the task of the new evangelization, the theme of mercy needs to be proposed again and again with new enthusiasm and renewed pastoral action. It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.

...
21. Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe. The experience of the prophet Hosea can help us see the way in which mercy surpasses justice. The era in which the prophet lived was one of the most dramatic in the history of the Jewish people. The kingdom was tottering on the edge of destruction; the people had not remained faithful to the covenant; they had wandered from God and lost the faith of their forefathers. According to human logic, it seems reasonable for God to think of rejecting an unfaithful people; they had not observed their pact with God and therefore deserved just punishment: in other words, exile. The prophet’s words attest to this: “They shall not return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to return to me” (Hos 11:5). And yet, after this invocation of justice, the prophet radically changes his speech and reveals the true face of God: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! How can I make you like Admah! How can I treat you like Zeboiim! My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger, I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy” (11:8-9). Saint Augustine, almost as if he were commenting on these words of the prophet, says: “It is easier for God to hold back anger than mercy”. And so it is. God’s anger lasts but a moment, his mercy forever.

If God limited himself to only justice, he would cease to be God, and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected. But mere justice is not enough. Experience shows that an appeal to justice alone will result in its destruction. This is why God goes beyond justice with his mercy and forgiveness. Yet this does not mean that justice should be devalued or rendered superfluous. On the contrary: anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God. God does not deny justice. He rather envelopes it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice. We must pay close attention to what Saint Paul says if we want to avoid making the same mistake for which he reproaches the Jews of his time: “For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified” (Rom 10:3-4). God’s justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the Cross of Christ is God’s judgement on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life.
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:

  How do I define mercy now?

  Why is mercy important for me?

  Why is mercy important for others?

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.
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 19)
  - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
  - Review the prayer format: *Lectio Divina* (page 20)
  - Discussion will follow based on the prayer and the questions (page 22).

- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
  - *Transition Passage:* “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful..” (Luke 6:36)

- Discussion (30/45 minutes)
  - Begin with insights from the prayer experience
  - Discussing the reflection questions (page 18)

- 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

Actions:

When do I encounter others in need of mercy?

When could I encounter others in need of mercy?

Do one thing to intentionally show mercy to another person:
Preparation

- 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 18)

- 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 19)
  - Prayer will be about 15 minutes
  - Review the prayer format: *Lectio Divina* (page 20)
  - Discussion will follow based on the prayer the Act exercise (page 22)
- Prayer (10/15 minutes)
  - Transition Passage: “Because of the tender mercy of our God by which the daybreak from on high will visit us to shine on those who sit in darkness and death's shadow, to guide our feet into the path of peace.” (Luke 1:78-79)
  - *Lectio Divina*: *Misericordia Vultus*, 10 & 12 (page 11)
- 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

Young Adults’ Session*, Wed., June 3, 7:30-9 PM, Parish Hall

TBD: Monday, June 8, 7:30-9 PM, Aquinas Room

* 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