

## Helpful hints for leading the group

**Getting started:** Think about how you are going to publicise 'Journeying to Christ' - make use of the Mass notices, parish newsletter, display boards, website and social media. Don't forget that personal invitation works the best! Make sure people know where and when the groups are meeting.

**Groups:** Remember, group size should be about 6 to 8 people. If there are more people wanting to participate then think about having more than one group. Ideally each group would have someone assigned to lead them. (You may need to train more leaders.)

**Setting up the space:** Make sure the space is as comfortable as possible. Arrange the seating into a circle or at least so people are facing each other. Print off enough leaflets for everyone. If you are using the accompanying recordings or PowerPoints make sure you have the right equipment and that everyone can see the screen. You might also consider some simple refreshments either before or after the session.

**Group Guidelines:** Agree that the sharing is confidential to the group - people need to ask for permission to share a useful insight with another person or group. Start and end on time. Only one person should speak at a time. During the sharing we listen first before making a response or asking questions. Encourage the use of 'I' language rather than 'they/he/she'. Mobiles need to be turned off or on silent. People should make contact if they're unable to come - perhaps get contact details for the group or set up a WhatsApp group.

**Leading the sharing:** This is an invitational process so let people share as much or as little as they are comfortable with. Don't be afraid of silence. Try to ensure that everyone has the chance to talk and no voice dominates the sharing. Avoid any interruptions/comments/questions while people are sharing - it is more about the respectful and prayerful synodal listening to understand. Asking questions in an 'open style' is more helpful: Who, What Where, Why, When etc.. Don't feel you have to respond all the time or provide answers to questions but encourage a group dynamic where all feel able to answer or make a response. Ask for volunteers for tasks like reading to avoid putting people under pressure. Try to keep an eye on the time so things don't overrun.

**Being in a group relationship 'develops the sense of belonging to the Church and assists growth in the faith.'**

(Directory for Catechesis #218)



Archdiocese of Dublin  
Office of Mission and Ministry

## A SMALL FAITH SHARING GROUP RESOURCE FOR ADVENT 2023



All the materials for 'Journeying to Christ' can be downloaded from the Adult Faith section of

[www.missionministry.ie](http://www.missionministry.ie)

## Introduction

The Season of Advent is a really good time for reflection and to devote time to our faith life. The 'Journeying to Christ' resource is here to support people and parishes as we grow and strengthen the synodal way of being Church that, under the guidance of Pope Francis, we have already started to develop.

*It's a very simple and easy way to offer something to people during Advent and can be run in conjunction with any other Advent initiative parishes may have.*

## What is it about?

'Journeying to Christ' is a resource to facilitate small groups to share faith together. The resource uses the scriptures from the Sundays of Advent as inspiration. Ideally, people gather in the lead up to each Sunday so they are more prepared and enriched to experience the liturgies and the season of Advent.

*Each of the 4 sessions uses a different theme from the Advent scriptures as a focus for reflection and sharing.*

## The four sessions

The four sessions are themes as part of one journey: GIFTED, BAPTISED, SENT and RESPOND

*Each session lasts approximately 45-60 mins depending on the size of group*

## Who is it for?

The resource has been developed to encourage people to gather in small groups to listen and share: these could be family groups, groups of friends meeting in someone's house, a group (or groups) meeting in the parish after weekday Mass or in an afternoon or evening. It can even be used online via Zoom!

The resource can be run with any number but experience would suggest that the group is about 6 to 8 people. Obviously, if you have more than that you can have more than one small group!

*It really is for everyone and can be delivered in a variety of ways to suit those who want to gather.*

## Structure of each session



### GATHER

[5 - 10 mins]

The first session starts with an opportunity for people to introduce themselves. After this, the Gather time is for people to briefly share anything that has stayed with them since the last session. It is good to pause before hearing the Word of God.



### HEAR

[5 mins]

Someone from the group slowly and clearly proclaims the scripture reading. (You may also choose to pause and then ask a different member of the group to proclaim the scripture again as people may hear something new.) This is then followed by silence.



### REFLECT

[20 - 30 mins]

After the moment of silence to allow people to reflect on the reading themselves, the group leader will then guide the time of group reflection and sharing. The questions follow a similar format each time:

- ◆ A chance for people to share their response to the Scriptures. *This might be just a word or phrase, or a thought, insight or question.*
- ◆ Reaction to the Image on the front of the booklet for that session. *Again, people may have an insight, an experience to share or a question, or they may focus on a particular part of the image, a colour etc.*
- ◆ A question unpacking the theme *based on the scripture of the week*
- ◆ An inward looking question - *helping us to go deeper*
- ◆ An action based question for the time of Advent - *reminding us that being a Christian is also about others and the world.*

*[You may not get through all the questions or you might want to adapt the wording of them to suit your group.]*



### PRAY

[10 mins]

Each week there is a different form of reflective prayer which should not be rushed. People might like to take it in turn to lead the reflection - or they can all be led by the group leader. Recordings of the reflections are also available to use. Each time of prayer ends with everyone praying the 'Glory Be...'



### ACT

[5 mins]

The final part of each session is the call to act - suggestions to encourage people to do something each week during Advent. People can also come up with their own ideas for action.

*The format for each session stays the same.*