

Small Groups, Big Mission: Forming Disciples at St. Boniface
with Mitchell Narvasa, Augustine Institute
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Part 1: WHY Small Groups?

Augustine Institute's Mission: *Understand the Faith, Live the Faith, Share the Faith*

YOU Have a Story to Share

- Everyone has a valuable story
- Example: *The Samaritan Woman (John 4)* — “He knew my sins! He knew my sins!”
- Sharing invites authenticity and vulnerability.

Scripture:

“Even so let your light shine before men in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” — Matthew 5:16

Vatican II — Apostolicam Actuositatem 7:

“There are innumerable opportunities open to the laity for the exercise of their apostolate of evangelization and sanctification. The very testimony of their Christian life and good works done in a supernatural spirit have the power to draw men to belief and to God...”

However, an apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one's way of life; a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view to leading them to faith, or to the faithful with a view to instructing, strengthening, and encouraging them to a more fervent life. ‘For the charity of Christ impels us’ (2 Cor. 5:14). The words of the Apostle should echo in all hearts, ‘Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel.’”

The Aloneness Epidemic

Genesis 2:18:

“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’”

Catching Closet Christians

- *“The harvest is plenty, but the laborers are few.”*

Parish as Community of Communities

Ecclesia in America — St. John Paul II:

“One way of renewing parishes, especially urgent for parishes in large cities, might be to consider the parish as a community of communities and movements. It seems timely therefore to form ecclesial communities and groups of a size that allows for true human relationships. This will make it possible to live communion more intensely...”

The institution of the parish, thus renewed, ‘can be the source of great hope...’”

Part 2: Characteristics of Healthy Small Groups

Acts 2:42–47

42 And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

43 And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

44 And all who believed were together and had all things in common;

45 and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.

46 And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

1. Evangelization

Matthew 28:19:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,”

Acts 2:47:

“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

- Discern who God is calling you to invite
- Discern if God is calling you to start your own group

2. Discipleship

Matthew 28:20:

“Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.”

Acts 2:42:

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

Apostolicam Actuositatem: (See Part 1, B)

3. Sanctification

Acts 2:42: They devoted themselves...*to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*

- Worship and sacramental life were central to growth in holiness

4. Fellowship (Koinonia)

Mother Teresa

“I have lived like an animal, but I am going to die like an angel—loved and cared for.”

Pope Leo XIV:

“Friendship... brings us back to Jesus Himself. Without a doubt, friendship is one of the most wonderful gifts that God has given us.”

Theological Root: Rooted in the Trinity: God is communion of persons

Communion of Saints:

- We are one Body — joys and sorrows shared
- Prayer and good works connect heaven and earth

5. Service (Ministering to Each Other)

Acts 2:45:

“And they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need.”

Part 3: Starting Your Small Group

A. Biblical Steps

- Pray and Discern

- Ask the Holy Spirit for clarity and courage

B. “Come and See” (Final Invitation)

- Build fellowship before inviting others
 - Journey together first in love and vulnerability
 - Then extend the invitation: “*Come and See.*”
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- “*How can we choose unless we have first been chosen?*” — St. Augustine
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Small Group Discussion

1. Personal Encounter & Evangelization

- Which story or Scripture passage from the workshop resonated with your current season of life or ministry?
- Who in your life might be waiting for a simple invitation into community or faith?

2. Vulnerability & Sharing Your Story

- What makes it hard to share your personal faith story?
- What helps you feel safe enough to be vulnerable in a group setting?

3. Building True Community

- What’s the difference between proximity and true presence in your relationships?
- Can you recall a moment when someone’s presence—not just their physical nearness—impacted you deeply?

5. Discipleship & Growth

- How have you personally grown in your faith through community?
- What obstacles keep people from joining or committing to small groups?

6. Next Steps

- What is one concrete action you feel called to take after today’s workshop?
- Is God inviting you to start or re-engage in a small group? What would it take to say “yes”?