**Ground Rules for Small Group Leaders:**

1. Love one another, even if it is difficult.
2. Propriety at all times.
3. Cultivate good listening skills and patience
4. See/hear, then judge, then act/speak
5. Commit to others but don’t smother others
6. Allow others to depend upon you; do not allow others to become **dependent** upon you
7. Pray before, pray during, and pray after.

**7 Foundations for Small Groups**

1. Prayer- All small group sessions and activities should be conducted in a prayerful atmosphere. Fundamentally, this means that we are conscious of and welcoming to the personal presence of God when we gather together. Whether we sit in silence, engage in meaningful conversation, meet each other for the first time, run across the lawn for an ice breaker, we trust in the Sacred. Setting aside time for prayer in our small groups establishes and enriches this atmosphere.

\*\* Begin and end each session with a small prayer

\*\* Ask if participants would like to lead the prayer at the beginning or close the session

1. Openness and Commitment- There is a delicate and important relationship between openness and commitment that one should strive for. As the small group facilitator, you should be open to the distinctive ways in which your small group develops, allowing the community to form as it will with the unique persons who come together that make up the small group. At the same time, you should be committed to guiding the small group towards a meaningful, significant conversation and experiences in the light of faith.

\*\* Don’t compare your small group to others-No matter how good or how difficult it seems

\*\* Be patient with your group God has some unusual ways of developing groups.

1. You should always respect the dignity of each small group member. You should strive to remember that each person’s life story is in progress, unfinished and, ultimately, in God’s hands. As you listen to each others’ questions, experiences, doubts, and expressions of faith, you should strive to allow each person a generous and positive listening experience in small group.

\*\* Don’t have favorites within your group. The talkative person is as important as the shy person

\*\* Each person holds the truth as revealed by God, listen, look and feel the truth.

1. Confidentiality and Reporting—from the beginning of the retreat, it is important and imperative to emphasize that your small group conversations are private and deemed confidential. No group member should take the liberty of relaying to someone outside the group something personal and/private that any member of the group shared while the group was gathered. As the facilitator, though, you are responsible for reporting any incident of physical and or sexual abuse, any dangerous/harmful behaviors and any criminal activities to the proper authorities.

\*\* What is shared in small group remains in small group. It is a privilege for you when someone reveals part of their faith journey to others. Respect it and hold that sharing as sacred.

\*\* When someone shares something that speaks about abuse, dangerous behavior or criminal in substance it is your duty to report ONLY to an adult who can take care to insure that the one sharing can get help. You are not a trained counselor/therapist just another pilgrim on the journey of faith.

1. Group identity- Forming a strong, healthy group identity can help group members to take ownership of the group and to feel at home with one another; however, the formation of a strong small group is not the end goal of the time together. Group identity should only serve to amplify God’s presence within and among the respective groups, and between all persons involved in and relating to our retreat experience as a whole.

\*\* Don’t get overly excited should your group immediately bond or if it seems like the group will never bond. Trust always that the Spirit is at work. Your job is to work hard, keep things focused on faith sharing and allow the Spirit to work in and through you.

1. Preparation and Follow Through—Part of the commitment to guiding a small group experience towards a meaningful and significant encounter is spending time preparing for **each** and **every** small group session. **Think ahead, plan ahead and stay ahead** then let the group develop as it will. On the flip side it is important to ***follow through*** on any promises made to the group, completing conversations with individuals when necessary, or getting answers for people when you have said you would do so. **Your role as facilitators depends, in large part, on your trustworthiness, authenticity, and demonstrated care for others.**

\*\* Be prepared ahead of time. Have your answers completed before the weekend starts. You have heard the P.T’s before and have a copy of the questions. Develop a secondary set of questions should time allow.

1. Leadership and Authority—yes, you exercise leadership within the group as its guide but you are also a member of the group with the participants. All are disciples and students-in-faith. You can help and guide the group, yet you cannot form the group in your own imagine or your own likeness. **Your authority is borrowed authority**. Are you ultimately in charge of the group? – No!! The Spirit of God really leads the group and we hope to contribute to and channel the life of the Spirit that abides in you and in each participant.

You are there NOT to save anyone—Jesus already did that. Be true to yourself. Be authentic. Be real.