



# #RULES \_OF\_ ENGAGEMENT

PARISH DISCUSSION GROUP  
FACILITATOR GUIDE

# TIPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

The *#Rules\_of\_Engagement Discussion Guide for Catholic Parishes* is designed for use in three small-group meetings (60 to 75 minutes each) but the suggested schedule can be adjusted to meet the needs of your particular parish community.

As facilitator, the groups will be looking to you to create a welcoming, prepared environment and an interesting, productive conversation experience. A few tips to help in both of these regards:

- Be sure that participating parishioners have a copy of the book *#Rules\_of\_Engagement* and the accompanying parish discussion guide several weeks in advance of the launch of the discussion sessions. Participants will need time to read and do the exercises before talking about them with others.
- Think in advance about the arrangement of the space where you will gather whether virtual or live. If you are live, you will want a space in the center of the room or up front as a focal point for prayer. Consider having a set-apart table, covered with a cloth, that could hold an open Bible on a stand and a candle (with the means to light and extinguish the candle). If you are meeting virtually, it will still be important to begin and end with prayer, so make sure that you have a Bible and candle nearby. You might even invite participants to each light a prayer candle in their own homes during the sessions.
- As noted, each week's session is intended to begin and end with prayer. In the pages that follow, you will find suggestions for how to open and close. Participants do not have the suggested prayer services within their discussion guides so if you would like to ask someone to read a passage from scripture or lead a part of the prayer, you will want to connect with them in advance. Participants do have Pope Francis's 2018 World Day of Communications Prayer included on the last page of their discussion guides.
- Based on the size of the group, consider the seating arrangement for participants. Generally speaking, if the group is smaller than eight people, you might consider a single circle of chairs. If the group is larger than ten people, you will almost certainly want to break into two (or more) circles to make sure that everyone has the chance to speak substantively. Also, some people will feel more hesitant to share the larger the group. The same holds true if you will be meeting virtually for these sessions. If you have more than ten people, you will want to utilize virtual breakout rooms to make sure that everyone has a chance to speak. A group of 5–6 people is often optimal for virtual breakout rooms.
- Discussion of social media in today's society can sometimes become contentious. If you find that the conversation among participants becomes intense, it does not mean that you are doing something wrong. People naturally have a lot of passion about topics they care a lot about. Read it as an indication that your parishioners care deeply about this issue. But, before initiating the first session, recall the general guidelines for having a constructive conversation that have been provided in the discussion guide—taken from Columbia's Center for Teaching and Learning: [learninginnovation.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ITF-H1-discussionguide-17h5iob.pdf](https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ITF-H1-discussionguide-17h5iob.pdf)

# TIPS FOR THE FACILITATOR

- When discussion begins, it is normal for there to be silences in the midst of conversation. Indeed, sometimes quieter folk in the group might not feel comfortable speaking up until there is a prolonged silence. So, do not feel the need to rush in to fill every pause. Allow at least ten seconds of silence to see if anyone who has not spoken has anything to say before re-directing or moving on to a new question.
- To help keep the conversation balanced between the extroverts and the introverts in the group, consider at least occasionally using the process of “mutual invitation” put forward by Eric Law (see: [intercultural-matters.com/intercultural-matters/mutual-invitation-eric-law](http://intercultural-matters.com/intercultural-matters/mutual-invitation-eric-law)) in which the first person to speak invites by name another person in the circle to speak next. That person can either speak or say “pass” but will, regardless, then be the person to call by name on the next person invited to speak.
- If there will be multiple discussion circles going on at the same time because of the size of the group, you might want to invite groups to each appoint one person in their smaller circle who will time keep and keep the conversation moving so that no one question takes up the majority of the time. You might also want to say a bit about “mutual invitation” as something that could be used in each circle.

**Most importantly:** Thank you for being willing to use your gifts as a facilitator in this process! You play an invaluable role in helping these conversations be productive and meaningful. They couldn't happen without you. So before reading any further, give yourself a pat on the back and trust that the Holy Spirit will be with you throughout your service.

# SESSION ONE

## Preparatory Reading: Introduction through Chapter 3 (pp. ix–34)

### Introductions (5–10 minutes)

*Invite those gathered to briefly introduce themselves, maybe sharing something about how long they have been part of the parish, why they decided to be part of this book discussion, or one fun fact about themselves.*

*Next, take a few minutes to review the information in the link about guidelines for constructive conversations (found in parish discussion guides). Ascertain who will take notes for the second set of questions in the session to make sure that the wisdom of the group is captured and discuss how/ with whom it will be shared.*

*Then you (or another designated person) should call the group to prayer.*

### Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

*Light candle.*

*Allow a few seconds of silence so that members can focus on God.*

Lord, you know how hectic and crazy our lives are. You know how fragmented we often feel. How harried and rushed. Pulled in so many different directions all at once. And yet, you have invited us to be here. Fully here.

As a gesture of our desire to be fully present to this space and this conversation, we take our phones from our pockets and purses and wherever else we might hide them. We silence them. We place them screen down in the middle of the tables at which we've gathered (or on the prayer table in the center of the circle... or, if meeting virtually, inside a drawer). We entrust into your hands the many needs and wants of those who might try to reach us during this time, so that we can truly be here.

And we open our ears and our hearts to the words of scripture...

*Slowly read Matthew 13:33. Pause. Read the verse again.*

Lord, as we gather tonight, we feel tiny before the immense network of connection that we call social media. It is hard to know what we can do; hard to know what we can try to influence this vast set of systems that are playing such a role in our daily lives. And yet, we cling to your word, that even the tiniest measure of yeast can leaven the whole dough. And we believe that even our small actions can shape the world that our children will live in. So, we ask you to bless our gathering. May everything we discuss here tonight serve the coming of your Kingdom and give you glory and honor.

In Jesus name, we pray. Amen.

# SESSION ONE

## **Discussion of Questions Provided in the Discussion Guide (45–50 min.)**

1. On pg. 6, Ann M. Garrido lists some of the effects researchers have associated with social media usage. Have you experienced any of these in your own family? Perhaps in your own life? Which ones concern you most?
2. Share the Personal Social Media Purpose Statement you arrived at on p. 10. What did you discover when you compared your purpose statement with your actual posts/tweets? Did they seem aligned?
3. In Chapters 2 and 3, Garrido makes a distinction between assessing news stories for accuracy vs. assessing news stories for bias. How do you understand this distinction and why is it important? What tips have you found especially helpful for determining the accuracy of a story?
4. In your assessment of your own feed were you able to find examples of stories that were inaccurate / from sources without journalistic credibility? Does this surprise you? (p. 24)
5. In your reflection of your own reading patterns, do you notice that you tend to read from sources that lean in a particular direction? (p. 33) What do you do to try to widen your perspective while still valuing accuracy of reporting?

## **Closing Prayer (5 minutes)**

*Light candle again. Allow a few seconds of silence so that members can focus on God.*

Let us pray together Pope Francis' prayer from the 2018 World Day of Communications found on the back page of the discussion guide:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Help us to recognize the evil latent in a communication that does not build communion.

Help us to remove the venom from our judgments.

Help us to speak about others as our brothers and sisters.

You are faithful and trustworthy; may our words be seeds of goodness for the world:

where there is shouting, let us practice listening;

where there is confusion, let us inspire harmony;

where there is ambiguity, let us bring clarity;

where there is exclusion, let us offer solidarity;

where there is sensationalism, let us use sobriety;

where there is superficiality, let us raise real questions;

where there is prejudice, let us awaken trust;

where there is hostility, let us bring respect;

where there is falsehood, let us bring truth.

Amen.

# SESSION TWO

## Preparatory Reading: Chapter 4 through Chapter 6 (pp. 35–64)

### Opening Prayer (5–10 minutes)

*Invite participants to once again silence their phones and place them face down in the center of the table (or in a drawer) as an indication of their desire to be fully present to the conversation at hand.*

The last time that we gathered, we began by reading the very short parable of the Leaven. Today as we gather, let's begin with a reading of the parable of the True Vine in which Jesus describes the kind of "connectivity" that he wants to have with us.

*Light candle and read from the Bible John 15:1-12*

Lord, you are the Vine; we are branches—so intimately connected to you that it is impossible to tell where you end and we begin. But it is not only you that we are connected to; it is also one another. The same sap runs through all of us. We are all branches of one Vine. And if injury happens to one branch, all of us are affected. As we re-gather for conversation on our use of social media, we pause to be grateful for the ways that these new modes of communication can help us to remain connected to one another and to you. We are grateful for how they can help build up life in your Vine.

But we also pause to be attentive to the ways in which damage to one branch impacts the whole of the Vine. We ask you this evening to raise our awareness of our interconnectedness with one another and the impact that our words and actions can have on one another. We ask you to bless our conversation and lead us to new insight. May all we do here deepen our relationship with you and each other.

In the name of Christ, the True Vine, we pray,

Amen.

### Discussion of Questions Provided in the Discussion Guide (45–50 min.)

1. It is commonly observed that people treat others online in a much harsher fashion than they treat others in person. Garrido offers a couple of hypotheses as to why this might be, but what do you think? Do you see yourself treating people online differently than you might in person? What do you attribute that to?
2. Do you tend to engage in conversations on social media or do you tend to be more of a "scroller" (reading, but not participating in the conversations)? If you tend not to engage, why? If you do tend to engage, what have you experienced as the pros and cons of trying to have actual conversation on social media?
3. Can you describe a situation in which somebody posted something that really offended you or you were negatively impacted? Did this change the way that you thought of the other person and their motivations?

# SESSION TWO

4. Can you describe a situation in which you posted something that others took offense to? When they let you know, how did you react to their negative response? Did it change the way that you thought of the other person or their motivations? How do your answers here compare to your answers in Question #3? What conclusions would you draw from the comparison?

5. What did you discover in doing the exercise “Where Am I On the Outrage-O-Meter” (p. 62-63)? What have you found to be the best strategies for managing your experience of anger/offense on social media?

## **Closing Prayer (5 minutes)**

*Light candle again. Allow a few seconds of silence so that members can focus on God.*

Let us pray Pope Francis’ prayer from the 2018 World Day of Communications found in the back of your discussion guides:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Help us to recognize the evil latent in a communication that does not build communion.

Help us to remove the venom from our judgments.

Help us to speak about others as our brothers and sisters.

You are faithful and trustworthy; may our words be seeds of goodness for the world:

where there is shouting, let us practice listening;

where there is confusion, let us inspire harmony;

where there is ambiguity, let us bring clarity;

where there is exclusion, let us offer solidarity;

where there is sensationalism, let us use sobriety;

where there is superficiality, let us raise real questions;

where there is prejudice, let us awaken trust;

where there is hostility, let us bring respect;

where there is falsehood, let us bring truth.

Amen.

# SESSION THREE

## Preparatory Reading: Chapter 7 through Epilogue (pp. 65–94)

### Opening Prayer (5–10 minutes)

The last two times that we met we ended our sessions with praying together Pope Francis' prayer from the 2018 World Day of Communications. For our final session, let us again place our phones screen down in the center of the table (or in a drawer), but instead of ending with Pope Francis' prayer, let us start with that prayer as it recalls some of the themes we've talked about the last two times that we met. Let us pray it asking God's blessing on our discussion this (morning / afternoon / evening).

*Light candle again. Allow a few seconds of silence so that members can focus on God.*

Let us pray:

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Help us to recognize the evil latent in a communication that does not build communion.

Help us to remove the venom from our judgments.

Help us to speak about others as our brothers and sisters.

You are faithful and trustworthy; may our words be seeds of goodness for the world:

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where there is superficiality, let us raise real questions;

where there is prejudice, let us awaken trust;

where there is hostility, let us bring respect;

where there is falsehood, let us bring truth.

Amen.

### Discussion of Questions Provided in the Discussion Guide (45–50 min.)

1. Do you have any family practices around the presence of devices in the home? At the dinner table? Before bed? On a scale of 1–10, how well are they working for you / your family?

2. What did you discover in completing the exercise “Where Is This Relationship Headed?” (pp. 71–73) What did you notice about the number of “strong-tie” and “weak-tie” relationships in your social media circles? Did you choose to cull any? On what grounds?

3. What did you discover in completing the exercise “How Much Time Do I Spend? How Much Time Do I Want to Spend?” (pp. 84–85) Are you content with the amount of time you spend on social media? Did you try to do anything different in time spent on social media leading up to this session? How did it work?



# SESSION THREE

4. Garrido notes that 5-10% of social media users show signs of serious addiction-like behavior related, but that 40% of social media users admit to “feeling addicted” some or most of the time. (p. 80) Do you identify within that group? Is it something that you worry about within your family?

## Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

As we prepare to wrap up our sessions with one another, I invite you to turn to p. 97 of your book *#Rules\_of\_Engagement* (or if you have a digital copy of the book, scroll to the Appendix at the end of the book). In our prayer tonight, we'll have the chance to recap the eight habits covered by the book and sign on to them in our own lives.

*Check to see if there are eight people in the group who would each be willing to read one, or note that we will move around the circle and each person can read one or say “pass.”*

*Light candle and give participants a few moments to re-settle.*

Lord, as we come to the close of our time together, we remember the habits that we talked about with one another, quietly calling to mind insights that had during our discussion of these habits, including perhaps awareness of times when we have failed to live up to one of these habits in our own social media use, ready to do better unto the future.

*Have participants read the habits one by one with a pause in between each.*

If you feel ready to sign on to these habits in your own social media use, I invite you to sign p. 99 in the book, and to pass your copy of the book to one other person in the group who you already connect with on social media (or would like to!) and invite them to be your accountability partner. (If sessions are being conducted virtually, you could skip this part or verbally ask another person to be an accountability partner.)

*Allow a moment for everyone who is able to sign.*

During each our sessions, we've begun by placing our phones face down in the center of the table (or in a nearby drawer). Now let us take our phones back into our hands and open photos to focus your camera on the QR code at the end of the discussion guide or p. 97 of the book *#Rules\_of\_Engagement*.



# SESSION THREE

*If you feel ready to make your signing of the eight habits public, go ahead and type your name into the list of people who've promised to consistently "be good and do good online."*

*Allow a moment for everyone who is able to sign on.*

Finally, with phones in hand, let us close our eyes and pause to be grateful to God for the gift of this technology, which has the potential to do a lot of harm in our world, but also has the potential to do tremendous good. Pause. Let us pause to be grateful for the people that it connects us to. Pause. The good news that we would not be aware of. Pause. The good deeds that we would not have been able to do if we were not connected through our devices. Pause.

Lord, as we take leave of this space, we ask you to bless our devices and all of the ways that we use them in daily life. May we find ways of using new technologies and new ways of communicating to further the coming of your Kingdom in this world. May they never distract us from the doing of good, but rather be a tool of good whenever we use them. In a particular way, Lord, we ask that in the way we engage our devices, we might become better parents, better witnesses of Christian living for our children, whom we love so, so much and only want the best for.

We ask this in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit,

Amen.