Session Guide:
Spirituality Matters

Session at a Glance
What is spirituality? What practices nourish one’s spiritual life and define one’s spirituality? This session develops rich and varied responses to these two questions. It is well suited for those who are new to conversations about spiritual practices or those who have a desire to be more intentional about their spiritual growth. It is an ideal beginning for a series of sessions on Catholic Spiritual Practices.

Session Goals
By the end of the session participants will be able to:

• Articulate a definition/description of spirituality
• Identify what spiritual practices constitute their spiritual life
• Give examples of practices of prayer, care, and discernment
• Make a decision for how to nurture their own spiritual growth
Options for Session Format

**Hour Session (approximately 60 minutes)**
Welcome and Prayer
Engaging the Conversation – video and conversation
Engaging the Tradition – video
Engaging Faith for Life – conversation
Closing

**Session with Practice (approximately 1 hour 15 minutes)**
Welcome and Prayer
Engaging the Conversation – video and conversation
Engaging the Tradition – video
Engaging Faith for Life – conversation
Introduce a practice
Closing
Before the Session

What to Decide Before This Session

• how you will arrange the space in which you are holding the event (viewing screen, how to seat people so that group conversation is easy, e.g., round tables)
• how you will access C21 Engage videos during the session (DVD, download, or access live from internet)
• which prayer options you will use and how participants will access them (e.g., view on a screen or read aloud)
• how the participants will view the conversation questions (e.g., displayed on the screen or have individual copies, etc.)
• if you will share a recommended reading and how participants will access the reading (e.g., provide internet address, provide copies to participants)

Materials Needed

• name badges and pens
• C21 Engage videos
• projector and screen
• computer
• copies of/participant access to opening prayer option
• copies of book Catholic Spiritual Practices: A Treasury of Old and New for distribution to participants (optional)
• copies of conversation questions handout (optional)
• C21 Engage prayer cards (if needed for closing prayer)
Overview of Session
The session begins by viewing a video of four brief interviews with Catholics who describe what spirituality means to them and what spiritual practices have been beneficial in their lives. After the initial discussion, participants view a video featuring Dr. Colleen M. Griffith. Griffith challenges the viewer to embrace an understanding of spirituality that includes nurturing our relationship with God, others, and the world. She identifies three areas of spiritual practice that are deeply embedded in the Catholic Christian tradition – prayer, care, and discernment for spiritual growth – and gives examples of each category. She encourages viewers to consider the spiritual practices that shape their lives now and the mentors who have illuminated their spiritual path. After viewing the video, participants will have an opportunity to reflect together on the practices that shape their spirituality.

Biographical Sketch of Presenter in Video
Colleen M. Griffith, Th.D., Associate Professor of the Practice of Spirituality and Director of Spirituality Studies, holds her Doctorate in Theology from Harvard University Divinity School. She works at the intersection of theology and spirituality and her publications, public lectures and addresses reflect this intersection. In addition to her full-time teaching, Griffith directs and oversees the Post-Masters Certificate Program in the Practice of Spirituality.
Session Details

Welcome and Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

- Briefly welcome the entire group. (Keep in mind that participants need to be seated conveniently near to conversation partners. You may want to ask participants to move now so that conversation can flow easily.)
- Have each person briefly introduce themselves to those in their conversation circle.
- Use the prayer experience to open the meeting: http://youtu.be/eV_jlNHwYX0

Engaging the Conversation

Video (7 minutes)

View video of four persons answering the questions “What is spirituality?” and “Name or briefly describe a spiritual practice from which you benefit”: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=horLjtqi5L0

Initial Conversation (13 minutes)

Invite participants to discuss the following questions. (Note: If you are facilitating more than one group at the same time, see the suggested strategy in the Facilitator’s Guide.)

Conversation questions:
1. Select one of the persons interviewed in the video and tell those in your conversation circle why you resonate with the responses he or she gave to the questions.
2. How would you have responded to the questions asked?

Engaging the Tradition

Video (6 minutes)

View the presentation by Dr. Colleen Griffith, who introduces the viewer to a rich portrait of spirituality and spiritual practices deeply rooted in the Catholic Christian tradition: http://youtu.be/c3067MXTMKg
Engaging Faith for Life (20 minutes)
Invite participants to discuss the following questions.

Conversation questions:
1. Who has influenced your spiritual practices? How has this person helped you shape your spirituality?
2. How would you build on or amend the description of spirituality with which you began this session?
3. What surprised or challenged you in the presentations in this session?
4. What spiritual wisdom from this session do you wish to make your own?

Optional: Introduce a Practice

Invite participants to reflect more deeply on the variety of spiritual practices presented in this session. (Note: You may glean from this exercise some ideas for future programming.)

Review with them the three areas of spiritual practices: prayer, care, and discernment. Give each participant a handout that has a section for each area of spiritual practices and lists the specific examples that Dr. Griffith mentioned. (Handout is a separate document.) Ask each participant to spend a moment (3 minutes) studying the list and identifying:

- which practices on the list they would name as part of their spirituality
- other practices they would like to add to the list
- practices they would consider but have not yet tried

After they have had time to reflect quietly, ask them to share with each other:
- What other practices would you add? Does each practice belong to prayer, care, or spiritual growth?
- What practices have you considered but not yet tried? What attracts you to that practice? How can you make it your own?
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Series Theme: Catholic Spiritual Practices
Session 1: Spirituality Matters

Closing (5 minutes)

• Alert participants to the take-home items you have for them.
• Announce any future events you have planned.
• Thank by name anyone who has contributed to the success of the event.
• Close with the C21 Engage Prayer or another prayer option.
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Delving Deeper:
Further Resources for Participants

Recommended Reading
Colleen M. Griffith and Thomas H. Groome’s Catholic Spiritual Practices: A Treasury of Old and New (Paraclete Press, 2012) is an ideal companion to the sessions in the Catholic Spiritual Practices topic. It is not necessary for participants to have the book in order to fully participate in any of the sessions. If you wish to refer to the book, invite participants to look over the Table of Contents and to read the introduction by Colleen M. Griffith, “Catholic Spirituality in Practice.”

The C21 Engage topic Catholic Spiritual Practices is based on the Spring 2009 issue of C21 Resources entitled “Catholic Spirituality in Practice.” Griffith’s article that introduces the issue is a good overview. The Table of Contents of the issue also provides support for the richly textured and varied practices in the Catholic faith.

http://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/top/church21/pdf/Spring_2009.pdf
http://issuu.com/church21c/docs/spirituality_practice

Further Resources

C21 VIDEO: Thomas H. Groome is featured in “Old Gold: Reclaiming Some Traditional Spiritual Practices”: http://www.bc.edu/content/bc/church21/webcast.html?C21_03.10.09_Groome_256K_Stream.mp4#feature-area

James Martin, S.J., describes a healing service in which he participated while on a retreat: http://americamagazine.org/issue/where-spirit-moves-you