

# Facilitator Guide

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St. Francis de Sales  
Holland, Michigan

## Purpose

To continue the energy and momentum of the New Life retreat by sharing and listening to one another's story and to strengthen your relationship with Christ and His Church by reflecting on the Sunday readings.

## Expectations

1. Come prepared having read and reflected on the Sunday Readings and the assigned questions from the Quest Booklet
2. Build and sustain a welcoming environment
3. Start and end sessions on time
4. Prepare an opening and closing prayer or assign this task out (use song whenever possible)
5. You may arrange for snacks and drinks (i.e. ask participants to rotate this responsibility)

## Ground Rules (for preparation to facilitate)

1. CONFIDENTIALITY:  
What is shared in the group stays in the group. We hold things shared in the group confidential unless given permission to share these things with people outside the group.
2. TRANSPARENCY:  
It's difficult to love someone as God called us to do without really knowing the person in a deep and meaningful way. You are encouraged to share from your heart—to let down your walls so that others can really know you—not just your struggles and fears, but also your victories and hopes. Your facilitator(s) should challenge you while respecting your boundaries.
3. NO CROSS-TALK:  
Be considerate of others as they are sharing by not engaging in side conversations.
4. DON'T FIX:  
Try to hear what people are sharing without trying to fix them. If they want your advice, they'll ask for it. If people think that as soon as they share a problem or issue everyone is going to immediately try to fix them (offer advice/solutions), often they simply won't share at all.
5. LISTEN:  
Let's value one another during the discussions by really listening to what is being shared. Don't be thinking about what you're going to say next or how you're going to respond. Really listen.
6. PAUSE:  
After someone shares, give pause to allow the group to feel the weight of what was just shared, and to fully consider it before the next person shares. This also provides the person sharing with the opportunity to continue with their thought without feeling rushed. Often people will only share

what's above the waterline, but if given the opportunity (and encouragement), they might share the deeper things.

7. SILENCE:

This is much like the pause but used in a broader and more deliberate way. Silence is used to wait for someone to share next without trying to fill the void with talk. Silence can create tension in a group, but tension isn't a bad thing if used wisely.

8. DON'T RELEASE THE TENSION:

It takes a lot of trust and emotional energy for someone to share deeply. It's like pushing a rubber ball filled with air underneath the water. The deeper they push the ball, the more energy it takes. When someone is sharing deeply, this can be highly emotional and can cause a sense of tension in the group. This can make people feel uncomfortable, resulting in the desire to relieve the tension. People do this by making jokes, trying to comfort the person sharing, diverting the conversation, creating a disturbance, or hijacking the conversation completely. When this happens, the "ball" pops back up to the surface. The person sharing then needs to decide if they want to invest the emotional energy to push the ball back beneath the surface. More often than not, they will simply stop sharing.

9. DON'T RESCUE:

When people are sharing something deeply personal and/or painful, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation. Often this will cause people to stop sharing and results in their not going as deep as they might have gone. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

10. USE "I" STATEMENTS:

It's easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Try to use "I" statements rather than "them", "the church", "us", "we", etc.

11. BE SELF-AWARE:

Be self-aware of how you are personally effecting the environment—words, actions, and non-verbal communication.

12. PERSONAL APPLICATION: It's important that we all use this time to consider where we stand on any given subject or issue. How am I "walking this out" in my personal life? How does this affect my ability to lead others? What is my part of the issue and/or solution? What positive change does God want me to make?

## Gathering Outline

1. Pray – Open with prayer
2. Hear – Read the Gospel out loud
3. Reflect – This is the time you work through the questions in the Quest Booklet
4. Action plan – Discuss what participants plan to do or change in light of the gathering's theme
5. Pray – End with prayer