

# GREATER LOVE

## Scriptures:

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” -John 15:13

## Exegesis:

The coincidence of confirmation preparations and greater love is, in my mind, at this question: how is what we are about to do going to impact our lives for the future? In Confirmation, candidates are choosing full initiation into the Catholic faith and inviting the Holy Spirit to descend upon their opened hearts as it did at Pentecost. So further relevant questions for candidates to ponder would necessarily include:

1. How is my life within the Catholic faith going to be different than my life would be outside of it?
2. What sorts of things can the Holy Spirit give me that will make my life visibly and tangibly different?

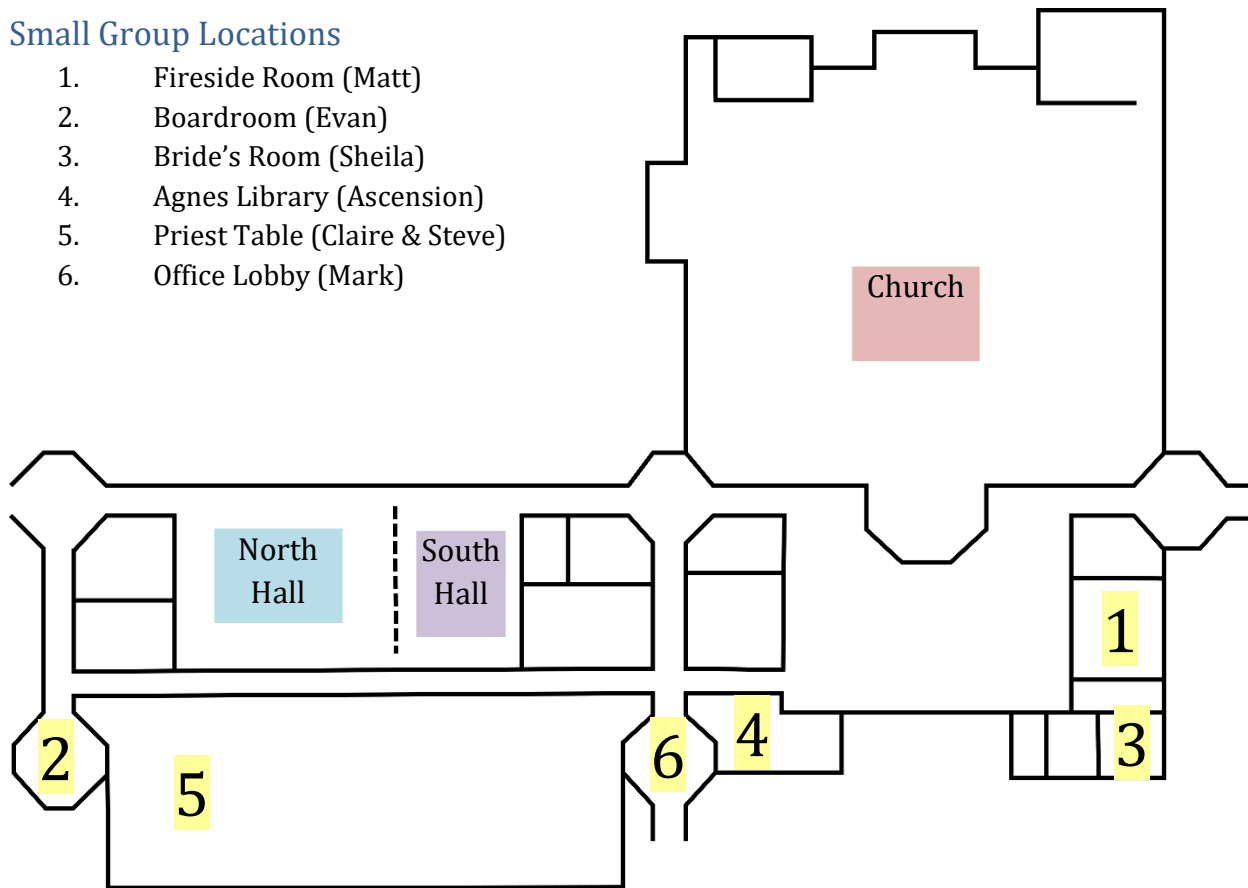
Our proposal with our first Sunday Meeting “Greater Love” is that life within the Catholic faith will grant candidates the ability to love more deeply than would otherwise be possible. Literally, we are capable of ‘greater love’ by being Catholic, by participating in lives of devotion and attentiveness to the brilliant theological thought handed down for centuries through Tradition. We also propose that the reception of the Holy Spirit—and the gifts the Spirit awakens in us—will make us capable of ‘greater love.’

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12:30-12:35pm:	Break			
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12:55-1:25pm:	Small Group 2			
12:25-1:55pm:	Adoration/Confession			
1:55-2:00pm:	Coordinator Send-Forth			
2:00-2:20pm:	Adult Leader Check-In			

## Small Group Locations

1. Fireside Room (Matt)
2. Boardroom (Evan)
3. Bride's Room (Sheila)
4. Agnes Library (Ascension)
5. Priest Table (Claire & Steve)
6. Office Lobby (Mark)



## SMALL GROUP 1: Father Ryan, Greater Love

### Activity:

1. Name Game
2. Two Truths & A Lie
3. Other

### Discussion Questions:

1. Were there any words, phrases, or ideas from Father's talk that stood out to you?
2. Think of a moment when you felt incredibly known and loved. Write it down in your journal.
  - a. What was that experience like?
  - b. Who was involved?
  - c. What happened?
  - d. At what point during the experience did you become aware that love was reaching you?
3. Who, from your life, has taught you how to love?
  - a. How?
  - b. What characteristics do these people have?
4. How do you hope to love?
  - a. Now, in your current daily life?
  - b. In the future?
  - c. What do you think of love as it relates to your vocation?

Practical: What's one way we can apply this to our lives in the next week?

## SMALL GROUP 2: Father Mike Schmitz, “If You’re Not Feeling Loved”

### Activity

#### Questions:

1. “It hurts when that person who is supposed to love me doesn’t love me.” When was a time when you know you didn’t love someone else well? Why did that happen?
2. Often there is something going on in our own lives that prevents us from loving well. What are some of those things for you? What are your own struggles that prevent you from loving others well?
3. How do we show that we love another?
4. Optional: the five love languages are quality time, words of affirmation, physical touch, acts of service, and gift giving. Which do you like to show or receive?
5. There is a father in heaven who loves me. I am not going to wait for another person to give me what the Father has already given me. There are times when the people who are supposed to love us don’t love us. Father Mike suggests we turn to God for love, as his love will never be taken from us. Why do we so often not trust in God’s love for us? What makes the love of God difficult to perceive?
6. How do we feel the love of God directly? In adoration. In the Mass.

Practical: What’s one way we can apply this to our lives in the next week?

Prepare for Adoration & Confessions

### Small Group Roster

There are three girl groups and three boy groups. Groups are split up randomly, but comprised of a mix of Catholic and public students.

#### Matt

- Isabel Baker
- Lauren Cobb
- Makayla Everson
- Victoria Fabricious
- Molly-Kate Atkinson
- Alyssa Bivian
- Jasmin Ceballos
- Grace Guderski

#### Sheila

- Mariana Fields
- Emily Hahn
- Reese Neumann
- Alyx Sabel
- Elizabeth Lopez
- Clare Maurer
- Ashley Patino
- Hannah Seurer
- Elizabeth Ibarra

#### Evan

- Maxwell Atkinson
- Ethan Basler
- Brayden Eigenbrodt
- Nathan Gindt
- Jordan Patterson
- Reed McCauley

#### Mark

- Dominik Baseley
- Hayden Diedrich
- Gilberto Hernandez
- Austin Hughes
- Ryker Johnson
- Uriel Lopez
- Mitchell Ludtke

#### Claire & Steve

- Alicia Tank
- Alaina Vogds
- Morgan Timblin
- Leslie Patino
- Lynsey Streeter
- Madeline Waldo
- Rachel Zimmerman
- Vanessa Barona

#### Ascension

- Benjamin McGuire
- Henry Wagner
- Elias Morales
- Jairo Morales
- Carter Moyer
- Alvaro Ramirez

## GREATER POWER

### Scriptures:

"But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." – 2 Corinthians 12:9

"Christ, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." – Philippians 2:1-11

Jesus said to them, "Amen, I say to you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. When John came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe him; but tax collectors and prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you did not later change your minds and believe him." – Matthew 21:28-32

### Exegesis:

Paul offers these words when confronted with a 'thorn in the flesh,' a trial he found to be particularly difficult. In reflecting on this, we are invited to bring our own trials, thorns, and weaknesses to Christ, who perfects them. We are the hands and feet of God on earth, and He makes perfect our weaknesses, manifesting his power through us.

Notice how Christ exemplifies this (Philippians 2:1-11). At the climactic moment of his life on Earth, Christ models this in his Passion, entrusting the weakness of his human frame to the Father. By offering up his weak body, Christ establishes power over death, enabling humanity to taste the joys of heaven.

Consider also Christ's words in the Gospel (Matt 21:28-32). Those conventionally considered as 'lessers' in that society are nearer to salvation than their pious contemporaries.

So we invite our candidates to consider Confirmation, stepping fully into the life & activity of the Church, as a moment of profound self-offering, one within which they offer their gifts as well as their weaknesses, so that God's power may be made perfect through the Church's members.

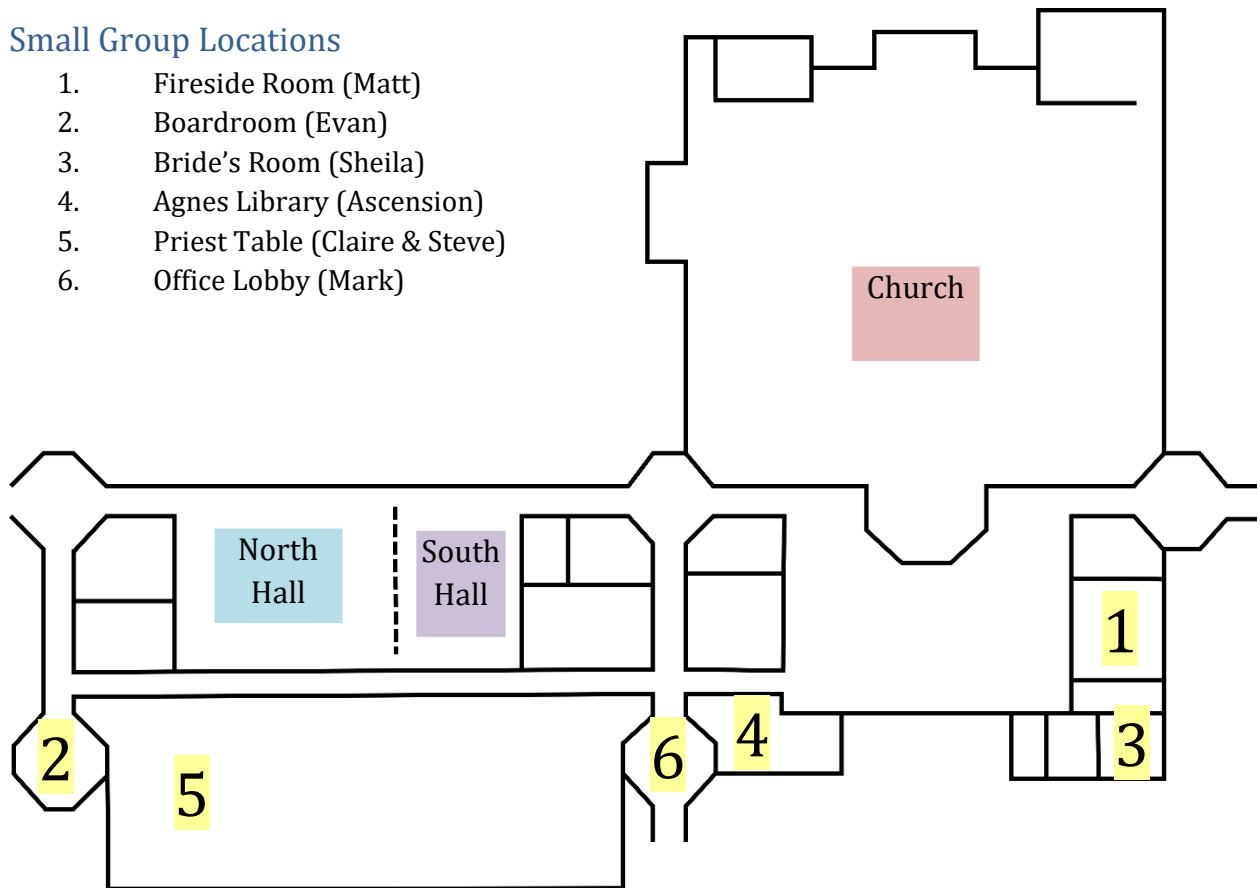
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## SMALL GROUP 1

Questions:

Acts 2:1-4: When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.

1. What are some images of power that we see here? What images of power do we ascribe to the Holy Spirit? What do you think it will feel like to get confirmed? How do you imagine the Spirit descending?

Acts 4:13-14: Observing the boldness of Peter and John and perceiving them to be uneducated, ordinary men, they were amazed, and they recognized them as the companions of Jesus. Then when they saw the man who had been cured standing there with them, they could say nothing in reply.

2. In what ways are we each ordinary? In what ways are we special? How have your gifts benefitted others? What do you have to offer the world around you? How do you make the world a better place through your life?

2 Corinthians 12:1-10: I must boast; not that it is profitable, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know someone in Christ who, fourteen years ago (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows), was caught up to the third heaven. And I know that this person (whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows) was caught up into Paradise and heard ineffable things, which no one may utter. About this person I will boast, but about myself I will not boast, except about my weaknesses. Although if I should wish to boast, I would not be foolish, for I would be telling the truth. But I refrain, so that no one may think more of me than what he sees in me or hears from me because of the abundance of the revelations. Therefore, that I might not become too elated, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

3. What are the difficulties that face people your age today? What are the difficulties that you face? Do you ask God to help you through these difficulties or to remove them, as Paul does? Why or why not?

Practical: What's one way we can apply this to our lives in the next week?

## SMALL GROUP 2

Sample Structure (~30 minutes)

Opening Prayer: Our Father

Questions:

1. What words or ideas stood out to you from the video? In what ways are you weak? In what ways are you broken? Of what are you afraid? Are you weak enough to be Catholic, broken enough to follow God's call, and afraid enough to throw yourself upon his power?
2. "I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed." How can we offer ourselves well to God? What do most people give him? What are you personally willing to give him?

Practical: What's one way we can apply this to our lives in the next week?

Prepare for Adoration & Confessions

## GREATER Living

### Scriptures:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. What profit would there be for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what can one give in exchange for his life? For the Son of Man will come with his angels in his Father’s glory, and then he will repay everyone according to his conduct.” – Matthew 16:24-27

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” – Matthew 25:31-46

### Exegesis:

Our invitation to candidates with the theme of “Greater Living” is to consider the ways in which being Catholic calls us to live in a profoundly different or unexpected way. In this passage from Matthew 16, Christ invites his followers to a life of radical love through sacrifice, dying to self for the sake of others in the taking up of our own particular crosses, itself an imitative maneuver of Christ. The way we live our lives—our ‘conduct’—clearly has implications for our livelihood in the afterlife as well.

An examination of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy lends itself to this conversation.

Corporal Works of Mercy: these kind acts by which we help our neighbors with their material and physical needs.

- feed the hungry
- shelter the homeless
- clothe the naked
- visit the sick and imprisoned
- bury the dead
- give alms to the poor

Spiritual Works of Mercy: acts of compassion, as listed below, by which we help our neighbors with their emotional and spiritual needs.

- instruct
- advise
- console
- comfort
- forgive
- bear wrongs patiently

We might reflect on these Catholic obligations further by praying with the passage on the Judgment of Nations (the Sheep & the Goats).

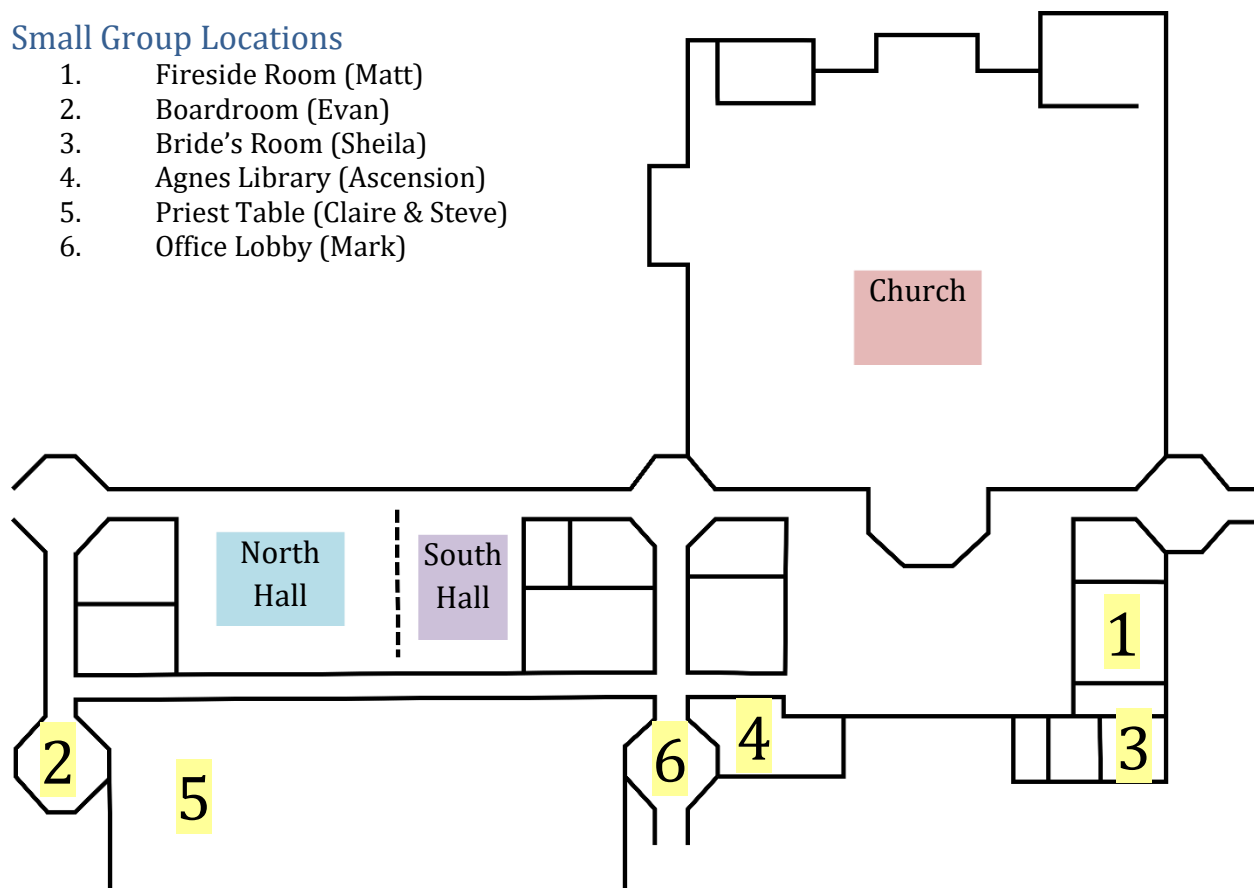
Our invitation to candidates is to consider what parts of their lives are already attentive to these ways of living, and what parts might be amended to be more sheep-like. This is subsumed under our broader claim: professing Catholicism opens us up to a more radical way of living and loving in this world.

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## SMALL GROUP 1

Activity: Up to Adult Leader

Discussion Questions:

1. What words, phrases, or ideas stood out to you from Father John's talk?
2. What activities make your life full? What people make your life full? What ideas make your life full?
3. What fills your heart with joy? What connection can you see between that which fills our hearts and helping others (meeting the needs of others)?
4. Who are people you interact with every day that you can be more attentive to? How can you attend to them? How can you expand your circle of care beyond simply your friends and see and encounter others whose paths you cross?
5. Love of neighbor and personal virtue are the same activity. Who is a person in your life that both prays well, loves well, and cares for others well? How do you pray, love, and care for others?

Practical: What's one way we can apply this to our lives in the next week?

## SMALL GROUP 2

Activity: Up to Adult Leader

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between Striving & Abiding? Give an example of each from your life.
2. The idea of striving helps us understand our call to live life in a particular way: not just in prayer, but in works as well. What are the names of the two categories of striving Andrew gave?
3. The Corporal Works of Mercy: what does the word corporal mean? ("of the body"; these works orient us to meeting the bodily needs of others)
4. The Spiritual Works of Mercy: what does the word spiritual mean? ("of the spirit"; these works orient us to meeting the mental, emotional, and spiritual needs of others).
5. Describe a time when you were the recipient a corporal work of mercy.
6. Describe a time when you were the recipient of a spiritual work of mercy.
7. Describe a time when you met someone's physical needs.
8. Describe a time when you met someone's mental, emotional, or spiritual needs.

Practical: What's one way we can apply this to our lives in the next week?

Preparation for Adoration & Confession

## GREATER MISSION

### Scriptures:

The eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had ordered them. When they saw him, they worshipped, but they doubted. Then Jesus approached and said to them, "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always until the end of the age."

—Matthew 28:16–20

### Exegesis:

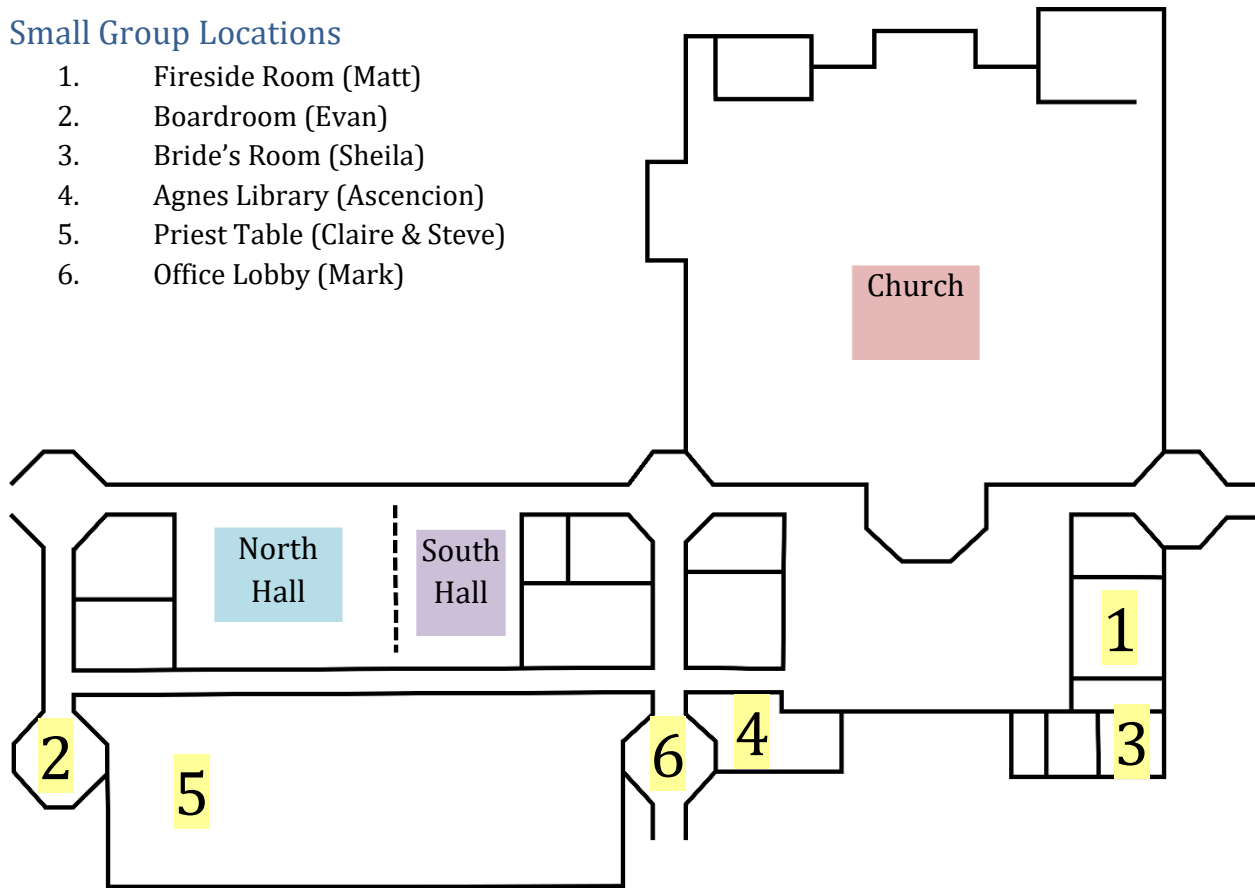
We reflect on the content from last session regarding greater living, in which we examined our Catholic vocation to holiness concretized in the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, and in the carrying of our crosses. The invitation from our Lord in Matthew 28 is to take this understanding of right living and 'go and make disciples.' Mission is what we are called to; evangelization of the world by word and deed. Our faith's end is not to bear only internal fruits. We are sent out. We are called to enter the world and show it radical love. The words that end each Catholic Mass are "go and announce the gospel of the Lord by your life," and we respond, "thanks be to God."

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### SMALL GROUP 1

Activity: Up to Adult Leader

Discussion Questions:

1. What words, phrases, or ideas stood out to you from Father's talk?
2. What did you think of Father's experience as a priest? Would you be able to follow God's call in that way?
3. We think about mission in terms of evangelization, our call to share the good news with the world. What communities or circles are you called to share the gospel with? (for example: friends, teammates, family, coworkers, classmates)
4. What are some obstacles to evangelization, or things that make sharing the gospel difficult?
5. Christ calls his disciples to go and make *more* disciples, 'teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you' (Matthew 28). How are evangelization and the commandments connected? What is the connection between our conversations two weeks ago about greater living and our conversation today about greater mission? Can true evangelization be undertaken without loving and meeting the needs of others (think corporal and spiritual works of mercy from last session)?

Practical: What's one way we can apply this to our lives in the next week?

## SMALL GROUP 2

Activity: Up to Adult Leader

Discussion Questions:

1. What words, phrases, or ideas stood out to you from Father Mike's talk?
2. Evangelizing is introducing people to the person of Jesus, either to Christ himself, to the Church, or to the sacraments. What do you think of this understanding of evangelizing? How is this different from confronting a person?
3. For you, do you think it would be easier to confront or to evangelize? What are the obstacles to confronting (or admonishing) a fellow Christian? What are the obstacles to evangelizing non-Christians?
4. Father Mike says that evangelization so often begins with asking the right questions, not knowing the right answers. Have you ever thought of evangelization in this way? Does this make evangelization less daunting for you?
5. What genuine questions about the meaning of life, the faith, or God would you feel comfortable asking a friend? A family member? What's one thing you can do daily to prepare yourself to ask those questions when the situations arise?

Practical: What's one way we can apply this to our lives in the next week?

Preparation for Adoration & Confession