



You Will Be My Witnesses

Small Groups

Small groups are the engine to propel many dimensions of parish life renewal through relational evangelization. Archbishop Hebda selected the Parish Evangelization Cells System (PECS) as a best practice model for parish-based small group ministry. PECS is a means of renewing parish life by growing the Body of Christ through a unified system of small groups that constantly grow in missionary consciousness, commitment, and zeal. PECS in its fullness encompasses more than merely the “7 moments of a small group” structure for small group meetings, as it is an approach to transform a parish into a “community of communities.”

Small groups are rooted in collaboration between the pastor and parishioners; they foster a mature sense of belonging to the parish, empower the laity to live their baptismal call to be missionary disciples in daily relationships, and deepen intimacy with God through daily prayer, attentiveness to the Holy Spirit, and regular Eucharistic adoration.

The elements described below use the acronym P.A.S.T.A. to **unite all types of parish small groups** under the vision of the pastor. Integrating these practices has proven to cultivate fruitful small-group parishes. Small Groups that have the elements of P.A.S.T.A. may be included on the Archdiocese’s GroupVitals database of small groups.

KEY ELEMENTS

P.A.S.T.A. - The Essentials of Small Groups and a Small Group Parish (Pastor · Adore · Send · Teach · Accompany)

P: Pastor

Pastors exercise spiritual fatherhood to small groups who look to him for leadership and shepherding. He approves content for groups and discerns an annual initiative for groups **to serve** the parish.

A: Adore

Adoration of Jesus in the **Blessed Sacrament** and worship in the **Liturgy** are the places of encounter with Christ today. Leaders pray regularly before the Eucharist and invite participants to Eucharistic events at the Parish.

S: Send

Jesus, through the Church, sends his disciples as missionaries to make other disciples. Parishioners develop a **close relationship with the Holy Spirit**, and through his inspiration intercede for and witness faith to people in their daily relationships, inviting newcomers to encounter Christ.

T: Teach

Ongoing formation in the Christian life is essential to following Christ. You cannot love what you do not know or give what you do not have. Teachings of small groups focus primarily on living as missionary disciples in daily life, and in other circumstances focuses on catechesis for a particular need.

A: Accompany

Every individual and group is a community of disciples that walks with and forms new disciples. Accompaniment is unique to every individual. A structure of accompaniment flows from the pastor down to each small group participant.

P.A.S.T.A. is an integration of all the essential elements of the PECS model.



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A DEEPER DIVE: SMALL GROUPS AND SMALL GROUP PARISHES

P: Pastor - For small groups to be firmly rooted in the parish, a Pastor shepherds his flock by discerning and approving content. Ideally, one teaching option for the whole parish. Additionally, small groups support an annual **service** to the parish which is discerned by the pastor.

A: Adore - Knowing that the Eucharist is the source of Christian life and mission, leaders pray regularly before the Eucharist, and invite their small group **into parish adoration, holy hours and the Mass**. Teachings in the small group can align with homilies or the liturgical year to connect the group to the parish at large.

S: Send - Evangelization is the Church's deepest identity. Evangelization flows from prayer and a lived experience of the Holy Spirit. Small group members pray daily to intercede for their *oikos*, (people in their daily relationships) to encounter God's love. Members of small groups learn to witness, share faith, discern charisms, serve their neighbor through **works of mercy**, inviting new members and raising new leaders so groups can grow and multiply.

T: Teach - Two types of content shape missionary disciples:

Living missionary discipleship in daily life: These teachings may be what most small groups of the parish use. It is simple, kerygmatic, tied to daily life, and empowers members to embrace and share the Gospel. This content allows for new members to easily join at any point and keeps the groups continually open to new members. This content can follow parish homilies or yearly themes, and helps unite the whole of the parish by every group using the same material.

Catechesis for Particular Needs: These teachings form members in a certain focus area and become a pathway to the Gospel Living in Daily Life teachings. After finishing formation for a particular need, groups continue by learning the Gospel living in daily life content. Examples include: OCIA, marriage prep, baptism prep and liturgical ministry formation. Other small groups such as Walking With Purpose, Reachmore, Cana Family Institute, Team of Our Lady, Catholic Watchmen small groups and other similar groups can consider using Gospel Living content in certain seasons to more firmly attach themselves to the parish.

A: Accompany - Personal, pastoral, and spiritual formation flows from the pastor to ECT and on to leaders who support small group members who accompany their *oikos* (daily relationships). The ECT/Division Leaders accompany small group leaders through training, visits, accompaniment groups of 4 small group leaders with an ECT/Division Leader, or other forms of mentoring. Additionally, small groups stay small (5-12 people) so leaders can accompany members personally and strive to use the 7 Moments during the 1.5-hour-long meetings.

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