

Communication in a Christian Community:

God created us as communal beings to live in communion with Him and one another. Communication is, in essence, all about giving and receiving a message. We send and receive messages every day to one another, many, many times each day; hopefully, we will strive to do this effectively, honestly, and positively. However, in most cases, the message given by the speaker is not always the message received by the listener; how could this be if the exchange of words was shared by the two of them? Misinterpretation can lead to miscommunication, confusion, chaos and conflict.

One of the biggest benefits of joining a Catholic Pastoral Group is the sense of community and belonging. This includes communicating with others who share the love of Christ and who have similar concerns and interests. Feeling appreciated and being welcomed as a valued member of the group gives us that sense of belonging. There are many different ways a sense of community can be achieved and communication can be strengthened:

1. The Holy Eucharist is "the source and summit of the Christian life" (LG 11). Center your activities on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. We can't give what we don't have; our own communication with God will be reflected in our communication with others.
2. Remain active in your parish helping others within and outside your group; be generous and strive to put God's given talents to the good of the whole community.
3. Build social time into business meetings so people can talk informally and get to know each other or catch up on the non-ministry stuff. A good place for this to happen is before or after the meeting, offer refreshments if possible.
4. Plan some fun activities! All work and no play makes for a boring group anyway! Celebrate special occasions with activities away from business meetings.
5. Show appreciation for a job well done. Nothing strengthens spirit as much as taking the time to acknowledge dedication, recognizing good work in others and in you. Be grateful for other people's contributions to the mission of the group.
6. Make sure all members; especially new members are made to feel welcome at group meetings. (You want them to come back) You can show this by:
 - Welcome people at the door and work on remembering their names.
 - Personally thank people for coming and later, for their input.
 - Sit next to someone different at each meeting (avoid cliques at all cost).
 - Value *everyone's* input; no matter how you feel about what was said, find something positive to say about the input.
 - Celebrate people's talents and skills. Know your own!!!
 - Accept people's shortcomings. Know your own!!!
 - Don't take yourself, or the group, too seriously.
 - Make sure everyone participates at some level.

Open communication is the vital foundation for every relationship, from the workplace to friendships, to groups or communities, where it is essential in order to understand and help each other. Without communication one cannot see what is truly motivating the other, or what his or her ideas and intentions are. Nor can we live in communion, learning or growing spiritually. Communication's most powerful tool is not speaking but listening. If you failed to listen you have failed to communicate well.