

GPCSD Leadership Academy Opening Retreat  
January 20, 2018

Tranquille Hall – St. Joseph Church

*Place chairs in 1 large circle.*

**Opening Reflection:**

Our District Faith theme this year is **“Discovering Your Mission in Life.”**

God has a challenge for us: to look, act, and live differently. Our mission is to challenge and change the status quo, not accept it. Be a “Disciple” that changes the world!

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius writes, “I will stand for the space of an Our Father, a step or two before the place where I am to meditate or contemplate, and with my mind raised on high, consider that God our Lord beholds me. Then I will make an act of reverence or humility.” This is a beautiful and simple way of entering sacred space. I am not alone with my thoughts and feelings. God is here with me. So I can say to Him, “Here I am, Lord.”

Let me repeat this inwardly several times. Here I am, Lord. Here I am, in this place, for this day. Here I am, Lord, as I am, just as I am, not as I feel I ought to be. No, here I am, just as I am, with all my real thoughts, real feelings, real worries and concerns, and also my deeper wishes and desires. I come before You, Lord, just as I am.

- from *Sacred Space*

**Opening Hymn:**                      **Here I Am, Lord**

I, the Lord of sea and sky,  
I have heard My people cry.  
All who dwell in dark and sin,  
My hand will save.  
I who made the stars of night,  
I will make their darkness bright.  
Who will bear My light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

**Refrain:**

Here I am Lord, Is it I Lord?

I have heard You calling in the night.  
I will go Lord, if You lead me.  
I will hold Your people in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have born my peoples pain.  
I have wept for love of them, They turn away.  
I will break their hearts of stone,  
Give them hearts for love alone.  
I will speak My word to them,  
Whom shall I send?

### **Refrain**

I, the Lord of wind and flame,  
I will tend the poor and lame.  
I will set a feast for them,  
My hand will save  
Finest bread I will provide,  
Till their hearts be satisfied.  
I will give My life to them,  
Whom shall I send?

### **Refrain**

Leader: May God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit be with you.

**All: And also with you.**

Leader: Believing that God is indeed with us, let us listen to God's Word, which reminds us of the gifts we have received.

Reader 1: A reading from Paul's letter to the Christians at Philippi:

"I thank my God for each of you whenever I think of you. My constant prayers for you are a real joy, for they bring to mind how we have worked together for the gospel from the earliest days until now. I feel sure that the One who has begun this great work in you will go on developing it, until the day when Jesus comes again in glory."  
The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

Reader 2: God has given us an amazing variety of gifts for which to give thanks: the created world with all its mysterious cycles and changes; natural wonders like waterfalls and rainbows; flowers in spring, the summer sun, glorious colors in the fall; the calm, cold quiet of winter.

Reader 3: God has given us our bodies and our minds; our hands and feet to do our bidding; our lips to smile and our ears to hear; our mouths with which to communicate and enjoy food and drink.

Reader 4: God has given us a human spirit that neither the created world or our bodies can contain: a spirit that composes music and poetry; a courageous spirit that serves those in need; a spirit that ultimately overcomes evil with good; a spirit that never gives up its search for meaning and truth.

Reader 5: God has given us other people: spouses and children, family and friends, co-workers and those with whom we minister; unique people, none of whom are exactly the same; people who sometimes give us joy, sometimes burden us; people who love and care for us unconditionally; people who need us and depend on us...

Leader: Let us pause now to reflect on one personal talent, or one gift of nature, or one special person for whom we feel particularly grateful at this moment.

(Pause for silent prayer.)

Leader: May the Holy Spirit be with you and pour out upon you unimaginable gifts. May the Holy Spirit bless you and strengthen you. I ask these things in Jesus' name.

**All: Amen.**

Leader: All praise to you, Holy Spirit. You were revealed to the followers of Jesus in a mighty wind, and You touched them with tongues of fire. Come; fill our hearts with Your fire and wind as we share God's word.

Reader 6: "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 whole house."

Reader 7: "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.”

The Word of the Lord.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

Leader: Each of us hears these words from a different perspective. Some of us will probably like the excitement of fire, wind and noise. Others would be terrified of it. Some of us are risk takers and some of us are not. But we all have needs.

Reader 8: So it was with the disciples. They all had different needs and reactions, but the Holy Spirit came to them all. The Spirit strengthened them and gave them the courage to use their own particular gifts more fully.

Leader: I invite you to spend a few moments thinking about the scene just described in Scripture and your reaction to it. If the Holy Spirit came among us right now in a visible way, what special gift would you ask for?

(Pause for silent prayer.)

Reader 10: Holy Spirit, give us Your gift of wisdom, that we might know what is most important in life.

**All: Holy Spirit, gift us with wisdom.**

Reader 11: Holy Spirit, give us Your gift of understanding, that we might genuinely care for one another.

**All: Holy Spirit, gift us with understanding.**

Reader 12: Holy Spirit, give us Your gift of knowledge, that we might know right from wrong.

**All: Holy Spirit, gift us with knowledge.**

Reader 13: Holy Spirit, give us Your gift of fortitude, that we might courageously live our faith.

**All: Holy Spirit, gift us with fortitude.**

Reader 14: Holy Spirit, counsel us, that we might make unselfish decisions for ourselves and others.

**All: Holy Spirit, gift us with counsel.**

Reader 15: Holy Spirit, give us the gifts of piety and fear of the Lord, that we might reverence and love God in all that we do.

**All: Holy Spirit, gift us with piety and reverence.**

Leader: Holy Spirit, You gift us in so many ways. Once again we come before You, confident that You are listening.  
(Fold your hands.)

We are ordinary people and we are needy.  
(Open your hands and cup them.)

How can we be the ones called to proclaim Your presence?  
(Extend hands and arms outward.)

We can't lead others unless You lead us.  
(Lift both arms above your head.)

We acknowledge Your greatness and Your goodness.  
(Bow your head deeply.)

And we want to lead our children to You.  
(Hold outstretched arms in front of your body.)

Show us how to be signs of God's presence in all that we do. Help us follow Jesus.

Leader: You are now invited to bless one another, using the words of St. Paul. Please turn to the person on your right, clasp hands, and offer this blessing: “ \_\_\_\_\_, *may God continue to work in you.*”

(When the blessing comes full circle, join hands for the closing prayer.)

**All: Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

**Closing Song:**

**Companions on the Journey**

***Refrain***

We are companions on the journey.  
Breaking bread and sharing life;  
And in the love we bear is the hope we share  
For we believe in the love of our God,  
We believe in the love of our God.

No longer strangers to each other,  
No longer strangers in God's house;  
We are fed and we are nourished  
By the strength of those who care,  
By the strength of those who care.

***Refrain***

We have been gifted with each other,  
And we are called by the Word of the Lord:  
To act with justice, to love tenderly,  
And to walk humbly with our God,  
To walk humbly with our God.

***Refrain***

We will seek and we shall find;  
we will knock and the door shall be opened;  
We will ask and it shall be given,  
For we believe in the love of our God,  
We believe in the love of our God.

***Refrain***