



# SPX Small Groups

*Life is Better Together*



**Series Description** – We don't have to look very hard to find bad news, it's all around us, all the time. The world is filled with it. Lots of the time even the Church's message can come across as negative and unwelcoming. And yet, as Christ's followers we have been given the greatest news in the history of the world. "Gospel" literally means good news - the good news of God's love and care for us, the promise that he is for us and not against us, and that he really does intend all things to work together for our good. In this series we hear some powerful good news that Jesus shared with others and which he speaks to us.

Hello SPX Small Groups,

Later in this series, we welcome about 40 adults to the small group process, in six new groups (some larger, some smaller) and one growing group. If you are new, there will be a small group guide for each message series that your facilitator will get to you – or that you can download from the experience page of our website ([www.spxbowie.org](http://www.spxbowie.org)). Just click on current message series. You will also find the Fr. Mike's message in written and audio format, in case you want to review the message or attended mass somewhere else that week.

Don't worry if your group doesn't get through all the questions – my goal is to include more questions than you will have time for so your group can pick and choose the most interesting questions. You may also notice that two questions may seem similar to each other. I've found that if you ask a question in more than one way, some people might connect better to the first version and others connect to the second. Don't feel the need to repeat yourself if it feels like your group has already answered a question.

I look forward to any feedback you have to share about this guide, and ask God's blessing on your group that it might be a fruitful place to grow.

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## Suggestion Session Outline

Gather/Catch up: How was your week?

Opening Prayer: Make one up of your own or use this prayer:

*Heavenly Father, we come to you today asking for your guidance, wisdom, and support as we begin our time together. Help us to engage in meaningful discussion; allow us to grow closer as a group and nurture the bonds of community.*

*Fill us with your grace, Lord God, so we can be people of Good News to all those we encounter. Help us to be joyful because of your love for us. Let that joy flow out of us as a sign to others of your goodness. We ask these things in your name. Amen.*

Discuss: What did you take away from this week's message? Use the provided questions to dive deeper.

Resolutions: Is there anything you plan to do differently this week?

Closing prayer: Close your session with a prayer, making sure to find out whether anyone needs prayer in a specific area or for a specific person. Use this prayer if it is helpful:

*God, these are our struggles: (allow each person to name a current struggle out loud or silently). We ask you to hear us and respond. We are listening. We are open to hear your voice. Please speak to us through your Word, through prayer and through others. We trust you and we will wait on Your promises. We ask this in Jesus Name. Amen.*

Week 1 – November 3  
Jesus comes to us when we are lost

- 1) Did you ever climb a tree as a kid (or adult)?
- 2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of being your height?
- 3) Can you describe the last time you had really good news to share with others? What was your good news? Were the people you told as excited as you were?
- 4) In the Gospel story, Zacchaeus is described as the chief tax collector and a wealthy man. Based on that info, would you guess that he had few or many friends? Would you think those friendships were shallow or deep?
- 5) Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus?
- 6) Jesus was passing through town, when he sees Zacchaeus and seems to change his plans by deciding to stay with Zacchaeus. Do you think Jesus actually changed his plans? What does that tell you about God?
- 7) Why do you think Zacchaeus had such an immediate and total change of heart about his possessions and how he interacted with people? What happened to him when he met Jesus?
- 8) Have you ever had a similar life changing encounter with Jesus/God? What were you like before, what happened, and how did life change for you?
- 9) How do you encounter Jesus in your life?
- 10) Jesus says that he comes “to seek and save what is lost.” How are you lost now (or how were you lost in the past) and how is this Good News to you?

Week 2 – November 10  
God will raise us up on the last day

- 1) Which are you most afraid of: public speaking, spiders, or death?
- 2) What is the most courageous thing you have ever done?
- 3) In the first reading, the Maccabean children chose death rather than breaking the Jewish dietary laws. Do you hold any belief so strongly that you would die for it, rather than compromise it?
- 4) TV shows and movies are filled with stories of reincarnation, zombies, vampires, the undead, walking dead, and demons. Which, if any of these, comes closest to Catholic belief of resurrection of the dead?
- 5) Have you ever come across a TV show, book, or movie that does a good job describing the afterlife?
- 6) How would you describe the difference between an angel and a saint?
- 7) Do you look forward to becoming a saint (that is, a human being who has died and is now in heaven)? Do you believe that is likely to happen? Why or why not?
- 8) How would you describe bodily resurrection? What do you think it will be like?
- 9) Why might God want us to have bodies again after we die? What might those bodies be like?
- 10) Do you think it is possible to have a false sense of security about your eternal destiny (heaven or hell)? Why?
- 11) How is the resurrection of the dead good news for you? How is God inviting you to act on this story this week?

Week 3 – November 17

Trouble does not surprise God. He expects it and tells us to persevere through it.

- 1) Are you more of a doom and gloom person or a glass half-full person?
- 2) What was the worst kind of natural disaster (e.g., storm, earthquake, tsunami, or blizzard) you have ever been in? What was it like and how long did it last?
- 3) In the Gospel Jesus talks about the persecution people will face as his followers. Has your belief in Jesus ever caused you trouble? Explain.
- 4) In the Gospel Jesus tells us "*Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute.*" How do you distinguish God's voice from your own thoughts?
- 5) Has God ever used pain and suffering to get your attention? What was he trying to get across to you?
- 6) Have you ever tried to "offer up" something painful? How did it go?
- 7) Do you believe suffering can be redemptive? How?
- 8) Jesus encourages us to persevere through troubles. In our last series, Fr. Mike talked about a few ways to do this – to be prepared, don't panic, and trust Jesus.
  - a. What can you do to be prepared for troubles?
  - b. How can you not panic in times of troubles?
  - c. What helps you most to trust Jesus in those times?

Week 4 – November 24 (Christ the King)

We get to do this! We get to share the Good News!

- 1) Would you enjoy being modern day royalty or not? Do you think it has more pleasure or painful obligation associated with it?
- 2) If you could be ruler of any place at any point in history, what time and place would you choose? Why?
- 3) Jesus promises the repentant thief that “today you will be with me in paradise.” How is this good news for you and not just that thief?
- 4) How is Christ the King of your life? Is this trending higher or lower than this time last year?
- 5) How do you feel about sharing the “good news” – are you excited to do it, does it cause fear or dread, or are you somewhere in between?
- 6) How is your faith in Jesus “Good News” for the rest of the world?
- 7) At St. Pius, we ask each parishioner to make five commitments – to Worship, Connect, Serve, Give and Invite.
  - a. How do you live each of these commitments out? Is there one you would like to work more on this year?
  - b. As members of small groups, it’s likely that you already are involved in worship and are connected to people. Is there anything more you feel called to in these areas?
  - c. Does serving others help only them or does it also help you? If you are not currently serving, is there something you would be interested in doing?
  - d. How do you feel about giving to the church? Is your level of giving impacted by the churches needs or plans for growth, or more based on the family budget?
  - e. Does inviting others help only them or does it also help you? Who might God want you to invite to St. Pius?

## **WEEK ONE: November 3 (31st Sunday in Ord Time)**

### **Reading 1 WIS 11:22-12:2**

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Before the LORD the whole universe is as a grain from a balance  
or a drop of morning dew come down upon the earth.  
But you have mercy on all, because you can do all things;  
and you overlook people's sins that they may repent.  
For you love all things that are  
and loathe nothing that you have made;  
for what you hated, you would not have fashioned.  
And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it;  
or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?  
But you spare all things, because they are yours,  
O LORD and lover of souls,  
for your imperishable spirit is in all things!  
Therefore you rebuke offenders little by little,  
warn them and remind them of the sins they are committing,  
that they may abandon their wickedness and believe in you, O LORD!

### **Responsorial Psalm PS 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13, 14**

### **Reading 2 2 THES 1:11-2:2**

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Brothers and sisters:  
We always pray for you,  
that our God may make you worthy of his calling  
and powerfully bring to fulfillment every good purpose  
and every effort of faith,  
that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you,  
and you in him,  
in accord with the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask you, brothers and sisters,  
with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ  
and our assembling with him,  
not to be shaken out of your minds suddenly, or to be alarmed  
either by a "spirit," or by an oral statement,  
or by a letter allegedly from us  
to the effect that the day of the Lord is at hand.

### **Gospel LK 19:1-10**

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At that time, Jesus came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town.  
Now a man there named Zacchaeus,  
who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man,  
was seeking to see who Jesus was;  
but he could not see him because of the crowd,  
for he was short in stature.  
So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus,



who was about to pass that way.  
When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said,  
"Zacchaeus, come down quickly,  
for today I must stay at your house."  
And he came down quickly and received him with joy.  
When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying,  
"He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner."  
But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord,  
"Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor,  
and if I have extorted anything from anyone  
I shall repay it four times over."  
And Jesus said to him,  
"Today salvation has come to this house  
because this man too is a descendant of Abraham.  
For the Son of Man has come to seek  
and to save what was lost."

## **WEEK TWO: November 10 (32nd Sunday in Ord Time)**

### **Reading 1 [2 MC 7:1-2, 9-14](#)**

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It happened that seven brothers with their mother were arrested  
and tortured with whips and scourges by the king,  
to force them to eat pork in violation of God's law.  
One of the brothers, speaking for the others, said:  
"What do you expect to achieve by questioning us?  
We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors."

At the point of death he said:  
"You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life,  
but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever.  
It is for his laws that we are dying."

After him the third suffered their cruel sport.  
He put out his tongue at once when told to do so,  
and bravely held out his hands, as he spoke these noble words:  
"It was from Heaven that I received these;  
for the sake of his laws I disdain them;  
from him I hope to receive them again."  
Even the king and his attendants marveled at the young man's courage,  
because he regarded his sufferings as nothing.

After he had died,  
they tortured and maltreated the fourth brother in the same way.  
When he was near death, he said,  
"It is my choice to die at the hands of men  
with the hope God gives of being raised up by him;  
but for you, there will be no resurrection to life."

## **Responsorial Psalm [PS 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15](#)**

### **Reading 2 [2 THES 2:16-3:5](#)**

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Brothers and sisters:

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father,  
who has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement  
and good hope through his grace,  
encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed  
and word.

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us,  
so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified,  
as it did among you,  
and that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people,  
for not all have faith.

But the Lord is faithful;  
he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.  
We are confident of you in the Lord that what we instruct you,  
you are doing and will continue to do.  
May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God  
and to the endurance of Christ.

### **Gospel [LK 20:27-38](#)**

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Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection,  
came forward and put this question to Jesus, saying,  
"Teacher, Moses wrote for us,  
*If someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child,  
his brother must take the wife  
and raise up descendants for his brother.*

Now there were seven brothers;  
the first married a woman but died childless.  
Then the second and the third married her,  
and likewise all the seven died childless.

Finally the woman also died.  
Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be?  
For all seven had been married to her."

Jesus said to them,  
"The children of this age marry and remarry;  
but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age  
and to the resurrection of the dead  
neither marry nor are given in marriage.  
They can no longer die,  
for they are like angels;  
and they are the children of God  
because they are the ones who will rise.

That the dead will rise  
even Moses made known in the passage about the bush,

when he called out 'Lord, '  
the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;  
and he is not God of the dead, but of the living,  
for to him all are alive."

### **WEEK THREE: November 17 (33rd Sunday in Ord Time)**

#### **Reading 1 MAL 3:19-20A**

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Lo, the day is coming, blazing like an oven,  
when all the proud and all evildoers will be stubble,  
and the day that is coming will set them on fire,  
leaving them neither root nor branch,  
says the LORD of hosts.  
But for you who fear my name, there will arise  
the sun of justice with its healing rays.

#### **Responsorial Psalm PS 98:5-6, 7-8, 9**

#### **Reading 2 2 THES 3:7-12**

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Brothers and sisters:  
You know how one must imitate us.  
For we did not act in a disorderly way among you,  
nor did we eat food received free from anyone.  
On the contrary, in toil and drudgery, night and day  
we worked, so as not to burden any of you.  
Not that we do not have the right.  
Rather, we wanted to present ourselves as a model for you,  
so that you might imitate us.  
In fact, when we were with you,  
we instructed you that if anyone was unwilling to work,  
neither should that one eat.  
We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in a  
disorderly way,  
by not keeping busy but minding the business of others.  
Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly  
and to eat their own food.

#### **Gospel LK 21:5-19**

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While some people were speaking about  
how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings,  
Jesus said, "All that you see here--  
the days will come when there will not be left  
a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down."

Then they asked him,  
"Teacher, when will this happen?  
And what sign will there be when all these things are about to happen?"

He answered,  
"See that you not be deceived,  
for many will come in my name, saying,  
'I am he,' and 'The time has come.'  
Do not follow them!  
When you hear of wars and insurrections,  
do not be terrified; for such things must happen first,  
but it will not immediately be the end."  
Then he said to them,  
"Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.  
There will be powerful earthquakes, famines, and plagues  
from place to place;  
and awesome sights and mighty signs will come from the sky.  
"Before all this happens, however,  
they will seize and persecute you,  
they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons,  
and they will have you led before kings and governors  
because of my name.  
It will lead to your giving testimony.  
Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand,  
for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking  
that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute.  
You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends,  
and they will put some of you to death.  
You will be hated by all because of my name,  
but not a hair on your head will be destroyed.  
By your perseverance you will secure your lives."

## **WEEK FOUR: November 24 (Christ the King)**

### **Reading 1 2 SM 5:1-3**

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In those days, all the tribes of Israel came to David in Hebron and said:  
"Here we are, your bone and your flesh.  
In days past, when Saul was our king,  
it was you who led the Israelites out and brought them back.  
And the LORD said to you,  
'You shall shepherd my people Israel  
and shall be commander of Israel.'  
When all the elders of Israel came to David in Hebron,  
King David made an agreement with them there before the LORD,  
and they anointed him king of Israel.

### **Responsorial Psalm PS 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5**

### **Reading 2 COL 1:12-20**

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Brothers and sisters:

Let us give thanks to the Father,  
who has made you fit to share  
in the inheritance of the holy ones in light.  
He delivered us from the power of darkness  
and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son,  
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God,  
the firstborn of all creation.  
For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth,  
the visible and the invisible,  
whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers;  
all things were created through him and for him.  
He is before all things,  
and in him all things hold together.  
He is the head of the body, the church.  
He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead,  
that in all things he himself might be preeminent.  
For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell,  
and through him to reconcile all things for him,  
making peace by the blood of his cross  
through him, whether those on earth or those in heaven.

### **Gospel [LK 23:35-43](#)**

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The rulers sneered at Jesus and said,  
"He saved others, let him save himself  
if he is the chosen one, the Christ of God."  
Even the soldiers jeered at him.  
As they approached to offer him wine they called out,  
"If you are King of the Jews, save yourself."  
Above him there was an inscription that read,  
"This is the King of the Jews."

Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying,  
"Are you not the Christ?  
Save yourself and us."  
The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply,  
"Have you no fear of God,  
for you are subject to the same condemnation?  
And indeed, we have been condemned justly,  
for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes,  
but this man has done nothing criminal."  
Then he said,  
"Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."  
He replied to him,  
"Amen, I say to you,  
today you will be with me in Paradise."