



Pastoral Theology 101

**What are we talking about
in the Church today?**



My task today

- To challenge and convince you
- To go home
- And **lead your leaders**

- **Lead them in a short course**
 - to define what we're saying about **Pastoral Ministry.**

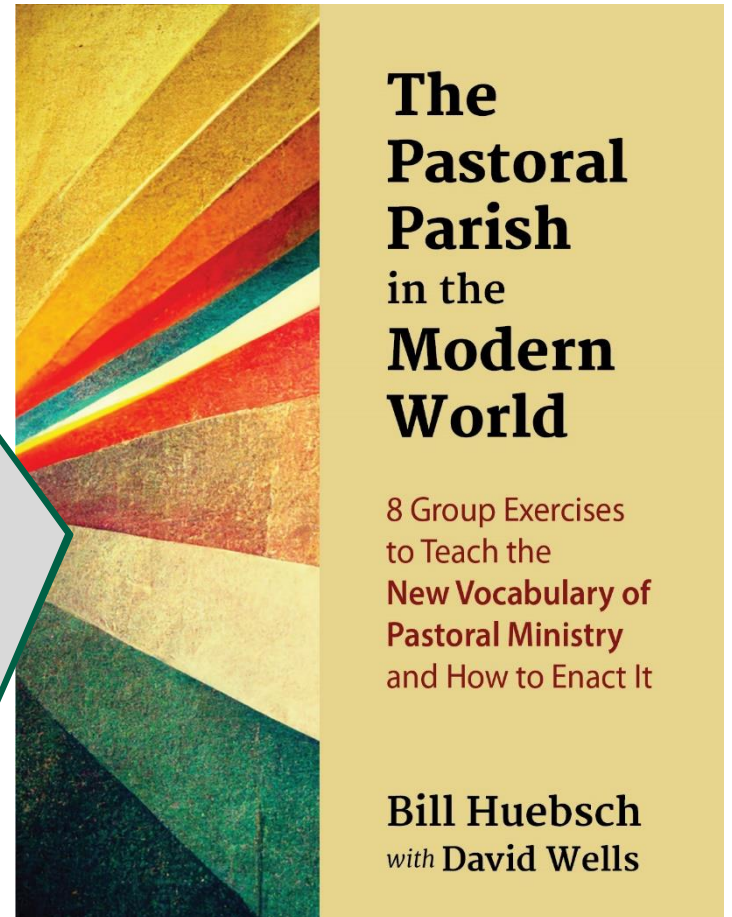


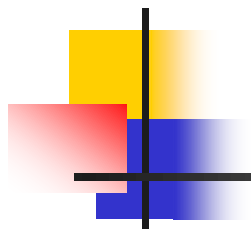
A short course

Pastoral Theology 101

**Available in print
or as a reproducible
eResource**

**The Pastoral Center
Booth #205**





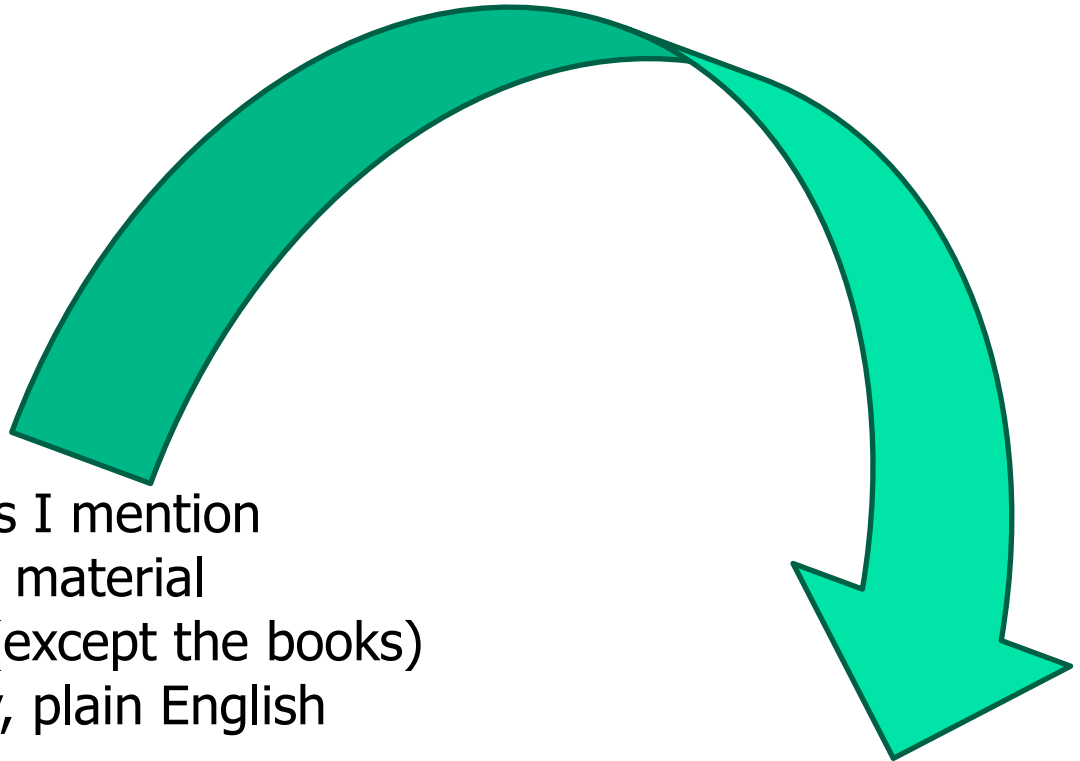
Exercise #1

Pastoral Theology itself



Please note

This PowerPoint
Any other resources I mention
Lots of background material
Free to reproduce (except the books)
All in contemporary, plain English





What is “pastoral ministry?”

- The actions we take to heal others
 - To heal the hearts of those who are wounded or hurting
 - *By helping them encounter Jesus*
- **The very heart of the Church**
- Always follows and imitates the style and methods of **Jesus**
- Deals with “real life.”



Pastoral Ministry

- Based on our **Pastoral Theology**
- Why is this important?
- When people understand this
- You have well-rounded parish programs
- That are in the style of Jesus
 - Like having Jesus on your parish team!



Pastoral Theology

- If people don't understand...
 - Poor training or a lack of formation
 - Self-taught
 - Hired because the pastor likes them
- Pastoral goals and strategies that aren't very much like Jesus' example
- ***A bit harsh & unwelcoming.***

Without pastoral theology

- Overly rigid
- We judge everyone according to law
 - No mitigating circumstances are tolerated
 - A person's conscience doesn't matter
 - **Everything is in relation to law**
- **Rigidity** – drives people away
 - Not like Jesus
 - Not within our tradition as Catholics.

Without pastoral theology

- Overly loose
- We try to allow anything
 - No discernment
 - No regard for church law and practice
 - **Everything can be justified**
- **“Anything goes...”**
 - Not like Jesus
 - Not within our tradition as Catholics.



Solid pastoral theology

- Balance between law and conscience
- We help people discern God's will
 - We offer people mercy
 - We befriend and heal in Jesus' name
 - **We learn what God is asking of us**
- **We treat people as Jesus would**
 - Very much like Jesus
 - Deeply **within** our tradition as Catholics.



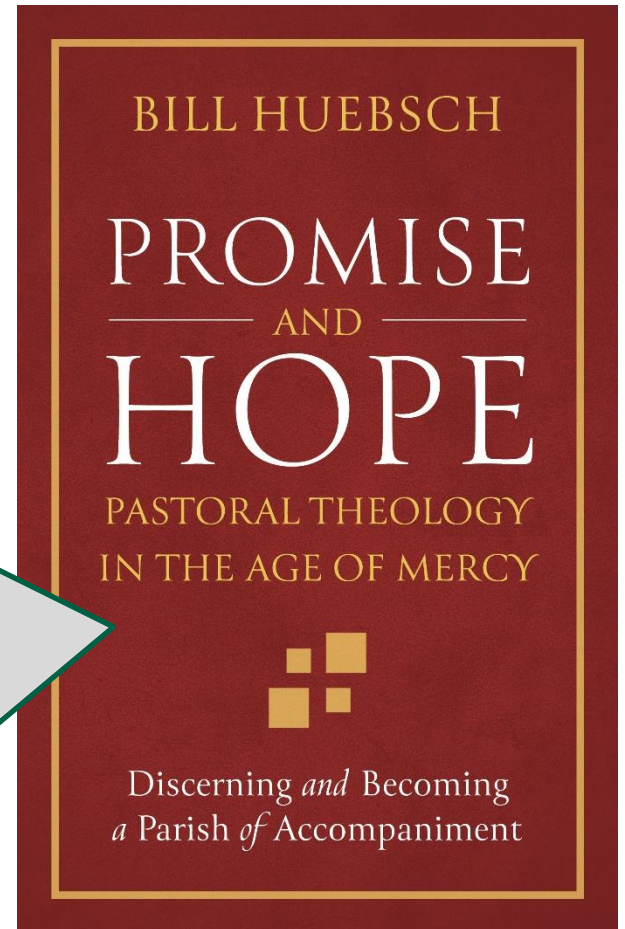
Group work

- How does each element of your parish ministry
 - Heal the people you serve?
 - How does it help them encounter Jesus?
- How will you help your leaders understand **pastoral theology**?



Pastoral Theology 101

23rd Publications
Booth #448





So far...

- Pastoral Ministry

Exercise #2

Synodality



Synodality well done

- “Walking together in faith”
 - It’s what we do as Church
 - The Church is a communion
 - Not a collection of private lives
 - It’s how the Holy Spirit guides us
 - It’s really important for us to grasp this!

- We go forward together.



What is “Synodality?”

- Ask tough but important questions
- Gather to discern
- Begin in quiet—listening to your heart
 - To what is God calling us in this matter?
- Speak from the heart
 - Share experiences rather than theology
 - Listen to one another’s story.



What is “Synodality?”

- Everyone listens
- Then everyone pauses for prayer
 - What do we hear in our hearts?
 - “I heard in the group...”
- Open dialogue
 - On what do we agree?
 - What needs more thought?
 - What specific proposals do we have?



Synodality poorly done

- Our gatherings might become times to complain about the Church
- We might think that every idea anyone proposes is good
- Or that the priests must do what we tell them to
- The result would be **messy chaos.**



Synodality misunderstood

- Parishes don't hold synods
- This isn't a new form of democracy
- It doesn't replace the authority of the pope, bishops, and pastors
- It isn't about "changing what we don't like"
- **It's about "listening to the Spirit."**



Synodality well done

- This listening process
- Calls on clergy **to carefully hear** what the religious and laity are saying
- And to make decisions based on the input of all
- **This won't be easy for some clergy.**



Group work

- How can we organize to discern what it is to which we are called as a parish?
 - Who will lead this in our parish?
 - What questions will we tackle?
- How can we listen to the many who have left the church
 - Especially those whom we have hurt
 - Or those whom we have not welcomed?



So far...

- Pastoral Ministry
- Synodality

Exercise #3

Discernment



What is “Discernment?”

- A prayerful way for us to hear and understand
- to what God may be calling us
- **In our conscience “we are alone with God whose voice echoes in our depths.”**
 - Article #1776 of the *Catechism*.



What is “Discernment?”

- Two levels:
- **Communal discernment**
 - To what is God calling us as a church, a parish, a family?
- **Personal discernment**
 - To what is God calling me in life?
 - Or in this specific situation?



Discernment well done

- By hearing “the echo within us”
- **We come to know to what or whom God is calling us**
- We recognize **the gifts** we are given
- It's an essential element of faith.



Discernment well done

- Also and very importantly:
- Well-done discernment drives
 - Synodality
 - Accompaniment
 - & Theological Reflection.



Discernment poorly done

- We may follow our own whims
- Or selfish ambitions

- We justify what we do as having been “discerned”
 - **When, in fact, we have not gone deep enough into our heart.**



Discernment

- **The language of the heart**
 - Not the same as “thinking through it”
 - Not a “decision” as such

- We open our hearts to **the Holy**
 - Who dwells within and among us
 - The Author of our very lives.



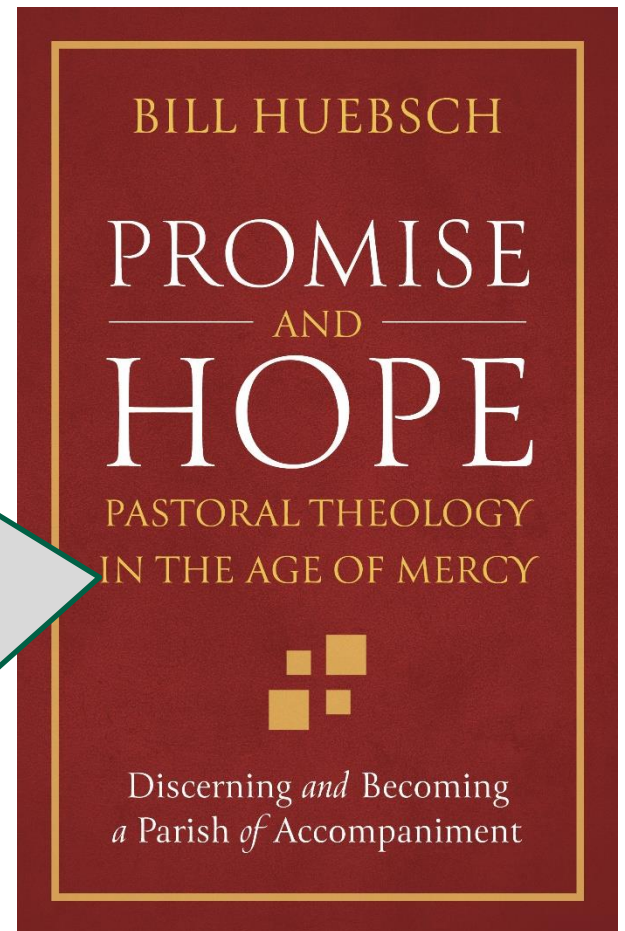
Group work

- God speaks in our hearts
 - How can we learn to hear the Holy?
 - How do we teach discernment?
- **To what is God calling us?**
 - What steps of discernment can we take together?



A very good resource

23rd Publications
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So far...

- Pastoral Ministry
- Synodality
- Discernment

Exercise #4

Evangelization



What is “Evangelization?”

- It is to invite and welcome people into the family of God
 - By announcing the “Good News”
 - At whatever level they can take part
- **Announce the good news!**
- It’s our mission
 - **“Go and make disciples...”**
 - Matthew 28



What is the “Good News?”

- **God loves you, my friends**
 - God has always loved you...
 - ...and has never turned away from you
- The Holy One dwells within you
- You are saved and forgiven
- So that you can follow Jesus’ way of life
- **You are sent to heal the world.**



Evangelization

- Also, and very importantly
- It's the goal of accompaniment
- And synodality
- It's at the very center of all religious education
- **"It's what we do."**

Exercise #4

on poorly done

The worst form of being in
the Church

Very common today

“Cheap grace”

people to encounter

generosity

nts and refugees

■ A heart for the poor

■ Self-giving love even unto death

■ It's “membership without conversion.”



Group work

- Examine each area of parish life
 - From the Sunday liturgy...
 - ...to faith formation
 - From pastoral care...
 - ...to work for justice and peace
- **How does each area**
 - **announce the Good News?**
 - **how does it invite and welcome?**



So far...

- Pastoral Ministry
- Synodality
- Discernment
- Evangelization

Exercise #5

Catechesis



What is “Catechesis?”

- The handing on of the faith
- From one person to another

- **The faith we hand on is that Good News we just discussed!**
 - Mainly by our example
 - How we live helps others to believe.



What is the “Good News?”

- **God loves you, my friends**
 - God has always loved you...
 - ...and has never turned away from you
- The Holy One dwells within you
- You are saved and forgiven
- So that you can follow Jesus’ way of life
- **You are sent to heal the world.**



What is “Catechesis?”

- There’s a key **educational element**
 - Learning about our faith is essential
 - It’s not enough just to come in the door
- It’s essential to “meet Jesus”
 - To know what he **taught**
 - How he **healed**
 - And that he walks with us now as a **friend.**



Catechesis poorly done

- It's **only about children**, never adults
- **Parents are on the sidelines**
 - They deliver their children to the parish
 - Someone else shares faith with them
- **Everything is from a textbook**
 - With nothing from the heart
 - The kids never meet Jesus
 - **It's all in the head**



Catechesis well done

- The whole community is involved
- The first task is to encounter Jesus
 - To walk with Jesus each day
 - To know Abba intimately

■ Our faith isn't in our doctrine

- Or moral codes
- Or canon Law



Catechesis well done

- The parish creates a focus on **young adults**
 - Rather than only on children
- Young adults
 - A very formative stage of life
 - But one in which people tend to wander
 - When we offer a safe harbor
 - They readily take us up on that



Young adult accompaniment

- Who are these young adults?
- We often don't know their names
- **But when they come for help
what do we offer them?**
 - Requirements?
 - Forms and deadlines?



Group work

- How do we help folks **meet and encounter** Christ?
- How do we **coach parents** to be the primary voice in the faith of their kids?
- How do we make catechesis **life-long**?

A very good resource

Grant money from Lilly
Talk with them about how you
can benefit from this.

FREE samples

The Pastoral Center
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Growing Up Catholic Sacraments

**First Eucharist/
Primera Eucaristía**

*Six Whole Family
Preparation Sessions*





So far...

- Pastoral Ministry
- Synodality
- Discernment
- Evangelization
- Catechesis

Exercise #6

Accompaniment



What is “Accompaniment?”

- One Christian helping another
- To hear the voice of God echo within

- **We walk with each other**
- Helping each other face the reality
 - Of our sinfulness
 - And God’s love.



Accompaniment well done

- We become true **companions** as we face life's dilemmas
 - A rich way to help each other
 - Sort out life's confusing moments
- Marriage, for example
 - We promise to walk with each other
 - In good times and in bad...



Accompaniment poorly done

- We may easily mislead each other
- We may justify every decision, even ones that wound our souls
- Or we may reduce our conversation to mere **chatter**
 - Or worse, to **gossip**
 - Or even worse, to **harsh judgements.**



Accompaniment

- Also and very importantly...
- Sometimes more is needed:
 - A Counsellor
 - Mentor
 - Spiritual director
 - or Confessor.



Pastoral Theology 101

**Each parish must train and prepare
folks as accompanists**

Joy of the Gospel #169

The Church will have to initiate **everyone** –
priests, religious and laity – into this **“art of
accompaniment...”**

reflecting...our compassionate gaze
which heals, liberates and encourages growth.



Who is waiting to be accompanied?

- Young parents
- Children and youth
- Those making key life decisions
- Those in irregular marriage situations
 - Divorce and remarried couples
 - Gay couples
 - Ecumenical couples
 - Cohabiting couples



Method for accompaniment

- Listen attentively and withhold your judgments
- Bring to bear **the way of Jesus**,
 - The teaching of the church
 - Their conscience
 - Modern medicine and psychology
- With accompaniment
 - ***They find their way.***



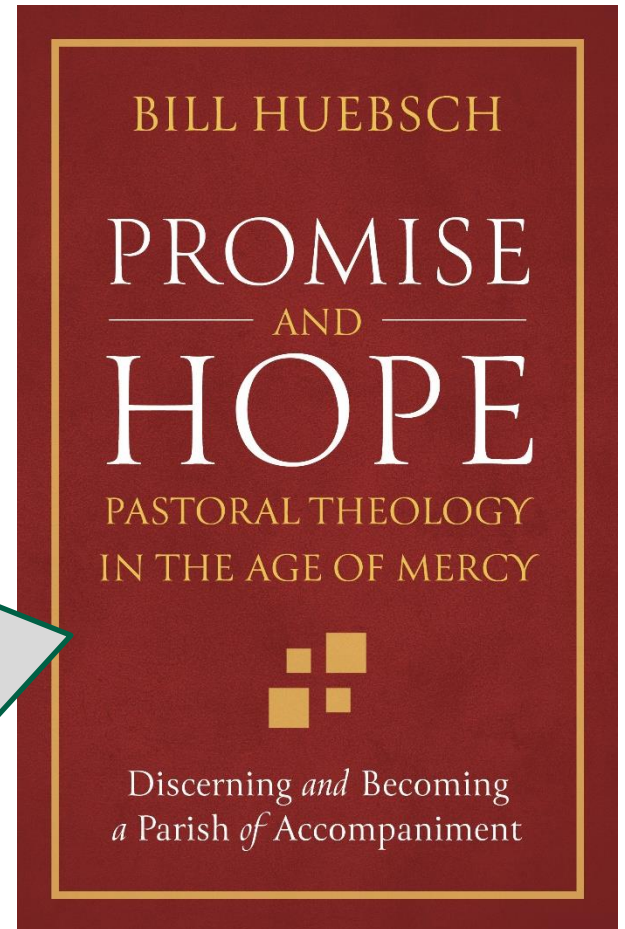
Group work

- **Who is waiting** for accompaniment in our parish?
- How can we offer it?
- How can we **learn the skills** needed for this?
- How can we help those on the margins of the parish **return to the table?**



A very good resource

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So far...

- Pastoral Ministry
- Synodality
- Discernment
- Evangelization
- Catechesis
- Accompaniment

Exercise #7

**Theological
Reflection**

What is "Theological Reflection?"

- A form of prayerful deliberation
- **To see situations through the lens of Jesus & the Gospel**
- We discern to what God may be calling us
 - Using **"Sacred Inquiry"**
 - A way of balancing church teaching, our inner voice, and the way of Jesus



Sacred Inquiry

- A **method** or **process**
- The systematic way we evaluate situations
 - Steps we follow
 - Bring faith and everyday life together
 - Church teaching
 - Jesus and the Gospels
 - In dialogue with real situations

What is “Theological Reflection?”

- Brings together all we have said about
 - Discernment
 - Synodality
 - Accompaniment
 - Evangelization
- Solid pastoral theology depends on good theological reflection



The Joy of Love

- The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone
- But to walk with them
- Avoid judgements that do not take into account mitigating circumstances
- No one should feel excommunicated.

Joy of Love, Chapter 8



When people fail

- Do we cast them off?
 - Or work to reinstate them?
 - No one can be condemned forever
- Not only the divorced & remarried
 - “But everyone in whatever situation they find themselves.”


Joy of Love, Chapter 8



What is possible...

- ...is a process of **theological reflection**

which guides the faithful
to an awareness of their
situation before God.



Joy of Love, Chapter 8



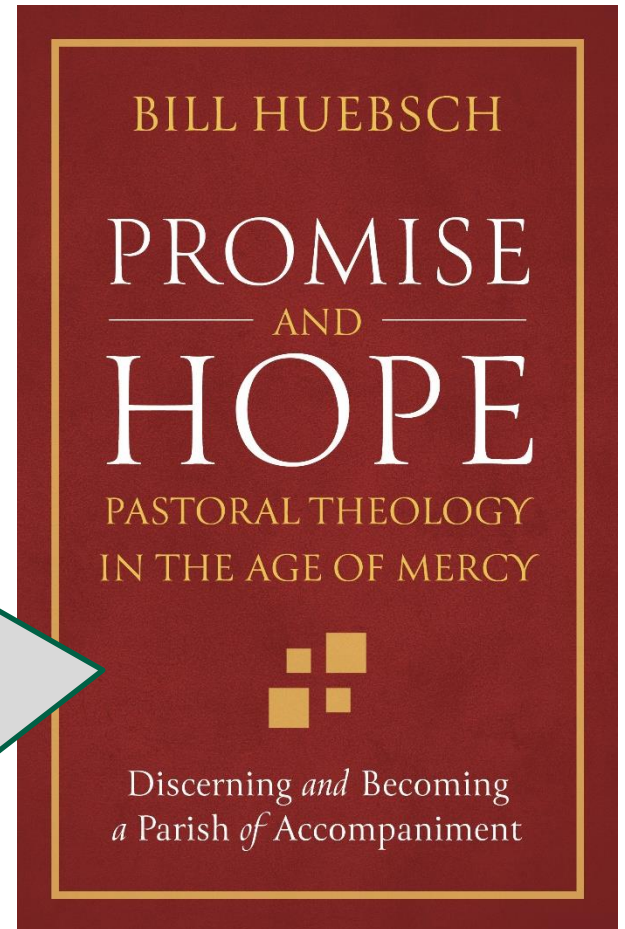
Group work

- How can we teach **families** to reflect like this?
- What can **active parishioners** gain?
- How could this help people in **special situations of marriage**?
- Can we reach out to **inactive folks**?
- Or even to **the wider community**?



A very good resource

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So far...

- Pastoral Ministry
- Synodality
- Discernment
- Evangelization
- Catechesis
- Accompaniment
- Theological Reflection

Exercise #8

Being Missionary Disciples



What is a “Missionary Disciple?”

- **1. Our hearts are on fire**
because of the indwelling presence
of Jesus in our lives
- **2. We can't help ourselves**
but announce **the Good News**
 - Share the fire of God's love
 - Reaching out to all



Group Work

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**The
Pastoral
Parish
in the
Modern
World**

8 Group Exercises
to Teach the
New Vocabulary of
Pastoral Ministry
and How to Enact It

Bill Huebsch
with David Wells