



take college life in a new direction

COMPASS Points Encounter Description

Explanation of the COMPASS Points Encounter and Sample Points COMPASS Points Bulletin

Description: The COMPASS Points Encounter is the basic activity of every COMPASS Chapter. Through it members encourage one another towards more intense holiness and apostolic work and invite non-members to grow in their faith and become involved in COMPASS.

The COMPASS Points Encounter consists of three interrelated parts:

- Reflection on the Gospel reading for the coming Sunday
- Discussion of a brief, recorded talk on a particular faith issue
- Review and renewal of personal and group commitments

Its compact, flexible format

- Penetrates and transforms the lives of participants with the power of the gospel,
- Shines the bright light of the Catholic teaching into members' lives,
- Sparks new ideas for more effective evangelization of college culture.

Frequency: Every other week is the recommended frequency.

Meeting Duration: From 45-90 minutes, depending on the needs and preferences of each group.

Group Size: A COMPASS Points Encounter generally requires between 6 and 12 participants.

- With more than 12 participants, the group should divide into separate COMPASS Points Encounters; with less than 6, just do your best.
- For stage-3 Chapters, the Chapter Committees form the COMPASS Points Encounter groups.

Duration of Group: In order to build stronger relationships, the groups should be as stable as possible. In other words, each member should meet with the same group throughout the year, unless growth requires groups to divide.

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Facilitator: Members of the Chapter Leadership Team and (if numbers require it) heads of sub-committees lead the COMPASS Points Encounters.

How to do a COMPASS Points Encounter

Format

(with suggested time divisions for an hour-long COMPASS Points Encounter)

- 1) Opening prayer (1-2 minutes)
- 2) Review of commitments (5-7 minutes)
- 3) Reading of and reflection on the Gospel passage (20 minutes)
- 4) Transitional prayer (1 minute)
- 5) Listening to and discussion of the COMPASS Treasure Chest Talk (20-25 minutes)
- 6) Making of personal commitments and Chapter Committee Updates (5-7 minutes)
- 7) Closing prayer (prefaced by mentioning personal prayer intentions of the participants) (3-5 minutes)

Explanation of the Format

- 1) The participants gather in a place where they can sit together in a circle, seminar-style (i.e., preferably on chairs around a table). **COMPASS Points** requires a minimum of 3 people: 1 leader to guide the Encounter, 1 timekeeper to make sure all the elements are included within the amount of time available, and 1 scribe to keep track of new ideas or questions that come up. You also need a tape or CD player to play the COMPASS Treasure Chest talk.
- 2) An **opening prayer** is said.
 - a) This can either be a simple Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be,
 - b) or a short spontaneous prayer thanking God for this opportunity to get to know him better and asking for the light and grace each participant needs to respond generously to him,
 - c) or the traditional prayer to the Holy Spirit:

Leader/	Come Holy Spirit,
Response/	fill the hearts of your faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of your love.

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Leader/ Response/ Lord, you send forth your spirit and things are created,
and you shall renew the face of the earth.

Leader/ Response/ Let us pray: Lord, by the Light of the Holy Spirit you have taught the hearts of your faithful. In the same Spirit help us to relish what is right, and rejoice always in his consolation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Leader and response/ Hail Mary...
Leader and response/ Glory be...

- 3) There is a **review of personal commitments**: taking turns around the circle all say how they did on the personal commitment they made at the end of the last **COMPASS Points Encounter** (the nature of these commitments is explained more fully below).
- 4) The **Gospel passage for the coming Sunday is read** – it can be read by any participant. (It is good if all participants bring a Bible to follow along, although it is not strictly necessary. The group leader can bring extra ones if some are available.)
- 5) An initial two-to-three minute **commentary on the passage** is presented. This should normally be the commentary published weekly in the **COMPASS Points Bulletin** (different members of the group can read the different paragraphs out loud to everyone), but on special occasions invited guests or individual participants can present a commentary that they have prepared beforehand.
- 6) Around thirty seconds of **silence** follow, in which everyone reflects personally on the passage.
- 7) The participants offer their **reflections** to the group.
 - a) The reflections are not meant to be abstract or theoretical. They should be personal considerations, spontaneous insights, concerning what this passage reveals about the person and mission of Christ, about God's plan, and about how we can follow him better.
 - b) It is good for the group leader to have reviewed the passage beforehand, and consulted a solid commentary on any points that may be confusing, so as to be able to answer the major factual or interpretive questions that may arise.
 - c) This period of Gospel reflection should take up about a third of the whole **COMPASS Points Encounter**.
- 8) The group leader (or one of the participants) closes this first half of with a brief **transitional prayer**, thanking God for his lights and the gift of the gospel, and asking him to let his Word take deep root in our souls.

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- 9) The second half of the Points Encounter begins, **the listening to and discussing of a COMPASS Treasure Chest talk**. The COMPASS Treasure Chest is a series of brief (10-15 minute) talks on particular aspects of the Catholic faith. They are meant to clarify fuzzy ideas and to make up for catechesis that many Catholic college students should have received but never did. It is a good idea to take notes during the talk, so you can gradually put together a personal notebook on faith issues. The brief discussion afterwards aids assimilation and affords any opportunity for further clarification if necessary. This segment should take up about a third of the **COMPASS Points Encounter**. This is how it works:
- a) The group leader (or a designated member) announces the title of the talk and turns on the recording.
 - b) Everyone listens attentively, writing down the main points, relevant references, and any questions that may come up.
 - c) When the talk concludes, the recording is turned off and the group leader states the first discussion question. Anyone can answer or comment on it. Then the same process occurs for the other discussion questions. Everyone should try to keep their comments focused, so that the discussion doesn't go off track. The discussion questions are as follows:
 - i) What did you learn from this talk that you didn't know before?
 - ii) What do you think is the most important point made in the talk and why?
 - iii) How would you explain these points to a non-Catholic?
- 10) Each participant **makes a personal commitment** for the coming week(s), as a response to God's action in our hearts and minds during the **COMPASS Points Encounter**. These commitments are the real fruit of **Points Encounter**, the way in which we make our lives "good soil" in which God's Word can take deep root and transform us. Commitments should be concrete, measurable, not abstract or vague (i.e. at the next Points Encounter we can say for sure whether or not we fulfilled them). **For example**, a concrete personal commitment would be: "This week I am going to get up early enough to spend five minutes in prayer at the start of the day, offering my day to God and renewing my intention of serving him and witnessing to him throughout the day", or "This week I will pray one decade of the rosary every day, so as to keep in contact with the mysteries of Christ and stay close to the Blessed Virgin Mary." On the other hand, a vague, abstract personal commitment would be something like: "I will be nicer to my roommate this week." That is not a bad thing to do, but it is hard to measure. This part of the **COMPASS Points Encounter** goes as follows:
- a) As the time for the **COMPASS Points Encounter** draws to a close, the leader invites the group to consider what personal commitments they will make in order to give continuity to these reflections in their daily lives, responding to however God has been nudging their soul during the Points Encounter. It is good to remind the participants that the commitments should be concrete.

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- b) This part of the **COMPASS Points Encounter** begins with a moment of silence, to give everyone a chance to come up with a commitment. As each participant decides, they voice their commitment out loud to the group. If it is a very personal commitment, and the participant would prefer not to explain it, he can simply say, "Mine will be a personal commitment", and the other participants should respect that. Everyone should make a commitment, so that the Points Encounters really begin to have an impact on their Christian lives.
- c) After each participant has made or renewed a personal commitment, the Chapter's **COMMITTEE HEADS** or secretaries give an update on the activities underway in their committees. These few minutes should be used to keep everyone informed of what the Chapter is up to, where extra help is needed, what new initiatives are being taken up... It can also be a time where members make announcements regarding particular opportunities for evangelization (e.g. someone's dorm is putting on a program about bioethics, so a COMPASS member who lives there announces this and asks for other members to show up and participate). The updates should take no more than 5 minutes for each committee.

11) The **COMPASS Points Encounter** ends with **a closing prayer**. It is a good idea for the leader to ask the participants if they have any particular prayer intentions before closing (a sick relative, a big decision coming up...). Then the leader can lead the closing prayer. A brief spontaneous prayer can preface it (or a group recitation of the Our Father), but the main idea is to thank God, offer our intentions to him, and ask for his grace. The usual way is to begin with a sign of the cross, then pray an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and a Glory be, and end with "**Leader/** We give you thanks for all your gifts, almighty God, living and reigning for ever and ever. **Response/** Amen." and a sign of the cross.

Note:

The above format can be adjusted according to the needs and desires of each particular group, but the essentials (review of commitments, Gospel reflection, informed discussion of Church teaching, and making of personal commitments) should remain.

The weekly COMPASS Points Bulletin, containing next Sunday's Gospel passage and a brief commentary on the Gospel, are available on the COMPASS Web Site. A sample is found below.

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A Sample COMPASS Points Bulletin

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Gospel

Matthew 9: 9-13

As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" He heard this and said, "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' I did not come to call the righteous but sinners."

Commentary

Christ the Lord

Jesus Christ makes more "I" statements than any other of the world's great religious figures. Buddha pointed to the Four Noble Truths, Mohammad to the words he received from Allah, even Moses drew his people's attention to their covenant with God and the Ten Commandments, but Jesus Christ never tires of calling men to himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6), "I am the vine" (John 15:5), "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and in this passage: "Follow me... I came to call sinners." Jesus Christ himself is the cornerstone (cf. Acts 4:11), the one foundation upon which the house of our salvation is built (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11). The religious buck stops with Christ.

Christ the Teacher

We do not know the background to this dramatic encounter between St Matthew and Jesus Christ. Perhaps Matthew had been following Christ at a distance for some time, perhaps they had known each other for years and only now did Christ call him to closer discipleship, perhaps they had never met before and Christ simply knew at first sight that this man was meant to be one of the Twelve. We do know, however, that the innocuous phrase "and he got up and followed him" implies a full-scale revolution in Matthew's life. Leaving behind his lucrative and secure (albeit unpopular) position of collecting taxes for Palestine's foreign oppressors required taking a risk, to say the least; it required putting more faith in an itinerant carpenter from Galilee than in money, power, and all the pleasures they can offer. Why did Matthew do it, what gave him the courage to forsake the wide and smooth road of the world for the narrow and steep way of Christ?

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Christ tells us – he wants us to know so that we can do the same: Matthew recognized and admitted his need for God. “Those who are well do not need a physician... I came to call sinners...” In Christ, God “never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #30), but only those who admit their need can hear his voice. The Pharisees rejected Christ, because they did not believe they needed him. Matthew followed him, because Matthew knew that something was missing from his life, and the look of love and power that he saw in Christ’s eyes as he sat tallying coins in the market square gave him hope that in Christ he would find it.

Christ the Friend

When Christ calls someone to follow him, it is a dramatic event, a real encounter, face to face, eye to eye, heart to heart. Christianity is no abstract philosophy or aloof ideology, but a drama, a “covenant drama”, as the Church calls it (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2567), which addresses every man and woman in the core of their existence as a living, thinking, searching human being. Christianity is communion with God through friendship with Christ – nothing more, but nothing less.

Questions for Reflection

1. Do I really believe that Christ is calling out to me personally, that “at every time and in every place” God is drawing close to me, inviting me “to seek him, to know him, to love him with all [my] strength”? (Catechism of the Catholic Church, #1) If not, why not, is some other voice dominating my attention? If so, have I responded to the call with courage and generosity, as St Matthew did?
2. Is my religious life more similar to the Pharisees, who were occupied with external propriety and appearances, or to “the sinners and tax collectors,” who recognized their need for God and were therefore able to enter into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ?
3. If Christ appeared to me right now as he did to St Matthew, and asked me to leave everything and follow him unconditionally, would I be able to do so? What would be hardest for me to give up: a relationship, a plan or dream, a pleasure, my comfort and security? May he be calling me to do just that?

Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church #s 1996-2005 on Grace and our need for God, 27-49 on our innate need for God.

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