



## SANDHURST PILGRIMAGE GROUP LEADERS GUIDE #1

This resource is designed to support pilgrim group leaders in forming and preparing their groups for ACYF 2025. This and future resources will provide suggested formation, designed around the Festival theme Pilgrims of Hope, alongside key information to help you tailor the journey to the needs of your group.

The modules are intended to assist you in preparing your pilgrims spiritually, personally, and communally through prayer, reflection, discussion, and engagement with the Festival's theme. In this way, pilgrims are invited to deepen their faith and arrive ready to participate with openness, purpose, and hope.

Our focus is on creating small, connected communities of belonging and participation rather than our time together in formation being explicitly catechetical or feeling like a religious education lesson.

The intent of this formation is to prepare pilgrims, create an opportunity for pilgrims to connect with one another on a personal and spiritual level and develop meaningful relationships as they walk together with their fellow pilgrims on their journey of faith.

Relationships, connection, belonging, and participation are at the core of this formation. There are no rules, and the resources provided are simply there to guide dialogue and form pilgrims as we accompany them on their journey. This formation should not be restricted to formal time-limited encounters/sessions although each provided session is achievable in an hour. Take as much time as you need in whatever setting will be most comfortable and practical for your pilgrims in your context.

# FORMATION MODULE 1

## PRAYER

### Part 1: Icebreaker

#### 1. Snowball Questions

This is a fun, movement-based activity that helps break the ice and deepen connections – with a twist of reflection.

#### Round 1: Get to Know You

Each person gets a blank sheet of paper and writes:

- Their name
- An answer to a light-hearted question

Sample questions:

- What do you care about?
- What gives you energy?
- Are you a Bush/Beach/Boulder person?
- Where would you love to travel one day?

Once everyone has written their answer, they crumple the paper into a “snowball.” On the leader’s cue, participants gently toss their snowballs into the air or across the room.

Then, each person picks up a snowball near them, opens it, and finds the person who wrote it by asking, “Is this yours?” Once they’ve matched up, they share a quick conversation about the answer.

#### Round 2: Why You’re Here – ACYF 2025 Round

Now that the group has warmed up, invite participants to take a fresh sheet of paper and respond to a deeper question, such as:

- What do you know about ACYF at the moment?
- How do you feel you belong to the Church community? i.e. Through your parish, school, volunteer organisation, family, friends, youth group?
- Why did you choose to come to ACYF?
- What are you hoping to experience at ACYF 2025?

## PART 2: PRAYER & REFLECTION

### **Scripture Reading** (Choose and invite a young person to read)

He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." <sup>2</sup>So he said to them, "When you pray, say:

Father, may your name be revered as holy.  
May your kingdom come.  
Give us each day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our sins,  
for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.  
And do not bring us to the time of trial."

And he said to them, "Suppose one of you has a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived, and I have nothing to set before him.' And he answers from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.' I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything out of friendship, at least because of his persistence he will get up and give him whatever he needs.

"So I say to you, Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asked for a fish, would give a snake instead of a fish? Or if the child asked for an egg, would give a scorpion? If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

## Small group/Whole group reflection

- Ask each participant to think about or share a line from the reading that struck them in a particular way.
- Jesus instructs us to pray and pray persistently.  
Guide a discussion, encouraging your participants to reflect on and share if they are comfortable:
  - What is prayer?
  - Why do we pray?
  - How do we pray as a Catholic Community and as individuals?
  - What is your experience of prayer?

REMEMBER: Your pilgrims will be in different places on their faith journey. Be sure to encourage them that wherever they are is okay. They don't have to know the answers and their responses should be real and honest and this is a space where there is no judgement. They might say, 'I never pray' or 'I don't know how to pray' or 'I never know what to say' and that is okay. Respond in a way that meets them where they are and validates their stage on the journey.

## Part 3:

### Activity - Composing a personal/ group prayer

You may choose to do this activity as a part of your group session or depending on your group, encourage pilgrims to reflect and complete this activity in their own time and their own space.

If doing this in the group session, the group may choose to compose their own individual prayer or one together that you may use at your future gatherings. Leave space for pilgrims to pray in a way that they feel comfortable with. Instead of writing a fully composed prayer, they may want to write just singular focused words or express their prayer through art.

- Guide your pilgrims to compose a prayer for themselves or for the group; they may want to do this in their journals
  - Inviting Jesus to enter into their personal faith journey and into their pilgrimage journey to ACYF.
  - Asking the Holy Spirit to help them to SEE, HEAR, FEEL and RECOGNISE the presence of Jesus throughout the pilgrimage.

Invite pilgrims to keep coming back to the following questions:

What is Jesus saying to me through these experiences?

How am I growing in my relationship with Jesus?

## Part 4: The Examen

The **Examen** is a simple yet powerful form of prayer developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola. Its purpose is to help us become more aware of God's presence in our daily lives and to reflect on how we are living in response to God's love.

The Examen involves five steps:

1. **Give thanks** for the day's blessings.
2. **Ask for light** to see the day clearly.
3. **Review the day**, noticing moments of grace and times of struggle.
4. **Seek forgiveness** for any failings.
5. **Look ahead** to tomorrow with hope and trust in God.

The Examen nurtures self-awareness, gratitude, and spiritual growth. It helps us recognise God at work in our everyday experiences and encourages us to live more intentionally and lovingly.

We keep coming back to this way of prayerful reflection throughout the pilgrimage, before, during and after.

- Guide your pilgrims through the Examen:  
(*There is a copy in their resource*)

*Light your candle if you have one*

Become aware of the presence of God.

Close your eyes, or focus on a candle, the light of Christ, or on Jesus on the cross.

Call on the Blessed Trinity: God, the Father; God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit.

Speak to them now, daring to call God our Father, "Abba," like Jesus.

- Abba (Pause for 5-10 seconds)
- Jesus (Pause for 5-10 seconds)
- Holy Spirit (Pause for 5-10 seconds)
  - Repeat 3-5 times

Invite the Blessed Trinity to help you see the past 24 hours with God's eyes.

God, the Father, breathed life into the world at the beginning of time. He created heaven and earth, the sun, the moon and the stars, animals and plants, and humankind. Everything the Father created was good.

How have you seen the hand of the divine Master in creation in the past day?

God, the Son, walks with us to bring heaven on earth each day. He offers friendship, encouragement and guidance. He calls us to inspire, to heal and to challenge.

Where have I seen Jesus in the past day?

Where have I been Jesus?

God, the Holy Spirit, gifts us with peace and joy. The Good Spirit draws us toward God in word, prayer and action. Meanwhile, the Bad Spirit takes us away feeling empty, dispirited and self-absorbed.

When has the Good Spirit drawn me to God in the past day?

How have I responded?

God, we give thanks for your love and mercy in our life, and for this time with you as our friend. And so, we praise you.

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

## Prayer Challenge:

Encourage your pilgrims to deepen their relationship with Jesus by doing the prayer challenge. This involves reflecting on a scripture each day and an Examen each night until we leave for ACYF in Melbourne. A guide is included in the pilgrim resource.

The resource also contains common Catholic prayers.