



Building Participation in LECTIO Studies: A Leader's Guide

One of the ways to build faith knowledge and community within a parish is to offer a parishwide Bible study. The Augustine Institute offers nine titles in its LECTIO study series, with detailed information about each study and the content of each session available on the LECTIO study website LectioStudy.org. But once a parish selects a topic for study, what are the best ways to build parish participation?

Below, the Augustine Institute offers suggestions from parish leaders who have run successful LECTIO studies.

- 1. *Involve the pastor.*** From what she has seen in her California parish, Shel Conner believes that building participation is helped “a great deal if the pastor shows his enthusiasm from the pulpit.” That enthusiasm can come in the form of an announcement from the pulpit, incorporation of the study themes into homilies, or the pastor’s leadership of his own small group. “People want to do what their pastor is doing,” Conner said.
- 2. *Find the leader(s).*** A married couple in Katie Frandsen’s Kansas parish coordinated the set-up—dividing up the work, overseeing the advertising, and creating the small groups. “You really need someone to take that on,” Frandsen said.
- 3. *Tap your Augustine Institute resources.*** The [FORMED Leader’s Page](#) includes promotional materials for many LECTIO studies. These include series trailers, homily talking points, and customizable flyers for your parish bulletin board. You want your volunteer helpers to say, “Oh, this is so easy.”
- 4. *The Basics—bulletin blurbs and pulpit pitches.*** Long the source for parish information, the parish bulletin remains the first and sometimes only place where some members of the congregation get their news. And auditory learners who are at Mass and likely interested in Bible study will respond to a pulpit pitch. The [FORMED Leader’s Page](#) includes bulletin blurbs—complete with artwork!—and two- to three-minute pulpit pitches for many of the LECTIO studies so you don’t have to write them from scratch. If you skip the basics, someone will find you after

Mass to say, “I didn’t see anything about this in the bulletin,” or “Did they say anything in church about a LECTIO study?”

5. **Put many lines in the water.** In addition to the bulletin, parishes now have their own webpages, Facebook pages, Instagram accounts, email blasts, and texting capabilities. Use them all, drawing on the Leader’s Page resources. When Debbie Shearn’s Kentucky parish is starting a new LECTIO study, she emails past participants to invite them to join. Sometimes those messages reach additional fish. “We’ve had some women from other parishes join our study,” Shearn said.
6. **Have someone waiting in the back of the church.** Katie Frandsen says that you can put the notice in the bulletin, include an item in the announcements, and put up posters, but the key part is having someone waiting in the back of church or in your church narthex to talk up the LECTIO study. “There has to be a human person,” Frandsen said.
7. **Have materials for pickup at after-Mass sign-up.** If sign-up takes place after Mass, it’s good practice to have the study guides available for pickup right then. It saves tracking people down and doesn’t give them the opportunity to change their minds about participating. Frandsen said that telling parishioners, “You can get all the materials today,” encourages them to sign up.
8. **Mix up those small groups.** We humans tend to congregate where we’re comfortable, but we grow in community when we take a risk and get out of our comfort zones. In Frandsen’s parish, the couple coordinating the LECTIO studies also made sure that the composition of the small groups changed with each study. You don’t want someone to feel they can’t join a group because “those aren’t my friends.”
9. **Plan a whole year out.** At Dorrie Long’s California parish, a group of parishioners reviews materials at the beginning of every year and makes decisions about which studies to use for the entire year, thus building excitement and momentum. “It keeps us going,” Long said.
10. **Send out the word about other resources on formed.org.** Debbie Shearn says that she goes on formed.org every day. When she finds something that ties in with the current LECTIO study, she sends it out to participants. When her parish was participating in *Lectio: Eucharist*, “I told people to watch *Presence*,” Shearn said.



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