

Carmen Lewis - Reach More Witness Talk

Good morning. My name is Carmen Lewis, and I'm speaking today about my experience in a Reach More small group this Lenten season. Before coming to OMC about 2 years ago, I attended Saint Agnes parish in West Chester. As a parishioner there, I joined a women's bible study during a time of my life when I was seeking extra support. I was pregnant with my first child, our daughter Vega, who will be 5 in June. There are plenty of regional, local mom's groups on Facebook and elsewhere to connect with other moms, but I wanted something more grounded in the teachings and traditions I had grown up with and felt comforted by. So when the small groups were advertised for Lent here at OMC, I imagined a similar experience, but now have two small daughters, a house, physical therapy appointments, and a new job, so the prospect of finding time for another weekly commitment was daunting. So much so, that I didn't reach out to Sr. Christine, whom I knew informally through her administration of the Sunday Story program, until the night before the small groups were supposed to start. I was in the process of discerning a transition in my career, and while I was consulting with all the right professional resources, I also sensed that there was a layer of spiritual discernment missing from my process. There just so happened to be a group that met during a time I could attend that hadn't yet reached capacity, so I signed up and began my Lenten commitment.

The spirit of Lent is one of sacrifice, so I almost feel like I cheated by being able to connect with other parishioners so closely and meaningfully, through sharing of scripture and personal stories. Every week, I looked forward to gathering again with my small group, hearing their perspectives on the readings and accompanying questions, and sharing my thoughts and challenges with the different scriptures. My group's makeup was very varied in many respects, and all the richer for this. The 10 minutes I dedicated each night to sitting down with my candle and the scripture, keeping my fellow small group members in mind as I read and prayed, were just the reminder I needed to slow down, step back from the daily grind, and spend some time with God each day. Those 10 minutes were also a chance for my daughter to see me engaged with God outside church. We know that our girls will pick up just as much from what they see us doing as from what they hear us tell them, and I hope to continue to find ways to show them, and remind myself of, the importance of spending time with God in an intentional way, every day.

Thank you so much for your time.