Lenten 2017 Series – Encounter Lent (#encounterlent)

Session 2 – With Words and Actions: Do it!

Objectives:

* Experience the power of active listening as a way to get involved
* Prepare ourselves for mission with people in the periphery
* Share the mission experience carried out during the 1st week

Symbol(s) of the session (optional):

* Bottles of water

Song for Prayer:

* Suggested song(s): *The Cry of the Poor* or *Come to the Water*

Introduction:

* Welcome to the second session of our Lenten Series *Encounter Lent.*
* During these five weeks we will make our journey with Jesus, following the various moments of the Emmaus passage. As part of this series, each closing prayer ends with a commissioning to prepare you to reach out to those who most need to hear the good news of Jesus and feel the loving embrace of the Church.
* Our session today will focus on the corporal works of Mercy: Feed the Hungry; Give Drink to the Thirsty; Shelter the Homeless; Visit the Sick; Visit the Prisoners; Bury the Dead; Give Alms to the Poor

Sacred Scripture:

A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke (Luke 24:17-20)

*He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped, looking downcast.* *One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?”* *And he replied to them, “What sort of things?” They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,**how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him.*

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Reflection:

In the first session we saw how Jesus took the initiative toward his disciples by joining them along the way to Emmaus. In this second section, we focus on how Jesus gets involved in the life of the disciples asking them about their conversation. This action by Jesus is one of the most surprising in this passage. Jesus knows full well what happened in Jerusalem, and he is very much aware of the difficult situation afflicting his disciples. Why, then, does Jesus ask the disciples what they are talking about along the way, as if he himself did not know the answer? In fact, Jesus asks again, kindly and calmly, saying, *“What sort of things?”* when the disciples answered sadly and in an incredulous tone: *Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?*

This very surprising gesture by Jesus, asking first, and then asking again, is very important aspect of discipleship. The encounter with others, particularly with people who are going through difficult moments, must start by asking about their lives, concerns, hopes, ideas, needs, and dreams. This also allows them to speak about their reality from their own perspective, to share their experiences, their feelings, their ideas. To listen deeply creates a space of trust and safety that allows people to quench their thirst and unload their burdens.

Jesus is not interested in scolding the disciples for having abandoned him, or for not trusting in his promises. Nor is he interested in reproaching them for not having recognized him. He does not start the conversation by teaching them. Jesus’ questions reveal a great human sensitivity as well as his divine wisdom to listen to the suffering of his disciples and to allow them to express their pain, confusion, and astonishment about the events. Jesus knows that his disciples are extremely thirsty in their journey; they thirst for Jesus himself, his message of hope, justice and freedom rooted in the love of the living God who draws near to us, listens to our pains, and frees us from our sins; they thirst to be listened to in their pain.

The questions of the stranger invite the disciples to proclaim that Jesus was a powerful prophet in word and deed before God and before the people. But their own leaders had given him up to be condemned to death, and he was crucified. It is not difficult to imagine the great confusion and pain that the disciples must have felt seeing their priests and officials surrendering a prophet sent by God to his death. The disciples and all of the followers of Jesus expected him to liberate Israel from the Roman oppression and to restore the glory of the Kingdom of Judea. With the death of Jesus, those dreams are demolished and the disciples sink into hopelessness, the Kingdom of God Jesus had announced seemed lost. They are likely to wonder how much longer they will have to wait for the “true Messiah.” The disciples express disappointment and probably wonder if it was all worthwhile to follow Jesus all the time. The fact that they are returning to the way they lived before meeting Jesus is a sign of their defeated hopes, because the one who had offered to quench their thirst forever is no longer with them.

**SEE**

* In our own history what have been the challenges and difficulties that have questioned your dreams and aspirations? Have these experiences threatened to doubt your faith in Jesus? If yes, how did you overcome that doubt? If no, how did your faith overcome the difficulties and challenges?
* During difficulties in your life, who was by your side? Who knew how to listen? Who lent you a friendly hand without judging you? Who helped you quench your thirst?
* How has your faith community helped you through these times of difficulty and challenges?

**JUDGE**

Pope Francis tells us that the disciples of an evangelizing community must be involved with works and gestures in the daily lives of others, particularly of those in difficult situations. Getting involved means narrowing distances, building bridges; going beyond one’s own financial, cultural, educational, or migratory situation in order to reach out to the other. It means owning the suffering of others, taking on their difficulties, and even humbling ourselves, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others. Missionary disciples thus take on the “smell of the sheep” and the sheep are willing to hear their voice (*Evangelii Gaudium,* #24).

This call to becoming involved with those who suffer poverty, dispossession, depression, or even discrimination comes from the very heart of the Church. The United States Bishops have articulated repeatedly that the Church’s Missionary Option shows a predilection for those who live in situations of poverty, sickness, discrimination, spiritual poverty and loneliness. Pope Francis speaks of a cultural and interior poverty so prevalent today, requiring an urgent response from the Church.

The mission of the Church to those who suffer demands these two things: works of mercy and a committed struggle against all forms of injustice. The bishops make an urgent call for us to get involved with those who live in the periphery, so that they can participate in the political, social, economic, and religious processes of their communities.

Personal and family situations can create hopelessness, confusion and suffering. Many people who live in these situations perhaps find themselves on the way back to their own Emmaus; that is to a way of living, thinking, and feeling removed from the Risen Christ, his love, and his promises of life lived to the fullest.

The encounter with the Samaritan woman is another example of how Jesus gets involved and involves a person in need with an entire community (John 4:4-42). Jesus sits by the well where the Samaritan goes to procure water. He sits at the place where the life of the Samaritan woman finds its origin (the well is an image of the source of life for the Samaritan). As he asks, *“Give me a drink,”* he identifies himself as the source of water of that well. Jesus speaks to the Samaritan woman with familiarity, going far beyond social and cultural prejudices, and he gets involved in her life, quenching the thirst she feels even without knowing it. The text shows how Jesus awakens the interest of the Samaritan woman, helping her to make a transition from everyday concerns to personal ones, and from personal concerns to spiritual ones. In this process, the Samaritan woman experiences her own conversion and becomes a disciple. She cannot contain the joy of *“knowing herself loved”* and *“knowing herself accepted”* and she goes to announce to others that she has met someone special. Then she says, *“Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty.*

**ACT**

What is the first best step to be involved in the lives of others in your communities and remain respectful of people’s privacy?

* How have you engaged others in sharing deeply about difficulties and challenges in their lives?
* What speaks to you as you actively listen to this passage in sacred scripture? How do you actively listen to the moments in which to engage the Corporal Works of Mercy?
* How are you encountering the call to this mission and those souls who are impacted by it?

**CELEBRATE**

* Suggested song: one of the two that you did not use above or another song of your choice
* A transparent receptacle of water is a wonderful symbol for the prayer service. People can pour their individual water bottles into the receptacle symbolizing their experiences being offered to God in this prayer.

**Leader:**

I invite all of you to look at the water. Saint Francis of Assisi called it sister water. The water represents our thirst as it refreshes us, energizes us, cleanses us and heals us. Lord, you said you are the spring of living water. Whoever drinks the water you give will never thirst. Allow us to be your vehicle to help quench the thirst of others and help them be refreshed in your friendship.

**All:**

* Lord, give us always of your life-giving water. Lord, you said that no one can go to you unless the Father calls her or him. Cleanse us with your life-giving water and free us from all forms of slavery and guilt.
* Lord, give us always of your life-giving water. Lord, who in your passion experienced thirst, free those who in their thirst drank water from false wells, and return them to your fold through the missionary action of your faithful.
* Lord, give us always of your life-giving water. Lord, you said that no one took life from you because you surrendered it freely. We want to drink from your open side and take that living water to our sisters and brothers who remain in the periphery, and to those whose strength is spent in the ways of the world.
* Lord, give us always of your life-giving water.

**Sacred Scripture:**

*He asked them, “What are you discussing as you walk along?” They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?” And he replied to them, “What sort of things?” They said to him, “The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,**how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. (Luke 24:17-20)*

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In the name of + the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

**MISSION:**

This week commit yourself to go out; either reach out to someone or to the peripheries.

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| **Reach out to someone** |
| 1 – Perform one corporal or spiritual works of mercy this week. |
| **Corporal Works of Mercy**  Feed the hungry  Give drink to the thirsty  Clothe the naked  Welcome the stranger  Visit the sick  Visit the imprisoned  Bury the dead |
| **Spiritual Works of Mercy**  Counsel the doubtful  Instruct the ignorant  Admonish sinners  Comfort the afflicted  Forgive offences  Bear patiently those who do us ill  Pray for the living and the dead |
| 2 – Near the end of the week ponder these questions   * What is most important in your life? * What are your concerns? * What makes you happy? * What are your dreams? * What do you expect from God? * What do you expect from the Catholic Church? * What do you offer to others, to society? |
| 3 – How do you think those in the periphery would answer the questions found above? |
| 4 – If you know someone in the periphery and feel comfortable, please ask them the questions above? |

(Reflections, prayer services and mission plans used by permission from the 5th Encuentro Guide

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