Lenten 2017 Series – Encounter Lent (#encounterlent)

Session 3 – Walking Together with Jesus



Objectives:

* Share about the missionary experience following the previous session
* Use Scripture to interpret life and inspire hope
* Learn about the spirituality of accompaniment
* Prepare for missionary action with emphasis on the proclamation of God’s continuous love for us (kerygma)

Symbol(s) of the session (optional):

* Bible

Song for Prayer:

* Suggested song(s): *O Breathe on Me O Breath of God* or *Come, Holy Ghost* or *We Walk by Faith*

Introduction:

* Welcome to the third 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.
* This third session helps us to more deeply understand the concept of accompaniment. This includes both the fact that Christ accompanies us in all our circumstances, and that we are called to accompany others.

Sacred Scripture:

A Reading from the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke (Luke 24:25-29)

*“And he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke!* *Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer****[\*](http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/24%22%20%5Cl%20%2250024026-1)****these things and enter into his glory?”* *Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.* *As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther.* *But they urged him, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.”*

(Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America, second typical edition © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC. Used with permission. All rights reserved. No portion of this text may be reproduced by any means without permission in writing from the copyright owner.)

Reflection:

*Accompanying, walking together with Jesus…*

What does it mean to be accompanied by Jesus? The disciple’s encounter with Christ begin with him tending to the disciples’ experiences, their own desires, fears, and disappointments. Even as he knew that they had misinterpreted events, he asks that they share from their perspectives. Even as he knew everything that was on their hearts, he lovingly asks that they reveal their own longings. What an act of humility that our all-knowing, all-powerful God, who needs nothing from us, would still ask that we share ourselves with him. Accompaniment begins when we’re attentive to the other person’s heart, and not just interested in sharing our own perspective.

It is only after hearing the disciples’ perspective that Christ begins to teach them. His openness has allowed the disciples’ to become open, and he directs them back to their own experiences, but from a new perspective. *“Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”* Christ gave the disciples new lenses through which they could understand their experiences and the world. How often do we misinterpret events, most of the time because we expect something less than what God wants to offer? As Archbishop Fulton Sheen wrote, “Man draws a blueprint and hopes that God in some way will rubber-stamp it; disappointment is often due to the triviality of human hopes. Original drawings now have to be torn up—not because they are too great, but because in the eyes of God they are too little.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

It is through the stories of scripture that Christ corrects their misunderstanding, *“beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.”* Just as it did then, the scriptures provide a script for us, the lens through which we allow God’s understanding of reality to inform our own. Just as the scriptures spoke of a living word to the disciples on the road to Emmaus they speak a living word to us today; relevant in our hopes, struggles, joys and disappointments.

After unpacking the scriptures for the disciples Christ leaves them free to either accept or reject the vision he has just offered. *“He gave the impression that he was going on farther.”* God will never impose himself upon us, but he always invites us into communion with him freely. And the disciples, moved by the greatness of God’s plan, urge Christ to *“stay with us.”* They have now begun to walk with Christ, not just learning from him or believing in him, but they can now see with his eyes. They have entered into the most profound accompaniment of living in communion with God. As Romano Guardini wrote in his 1954 book *The Lord,* “*Christ in man draws man into himself. In the Holy Spirit, man shares in Christ’s existence, which is the life of his life… This does not mean that man merely thinks of Christ or lovingly cherishes his image; what exists in him is the living reality of Jesus.”[[2]](#footnote-2)*

**SEE**

* Have you had an experience of being accompanied by a loved one in your own life? Who has best accompanied you? What attitudes or actions helped you to trust this person in their accompaniment?
* Has there been a time where God’s plans for you have exceeded your own plans? Do you ever make plans and then hope that God will simply confirm them, instead of being open to his will?
* When do you spend time with God’s word? (Examples, Mass, personal prayer, devotionals, etc.) Do you seek out scripture as a source that can help you understand your experiences? Do you believe that God’s word has something to say to you personally, and in the present moment?

**JUDGE**

One of the deepest convictions we hold as Christians is that God accompanies us. God walks with us every day, in joyful moments and in difficult ones. It is possible to imagine, as many people do, that God created the world and left it to its own devices. When we experience suffering, violence, difficulties, rejection, abandonment, misunderstanding, and even the harsh reality of death, it is tempting to think that God is not with us. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, however, clearly revealed to us that it is especially during those difficult moments that God is with us. God does not abandon the poor, the immigrant, the sick, the imprisoned, the person who feels lonely, nor does he abandon one who struggles with serious sin. God accompanies us with the power of the Word, sustaining us. God accompanies us in the sacraments, strengthening us with his divine grace. And it is in the Eucharist most of all that we discover that the Lord is with us, closer than anyone else could be. In the sacrament of Reconciliation we are truly forgiven by God.

 “In the apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel,* Pope Francis offers Mary to us as a model of accompaniment:

*‘Mary is able to recognize the traces of God’s Spirit in events great and small. She constantly contemplates the mystery of God in our world, in human history and in our daily lives. She is the woman of prayer and work in Nazareth, and she is also Our Lady of Help, who sets out from her town ‘with haste’ (Lk 1:39) to be of service to others.”*

Mary’s attentiveness to God inspires her to accompany others, to go out and serve those around us. Since Christ lives within us his mission lives within us, to go out to the marginalized and vulnerable and share the awesomeness of God’s divine plan.

**ACT**

***Accompanying all***

How can we become more attentive to God’s accompaniment today, and to our call to accompany others?

* When do you find it most obvious that God is acting in your life? When do you find it most difficult to recognize God’s action?
* How can we become more attentive to scripture, which can help us recognize and respond to God’s presence in our lives?
* Who do you think is most in need of accompaniment today? How can we better accompany this person/these people?

**CELEBRATE**

* Suggested song: one of the two that you did not use above or another song of your choice

**Leader:**

The Word of God comes to us, and to our community, meeting us where we are, in order to lead us to the Lord. This is why we are a pilgrim people, being led by the Word. This message is the same that the patriarchs, kings, and prophets heard in old times. This message was heard by the early Christians, the desert fathers, the holy men and women of our Church. This message was known by our grandmothers and grandfathers who taught us how to pray.

**All:**

* Give us Lord, a vision which can help us see your accompaniment in our lives today.
* Give us Lord, a vision which can comfort us in our affliction, and strengthen us when we waver.
* Give us Lord, a vision which help us see scripture as your living Word, given to us personally.
* Give us Lord, a vision to recognize those who are most in need of accompaniment today.

**Leader:**

Let us always remember that Christ accompanies us, and that as he lives within us we are called to accompany others.

**Closing Prayer:**

God of life and wisdom, you are always faithful to your promises and bring your plans to fulfillment. Walk with us today so that at each step we may find your message of love and tenderness. We ask you this through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the living face of your mercy and has given us your Holy Spirit to keep us faithful to you, and lives and reigns with you forever and ever.

**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 – Invite one person from your group to join you in missionary action this week. |
| 2 – Decide which family living in the periphery you plan to visit. |
| 3 – Start with dialogue by introducing yourselves, offering a greeting of welcome and peace, and identifying the parish, ecclesial movement, or Catholic organization to which you belong. |
| 4 – Get to know the family a little better by using last week’s questions proposed for the missionary action to get involved. |
| 5 – Share your testimony of how God accompanies you in your own life. |

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

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1. Sheen, Fulton (Life of Christ 412). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Guardini, Romano (The Lord 431). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)