



Just Prayer and Spirituality Extras

I: Extra activity

ideas and resources

You can use these extra activities in place of the ones suggested in the module, or for further exploration of just prayer and spirituality.



Activity idea I: The good Samaritan

Reading

Read Luke 10:25–31.

Reflection

Jesus invests in the most unlikely people and has wide friendships, i.e. his relationships are not confined to people like him! The challenge to those around him is to cross cultural, social or religious barriers.

The Samaritan by his action judges the dominant way by disregard of the marginal. The ones who pass by, obviously carriers of the dominant tradition, are numbed, indifferent, and do not notice. The Samaritan expresses a new way that displaces the old arrangements in which outcasts are simply out. The replacing of numbness with compassion, that is, the end of cynical indifference and the beginning of noticed pain, signals a social revolution.

The Prophetic Imagination by Walter Brueggeman

Who is my neighbour? The neighbour was the Samaritan who approached the wounded man and made him his neighbour. The neighbour ... is not he whom I find in my path, but rather he in whose path I place myself, he whom I approach and actively seek.

Gustavo Gutierrez

Follow-up questions

- Are there barriers that prevent you from acting in solidarity? What or where are these barriers?
- The Samaritan goes beyond his own boundaries to support and care for another person. How can your group take similar action?



Activity idea 2: Slaves or partners?

Reading

Read the Letter to Philemon, followed by this poem:

Slaves or Partners?

Are we partners, in the work, you and I...
Or just slaves to unrealistic expectations?



Dare we trust ourselves to this creative tension?
 These sparking differences...
 Or will we just continue in our determination,
 To mould one another in our own image?

Can I discover the Gospel expressed in you...
 and will you have the eyes to glimpse Christ in me?

Together, in this time and place,
 that is the Divine “given”.
 But who we are, who we will become
 that is “choice” – Our choice!

Reflection

Paul appeals to Philemon to accept Onesimus, as his brother and as an equal partner. In doing so Paul is reinforcing the concept of equality in Christ. Who are *our* partners? Well, there are the obvious ones (and in some ways the easy ones!); others like us; those who share similar values/ideas – we know where they are coming from! But in Christ we are challenged also to look further afield. To see others as equals and partners in the work of justice and peace. Do this and Christ will be in the midst and you will live the Gospel!

Revd Will Morrey (a former Methodist President of conference), speaking on this passage, talked about the need and challenge to see the good and dwell there, rather than allowing our differences to become a stumbling block that prevents us seeing one another as partners.

Follow-up questions

- What might dwelling on the good mean as we seek to live out a just spirituality in partnership with Jesus’ friends?
- What might looking further afield for partners mean for your group in its quest to live justly?

Activity idea 3: Living out a Just Spirituality

Start by watching the scene described below from the film *Dead Man Walking* (if you can, otherwise use the reflection on its own).

Reflection

In the film *Dead Man Walking*, there is a scene at the end when an angry and grieving father says to Sister Helen: “I wish I had your faith”. Sister Helen replies, “It’s not faith, I wish it was that simple. It’s work.”

Faith is a gift, but it makes incredible demands upon us: time, energy, generosity and patience. Poverty, homelessness, and the struggles associated with them are signs that God’s kingdom of justice has not fully arrived.

Jesus assures us that if we work together to build justice and create a world of peace, where all are valued, God will help us.

“The Christian life is a continuous going into the presence of God from the presence of people (men)... and coming into the presence of people (men)... from the presence of God.”

William Barclay, Daily Study Bible

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something.”

Edward Everett Hale

“Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Certainly this refers to us. We hold in our hearts one whom we do not see in his





body. He refers to us, but only if we follow up our faith with our works. Those people truly believe who express their belief through their work.”

Gregory the Great (540–604)



Activity idea 4: The demands of solidarity

Choose **ONE** of the following activities:

Option 1: The lion's whisker

Reading

Once upon a time in a country far away, a woman married a widower who had a young son. The woman was overjoyed in her new home and new relationships. But the child refused her affections; he also refused her cooking, tore her mending and turned away from her kindness.

After some time, the woman sought the help of a wise hermit who lived on the mountain. She begged the hermit, “Make me a potion, so my stepson will accept my love.” “I will make you a potion”, the hermit said, “but the ingredients are very difficult to obtain. You must bring me a whisker of a living lion.”

The woman went away still in distress but determined not to give up. That night whilst everyone slept, she crept out of the village to the edge of the desert carrying a bowl of meat. She knew that a great lion lived near some rocks some distance from the village. Hearing him roar, she dropped the bowl and ran back to her home, while he snatched up and ate the meat. The following night, she went again. This time she walked further into the desert until she could see the form of the lion on the distant rocks. She set down the bowl and ran home.

Every night she drew closer to the lion before setting down the bowl of meat. Every night the lion ate her food. Finally after many nights, she placed her bowl down and stepped back but did not run home. She watched as the huge lion enjoyed her food. The following night, she placed the bowl down but it not move away. Slowly the lion came forward and began to eat the food. The woman reached out and stroked the lion. He made happy sounds in his throat. “Thank you my friend” the woman said and she carefully snipped a whisker from his chin. She moved away slowly and then ran all the way to the wise hermit.

“I brought you the whisker of a living lion,” she called as she ran into the hermit’s hut. The hermit was sitting before her fire. She took the whisker and examined it closely before dropping it into the fire!

“What have you done?” cried the woman. “That whisker was for the potion. You don’t know how hard it was to obtain. It has taken me months to win the trust of the lion.” “Can the love and trust of a child be harder to obtain than that of a wild lion?” asked the hermit. “Go home my sister, and think on what you have done.”

The woman returned home and slowly, with love and patience, won the trust and love of her stepson.

Quoted in Prayer without borders (Catholic Relief services, US)

Reflection

Solidarity is a long-term relationship. It is about trying to understand the root causes of poverty and all its intricacies; witnessing first-hand the struggle and the stories and working for change to the complex structures of injustice. Truthful solidarity requires much determination and courage.



Just Church: Extras

“Jesus in his solidarity with the marginal one is moved to compassion. Compassion constitutes a radical form of criticism, for it announces that the hurt is to be taken seriously, that hurt is not to be accepted as normal and natural but is an abnormal and unacceptable condition for humanness...”

The Prophetic Imagination by Walter Brueggeman

Follow-up questions

- The woman in the story was motivated by love – this sustained her on the quest. What do you need to sustain and maintain solidarity with Jesus’ friends? Share your need with God.
- Can you think of one practical action that you as a group (or individual) could take in order to be alongside and supportive of another person/ community group? What is the action and how will you fulfil it?

or

Option 2: The rich father

Once, a rich father took his child on a journey to the countryside with the firm intention that the child should see how poor certain people were and understand the value of things and how fortunate their family was. They spent a day and night in the home of a humble peasant family.

Upon concluding the trip, on the way home, the father asked the child, “What did you think of the trip?”

“Very pretty, Dad!” came the reply.

“Did you see how poor and needy people can be?”

“Yes.”

“And what did you learn?”

“I saw that we have a dog at home, they have four. We have a 20-metre pool; they have a creek without end. We have solar panelled lighting on our patio, they have the stars. Our patio goes to the wall of our house, theirs goes to the horizon. Especially Dad, I saw that they have time to talk together and live as a family. You have to work all the time and I almost never see you.”

The father was speechless but the child continued, “Thank you, Dad, for showing me how rich we could someday be.”

Quoted in Prayer without borders (Catholic Relief services, US)

Reflection

Solidarity can be imagined as a shared walk, journeying with another to reach a difficult destination. For those who are non-poor (in economic terms), a relationship that is mutual, receptive and involved in common cause with people who live in poverty can require a complete change in perspective as in the story.

“Solidarity means truthfully recognising the place we stand in... The meaning of the words we pray will be charged with the weight of our wealth or poverty, the place we live, the group we belong to, the schooling we have received, and the political beliefs we cherish – whether they are conscious or not. We can only pray from the place in which we are standing, and not from some “pious” or abstract space separate from the real world... We are called ... to recognise that we too are diminished and wounded, because the world is arranged as it is...”

Bread of Tomorrow by Janet Morley

“Often we shall have to change the direction of our thinking and our wishing and our striving. That is what repentance really means – taking our bearings afresh and trying a new road.”

Harry Williams



Follow-up questions

- In your call to solidarity with all of Jesus' friends, reflect: "Where do I come from and where am I going?"

More quotations, stories and poems

Unless you are prepared to be made nothing, to be dipped into oblivion, you will never really change...

DH Lawrence

Perseverance is the greatest of all teachers.

Arabian proverb

The love we dream about is tested by the actualities of this particular person at this particular time.

John Kavanaugh SJ

It is easy to halve a potato where there's love.

Irish proverb

A woman dreamed

A woman dreamed she walked into a brand new shop in the marketplace and, to her surprise, found God behind the counter.

"What do you sell here?" she asked.

"Everything your heart desires," said God.

Hardly daring to believe what she was hearing, the woman decided to ask for the best things a human being could wish for,

"I want peace of mind and love and happiness and wisdom and freedom from fear."

Then as an afterthought, she added, "Not just for me. For everyone on earth."

God smiled, "I think you've got me wrong, my friend,"

God said. "We don't sell fruits here. Only seeds."

Anthony de Mello

The edge is where you meet with God

At the edge of the housing market with the Street homeless, in the God who comes to us again and again in the world's poorest and most vulnerable.

At the edge of consumerism in the Glad Rags thrifty shop, where the Retail Price Index is overshadowed by the economy of the Kingdom.

At the edge of polite society with the heavy drinker and intravenous drug user, where for all the world to see Christ bares the wounds of Crucifixion.

At the edge of worship with the radical and the heretic, where angels fear to tread, and safety and comforting platitudes are no longer a priority because Truth is.

At the edge of strength and self-reliance, in the gifts and skills of another, where we learn, often with difficulty, that we are created not for independence but to be co-partners.

Yes, the edge is where we meet with God.

And meeting God is easy!

Just strip away pretence and give away your self.

Accept your need; open your hands and heart.

See God in friend and stranger; recognise the Christ in you and me

Meeting with God is easy –

But to truly deeply madly love her that will take you to the edge!



Just Church: Extras

Reasons not to act?

- Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor” ... *(And those who stand up for what is right and fight injustice.)*
- Anyway, nothing we can do will make a difference. *(But acting together does make a difference.)*
- And of course, some people are not as poor as they look – you hear that some of them have homes and make their living begging. *(What sort of shelter do you need to have to call it a “home”?)*
- Besides, aren’t riches a sign of God’s blessing? *(But what sort of riches?)*
- The thing is, people need to sort themselves out first. *(And how can they do that without a home; without support?)*
- Isn’t it the government’s responsibility to take action? Or the council’s? *(Whose government/council is it anyway?)*
- Other people must be much better placed to do things than me – I’m too busy/not important enough/not articulate. *(“For evil to prevail it is enough for good men to do nothing” – Edmund Burke.)*

From Homelessness Sunday

Further reading

- *Beyond the Good Samaritan* by Ann Morisy
- *Acting in Solidarity* by Anthony Reddie
- *Bread of Tomorrow*, edited by Janet Morley
- The stories and reflections of Anthony De Mello
- The poetry of Edwina Gately
- The theological reflections/work, stories and poetry of Megan McKenna
- *Holy Ground – liturgies & worship resources for an engaged spirituality* by Neil Paynter and Helen Boothroyd (Wild Goose Publishing)