



Re-Imagining

our

Ministries

at

St. Mary of the Woods

Faith Community

Purity of heart communicates faith better than rational arguments.... The gospel is better lived in personal encounters in community than in the polemic of ideas. Hence the value of the Eucharist and of meditating with others in silence. These demand personal, physical presence. You cannot celebrate the Eucharist or meditate together in faith without being aware of a presence that unites you with others and Itself and that also embraces you and all others present. To love and to pray *in His name* is an adequate definition of what it means to be a Christian.

Laurence Freeman
Jesus the Teacher Within

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A CALL TO RE-IMAGINE OUR MINISTRIES

St. Mary of the Woods Faith Community is truly blessed with numerous individuals and groups who through their selfless gift of time, talent and resources make real the Gospel of Love in their varied ministries. I am calling us to deepen our experiential encounter of Jesus and His transforming Spirit present in each of us and in the collective experience of our ministry. We can begin to do this by using this "How To Manual" effectively within our ministries.

By adding the contemplative dimension (prayer) to our ministries, we will grow into a Christian Community that will have learned to integrate and balance the active and contemplative aspects of the Gospel life. Our ministries above all need a contemplative spirit moving within them to ensure that their activity is continuously being checked against the standard of love and discipleship.

"A great discovery awaits us when we sit regularly with others in silence and then get up to work with them for the good of others. This will be the experience of communion at a deeper level than that of the words and gestures with which we generally communicate." (Thoughts culled from the article, "The Contemplative Parish" by Laurence Freeman)

In the words of Joyce Rupp, we pray:

God who sings in our hearts, as the flute needs openness to receive the breath of melody, we pray to be open to the many ways that Your symphony of love plays in our lives. Thank you for the way that Your enlivening Spirit touches us and moves through our lives. Remind us often that each of us is a special instrument of Yours. You stand at the door of our hearts asking for an entrance. You desire to come in and share the intimacy of Your presence with us (Rev. 3:20). As we say "Yes" we together create the wondrous music in Your concert of love.

Thank you for the profound difference you are making in our Faith Community.

On the spiritual journey with you,

Fr. Greg Sakowicz
Pastor

Structure of Each Session

The following elements should be included in each faith sharing. The sharing should be for at least 15 to 20 minutes.

- 1) Silence - About one minute of silence to become aware of God's presence in our lives.**
- 2) Scripture or passage**
- 3) Reflection - Silent reflection on Scripture or passage**
- 4) Focus Questions**
- 5) Sharing and Dialogue at your own comfort level**
- 6) Prayer - Our Father, Hail Mary or Glory Be**

RESOURCE #1

Ministers to the Future

Archbishop Oscar Romero

**It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.
The Kingdom is not only beyond our efforts; it is beyond our vision.
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise
that is the Lord's work....**

**Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that
the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
No sermon says all that should be said.
No prayer fully expresses our faith.
No confession brings perfection.
No pastoral visit brings wholeness.
No program accomplishes the Church's mission.
No set of goals and objectives includes everything.**

**That is what we are about.
We plant the seeds that one day grow.
We water seeds already planted knowing they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We provide yeast that affects far beyond our capabilities....**

**We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.
This enables us to do something, and to do it very, very well.**

**It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.**

**We may never see the end results.
But that is the difference between the Master Builder and the worker.**

**We are the workers, not the master builders...
Ministers, not messiahs.**

We are prophets of a future that is not our own.

Amen

Suggestions for using “**Ministers to the Future**” by *Archbishop Oscar Romero* as an opening prayer.

Take a few minutes to silently **read this prayer**. Highlight words or phrases that speak to you in your role as ministers at St. Mary of the Woods. As you are doing this ask yourself, “How is God beckoning me to apply Romero’s insights to my particular ministry?”

Now invite individuals who wish to **share their response** to the reading to speak briefly to the group. Sharing is an important dimension of this process because it encourages one another in the faith experience. The Spirit is calling and speaking through the members of this group. Allow up to 10 minutes for this sharing and end with the “Our Father.”

Your ministry may want to revisit this prayer of Oscar Romero at some other time. It is profound and pregnant with dimensions of the Catholic faith that call us to reflect and share in group gatherings.

RESOURCE # 2

**Eleven sessions of Scripture passages related to Ministry
and Service in Joyce Rupp's book, Out of the Ordinary
Pages 137 - 157**

Focus Questions for Sharing and Dialogue

1. As you read or participate in the reading of the passage, what sentiments were aroused in you and how does this relate to your ministry?
2. What in the Scripture or passage relates specifically to your ministry and how is the Spirit inviting you to make this real in your ministry?
3. What is the particular motif or subject matter of this reading (e.g. discipleship) and how does this play out in your ministry?

Integrating the Contemplative Experience into our Ministries

In His teaching in the house of Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42), Jesus gives the first defense of the contemplative life in the Christian Tradition against the oft leveled charge that the solitary, silent contemplative is selfish and insensitive to the needs of the world. Martha and Mary represent two sides of the human soul which need to be friends and to live in an integrated and wholesome way together in the house of the self.

By adding the contemplative dimension to our ministries we will grow into a Christian Community that will have learned to integrate and balance the active and contemplative aspects of the gospel life. Among the early Christians it was commonplace that the way you prayed determined the way you lived. Today we call this “spirituality.” The level and quality of prayer determines the level from which our sense of meaning arises through daily experience as well as the quality of our relationships and self-knowledge. Ministry is vitally influenced by this. Our ministries above all need a contemplative spirit moving within them to ensure that their activity is continuously being checked against the standard of love and discipleship. We really believe in love and commit ourselves to discipleship only to the degree that we have an identity beyond the horizons of the ego. When we even barely glimpse the reality of St. Paul’s statement that “I live no longer but Christ lives in me,” our way of relating to other people is radically transformed.

A great discovery awaits us when we sit regularly with others in silence and then get up to work with them for the good of others. Silence is not an absence of the communication that we think exclusively creates community. It is the experience of communion at a level deeper than that of the words and gestures with which we normally communicate.

Two great challenges offer our ministries and the parish as a whole an opportunity for regeneration: the re-discovery and re-appropriation of our contemplative tradition as a living practice among all our members and the encounter in deep dialogue with each other.

Thoughts culled from the article “The Contemplative Parish”
by Laurence Freeman