



5 PAPAL VISIT 2010

RESOURCES FOR FAITH SHARING GROUPS

The theme of this session: A heart that seeks justice

Welcome and Invitation to prayer

Light the candle

Gathering Prayer From Psalm 101 (100) NRSV

After a few moments of quiet we join together to pray with the psalms, prayers that Jesus himself would have used.

Leader

My song is of mercy and justice;
I sing to you, O Lord.
I will walk in the way of perfection.
O when, Lord, will you come?

Group

I will walk with blameless heart within my house;
I will hate the ways of the crooked;
they shall not be my friends.

Leader

The man who slanders his neighbour in secret,
I will bring to silence.
The man of proud looks and haughty heart
I will never endure.

Group

I look to the faithful in the land
that they may dwell with me.
He who walks in the way of perfection
shall be my friend.

Leader

No man who practices deceit
shall live within my house.
No man who utters lies shall stand
before my eyes.

Group

Morning by morning I will silence
all the wicked in the land,
uprooting from the city of the Lord
all who do evil.

All: Glory be to the Father...

Scripture Reading Luke 23:33-47 NRSV translation

*Let us listen carefully to the Word of the Lord,
And attend to it with the ear of our hearts.
Let us welcome it, and faithfully put it into practice.
St. Benedict of Nursia (c.480-547)*

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, 'He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!' The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, 'If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!' There was also an inscription over him, 'This is the King of the Jews.'

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!' But the other rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, 'Certainly this man was innocent.'

Please take a few moments in silence to reflect on the passage, then after a second reading (perhaps with a different voice) share a word or phrase that has struck you.

Reflection

Even from the earliest age children seem to know when something is unjust. When one gets poured more cereal, served more ice cream, receives a larger present, often you hear the words 'that's not fair'. As we get older, we can often relax into this and find ourselves saying 'that's life', 'that's the way it is', 'you win some, you lose some'. However, sometimes we experience an event so unjust, so simply wrong, that we can't help but cry out.

Suffering is part of life, whether it is physical pain or mental anguish from bereavement or difficult circumstances. It is perfectly possible to become 'immune' to suffering and pain, inoculated by the doses we experience in our own lives and the horrors of famine and disease, conflict and pain, that we see in the papers and on TV. Pope Benedict links suffering and hope in his second encyclical *In hope we are saved* (*Spe Salvi*). 'A society unable to accept its suffering members and incapable of helping to share their suffering,' he writes, 'is a cruel and inhuman society' (*Spe Salvi*, 38). There is no Christian 'answer' to suffering, but there is a Christian way of using it.

A heart that stirs at the sight of pain is a heart that seeks justice. A heart that moves at suffering is a heart that hopes and works for its relief. As the world in which we live becomes more and more globalised, we realise our interconnectedness and our indebtedness to others. As we realise the opportunities that such global awareness brings, we are also conscious of its challenges and the presence of real injustice. We too become aware of the needs of the future put at risk by the actions of past and the desires of our present.

(pause)

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12), Jesus provides us with a checklist for living for justice: blessed the peacemaker, the merciful, those who hunger and thirst for what is right. In the Bible we also read of the ultimate injustice – Jesus' death. As the 'good' criminal recognised, the sinless one was given over for our faults which made us right with God. By acknowledging that he died for our sins, both our individual sins and those injustices caused by the political and economic conditions of which we are a part, we can live in hope. As our hearts seek justice for the poor and suffering we look towards the

great hope of God's future promise that gives us courage and directs our action in good times and bad (*Spe Salvi*, 35).

Questions to consider and share with one another

What examples of injustice do you see in the world today?

How would our society be judged regarding its treatment of its poor and suffering?

Can we say we have 'done nothing wrong'?

How can we grow in our appreciation of our brothers and sisters across the world?

Collectively and personally how do we contribute to the common good?

The world is full of suffering and injustice. As followers of Jesus Christ, we must seek to respond in hope and love when such pain stirs our hearts.

Intercessions

Take the opportunity now to share any cares and concerns you may have, people who've asked for your prayers and your help or challenges you face. Perhaps you wish to give thanks too for a particular joy you have experienced recently or express sorrow for a moment where you have turned your face from God.

To draw these prayers together we say the prayer that Our Saviour gave us: Our Father...

Living the Message

What difference will the Word of God and our sharing make to my life during the coming week? In small ways how might we be able to respond the pain and suffering of others?

Closing Prayer

God of truth and love,
your Son, Jesus Christ, stands as the light
to all who seek you with a sincere heart.
As we strive with your grace
to be faithful in word and deed,
may we reflect the kindly light of Christ
and offer a witness of peace and hope to all.
We pray for Pope Benedict.
May he be a witness to the unity and hope
which is your will for all people.
We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Our Lady, Mother of the Church – pray for us.
St Andrew – pray for us.
St George – pray for us.
St David – pray for us.