

Session 4

Exploring a Life of Discipleship - Compassionate Service

MAKE ME A SERVANT

Jesus not only calls people to him but also forms them and sends them out in his service. Being sent on a mission is a consequence of being a disciple. Whoever wants to follow Christ will have much work to do on his behalf-announcing the Good News and serving others as Jesus did.

(Stewardship: A Disciple's Response, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops)

GATHERING: (15 minutes)

Welcome and Greeting

Group Members Share:

- One word that describes me today is...
- What did I commit to in Session 3?
- How did I follow through with my commitment?

PRAYING: (15 minutes)

Songs

Traditional songs to sing/play or select a contemporary personal favorite:

- The Summons – Kelvin Grove
- Go Make of All Disciples - Ella Combe

YouTube selections:

- Servant Song – Donna Marie Mc Gargill, OSM
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uSG1gm5KT1c>
- Here I Am Lord - Dan Schutte
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GINNh15cT08>

Quotation for Silent Reflection

Consider a word or phrase for possible sharing

Serving

Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve:
to give, and not count the cost,
to fight, and not heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor, and not to ask for any rewards,
save that of knowing that we do your will.

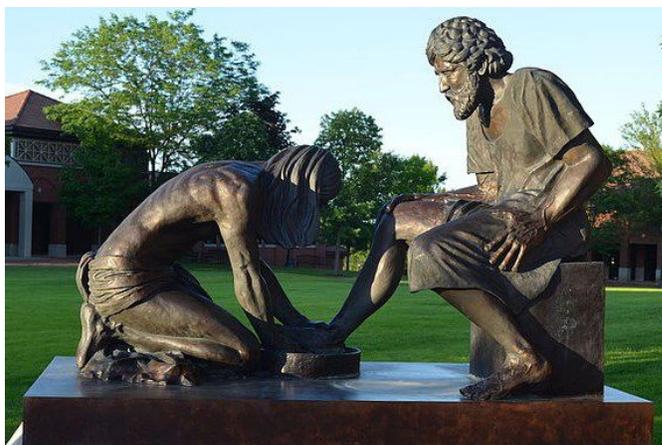
Ignatius of Loyola

Scripture for Inspiration

John 13: 1-15

Question for Group Reflection

- Words or verses that spoke to me are?



Prayer Conclusion (Together)

Lord God, we are the work of your hands created for your joy and your service. Send your Spirit upon us that we may imitate the lesson taught by Jesus when he washed the feet of the first disciples. Give us a generous heart that we may be energetic and joy-filled servants not only out of obligation but out of faith and love. May the world know that we are your disciples by our passion for service. We ask this in the name of our primary Servant Leader and our Savior. Amen.

“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

(Mary, Mother of God, Lk 1:38)

CONSIDER THIS: (38 minutes - If participants have not read content prior to gathering, please take a moment to read aloud, rotating willing members.)

Jesus and Service— His Life Was a Template

The pertinent question for this fourth stewardship session is this: Why is service so fundamental to the Catholic Church?" The answer is simple: "We are disciples of a God who served."

Prior to Jesus' final and ultimate act of service on the cross, we observe him washing the feet of his disciples in the Gospel of John (*Jn 13:1-15*). Each time we encounter this episode we are witnesses to one of Jesus' most profoundly "teachable and demonstrative moments" with his followers. In this passage we also are invited to recall what he said and did during his three years of ministry on earth. The word ministry means service and as Jesus steps into full view following his baptism in each of the Gospels, it is clear that he is on a mission to serve.

How did Jesus serve? He served by teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people (*Mt 4:23*). Jesus instructed others about the kingdom through his Sermon on the Mount and Plain (*Mt 5:1-12, Lk 6:20-49*); and stories like the Parables of the Talents and Lost Son (*Mk 12:1-12, Lk 15:13-32*). He served through encouragement and providing for people's basic needs. We have insight into Jesus' compassion as he is about to feed four thousand people: "My heart is moved with pity for the crowd." (*Mk 8: 2*); or as he is about to raise the widow's son "when the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity" (*Lk 7:13*).

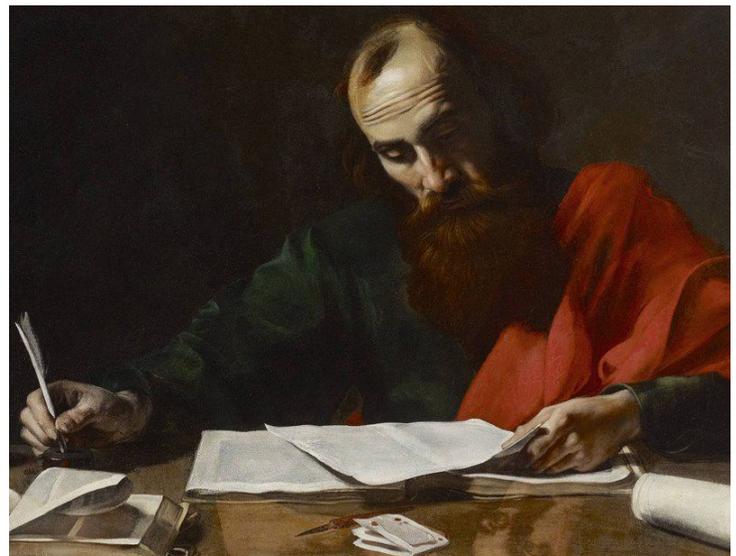
Who did Jesus serve? He came to serve the "House of Israel" but tirelessly offered himself to anyone who would listen, hear and believe. Jesus served the rich by encouraging them to make God central in their lives and challenged them to act with justice (*Mt 19:16-22*). He tended to the poor, considering those who were sick and racked with pain, those who were possessed, as well as lunatics and paralytics (*Mt 4:24*). Jesus responded to the marginalized such as the Syrophenician woman (*Mk 7:24-30*); and the woman caught in adultery (*Jn 8:1-11*). He served all that they might be great recipients of God's love and mercy.

Powerfully, in the end and on the cross, Jesus makes his earlier testimony to service a reality "For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the many" (*Mk 10: 45*).

Quotation for Reflection

"The theology of ministry and service emphasizes that it is not so much that we do things for others but rather Jesus is doing something for others through us. Being aware of the difference between "for" and "through" changes our whole manner of service. That is why prayer is so important: it keeps reminding us that all stewardship is ultimately the work of the Lord taking place through the actions of faithful disciples."

*Bishop Robert F. Morneau
(Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus, Diocese of Green Bay)*



St. Paul Writing His Epistles

Stewardship of Service - Called Out of Our Giftedness

Prior to Jesus' death and resurrection, the disciples had the opportunity to intern with the Master in the area of service (*Mt 10:7-8, Mk 6:7-13, Lk 9:1-6*). He empowered and coached them into imitating what they had witnessed. We know today that once the Messiah had risen and sent his Spirit that his ministry would need to be duplicated and expanded.

With the help of the Holy Spirit, the disciples formed the early Church into a community of Christ's servants (*1Cor 4:1*). People knew they were Christians by their great love and became effective evangelizers through their compassionate service.

As the Church grew, Paul for example, brought a new dimension to serving others. He reminded members in places such as Rome and Corinth to consider how uniquely they had been created and called them to bless the Church with their gifts. Consider: "Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them" (*Romans 12:6*). "Indeed, I wish everyone to be as I am, but each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another" (*1Cor 7:7*). When you consider the lives of saints, many heard and acted upon Paul's message.

As members of the Church in the third millennium, the call is the same for us. The United States Bishops quote Pope John Paul II in *Stewardship: A Disciple's Response*: "Participation takes different forms according to people's different gifts and offices, but there is a fundamental obligation arising from the sacrament of Baptism that people place their gifts, their resources-their-selves at God's service in and through the Church."

Pope Francis expresses it very simply when he states: "*We who are Christians, members of God's family, are called to go out to the needy and serve them*" (*tweeted Jan. 17, 2015*). Though the message is clear, the challenge for us today is identifying our gifts and then making service a priority in our busy lives. Our free will always makes commitment to discipleship a choice, but our "yes" promises a life of joy for us and for our Church.

Questions for Reflection:

Next to his death on the cross, what element of Jesus' life as servant speaks most powerfully to you? * Consider a saint and describe how he/she served as Jesus did using his/her specific gifts.* What special gifts have you been given that provide you with joy? * How might you use these gifts to serve the Church and/or the world. * What are some of the challenges to becoming a good steward of your gifts in service? * What would you be willing to do to increase the amount of time you spend serving others?

Notes:

"There is a light in this world, a healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometimes lose sight of this force when there is so much suffering and pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call and answer in extraordinary ways."

Mother Teresa

FROM THE HEART OF POPE FRANCIS (optional)

- Jesus washes the feet of the Apostles. Are we ready to serve like this? *(tweeted April 2, 2015)*
- Practicing charity is the best way to evangelize. *(tweeted Jan. 24, 2015)*
- Love is the measure of faith. *(tweeted Nov. 27, 2014)*
- Christians know how to give. Their lives filled with generous acts-often towards their neighbor. *(tweeted Aug. 23, 2014)*
- To change the world we must be good to those who cannot repay us. *(tweeted Oct. 18, 2014)*
- Indifference towards those in need is not acceptable for a Christian. *(tweeted Nov. 6, 2014)*
- At times we can be so self-absorbed. Lord, help us to open our hearts to others and to serve those who are most vulnerable. *(tweeted June 2, 2014)*
- Like the Good Samaritan, may we not be ashamed of touching the wounds of those who suffer. But try to heal them with concrete acts of love. *(tweeted June 2, 2014)*



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LIVING LIKE JESUS: (21 minutes)

Take Action

Consider how your prayer, reflection and sharing in Session 4 might have inspired you to step out in faith this week. Share ideas that reflect your personal situation or consider one of the simple ideas below.

- Reflect upon the gifts God has given you (those things that you are passionate about and give you life). Make a list of the ways in which you can or are using your gifts to serve your Church or community.
- Prayerfully review your calendar and the hours you currently give to serving others. Consider increasing your gift of service.
- Purchase a copy of *Living Your Strengths (Catholic Edition)* from Gallup and take the online survey which determines your strength-themes. Locate in the text ideas for using your specific themes to serve your parish.
- Contact your parish office to explore what opportunities there are to serve.
- Ponder initiating a life-giving, relevant new ministry in your parish.
- Contact your local St. Vincent De Paul, Homeless Shelter, etc. for opportunities to serve.

Commitment:

- In light of this, what commitment will I make for the week(s) ahead?

Additional Scripture Passages

Jeremiah 1:4-5, 7-8

Matthew 25:14-30

Mark 10:43-45

Matthew 5:13-16

Luke 10:25-37

John 15:16-17

Hebrews 13:16

James 2:14-17

Romans 12:4-8

1 Peter 4:10

Wrap Up: (1 minute)

Date for Session 5 _____

Closing Prayer (Together)

Closing Prayer

Father, we thank you and praise you for the gift of your Son. Help us to become Jesus imitators as we work to wash the feet of others. Assist us in identifying our gifts that we can truly be the “salt of the earth” and the light of the world.” Give us the heart of Mary and the saints and fill us with courage and wisdom to make serving a priority that comes from the “first fruits” of our calendar. Walk with us as we discern ways to become a more committed steward of service so that we can give you glory and build up your Church.

In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen.



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