

Session 5

Sent to the peripheries of society

Introductory Activity

5mins

Invite participants to share something that has stayed with them from last week or something from their homework.

Prayer

Listen to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DisweFp-z3g>

10mins

Lectio Divina using the gospel of the day, or the Sunday gospel, or one of the paragraphs below from Pope Francis:

Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel [2013])

20. The word of God constantly shows us how God challenges those who believe in him “to go forth”. Abraham received the call to set out for a new land (cf. *Gen* 12:1-3). Moses heard God’s call: “Go, I send you” (*Ex* 3:10) and led the people towards the promised land (cf. *Ex* 3:17). To Jeremiah God says: “To all whom I send you, you shall go” (*Jer* 1:7). In our day Jesus’ command to “go and make disciples” echoes in the changing scenarios and ever new challenges to the Church’s mission of evangelization, and all of us are called to take part in this new missionary “going forth”. Each Christian and every community must discern the path that the Lord points out, but all of us are asked to obey his call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the “peripheries” in need of the light of the Gospel.

Evangelii Gaudium

48. If the whole Church takes up this missionary impulse, she has to go forth to everyone without exception. But to whom should she go first? When we read the Gospel we find a clear indication: not so much our friends and wealthy neighbours, but above all the poor and the sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked, “those who cannot repay you” (*Lk* 14:14). There can be no room for doubt or for explanations which weaken so clear a message. Today and always, “the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel”, and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them.

Evangelii Gaudium

49. ... I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. I do not want a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures. If something should rightly disturb us

and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: "Give them something to eat" (Mk 6:37).

Gaudete et Exsultate (Rejoice and Be Glad [2018])

98. If I encounter a person sleeping outdoors on a cold night, I can view him or her as an annoyance, an idler, an obstacle in my path, a troubling sight, a problem for politicians to sort out, or even a piece of refuse cluttering a public space. Or I can respond with faith and charity and see in this person a human being with a dignity identical to my own, a creature infinitely loved by the Father, an image of God, a brother or sister redeemed by Jesus Christ. That is what it is to be a Christian.

Homily at Mass for new Cardinals 2015

I urge you to serve Jesus crucified in every person who is marginalized, for whatever reason; to see the Lord in every excluded person who is hungry, thirsty, naked; to see the Lord present even in those who have lost their faith, or turned away from the practice of their faith, or say that they are atheists; to see the Lord who is imprisoned, sick, unemployed, persecuted; to see the Lord in the leper – whether in body or soul - who encounters discrimination! We will not find the Lord unless we truly accept the marginalized! May we always have before us the image of Saint Francis, who was unafraid to embrace the leper and to accept every kind of outcast. Truly, dear brothers, the Gospel of the marginalized is where our credibility is at stake, is discovered and is revealed!

Laudato 'Si (Praise be to You: On Care for our Common Home [2015])

48. The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet: "Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest". For example, the depletion of fishing reserves especially hurts small fishing communities without the means to replace those resources; water pollution particularly affects the poor who cannot buy bottled water; and rises in the sea level mainly affect impoverished coastal populations who have

nowhere else to go. The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor, in conflicts sparked by the shortage of resources, and in any number of other problems which are insufficiently represented on global agendas.

49. It needs to be said that, generally speaking, there is little in the way of clear awareness of problems which especially affect the excluded. Yet they are the majority of the planet's population, billions of people. These days, they are mentioned in international political and economic discussions, but one often has the impression that their problems are brought up as an afterthought, a question which gets added almost out of duty or in a tangential way, if not treated merely as collateral damage. Indeed, when all is said and done, they frequently remain at the bottom of the pile. This is due partly to the fact that many professionals, opinion makers, communications media and centres of power, being located in affluent urban areas, are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems. They live and reason from the comfortable position of a high level of development and a quality of life well beyond the reach of the majority of the world's population. This lack of physical contact and encounter, encouraged at times by the disintegration of our cities, can lead to a numbing of conscience and to tendentious analyses which neglect parts of reality. At times this attitude exists side by side with a "green" rhetoric. Today, however, we have to realize that a true ecological approach *always* becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear *both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor*.

Activity

15mins

Invite participants to share, collate and discuss what they found out about:

- the peripheries of society in their area.
- the extent/lack of their parish's involvement.
- Suggestions for more involvement.

List the names of parishioners known to be involved already. What support do they have? How is their ministry recognised? (Note: If participants listed care for the environment as a periphery, there are many resources listed below.)

Input

50mins

Watch and jot down key points: Kenneth Himes OFM [The Poor: What did Jesus preach? What does the Church teach?](#) (You may prefer to begin the presentation at 4.40).

Activity

10mins

Invite participants to reflect on:

- What was new/confusing/challenging/clarifying/ affirming/uncomfortable/raised questions for you?

Large group discussion of insights/questions raised.

Homework

- Considering what you have heard/learnt in this session, spend some time looking back at your homework from the first session. There may be something you wish to change/add to your chart, list and paragraph.
- Reflect on the four paragraphs below from *Gaudete et Exsultate* then use the reflection sheet 'Works of Mercy' to consider: 'During the past month how/when have I...?'

107. Those who really wish to give glory to God by their lives, who truly long to grow in holiness, are called to be single-minded and tenacious in their practice of the works of mercy.

105. Similarly, the best way to discern if our prayer is authentic is to judge to what extent our life is being transformed in the light of mercy. For "mercy is not only an action of the Father; it becomes a criterion for ascertaining who his true children are". Mercy "is the very foundation of the Church's life". In this regard, I would like to reiterate that mercy does not exclude justice and truth; indeed, "we have to say that mercy is the fullness of justice and the most radiant manifestation of God's truth". It is "the key to heaven".

135. God is eternal newness. He impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond. He takes us to where humanity is most wounded, where men and women, beneath the appearance of a shallow conformity, continue to seek an answer to the question of life's meaning. God is not afraid! He is fearless! He is always greater than our plans and schemes. Unafraid of the fringes, he himself became a fringe (cf. *Phil* 2:6-8; *Jn* 1:14). So if we dare to go to the fringes, we will find him there; indeed, he is already there. Jesus is already there, in the hearts of our brothers and sisters, in their wounded flesh, in their troubles and in their profound desolation. He is already there.

144. Let us not forget that Jesus asked his disciples to pay attention to details. The little detail that wine was running out at a party.
The little detail that one sheep was missing.

The little detail of noticing the widow who offered her two small coins.
The little detail of having spare oil for the lamps, should the bridegroom delay.
The little detail of asking the disciples how many loaves of bread they had.
The little detail of having a fire burning and a fish cooking as he waited for the disciples at daybreak.

- Explore one further resource listed below and be prepared to share your findings at the next session.

Action

- Considering what you have heard/learnt in this session and any implications that your learning may have for your own spirituality of service, commit to a concrete action. Add it to your diary/calendar.

Online resources

Joan Chittister OSB

[Hard-wired for Compassion](#)

[From Contemplation to Justice](#)

17 short articles from Boston College

[The Poor: What did Jesus preach? What does the Church teach?](#)

USCBC [The Corporal Works of Mercy](#) USCBC [The Spiritual Works of Mercy](#)

Robert Schreiter, C.P.P.S. [“Mercy and Truth Will Meet”: Horizons in Twenty-First Century Mission](#)

Poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-policy/social-policy-parliamentary-unit/latest-report>

<https://nzccss.org.nz/>

<https://www.cpag.org.nz/>

<https://nzccss.org.nz/publications/policy-watch/>

For resources on *Laudato 'si* and environmental issues:

Neil Darragh

<http://www.tuimotu.org/a/EVTC3VS>

<https://hail.to/tui-motu-interislands-magazine/publication/S5hzabk/articles/tag/TEAq5As>

<https://hail.to/tui-motu-interislands-magazine/publication/S5hzabk/articles/tag/8uMIV6O>

<https://hail.to/tui-motu-interislands-magazine/publication/S5hzabk/articles/tag/njrNJNd>

<https://hail.to/tui-motu-interislands-magazine/publication/S5hzabk/articles/tag/EXGEift>
<https://hail.to/tui-motu-interislands-magazine/publication/S5hzabk/article/Gk6z0yx>
<https://www.ncronline.org/feature-series/our-common-home/stories>

James Martin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUs4NHoabvk>
<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2015/06/18/top-ten-takeaways-laudato-si>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=19v0A19DDXs>
<https://www.mercyworld.org/global-action/>

<http://laudato-si-conference.com/>

Jonathan Boston

<http://www.nathaniel.org.nz/component/content/article/17-bioethical-issues/bioethics-and-the-environment/306-christianity-and-the-ecological-crisis-lament-hope-and-action>

Bruce Duncan

<http://www.nathaniel.org.nz/component/content/article/17-bioethical-issues/bioethics-and-the-environment/378-pope-francis-on-avoiding-environmental-catastrophe>

http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/eight-works-mercy#_ednref20

<https://cathnews.co.nz/2015/06/26/glossary-of-terminology-used-in-laudato-si/>
<http://www.tuimotu.org/a/21AVy72>

Catholicism and the challenge of ecology

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Lrlww-06_4&feature=youtu.be

Barron: Everything is connected

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWEK8JXQo0M&feature=youtu.be>

Ecological examen

<http://www.ecologicalexamen.org/>

Multiple resources

<http://catholicclimatemovement.global/laudatosi/>
<https://www.mercyworld.org/library/main-menu-topics422/>
<https://www.mercyworld.org/library/main-menu-speakers410/>
http://www.plimmertoncatholic.org.nz/homepage_boxes/climate-change.html
<https://www.sowinghopefortheplanet.org/resources/en>