



# FAITH IN ACTION AWARD



## Reflection Point

### Theme: Love

### 1. We Love Because We Are Loved

#### Objectives:

**Explore** what it means to love and be loved.

**Understand** how God shows us love and teaches us to love one another through acts of service.

**Reflect** upon how our experience of love affects the way we live our lives and love one another.

#### Before you begin:

*Create a reverent, quiet and comfortable space for the group. Ensure that all relevant materials are printed and readily available for the group and that the sacred space is set up ready for the closing liturgy.*

#### Each reflection point should include:

- Reading a passage from the New Testament
- Exploration of the Church's Story (teachings from the Catechism and/or the Pope, research into the life of a saint)
- The opportunity for the participant to reflect on their personal experience
- An activity
- A Liturgy

#### You will need:

- Print-outs of the chosen scripture passage/church's story for participants
- Instructions from the chosen activities
- For the liturgy:
  - Card heart shapes
  - Ribbon or string
  - Pens
  - Small branches
  - Plant pot containing soil or sand to keep branches upright.
  - Candle
  - Scripture
  - Reflective music

## **Welcome, Introduction & Opening Prayer**

**Gather the group together.**

### **Briefly introduce the theme for this reflection:**

Without love we do not live, we simply exist. The love that others show onto us, and the love that God showers us with, bring us to life and help us to shine. The love we receive is a gift, but even more so than that, the love others show us teach us how to love others. From our earliest days our family and friends teach us how to be loving people and how to show others that they are loved. Jesus is an integral part of that teaching. Our relationship with Him teaches us a great deal about how to love in the world. Jesus shows us that love, and sharing that love with others, gives our lives meaning and purpose.

### **Say the Faith in Action Prayer together:**

God our Father,

We thank you for the gift of your love which you give to every person in the world. We thank you that because of your love we are never alone and should never feel afraid. We thank you for the gift of faith which allows us to know you, one God three persons. We thank you that because of that faith the whole of our lives are directed to living for other people. Through your son, Jesus Christ, our friend and brother, you show us how to love. Give us the strength we need to live lives of love and faith, so that the world might come to know your son more and more through our actions and words as we seek to live lives which help to build your Kingdom here on earth.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. AMEN

### **The Good News**

*Choose a passage from scripture that will help the group to reflect on the theme.*

*Below are some suggestions followed by discussion points:*

#### **John 15:12-17**

This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do what I command you. I shall no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know the master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I learnt from my Father. You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and bear fruit, fruit that will last; so that the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name. My command to you is to love one another.

**John 3:16**

For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-13**

Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds joy in the truth. It is always ready to make allowances, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes.

Love never comes to an end. But if there are prophecies, they will be done away with; if tongues, they will fall silent; and if there is knowledge, it will be done away with. For we know imperfectly and we prophesy imperfectly; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will be done away with. When I was a child, I used to talk like a child, and see things as a child does, I think like a child; but now that I have become an adult, I have finished with all childish ways. Now we see only reflections as in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face. Now I can know only imperfectly; but then I shall know just as fully as I am myself known.

As it is, these remain: faith, hope and love, the three of them; and the greatest of them is love.

**Pointers for discussion**

How do we know that God loves us?

How does Christ's life teach us to love one another?

Does everyone deserve to be shown love?

Do you think love is something that we can be forced or commanded to do?

Can you be taught how to love?

How can we show God's love to one another?

When is it difficult to love?

If you love someone, do they have to love you back?

**The Church's Story**

*To help reflect and explore the Good News further, share some of the church's teachings from the Catechism, the Pope's writings or the lives of holy people with the group:*

**Catechism of the Catholic Church****CCC1823**

Jesus makes charity the new commandment. By loving his own "to the end", he makes manifest the Father's love which he receives. By loving one another, the disciples imitate the love of Jesus which they themselves receive. Whence Jesus says: "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love." And again: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

**CCC1828**

The practice of the moral life animated by charity gives to the Christian the spiritual freedom of the children of God. He no longer stands before God as a slave, in servile fear, or as a mercenary looking for wages, but as a son responding to the love of him who "first loved us".

If we turn away from evil out of fear of punishment, we are in the position of slaves. If we pursue the enticement of wages...we resemble mercenaries. Finally if we obey for the sake of the good itself and out of love for him who commands... we are in the position of children.

## **Pope Francis**

“To love is much more than feeling tenderness or a certain emotion once in a while. It’s a total challenge to creativity!” April 2006

"Love is not words, it is work and service. A humble service, performed in silence and concealed, as Jesus Himself said: 'When you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.' " And this service is shown also when "we make available to the community the gifts the Holy Spirit has granted us, so that it may grow", and when "we share material goods so that no-one may be in need. This sharing and dedication to those in need is a style of life that God suggests also to many non-Christians, as a way of authentic humanity."

Jubilee audience, March 12, 2016

“In talking with his disciples, Jesus would invite them to recognise the paternal relationship God has with his creatures. With moving tenderness he would remind them that each one is important in God’s eyes.”

Laudato Si 96

“Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God’s love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God.”

Laudato Si 84

“If the simple fact of being human moves people to care for the environment of which they are a part, Christians in their turn realize that their responsibility within creation, and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith.”

Laudato Si 64

“Because all creatures are connected, each must be cherished with love and respect, for all of us as living creatures are dependent on one another.”

Laudato Si 42

“Saint Therese of Lisieux invites us to practise the little way of love, not to miss out on a kind word, a smile or any small gesture which sows peace and friendship.”

Laudato Si 230

“Whenever we encounter another person in love, we learn something new about God.”

Evangelii Gaudium

## **Lives of the Saints**

### **Maximilian Kolbe**

Maximilian Kolbe, born Raymond, was born in 1894 in Poland to a devout Catholic family, Juul Kolbe and Maria Dubrowska. His parents had a strong devotion to Our Lady. When he was a young child, Raymond was mischievous. But one day, after his mother told him off, there was a dramatic change in his behaviour. Later he explained the change: "That night I asked the Mother of God what was to become of me. Then she came to me holding two crowns, one white, and the other red. She asked if I was willing to accept either of these crowns. The white one meant that I should persevere in purity, and the red that I should become a martyr. I said that I would accept them both". From a young age, Raymond accepted and believed that he was destined to be a martyr, that is, someone who is willing to give his or her life for God.

In 1910, Raymond became a Franciscan and took the name Maximilian. He studied in Rome and was ordained a Priest in 1919. When he returned to Poland, Maximilian taught Church History in a seminary, built a friary near Warsaw, and printed eleven journals. Maximilian then went on to spend six years in Asia, where he founded friaries in Japan and India.

In 1936, Maximilian returned to Poland due to ill health. During this time, he supervised the friary in Warsaw. However, after the German invasion in Poland, Maximilian was briefly imprisoned. After his release, he and other friars, dedicated their time to organizing shelter for Polish and Jewish refugees. There were around 5000 refugees under the friars' care. The friars shared everything they had with the refugees: their homes, their food, and their clothes.

In 1941, Maximilian was sent to Auschwitz concentration camp. Maximilian felt that, as a prisoner, he was destined to be a sign of God's love and mercy. In contradiction to the hatred and brutality of the prison guards, Maximilian showed constant obedience, humility and forgiveness, urging his fellow prisoners to do the same. His endless generosity was noted by all; he would give up his food for others despite his own starvation; he would offer assistance in the infirmary, regardless of his own illness.

On the night of 3 August 1941, the destiny that Maximilian has resigned to was soon upon him. Due to a prisoner escaping from the camp in which Maximilian was detained, a punishment was to be inflicted upon ten random men from the same section. The punishment was death by starvation. Maximilian was not chosen to be killed. However, one of the condemned shouted out in despair that he would never be able to see his wife and children again. Maximilian stepped forward, offering his own life in exchange for the life of this man.

Until the very end of his life, Maximilian remained faithful to God, leading the other nine men in prayers and hymns before the time of their death arrived. On 14 August 1941, Maximilian died by lethal carbolic acid injection.

Only 41 years after his death, Pope John Paul 2 canonised Maximilian as a martyr of charity. Present at the ceremony was Franciszek Gajowniczek, the Auschwitz prisoner whose place Maximilian had taken in giving his own life.

### **Sean Devereux**

Sean Devereux grew up in Yateley, Hampshire with his two younger sisters. He went to the Salesian College in Farmborough and then Loughborough University where he studied sports, science and geography before training as a teacher at Exeter University. He taught PE in a Surrey school where he became very popular and students were sad when he decided to leave to teach in the St Francis Salesian School in Liberia, West Africa. He arrived in Liberia in February 1989 and began working with the Salesian community in St Francis' school. He was well liked and was referred to as "Mr

Sean” by the students. Sean loved playing football with the children and would also spend time in quiet prayer in the school chapel.

Sadly, civil war broke out in Liberia in 1990 and eventually the school closed but Sean did not return home instead he joined the United Nations as a volunteer relief worker. He risked his life trying to free one of his former pupils who had been taken by rebels and forced to join their army as a child soldier. He worked with the Salesian priests looking after child soldiers who had suffered mental and physical trauma because of what they had seen and what they were forced to do. He was beaten himself for trying to rescue and protect the young boys. The authorities were angered by Sean’s work and had to leave for his own safety so he travelled to Somalia and joined UNICEF, the organization working for children’s rights where he was tasked with providing relief for the starving, particularly children. While in Somalia Sean spoke out against the injustices that he saw and he spoke honestly to journalists reporting for international television. This cost him his life.

On January 2nd 1993 he was shot in the back and the back of the head by a hired gun man. Sean was only 28 years old when he was killed. Sean Devereux Park in Yateley is named in his honour and a plaque commemorates him.

## **Personal Story**

*During this time, the young people should be encouraged to think about their FIA journey so far, and share with the group how the acts of service they have participated in have been examples of showing others God’s love.*

*You can, at this point, review the acts of service young people have participated in thus far, and give them the opportunity to reflect in their journal the acts of service they have done, if they have not done so already.*

## **Activity Suggestions**

### **Exploration**

- Make a podcast or video, interviewing one another about the different ways you can show love to others and the ways in which you have been shown love by other people. Question one another on whether or not the society we live in exposes us to a different way of showing love to that of Christ’s way, e.g. commercialised feast days such as Valentine’s; spending a lot of money on people, equating social media “likes” and “follows” to being truly loved.
- Make a collage of words and pictures to show different ways of being shown love and showing love to others.
- Listen to a popular love song. What kind of love is it about? What can we learn about love in popular culture?

### **Understanding**

- Plan an assembly or liturgy that explains how the life of Maximilian Kolbe/Sean Devereux or a saint of your choosing was an example of God’s love to others.
- Create an informative poster explaining how one the above put into practice the teachings of Jesus and the Church.

## Reflection

- Give yourself an action plan for putting love into action in your daily life.
- Ask a friend or relative to list ways they have seen you put love into action.
- Make a list of all the people who love you, then make a list of all the people you love. Consider the similarities and difference of each list. What does that tell you about the way you love? Is it possible to show love to people we do not even know?
- Find out about some of the projects undertaken by MISSIO. See how love of others drives work of the good of all.

## Liturgy

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

## Scripture Reading

A reading from the Gospel of John (15:5-12)

'I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more. You are pruned already, by means of the word that I have spoken to you. Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.

As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, but must remain part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty; for cut off from me you can do nothing.

Anyone who does not remain in me is like a branch that has been thrown away – he withers; these branches are collected and thrown on the fire, and they are burnt. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will and you shall get it. It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.' I have loved you just as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love.

## Reflection

*Play quiet and reflective music*

- Invite each young person to take a heart shape and on one side draw or write an example of how they have been shown love and how it made them feel.
- On the other side, ask each young person to write or draw a time when they showed love to another person and what difference it made.
- Thread a string or ribbon through a hole in the top of the shape and make a loop.
- Invite the young people to place their hearts onto the twig tree.

## Litany

*Response: I am loved, therefore I love.*

Lord, you created me. You designed me. I am unique, special, one of a kind. You cherish me. You know me inside out. **Response.**

Lord, I thank you for giving me the people who transform my life by showing me love. They shape and inspire me. **Response.**

Lord, you command me to love you, show me how to love through your words and actions. I am called to love. **Response.**

Lord, you challenge me to be an instrument of your love. I can bring your love to others in the way I live my life. **Response.**

### **Concluding Prayer**

Let us pray,

Lord, you are the vine and we are your branches. Help us to be more deeply rooted in you. Give us the courage to respond to your love by showing love to others. Fill us with your Spirit, so that through the love you have shown us, we can bear the great fruits of love in our daily lives.

Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.