



FAITH IN ACTION AWARD



Reflection Point

Theme: Love

2. Loving our Neighbour is Loving Jesus

Objectives:

Explore Jesus' example of active love and what "neighbour" means

Understand how following Jesus' example means taking responsibility for the wellbeing of others

Reflect upon what it means to love a neighbour and how your actions affect them

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:
 - Bowl(s) of water
 - Small jug(s) or cup(s)
 - Small towel
 - Reflective music
 - Candle
 - Scripture

Welcome, Introduction & Opening Prayer

Gather the group together.

Briefly introduce the theme for this reflection:

Jesus lived a life of love and service for his neighbours. But who were his neighbours? When Jesus was asked this, he told the story of the Good Samaritan, in which two strangers are thrown together and one looks after the other when people who should have known better just pass by. Following the example of Jesus means that we can never just walk by when we see those in need. This is a big challenge because it is not always as simple as helping individuals. We have the responsibility to help build a society that looks after all the poor, marginalised and disadvantaged. This is a journey we embark on for life.

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:

Matthew 25:31-46

The Sheep and the Goats

When the Son of Man comes in glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All nations will be assembled before him and he will separate sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my father has blessed, take as your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you made me welcome, lacking clothes and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me."

Then the upright will say to him in reply, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome, lacking clothes and clothe you? When did we find you sick or in prison and go to see you?” And the King will answer, “In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.”

Then he will say to those on this left, “Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you never gave me food, I was thirsty and you never gave me anything to drink, I was a stranger and you never made me welcome, lacking clothes and you never clothed me, sick and in prison and you never visited me.”

Then it will be their turn to ask, “Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty, a stranger or lacking clothes, sick or in prison, and did not come to your help?” Then he will answer, “In truth I tell you, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.” And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the upright to eternal life.

Luke 10:25-37

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

And now a lawyer stood up, and, to test him, asked, “Master, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?” He replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.” Jesus said to him, “You have answered right, do this and life is yours.”

But the man was anxious to justify himself and said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” In answer Jesus said, “A man was once on his way down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell into the hands of bandits; they stripped him, beat him and then made off, leaving him half dead. Now a priest happened to be travelling down the same road, but when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. In the same way a Levite who came to the place saw him, and passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan traveller who came on him was moved with compassion when he saw him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them. He then lifted him onto his own mount and took him to an inn and looked after him. The next day, he took out two denarii and handed them to the innkeeper and said, “Look after him, and on my way back I will make good any expense you have.” Which of these three, do you think, proved himself to be a neighbour of the man who fell into the bandits’ hands?”

Pointers for discussion

Can I love someone I don’t know?

Who is my neighbour?

How well do you know your physical neighbours?

When did you last show love to your neighbour?

Am I responsible for the well-being of people I don’t even know?

Does the way you love your neighbour affect your school/local community/ the world?

When did you last see Jesus in your neighbour?

Today, what stopped you from loving your neighbour?

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

CCC 1825

Christ died out of love for us, while we were still “enemies”. The Lord asks us to love as he does, even our enemies, to make ourselves the neighbour of those farthest away, and to love children and the poor as Christ himself.

The Apostle Paul has given an incomparable depiction of charity: “Charity is patient and kind, charity is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Charity does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Charity bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

CCC 2196

In response to the question about the first of the commandments, Jesus says: “This first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

The apostle St Paul reminds us of this: “He who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,’ and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Pope Francis

“A community that stops kneeling before the rich, before success and prestige, and which is capable instead, of washing the feet of the humble and those in need, will be more aligned with God’s teaching than the winner at any price ethic that we have learned, badly, in recent times.”

Easter 2002

“Jesus did not preach his own politics; he accompanied others. The conversions he inspired took place precisely because of his willingness to accompany, which makes us all brothers and children not member of some multi-national company.”

September 2012

“Each time life puts the option in front of us to serve inclusively or to take advantage by excluding others, between washing another’s feet or washing our hands of someone else’s troubles, let the image of Jesus and the joy of service come to mind.”

August 2005

“We should recognise that despite the present crisis of commitment and communal relationships, many young people are making common cause before the problems of our world. How wonderful it is to see that young people are ‘street preachers’ joyfully bringing Jesus to every street, every town square and every corner of earth!”

Evangelii Gaudium 106

“Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to date to turn what is happening in the world into our own personal suffering and this discover what each of us can do about it.”

Laudato Si 19

“Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not succumb to sadness for what we lack.”

Laudato Si 222

Lives of the Saints

Pier Giorgio Frassati

Pier Giorgio Frassati was a handsome and athletic young man. He hiked, climbed mountains, rode horses and skied with his many friends. He also invited them to Mass, to read scripture, and to pray the rosary together. He could often be found at the theatre and at museums because he loved art, music and poetry. He loved to laugh, and he was famous for his practical jokes. He loved life and lived it to the full!

Pier Giorgio Michelangelo Frassati was born in Turin, Italy, on 6th April, 1901. His mother was an artist and his father founded and ran the Italian newspaper, *La Stampa*. As he was growing up, Pier developed two habits that became part of his everyday life. He went to Mass daily to receive the Eucharist, and he also prayed the Rosary. He never hesitated to share his faith with others.

Pier had a great concern for the poor, even as a child. One day a needy mother with a young son came to the Frassati home to beg for food. Pier noticed that the child was barefoot. He took off his own shoes and gave them to the boy, and then he and his mother fed the poor family. Pier used the money he got as a graduation gift to rent a room for a woman who had been evicted from her apartment because she had no money. He gave away his allowance to the poor, and sometime he chose to walk home from school because he gave the money for his bus or train fare to someone in need. At the age of 17, he joined the St. Vincent de Paul society and dedicated much of his spare time to its service.

He went to University and decided to become a mining engineer, studying at the Royal Polytechnic University of Turin, so he could “serve Christ better among the miners,” as he told a friend. He remained involved in his faith whilst away at University.

When he was 24, just before receiving his degree, Pier Giorgio became very ill with polio. Some people said he got this disease from caring for people in the slums of Turin, but Pier saw Jesus in the people he served. In his last days, he whispered the names of people who still needed assistance to his family and friends who gathered at his bedside. He died on July 4, 1925.

Peter was declared “Blessed” in 1990 by Pope John Paul II who called him a “man of the Beatitudes” and a “joyful apostle of Christ.” Many people were surprised that the Vatican created

an official portrait of him for his beatification that showed him outdoors, leaning on an ice axe, with one foot on a rock, in honour of his youthful vitality and his love of the mountains.

Saint Therese of Lisieux

Saint Therese of Lisieux, also known as St Therese of the Child Jesus and of the Holy face and the Little Flower, was born in Alencon, France on January 2nd 1873, baptised with the name, “Marie Francoise Therese”. Therese was drawn to God at a very early age. At the age of fifteen Therese entered the Carmelite Convent and became a novice one year later, professing her vows the following year. In the Carmelite community Therese lived a life of simplicity, humility and a childlike trust in God. For three years she had simple jobs to do and at seventeen she was put in charge of the sacristy. It appeared that she did nothing remarkable in the outward sense during her nine years in the convent, however her writings tell a very different story. Therese wrote down all of her childhood memories and reflections. This manuscript which covered all of her life was published after her death as a book called, “The Story of a Soul.” In her book Therese described her life as “a little way of spiritual childhood.” She lived each day with complete confidence in God’s love. She wrote, ”What matters in life is not great deeds but great love.” Therese lived her life by attending to everyone and everything with great love. Her deep spirituality is in doing the ordinary with extraordinary love. Therese lived a hidden simple life of prayer and it was prayer that helped her through her dark days of suffering due to tuberculosis as well as her close relationship with God which was evident in her writings which have inspired many over the years. Sister Therese’s “Little Way” of spiritual childhood, the way of trust and complete surrender, the way of doing the simple things and daily duties with great love has become a pattern for millions of people. After a long struggle with tuberculosis, Therese died on September 30th 1897 at the age of 24. She was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1997 by Pope John Paul II.

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 involved loving their neighbour.

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

- Create a publication which explains to your peers the example of love Jesus sets us
- Mind-map the different examples of love Jesus set. Highlight the challenges and the effects
- Read a Bible story where Jesus showed love. Imagine you are the recipient of this love. Write a diary entry to express how the love has affected your life

Understanding

- Select a quotation from the Bible or from the Catechism of the Church. Annotate the teaching, showing how this encourages us to take responsibility for the well-being of others
- In small groups, role play situations when it would be appropriate to take responsibility for the wellbeing of others
- Make a campaign film to encourage your peers to take greater responsibility for people in need

Reflection

- Research a project undertaken by CAFOD. Make a power-point to show how the work of CAFOD had a direct effect on someone's life
- Write a piece of creative narrative which explores what the world would be like if no one ever took responsibility for the wellbeing of others.
- St Paul wrote: "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbour as yourself"." (Galatians 5:13-14) Can you be free and responsible for others at the same time?
- Go on the CAFOD website and search for "Who is my neighbour?"

Liturgy

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

Scripture

Play a clip of Jesus washing the feet of the Disciples. Alternatively, read John 13:1-17.

Reflection

Play quiet and reflective music

- Invite young people to sit in a circle barefoot.
- The first person is to wash the feet of the person sitting beside them. As one pours a little water over the feet, they say: "You have taught me that love is an action."
- As they dry the person's feet with the towel, they say: "My actions show Your love in the world."
- The next person then repeats this symbolic action to the person beside him/her until all have been washed.

If you think feet-washing may be difficult, ask young people to wash one another's hands instead.

Litany

Response: loving my neighbour is loving you, Lord.

Lord, you created each one of us in your image and likeness. You love us all equally; help us to recognise that we are your cherished and beloved children and that each one of us is deserving of your love. **Response.**

Lord, you teach us that loving our neighbour goes beyond the boundaries of loving those nearest to us. Help us to see our neighbour in those who are far away, in the stranger, the marginalised, the disadvantaged, the poor and the vulnerable. **Response.**

We are stewards of the earth, the builders of your kingdom. We are called to love, care and take responsibility for all of your creation. **Response.**

Concluding Prayer

Let us pray,

Jesus, You taught us that love is far more than an emotion or feeling.

Love is an action.

Help us to be humble instruments of your love in all that we do.

Let others experience your love in the world through our service.

Amen.