



# FAITH IN ACTION AWARD



## Reflection Point

### Theme: Service

## 1. Our Active Love Builds the Kingdom of God

#### **Objectives:**

**Explore** what is meant by God's Kingdom

**Understand** how Jesus' teaching: "the Kingdom of God is close at hand" affects the world we live in

**Reflect** upon our individual role in being witness to, and building, God's Kingdom.

#### **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:
  - 1x large candle
  - A small candle for each participant
  - Reflective music
  - Scripture

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

**Gather the group together.**

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

During his life, Jesus constantly speaks about the Kingdom of God. We believe that God's Kingdom is a place of justice and peace and that we are called to help build up that Kingdom here on earth.

People often asked Jesus what the Kingdom of God was like. One of the best answers Jesus gave to those people was to "Go and tell John (the Baptist) what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the good news preached to them." This is the work Christ gives to us, his disciples. This work will never be finished. But we are co-workers with Jesus. We are his body on earth.

### **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, through your Holy Spirit, to live lives of love and faith. May the world 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 18:3**

Then he said: "In truth I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven."

#### **Matthew 6:10-14**

Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven those who are debt to us. And do not put us to the test, but save us from the Evil One.

Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either.

### **Luke 18-19**

Then Jesus asked, "What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds perched in its branches."

### **Isaiah 6-9**

The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling[a] together  
and a little child will lead them.  
The cow will feed with the bear,  
their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.  
The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.  
They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

### **Pointers for discussion**

How do you imagine God's Kingdom to be?  
Do you think God's Kingdom is something distant or near?  
What is meant by "thy Kingdom come?"  
Is our behaviour affected by our faith and belief system?  
Can God's kingdom be destroyed?  
Is there anything which makes it more difficult to build God's kingdom on earth?  
Is God's Kingdom promoted by modern culture or does our society promote a different "ideal kingdom?"

### **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 542**

By his word, through signs that manifest the reign of God, and by sending out his disciples, Jesus calls all people to come together around him. But above all in the great Paschal mystery – his death on the cross and his Resurrection – he would accomplish the coming of his kingdom. "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself". Into this union with Christ all men are called.

#### **CCC 544**

The kingdom belongs *to the poor and lowly*, which means those who have accepted it with humble hearts. Jesus is sent to "preach good news to the poor"; he declares them blessed, for "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." To them - the "little ones" the Father is pleased to reveal what remains hidden from the wise and the learned. Jesus shares the life of the poor,

from the cradle to the cross; he experiences hunger, thirst and privation. Jesus identifies himself with the poor of every kind and makes active love toward them the condition for entering his kingdom.

### **CCC 545**

Jesus invites *sinners* to the table of the kingdom: "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents". The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life "for the forgiveness of sins."

### **Pope Francis**

Just as you cannot understand Christ apart from the kingdom he came to bring, so too your personal mission is inseparable from the building of that kingdom: "Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Mt 6:33). Your identification with Christ and his will involves a commitment to build with him that kingdom of love, justice and universal peace.  
*Gaudete et Exultate 25*

"But we must not forget that the kingdom of Jesus is not of this world. He will be able to give a new meaning to our life, sometimes put to the test even by our mistakes and our sins, only on the condition that we do not follow the logic of the world and its 'kings,'" *November 2018, Feast of Christ the King*

### **Pope Benedict XVI**

"The message is clear: the Kingdom of God, though it requires our collaboration, is above all a gift of God."  
*June 2012*

### **Lives of the Saints**

#### **St Teresa of Calcutta**

Mother Teresa was born in August 1910 in Macedonia. Throughout her childhood she liked to be in church – reading, praying and singing. When she was 12, she felt God calling her to do His work and wanted to commit herself to doing it for the rest of her life. At the age of 18 she joined the Sisters of Loreto, an Irish community of nuns with missions in India. At the age of 29 she took her vows to become a nun, and for almost 20 years, she was a teacher in India.

It was then that Sister Teresa noticed the suffering and poverty around her in Calcutta, one of the poorest cities in the world. She couldn't ignore it. "Who cares for these poor living in the streets?" she would wonder.

Sister Teresa had always felt the calling to help people as Jesus did, she started the 'Missionaries of Charity', in response to the deprivation she has witnessed. This Order of nuns became 'the poorest of the poor', which was exemplified by the way in which they

dressed and the food they ate. She encouraged and gathered others to help the poor and the sick by founding a care home for those who needed it. She regularly visiting hospitals to care for sick people. Children whose parents were unable to take care of them were looked after and taught by Sister Teresa. The list of her good works and charity is endless, as was Sister Teresa's happiness in dedicating her life to others.

Her life-changing work earned her the title Mother Teresa and she received various honours for her constant acts of charity. In 1979 she was awarded one of the greatest honours: the Nobel Peace Prize. She accepted the prize: "In the name of the hungry, the naked, and the homeless; of the crippled, of the blind, of the lepers; of all those people who feel unwanted, unloved, uncared for throughout society and are shunned by everyone."

The many thousands of dollars that accompanied the award were used to purchase supplies and to begin similar homes for the sick and the needy in many other cities of the world, including New York and Beirut.

Mother Teresa died in September 1997. Though she is no longer with us physically, her prayers, her guidance, and her good work for the poor and the needy remains with us. Over 5000 sisters in the order she founded continue Mother Teresa's astounding work, helping to be a shining light in over 120 countries today. Mother Teresa was canonised on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2016. St Teresa of Calcutta's Feast Day is 5<sup>th</sup> September.

### **St. Vincent de Paul**

Vincent was born in 1576 to a poor peasant family in a France. He was educated by the Franciscan Friars for four years and then studied divinity at the University of Toulouse. At the age of twenty, Vincent was ordained to the priesthood. Shortly afterwards, he was captured by Muslim slave traders and taken to Tunis.

After escaping to France, he served as a parish priest near Paris, where he set up organizations to help the poor, nurse the sick and find work for the unemployed.

Vincent was appointed Chaplain General to the prisons of France. He dedicated himself to serving the poor wherever he found them. He brought hope to those who suffered. Vincent walked through the streets of Paris at night seeking out children who had been abandoned and left to die because their families were unable to care for them. Vincent also taught the rich to carry out acts of mercy to help those who were suffering. In this way, Vincent encouraged others to reach out to the poor and unloved.

Vincent died in 1660 and was canonized in 1737 by Pope Clement XII. His work continues today through the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Sisters of Charity and the Priests of the Missions.

## **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 witnessing and building God's Kingdom on earth.*

*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**

Draw or paint your idea of the Kingdom of God.

Research on what it means to be a witness. Does your new knowledge help you understand better the importance of being a witness to God's Kingdom here on earth?

### **Understanding**

Write a speech calling for all people to contribute to the building of the 'Kingdom of God'.

Write a newspaper article about the ways people can be witness to the 'Kingdom of God'.

Design an information leaflet on the life of Saint Vincent de Paul, and how his legacy has helped others become witnesses to the building of God's kingdom, particularly through Mini Vinnies and the SVP groups.

### **Reflection**

Take photographs and/or create an Instagram page of you and others at work for the 'Kingdom of God'.

"When work is done in common – when hope, hardship, ambition and joy are shared – it brings together and firmly unites the wills, minds and hearts of mankind." (Populorum Progressio, 27). What does this tell you about working together for God's Kingdom and being part of a Christian community?

How do Catholic organisations and charities, such as CAFOD or the SVP promote the building of God's kingdom on earth? Plan an event in support of these charities for your own community.

Research into the Lourdes pilgrimage. How do people participate in the active building of God's kingdom by participating in this pilgrimage?

### **Liturgy**

Begin with the Sign of the Cross.

### **Scripture**

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 5:16)

In the same way, your light must shine in people's sight, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven.

## **Reflection**

Light the large candle as a focal point.

After a moment's silent meditation, young people are invited to share their thoughts about the symbolism of light.

Pointers for discussion:

- Do you let others see your light shine?
- How are you a shining light for others?
- Who is a light in your life?
- What significance does light have when thinking about being witnesses and builders of God's Kingdom?

*Sing or play a song about light.*

*During this time, invite the young people to process forward and light their individual candle from the large candle.*

## **Concluding Prayer**

Let us pray,

Jesus, you are the light of the world,

Bringing joy, hope, and peace, and dispelling all despair and darkness.

Shine in my heart.

Help me to turn away from darkness.

Let me bring your light to those who are afraid, alone, and lost.

Light my path, so that I can remain close to you always,

As a witness to your light and your love.

Amen.