

Facilitator's Directions for Being Church 1

Preparation for Facilitator

The sensitive and complex issues surrounding Mother Theresa's negotiations with the hierarchical church may arouse emotional responses from participants. Acknowledgement of such feelings is vital to the exploration of this topic.

If the Facilitator can focus some attention on all aspects of her struggle, depending on time constraints, the participants will perceive the depths of her integrity and wisdom. These directions are created with this perspective in mind.

The Facilitator will find it helpful to be familiar with the thirteen chapters forming this segment. If the group has access to an LCD projector the video clips could be viewed by the group.

The Facilitator begins by welcoming the participants and inviting them into the following centering prayer.

Let's begin with a time of centering prayer. Take a comfortable position, close your eyes and begin to slow down your breathing. Pause

Breathe in a sense of peace and well-being, exhaling any anxiety you may have brought with you. Breathe in a sense of being at ease within yourself, letting go of any dis-easiness you may be feeling, aches, pains, indigestion, etc. Let's do this again, breathing in deeply and sending that healing breath to whatever part of your body might be in distress and release it...

Breathe in a sense of being focused on this time and place, letting go of any concerns for later today or this evening. As we sit in silence, let's pray for wisdom. Silence within us O God, any voice but your own. (pause for about 1 minute)

As we gradually come back to this time and place let us pray for the church, particularly for our local parishes/congregations. We ask this in Jesus' name.

After pausing a few seconds the Facilitator continues: The title chosen for this topic is "Being Church. As we prepare ourselves to explore Mother Theresa's experience, let's take a moment to consider our own experience of "Being Church."

I'm going to ask two questions inviting you to share your reflections with someone near you.

1. Have you ever served in church ministry?
2. Did you ever initiate any changes while in that ministry?

After 5-10 minutes the Facilitator continues: Would anyone like to share an experience of initiating a change with the group? As the individual shares her experience, The Facilitator asks the spokesperson, "Did this experience change you? Did you see "the church" differently after this experience?"

After several have shared, the Facilitator continues by asking any of the participants to respond to the question: "What made you risk such initiative?"

When the Facilitator feels the interaction is completed, s/he suggests: Being Church often means taking a risk. As we begin to look at the life of Mother Theresa Gerhardinger, a 19th century Bavarian woman, consider her own motives for initiating the changes she did. We'll begin by briefly recalling the cultural context of the early 1800's in Bavaria. Invite the group to recall events such as: French Revolution, Napoleonic Era, confiscation of church property, murder of priests and sisters, etc. It may be helpful to share copies of the events given by S. Maria Canisia found in her essay, "Sent into Time."

After the Facilitator shares highlights from the Cultural Context and Sent into Time, s/he may want to consider concluding this topic by asking: How would you describe the cultural context of today's church? What significant events of the past 50 years would you include? i.e. Vatican II, (you may want to show the video from Sturdy Roots I on Vatican II, found under Education.)

The growth of lay ministry, clergy abuse, Sister Formation, Restorationism, Opus Dei, Liberation Theology, the pontificate of Pope John Paul II, etc. would help participants understand the depths of cultural context that influence our lives in the church at any given time.

The Facilitator may conclude with Beethoven's Ode to Joy, written in 1827. The original title was Ode to Freedom, but that was considered too incendiary for the times, and so it was changed. Knowing that it is the European anthem gives even greater significance to this music. It is the fourth movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or it is found in many books of church music. Encourage them to meet again to look at subsequent topics in Being Church.