

Facilitator Directions 4: Being Church

The Facilitator needs to be conscious that there are three previous sets of facilitator directions for Being Church. If the groups have met prior to the present session, it may be helpful to recall these sessions with them.

The topics covered in this segment include “Reconciliation,” “Beatification,” “Bavarian Hall of Fame” and “Letter of De Lubac.” There are video segments in both “Beatification” and “Bavarian Hall of Fame” that can be shared with a group if the facilitator has access to an LCD projector.

The Facilitator welcomes the group, assuming they may have studied previous topics, by saying: “Have you learned something about Mother Theresa and her sisters through these sessions?” Have you learned how she fostered support from the clerical church? Invite comments.

Today we’ll be looking at “Reconciliation” in Mother Theresa’s life. Before we begin, let’s take a few minutes to reflect on a time when reconciliation touched our own lives. (pause for silence) The Facilitator continues: Did you feel differently about yourself and others after this experience? Invite comments.

The Facilitator may want to share a personal story of reconciliation, especially if it deals with the church. An example might be the true story shared below.

One person shared that there was a difficult situation between the pastor and choir director that went on for months. It was an emotional experience because the differences were always highlighted when the choir and pastor were attempting to celebrate Eucharist together. During Holy Week there were some very hurtful moments. On Holy Saturday evening the choir was gathered to practice a few minutes before the Easter Vigil. Suddenly the pastor appeared in the choir room. He acknowledged his failure to be a good administrator, etc. and asked forgiveness of the choir director and the choir. She had expressed her own desires for reconciliation to him earlier in the day. His words took less than five minutes. When he concluded there was a burst of energy in the room. The joy of all was evident and the music was extraordinary when the choir sang that Easter Vigil. The reconciliation was felt by many in the congregation as well.

The Facilitator continues: Evidence of Mother Theresa offering the hand of forgiveness and reconciliation can be seen in her letters relating especially to Archbishop Reisach and S. Rosa Franz. (Recall their significance from previous sessions.) The Facilitator distributes copies of “Reconciliation with Cardinal Reisach” and “Reconciliation with S. Rosa.”

Invite participants to remember the meeting of April 22, 1852, found under Decrees. The Facilitator says: Let’s read “Minutes Matter” together and consider what this tells us about Mother Theresa. (After reading) The Facilitator asks: Where do you think she got the energy to offer a gracious welcome to the motherhouse, and even to offer him a permanent site in

case war was declared in Rome? (Her belief that the founding of the congregation was “God’s Work,” her devotion to Eucharist and love for her sisters, her faith that the church would be led by the Holy Spirit, etc.)

The Facilitator continues: Now we’ll look at reconciliation with S. Rosa Franz. Let’s read these excerpts of letters together. What do they say about S. Rosa and Mother Theresa: and her sisters in 1920? Does this conversation about reconciliation say anything about positive energy and new life?

The Facilitator says: In your own experience of Being Church, have you felt such moments of creative energy? (perhaps some will recall the energy around Vatican II, or at Pope John Paul II’s funeral, or at a Youth Day, or in a retreat setting, or when a family event includes moments of sheer joy at being together... weddings, baptisms, jubilees, etc.)

As we continue to look at the life of Mother Theresa, we begin to understand why the women of Amberg, Germany decided to begin her process of Beatification. This is the process within the Catholic Church where one’s life is studied carefully to see if there is evidence of extraordinary goodness.

The Facilitator can find this Background of the Beatification under S. Carol Marie Wildt’s essay by the same name. It may be helpful to share this with participants.

The Facilitator can share the video clips of the actual ceremony by using an LCD projector attached to a laptop. They are brief but give some idea of the ceremony at the Vatican that proclaimed Mother Theresa as “Blessed” in 1985.

In 1998, the Bavarian government added Mother Theresa to their Bavarian Hall of Fame. This was an honor reserved for few German women. It expresses the high regard for Mother Theresa’s contribution to German education. The Facilitator may find reading more on the background of the Bavarian Hall of Fame helpful as well as viewing some of the video clips, using the LCD projector and laptop mentioned above.

The Facilitator concludes: Being Church for most of us will never mean “beatification” or being inducted into a “hall of fame.” But each of us can be “church” wherever we live. The author once received a letter from a faithful Jesuit priest, “silenced” by the church for his writings. Fr. Henri de Lubac, SJ, gives some suggestions as to “being church” in his letter of 1967. Let’s read it together. Any thoughts you’d like to share? (One person wanted to support her local parish and decided to invite the parish staff to coffee and prayer once a year. During this visit she would remind them that she was their “resident contemplative,” praying for them and their families as they serve the parish as deacons, DREs, pastor, secretaries, business manager, etc. Thanking them for their service and providing a few minutes away from their busy lives was much appreciated. It was a way of “being church” that spoke of reconciliation and support.)

One final example of “being church” is found in this “Parish Family Prayer for Vocations,” composed by a spouse and parent, Joseph Soete. It is recited daily by the people at St. Ann’s Catholic Church, Clover Bottom, Missouri.

Our Parish Family Prayer for Vocations

By Joseph Soete (Used with permission)

St. Ann’s Catholic Church
Clover Bottom, Missouri

Loving God, You speak to us and nourish us
through the life of this Church community.

In the name of Jesus, we ask you to send your Spirit to us so that men and women among
us, young and old, respond to your call to service and leadership in the Church.

We pray especially, in our day, for those who
hear your invitation to be a priest, sister, or brother...
May those who are opening their
hearts and minds to your call be
encouraged and strengthened
through our enthusiasm in your
service. Amen.