



A Compassionate Heart:

Session 5

Refreshed and Renewed

Holidays and vacations can help to balance activity with contemplation, haste with more natural rhythms, noise with the heralding silence of peace.

Pope John Paul II

Gathering (15 minutes)

Welcome and Greeting

Group Members Share:

- One word that describes me today is...
- What did I commit to in Session 4?
- How did I follow through on my commitment?

Scripture for Inspiration

Matthew 7:7-8

Question for Group Reflection

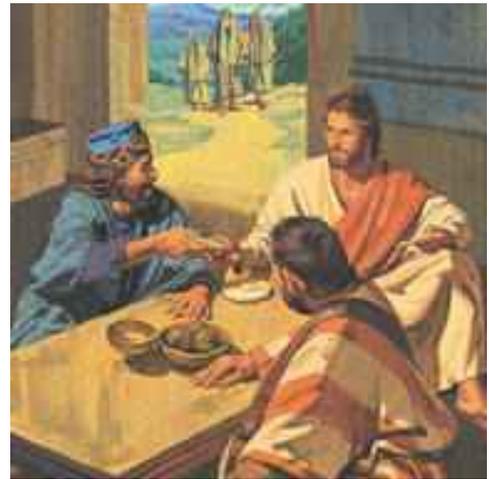
- Words or verses that spoke to me are?

Praying: (15 minutes)

Songs

Traditional songs to sing/play or select a contemporary personal favorite.

- Rain Down, Jaime Cortez
- I have Loved You, Michael Joncas
- Shepherd Me, O God, Marty Haugen
- You Are Mine, David Haas
- You Are Near, Dan Schutte



Quotation for Silent Reflection

Consider a word or phrase for possible sharing.

Jesus is clear and decisive. The greatest command is love! That love goes in a double direction in that we are to love God with the fullness of our being and we are to love our sisters and brothers as we love ourselves.

*Bishop Robert F. Morneau, Auxiliary Bishop,
Diocese of Green Bay*

Prayer Conclusion (Together)

Lord, you have given each of us many gifts and endless opportunities to use our gifts for your glory. Help us to remember that there is a time for everything, including a time for rest. Grant us moments of holy leisure and the wisdom to enjoy them. We ask this in the name of your Son, our Shepherd, who leads us to still waters. Amen.

We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest.

Archbishop Oscar Romero

Consider This: (38 minutes - If participants have not read content prior to gathering, please take a moment to read aloud, rotating willing members.)



A Compassionate Heart: Service - The Gift of Balance

Jesus experienced the complex emotions of daily life. He felt the weariness of service, the need to rest, the joy of his companions, and the wisdom to turn all things over to His Father. He assured us that when we are tired, he will give us rest. (Matthew 11: 28-30) Most importantly, Jesus went off to pray when he needed to be re-energized through relationship with His Father.

As followers of Jesus, we give of ourselves through service in many ways. Some of us visit the sick, the dying, individuals who are incarcerated, the homebound, those in residential care facilities, or are members of parish committees. We serve our parish, our families, friends and our communities. Our service adds meaning to our lives and enables us to reach out to others in celebration or consolation.

Many of us live with the illusion that some is good and more is even better. This might be okay if we are talking about chocolate, but when it comes to service that catchy phrase doesn't hold true. We each need to find a unique path that will keep us in balance, spiritually and personally. We all have different gifts and temperaments. Some of us are energized being with people while others need quiet time after they have been visiting with a number of people. One is not better than the other. What is important is to know our own strengths and use them well. Comparing our service with that of others can discourage us or give us an overinflated sense of ourselves. Neither brings us closer to being an authentic person of service.

Many of the parables of Jesus focused on ways to live our lives more freely. Jesus told us not to worry about life (Matthew 6: 25-34) and reminded us, through Mary, to sit for a while, take in life and savor our relationships. (Luke 10: 38-42)

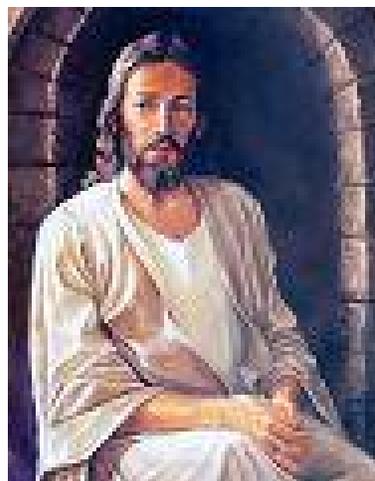
Jesus gave Himself time to be refreshed with friends and quiet time to be away from the crowds. The gospel stories tell us that Jesus reclined in his home (Mark 2:15) and that he spent time socially with his friends. (John 2:1-2)

Just as we are challenged by the call to service in the gospel messages, we are also reminded to balance ourselves between labor and rest. (Matt 11:28-30) Do we live a life of balance – in prayer, service, and leisure?

Quotation for Reflection

Forgive us for the pace that forgets you and snarls our days in a faithless scramble to make more ends meet than we can manage or than you purpose for us.

Ted Loder, Author



Holy Leisure: A Time for Ourselves

How could our schedules be any busier than that of Jesus? His mission was to save the world. Jesus' entire life was one of service but Jesus knew a secret. The secret of balance. People wanted to be in the presence of Jesus, he attracted others to himself. He was not a weary and worn out person but someone who revealed the love of God to each person he encountered. He realized that unless he found time to re-energize himself, he could not effectively reach out to others.

As loving people it is so easy to take on just one more project, visit one more person, teach one more class, or go to one more parish meeting. It can be a challenge to remind ourselves that God invites everyone into service and to trust that our neighbors will also answer the call.

Jesus was clear that we are to love our neighbors but to love them as we love ourselves. Upon reflection would others say to you – “Please don't love me the way you love yourself!” How many of us do a much better job of loving others than ourselves. Let us remember the words of John Ortberg – “Arranging to get enough sleep is actually an act of discipleship.”

Pierre Teilard de Chardin's deepest desire “was to teach people how to see God everywhere, to see Him in all that is most hidden, most solid, and most ultimate in the world.” Chardin had the gift of envisioning the Divine in all things. Do we give ourselves time and space for reflection as the Divine unfolds throughout our daily lives?

Questions for Reflection:

What areas of your ministry are the most meaningful for you? In what ways have you learned to set aside your guilt when you have to say NO to one more thing? How do you refresh yourself so you can bring the good news to others with a light heart? In what ways did you see the Divine today?

Notes:

If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!

Saint Catherine of Sienna

Following the Path of Jesus (21 minutes)

Take Action

Consider how your prayer, reflection and sharing in Session 5 might have inspired you to serve compassionately this week. Share ideas that reflect your personal situation or consider one of the simple ideas below.

- Consciously spend a few minutes every day reflecting on the beauty all around you.
- At the end of the day, take an inventory of your activities. Was your day a balance? Activity, rest, and prayer?
- Make a list of the things that you enjoy doing for leisure. Engage in at least one activity this week.
- What activities in your ministry are the most meaningful to you? Consider how they are life-giving and journal on them.
- Record your activities for the entire week. Share them with a friend. Ask for an honest assessment if you have a balance of leisure, ministry, and prayer. Make one positive change.
- Spend time in your favorite nature place. Reflect on how you experience the presence of God there. Journal the experience.

Commitment:

- In light of this, what commitment will I make for the week(s) ahead?

Wrap Up: (1 minute)

Date for Session 6 _____

Closing Prayer (Together)

Lord, help us to remember that your love and friendship are with us at all times. They are gifts showered on us whether we are serving you, enjoying time with friends, in prayer, or engaged in activities that refresh and renew us. Awaken us to the beauty that surrounds us and fill us with your presence every moment of our lives. Amen.

Additional Resources:

A New Heart: Eleven Qualities of Holiness,
Robert F Morneau

*Benedict's Way: An Ancient Monk's Insights for a
Balanced Life,* Lonni Collins Pratt &
Daniel Homan OSB

How Full is Your Bucket? Tom Rath and
Donald O Clifton, PhD

*The Mary Martha Principles: Discovering Balance
Between Faith and Works,* Tommy Tenney

Life's Greatest Lessons: Twenty Things That Matter,
Hal Urban

Scripture Passages:

Eccl 3:1-8

Luke 10:38-42

Mark 1:35-39

Mark 3:7-12

Mark 6:30-32



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The only way you are going to come to know your true identity is to be silent long enough so that God can tell you. *Fr. Larry Richards*