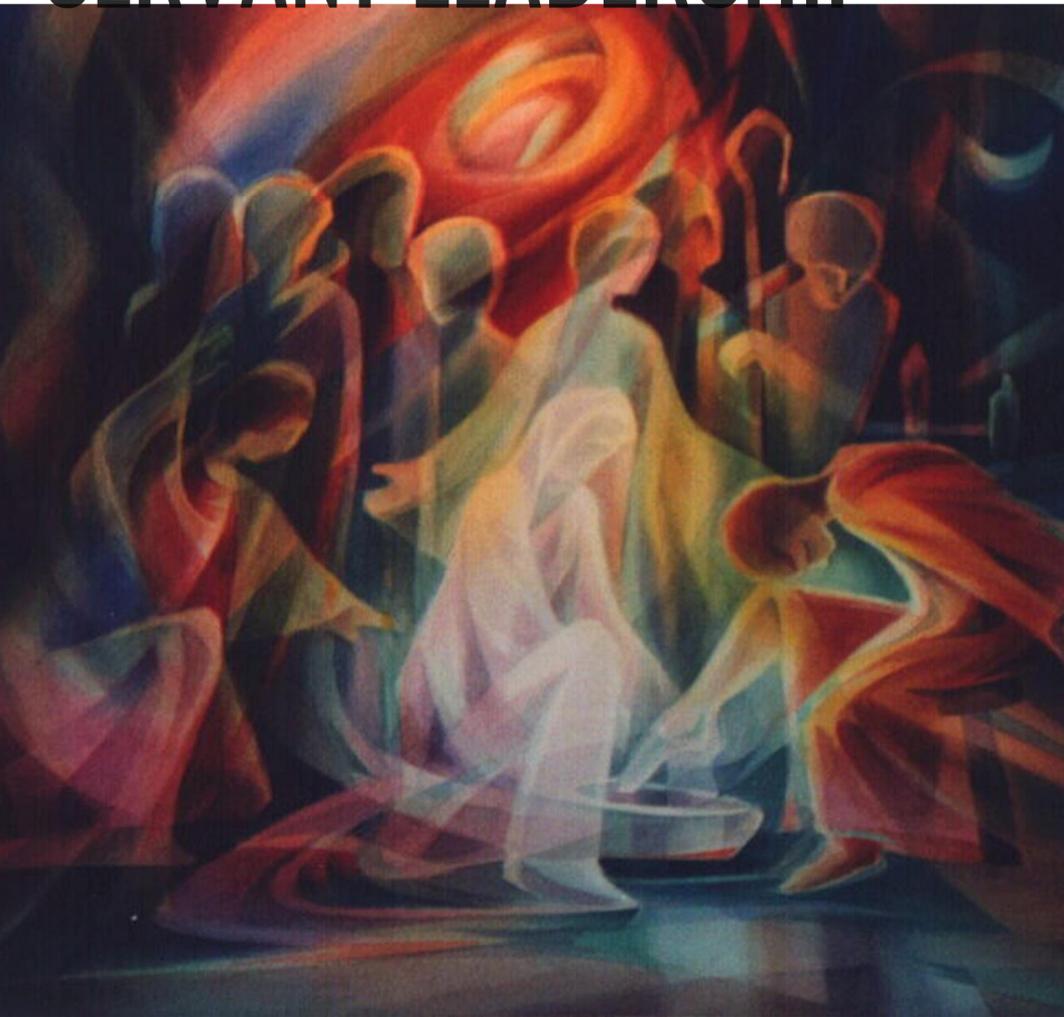


SCHOOL OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP



Learning to receive & respond to God's invitation to love & to serve like Jesus - becoming joyful missionary disciples.

LEARNING COMMUNITY GATHERING #2: Prayer & Identifying Genuine Needs

First Encounter: Being Present, Connect, Pray

Initial Steps in Genuine Caring

Encounter

1. Take a deep breath & welcome the Spirit. Ask for the grace to be present.
2. **LISTEN attentively to how the person's name is said:** use any mnemonic devices such as repeating the name, alliteration, or association to help with memory retention. Make good eye contact or give a handshake.
3. Smile. It helps both of you to relax & communicates interest and care.
4. **Try to be present & attentive as best as you can.** Give the person your full attention, especially within the first 5 minutes. Show genuine interest. Treat the person as if she or he matters to you. Put away your phone and entrusting God your current worries and preoccupations.
5. Be open to being surprised. The word “encounter” denotes something unexpected. People are a mystery to be encountered, not a problem to be solved.

Connect

6. **Notice any connection** that arises between the two of you. Take note of interests, needs, and/or present concerns that are important to the person. Ask where he or she grew up; inquire about family, hobbies, and special interests. Connect by sharing something important to you.
7. Ask yourself: **“What is unique or special about this person? What is important to her or him?”** Try to affirm, encourage, and draw out this aspect of the person.
8. Notice any biases and prejudices (positive or negative) that arise within you. Be honest (with God and yourself) about any mixed motives to network, get something from the person, etc.

Pray

9. Be open to connecting with God throughout the encounter by being attentive and noticing.
10. Say goodbye deliberately. Show appreciation of the person & of the encounter.
11. Immediately after leaving the person, ask yourself: **“What's memorable about my encounter with this person?”** Make a mental note and remember to reconnect later.
12. **PRAY for the person.** Ask yourself: Does the person have any concerns or needs with which I might lift up to God? Do I notice any hopes or worries for the person that I can entrust or surrender to God? It may be helpful to offer a short prayer like, *“Lord Jesus, how do you invite me to see this person as you see him or her. Please help me.”*

ACCOMPANIMENT

Walking with others towards God

Accompaniment primarily means “being with” the people we are serving and journeying with them towards God. It involves discerning how the Spirit invites us to actively attend to someone, walk with, and empower the person.

In his Apostolic Exhortation, The Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis stresses the importance of accompaniment in shaping the overall ministries of the church. Accompaniment means primarily “being with” the people we are serving, journeying with them towards God.

The word accompany is a Middle French corruption of the words *companion* and *company*, which are from the Latin words *com*, “with,” and *panis*, “bread”: with one who breaks the same bread. This highlights the sense of solidarity, that “we are in it together,” as God-is-with-us.

Accompanying another is fundamentally a participation and response to the Mystery of the Incarnation. God in Jesus enters our life personally, intimately, walking with us every step of the way, as a fellow pilgrim. St. Ignatius of Loyola imagines that we are all pilgrims, walking together towards God.

*Personal accompaniment in processes of growth
(from The Joy of the Gospel):*

169. In a culture paradoxically suffering from anonymity and at the same time obsessed with the details of other people’s lives, shamelessly given over to morbid curiosity, the Church must look more closely and sympathetically at others whenever necessary. **In our world, ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ’s closeness and his personal gaze. The Church will have to initiate everyone – priests, religious and laity – into this “art of accompaniment” which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other** (cf. *Ex* 3:5). The pace of this accompaniment must be steady and reassuring, reflecting our closeness and our compassionate gaze which also heals, liberates and encourages growth in the Christian life.

170. Although it sounds obvious, spiritual accompaniment must lead others ever closer to God, in whom we attain true freedom. Some people think they are free if they can avoid God; they fail to see that they remain existentially orphaned, helpless, homeless. They cease being pilgrims and become drifters, flitting around themselves and never getting anywhere. To accompany them would be counterproductive if it became a sort of therapy supporting their self-absorption and ceased to be a pilgrimage with Christ to the Father.

171. Today more than ever we need men and women who, on the basis of their experience of accompanying others, are familiar with processes which call for prudence, understanding, patience and docility to the Spirit, so that they can protect the sheep from wolves who would scatter the flock. We need to practice the art of listening, which is more than simply hearing. Listening, in communication, is an openness of heart which makes possible that closeness without which genuine spiritual encounter cannot occur. Listening helps us to find the right gesture and word which shows that we are more than simply bystanders. Only through such respectful and compassionate listening can we enter on the paths of true growth and awaken a yearning for the Christian ideal: the desire to respond fully to God's love and to bring to fruition what he has sown in our lives ...

172. One who accompanies others has to realize that each person's situation before God and their life in grace are mysteries which no one can fully know from without. The Gospel tells us to correct others and to help them to grow on the basis of a recognition of the objective evil of their actions (cf. *Mt* 18:15), but without making judgements about their responsibility and culpability (cf. *Mt* 7:1; *Lk* 6:37). Someone good at such accompaniment does not give in to frustrations or fears. He or she invites others to let themselves be healed, to take up their mat, embrace the cross, leave all behind and go forth ever anew to proclaim the Gospel. Our personal experience of being accompanied and assisted, and of openness to those who accompany us, will teach us to be patient and compassionate with others, and to find the right way to gain their trust, their openness and their readiness to grow.

173. Genuine spiritual accompaniment always begins and flourishes in the context of service to the mission of evangelization. ...

Accompaniment & Mercy

Accompaniment is a kind of friendship—the friendship that leads to a compassionate or merciful recognition that the suffering of one’s friend is one’s own.

“Mercy is another word for compassion—*com*, with, and *passion*, suffering—to be with another in his or her suffering. The etymology of the Latin word for mercy indicates the same spirit. In mercy or Misericordia, one’s heart (*cor*), is full of the suffering (*miserum*) the beloved is experiencing. St. Thomas Aquinas saw mercy as like friendship, the form of love that most leads to a compassionate heart. “[S]ince one who loves another looks upon his friend as another self, he counts his friend's hurt as his own, so that he grieves for his friend's hurt as though he were hurt himself.” This love is truly compassion, sharing in the struggle or suffering of another. It is Misericordia, to have one’s heart—*cor*—touched by the struggles—the *miseria*—faced by one’s friend. Thus, mercy is love extended to those who are suffering or struggling.”

The three most recent Popes remind us often that Jesus embodied and taught this kind of loving mercy, which is not only central to our the Christian vocation or pilgrimage but also key to how we accompany others to God.

Accompaniment, like teaching or serving, is more than something we do. It is an attitude, a way of being; a way of receiving and extending mercy.

Reflection Questions:

1. Are there any phrases or ideas above that inspire or challenge you? How so?
2. Who has accompanied you towards God in the ways described above, and how so?
3. Is God inviting you to practice or cultivate any particular aspects of accompaniment in your ministry and involvement in the parish? How so & what might be your concrete response?

Cura Personalis: Ongoing Accompaniment

A. CONNECT DEEPER

1. Follow-up with the person.
2. Deepen the connection established in the first encounter.
3. Learn his or her “unique language” of the person. Notice how they communicate, their frequent facial gestures, non-verbal cues, etc.
4. Cultivate some one-on-one time with the person.

B. AFFIRM

1. Highlight the person’s goodness that comes from God and flows through the person – that he or she bears the divine image and likeness (Imago Dei).
2. Recognize and appreciate the person for who they are, not just for what they do or accomplish.
3. Follow up with personal notes or messages of care.

C. GENUINE NEEDS

1. Be attentive to the person’s genuine needs at this time. Check-in with the Lord often by seeing the person through the eyes of Jesus, and asking, “Help me to see his or her genuine needs, Lord.”
2. Communicate care for the person in a way that they can receive.
3. Wait for an opportunity to make an extravagant gesture of love in meeting a genuine need of the person.

D. EMPOWER

1. Identify, affirm, encourage, and draw out the person’s gifts.
2. The more we understand how a person relates and communicates, the more we can help him or her grow.

E. PRAY

1. Ask for the grace to help the person encounter God. Practice seeing Jesus with and in him or her (as described on page 5).
2. Give thanks for this person as a gift.
3. Pray for the person by lifting her needs and concerns as well as your wishes and worries for her up to God.

To See and Love as Jesus Sees and Loves

An imaginative prayer

“Ordained ministers and other pastoral workers can make present the fragrance of Christ’s closeness and his personal gaze.”- Pope Francis

This imaginative prayer can be helpful to foster spiritual growth in yourself or another. It can also help with letting go & trusting God.

1. Take a minute to be explicitly aware of God’s presence by taking deep breaths (inhaling and exhaling slowly & fully).
2. Ask for the grace to see with the eyes of Christ and to feel with his heart.
3. Picture the person as he or she is engaged in a typical activity at this time of the day ... Imagine Jesus being next to the person, perhaps stand or sitting before or beside the person ... Observe how Jesus looks at the person, notice how Jesus sees the person’s genuine needs and current struggles ... Pay attention to how Jesus cares for the person in his or her present needs and struggles ... Notice how he loves the person in his or her present needs and struggles ... Continue to observe for 3-5 minutes how Jesus looks, cares for, and loves the person in his or her present needs and struggles ...
4. Ask Jesus if he wants you to help him directly care for and love the person. (Don’t answer for him or project any “should’s”. Allow Jesus to respond.) ... If he wants you to help him, ask how he invites you to concretely cooperate with him in caring for and loving the person. (At times, he may invite you to indirectly love the person from a distance) ... Talk to him about anything else that came up as you tried to look through his eyes and feel with his heart. Spend time sharing with him about any hopes, concerns, or struggles you may have with the person. Ask Jesus what he thinks ...
5. Thank Jesus for this time of learning to see with his eyes and feel with his heart.

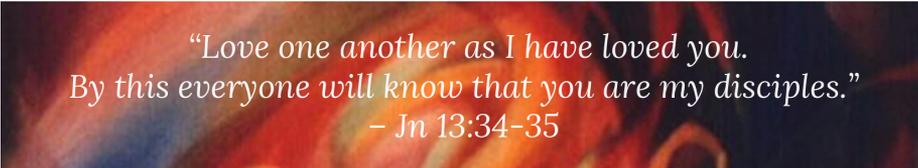
PRAXIS

A. Reading & Noting

1. Read Henri Nouwen's *In the Name of Jesus* pages 25-47 (Chapter 1: "From Relevance to Prayer"). Note what consoles, challenges, or puzzles you while reading. Notice how your mind and heart are affected and journal as needed.
2. Re-read p. 3-5 of this handout and reflect on the questions at the end.

B. Practicing & Noting

1. Guided by the Spirit, choose one person to accompany in the next month. Use the suggestions on p. 7 to pray for the person 1-2 times/week. Reflect on the following questions each time:
 - Was there anything surprising that came up during the prayer?
 - Was this prayer helpful to you in praying for the person? How so?
 - Is there any point to which you are invited to return and listen deeper?
2. Continue to practice intentionally meeting people at least once/week (using the "First Encounter" suggestions on p. 2) and pray for the person afterwards as in question #1 above .
3. Journal before the next gathering using these prompts:
 - What did I learn about God, myself, and/or others in my praxis?
 - As I practice spiritual accompaniment and intentionally meet people, do I find myself trusting God (following the Spirit) or relying on myself (making things happen) more? How so?



*"Love one another as I have loved you.
By this everyone will know that you are my disciples."
– Jn 13:34-35*