



Let us Dream

Pope Francis & Austin Ivereigh

Praying and Reflecting through
the Coronavirus and other
Crises in our lives.

Northampton Diocese

- Materials developed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference, Spirituality Committee, Britain.
- Opening Prayer
- Summary
- Psalm

Prologue – Urbi et Orbi Message 3/27/2020

- <https://youtu.be/JcUqLrbi9Cg?t=326>

- Ezekiel 47

- <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ezekiel+47&version=NRSVCE>

- I see this as a time of reckoning. That the devil wants us to be sifted like wheat...
- To enter into crisis is to be sifted. Your categories and ways of thinking get shaken up; your priorities and lifestyles are challenged. You cross a threshold, either by your own choice or by necessity, because there are crises, like the one we're going through, that you can't avoid.
- You don't come out the same.
- We are living a time of trial...we are all tested in life. It's how we grow.

What's your response?

- Don't know what to do?
- Don't want to do anything?
Step back and step away?
- Find a way around?
- Find out who is responsible?

Role model in this crisis – Good Samaritan

- It is not right to retreat
- A crisis that requires our whole self
- Letting self be struck by what I see, knowing that suffering will change me

“It is what it is!”

- Misrepresents God’s creation as static.
- Instead, the world is always being made.
- Genesis says that humankind has a mandate to change, to build, to master the world in the sense of creating from it and with it.

This is a moment to dream big...

- This is a moment to dream big, to rethink our priorities and to commit to act in our daily life what we have dreamed of.
- When have people had to rebuild? What were the circumstances? Did they let their dreams be a part of that rebuilding?

A time for Fraternity

- Now more than ever, what is revealed is the fallacy of making individualism the organizing principle of society.
- We need to proclaim that being kind, having faith, and working for the common good are great life goals that need courage and vigor
- We need to slow down, take stock and design better ways of living together on this earth

Reflection time: (see handout for questions)

1. 'Where the danger is, also grows the saving power,' What examples might you give in your own life or in the world?
2. +Francis uses the parable of the Good Samaritan as a call to change and later says 'God asks us to dare to create something new' Just how well do you think this is being received?
3. Why can't we just go back to the old normal? What would you say to those that support this view?

Response

1. What did your group consider important to note?
2. Do you think it is possible for Pope Francis to lead us out of this crisis to something new (in the Church or in the world)?

Psalm

Stretch

Chapter 1: A Time to See

- Opening Prayer once again
- Summary
- Psalm
- Presentation

The unexpected helper

Sometimes, when you think globally, you can be paralyzed: there are so many places of apparently ceaseless conflict, there's so much suffering and need. I find it helps to focus on concrete situations: you see faces looking for life and love in the reality of each person, of each people.

Has this been your experience? Do you see the truly human come out in folks you did not expect when a crisis occurs?

Mr. Roger's saying – when bad things happen, look for the helpers.

The Concrete Reality

- The abstract paralyzes but focusing on the concrete opens up possible paths.
- You have to go to the edges of existence if you want to see the world as it is. Where there is suffering...were also places of possibility.
- Developing antibodies to the virus of indifference.
- Are we really self-sufficient?

Our Culture today

- What the lord asks of us today is a culture of service, not a throwaway culture. To go there you have to open your eyes and let the suffering around you touch you, so that you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you from the margins.
- Narcissism, discouragement, pessimism three ways that block you
- Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus
an existential myopia that cannot become normal
- God is never indifferent, the essence of God is mercy
- ***Indifference blocks the Spirit by closing us to the possibilities that God is waiting to offer us.***

Our Christian Tradition

- We are born, beloved creatures of our creator, God of love, into a world that has lived long before us. We belong to God and to one another, and we are a part of creation. And from this understanding, grasped by the heart, must flow our love for each other and our recognition that life, our families and our world are unearned gift.
- Biblical stories – the truth that they reveal
Genesis and the Garden – recognizing that there are limits
Noah – what parts of that story are relevant to this crisis today?
- Realization that this grace is available to us now, the light in the midst of tribulation.

Our Deeper Tradition

Pope Francis reminds us of the story from the first chapters of Nehemiah. Many of the elite of Israel are in exile while those who remained in Jerusalem were subject to the whims of warring tribes in a city left without gates, many of the walls destroyed, the buildings likewise ransacked.

Nehemiah, a cupbearer for this foreign king, asks if he can return to help rebuild the city. Permission is granted and a group returns. Over the years the exiles attempt to rebuild but are always wary of raiders and nearby adversaries. Building the walls happens with a stone in one hand and a sword in the other.

What kind of faith does it take for Nehemiah to continue, to strive to rebuild?
What kind of celebration happens when the gates are finally restored?

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Nehemiah%208&version=NRSVCE>

The notion of overflow

Francis loves this image of overflow (see Ezekiel)

That when God acts with mercy it bursts the banks of our thinking. Need to humbly set before God the challenge we face and ask for help.

What's possible: The Moth – Hector Black

<https://themoth.org/storytellers/hector-black>

Reflection Time:

In what ways can you see that +Francis' dream that those people now on the edge of the crisis become the protagonists of social change?

Speaking of personal Covids – What is the greatest fruit of a personal Covid?
“I’d say patience sprinkled with a healthy sense of humor, which allows us to endure and make space for change to happen.”

What qualities would you say are the greatest fruits?

Pope Francis says: Of all the institutions, the family has taken the hardest knock of all.

What evidence do you see to support Pope Francis’ claim that the family has suffered the hardest knocks of all? How can renewing this be part of a new, wider Nehemiah project?

Response

1. What did your group consider important to note?
2. Do you think it is possible for Pope Francis to lead us out of this crisis to something new (in the Church or in the world)?

Psalm

Break

Chapter 2: A Time to Choose

- Opening Prayer once again
- Summary
- Psalm
- Presentation

Liminal Space

- Between the first step, which is to come close and allow yourself to be struck by what you see, and the third step, which is to act concretely to heal and repair, there is an essential intermediate stage: to discern, and to choose.
- Need criteria to guide us
- Healthy capacity for silent reflection & prayer to hear the prompts of the Spirit
- To cultivate dialogue in a community that can hold us and allow us to dream.

Beatitudes and CST

- A crisis is almost always the result of self-forgetting and the way forward comes through recalling our roots
- The value of life, of nature, of the dignity of the person, of work, of relationships – all these are value key to human life and cannot be traded away or sacrificed.
- The Beatitudes:
<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+5&version=NRSVCE>
- How are these lived out in our day?

Catholic Social Teaching (USCCB)

- a. **Life and Dignity of the Human Person:** The Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society.
- b. **Call to Family, Community, and Participation:** The person is not only sacred but also social. How we organize our society -- in economics and politics, in law and policy -- directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community.
- c. **Rights and Responsibilities:** The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met.
- d. **Option for the Poor and Vulnerable:** A basic moral test is how our most vulnerable members are faring.

Catholic Social Teaching (cont)

- e. **The Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers:** The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way to make a living; it is a form of continuing participation in God's creation.
- f. **Solidarity:** We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers and sisters keepers, wherever they may be. Loving our neighbor has global dimensions in a shrinking world.
- g. **Care for God's Creation:** We show our respect for the Creator by our stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is not just an Earth Day slogan, it is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation.

Solidarity and Subsidiarity

- Solidarity acknowledges our interconnectedness; we are creatures in relationship, with duties towards one another, and all are called to participate in society.
- Subsidiarity ensures that we do not distort the idea of solidarity, recognizing the autonomy of others as subjects of their own destiny. Act not just for but with.
- Engineering: Appropriate Technology

Discernment – What Spirit is it?

- Discernment, not just rational calculation but listening to the Spirit. Difficult for those who seek a technical solution.
- “Change of Era”, cannot go back to previous categories and assumptions
- Truth as beyond and beckoning, never complete. Not normally reached through reason but through the imagination by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by story and description
- Tradition and doctrine not complete but develops
- Spirit shows us new things through the “signs of the times”

Discernment – What Spirit is it?

- “False Messiahs” ignore the freedom of people to build their own future (subsidiarity)
- Voice of God never imposes but proposes
- Voice of enemy distracts us from the present by getting us to focus on fears of the future.
- Temptations of rigid thinking to reduce people to functions
- To dream a different future we need to choose fraternity over individualism (Union of Hearts and Minds)
- “Isolated Conscience” temptation to withdraw spiritually from community, closing in on own interests and viewpoints by means of suspicion and supposition

Discernment – Biblical Examples

- Jonah – who is he listening to when he chooses?

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jonah%201&version=NRSVCE>

- Zaccheus – hearing God's call and responding

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=luke+19%3A1-10&version=NRSVCE>

Story of storming the STL Cathedral

Reflection Time

Pope Francis suggests two sets of guidelines to help us choose:

- “...we need not just openness to reality but a robust set of criteria to guide us: knowing we are loved by God, called to be a people in service and solidarity.
- We need too a healthy capacity for silent reflection, places of refuge from the tyranny of the urgent.
- Most of all we need prayer, to hear the prompts of the Spirit and cultivate dialogue in a community that can hold us and allow us to dream.” (p.51)
Francis suggests these further aids to help us in our growth: the Beatitudes, Catholic Social Teaching, the preferential option for the poor, the common good, universal destination of goods, solidarity, subsidiarity.

Which of the above seem most important to you? Why?

(See also today’s handout)

Response

1. What did your group consider important to note?
2. Do you think it is possible for Pope Francis to lead us out of this crisis to something new (in the Church or in the world)?

Psalm

Stretch

Chapter 3: A Time to Act

- Opening Prayer one last time
- Summary
- Psalm
- Presentation

Chapter 3: A Time to Act

- In times of crisis and tribulation, when we are shaken out of our sclerotic habits, the love of God comes out to purify us, to remind us that we are a people.
- Time for action asks us to recover our sense of belonging, the knowledge that we are part of a people.

A Time to Act -- Biblical Examples

- Exodus – not just the event but the continual renewal of our memory of that event.
- When do we see such remembrances?
- What are our national remembrances?
Do they still hold us together?

Recovering our sense as a “people”

- The feeling of being a part can only come together the same way it was forged: in shared struggle and hardship.
A people may have profound disagreements and differences but they can walk together inspired by shared goals, and so create a future.
- Saw this in protests in reaction to killing of George Floyd not just popular feeling but the feeling of a people, its soul.
Reserves of fundamental values – struggle for life, human dignity, freedom, justice, concern for creation, love of family and friends.
- When the people pray, what do they ask for? Health, work, family, school, decent place to live, enough money to get by, for peace between neighbors, and a fresh chance for the poor.

Vatican II – The People of God

- Dignity of the people comes from God's closeness.
- Jesus comes to restore Israel to the remembrance of God's closeness, to return to the people the dignity of the promise. Restores dignity in acts and words that perform God's closeness. No one is saved alone. ***To be Christian is know that we are part of a people.***
- If the church has a particular role to play in crisis it is to remind the people of its soul, of its need to respect the common good.

Person as social, belonging

In this sense the Bible offers us a clear contrast between the indifference of Cain toward the fate of Abel – “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gen 4:9) – and the response of Yaweh to Moses in the third chapter of Exodus: “I have observed the misery of my people...I have heard their cry...and I have come down to deliver them.” (Ex 3:7-8) 106

Role of the Church

- Church must always be known for its closeness to the peoples of the earth in their struggle for dignity and freedom.
- Current crisis calls us to recover our sense of belonging....restore and ethics of fraternity and solidarity.
- What saves us is not an idea but an encounter. Only the face of another is capable of awakening the best of ourselves.

True Charity

The problem is not feeding the poor, or clothing the naked, or visiting the sick, but rather recognizing that the poor, the naked, the sick, prisoners, and the homeless have the dignity to sit at our table, to feel “at home” among us, to feel part of a family. This is the sign that the Kingdom of Heaven is in our midst.”

Outreach

- Humility – need to admit we need God’s help
- Solidarity & Subsidiarity – solutions come from listening, not imposed
- Beyond and Beckoning – Never holding the final answer, always seeking both truth and beauty
- Dignity is more than a handout, it is participation in society
- The Medicine: <https://youtu.be/h0wmn7IXRDI>
Good Shephard New York Music Collective

Closing Reflection Time

Pope Francis has often insisted on the importance of going to the margins,

“To recover the dignity of the people we need to go to the margins of our societies to meet all those who live there. Hidden there are ways of looking at the world that can give us all a fresh start”.

He adds to this saying, “to embrace the margins is to expand our horizons, for we see more clearly and broadly from the edges of our society”.

From your own experience and knowledge, what might some of those “hidden ways” be? What are those margins in your locality? Where might there be those life-giving ways in the margins that the Pope is sure we will find?

Closing Psalm

Read the Book

A good Christmas gift as well