

Facilitators Guide: Faith Traditions and Mercy

Guiding Group

The role of the Facilitator will necessarily include organising the group's access at the session to the resources on screen or in print.

A suggested structure for each Session is:

1. Preparation of the Focus Space
2. Prayer
3. Introduction
4. Content Explored
5. Reflection and Discussion
6. Closing

As this is the second Segment, most groups will have already met for one or more sessions and so will be familiar with the process and the microsite. **To other groups who have decided to commence the process with this Segment - Welcome!** We are delighted that you have chosen to join us on this journey and welcome your participation.

Whichever presentation you, the Facilitator, or group first choose to engage with, commence your work with the theme using the Introduction by Elizabeth Davis rsm which informs us that 'mercy is the essence of religion', introduces us to the understanding of mercy in the Abrahamic and Eastern faith traditions and invites each participant to deepen her/his contemplation of mercy using five questions:

- How is mercy essential in my life?
- With what words do I imagine mercy?
- What mercy-name for God do I use most often?
- In this past week, how and where have I been mercying?
- During this past week, when did Earth show me mercy?

This set of questions, designed for use with the Introduction, could well be used as review questions at the end of the thematic exploration.

Once again we offer three of many possible approaches to using resources from the theme 'Faith Traditions and Mercy' implementing the suggested structure (nos. 1-6). The approach used will depend on the needs, interests and abilities of the group members. Facilitators may, of course, use their own approach with the resources, or choose elements from these three suggested approaches to create a different approach. At the conclusion of the Session

the Facilitator or another group member is encouraged to send on 'what is too good for the group to keep to themselves' to mgpfeedback@mercyinternational.ie

Example Approach One: Introduction

The Facilitator organises a smart television, or a data projector and laptop for the meeting place in order to screen (on a blank wall or screen) the Introduction.

The focus space would incorporate words, symbols and artefacts that evoke the theme 'Faith Traditions & Mercy'. The five quotes cited in 'Mercy as the Essence of Religion' could be included as part of the display.

Begin the session in your own words using the content of the first paragraph of the introduction to do this, then invite participants to prepare to engage with this Segment and theme by reflecting silently on the first two questions:

- How is mercy essential in my life?
- With what words do I imagine mercy?

Screen the introduction. Sr Elizabeth covers six aspects of mercy in her introduction

Depending on the group, the facilitator could stop the video at the end of each topic and invite a response or discussion on the material covered. Alternatively, the facilitator could provide each member of the group with a print out of the video script.

Following the screening, in groups of 2-3, invite participants to respond to each topic using the following question:

- What can I now add to my image of mercy?

Each small group could be then invited to share with the whole group something they heard that is 'too good to keep to themselves'.

The conclusion of Sr Elizabeth's presentation could be read aloud with the invitation to the participants to deepen her/his contemplation of mercy using her five questions.

Conclude the gathering by reading a selection from the Reflective Prayer.

Example Approach Two: Theological Imaginings

The Facilitator arranges for each member of the group to receive a copy of the presentation.

The focus space would incorporate words, symbols and artefacts that evoke the theme 'Faith Traditions & Mercy'. The five quotes cited in 'Mercy as the Essence of Religion' in the Introduction could be included as part of the display.

Peta Goldberg rsm introduces us to the term 'house faith' (Catherine Corneille) and the concept of 'inter-religious empathy' in her introduction.

Invite the group to consider what insights these terms offer them in their examination of other systems of theological belief before exploring Sr Peta's examination of the Abrahamic and Eastern traditions

Form groups of 2-3 to each consider one of the five religions discussed in the presentation: Abrahamic (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) and the Eastern traditions of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Each group could report back to the whole group on the religion they were asked to 'study' using Sr Peta's set of questions:

- What was familiar?
- What was new or different?
- What feels comfortable?
- What feels uncomfortable?
- What insights did I gain about other faith traditions?
- What insights did I gain about my 'house tradition'?

Conclude the Session with the Reflective Reading in the Reflective Prayer.

Example Approach Three: Artistic Response

The Facilitator organises a smart television, or a data projector and laptop for the meeting place in order to screen (on a blank wall or screen) the Painting.

The focus space would incorporate words, symbols and artefacts that evoke the theme 'Faith Traditions & Mercy'. The five quotes cited in 'Mercy as the Essence of Religion' could be included as part of the display.

The Facilitator shares Sr Anne's description of the painting 'Table of MERCY' before inviting participants to spend a set time reflecting on it.

Soft, gentle instrumental music could be playing to assist reflection

Some of these observational questions might be of assistance

- Look at Table of MERCY. What observations can you make about it?
- What colours, lines, shapes, textures, values, and spaces caught your attention?
- How would you describe the lines in this picture? The shapes? The colours?
- What kinds of things do you see in Table of MERCY? What else do you see?
- How would you describe this painting to a person who could not see it?

Invite participants to share their reflections in small groups of 2-3, then a word or phrase in the larger group.

Invite a member of the group to read Sr Maureen's reflection aloud, then ask participants:

- What words would you use to describe Table of MERCY?

Invite participants to write their reflection, drawing from their responses to the observational questions and from what they have heard shared in the small and whole group discussion.

Invite sharing in the larger group.

Conclude the Session with the Closing Prayer from the Reflective Prayer.