

Facilitators Guide: 'Contemplative Seeing'

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

We begin Segment Four in this Holy Week and in this time of continuing global vulnerability with the first of our 'Integrated' themes — '*Contemplative Seeing*'.

As this is the fourth and final Segment, most groups will have already explored the context for *Mercy Global Presence* as "global" (Segment One), its spirit as "mercy" (Segment Two), and its experience as "presence" (Segment Three), so will be familiar with the process and [the microsite](#). For those coming new to the process, or wishing to revisit earlier themes, these Segments will remain available on the microsite.

Whichever presentation you, the Facilitator, or group first choose to engage with, commence your work using the introduction by Elizabeth Davis rsm.

Sr Elizabeth reminds us that 'We set out on this journey to shape new words, new images, new language, new theology, and new spirituality to enable us to find the energy we need to be Sisters of Mercy and people of mercy in our world so "in need of God's compassion and Mercy". She invites us to share our voices in regional gatherings organised for 25-27 May where we will 'reflect further on integration in our continued global conversations, cherishing the diversity and wisdoms among us'.

Once again, we offer three of many possible approaches to using resources from this theme, implementing the suggested structure (nos. 1-6). The approach used will depend on the needs, interests, abilities and situations of the group members. **At this present time, groups that are able to meet are using video conferencing. Our suggested approaches take account of this and of face-to-face-meetings becoming possible again in the future.**

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: Theological Imaginings

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. If using Zoom, the presentation could be shared using the 'Share screen' function.

Prepare the Focus space with greenery and other elements or images that evoke the environment in keeping with the theme of this presentation.

When face to face meetings are possible again, consider gathering outside, weather permitting, or in a room where there is a view of a garden or other natural environment and arrange for each member of the group to have a copy of the presentation.

Commence the session with the 'Invitation to Stillness' in the Reflective Prayer.

The text of the presentation could be read aloud by one person, by alternate readers, by different readers taking turns to read the paragraphs aloud, slowly and reflectively.

Pause at each image to allow time for personal reflection on what has been heard and what the image conveys.

At the conclusion of the reading, following a period of silence, invite participants to share with a neighbour or in a group of two or three (depending on the size of the whole group) their response to the material presented. If meeting on Zoom, breakout rooms could be used for this purpose.

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

Alternatively,

Sr Mary Katherine begins her presentation by telling the reader that she learnt to see contemplatively from a tree standing deep within an ancient Sequoia Grove. Invite the group to share what experience has taught them to see contemplatively.

She concludes her presentation writing that 'Each of us will discover our own Sacrificial Tree. Julian of Norwich found it in a hazelnut. Like Julian, one day we will hold in our hand a small piece of creation and hear God speaking to us through its holy gift.' Invite participants to respond to this statement.

Conclude the Session with a member of the group reading aloud 'The Gift of Sight' by Tom Bass from the Reflective Prayer.

Example Approach Two: Artistic Response

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. If using Zoom, the artwork could be shared using the 'Share screen' function. When face to face meetings are possible again, the Facilitator arranges for a smart television, or a data projector and laptop for the meeting place in order to screen the artwork on a blank wall or screen.

The focus space would incorporate artefacts that evoke the theme 'Contemplative Seeing', such as a beautiful cloth, a lit candle, a shell or leaves or other elements from nature, and something of beauty that has been created, such as a piece of porcelain or glass.

Commence the Session with the 'Invitation to Stillness' in the Reflective Prayer.

The Facilitator invites participants to spend a set time reflecting on Sr Ma. Victoria's artwork. Soft, gentle instrumental music could be playing to assist reflection. Some of these observational questions might be of assistance:

- What was your first reaction to this artwork? Why do you think you had the reaction?
- What emotions do you feel when you look at the painting?
- What adjectives would you use to describe this artwork?
- What colours, lines and images caught your attention?
- What have you learnt about the ministries of the RSM Philippines Congregation from this artwork?
- What would you include in an artwork about the ministries in your Congregation or Institute?
- What do you want to remember and share about this artwork? Why?

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

If using Zoom, breakout rooms could be used for the small group discussion. When the group comes back together, following the sharing the Facilitator shares Sr Ma. Vic's description of her artwork.

An alternative approach to using some of these observational questions would be to use the Visio Divina (Guided) approach from the Reflective Prayer.

Conclude the Session with a member of the group reading aloud 'The Gift of Sight' by Tom Bass from the Reflective Prayer.

Example Approach Three: Reflective Prayer

The Facilitator organises an online meeting room such as Zoom, Skype or Facetime. If using Zoom, the text of the prayer could be shared using the 'Share screen' function.

When face to face meetings are possible once more, the Facilitator arranges for each member of the group to have a copy of the prayer text.

The focus space for this prayer could include the items suggested by the presenter.

The presenter has structured the Reflective Prayer. Ensure the roles in the Prayer Service of the Facilitator, Leader, Shared Readers – which could be four readers taking a verse each, or two alternating readers – and All are clear to participants before commencing the Reflective Prayer.

After the shared reading of 'The Gift of Sight' and following a period of silent reflection, participants could be invited to share aloud in a word or sentence their response to the prayer material.

Conclude the session with the Closing Song.