

Facilitators Guide: Presence of/with/to God

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 first theme of the third segment, most groups will have already explored the context for *Mercy Global Presence* as "global" (Segment One) and its spirit as "mercy" (Segment Two), and so will be familiar with the process and [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 begins her Introduction by recalling the first two segments, 'global' and 'mercy'. The presentations from each of these segments remain available on the Mercy Global Presence microsite. Simply click on the forward/back arrows next to this third segment to access these. The **integrating posters** in an interactive format can be accessed [here](#), while the **posters in a format for printing** can be downloaded [here](#). The complete **set of reflections** from the Regional Gatherings can be accessed [here](#)

Sr Elizabeth's Introduction is an exploration of the presence of God grounded in three rich traditions: the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the words of Catherine McAuley. These and further quotes from Catherine McAuley can be found in our online library [here](#).

Elizabeth concludes her introduction with an invitation to each one of us to ponder:

- When do I experience God as transcendent, far above me?
- When do I experience God as intimate, quite close to me?
- Where have I seen God dwelling among us?
- How have I seen God's Spirit poured out on me, on us, on Earth?
- How do I image God with the eyes of my heart?

These reflection questions might be equally well used after an exploration of some of the presentations on this theme as after spending time with the Introduction.

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: Artistic Response

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

The focus space would incorporate words, symbols and artefacts that evoke the theme 'Presence of/with/to God'.

Play the video 'Be Still My soul' from the Reflective Prayer. Lyrics can be found [here](#)

The Facilitator shares Sr Marilyn's description of her painting 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:

- 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, shapes and spaces caught your attention?
- How do you feel about the world and about your place in it, after looking at this artwork?
- What do you want to remember 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. If using Zoom, breakout rooms could be used for the small group discussion.

In the large group, discuss one or both questions Sr Marilyn has provided for reflection.

Conclude the Session with a member of the group reading aloud Sr Marilyn's poem 'Presence'.

Example Approach Two: Grassroots Ministry

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

Prepare the Focus space with symbols and elements that evoke nature, beauty and growth. Play the video 'Be Still My soul' from the Reflective Prayer. Lyrics can be found [here](#)

When face to face meetings are possible again, gather in a room where there is a view of a garden or other natural environment.

Invite the participants to read the article to themselves or perhaps six participants, taking a heading each, could share reading the article aloud. Pause after each section to enable listeners to stay in that moment of Sr Maura's personal discovery.

Sr Maura, in tracing her life story, gifts us with her spiritual autobiography. We learn about significant people, places and events that have contributed to her spirituality.

Using Sr Maura's article as a model, recall physical places, particular memories, opportunities and learnings, people and other sources of nourishment that have contributed to your spiritual growth.

The following questions might be helpful for this exercise:

- When you listened/read Maura's presentation, which of the six stories within her life story was most significant to you? Does this connect with something that is important to you in your own life?
- Did her words make you think about anything in your own story differently? What contribution have her words made to you?

Invite participants in the large group to share a personal story or a reflection from this exercise. Conclude the session with the Closing Blessing 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 again, the Facilitator arranges for a smart television, or a data projector and laptop for the meeting place in order to screen (on a blank wall or screen) one or both videos.

She/he also arranges for each member of the group to receive a copy of the prayer text.

The Context of the Reflective Prayer has been provided by the presenter.

The focus space for this prayer could include images of Julian of Norwich and of Pope Francis, or a copy of their publications, if available.

Invite two readers to prepare and read aloud reflectively a selection or all the quotations from Julian and Pope Francis.

Take time between each quotation for the participants to 'drink in' the words and ponder them.

Following a period of silent reflection, participants could be invited 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.

Each small group would then invited to share with the whole group something they heard that is 'too good to keep to themselves'. If using Zoom, this activity could take place in breakout rooms.

Conclude the session with the Closing Prayer.