

GOOD NEWS
FOR OUR WORLD



UNPACKING THE EMMAUS SERIES

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THE EMMAUS SERIES



Questions Catholics ask on their journey of Faith

GOOD NEWS FOR OUR WORLD

SESSION 1

Introductory reading

Evangelisation in the Modern World (1975) (n.8)

Paul VI's Exhortation

'As the kernel and centre of his Good News, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses humanity, but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One, in the joy of knowing God and being known by God, of seeing God, and of being given over to God.

'All of this is begun during the life of Christ and definitively accomplished by his death and resurrection. But it must be patiently carried forward during the course of history, in order to be realised fully on the day of the final coming of Christ, whose date is known to no one except the Father'. ◇

Questions opening up the topic

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing reactions to the following questions:

Questions

- ◆ Recent popes have called the Church to 'a new evangelisation' (i.e. to a new spreading of the GOSPEL). 'Gospel' has not been a familiar theme in Catholic teaching in recent centuries. How would you respond if an unbeliever asked you, 'What is the gospel Christians talk about?'
- ◆ Do you think this question was neglected in our Catholic formation?

Viewing of DVD

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Chapter 1:
John Paul II's Call to Renewal
- ◆ Chapter 2:
A New Emphasis with the Reformation

Sharing of reactions to the presentation

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing immediate reactions to the presentation:

Question

- ◆ What has struck you as enlightening, inspiring, or even puzzling?

A reading related to the theme

From the Eastern Church

It describes the way in which an openness to the Holy Spirit can form a Church living in the spirit of the Gospel brought by Christ.

Without the Holy Spirit:

God is far away,
Christ stays in the past,
the GOSPEL is a dead letter,
the Church is simply an organisation,
Mission a matter of propaganda,
the Liturgy is no more than a solemn ceremony,
Christian living a slave morality.

But in the Holy Spirit:

The cosmos is resurrected
and groans with the birth pangs of the Kingdom,
the risen Christ is there,
the GOSPEL is the power of life,
the Church shows forth the life of the Trinity,
authority is a liberating service,
Mission is Pentecost,
the Liturgy is both living memorial and anticipation,
and our human strivings are filled with divine life. □

A final reflective sharing

This final sharing of personal responses to the questions given below is the most important phase of the session, and should be entered into generously, in the spirit of the Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15.

It may begin with a brief period of silent reflection, which is followed by two stages:

- 1. An informal Buzz Session in which each participant is able to express their response to each question – questions should be discussed separately.*
- 2. The sharing is brought to a conclusion, with each participant expressing, in a few words, what is their personal response to each question – in view of all that has been discussed in the session.*

Questions

- ◆ Have you gained any insights in this session that seem important to you?
- ◆ Are there questions for which you seek answers, as we look forward to the second session on this topic?

GOOD NEWS FOR OUR WORLD

SESSION 2

Introductory reading

Gospel of Luke (15: 11-32)

A parable of Jesus about the son who comes back to the love of his father.

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, let me have the share of the estate that will come to me'. So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

When he had spent it all, the country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would have willingly filled himself with the husks the pigs were eating but no one would let him have them. Then he came to his senses and said, 'How many of my father's hired men have all the food they want and more, and here I am dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired men'. So he left the place and went back to his father.

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him. Then his son said, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you, I no longer deserve to be called your son'. But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have fattened, and kill it; we will celebrate by having a feast, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found'. And they began to celebrate.

Now the elder son was in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. The servant told him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the calf we have been fattening because he has got him back safe and sound'. He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out and began to urge him to go in; but he retorted to his father, 'All these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed any orders of yours, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his loose women – you kill the calf we have been fattening.

The father said, 'My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found'. ◇

Questions opening up the topic

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing reactions to the following questions:

Questions

- ◆ When you come into God's presence, what is uppermost in your relationship with the Lord, fear or love?
- ◆ In the text we read in the first session, Paul VI described the Christian GOSPEL as 'the joy of knowing God and being known by God'. Do you think there has been a satisfactory balance, in the way in which the faith has been expressed, between the joy and the fear we should have before God?

Viewing of DVD

- ◆ Chapter 3:
What is God really like?
- ◆ Chapter 4:
Protestants and Catholics now in agreement

Sharing of reactions to the presentation

Groups have a Buzz Session – in the spirit of Sympathetic Listening described in the booklet 'Getting Started' pp. 14-15 – sharing immediate reactions to the presentation:

Question

- ◆ What has struck you as enlightening, inspiring, or even puzzling?

A reading related to the theme

Deus caritas est (God is Love) (n.39)

The encyclical of Benedict XVI

Faith, hope and charity go together. Hope is practised through the virtue of patience, which continues to do good even in the face of apparent failure, and through the virtue of humility, which accepts God's mystery and trusts God even in times of darkness. Faith tells us that God has given his Son for our sakes and gives us the victorious certainty that is really true: God is love! It thus transforms our impatience and our doubts into the sure hope that God holds the world in his hands, and that, as the dramatic imagery of the end of the *Book of Revelation* points out, in spite of all darkness God ultimately triumphs in glory. Faith, which sees the love of God revealed in the pierced heart of Jesus on the Cross, gives rise to love. Love is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim, and give us the courage needed to keep living and working. Love is possible, and we are able to practise it because we are created in the image of God. To experience love, and in this way to cause the light of God to enter the world – this is the invitation I would like to extend with the present Encyclical. ◆

A final reflective sharing

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Questions

- ◆ What new insights do you take away from our reflections on the GOSPEL?
- ◆ The Catholic approach recognises various mediums through which the GOSPEL comes to us; do any of the mediums that have been mentioned have a particular appeal for you as a source of faith and inspiration?

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

Since Vatican II the church has re-emphasised the theme of “evangelisation”: bringing the Gospel (Good News) of Christian faith to our world.

But what is this Good News? It is not surprising that frail humanity has experienced great **uncertainty before God**, the all-powerful Creator and the all-perfect Lord of all. Even good Christians have often lived in fear and uncertainty before God. The Good News brought by Christian faith should banish these fears.

It was **God’s love and astounding generosity** that brought us into existence - a love finally “poured out in the world in Jesus Christ in the form of human powerlessness”. God wants to share with each of us God’s life, God’s joy, and God’s eternity. God will show the divine rectitude (justice) by a love and mercy which - if it finds humanity gone astray - will bend down to heal and restore, so that creation may be truly worthy of God.

God’s love, told of in the Gospel is not an **indulgent** love, however. We must become worthy of what God calls us to. But (just as the prodigal’s life was changed when he came to recognise and be inspired by the love that was in his father’s heart from the beginning) God will lead us, **not by fear**, but by teaching us to share in his generous ways.

The **Churches of the Reformation** have always emphasised the Gospel. Martin Luther's inspiration was his discovery – in the age of uncertainty and pessimism -of the Gospel message in the Scriptures. Today however, what has for a long time a divisive issue, can provide grounds for reconciliation – as Catholics recognise the importance of the Gospel in their life of faith, and Protestants recognise that they have often concentrated too narrowly upon **one** of the many mediums through which we meet the saving truth of the Gospel brought by Jesus Christ. □

