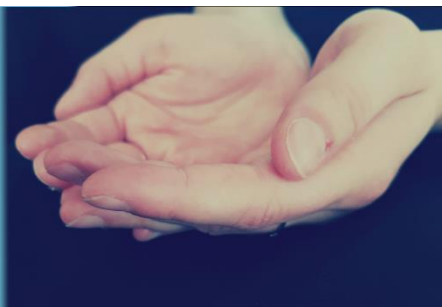


CALLED TO LOVE

— the way through despair is love —



When we feel despair, there is a way through: LOVE. As we approach the challenges ahead, we must see ourselves as agents of God, of His love, and His mission. At the heart of the Gospel, is the message of God's merciful love for all. When we act against the hyper-individualism, that is rampant across our society, using ways that are loving and generous, we are living out the Gospel. We become **living examples** of a different and more sustainable way of being - for our communities, for families, for creation, for sustainability, and as part of our own spirituality. In the previous session, *Called to Listen*, we invited you, with your young people, to begin exploring the desires they have for their lives and the future. We used silence to discern vocation. This session provides faith sharing, centered on Christian love, using great Christian examples in the past but also providing guidance for seeking out where God's love is, even at this time. As we come to recognise this, may we do little things, every day, with a big open heart to God.

"Let us not tire of preaching love; it is the force that will overcome the world." (Saint Oscar Romero)



Reflections

For a short reflection:

Dorothy Day*: "Young people say, "What can one person do? What is the sense of our small effort?" They cannot see that we can only lay one brick at a time, take one step at a time; we can be responsible only for the one action of the present moment. But we can beg for an increase of love in our hearts that will vitalise and transform these actions and know that God will take them and multiply them, as Jesus multiplied the loaves and fishes."

*Dorothy Day set up the Catholic Worker Movement and is celebrated for her dedication and love for the poor and for poverty itself. Read more about her here: <https://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/>

Do you have love in your heart? For what?
How might our world be transformed if we prayed for an 'increase of love'?
How do little actions, every day, make a difference?

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IT'S TIME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

For a longer reflection:

Pope Francis in 'Christus Vivit': 132. *Are you looking for passion? As that beautiful poem says: "Fall in love!" (or "let yourself be loved!"), because "nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. **What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.** It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything". This love for God, that can approach everything in life with passion, is possible thanks to the Spirit, for "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5).*

and/or

148. *Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Van Thuân, when imprisoned in a concentration camp, refused to do nothing but await the day when he would be set free. **He chose "to live the present moment, filling it to the brim with love"**. He decided: "I will seize the occasions that present themselves every day; I will accomplish ordinary actions in an extraordinary way". As you work to achieve your dreams, make the most of each day and do your best to let each moment brim with love.*

Reflective questions:

132. Spend a minute thinking over the questions Pope Francis poses: 'What are you in love with? What seizes your imagination?'

If this 'will affect everything', how might we encourage a desire for compassion, generosity, love and solidarity with our neighbour, rather than wealth, success and material possessions?

If society cared more about the former, and less about the latter, how might our world look different?

Do we love our neighbour as we love ourselves?

148. What opportunities have been presented to us today, or this week, where we have seen people accomplish 'ordinary actions in an extraordinary way'? Do we, ourselves, let these opportunities pass us by or do we attend to them with great love? How does doing something for somebody else *change you*?

Activity

In groups, pairs, or as individuals think over these questions:

- What is it that you most cherish, and love, about this world? Why is that?
- What do you want to safeguard (keep safe) for the future?

Together, or as individuals, write a love letter to the world or to creation. You could get creative! Maybe instead of a letter you could present it as a poster, or a poem, song or rap? In it include the things you love, why you love them and why you want to keep them safe for the future. Can you imagine what the world would look like without them? We would love to see what you come up with - share them with us to help encourage others to see the beauty we have in our world, and in humanity, and how we need to safeguard these for the future.

Prayer

St. John said: “No one has ever seen God. Yet, if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us his Spirit... **God is love**, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him” (1 John 4:12-14, 16b)

Dear Lord,

In this time of prayer allow us to feel the presence of your love.

May we share this with all those with whom we come into contact today and throughout this week.

May we be a blessing to the lives of others and a source of inspiration and hope as we demonstrate the Gospel to them, through our behaviour, our words, and our actions.

As disciples, may we share in the joy that we receive through your love and through putting others before ourselves.

In this way, may we transform the world, one action at a time.

In your name, we pray,

Amen.



Passages to draw on from the Gospel and reflective questions:

- Almsgiving: **‘For wherever your treasure is, that is where your heart will be too.’** - Luke 12: 34.
 - Where does your treasure lie? Might it need redirecting? Have we been listening to God’s call? Throughout the crisis: Have we experienced companionship, mutual support, care? Have we let superficial wants fall away? Have we been called to more?
- Renouncing all that one holds dear / renouncing possessions: – **‘none of you can be my disciple without giving up all that he owns.’** - Luke 14:33. How close, or far away, are we from living by this?
- Love your neighbour: **‘You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbour, lest you incur sin because of**

*him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall **love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.*** - Leviticus 19: 17-19

Other resources:

- Explore Ignatius’ Three-Part Vision and his questions: ‘What does it mean for us to love? How do we go about expressing our love? How do we show our love for God, for ourselves, for others, and for our world? He invites us to answer these questions by looking at how God loves. He is a God who sets no limits on what he shares with us.’ Read more here: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/ignatius-three-part-vision/>
- More on ‘Contemplation of the Love of God’: <http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-spiritual-exercises/contemplation-on-the-love-of-god/>