

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions

Session 6: Saturday 13th June 2015

Feedback from Group Work

The questions the groups discussed were based on the first two sections of Chapter Four – The Social Dimension of Evangelisation, paragraphs 176-216 (pages 93-109) in full text.

1. Communal and Social Repercussions of the Kerygma

- a. Can you recall a couple of actions of Jesus which reflect the social impact of his message?

Group 1+

- Jesus treated everybody equally, no matter who they were or where they came from.
- Jesus was always inclusive.
- The widow's mite. She trusted that giving her last, she would not be left alone. She trusted God would be there for her.
- Giving doesn't always mean giving money – it could mean giving our time or a smile in the street.
- The labourer in the field with the last to be hired being paid the same as the first. The labourer who had been there since early in the morning had agreed to his wages; the employer **chose** to be generous and give those hired last the same wage. It might appear unfair from a human perspective.

Group 3+

- He ate with the tax collectors.
- The woman at the well.
- The healing of Bartimaeus who was blind.
- With Mary and Martha; and Mary anointed his feet with Nard. Why was this not sold and the money given to the poor. Christ was showing that for there to be generosity, there needs to be generosity in receiving as well as in giving.

Group 4+

- The stoning of the woman.
- Zacchaeus in the tree.
- The poor widow's mite.
- Healing the leper.
- Eating with tax collectors and sinners.

Group 5+

- Jesus passed over social boundaries all the time in order to save people.
- Jesus' purpose/outlook was to give people freedom.
- After the resurrection, Jesus did not go back to Pilate or Caiaphas. He was changed within his personality and his state - he continually went back to the small group of women and men he had built up.
- God does not force - he invites.
- The Samaritan woman at the well - Jesus did not ask or tell her to become a Jew. He only asked her to go and sin no more.
- Crossing boundaries can be difficult. For example, the Edinburgh person who said he had never met his neighbour because he had never been introduced - Jesus would have broken through that barrier, he would have overcome it. A boundary can be a personal bondage

b. What specific actions/events might we take which would make real the social dimension of the gospel?

Group 1+

- Giving our time and listening are actions we can all try to do. For example, just asking somebody how they are might elicit a response of "I'm fine"; however, if you were to sit and spend time with that person, she or he might not be as fine as they are making out.
- Accept everybody, irrespective of what their background is.
- Love one another; treat one another as we would like to be treated.
- Respect everybody.

Group 3+

- By putting the precepts of the Sermon on the Mount into practice.
- We spoke about passkeepers who watched out for who was new in Church and welcomed them and importantly for who wasn't there and may need to be visited.
- "Behold how these Christians love one another".

Group 4+

- The group found this question difficult.
- The social dimension is about the poor and oppressed, inclusion and not judging.
- The group are finding it difficult to watch the news about our country refusing to accept the large numbers of immigrants escaping grinding poverty and oppression.

- There have always been immigrants over many years - many have feared and refused to accept them.
- It seems to be the majority that have this fear – but is that true, is it the majority?
- It may be that those expressing the fears are more vocal.
- We perhaps need to be more vocal with our views.
- A couple of people in the group have heard about 'Edinburgh Churches for Sanctuary' and will try to find out more about their work.
- The group also spoke about the production of food and clothes in countries where they are produced in sweatshops, etc.
 - We can make choices and avoid buying these products – not shop for the cheap bargains and offers.
 - Sanctions do work. Just think about South Africa - we didn't buy their wine.
- We don't have the grinding poverty that exists in South America and experienced by Francis, but we do have spiritual poverty.
- We should accept the invitation from the Syro-Malabar community.

Group 5+

- The group felt that their discussion of this question prompted further questions rather than giving any answers.
- With regard to the current economic crisis in Greece and the positions of the Greek and German governments, the group wondered if the Greek and German people have been asked their views?
- Giving back to people what belongs to them, especially the poor nations perhaps?
- Greed and power are at the root of so much misery and tension.
- Being tuned into those around us – the group felt this is very important and summarises a lot of what they want to say. Instead of looking straight ahead, we need to learn to tune in to those around us. To do that, we need to take notice of our neighbour.

2. The Inclusion of the Poor in Society

In paragraph 198 Pope Francis says: *"This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us."*

What practical steps could we take here in South East Edinburgh to bring the Church to the poor and the poor to the Church?

Group 1+

- The group wanted to set their feedback in the following context:
 - We all good human beings and that needs to be recognised and exploited.
 - A lot of what we have shared this morning has been about our inner motivation and attitude.
 - We have to be like Jesus, we have to be counter-cultural – that is what Jesus was in his preaching and his actions
- Being poor isn't always about money – it is also about health, loneliness, self-worth, etc. We are all poor in some way.
- If the Vatican sold *some* of its treasures, it could maybe alleviate the needs and poverty in some places in the world.
- Make the church more appropriate for the time and the world it is in now. This would involve:
 - A reduction in the hierarchy.
 - More involvement of the laity in decision-making – the church should become more circular rather than top-down.
 - Becoming more inclusive, using females and males and their talents.
- In priestly formation, are our priests being trained to adapt according to the parish and the people they are sent to shepherd; or, are they being trained to follow what their local bishop wants them to do, and they are not encouraged to listen to what Francis is asking.

Group 3+

- Paragraph 199 seems to be the key passage as we are called not just to give to the poor, but to love them, as this will lead to selfless giving as gifts given through love rather than obligation.
- The new proposals for the Archdiocese are not well aligned to the needs of those who cannot travel or are able to get to Mass in some place further from their Parish.
- We need to learn to be communities and to receive from within, just as Jesus with Mary and Martha we need to learn to accept the gifts of those among us in their particular Ministries rather than always relying on our priests.

Group 4+

- We can support food-banks but they are a sticking plaster, not the solution.
- Beggars: we mourn the demise of the ARC when we could give vouchers and be sure they could be exchanged for food. Could this be resurrected via a charity already providing food for people in poverty?
- The under-claiming of benefits is an issue, especially for older people. Could we find someone in the parish who could give advice to parishioners?
- The poverty of loneliness is a problem for the elderly. Could we start a group that would visit the lonely? This would be a positive thing to do.
- Visitation in the parish: could we divide the parish into areas and visit, give newsletters/leaflets and invite people to come and join us? Could the Parish Council organise this?
- We have a wealth of resources in our retired and older parishioners. Could this energy be used to help younger members of the community, supporting and mentoring? Mentoring has already been suggested by a member of the parish council.

Group 5+

With regard to 'bringing the Church to the poor':

- Seeing the goodness in others and blessing it, enjoying it and being part of it.
- The food-bank – should we do more about it here in our parish?
- Red tape can make a difficult matter worse.
- Our motive in doing anything is so important, as is the way that we do it.

With regard to 'bringing the poor to the Church':

- Perhaps issue an invitation (like the invitation today from Liberton Kirk to the wider community)
- A knitting group brought in people many of whom did not have a Church connection.
- There is already a lot happening – can we become part of things that are already out there?
- Does love, or an act of love, require something to make it valid?

To facilitate the discussion and sharing we combined the groups into four, hence the groups are referred to as Group 1+, Group 3+, Group 4+ and Group 5+.
