

Joy of the Gospel – Saturday Morning Sessions

Session 8: Saturday 7th November 2015

Feedback from Group Work

The questions the groups discussed were based on Chapter Five – Spirit-Filled Evangelisers, paragraphs 259 to 288 (pages 127 to 142) in full text.

1. What difference does knowing Jesus and hearing his Word in the Scriptures make in my life?

How does this help and encourage me to share the 'good news' with others?

Group 1+

- It gives us hope and it keeps us aware.
- It is the difference between BEING ALIVE rather than just living.
- It makes us concerned about others and their problems (but acknowledge that non-believers will do the very same).
- We share because we know we cannot help it.
- This document is full of the Holy Spirit – the group came to the conclusion that, as adults, we have become more aware of the Holy Spirit rather than the Holy Ghost
- Sometimes you say something and wonder "where did that come from?" – you surprise yourself. A very good suggestion was put forward – "would you like me to come and pray with you?" Where did that come from?
- The group shared about a wonderful book/film – 'Heaven is for real.'

Group 2+

- The group enjoyed the open and accessible language of Joy of the Gospel. They contrasted this with the Vatican II documents, where we frequently referred to the Bill Huebsch text to help understand. Many of us have this time relied solely on the original text.
- The section on "razed land" (paragraph 276) made the group think of a post-apocalyptic landscape, much like that seen in the Australian Bush after a bushfire. All that remains is cinder and ash, and yet after rain (the Spirit), in a short time new life appears and there is a renewal that shows that God and life are always present. The "treasure in earthen vessels" is a beautiful description of the presence of God in all things.
- Francis describes many of the pitfalls that will see us not evangelizing. He talks about how we can make excuses, we can fall way. But we should return to the Spirit to be re-energised.
- By making the life of even one person better, our lives are justified and worthwhile.

- Francis finally writes about the importance of Mary. Jesus' last act on earth was to offer his mother to us. Mary as an evangeliser may not appear the most obvious example in comparison to Paul or some of the heroic martyr evangelisers. But by offering us the beautiful example of a mother who takes care of her child, we see evangelisation in its simplest and most accessible fashion. We can evangelise in simple every day actions. We should also look to those at the margins, but there are many margins, margins of mental health, infirmity, prejudice as well as poverty.

Group 5+

- The group felt that the question presupposes the very existence of gift of faith.
 - What would life be like without our faith? When we live without faith, life has an inky blackness to it. Faith gives our lives substance – it is like an anchor.
 - One of the group shared the following thought: I can't do anything by myself – I need others, I need community and the community is the church. The group felt that this is the theme of this chapter – we need each other; we can do little on our own.
 - The question is founded on having a relationship with Jesus. Do I have a relationship with him? Do I just talk about it, or do I have a relationship with Jesus?
 - The group explored the notion of 'falling in love' with Jesus – like any relationship in life you have to work at it. Jesus keeps calling us. He is demanding and that never changes. He takes us where we would rather not go.
- The group felt that there is a difference between knowing Jesus and hearing his Word, but didn't explore this difference.
- Lifting our eyes and seeing Jesus in our prayer/meditation can be a very moving experience.
- Jesus helps us to know we are sinners, but at the same time helps us to know we are loved. Knowing this we can go out to meet others, but, very importantly **without** judgement.
- We evangelise others not only by our words but also by our presence and the acknowledgement of our brokenness – e.g. meeting poor people and having respect for them.
- Dealing with respect for people at margins of life. There are times when we will sow and others will reap.
- Jesus did not go after rich young man – He asked him to sell everything and follow me. The young man couldn't and he went away. Jesus didn't run after him, he let him go. Jesus was not about numbers (when he died there was almost no one there).
- We are poor (poverty of spirit) but we can be unaware of our poverty and this can be a problem. Jesus helps us to recognise our poverty.
- If people look for thanks that can be a problem because often we don't get it.

2. How does the passion Francis expresses in these excerpts about sharing our lives with others and generously giving of ourselves make me feel?

What am I going to do about it?

Group 1+

- When the group were talking about how we *feel* when we give ourselves do things for other people, we realised that sometimes when we do something for others, we do it grudgingly. However, once you do it, it makes you feel good about yourself.
- While we do think that we do give ourselves, paragraph 274 challenges us to think about where we use our talents and gifts for the best.
- Working in groups with others of like mind helps us to keep focused and make the right choices.
- One of group shared a story about a man with difficulties who lived beside her family – his mother had had a fall before his birth and that had affected his mind. He went to her family’s house each day, just as she was getting the dinner ready – and she thought to herself: “Oh, here’s Eddie again!” She remembered a book she had read that said that an interruption in your day is God calling. This helped her realise that Eddie was God in person interrupting her day. This made her welcome Eddie into her home and share time and food with him. It made us think that if we did that with everybody, what a welcome people would receive.
- Another person in the group shared that Gypsies came round to her family house and her mother invited them in. She always said that they don’t choose the way they live and somebody has to help them. Her attitude was very much that whoever comes to your door, you welcome them and give what you can.
- If we took Francis at his word, we would have a passion for the Word and be filled with the Holy Spirit and do marvellous things.

Group 2+

- The group had some nervousness about the question. This is because what we believe Francis is doing and what the Gospel does is to draw us, not drive us, into living more deeply. So when we respond to somebody it is a spontaneous response, not from a sense of obligation or because of what piety demands. Our response is natural. It expresses a developed sense of our selves. It is therefore a response of integrity because we are different to what we were.
- The group looked briefly at an example: responding to people who are marginalised. In looking at this, there was an acknowledgement that within us there are aspects of our own lives where we need to connect with ourselves. People can be marginalised in many ways, not just the obvious ways like homelessness and poverty.
- There are times to have the courage to act and the need to grow in awareness.

- The group we identified three attitudes we would wish to have to try to live more deeply out of this document
 - Openness to God and renewed encounter with Christ
 - Delight in being alive and the desire to live more deeply.
 - Continuing attitude of discernment: we grow in awareness and response to our circumstances. That response might be in small steps and then discern the next step.

What am I going to do about it?

- The group thought about whether the question should be 'What am **I** ...' or 'What are **we** ...' and concluded that the joy grows especially when we respond as 'we' rather than 'I'.
- We have a community that can be welcoming and outward-looking – doing things together is an inherently more stable way of making a difference in the world.
 - The meeting we had in St Catherine's on October 4th illustrated this, when we were looking at how we, as a community, can help people who are refugees coming into the area.
- Joy is not something we seek it is something that happens when we respond to the Gospel **together**.
 - Maybe it is what is seen in us rather than a quality that we seek.

Group 5+

- Being ourselves is important – this leads to an authenticity.
- Getting on the road and not getting stuck (keeping our focus) is important. It is about getting on with job you think you ought to do.
- We have a choice in life to be bothered about others, or not.
 - Do I bother about other people or not?
- We can beat ourselves up, but that's not a good idea, and we can overdo that at times.
- We know we should pray more – it helps, perhaps, to remember that prayer can be a simple act of gazing at something beautiful.
- Paragraph 270 in the document speaks about the power of tenderness. Knowing Jesus is being alive and feeling alive – that is what he brings.
- Seeing the faces of people at communion is a very moving human experience and a privilege.
- The contemplative life helps us to remember the importance of the link between prayer and action.
- Prayer is an a priori requirement before we speak or act – otherwise we may be like a gong booming or a cymbal clashing.
- Paragraph 262 talks about the need to cultivate an interior space. The group felt that this is very important.
- Spending time with our friend is important. Our friend is Jesus himself and it is important for us to talk to him.

What am I going to do about it?

- Seeking Jesus more would be a good place to start.
- One of the group shared that apostleship can be imparting skills to other people – this is because our skills and gifts are given to us by God.

To facilitate the discussion and sharing we combined the groups into three, hence the groups are referred to as Group 1+, Group 2+ and Group 5+
