

LESSON OUTLINE FOR THE GROUP LEADER

“Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” (Mt 25:40).

GOAL:

To experience union with God after having loved others

LEARNING FROM THE WORD OF GOD

Why do we love this statement of Jesus so much? Why are these words so often part of the Word of Life that we choose each month? Perhaps because they are the heart of the Gospel. They are the words that the Lord will address to us at the end of our lives, when we find ourselves standing before Him. **They are the most important questions we will ever be asked, and we can prepare ourselves daily for this final exam of our life.**

He will ask if we gave food and drink to those who were hungry and thirsty, if we welcomed the stranger, if we dressed the naked, and visited the sick and imprisoned... These are all small gestures, but they have eternal value. Nothing is small if it is done out of love, if it is done to Him.

GOING DEEPER

Re-read in the Gospel the passage that speaks of the works of mercy (Mt 25:31-40):

*When the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”*

SUGGESTIONS FOR LIVING IT TOGETHER  
(chosen according to the Group)

Choose a work of mercy and then plan together some activity to live it out.

<p>Jesus was not only close to the poor and people rejected by others, he not only healed the sick and comforted the suffering, but <b>he loved them with a very special love and preferred them</b>, to the point of calling them members of his own family, so as to identify with them in a mysterious solidarity</p> <p>Today, too, Jesus continues to be present in those who suffer injustice and violence, in those who can't find work, or who live in a difficult financial situation, or are forced to leave their homeland because of war. <b>So many people around us are suffering for so many reasons and implore our help, even without words. They are Jesus who is asking us to love him in concrete ways, to find new "works of mercy" that will meet new needs.</b></p>	<p><i>Look for new "works of mercy," new ways to respond to new needs:</i></p> <p>There might be people who are not hungry for food, but for companionship, for care, for help... There might be people who are not actually in prison, but are prisoners of drugs, of alcohol, of the internet, of pornography, of fear... Or a person who is not really a stranger, but belongs to another religion or another culture... And there are other examples... Do we know people like that? What can we do for them?</p>	<p>Do something together for people around us who have "new needs."</p>
<p><b>No one can be left out.</b> If an elderly or sick person is Jesus, how can we not give them what they need? If I teach an immigrant child to speak my language, I am teaching Jesus.</p> <p>If I help my mom to clean the house, I am helping Jesus. If I give hope to someone in prison, or console someone who is in pain, or forgive someone who hurt me, I am doing it for Jesus. Every time I do an act of love, not only do I make the other person happy, but I too am full of joy. In giving, we receive and experience inner peace and fullness. We are happy because, even though we might not realize it, we meet Jesus in the other person.</p> <p>As Chiara Lubich once said, "Every person is like an archway that we have to pass under in order to meet God."</p>	<p><b>No one should be excluded from our love.</b> See Chiara Lubich in Payerne, Sept 29, 1982:</p> <p><i>Here is the first idea, the first idea that may be already revolutionizing our soul if we are sensitive to the supernatural: universal brotherhood that frees us from all slavery, since we are slaves of distinctions between rich and poor, between generations, between parents and children, between whites and blacks, between races, between nationalities, even between different districts of the same nation. We are slaves, we criticize one another, there are many obstacles and barriers. No, the first idea is to free ourselves from all those forms of slavery and to see in all persons, all persons....</i></p> <p><i>"Even my little boy?" "Even in that woman who talks so much?" "Even at that old man who doesn't make any sense?" "Even in that poor person?" "Even in that Jew?" "Even in that other person? But is that possible?" Yes, to see everyone as a possible candidate for unity with God and unity among us. We have to throw open our hearts, break down all barriers and put universal brotherhood at the center of our hearts. I live for universal brotherhood.</i></p> <p><i>(Applause)</i></p> <p><i>Therefore, if we are all brothers and sisters, we must love everyone, we must love everyone, we must love everyone. It seems like such a little word, but it causes a revolution! We must love everyone. "Even the lady who lives next door to me? But she criticizes me, she gives me bad looks, she's a real character!"</i></p>	<p>Make a video clip or a Power Point on our experiences with the works of mercy to share with others around the world through the website of the Youth for Unity.</p>

	<p><i>Yes, that woman, too! We must love them all! And in these notes there are some other things that will help us to know how to love everyone. It says that we have to love every neighbor. But which neighbor? The one who passes us in the present moment of life. So it is not just a theoretical love. It's concrete! My neighbor in this moment is you, and I am your neighbor, and the person sitting next to you or behind you. We must not love just in theory or in the future. We have to love in a concrete way, right now. We must love, we must love.</i></p>	
<p>This is how she recalls the impact of this Word of Life at the beginning of her experience: "Our old way of thinking about our neighbors and loving them totally collapsed. If Christ was present in some way in everyone, then we could not discriminate against anyone, we could not have any preferences. We could no longer classify people as a fellow citizen or a foreigner, as young or old, ugly or pretty, nice or nasty. Christ was in each one of them. Every neighbor, every person we met was «another Jesus» and thus someone of our family, a brother or sister.</p> <p><b>“Living like this we realized that our neighbor is our path to God. Indeed, every person seemed to us like an archway under which we had to pass in order to reach God.”</b></p> <p>“This has been our experience since the early days. We experienced such great union with God in the evening, at prayer or in meditation, after having loved him all day long in other people! Who gave us that consolation, that new and heavenly union with God? Christ, who was living the words, ‘Give and you shall receive’ of his Gospel. We had loved him all day in our brothers and sisters and now he was loving us in return. ”</p>	<p>The experience of Sillas (attached) Or <a href="http://collegamentoch.focolare.org/2015/09/27/e-il-come-che-fa-la-differenza/">http://collegamentoch.focolare.org/2015/09/27/e-il-come-che-fa-la-differenza/</a></p>	
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