

Journey to Easter

Third Session

Before the Holy Eucharist on March 11, 2012

Based on the reading for the Third Sunday in Lent, Year B, RLC

I Gather

The priest may want to greet any new participants, and thank everyone for participating, then leave. The facilitator for the day decides to what extent people may want to get to know each other, as this varies from group to group.

If you only have an hour, this part should take no more than 5 minutes. One way to keep this part short, but interesting is to use an opening question that encourages metaphoric thinking. Participants do not need to explain why they pick a certain metaphor, but may give a one sentence answer; again the facilitator models this by answering without explanation.

Suggested opening question:

Think of one thing that has really made you angry or confused this past week.

What image comes to mind when you think about that situation?

You don't need to tell the whole story; just give the group a snapshot of the event, a metaphor that sums it up, or a cartoon image of what you felt like.

II Listen

A participant reads the passage aloud as others listen:

John 2:13-22 The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Facilitator: Let's quickly share a word or image that struck you in this story. What

surprised you or got your attention? No need to elaborate, just say it.

People quickly share what struck them.

Facilitator: While we listen to the passage again, notice what it brings to mind or whether it reminds you of an experience you have had in your life.

Another participant reads the same passage aloud once more.

The Facilitator encourages the group to explore parallels between the passage and their experience. The following questions may be helpful –or develop your own. Do not feel obligated to use all of the questions.

- **In Jesus’ s time, his country was invaded by the Romans, who demanded very high taxes from the population and expropriated lands. The priests in the Temple supported the Romans. Yet the money changers and cattle sellers were there legitimately. People had to change Roman coin into Temple coin (and pay a tax) to buy animals to sacrifice. How might this historic information change the way we understand Jesus’ actions?**
- **What do you suppose angered Jesus? Was he right in his violent response? What kinds of judgments does this passage call us to make?**
- **Imagine Jesus living today. Who are our Romans? Who are the Temple priesthood? What would you do if you were Jesus?**
- **What is most confusing about this passage? Is there anything that eventually clears up the confusion?**
- **What signifies reconciliation or gives hope either to the characters in the story or to you as you read this passage?**

Sometimes, while answering these questions, people will naturally relate the passage it to something from their own lives. Then the facilitator merely has to point out that they have made the connection.

Facilitator: We have seen that some parts of this story are similar to our own lives; perhaps there are other parallels that we might not have thought of immediately. What insights emerge as you compare the biblical story to the event in your own life – a time of anger or confusion - that came to mind when we started this session?"

Make sure you give people the space to entertain the story, but leaving them an "out" - maybe their own situation is very different. Oddly, if people have permission to assert that the story is different/not quite applicable, they are often more able to admit that the story applies in ways that are challenging.

IV Apply

Facilitator: Now let's look at the **baptismal promises** and our experiences of baptism; keep them in mind as we listen once more. (The following are from the Episcopal Book of Common Prayer, pages 304-305; use the liturgy from your own tradition if you are not Episcopalian.)

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

Another participant reads the same passage aloud once more.

Facilitator: Thinking about the passage and the baptismal promises, do you have any new insights into the situations you thought about?

Facilitator: Considering the themes of anger, confusion, injustice and hope – or any other theme that has emerged during this discussion - what do you feel called to do in response *this week*?

Participants may share what they feel called to do in the coming week. Encourage small and specific actions.

V Pray

The facilitator ends the session in **one or more** of the following ways:

- Each member prays for the specific needs of the person next to them.
- Say the Lord's Prayer together
- The facilitator (or perhaps all participants together) lays hands on each participant, in silence.

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