



Marist
ASSOCIATION OF
ST MARCELLIN CHAMPAGNAT

Created + Called

Resources for Local Groups

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The following formation resources are designed to support Local Groups of the Marist Association to explore the Association Theme, *Created + Called a revolution of love and tenderness'*

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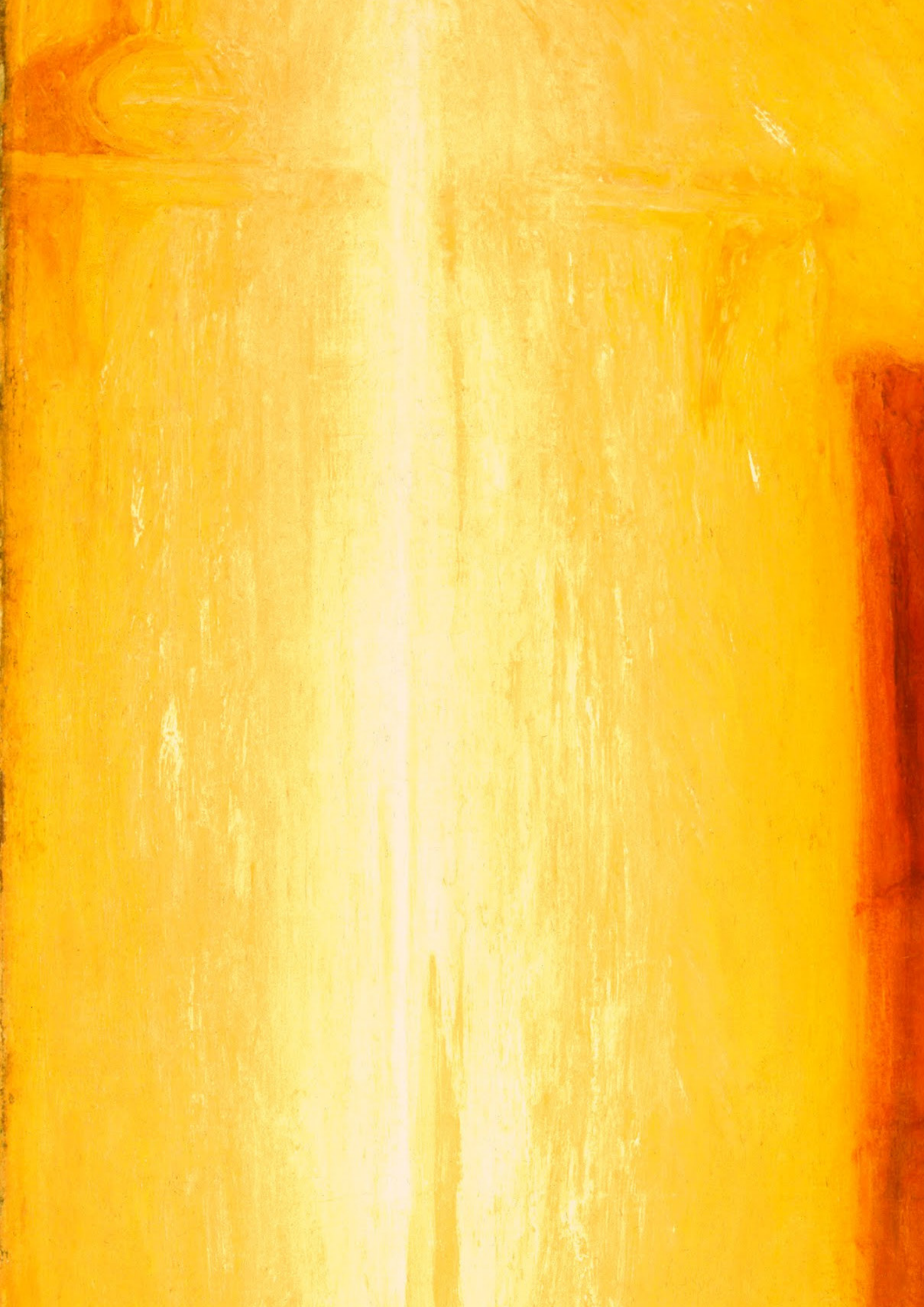
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Called by Mary's YES

Explore how Mary, as Our Good Mother, is a model to our daily lives



The Annunciation by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1898)

Seeing

For 1 minute, look at the image and ask yourself - What am I noticing?

This may include the colours, use of light, perspective, the figures and objects in the image

Write three things that attract your attention and why they interest you.

Discuss

Share your responses with a partner.
(5 minutes)

Participants are invited to share their own responses, or what they have heard, with the larger group.
(5 minutes)

Listening

Listen to the Annunciation story:

The Birth of Jesus Foretold Luke 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Re-read the passage to yourself. Circle key words or phrases that stand out for you.

Mary is surprised by the forceful entry of God into her life. She is afraid. Then she comes to be at peace because of her intuition of the presence and love of God for her. Without having all the answers to her questioning, she trusts and commits herself to a God who inspires trust.

Water From the Rock: Marist Spirituality #51

Discuss

Question for discussion in pairs: Share a time you have not 'had the answers' yet placed your trust in God?
(5 minutes)

Responding

Mary: The Model of Discipleship

In the Synoptic Gospels, Mary is presented as a model of discipleship. More simply, she's shown to us as the one person who gets it right from the beginning. But that isn't immediately evident. On the surface, the opposite sometimes seems to be the case. For example, on a couple of occasions as Jesus is speaking to a crowd he is interrupted and told that his mother and his family are outside wanting to speak to him. His response: "Who are my mother and who are my brothers and sisters? It's those who hear the word of God and keep it." In saying this, Jesus isn't distancing his mother from himself and his message, the opposite. Before this incident is recorded in the Gospels, the evangelists have been very careful to point out that Mary was the first person to hear the word of God and keep it. What happens here is that Jesus singles out his mother first of all for her faith, not for her biology. In the Synoptic Gospels, Mary is the paradigm for discipleship. She's the first to hear the word of God and keep it.

Ron Rolheiser: *The Mary of Scripture and the Mary of Devotion*. June 25, 2018

Reflect

In your own knowledge and experience of Mary in scripture, or in prayer and reflection, how is she a 'Sister in Faith' to you in your own faith journey?

Since Marcellin's time the Church has deepened its appreciation of Mary as First Disciple. Marists therefore have a growing relationship with Mary as our Sister in Faith, a woman with dust on her feet, a woman who was disturbed and puzzled by God, who was challenged to trust and give without knowing all the answers, whose faith life was a journey.

Water From the Rock: Marist Spirituality #29

References:

The Annunciation by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1998)

New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition Bible

Ron Rolheiser: "The Mary of Scripture and the Mary of Devotion" June 25, 2018 (www.ronrolheiser.com)

Water From the Rock: Marist Spirituality (2007) (www.champagnat.org)

Br Sean Sammon fms, *A Heart That Knew No Bounds* (1999) (www.champagnat.org)





Walking the Walk

Reflect on the nature of God's love for us and how we can respond to this Christian calling by living authentically

Seeing

No-one could accuse the modern-day Francis of not walking the walk, and as Pope he has made an art form of public displays of the kind of life he expects his church to live. In November 2013, we saw images of Francis embracing and kissing a horribly disfigured man, Vinicio Riva, in St Peter's Square.

He made headlines in 2013 and again in 2014 when, in the traditional re-enactment of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, Francis included women - the first Pope to do so - and Muslims in the ceremony.



Pope Francis is:

- the advocate of those without a voice
- the champion of the disadvantaged,
- the Pope who continues to shun the trappings of office
- straining against the allure of power and privilege
- a spokesperson for social justice who is willing to challenge and offend the powerful to speak the truth

The Drum / By Simon Smart Posted Tue 3 Mar 2015 at 2:16pm

In his APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION -GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE On The Call To Holiness In Today's World,

Pope Francis says:

"Strengthened by so many and such great means of salvation, all the faithful, whatever their condition or state, are called by the Lord – each in his or her own way – to that perfect holiness by which the Father himself is perfect". (10)

The important thing is that each of us discern our own path, that we bring out the very best of ourselves, the most personal gifts that God has placed in our hearts (1 Cor 12:7). We are all called to be witnesses, but there are many actual ways of bearing witness.

Francis is not creating something new for the church of the 21st century but recalling and breathing life into a key aspect of what the faith has always been about. Since the beginning, Christianity calls its followers to live in thankful response to a loving God.

A call is a response to a summons. It is a kind of surrendering. It is a challenge and a joy. Author C. S. Lewis wrote, "To follow the vocation does not mean happiness, but once it has been heard, there is no happiness for those who do not follow." Eric Liddell, an Olympic racer in the movie *Chariots of Fire*, summed up his call differently. "When I run," he said, "I feel God's pleasure."

Every person has a story to tell that helps reveal who God is in the world. Francis of Assisi said, "Preach the gospel always. If necessary, use words." We can share the Gospel message, by our words and actions – our talking and walking.

In what ways do you 'walk the walk' and bear witness to the message of the Gospel in your daily living?

Share a response, in groups of three.

Listening

Scripture is brimming with 'call' stories. God called Noah to build an ark. God called an elderly Abraham and Sarah to leave their home and go on a journey to create a nation. God called Esther, telling her she was made "for a moment like this" (Esther 4:14). God called Mary, a teenage girl, to give birth to the Saviour of the world. God called Peter to be a rock upon which a church could be built and set him on a path that would transform the world.

In different stages and places of our lives, God calls us to new things. Our call never ends.

"Dear, dear Corinthians, I can't tell you how much I long for you to enter this wide-open, spacious life. We didn't fence you in. The smallness you feel comes from within you. Your lives aren't small, but you're living them in a small way. I'm speaking as plainly as I can and with great affection. Open up your lives. Live openly and expansively!"

Eugene Peterson, *The Message* 2 Corinthians 6:11-12.

Life together supports and challenges us to be a community of mission. We listen to the invitations of God that flow through our shared life and discern our shared responses. Based on a common trust in God, we offer our lives in service. In [our] ministry we find ourselves, like Jesus, broken open for our brothers and sisters. Truly, we are bread of life for others as Jesus has been for us.

Water From the Rock: Marist Spirituality #107

*I have called
you by name
you are mine*

Isaiah 43:1

Responding

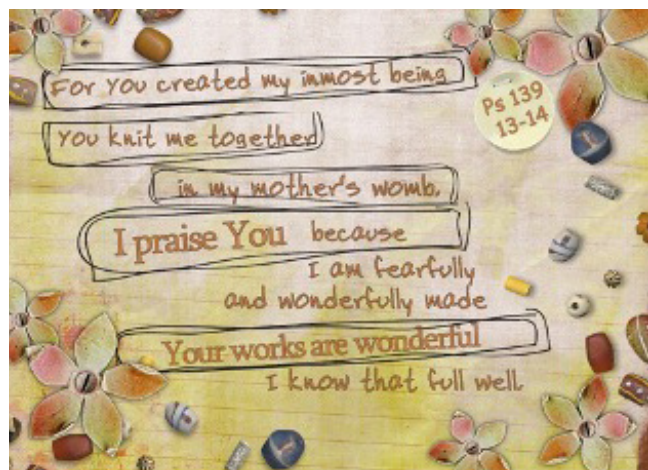
Our Personal Response to God's Call:

We may have doubts about our ability to serve God or wonder why God called us to serve him in the first place. We might well ask sometimes, "Who am I?", not because we lack the confidence that God will enable us to do what He has called us to do, but because we are utterly dumbfounded as to why God would use us in his ministry at all.

God has gifted us to make the world and the church better. That is what God calls us to do. To say 'yes' to our own call and then to say it in our community so that others may partner with us. They help us live out our call in practical and life-changing ways.

It is life-changing because God calls us to new things. Our call never ends.

Sit with the passages above, share in your group a word or phrase that resonates with you and what that means.



"When we invite children to create self-portraits, we offer them mirrors and encourage long, sustained study of their faces from this unfamiliar perspective. Then we ask them to re-create themselves on paper, weaving together the image that they see in the mirror with the person they experience themselves to be. Their portraits are eloquent statements of self."

Spend a minute looking at these self-portraits of Grade One students.



Choose one or two and share with your neighbour how you think, through their portraits, these children see themselves.

It might be interesting to ponder what our own self-portrait might express about who we really are called and created to be.

Invitation

Oh, do you have time
to linger
for just a little while
out of your busy
and very important day
for the goldfinches
that have gathered
in a field of thistles
for a musical battle,
to see who can sing
the highest note,
or the lowest,
or the most expressive of mirth,
or the most tender?

Their strong, blunt beaks
drink the air
as they strive
melodiously
not for your sake
and not for mine
and not for the sake of winning
but for sheer delight and gratitude –
believe us, they say,
it is a serious thing
just to be alive
on this fresh morning
in the broken world.

I beg of you,
do not walk by
without pausing
to attend to this
rather ridiculous performance.

It could mean something.

It could mean everything.

It could be what Rilke meant, when he
wrote:
You must change your life.

Mary Oliver

This poem offers an invitation to change.
What does this mean to you?

Let us pray together:

Mary our Good Mother...pray for us

St Marcellin Champagnat...pray for us

St Mary of the Cross McKillop...pray for us

*And let us always remember...to pray for
one another*

References:

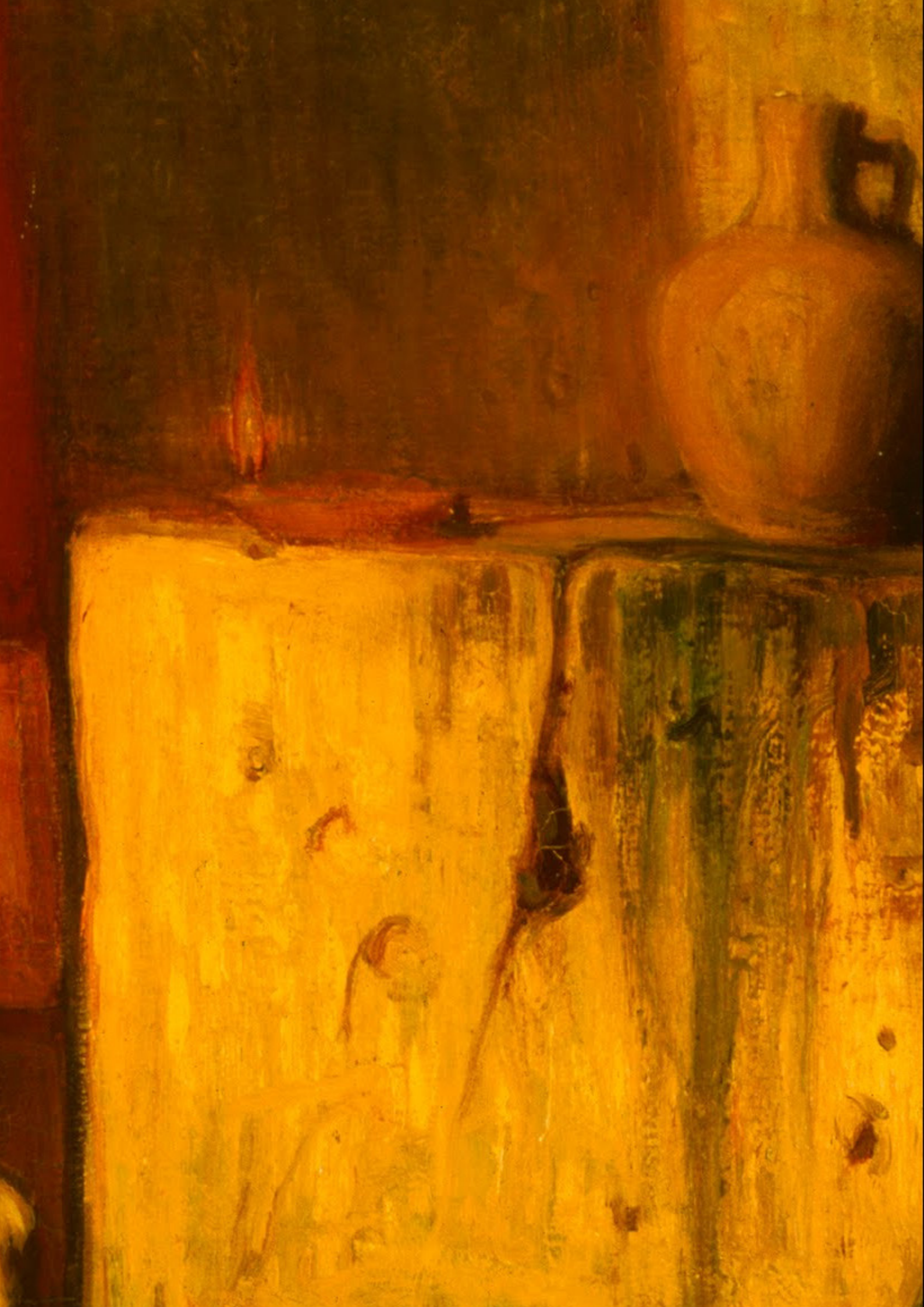
The Annunciation by Henry Ossawa Tanner (1998)

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The Potter's Hands

Consider how we are Created and Called – Moulded by God

Seeing

Have you ever made something – a drawing, a painting, mowed the lawn immaculately, tended a garden, sewn a dress, cooked a delicious recipe, made a piece of furniture, designed, modelled or fired a clay pot? How proud you must have felt, to share it with others so they too could experience its unique beauty, created by your hands!

God is the Master Potter, the Creator, shaping us physically, moulding us spiritually in the image of Christ and reshaping us when we collapse to become a vessel that is useful.

When Jeremiah was in a dilemma of how to defeat the Babylonians, God nudged him to go to the potter's house to see how the clay moulds and spoils and reforms in the hands of the potter.

The clay shapes into a beautiful, useful vessel, just as we are shaped when we trust God. The potter's wheel and the water are symbolic of the daily challenges and changes that the wheel of life brings our way.

Clay begins brittle and hard and needs to be moistened with water and kneaded – our brittle parts of life can be softened by our experiences of love and gentleness.



When have you felt stiff, stubborn, “not mouldable”?

During this time, we turn to God, trusting God to soften us, create us into Christ's image to show others the beauty of God.

There is a technique in forming clay. The right hand exerts pressure; this can be seen as the daily challenges of our lives with deadlines, stress and expectations others put on us or a spanner is thrown into the works that need an immediate change. If we don't trust in God these external pressures can make our lives collapse. God holds us securely to stay in shape.

Listening

The left hand is placed inside the vessel which exerts pressure to shape the vessel. The fingers squeeze, nudge and imprint the uniqueness of each pot. God moulds us from within and influences us to become what God wants us to be. The strength of the Holy Spirit then kindles our soul just like the clay that is fired in the kiln to make the vessel strong and useful.

The events we encounter each day make and sculpt us into the image of Christ, make us persevere and be resilient to the pressures of life. We become watertight containers holding love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

The beauty is that if it collapses the potter doesn't give up on the clay. God never gives up on us. We can be weak, we sin, we are human, and this is when God gently calls us to be reshaped. By reconciling with God and those we have hurt, even ourselves, the potter can create a new vessel. God creates us anew over and over again when we collapse.

Video – I Am The Potter



How have you been moulded by God's love for you?

The Potter and the Clay – Jeremiah 18:1-2

The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: "Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words." So, I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.

Play music/video: 'The Potter's Hands' (Hillsong) whilst participants respond to the following questions:



Questions to ponder:

Who are the 'potters' that God uses to shape your life?

When you have had pressures in life through suffering or hardship how did the Master Potter mould you to cope with these challenges?

Responding

As we allow our lives to be sculpted by the Master's hands we will become, well-tuned, happy, polished, and productive. We must respond to our Master's care, demanding nothing, and surrendering all. Allow the Lord to give your life purpose. Allow God to mould your mind to transform your very thinking, and allow His love to shine through you, making an impact in others' lives. The more you become as clay, and allow God to mould you, the clearer your calling in life will become. As God moulds you and uses you, your goals in life will not be to reach the places that you desire, but to find the destinations that He has waiting for you. You are the handiwork of God, the Master Sculptor, and you are a masterpiece moulded and sculpted by the Lord. Your life in Christ is a thing of beauty that even Michelangelo in all his glory could not even come close to creating. Melt in His presence and allow Him to mould and shape you into the person that God desires you to be. Our Lord wishes us to be . . . like clay.

The Potter's Hands

Strong hands hold
a shapeless lump;
clay to be pounded and kneaded
until, even textured and air-freed,
it is supple-smooth for the potter's wheel.

The swift-spinning motion;
pressuring hands that pull
and draw relentlessly into centre -
for what is not centred must be put away;
only centred clay can yield its inmost.

Clay thus opened to shaping action -
hand moving steadily

pulling
raising
widening

asking for the form that is hidden in the clay,
hand strong in supportive stillness
speaking its own unceasing demands.

To one-in-answer; to the other in
trust the clay

pulls
rises
widens

surrenders the form hiding in itself...
becoming one with the potter's will
until spent and shaped
is freed to wait for the time
to confirm into hardened shape
in dialogue with the potter.

Not as a final respite,
but only to be turned
so that what is not perfect may be revealed
and placed ruthlessly
beneath the cutting tool,
until, smooth-grooved and time-hardened
it is purified by fire into final shape;
now enabled to receive
colour and shine from another's hand -
final surrender to the potter's wish.

John Predmore SJ - Ignatius Spirituality

Let us pray together

Lord Jesus, it is your hands that take and knead and centre and open and support so that clay can yield itself in obedient answer and trusting surrender to your loving action.

You relentlessly draw us into God-centre, so that open, yielding, totally one with your loving will it is freed to wait and confirmed in shape and burnt in fire and clothed in colour- to delight the heart of its potter.

Amen.



Rejoicing in Our Call through Discernment

A gift we must implore

Seeing

The influential nineteenth century German Philosopher (and high-profile atheist) Frederick Nietzsche once quipped that he would be more likely to believe in Christ as Redeemer if Christ's followers "looked a little more redeemed!" Ouch!

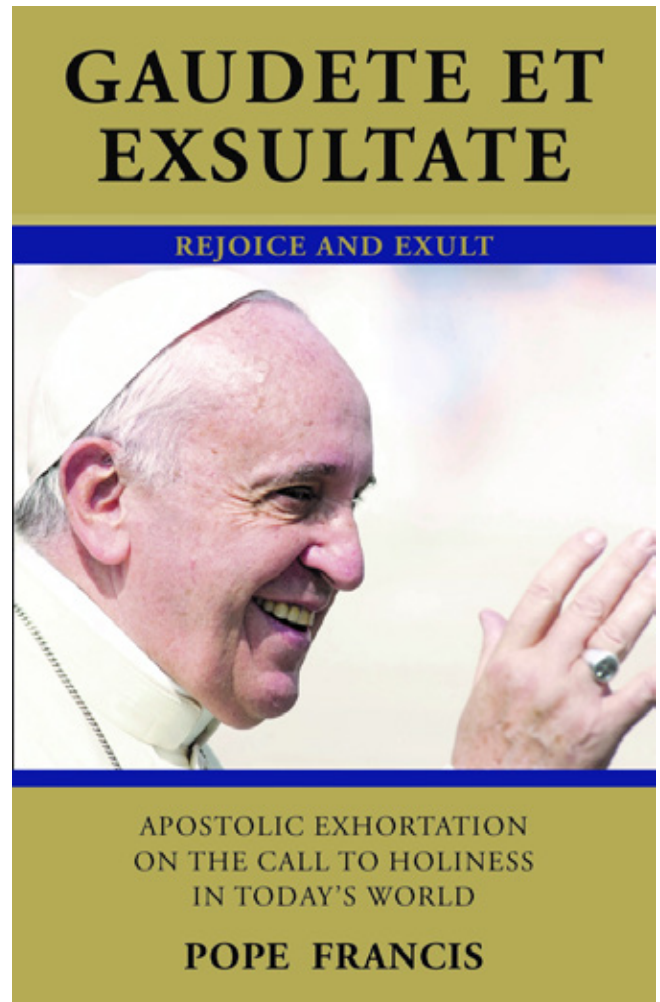
Christians, like all other people, will face difficulties and hardships in life and will naturally feel dejected and downhearted from time to time. It's a part of our human condition. However, our Christian heritage should of course inspire hope – the kind of hope that can not only help us to cope in difficult times, but that can lead to feelings of awe and exultation, and most of all joy. Pope Francis has addressed this issue regularly and one only has to look at the names of some of his encyclicals and exhortations:

The **Joy** of the Gospel (2013)

The **Joy** of Love (2016)

Rejoice and Exult (2018)

Br Mark O'Connor fms has even commented that Francis has a particular frustration with those he refers to as "sourpusses" – people who do not seem to experience the joy of being a Christian. In his Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete Et Exsultate – Rejoice and Exult – Pope Francis begins this way:



“Rejoice and be glad” (Mt5:12), Jesus tells those persecuted and humiliated for his sake. The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not settle for a bland and mediocre existence.’ (#1)

Share with a partner (5 min)

What is it about the Christian message that brings you a sense of hope and joy?

Listening

So how do we tap into this “happiness for which we were created.”?

Pope Francis suggests the answer to this question can be found by us “imploring a wonderful gift – the gift of **discernment**.” A gift he says, “which calls for more than intelligence and common sense.” (#166) So, what is it?

Discernment, in the spiritual sense, refers to my willingness to **allow the Spirit of God to guide and assist me** in weighing up choices and making decisions. It is a process that involves prayerful reflection as well as rational thinking. In other words, discernment happens at the point where head and heart come together.

Defining Discernment:

The process for making choices in which we honestly attend to:

- The rational reasons – pro’s and con’s –
- The realm of our feelings, emotions and desires – “movements of the soul.”



Every day we are faced with choices. Some are small and relatively insignificant – coffee or tea for breakfast? Some can be big with significant potential impacts on ourselves and others – will I apply for another job? Making as many good choices as possible, particularly with big decisions, can lead to greater happiness and fulfilment.

The rational reasons involve data gathering and being informed which is very important. However, it is in the realms of our feelings, emotions, and desires that we are most likely to encounter the spirit of God. In entering into this space, and prayerfully reflecting on our experiences, we can become more open and receptive to God’s presence in our lives.

Not all decisions need to be discerned

Should I get the car serviced?

When can I get the shopping done?

Do we let the tuck-shop sell sushi?

Do we develop a policy on Immersions?

Some decisions do need discernment

Which school will I send my child to?

Shall we move away from our aging parents?

What is the most appropriate consequence for that student?

What is my next career move?

Personal Reflection (5 min)

Recall a decision that you had to make personally. Can you identify elements of discernment that were involved?

Responding

For us to be able to discern what God asks of us, it is important that we have some familiarity with God. We should know God personally—not just know about God. And the best way to grow in familiarity with God is through Prayer.

The Examen

One type of prayer which can be helpful in reflecting on where we might find God at work in our lives is the Examen. This prayer is a way of reviewing our lives in a reflective way, sifting through our experiences and interactions in a way that allows the presence of God in my life to emerge. It has several variations, but the core elements are as follows:

I give thanks:

I begin by giving thanks for the graces, benefits and good things of my day.

I ask for help:

I ask the Holy Spirit to help me to discern my day with openness and honesty – remember, this is just between me and God

I review:

I review my day, hour by hour, to see how God is working in my life, paying particular attention to my feelings and emotions at times that seemed more significant.

I respond:

I respond to what I felt or learned in my review just made. This might include further gratitude or asking for forgiveness and guidance for the times I feel I haven't been at my best.

I resolve:

I resolve with hope and the grace of God to take my learnings into a new day.



“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

Socrates

Let us pray together

Take a couple of minutes to pause, take a few deep breaths and try to clear your mind.

Let's take our time to be slowly guided through the 5 elements above. You may wish to jot down a few points to capture what has emerged for you as you conclude your Examen.

References:

<https://www.slideserve.com/roman/discernment>

Pray as you go App

Gaudete Et Exsultate – Pope Francis

Always Discerning – Joseph Tetlow SJ



Drawn

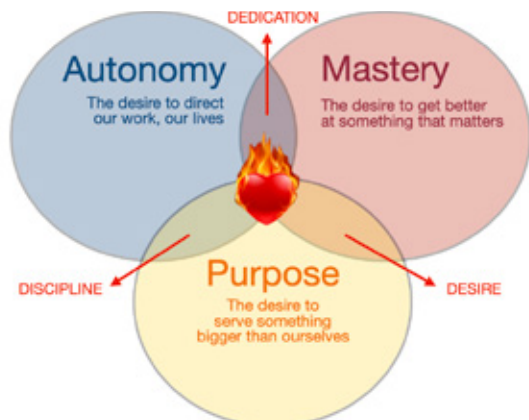
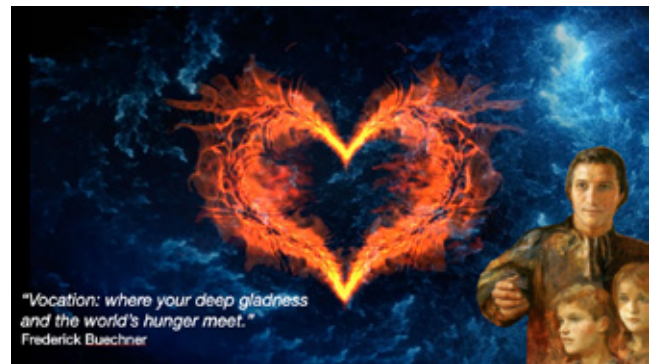
An exploration of our emerging vocational call

The DRAWN module is fully resourced to enable Local Coordinators to lead their group into a deeper reflection of the 2023 Association Theme, Created and Called. Using the image inspired by the artistic work of Mark Rothko, DRAWN encourages movement from the periphery, into the centre. This requires conversation, personal reflection, meditation and silence.

The journey is not in one direction, we are renewed and called to go the edge, to go out, where we go on mission to serve others. Empowering them, encouraging them to go the heart of the matter and be transformed themselves. Whilst there are many workshops and literature to assist in working with our 'drive', what we are drawn by is more enigmatic and mysterious - requiring reflection of my identity and what it requires to feel whole, to be complete.

An MLF Team member is available to assist with the delivery of this module.

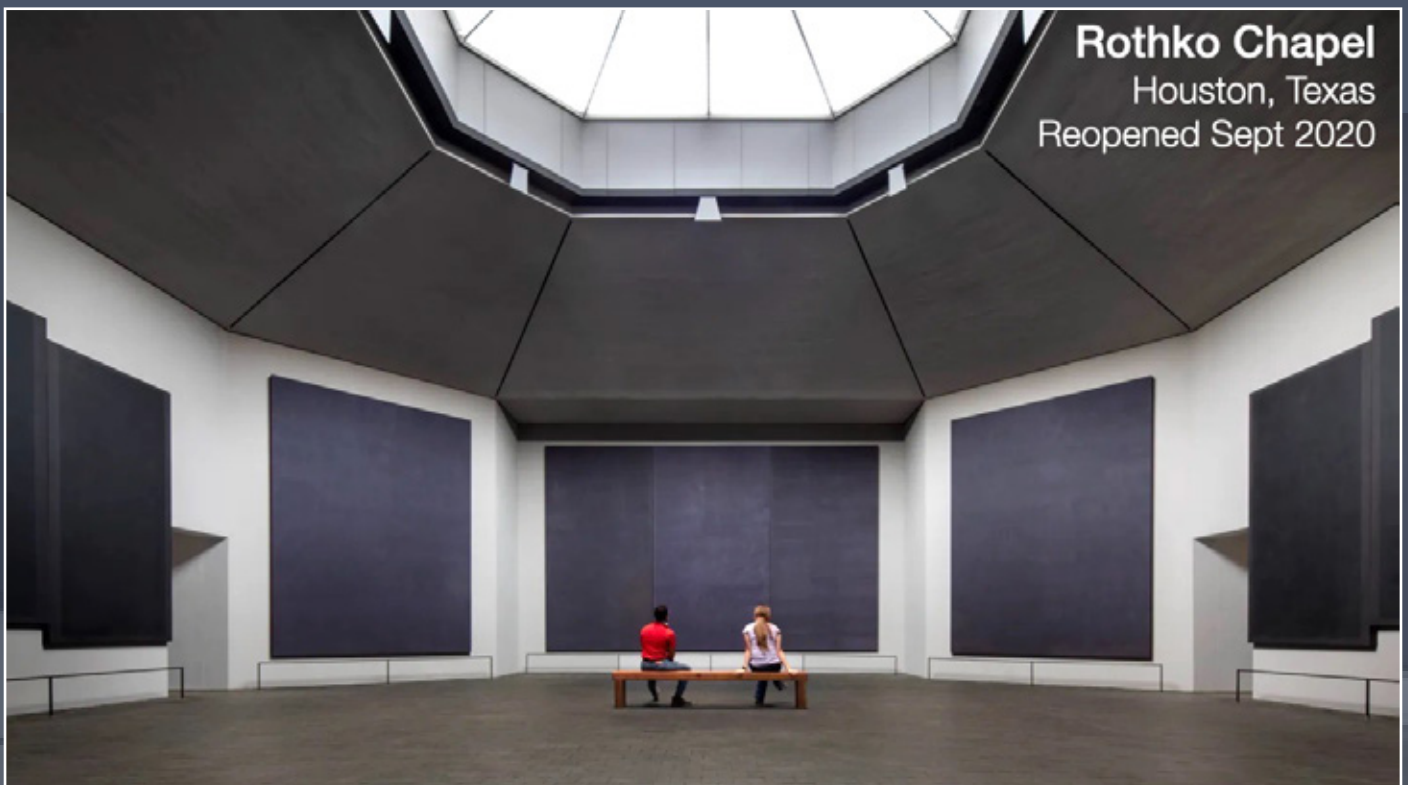
To access this resource click [here](#).



*to move away from the noise and busyness of the periphery,
to the silence and dispossession of the centre
where we may expose ourselves to the vastness,
the silence and even the menace of the land.*

Tony Kelly CsSR

A New Beginning – Towards a New Australian Spirituality (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1990)





You Are Not Needed Here

A lifetime of wisdom on service, family spirit and presence

In this 20 minute interview with Br Doug Walsh at the Latrobe Valley Marist Association Dinner, Mike Hansen invites the 'humble Dougie' to share his reflection on school culture, family spirit, the meaning of service and the value of presence in a Marist community. Br Doug shares aspects of his life and ministry with the Marists and what led him to a life of service after an encounter with Saint Teresa of Calcutta.

Through the use of stories and a lifetime of wisdom, Br Doug inspires Association members to consider their own life journey and those who have blessed them along the way.

Questions for Reflection

1. What struck you about this interview with Br Doug Walsh?
2. Where might you and your Local Association group be 'needed for service'?
3. How are the spiritual characteristics of family spirit and presence lived out in your Marist community?

To access this resource click [here](#).





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Marist Mission and Life Formation Spirituality Hub

➔ www.maristformation.org