

## Faith in Action Reflection Session: Social Action – Solidarity



*This FIA session has been produced by Missio, the Catholic Church's official charity for overseas mission. Find out more and view our school resources by visiting [missio.org.uk](http://missio.org.uk)*

### **Before you begin, remember:**

Each FIA session must cover at least one key element from 'The Good News' (page 2) and two from 'The Church Story' (pages 2-3). You can then allow participants time to consider their own experience ('The Personal Story', page 5), so that each FIAT session models this structure of reflection and prayer.

Each FIA session must also conclude with a prayer service.

### **For this session you will need:**

One large candle

An image or statue of Christ

A basket or bag, containing 'Solidarity Suggestions' (pages 8-9)

Printed A4 sheets containing 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (available to copy and paste on page 2)

### **Objectives**

**Explore** the meaning of solidarity as a follower of Christ.

**Understand** that following Christ means working in solidarity with others to build God's kingdom of justice, mercy and love.

**Reflect** upon what it means to stand in solidarity with poor and oppressed people, as Jesus did.

### **Starting point**

Gather the group together, and begin the session with the FIA prayer. Invite participants to share their thoughts and feelings. The following questions may help:

How are you today? (What type of weather best describes how you are feeling?)

How do you think your FIA Award is going so far?

What do you think of when you hear today's FIA session theme 'Solidarity'?

*Solidarity comes from the same root as the word solid. Solidarity reminds us that we are not separate from one another, but through our shared humanity and as children of one God, all of us, wherever we are in the world, are bonded together and dependent on each other.*

You may wish to have the FIA Session resources available to participants at the beginning of their FIA journey for those who wish to use them as they go along.

## **The Good News**

Choose a passage from scripture to help the group reflect on the theme. Below are some suggestions.

### **1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (abridged) - One body, many parts**

For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts - all the parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body - so it is with Christ...

If the foot were to say, 'I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the body,' it does not belong to the body any the less for that. Or if the ear were to say, 'I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body,' that would not stop its belonging to the body...

The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' and nor can the head say to the feet, 'I have no need of you.' What is more, it is precisely the parts of the body that seem to be the weakest which are the indispensable ones.

If one part is hurt, all the parts share its pain. And if one part is honoured, all the parts share its joy.

Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole.

### **Luke 5: 17-25 - Cure of a paralytic man**

Now it happened that he was teaching one day, and Pharisees and teachers of the Law, who had come from every village in Galilee, from Judaea and from Jerusalem, were sitting there. And the power of the Lord was there so that he should heal. And now some people appeared, bringing on a bed a paralysed man whom they were trying to bring in and lay down in front of him. But as they could find no way of getting the man through the crowd, they went up onto the top of the house and lowered him and his stretcher down through the tiles into the middle of the gathering, in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith he said, 'My friend, your sins are forgiven you.'

The scribes and the Pharisees began to think this over. 'Who is this man, talking blasphemy? Who but God alone can forgive sins?' But Jesus, aware of their thoughts, made them this reply, 'What are these thoughts you have in your hearts? Which of these is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven you," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' - he said to the paralysed man - 'I order you: get up and pick up your stretcher and go home.' And immediately before their very eyes he got up, picked up what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

## **The Church Story**

Share some of the Church's teachings from the Catechism, the Pope's writings and examples from the lives of holy people with the group.

You may wish to choose one or two that would be best for your group.

You may wish to present a selection to the group and ask them to comment on the one that stands out to them.

## **DOCAT 27 (excerpt)**

Through his Church, which... shows solidarity with the helpless, the victims of injustice, and the poor of her times, God tries to reach the people of all nations and cultures and to help them. Whenever people try to shape a more human world, God is on their side. The Church is therefore in solidarity with all who want to give God's salvation a visible face in the world.

## **DOCAT 234**

There are many problems that we can do something about only if we work together. For this purpose there must be an increase in solidarity and mutual responsibility on earth. Catholic social teaching cites as the reason for this mutual responsibility the idea of the "unity of the human family". God is the Creator of every single human being; therefore, he is the Father of all mankind. We human beings can regard each other as brothers and sisters who are connected with one another in one family. In a family, the members trust one another, are there for each other, and help each other. In the same way, the entire population of the world should feel connected with one another.

## **Pope Francis on solidarity**

To the young people and to all of you today I repeat: solve problems with solidarity. I therefore encourage you to be witnesses to solidarity in your cities and towns, at work, at school, in the family and at meeting places. (2/5/15, Pilgrims)

The future is, most of all, in the hands of those people who recognize the other as a "you" and themselves as part of an "us". We all need each other. (TED2017 Conference)

Faith awakens our commitment to others, faith awakens our solidarity: it is a virtue, human and Christian, which you possess and which many possess, a virtue that we must learn. (12/7/15, Bañado Norte)

Dear young people... Be always ready to offer solidarity, to be steadfast in your closeness to others, determined in awakening joy and genuine in giving comfort. The world stands in need of concrete signs of solidarity. (*The Works of Mercy*, 2016)

## **Lives of Holy Man and Women**

### **St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)**

Edith Stein was born in Breslau, Germany in 1891. Although she belonged to an observant Jewish family, by her teens Edith had stopped practising her Jewish faith, preferring instead to base her beliefs on science and philosophy.

Edith loved to learn and was driven by her pursuit of knowledge and truth. In 1913 she moved to University in Germany, but her studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War One.

Determined to help, Edith volunteered as a wartime Red Cross nursing assistant. This experience brought about in Edith a huge interest in empathy—*the ability to understand how someone else is feeling or to understand the situation they are in.*

When she returned to university, Edith decided to learn more about empathy and to help others understand its importance. Alongside her studies, she also became interested in the writings of St Theresa of Ávila, a brave 16<sup>th</sup> Century Carmelite nun. Inspired by the life and faith of St Theresa of Ávila, Edith chose to become a Catholic. She was baptized on 1 January 1922.

Soon after her baptism, Edith felt called to become a nun herself. After many years of prayer and reflection, Edith became Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross in 1933.

Though many felt that Edith had rejected Judaism, she remained loyal to her Jewish family and heritage to her death. From inside the convent, Edith learned about the rise of Nazism in Germany. Deeply troubled by this, she prayed fervently for, and in solidarity with, her Jewish people.

During World War II, the Nazis declared that all Jews would be put into concentration camps. Since Edith would not renounce her Jewish background, she was sent to Auschwitz with other Jews.

Because of her solidarity with the oppressed Jewish people, she too was killed in the gas chambers at Auschwitz, in August 1942.

Edith Stein is now recognized as a martyr of the Catholic Church. She is known as St. Teresa Benedict of the Cross and is a patron saint of Europe.

### **St Oscar Romero**

Oscar Romero was born into a large Catholic family in El Salvador in 1917. As a young man with a deep faith, by the age of 13 he had decided to join the priesthood.

Once ordained, Oscar became known as a faithful and dedicated priest. Because of this he was appointed Archbishop in El Salvador in 1970, at a time of great unfairness and conflict.

In 1970s El Salvador, a small group of very rich people – members of the government, military, police, and big business – controlled the country's money. They took advantage of their situation by exploiting El Salvador's poor mercilessly.

As the rich owned almost all El Salvador's property they could set high rents knowing farmers and families, unable to buy their own land, had no option but to pay. Rich business leaders and government officials also kept wages low and the cost of living high. This meant that, no matter how hard ordinary Salvadorans worked, they were left with very little money, even though they made up most of the population.

Some Salvadorans tried to challenge the situation, but their protests were quickly and violently crushed by the wealthy and powerful. There were very few people brave enough to speak out against the growing injustice. Then along came Archbishop Oscar Romero.

Motivated by his faith in Christ, Romero stood in solidarity with the poor, but he urged all Salvadorans – poor and rich alike – to act as one, building together God's kingdom of love.

His mission was a difficult one, but St Romero found strength and guidance through prayer, the Eucharist, and reading the Bible. There were many passages that inspired him, such as that found in the Gospel of St Luke: 'Jesus said, "The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free."' (Luke 4:18)

To reach everyone in the country, Romero began broadcasting a radio prayer service every Sunday. In this service he would read out passages from the Bible that spoke of justice, mercy and peace. He would also remind people that all humans are made in God's image, thus they should support and stand together, as children of one heavenly Father.

By speaking out so boldly Romero annoyed many influential and powerful people. He knew his life was at risk. On Sunday 23 March 1980, he broadcast a very brave sermon in which he urged people to recognise each other as brothers and sisters in Christ and ordered the killings to stop.

The next day whilst he was saying mass in a small hospital chapel, Romero was shot dead. An assassin's bullet hit him in the heart, killing him immediately.

Archbishop Oscar Romero is now recognised as a martyr and saint of the Catholic Church. St Romero continues to witness to the power of solidarity. His legacy inspires people of different faiths and cultures to stand together and establish on earth peace and justice for all God's children.

### **The Personal Story**

Give the young people time to reflect on their FIA journey, and to review the evidence and mini reflections they have done after each action.

### **Discussion Prompt Questions**

Invite participants to work in groups (max 4) and share their responses to the questions below. After a few minutes, invite participants to share their thoughts with the whole group.

- How easy / difficult has it been working together with others in your FIA journey?
- What is the greatest lesson you've learned so far about how best to work together?
- Why is it important to involve everyone?
- What is the best thing you've discovered about working together / in solidarity with others?
- If we did not work together and in solidarity with others, especially people in need, how would that affect us:

as individuals?

as a country?

as a world?

as a Church?

### **Exploration ideas**

*Invite participants to work in groups (max 4) unless otherwise stated.*

- Copy and paste the Corinthians scripture (1 Corinthians 12:12-27) into a Word document. Print onto A4 sheets and ask participants to annotate the scripture, revealing its teaching on solidarity. After a few minutes, invite groups to share their findings.
- Select one of Pope Francis' quotes about solidarity. Create a tag line (slogan) from this quote and set it in a poster, also inspired by the Pope's words.

- Read the biography of St Oscar Romero. Roleplay a 3-minute radio interview between Archbishop Romero and a radio reporter. Your broadcast should highlight the ways in which St Romero was inspired by his faith and the example of Christ to promote solidarity in El Salvador. Try and include some quotations from St Romero - you can find these online.

### Understanding ideas

*Invite participants to work in groups (max 4) unless otherwise stated.*

- In groups of 6-8, dramatise the Gospel passage from Luke 5 (cure of a paralytic man). Think about the qualities needed to ensure the mission was achieved e.g. trust, faith, and Jesus' response. Please note: lowering people through roofs is not necessary for this portrayal!
- In the biography of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, we learn that as a young woman St Teresa wanted people to understand the importance of empathy. Create a three-minute campaign film about empathy. Illustrate how empathy and faith enabled St Teresa to stand in solidarity with the Jewish people.
- Select one of the paragraphs from DOCAT (page 3). Read the passage carefully, then create a mind-map highlighting its teaching on solidarity. In your mind-map come up with as many ways as possible we can put this teaching into practise e.g. *unity of the human family; view and respect all people as God's children; challenge ideas that promote division.*

### Reflection ideas

- View the Missio film Pirimiti Boys <https://missio.org.uk/films/> What does the film teach us about solidarity and how Missio enables Christians to carry out their responsibility to work together?
- Write a poem / spoken word, which explains what it means to you to be part of the human family – God's family. In it, reference our responsibility as children of God, to stand in solidarity with those in need.
- Missio is the Catholic Church's charity for overseas mission. Through its work it illustrates St Paul's idea that the Church is Christ's body, made up of many parts, with equal concern for each other. In light of this, ask yourself the following questions:

**Do I** see myself as a valued member of Christ's body?

**Do I** recognise that this means, as a member of the Church, I am bonded to billions of Christians across the world?

**Do I** agree that by working together with people of good will, all members of the Church have a responsibility to build a better world for all people, everywhere?

In what ways **can I** support the Church at home and far away? *E.g. through prayer, by practising my faith, by supporting Missio.*

## **Liturgy**

Invite participants to sit in a circle. In the centre, place a bag or basket containing the 'Solidarity Suggestions' (see page 8).

Ask a participant to light a large candle, also placed in the centre of the circle along with an image or statue of Christ.

Make the sign of the cross together and invite participants to prepare for prayer by spending 30-60 seconds in silence. To avoid distractions, ask participants to close their eyes or focus on the candle flame.

After the silence, invite participants to share one lesson from today's session.

Remind the young people that today's FIA session focused on our responsibility, as Christ's body, to act in solidarity and work together to build God's kingdom of justice, mercy, and love.

Remark that this teaching is evident in St Paul's letter to the early church in Corinth.

Invite a young person to read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (abridged).

Note that St Paul wanted his readers to understand the importance of connecting with others, so as to act in solidarity and work well together.

The basket in the centre of the circle contains 'Solidarity Suggestions'. These can prompt us to share God's love and build unity among people.

*Pass around the basket containing 'Solidarity Suggestions'. Ask each young person to take a slip and share the suggestion (not the prayer) with the group. Encourage participants to think of ways they can put the suggestion into effect.*

Once 'Solidarity Suggestions' have been shared, invite participants to still themselves again by returning to a few seconds of silence, closing their eyes, or focusing on the candle.

Follow the silence by reading together the prayer of St Theresa of Avila: *Christ has no body but yours.*

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours,  
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,  
Yours are the eyes through which he looks with  
Compassion on this world.  
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,  
Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world.  
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,  
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.  
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

Make the sign of the cross together.

***Print and cut out the 'Solidarity Suggestions' on pages 8-9. Then place in a bag or basket and use in the FIA session liturgy.***

# Smile at people

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

# Listen to people

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

# Offer to read in church

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

# Be attentive to others

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

# Shake someone's hand

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

# Give someone a hug

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*



## Discuss a topic, don't argue, listen and learn

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

## Pray for others

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

## Forgive others

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

## Have an open heart

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

## Share what you have

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*

## Stand by someone in need

*Christ has no body on earth now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet. Yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.*