



Theme: Service

2. Servant Leadership

Objectives:

Explore the joys and sorrows of living a life of service

Understand that Jesus challenges us to change

Reflect upon how service transforms not only us, but those whom we serve in the wider community

Before you begin:

Create a reverent, quiet and comfortable space for the group. Ensure that all relevant materials are printed and readily available for the group and that the sacred space is set up ready for the closing liturgy.

Each reflection point should include:

- Reading a passage from the New Testament
- Exploration of the Church's Story (teachings from the church and the lives of Amazing Christians)
- The opportunity for the participant to reflect on their personal experience
- An activity
- A time of prayer and worship

You will need:

- Print-outs of the chosen scripture passage/church's story for participants
- Instructions from the chosen activities
- For the liturgy:
 - Olive Oil
 - A bowl
 - Cotton Wool
 - Focal Candle
- Sacred Space Materials
- Scripture

Welcome, Introduction & Opening Prayer

Gather the group together.

Briefly introduce the theme for this reflection:

As you all know, the essence of the Faith in Action Award is exploring and deepening your faith through serving others. This is because our faith is based upon a life lived in service of others. Christ came to us as a leader and a king, but not as we know it. The kind of leader Christ was would not have been recognisable in his day, nor would it be in ours. Jesus came as a servant king, a peaceful ruler, clothed in humility, love and mercy.

In this reflection point, we will explore what it means to live a life of service, and how doing so is both fulfilling and challenging. We will also explore what it means to be a good leader, and how Christ challenges us to re-think what it means to lead others.

Say the Faith in Action Prayer together:

God our Father,

We thank you for the gift of your love which you give to every person in the world. We thank you that because of your love, we are never alone and should never feel afraid.

We thank you for the gift of faith which allows us to know you, one God, three persons. We thank you that because of that faith, the whole of our lives are directed to living for other people.

Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our friend and brother, you show us how to love.

Give us the strength we need, through your Holy Spirit, to live lives of love and faith.

May the world come to know your Son more and more through our actions and words as we seek to live lives which help to build your kingdom here on earth. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

The Good News

*Choose a passage from scripture that will help the group to reflect on the theme.
Below are some suggestions followed by discussion points:*

Luke 22:24-27

An argument also began between them about who should be reckoned the greatest; but he said to them, "Amongst the gentiles it is the kings who lord it over them, and those who have authority over them are given the title Benefactor. With you this must not happen.

No; the greatest among you must behave as if he were the youngest, the leader as if he were the one who serves. For who is the greater: the one at the table or the one who serves? The one at the table surely? Yet here am I among you as one who serves!"

John 13:4-10

And he got up from the table, removed his outer garment and, taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist; he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "At the moment you do not know what I am doing, but later you will understand." "Never!" said Peter. "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus replied, "If I do not wash you, you can have no share with me." Simon Peter said, "Well then, Lord, not only my feet, but my hands and my head as well!" Jesus said, "No one, who has had a bath needs washing, such a person is clean all over. You too are clean, though not all of you are."

Pointers for discussion

What qualities are required for a good leader?

Do I value the contributions I make and the work I do?

Why would someone want to follow me?

Am I inspiring to others?

Is it a sign of weakness to show love and forgiveness?

Whose feet would you wash?

Can you only be a leader if people follow you?

The Church's Story

To help reflect and explore the Good News further, share some of the church's teachings from important texts and the work of great theologians.

Archbishop Justin Welby

"The Church is called to be a servant to the world, helping to build a kingdom of justice, peace, and reconciliation."

Bishop Richard Holloway

"The test of a good leader is not what he achieves, but what he inspires others to achieve."

Nicolas of Lyra

"Service to others is the greatest work of all."

Bishop John Sentamu

"We are not simply called to change the world; we are called to serve the world."

Eugene Peterson

"The leader is the one who, with a heart full of love, gives himself to the service of others."

Walter Brueggemann

"Leadership in the Bible is about the capacity to bring the people together and lead them into the future, doing so in a way that serves the needs of the community."

Pope Francis

"A good leader must be a servant; someone who serves the people and creates conditions that allow them to thrive."

Richard Foster

"The path to spiritual leadership is the path of humility, service, and love."

Lives of the Amazing Christians

St Oscar Romero

“Aspire not the have more, but to be more.”

Oscar Romero was born into a large family on 15 August 1917 in El Salvador. Although they had more money than many of their neighbours, Oscar’s family had neither electricity nor running water in their small home, and the children slept on the floor.

Oscar’s parents could not afford to send him to school after the age of twelve, so he went to work as an apprentice carpenter. He quickly showed great skills, but Oscar was already determined to become a priest. He entered the seminary at the age of fourteen and was ordained a priest when he was 25. Recognising the power of radio to reach the people, he convinced five radio stations to broadcast his Sunday sermons to peasant farmers who believed they were unwelcome in the churches.

In 1970, he became Auxiliary Bishop in San Salvador, and in 1974, the Bishop of Santiago de Maria. At this time, Oscar Romero was described as a conservative, not wanting to break from tradition. He supported the hierarchy who encouraged conformity and was uncomfortable with the social action that was challenging political leaders of his time.

During his two years as Bishop of Santiago de Maria, Romero was horrified to find that children were dying because their parents could not pay for simple medicines. He began using the resources of the diocese and his own personal resources to help the poor, but he knew that simple charity was not enough. Romero wanted the Church and the government to participate in changing the lives of these people for the better, not just giving them the occasional “hand-out”.

Romero became a source of strength and hope for the poor and the oppressed. He worked with and for them, taking their struggles as his own. Despite threat and danger from those who opposed his ideas, Romero would write and speak passionately and publicly of the need for Christians to work for justice.

Dr. Thomas Barnardo

Dr. Thomas Barnardo was an Irish-born British philanthropist and the founder of homes for destitute children. His journey toward servant leadership began while he was studying medicine in London. Inspired by his Christian faith, he became deeply disturbed by the poverty and suffering he witnessed, especially the plight of homeless children living in squalor on the streets of Victorian London.

In 1867, Barnardo opened his first "ragged school" to provide basic education, food, and care to impoverished children. This marked the beginning of his life's mission to serve vulnerable children. Over time, he established a series of homes for children, famously adopting the principle that "no destitute child ever refused admission."

Barnardo's work was grounded in his Christian belief in the dignity of every child and his conviction that they should be given opportunities to thrive. He pioneered innovative approaches to care, including fostering children out to families when possible, rather than institutionalizing them. His care was comprehensive, addressing not only the immediate physical needs of children but also providing education, skills training, and spiritual nurturing, equipping them to lead fulfilling lives.

By the time of his death in 1905, Barnardo's homes had cared for over 60,000 children. Today, the charity he founded, Barnardo's, continues to serve disadvantaged children and families across the UK, a lasting testament to his servant leadership. Dr. Barnardo's life and legacy show how one person's faith and commitment to serving others can transform the lives of countless people.

St Peter

St Peter was from the village of Bethsaida in the province of Galilee. He was the brother of Andrew and worked as a fisherman when Jesus called him to be one of the Twelve. Peter was the first to publically confess Jesus as Messiah. As God had revealed this to him, Jesus appointed him as the 'Rock' upon which the foundations of the Church would be laid. Peter was therefore the first Pope of the Catholic Church.

When Jesus was taken to be tried, Peter was afraid. Just as Jesus had predicted, Peter denied even knowing Christ, three times. At the moment he realised he had fulfilled Jesus' predication, he wept bitterly.

After the Resurrection, Jesus reinstated Peter, by asking three times, "Do you love me?" Jesus commanded Peter; "Feed my sheep."

St Peter was a great preacher and spoke to the crowds gathered at Pentecost, which resulted in the conversion of many.

St Peter was sentenced to death by crucifixion, but he requested that he be crucified upside down, because he did not feel worthy to die in the same way as Jesus.

Personal Story

During this time, the young people should be encouraged to think about their FIA journey so far and share with the group how they have been serving others. They might wish to discuss what they have enjoyed about serving others and what they have found more difficult and challenging.

You can, at this point, review the acts of service young people have participated in thus far, and give them the opportunity to reflect in their journal the acts of service they have done, if they have not done so already.

Activity Suggestions

Exploration

- Research the life of a saint or exemplary Christian. Make a list of the sorrows and the joys of their leadership.
- Create a piece of artwork that expresses the joys and the sorrows of servant leadership.
- Create a job description for a leader.

Understanding

- Role play scenarios where people struggle to establish their authority and power. How would Jesus resolve these disagreements?
- Write a letter addressing a Christian audience, challenging their expectations of a leader.
- Jesus washed feet to demonstrate servant leadership. What symbolic actions could Christians use to express servant leadership to a modern audience? List examples.

Reflection

Produce a creative piece of work (narrative, craft, art, prayer, etc.) or a video/broadcast/podcast with the title 'Actions Speak Louder than Words'.

Liturgy

Begin with a time of stillness.

Reflection on Kingship

*Sing Graham Kendrick's *Servant King* or play in the background during the time of prayer.*

Response: What kind of king is this?

Kings are born into wealthy families, with high social status. But you, Jesus, you were born in a stable and were raised as a carpenter. **Response.**

Kings are grand, regal, noble, triumphant. But you, Jesus, you made your triumphant entry into Jerusalem on a humble donkey. **Response.**

Kings are military leaders, fierce warriors, war lords. But you, Jesus, you called for peace. **Response.**

Kings have authority and power. They are leaders. They come first. But you, Jesus, you taught us that the first will be last and the last will be first.

Response.

Kings defend traditions. But you, Jesus, you called for a new way of thinking.

Response.

Kings protect their laws by serving harsh punishments as a lesson to all. But you, Jesus, you forgive and deal in second chances. **Response.**

Kings have servants and personal assistants. But you, Jesus, you put on a servant's robe and washed the feet of your Disciples. **Response.**

Kings rule by fear and force. But you, Jesus, you rule with love. **Response.**

Concluding Prayer & Anointing

Let us pray,

Lord, you challenge us to turn away from our sinful lives and begin a new life in you.

You challenge our old way of thinking.

Power and authority does not come from aggression of force or selfishness.

It comes from a place of love.

As we come forward to be anointed, fill us with your Holy Spirit, so that we can be strong

enough to be the kind of leader you are.

Let us commit ourselves to a determination to be more like you.

Amen.

Participants then take it in turn to anoint the hands of each other, or wash them,, as a symbol of their loving service to each other, and the community. Where this is problematic, it might be worthwhile to watch a video of foot washing from a Maundy Thursday service.