

Facilitator Directions 3 Being Church

The Facilitator would find it helpful to read through “Decrees,” “Appealing to the Pope,” “Crises” and “Theresa’s Dark Night” before the session. A significant reality that runs like a thread through this difficult period is the “Missionary Spirit” of the congregation, an additional chapter to recognize.

The Facilitator recalls the context of the difficulty facing Mother Theresa, namely the desire of Archbishop/ Cardinal Reisach to take control of the congregation. This is explored in the earlier chapters under “A Woman’s Place,” and “Gathering Storm.”

The Facilitator prepares copies of the one-act play found under “One-Act Play.” It would be helpful to become familiar with the essay by S. Mary Ann Kuttner, SSND on the immediate reasons for the decrees.

The Facilitator welcomes the group and says: “Today we will be remembering a specific meeting held at the Munich Motherhouse, April 22, 1852. The minutes of that meeting have been turned into a one-act play. Would some of you be willing to read the parts? (Assign roles as given at the beginning of the play.)

Using the ideas given by S. Mary Ann Kuttner, The Facilitator gives an overview of what precipitated this meeting and then invites participants to read the play together.

The Facilitator suggests: As you listen to these minutes jot down any feelings that come through the written words. Try to imagine the scene. What would you have done if you had been a sister in that meeting? Consider Mother Theresa, her feelings, her physical appearance, her words.

After the play has been read, invite comments related to the above suggestions.

The Facilitator continues: What does this incident tell us about Archbishop Reisach and his secretary? What does it tell us about another diocesan priest, Fr. Mathias Siegert? (The group may not know that Fr. Siegert was the close friend and advisor of Mother Theresa for almost 50 years. His loyalty to her and the congregation is significant. In this account he spoke for Mother Theresa and that put him in opposition to his own bishop. The result was that he was literally thrown out of the meeting.)

The Facilitator says: What does this experience tell you about Mother Theresa’s personality? (Perhaps she was expecting something like this; she had been ill prior to the meeting. She was determined, not ashamed to weep before others, calling on her sisters for help and advice, humble, courageous, faithful, etc.)

What does Mother Theresa's ability to hold onto the vision of the congregation despite this intense pressure say to you? Can you share her anxiety as she was being criticized by the hierarchy and her angst for her sisters?

Depending on time, The Facilitator may want to move into "Appealing to Pope" and select a few passages from letters sent to Pius IX. It is also helpful to mention the role of Dr. Schels given under "Crises." Mother Theresa was using the appropriate channels of negotiation available to her at this time of church history. (Recall "Rules for Thinking with the Church" found under "A Woman's Place.") The deep pain of this period forms the context for "Theresa's Dark Night." This valuable segment invites participants into the mystery of pain and misunderstanding. It often results in a visible courage and graciousness that causes awe in those observing it. Engaging the "dark night" often results in fruitfulness. This is seen in the growth of the congregation at this time. It is in the midst of all this turmoil that the congregation deepens in "Missionary Spirit" as expressed in Mary Ann Kuttner's essay.

The Facilitator concludes by saying: One of Mother Theresa's favorite scripture quotes was John 19:25, "Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother..." In a letter written to Dr. Schels during this painful period she wrote "I often visualize the Blessed Virgin standing beneath the cross as I meditate on the words, 'she stood.'" (#1250)

Let us conclude by taking a few minutes of silence together. I invite you to remember a time in your own experience when you felt crushed, broken, and very alone. Review your memories of that time and reflect on what/who enabled you to believe once again... Conclude session in silence.

Or if The Facilitator wants to share insights she says: Would you like to share your thoughts with one other person? Encourage each partner to share and then honor the time spent together by saying: We've looked at Mother Theresa's dark night and our own... I'd like to conclude by listening to a poem by St. John of the Cross entitled "The Dark Night." Read the poem as found under "Theresa's Dark Night" or if a Spanish speaking participant is present, perhaps it could be read in Spanish. Translation is found in Collected Works of John of the Cross. The audio in Spanish is given under "Theresa's Dark Night."