

PEOPLE OF GOD AS A COMMUNITY OF LOVE

(10-15 minutes. Written exercise and summary sharing. This talk is given by an outside team member.)

Please limit your talk to the time allowed for this talk. In order to successfully complete the program every effort must be made to be on schedule. Time is of the essence and your cooperation is extremely important. If you are witnessing, please do it within the theme and within the outline of this talk.

Open with a short prayer.

Purpose: To explain that as people of God we are not isolated but rather we live in "community". We need the mutual support of other christians to strengthen our faith. God has called us to help each other. Community is to help and support each other. We also, as people of God, belong to a Church. As members of the Church each one of us is called to participate and get involved making use of our different gifts and talents for the common good.

Points to cover in your talk:

1. The Church is not the building. We are the Church. The Church is a community, the body of Christ and we are members of this body.
2. We must share our lives with each other as all the parts of our body work together. How can you be "community" inside a correctional facility? What is a christian community?
3. How each of us serve God and the Body of Christ. How can the residents be of service to their fellow residents?
4. Regardless of our profession or trade, as members of the Church we all are called to be: Priests (to worship and participate in the public worshipping); Prophets (to proclaim the word of God by our own deeds, witness, action) and Leaders (to bring and lead others to Christ).
5. We turn to our Father as children and to each other as brothers in a true family. As a REC participant your family will be all the other residents that have made REC.
6. We suffer with each other and we also celebrate life with each other.
7. How did you come to be a person of God? Who is your community of love? How do you specifically fit into the Body of Christ? How do you contribute to the health of this body/community: prayer, service, sacrifice, etc.
8. Do you see Jesus in all people? How do you overcome your prejudices, anger, hurts, etc. to experience Jesus in all people? How do you experience God through the love we share with each other?

NOTE: At the end of this talk the Lay Director will indicate that instead of table discussion there will

be a written exercise at each table. The table leader(s) will conduct the exercise. The Lay Director will have provided copy of the exercise sheet to the table leaders during the team formation meetings. At these meetings the Lay Director will explain and practice the People of God Exercise right after the critique of this talk. Each table leader should know how to conduct this exercise before the retreat.

People of God Exercise

The table leader will conduct this exercise. The idea is for the candidates to understand the message from the preceding talk and to reaffirm the concept of community. The table leader has complete discretion on how to conduct this exercise. The following words are just a suggestion to introduce the exercise and to provoke the thoughts and participation at the table.

Lord we're here together to help each other accept the call You've given us. Sometimes it's hard to say "Yes" if we're alone. We need the mutual support of other Christians to strengthen us when we're down. The love that You show us through Your people enables us to grow closer as a Christian community.

We ask that You help us to accept the responsibilities of living according to Your teachings and pray that we grow in You as we do Your work.

From the very first, when Jesus called His disciples, He knew that they would need each other for support in accomplishing the task that He had placed before them. There would be times when they would fail and need the encouragement of their friends. There would also be times when they would want to share the jobs of their ministry.

The community that Jesus formed with His twelve apostles should serve as a model for the type of community which our Lord would want us to form. We need to be like the apostles in giving encouragement and comfort to those who need it. We need to share with each other as the Apostles did and, in this way, we can make God even more present in our lives.

Pretend that you have just received a message from God. He wants you to set up a community in the joint in which His will would be carried out.

- Name the group
- State the purposes of the community (what's it there for?)
- Set up some guidelines to achieve the purposes
- What difficulties do you anticipate in doing this, and how might they be overcome?
- Summarize your proposal and appoint one or two table members to present to the group.

NOTE: The ideal would be to get the residents to form a REC community inside the correctional facility. But, reality, population movement and other circumstances don't allow to form a community as we may have it outside. The table leaders and the speaker should then emphasize the main components of community (help and support each other) and try to get the residents to learn and practice how to help and support each other inside the facility.