

## **RESPOND** (15 minutes)

*No sharing would be complete without a commitment to putting our faith in practice. You may like to share what you have decided upon and /or keep a record of your response.*

Think about what God is inviting you to do:

- ◇ Rita knew just how to “unlock” the key to Joe. There are so many people in the parish just waiting to do something. Identify one of them and help them find their niche.
- ◇ Pray for those people who suffer from mental illness, and those who care for them, that they may be witnesses to God’s mercy.
- ◇ Commit to celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation this Lent

## **Closing Prayer**

*The leader, or another member of the group, who has been advised in advance, then leads the group in the closing prayer.*

Christ our Lord, your light shines into the shadows,  
and shows us where the obstacles to change lie.

We know that often they are in our own hearts,  
in the way we live, and in our daily choices and actions.

We pray that we accept the light of your love  
as a challenge to change ourselves and our world.

We pray that, each day,  
we make the choices and take the actions  
that will bring an end to poverty and hunger,  
and lead us all towards a fairer world.

Be with us, Lord, as we face your challenge  
and learn how to live our lives in love. Amen

(Linda Jones c 2004, CAFOD)



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## **Diocese of Westminster**

Agency for Evangelisation

<http://rcdow.org.uk/faith/small-groups/>

# LENT 2017

**Proclaim Westminster**  
building missionary parishes



## **Week Two, Meeting Mercy** *On the mountain*

### **GATHER** (30 mins)

If you wish, share something of how last week’s session has influenced your thoughts and actions.

### **Opening prayer**

*Grant, almighty God, through our yearly observance of Lent,  
that we may grow in understanding of the riches hidden in Christ  
and by worthy conduct pursue their effects.*

*We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

### **LISTEN TO EXPERIENCE/Living our faith**

*Take a few minutes to read the following reflection silently or aloud*

Joe’s life suddenly changed. He had been living with his mother who looked after all his needs since he had become ill. But now Joe found himself isolated in his village; his mother had died and he was too afraid to go out other than to the corner shop. He was lonely and depressed. The only company he had was Rita who called in once a week to help him with his shopping and his bills. Joe asked Rita one day how much she got paid for looking after him? “I don’t get paid for this”, said Rita. “I’m a volunteer. I do it because I enjoy it, and it helps me to get over my problems. Perhaps you should try being a volunteer”. Joe laughed. He didn’t think he had it in him to be a volunteer.

The next day Rita called in unexpectedly and told Joe to put his coat

on. “We’re going volunteering” she said. Joe did not think it was a good idea, but did as he was told. They went along to the high street, past the corner shop where Joe did his shopping, and stopped at a local charity shop for the elderly; and Rita introduced Joe as the new volunteer.

Every week after that, Rita would take him along to the charity shop. He helped sort out the clothes and bric-a-brac, and even learned to use the till. One day, one of the older customers asked Joe if he could help her in her garden and he agreed. He now helps tidy gardens for elderly people two or three days a week as well as helping in the shop. When Rita asked him one day what volunteering had done for him, Joe responded that it had changed his life—just when he wasn’t looking and—while he thought he was helping to change other people’s lives.

*Take a few moments of silence to reflect on the following question, and then share your thoughts.*

### **Share**

Can you identify with Joe’s story? In your own experience, have you seen lives being transformed by what you do for others? Can you think of a time when your life was transformed by someone else doing something for you?

### **EXPLORE THE SCRIPTURES (45 minutes)**

*Instructions: Some time before the next meeting, the leader may ask a member of a group to read the Gospel for the second Sunday of Lent Year A.*

#### **Gospel Matthew 17:1-9**

*Take some time for silent reflection after Scripture passage is read; then read the following reflection silently or aloud.*

It is often the case that climbing a hill or a mountain can give us a sense of being closer to God. The challenges of everyday life are left far below, and there is nothing to interrupt the lifting up of our heart and mind to God. In scripture too, the mountain is often the meeting place between God and humanity.

It was on a mountain that God made a covenant with Noah when his ark came to rest after the Flood (see Genesis 8:4). It was on a mountain that God asked Abraham to make a sacrifice of his only son Isaac and then God

provided the Ram as a substitute (see Genesis 22:2). On Mount Sinai God revealed himself to Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 19:16-20:12). Elijah met God in the “still small voice” (KJV) or “gentle whisper” (NIV) (see 1 Kings 18). And, now, Jesus and his closest disciples get a glimpse of the glory that is to come. They are transformed.

In *Misericordia et Misera*, Pope Francis shows us how mercy constantly gives rise to joy: “Everything is revealed in mercy; everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father” (para 1). He goes on to remind us that we can find God’s mercy given in a particular way through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, when “we feel the embrace of the Father who comes to meet us and grant us the grace of being once more his sons and daughters” (para 8).

Paragraph 8 continues: “We are sinners and we bear the burden of contradiction between what we wish to do and what we do in fact (cf. Rom 7:14-21). Yet grace always precedes us and takes on the face of the mercy that effects our reconciliation and pardon. God makes us understand his great love for us precisely when we recognize that we are sinners. Grace is stronger than sin: it overcomes resistance, because love conquers all (cf. 1 Cor 13:7). In the sacrament of forgiveness, God shows us the way to turn back to him and invites us to experience his closeness anew.” Pope Francis reminds us that, “in the sacramental life, mercy is granted us in abundance. . . . In the Church’s prayer, then, references to mercy, far from being merely exhortative, are highly performative, which is to say that as we invoke mercy with faith, it is granted to us, and as we confess it to be vital and real, it transforms us” (*Misericordia et Misera* 5).

### **REFLECT**

*Instructions: The leader invites people to take few moments of silence to reflect on the questions. Then share your reflections.*

- ◇ Think of a time when you have been transformed or when you have seen someone else transformed. If you are willing, share what happened with the others.
- ◇ How does the Sacrament of Reconciliation reveal God’s mercy to us and transform our lives?