

Lent 2022 Study Questions (4 weeks)
A Spirituality of Fundraising

Week 1 FUNDRAISING AS A MINISTRY

- Nouwen tells us that fundraising is sharing what we believe, what we value in such a way that we are inviting other people to participate with us in God's mission. Nouwen also suggests that the act of asking and the act of giving together are a transforming experience through which God is doing something new through our collaboration. What excites you about Henri Nouwen's perspective about stewardship and fundraising? In what ways are you nervous or uneasy about asking people for money?
- Have you ever said yes to an invitation to commit to an initiative that serves others and supports your Christian beliefs that ended up feeling like you were the one who was blessed, and would you share that experience with the group?
- What is your reaction to the idea of inviting people to invest in building the kingdom of God, of realizing God's mission which is wholeness for the entire world? How do you imagine that invitation might be compelling to people in a way that asking people to give to a budget shortfall is not? What might that invitation look like from the perspective of your parish?

Week 2 OUR SECURITY BASE

- Nouwen suggests that before we contemplate asking others for monetary gifts to support God's mission, we should first explore our own relationship with money. He asks us to ponder several questions:
 - What is the place of money in our lives?
 - Where do we have conversations about money and what's the emotional undertone of those conversations?
 - How do we spend our money?
 - How does having or not having money impact our self-esteem and our sense of value?
 - How do you understand money and a sense of inner security? What is your sense of enough?
 - What are your giving practices?Please share your sense of your relationship with money with the group (to the degree you are comfortable) and how this perspective might have changed your relationship with money.
- Nouwen comments that our relationship with money also reaches into our inner life; our hearts and our souls, "...money has something to do with that intimate place in our heart where we need security...". And he says that we need to make an intentional choice about our security base; God or money. Reflect on what this suggested to you about your own inner life.
- We understand that the gospels and Jesus have a strong concern for taking care of the poor and the marginalized, a lean into reshaping unjust structures to bring about wholeness for all. Sometimes in the midst of acknowledging God's care for and thus our care for the marginalized, we can develop a bias against those with money; thinking they don't need special care or that they don't have a place in God's mission. Nouwen suggests that those who have a lot of money have their own needs for relationship, for purpose, and for wholeness. Explore with the group Nouwen's idea that through the invitation to give to God's mission and the relationship we develop with them, they will become closer to God.

Week 3 ASKING

- Asking for money can be anxiety-producing; what's behind anxieties about asking that you might have? Discuss those anxieties in the group and then talk about how to shift our perspectives using Nouwen's thinking so we're hampered by each of the fearful outcomes.
- One of the critical pieces of asking people to put their resources at work for God's mission is being able to tell the story of your piece of that mission. The compelling story captures several elements; how a difference will be made in terms of God's mission, who will be impacted, what activities will take place and how will people be involved, the strengths and skills already at play in this work, how your concerns are shared in the broader community and with whom you are collaborating, and how you will measure the impact. Spend a few moments creating "the story" of an initiative at your parish that you want funded, and then share the stories with your group. Give one another feedback about what might make each story more compelling and inviting to someone.
- What excites you about inviting someone to partner financially with you in a missional initiative? Where might this go beyond just a financial gift?

Week 4 CREATING A NEW COMMUNION

- Fundraising as a ministry is built on the understanding that we are called to build the beloved community, and one of the ways in which people become part of that community is through an invitation to partner, to invest in the restoration of wholeness to a broken world. What language do we need to let go of that identifies donors as commodities and their assets as targets of our fundraising goals? What language do you imagine using to invite givers into a new relationship with God and their church community? And what language might you use to invite people from outside your congregation to join you as financial partners?
- As fundraisers, how might you invite members of your congregation and/or members of the neighbourhood (potential financial partners) into a compelling experience of community?
- Nouwen tells us that "prayer is the radical starting point of fundraising because in prayer we slowly experience a reorientation...that shapes our relationships." (Chapter 1, Prayer and Gratitude) He suggests that we use prayer as a time to listen for the voice of God, a time to acknowledge and let go of our fears and our need for control and security, a time to hold the needs of others, and a time to acknowledge that we both have we enough and are enough. What was your response to this segment?
- How will you grow your capacity to live from a place of gratitude?