



Bitesize workshop

Called to care

Why politics is not just someone else's problem



#YahadMT

www.yahad.mt

Session 1: Why should I care?



Icebreaker:

4 CORNERS

Before the activity, create four large posterboard signs, each with a different letter -- A, B, C, or D -- on it. Post each lettered sign in one of the four corners of your meeting room.

After reading the quotes, instruct participants to go to the corner of the room labelled with the letter that matches their favourite quote. Invite them to share the reason they went to that corner.

A: "All of us would like to be good to others, and most of us would be relatively good in a good world. What is difficult is to be good in an evil world." (Pedro Arrupe sj)

B: "We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)

C: "Do I, a Catholic, watch from the balcony? You can't watch from the balcony! Get involved! Give it your best." "A good Catholic meddles in politics." (Pope Francis)

D: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." (Martin Luther King)



Brainstorming:

"WHY SHOULD I CARE?": REASONS NOT TO CARE

Very often, it's easier NOT to care about politics, the common good, our country etc. Invite participants to suggest possible reasons for this.



Input from Catholic Social Teaching:

WHY CARE:

One of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching is Participation. According to this principle, all people have a right and a duty to participate in the economic, political and cultural life of society. We each have something unique and important to contribute to society.

Share with participants the following points drawn from Catholic Social Teaching.

- "Common sense" (self-interest):

Everything/Everyone is connected.

We thought we could stay healthy in a world that was sick. In fact, no one is safe, until everyone (including creation) is safe.

Common Good: If one of the "numbers" (i.e. persons) is a zero (i.e. excluded), the resulting sum is always zero.

- Spiritual reasons:

Our God cares. Refer to the empathy/compassion of Jesus in the Gospels.

Yes. Politics is "messy" but it is one of the highest forms of charity. Politics is one of the most powerful ways of upholding Christ's Gospel mandate to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, etc. Refer to Matthew 25, 35-40. We feed the hungry through direct service, meeting individual needs as they arise. But we also go to the root of social ills and try to change systems and structures, so people won't go hungry anymore. This latter work requires getting involved in politics.

If we are called to find God in all things, why not in politics, when this is understood as a service towards the common good and the promotion of human dignity?



Discussion:

Invite participants to discuss the points highlighted above.



Prayer:

Lord, you invite us to find you in all things. As we collaborate as a people in the building of our society,

May we find you in our laws and policies,

May we find you in our political parties and politicians,

May we find you in our electoral campaign,

May we find you in our streets and squares,

May we find you in our neighbours, especially those on the margins,

We make this prayer through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Session 2: Are we listening?



Brainstorming:

Invite participants to share a news story from the past few years/months which has troubled them deeply.



Input from Catholic Social Teaching:

IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING:

Share with participants the following points drawn from Catholic Social Teaching.

- We are invited to listen to the voice of God who speaks to us through:
 - the Word of God
 - the cry of the poor
 - the cry of the earth

- Listening is the first step in any discernment process. If I want to discover God's priorities for this world, if I want to know more about my role in building a better world, before acting, I have to develop a listening attitude.

- Listening is not easy. There are many things which distract us and make it more difficult to have a listening attitude. For example: an overload of information; a certain superficial way of "consuming" information; in the words of Pope Francis we have lost the ability to cry given that we are constantly exposed to endless tragedies; in the echo-chambers we find on social media we only listen to the voices of those who agree with us; our hectic and noisy lifestyles etc.



Discussion:

Invite participants to discuss the points highlighted above.



Prayer:

Lead participants through the examination of conscience for Active Citizenship (Appendix A). Provide suitable background music.

Session 3: Now what?



Brainstorming

Invite participants to answer the following question:

What would be the 1st decision you would take as prime minister on your 1st day in office?



Input from Catholic Social Teaching:

DO SOMETHING!! BUT HOW??

We often focus on **what** we can do as active citizens in our society. But the **how** is equally important. Share with participants the following points drawn from Catholic Social Teaching.

- Our God is a God who acts...in a certain way (Exodus: God chose Moses to free His people after hearing their cry of anguish; Prophets: In His infinite patience, God always gives the people of Israel yet another chance to correct their ways; Incarnation: God sends His only Son not on a mission of destruction, but to live among us, so that all those who believe in Him may have life and life in abundance).

Our "style":

- Following the footsteps of Christ:

In freedom. Leave aside unhealthy attachments to whatever it is that might get in the way of loving God and neighbour.

Do I seek riches, prestige, glory and power in my role as an active citizen? Or do I follow the footsteps of Christ, poor and humble? Refer to Temptations in the desert Mt 4, 1-11.

Do we allow our politics to be the lens by which we judge the Gospel? Or is the Gospel the principal lens through which we judge things?

How do we measure success? As a community of believers who follow a Crucified God, we should maybe question a certain definition of success. In the words of Greg Boyle, a Jesuit who runs a gang intervention and rehabilitation program, "success and failure, ultimately, have little to do with living the gospel. Jesus just stood with the outcasts until they were welcomed or until he was crucified — whichever came first."

- Engaging in respectful dialogue & merciful patience:

Ignatian "presupposition". This is a ground rule that St Ignatius puts right at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises. It means that we should be more ready to generously interpret another's views than to jump to conclusions about bad intent, even if disagreement is profound. How often

do we do the exact opposite and seek to “destroy” our adversaries even before we have had the time to listen to him/her properly?

- With God and with others:

We are called to nurture our relationship with Christ to learn more about God’s hopes for our world and how best to live those out, in the humble knowledge that we cannot do it alone.



Discussion:

Invite participants to discuss the points highlighted above.



Final activity:

3-LEGGED POLITICAL STOOL

Invite participants to think of an issue they feel strongly about in today’s world. How can they respond:

- Personally
- As a community
- Politically

Present www.Yahad.mt which follows the scheme of these workshops: After listening to the cry of victims and enlightened by Catholic Social Teaching, we use the tools provided by the tradition of the Church to act in a certain way and with a certain style. Invite participants to use the hashtag #yahadMT when posting examples of their practical commitment towards a society in which the human dignity and the human rights of all – especially of the most vulnerable – are respected, and a culture of waste is replaced by a culture of encounter.

APPENDIX A

Examination of conscience for Active Citizenship

Begin with a prayer of gratitude.

Consider the current situation of our country—for what and for whom are you most grateful?

Ask for the Spirit's guidance.

Enlightened by the spirit, prayerfully review the situation in our country; pay attention to your emotions and reactions.

What energizes you or brings you closer to God as you reflect on our country?

What distracts you, makes you angry or makes you feel farther away from God as you reflect on our country?

What is the current situation of your brothers and sisters, particularly those who are most vulnerable and often marginalized by poverty and injustice?

What communities, groups, or aspects of creation in our country need healing and reconciliation?

Allow your honest reactions, emotions, and desires to surface.

Conversation with God

Consider perhaps one or two of the strongest desires or feelings evoked by your prayers about our country and bring this to God.

Engage God in conversation over these desires or feelings, speaking simply, clearly, directly, and honestly, as one friend speaks to another.

Listen with your heart—how is God present to you through your reactions and desires?

Prayer of renewal and resolution

As we prepare to elect a new government, how will you promote the common good? Is there a specific attitude you want to cultivate or an action you want to take? Entrust your desires and intentions to God's grace.

Amen.