Mission Together

Faith in Action Reflection Session: We belong to the Family of God

This FIA session has been produced by Mission Together, the Catholic Church's official children's charity for worldwide mission. Find out more and view our school resources by visiting missiontogether.org.uk

Before you begin:

Create a quiet and comfortable space for the group. Ensure that all relevant materials are printed and readily available for the group and that the sacred space is set up ready for the closing liturgy.

Each reflection point should include:

- Welcome & introduction
- Opening prayer (we suggest the Faith in Action prayer)
- A reading from Scripture
- Exploration of the Church's Story (teachings from the Catechism and/or the Pope)
- Witness of a holy person
- Opportunity for the participant to reflect on their personal experience
- Activity
- Closing liturgy

For this session you will need:

- Printouts of the Scripture passages (Appendix 1)
- Printout of selected CCC and papal quotes (Appendix 2)
- Printout the lives of holy men and women (Appendix 3)
- Printouts of the Faith in Action Prayer
- Instructions for the chosen activities
- A Mission Together or Missio red box
- Pens and paper (depending on activities selected)
- Post-it notes (depending on activities selected)
- Copies of Appendix 4 & 5 (depending on activities selected)

For the liturgy:

- Scripture: Matthew 6:7-13 (use the version in this reflection point).
- A candle
- An image of Christ or crucifix
- A Mission Together or Missio red box
- A small globe (if possible)

Objectives

Explore what it means to belong to the family of God.

Understand that as members of this family we are called to serve all God's children.

Reflect on how belonging to God's family helps us to love one another as Jesus taught.

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Starting point

Gather the group together. Invite participants to share their thoughts and feelings. The following questions may help:

- How are you today? (What type of weather best describes how you are feeling?)
- How do you think your FIA Award is going so far?
- Who or what comes to mind when you hear the word 'family'?

Family comes from the Latin word 'famulus' meaning 'servant'. This ancient meaning reminds us that being part of a family means serving one another. Each member of the family looks after each other and commits to making sure that everyone has what they need so all keep safe, well and happy.

In today's session we'll be thinking about the family of God to which we all belong, and how Jesus taught us to serve one another as members of God's worldwide family.

Faith in Action prayer – *say the prayer together or ask participants to read a line in turn.*

God our Father,
We thank you for the gift of your love which you give to every person in the world.
We thank you that because of your love, we are never alone and should never feel afraid.
We thank you for the gift of faith which allows us to know you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Through your Son, Jesus, our friend and brother, you show us how to love.
Give us the strength we need, through your Holy Spirit, to live lives of love and faith.
So that, by our actions and words, we help to build your kingdom here on earth.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen

Scripture

Choose a passage from Scripture that will help the group to reflect on the theme. Suggestions below.

Matthew 6:7-13 (adapted)

See Appendix 1

Pointers for discussion

- Why do you think Jesus taught his followers to say ***our*** Father and not ***my*** Father?
- Why do you think Jesus uses ***us*** (give us this day, forgive us our sins), rather than ***my***?
- How do we make sure we ***all*** have enough food for each day?

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 12:12 – 27 (adapted)

See Appendix 1

Pointers for discussion

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- St Paul wrote this letter to a small group of Christians 2000 years ago, when the Church was just beginning. There were groups of Christians living far away from each other in different parts of the country, some faced difficulties because they were poor, or had no support, or because they were looked down on. Sometimes there were disagreements between the different groups. What was St Paul's letter trying to teach the Corinthian Christians?
- Are the lessons of St Paul still important today? Give reasons for your answer.
- Are there words or ideas in this reading that you especially like? Which and why?

The Church Story

Share some of the Church's teachings from the Catechism, Pope's writings and examples from the lives of Holy people with the group.

Catechism of the Catholic Church: CCC2792 (adapted for children)

See Appendix 2

Pope Francis quotes on the family of God (adapted for children)

See Appendix 2

Lives of holy men and women: Mother Anna Maria Dengel and St Pope John XXIII

See Appendix 3

The Personal Story

Give the young people time to reflect on their FIA journey, and to review the evidence and mini reflections they have done after each action.

Exploration Activity Ideas

Invite participants to work in groups (max 4) unless stated.

- Read the passage from 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 (Appendix 1). After considering the discussion questions, ask participants to think about the different people needed in order to run either a sports team, school, or parish. Remind pupils to include all the people involved and the role they play, however big or small. Ask participants to think about how these roles are dependent on each other and important to the team/school/parish. Participants are encouraged to illustrate their ideas through a mind map. Once completed, ask participants to present their findings to the group, drawing parallels between their findings and the lessons found in the reading from St Paul.

- Inspired by the stories of Mother Anna Dengel and/or St Pope John XXIII (Appendix 3) think about the virtues and values they possess. Write these on the virtues and values sheet (Appendix 4), putting your initials alongside those you possess too.

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You may need team mates to help you identify these. Think about how these virtues and values help us to live as members of: our family, our Church family, our worldwide family.

- Select a quote from Pope Francis (Appendix 2) and highlight the lessons the Holy Father wants to teach us e.g. to be a witness, to build a better world. Next write down ways you can live out these lessons e.g. lead a prayer time, to plan a school or parish event that brings people together. Speak to your FIA leader about making one or more of your ideas a reality.

Understanding Activity Ideas

Invite participants to work in groups (max 4) unless stated.

- Read and reflect on the Catechism of the Catholic Church quote (Appendix 2). Highlight the words and phrases that are important to you all. Create a slogan from this quote and set it in a poster. The poster should contain words and images that help people see themselves as members of God's worldwide family.
- View the film Missio in Malawi: Pirimiti Boys **missio.org.uk/films/** At the end of the film, discuss the how Missio and Mission Together helps us to work together as God's family to support our brothers and sisters around the world. Then, on post it notes write a prayer for the boys at the Primiti Boarding House and stick these onto a Mission Together or Missio Red Box (this can be presented at the closing liturgy).
- Read the passage from the Gospel of St Matthew (Appendix 1). After considering the questions, write a list of all the lessons Jesus wanted to teach us through this reading e.g. reverence, fairness. Then as a group, create a short Gospel drama that includes all these lessons. After 20 minutes present your drama to all present.

Reflection Activity Ideas

These tasks can be undertaken in groups or as personal reflections.

- Inspired by the Pope Francis quote (Appendix 2) beginning, 'By your witness to the Good News of Jesus', write a poem/song/prayer, that 'helps draw all God's children closer together'.
- Mission Together's prayer is an acrostic that spells out the word 'mission'. Write your own acrostic prayer for God's family, that spells out the word 'family'.
- Carefully watch and listen to the short film 'Sr Sonia's Journey' **missio.org.uk/films/** Remembering that the Latin word for family means servant, pay attention to the different ways Sr Sonia serves the people of Lisanjala. Write these ways down on the sheet provided (Appendix 5), then think of how you can serve in similar ways too.

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Liturgy

Invite participants to sit in a circle. In the centre place a candle, an image of Christ or crucifix, a Mission Together or Missio red box, and if possible, a globe.

Ask a participant to light the candle, then all make the sign of the cross together. Spend a short time in silence to prepare for prayer. To avoid distractions, ask participants to close their eyes or focus on the candle flame.

> *Today's reflection point has been about belonging to God's worldwide family and belonging to our universal Church family. One very important prayer that reminds us of this is based upon the reading we'll hear now, taken from the Gospel of St Matthew.*

Invite a participant to read Matthew 6:7-13 (or have lines read by different participants).

Hand the globe to a participant and ask them to hold it for a few seconds before passing it onto the person on their right. They are to do the same. While the globe passes round the group, ask the participants to reflect upon the following words:

> *As members of God's human family our lives are bound together with the 7.7 billion people who share our home planet. Jesus taught us to see each one as children of our Father, made in God's image, all worthy of the things we need to live well; food, forgiveness, fairness, faith, love.*
>
> *1.2 billion of these people are Catholics and so belong to our Church family too. We are bound together with these 1.2 billion Catholics in a special way. Together we are Christ's body on earth. We all share his body and blood in Communion at Mass and we are all sent by Jesus to share God's love with all his children everywhere.*

When the globe has been passed round the group, invite participants to hold hands with those at either side. Tell the group:

> *Through our prayers, loving actions and through the charities Missio and Mission Together, it's as if we are holding hands with our brothers and sisters around the world and reminding people everywhere that we are all part of God's universal family.*

Invite participants who have written prayers/poems/songs to share their words now.

After the contributions, invite participants to share one lesson each from today's session.

Thank participants for contributing, then conclude with the Our Father. Invite participants to say the prayer with their hands open, palms facing the sky.

Our open hands remind us that our Father belongs to everyone, and that as Pope Francis once said, 'Our hands are a symbol for our hearts and only open, generous hearts can change the world.'

Make the sign of the cross together.

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A reading from the Gospel of St Matthew 6: 7-13

Jesus said to his followers, 'In your prayers do not babble as some do, for they think that by using many words they will make themselves heard. Do not be like them; your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

So you should pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be held holy, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.

And do not put us to the test but save us from the Evil One.'

The Gospel of the Lord

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 12:12-27

Our bodies have many parts and the many parts make up one body. So it is with the 'body' of Christ.

The eye can never say to the hand, 'I don't need you.'

The head can't say to the feet, 'I don't need you.'

God has put the body together in such a way that all the parts need each other; with special care given to the parts that seem less important.

Now, all of you together form the body of Christ, and every one of you is a separate and important part of it.

The Word of the Lord

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Catechism of the Catholic Church: CCC2792

If we pray the Our Father from our hearts, we accept God's love, and God's love frees us from our selfishness. The 'our' and the 'us' of the Lord's Prayer include everyone. If we say the Our Father and mean the words, we are united with one another.

'By your witness to the Good News of Jesus, you can help God's dream to come true. You can help to draw all God's children closer together, so that they can grow in unity and learn what it is for the entire world to live in peace as one great family.'

'Young people… be active members! Play down the field, build a better world, a world of brothers and sisters, a world of justice, of love, of peace, of brotherhood, of unity.'

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Lives of holy men and women: Mother Anna Dengel

Anna Maria Dengel was born in 1892. She belonged to a large family of four brothers and sisters, and four half-brothers and sisters. She was a happy child with lots of energy who sometimes found it hard to stick to rules!

Sadly, when Anna was nine her mother died. As the eldest she did her best to care for her younger siblings, but Anna's own sadness eventually made her ill too. Slowly she recovered, but her experience of illness, loss, care and healing left a huge impression on Anna.

After her recovery, Anna was enrolled in a boarding school. The school was run by an order of Religious Sisters. The Sisters expected a great deal from the pupils. School days were long and subjects difficult. But with the Sisters' help, Anna rose to the challenge.

As well as subjects like Maths and English, the Sisters also taught the pupils about missionaries and the many countries in which missionaries shared God's love. Anna pondered over ways she could do the same. For a while she thought this might be as a teacher and after leaving school this is what Anna did, but in her twenties she discovered what her vocation – that is her calling from God – was.

One day Anna heard an appeal from a missionary called Dr Agnes McLaren. Dr McLaren was looking for female doctors to help poor Muslim women in Pakistan who, because of their culture, were unable to be treated by men. Anna responded immediately and quickly began training to become a doctor.

In 1919 she qualified and a year later travelled to Pakistan. For four years she served as the only female doctor to 10,000 sick women and children! Anna knew she needed more women to help. But Anna also felt God was calling her to become a Religious Sister. At that time it wasn't possible to be both a Religious Sister and a doctor, so Anna was faced with a problem – to which she devised a solution!

Inspired by Dr McLaren and helped by friends and supporters, Anna appealed to the Church leaders in Rome requesting that they allow her to become a Religious Sister, continue working as a doctor and set up a new society called the Medical Mission Sisters. This society would be made up of Religious Sisters who were also qualified doctors and nurses. They would travel all over the world to care for the poor and sick. In this way they would serve God's family and share Christ's love as special medical missionaries.

Due to her determination, faith and skills, the Church leaders eventually agreed. As founder of the Society of Catholic Medical Missionaries, today known as Medical Mission Sisters (MMS), Mother Anna, as she became known, reminded people everywhere that as well as caring for our own families at home, we must care for God's universal family too.

Today the Medical Mission Sisters have doctors and nurses serving the sick and poor around the world. Thanks to them millions of people have been cared for and cured. That – she believed – was her society's mission. Over the years Mother Anna has certainly fulfilled her goal, 'To bring Christ into the world, into whatever part we go and wherever we are.'

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Lives of holy men and women: St Pope John XXIII

St Pope John XXIII was born Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli in 1881 into a family of poor farmers. He had 12 brothers and sisters. At school he was known as a hard-working student with a strong faith. So it was no surprise when after finishing school he joined the local seminary. A seminary is a college where Catholic men train to become priests.

In 1904, at the age of 23, Angelo was ordained a priest. At the start of World War One he enlisted in the army, first as a field hospital assistant then military chaplain. Fr Angelo's time at war encouraged his pursuit of peace and unity.

After the war Fr Angelo was asked to become Italy's director of Missio. Missio is the Pope's own charity. It shares God's love by encouraging people to pray and share to support others around the world who are poor or in need. Mission Together is the children's branch of Missio. As director of Missio, Fr Angelo helped people see themselves as members of God's worldwide family.

After four years as director of Missio, Fr Angelo was made the Pope's diplomat. A diplomat is a person whose job it is to handle relations with the governments of other countries. Diplomats must be thoughtful and wise, able to resolve disagreements and encourage people – sometimes from different cultures and backgrounds – to work together.

After Fr Angelo's success as the Pope's diplomat he was made a cardinal. A cardinal is a senior leader in the Catholic Church. Even though this was a very important role, Cardinal Angelo continued to live a humble life and was always grateful for what he already had. He showed great love for all the people in his care, especially those living in poverty.

Just before his 78th birthday, to everyone's surprise, Cardinal Angelo was elected pope. He adopted the name John XXIII. The Pope is successor of St Peter, who Jesus selected to lead his Church.

Many thought that Pope John's leadership of the Church would be uneventful. But they were wrong! He organised an historic meeting of Catholic bishops and cardinals from around the world. He even invited leaders of other Christian churches and faiths too. Pope John wanted to build unity and understanding, as this would help the world move closer to the Kingdom Jesus asks us to create.

The meeting, called the Second Vatican Council, reminded Catholics that they are members of a worldwide family, God's family. And as members who have chosen to follow the teachings of God's son Jesus, they belong to another family too, our universal Church family.

Pope John helped people to see that our role in all the families we belong to, is to love and serve one another as God's children. He encouraged this thinking by writing a very important letter to all the people in the world, called 'Peace on Earth'.

Because of his efforts to foster world peace and for his love and respect for all people, he was admired around the world and given the nickname 'the Good Pope'.
Pope John XXIII died in 1963. He was made a saint by Pope Francis in 2014 and is buried in a simple tomb in St Peter's Basilica, Rome.

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Write alongide the images below the virtues and values Mother Anna and St Pope John XXIII practised. Put your initials alongside those virtues and values you practise too.

Example virtues: hope, humility, wisdom, love, faith, truth

Example values: compassion, service, kindness, forgiveness, gratefulness

Mother Anna Maria Dengel

St Pope John XXIII

Think about how these virtues and values help us to live as members of: our family, our Church family, our worldwide family. Write one idea for each family below e.g. for ***your*** family you could write: being grateful reminds me to say thank you after every meal.

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Write alongide the image of Sr Sonia the different ways she serves the people of Lisanjala.

Now write down how you can serve in similar ways too. Try to come up with an idea for every type of service Sr Sonia provides e.g. Sr Sonia asked the villagers, 'What help do you need?' I could ask people in my class who are struggling, 'How can I help you?'

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