



FORMATION SESSION 6:

'Contemplatives in Action': refer btewk.com.au

There are many different approaches to formation as well as stages or phases that participants experience while engaged in formation. The overall goal is to assist leaders to be confident and competent in guiding and directing their ministries. A critical element in effective leadership formation for MAM is to realize that it is beyond theory and focused on the lived experience of mission and ministry. It involves information and understanding of content yet goes beyond this to elicit commitment to lived values... Extract from MAM Leadership Framework.

The relationship between the Foundational Christian story of Jesus, the Mary Aikenhead tradition and the evolving spirit of Mary Aikenhead Ministries, should be consistent in the delivery of all mission formation programs in accordance with our commitment to the preferential option for the poor.

The principles, which guide mission development, are forward-looking and engage in the three levels of story: the Enduring story of God through Jesus, the Expressive story of Mary Aikenhead and the Evolving story of the Spirit alive in the hearts of those engaged in the service through Mary Aikenhead Ministries. Mission formation is an important and ongoing priority in the context of Mary Aikenhead Education Australia; it is central to who we are and what we do. ... Extract from the MAEA Formation Policy

	Program and Focus	Guide Notes
Welcome Setting the Scene - Scripture Mk 6: 30-36 15 min	Leader: This session intended as invitational, providing the space to be forward-looking and to reflect on the story you/ we are part of. This is a place of trust. Leader: This dimension is about Ignatian Spirituality which is at the heart of the Sisters of Charity and was chosen by Mary Aikenhead to foster reflective, prayerful and faith filled relationships with God and others at the same time as being purposeful in the service of others, particularly those in need. From btewk: <i>From their foundation, the congregation of the Sisters of Charity had a strong connection to Ignatian Spirituality. In a Mary Aikenhead Ministries 'College, that spirituality finds expression in the relationship between the individual, God and the world. Ignatian Spirituality tells us that God is an active God, and that we are called by Christ to be active with God in and for our world...The fruit of our contemplative effort is action, action which brings to reality the presence of God in our world and the love of Christ for all.</i> Resource 1: Reflect and discuss how we understand 'Contemplatives in Action' from Mark's scripture	

For reflection and discussion: 20-25 min	Resource 2: Richard Rohr offers us his insights and reflections on this dimension. Invite all to read - discuss in pairs and then share 1-2 points per pair. <i>What insights does this piece uncover for you? How is this so?</i>	
Heritage and Story – Informing the present and future... 15 min	Refer 'Collaboration' - Ministry of Love pages 106-107 Click here <i>'Contemplatives in Acton' - how are we being called today?</i>	
Concluding comment 5 min	Leader: <i>Invite participants to sit quietly for a couple of minutes: Ponder today's discussion and reflections as you collectively lead and serve your college.</i>	
Reflection. 5 min	Resource 3: The Soul of Time...	

Reference Material:	
Bible Mary Aikenhead Ministries' Vision, Values and Mission <i>By this Everyone Will Know...</i> https://www.btewk.com.au/ Ministry of Love pages 106-107 Richard Rohr: Contemplation: A Life's Journey	

Resource 1:

The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat." But he answered them, "You give them something to eat."

Mark 6: 30-36

In what ways does this scripture speak to you about being 'contemplatives in action.'?

Contemplative Activists

Resource 2:

Contemplation: A Life's Journey

I believe that the combination of human action from a contemplative centre is the greatest art form, one that takes our whole lives to master. When action and contemplation are united, we have beauty, symmetry, and transformation—lives and actions that heal the world by their very presence. Jesus is the perfect example of this, but we can also point to the lives of many saints, mystics, teachers, and even people we know who share this gift.

For most people, the process begins on the side of action. We learn, we experiment, we do, we stumble, we fall, we break, and we find. Gradually, our thoughts and actions become more mature, but it is only when we begin to question our own viewing “platform” that we begin to move into the realm of contemplation. The contemplative side of the soul will reveal itself when we begin to ask, “How can I listen for God and learn God’s voice? How can I use my words and actions to expand and not to contract? How can I keep my heart, mind, and soul open, even ‘in hell’?”

Contemplation is a way to bring heaven to earth, but it begins with a series of losses, largely of our illusions. If we do not enter the learning process deeply, with curiosity and openness, we will use our words and actions to defend ourselves. We will seek to protect ourselves from our shadow and build a leaden cover over our soul and our unconscious. We will settle for being right instead of being whole and holy, for saying prayers instead of *being* prayer.

True contemplation is really quite down to earth and practical. It does not require life in a monastery. It is, however, an utterly different way of receiving the moment, and therefore all of life. In order to have the capacity to move the world, we need some “social distancing” and detachment from the diversions and delusions of mass culture and our false self. Contemplation builds on the hard bottom of reality—as it is—without ideology, denial, the contemporary mood, or fantasy.

The reason why the true contemplative-in-action is still somewhat rare is that most of us are experts in dualistic thinking. And then we try to use this limited thinking tool for prayer, problems, and relationships. It cannot get us very far. *We cannot grow in the great art form of action and contemplation without a strong tolerance for ambiguity, an ability to allow, forgive, and contain a certain degree of anxiety, and a willingness to not know—and not even need to know. This is how we allow and encounter Mystery*

Gateway to Action & Contemplation:

What word or phrase resonates with or challenges me? What sensations do I notice in my body? What is mine to do?

Adapted from Richard Rohr, [*Dancing Standing Still: Healing the World from a Place of Prayer*](#) (Paulist Press: 2014) 1, 2,
Sunday, July 12, 2020

Resource 3:

The Soul of Time...

That your soul may live

In the cycles it needs.

That time may work its wisdom in you.

Repetition, return, reverie, and rest:

May the heart of each moment open top you.

May time spiral well for you,

leading you around and around yet again

to the landscapes where remembering

offers redemption and grace.

That the holy will haunt you.

That the terrain of your days will give way to God

Each moment. Each step.

Each circling and turning.

Every breath an opening

tearing the veil.

May your journey through this day

offer a thin, thin place

where heaven and earth meet

and time falls away.

In the choices of your past,

in the choices of your present,

in the choices yet to come:

the God of wisdom in habit you

and inspire the way you go.

Jan L. Richardson, *In the Sanctuary of Women*