# **GOSPEL EXERCISES**

# **Writing Letters to Gospel People**

### Come to Know yourself better by reflecting on the mistakes of others

#### Intent of the exercise

- ✓ Bible study
- ✓ Self discovery and self knowledge.
- ✓ *Growing honest to ourselves.*
- ✓ Acceptance of our failures.

<u>:</u>

### Note for the Moderator - Dynamics of this Exercise

- 1. The participants are requested to pick <u>one person</u> found in the Gospel narrative whose behavior they do not approve (For instance; <u>Peter, Pilate, Herod, The Pharisees, The Soldiers, The Tax collectors, The Prodigal Son, The Elder Son, The Rich Man of Lazarus story, The would-be followers of Jesus, Herodias, Annas and Caifas, The Bad thief, The Tax Collectors, The Unforgiving Servant, etc...</u>
- 2. Next, they are told to write a "frank" letter to that person and tell him/her how they feel about him/her, point out their shortcomings and defects, and give them some advice on how to improve,
- 3. After sharing their letters with the group, the participants are asked to re-address the letters to themselves (as if a third person had written the letters them)
- 4. Next, they are asked to read the letters now addressed to them very attentive and be attuned to their feelings.
- 5. Often enough, in their letters, the participants unconsciously, criticize the very defects and negative qualities they dislike in themselves.
- **6.** This exercise besides helping the participants to learn about the persons of the Gospel's narratives has a good potential for self-disclosure thus helping them to self-knowledge.

### **PROCEDURE:**

### 1. Introductory Session.

- ✓ Meeting the participants.
- ✓ Explaining the nature of the exercise. (*Do not disclose the self-revelatory potential of the exercise*)
- ✓ Singing hymns and/or bhajans.
- ✓ Opening prayer.

# **2.** <u>Personal Work</u>: <u>Studying some N.T. Texts and writing personal letters Instructions to the participants</u>

- 1. Indicate the N.T. texts to be studied and the persons in those texts to be considered.
- 2. Ask the participants to choose from among them, the one they dislike most and study his character or behavior, namely; his strong and weak points, virtues and mistakes
- **3.** Now, let them imagine that the persons they have chosen are still alive and can be reached by letter....
- **4.** Finally, tell the participants to write a letter to the persons they chose In their letters they should tell them, as frankly as they can, what sort of persons they are, describe them as they see them, their character, manners, attitudes, etc. What their virtues and vices are...
- **5.** The participants, In their letters, should feel free to tell them what they like or dislike in them... They may praise them or criticize them, approve or reprove, encourage or rebuke...
- **6.** They will have (10 to 15) minutes to write their letters.

# 3. Group Session.

- ✓ The participants, by turn, will read aloud their letters to their group members.
- ✓ Next, clarifications, comments and discussion will follow.
- ✓ Discussion and questioning on personal matters will not be entertained.
- ✓ Moderator be alert to any cues that may come from the participants' sharing pointing at some negative traits of theirs.

### 4. Personal Reflection Form

At the close of the group session give to the participants, copies of the **Personal Reflection Form** found below here.

Ask them to follow the instructions given therein. You may explain the instructions by word of mouth.

# **Personal Reflection Form**

Instructions on how to use this form.

## PART ONE: Re-directing or re-addressing your Letter

#### **Instructions**

- **1.** Go anywhere where you can be all alone by yourseves
- 2. There, read aloud the letter you have written
- **3.** Next, read them a second time, now however. Instead of addressing your letter to Peter or Pilate or Judas or to any other Gospel person, change the addressee.
- **4.** Address it now, personally to yourself. Imagine that someone else has written that letter to you.
- **5.** Wherever the name of Peter, Pilate, Judas or any other is mentioned in your letter substitute it with your own name!

- **6.** Now, aloud and slowly, read that letter addressed to you......once, twice, three times...
- **7.** While you read that letter, now addressed to you, be aware of your feelings and insights.

### PART TWO. Personal Reflections

After, you read your letter reflectively a few times over, reflect on the questions below: (*Put our reflections in writing*)"

- 1. Does the letter you wrote tell you something of yourself? What is that?
- 2. What makes you say so? Recall some instances of your life?
- **3.** Are you not also a "mini" Pilate, or a "mini" Judas ", or a "mini" Peter, or a "mini" Pharisee, or a "mini" whatever?
- **4.** Have you discovered something about yourself?
- **5.** Write down the feelings you had while reading your letter, and of insights you gained about yourself.

<u>My feelings</u> :	
1	_
2	
3	
4	
My Insights	
1	
2	
3	
4	

## 5. General Session: Sharing and Input.

### a) Sharing

- ✓ Participants will be invited to share their experiences. (*They are free to share only what they feel comfortable to share*)
- ✓ Try to elicit from the group members, reactions to the following points: :
  - 1) What did you feel while reading your letters?
  - 2) What did you learn today about yourselves?
  - 3) How, what you learned today will help you in your future?

### (b) Input

### Build the input from the following sources:

- ✓ From the participants' sharing.
- ✓ Ideas, topics and items that came up for clarification and discussion.
- ✓ You own ideas.

### ✓ Suggested thoughts:

We dislike in others what we dislike in ourselves.

We blame others for what we should blame ourselves.

We project our failures, shortcomings and weaknesses on others.

By criticizing others for the very same defects we have ourselves, we, unconsciously may be looking for a sort of "vicarious" satisfaction.

In one way or other, any criticism of others implies "self-criticism"

We have to accept ourselves as we are if we want to improve ourselves.

Yet, in order accept ourselves, the first thing we have to have, is self-knowledge, a thing we loath.

No man is good or bad, he is human! We are all fallible human beings...

# 6 . Closing Group Prayer.

Close the event with an active participatory prayer service.

It can be a prayer meeting, or a Para-liturgical service,

Get all the participants involved in the preparation and execution of the group prayer service