

## **WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?**

### **Aims of these notes:**

- ✓ *To discover that life has a meaning*
- ✓ *Once we know the meaning of our life, we can live happily anyhow.*
- ✓ *All men and women have a vocation, a task to accomplish in their life.*
- ✓ *In order to accomplish that task, right attitudes and dispositions are required. .*

### **Use of these Notes:**

- ✓ *Vocational events*
- ✓ *Talks, Sermons, Catechism.*
- ✓ *Prayer services.*

### **Target Audience:**

- ✓ *All audiences.*

## **1. Introduction**

- Singing of hymns and/ or bhajans.
- Opening prayer.

## **WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?**

### **A PARABLE**

**Narrator:** Mr. Inquisitive never idled away any time in his life. He was forever hanging around the town, poking his nose into other people's affairs. While on his inquisitive trail, one day, he stopped at a construction site. He spoke to one of the workers.

### **FIRST PART:**

**Inquisitive:** Hey, can you tell me something?

**Worker:** About what?

**Inquisitive:** About? What are you doing here?

**Worker:** What am I doing here? Can't you see!. Working like a donkey. Carrying bricks, cement! Up and down this damn scaffold... A thousand times a day. You want to work here?

**Inquisitive:** No.... No...

**Worker:** It's not worth it at all working like this; scorched by the sun in summer, soaked to the bone in rain and shivering with cold in winter. That's my life, if you can call it that! I am just fed up! There's nothing else I can do, you know.

**Inquisitive:** Hmmm....Hmmm....

**Narrator:** Mr. Poke found this kind of interviewing very interesting. Next he stepped into Mrs. Singh's kitchen.

**Inquisitive:** Good morning, Mrs. Singh, surprise, surprise!

**Mrs Singh:** What is it you want here?

**Inquisitive:** Well, if I may be permitted to ask you: What are you doing here?

**Mrs. Singh:** Can you not see me here in my misfortune and misery? Look man, look... day in, day out, the same thing from morn to night: rolling chapattis, grinding masala, washing utensils, filling up water!

**Inquisitive:** Well

**Mrs Singh:** Well, what? and all this for whom? And what do I get from it all? An aching back!

**Inquisitive:** Don't your husband and children ever help you in your work?

**Mrs Singh:** My husband to help... me?! Help to eat, yes! Most ungrateful man after all I've done. For him! And to add to it, those greedy brats around, they give me hell here.

**Inquisitive:** But that's marriage.

**Mrs Singh:** Don't tell me, Mister... I tell you: Better not to get married.

**Inquisitive:** Yes... yes...

**Mrs Singh:** Save yourself the trouble; where is all the joy and happiness of marriage? In the books... Right? Can you call this, life? Now you know what I'm doing here?

**Inquisitive:** yes... yes...

**Narrator:** He was up and gone out of sight before anything could get hurled at him.

**Inquisitive:** Ahh... now let's see what this youngster has to say, young people understand much more of life than some grown-ups. Sonny, can you tell me what you are doing here?

**Youngster:** Get lost, man... I'm telling you... don't you come here now to tell me or ask me anything like that: What am I doing here?! Sitting and warming up this blooming seat you see. Mugging and cramming things I can't understand, doing home-works one after the other, just to please one Miss and another Sir and then they don't believe I did it. You copied it! They say.

**Inquisitive:** Too bad... I see...

**Youngster:** Now you see, but they don't see. I've had enough of this.

## **SECOND PART**

**Narrator:** He hastened off... the undaunted Nosy Poker. He just had to go on and on

**Inquisitive:** There, I knew. I'll find another worker here. Let's see. Hey! Can you tell me what you are doing here?

**Worker:** Oh...I am working here. I sweat it out, all day long, supplying sand, stones, and bricks to the masons to do their work. Some times the weather makes it all the more difficult. At the end of the day I get my pay, that makes me happy, that means a lot for my wife and children for tomorrow's needs.

**Inquisitive:** That's nice to hear.

**Worker:** Yes, my wife and children, they do so much for me! So I do all my work for them. It's worth living for them... Don't you think so?

**Inquisitive:** Oh yes, yes.

**Narrator:** Inquisitive was roused to see if he could find more such people exist. It might make good statistics some day and pay off. He decided to interview another housewife.

**Inquisitive:** Excuse me, Mrs. Chacko, am I interrupting your work?

**Mrs Chacko:** Not at all.

**Inquisitive:** Mrs. Chacko, what are you doing here?

**Mrs Chacko:** I am doing what most mothers do. Cooking for my husband who is at work and for my children. I know that they enjoy the food I cook for them.

**Inquisitive:** But are you not tired of doing this everyday? Is it not a boring task?

**Mrs. Chacko** It is... in a way... yes... very monotonous. But frankly, I like it and I can even say I love it.

**Inquisitive:** How can you like this drab routine? I can't understand.

**Mrs. Chacko:** I love my husband and I love my children. They are wonderful! They go all out to please me and help me. I can't live without them. I feel happy just to be with them. That's life for me. It's worth living and working hard for them.

**Narrator:** As Inquisitive looked through the window of the kitchen he saw small Jimmy Chacko studying. So, there he went.

**Inquisitive:** Jimmy, my boy, what are you doing here?

**Jimmy:** I am studying.

**Inquisitive:** You love to study Jimmy? Don't you?

**Jimmy:** No! I like to play.

**Inquisitive:** Then why sit here? Go and play outside.

**Jimmy:** I love Mum and Dad! I want to make them happy. They want me to study.

**Inquisitive:** So you are happy then, studying your lessons?

**Jimmy:** Oh yes... I'm very happy! If I study everybody is happy, me too!

### **THIRD PART**

**Narrator:** With a happy heart... Inquisitive proceeded, never satisfied. Back he went to the construction site and approached a third worker.

**Inquisitive:** Hay you... Tell me... What are you doing here?

**Worker:** What am I doing here? Look up... look up... there you have the answer. See this wonderful column I am building.

**Inquisitive:** You seem to be very happy and cheerful, I see.

**Worker:** Yes... and why not! I am building a Church for God!

**Inquisitive:** But isn't the work you are doing here heavy and taxing on your health?

**Worker:** That's how it is for you. For me, I enjoy it. I am building God's house here for people to come and worship Him. So much praise will be given God here by those who will come to pray. It is great to live and work for God.

**Narrator:** Those last words touched Mr. Inquisitive to the quick but were not enough to make him stop. He saw a poor man's door open, so he peeped inside to see. He saw a poor housewife. She was singing.

**Inquisitive:** How come, good lady, singing in the kitchen?

**Lady:** The Kitchen is my place of worship. It's my temple and my church. I am singing the praises of God right here!

**Inquisitive:** Right here, in the middle of your cooking? Isn't that job tiresome and dull?

**Lady:** Not at all, my friend. I enjoy cooking for my husband and children. This helps my husband and children to grow and with God's grace to become His good children in our world today.

**Inquisitive:** Oh I see...

**Lady:** Yes. In my own little way, I am helping to build the living temple of God.- God's family on earth - That is why I am happy and can sing along while I do this work.

**Inquisitive:** What sort of temple, what sort of Church is this you are talking about?

**Lady:** You don't seem to understand. My kitchen is the Church, my house is the Church, the town is the Church, the world is the Church, yes, the Church of God, the temple of God! That's why I sing and clap.

**Inquisitive:** Oh... now I understand!

**Narrator:** Mr. Inquisitive left the lady half wondering whether she was in her senses or not. He was confused. That was enough for the day. As he hurried home he chanced to see a poor young man studying beneath a street light. He could not refrain from asking him his only question.

**Inquisitive:** My dear young man, what are you doing here under that street light?

**Young man:** I am getting ready.

**Inquisitive:** Getting ready! For what/? For your exams?

**Young man:** Yes, exams and much more, I want to build a better world for all people. I am getting ready to build the Kingdom of God here on this earth, right now!

**Inquisitive:** Are you quiet sure; you are going to build the Kingdom of God?

**Young man:** Yes...surely..... If I don't start doing something good now to build God's Kingdom, I will never do it later.

**Inquisitive:** But look here, how can you study under this miserable light? It must be very painful and trying.

**Young man:** When I know that someday, somehow, somewhere I will be what I am born to be, to love and serve Him and others, the rest doesn't matter at all.

**Inquisitive:** And just how do you know that? How do you know what you are born to be?

**Young man:** My heart tells me, and I believe it. If I follow what it tells me, I will be happy and the world will be better and happier for it and when I die, I will know that I have really lived.

## **2, Reflection Questionnaire: Personal Work.**

### **Instructions:**

*Go over the following questions, reflect on them and take some notes on them.*

1. What are the differences between the replies of the first set of persons, (i.e. the desperate coolie, Mrs Singh, and the angry boy) and those of the second set of people, (i.e. the contented worker, Mrs. Chacko and Jimmy)?

2. What are the differences between the replies of the second set of people and those of the third set? (i.e. the happiest worker, the poor woman singing in the kitchen and the boy studying beneath the street light.)
3. With what person or persons in the story do you identify most? Why?
4. Why did the same work and occupation bring joy to some and misery to others?
5. Can we always find happiness in what “we have” to do? How?
6. What difference it makes in life to have or not have a reason to live?
7. What would you call the work God wants us to do in life? A task? A job? An assignment? A vocation? An imposition? A punishment? Or anything else? Why?
8. What’s your propose in life?
9. What do you want to give and what do you want to get from life?
10. How can we find out the job, work, task or vocation God wants each one of us do in life?
11. Explain the following sentences
  - If you cannot do what you like, like what you do
  - Happiness is an inside job
  - Do not search for happiness anywhere, it is already there.
  - If you see things dark, or red, or green change the color of your glasses.
  - The happiness you will get in life is commensurate to the one you gave to others. ..
  - The crop you will get from life will be according to the seed you plant.
  - Change your inner glasses and the world will look different.
  - Ant hills seen at a close distance, look like mountains, mountains seen from far, look like ant hills.
12. Any other lessons we can draw from this story for our lives?

### **3. Group Sharing and discussion.**

The participants will share in groups their reflections and answers.

### **4. Teaching or input.**

#### **a) Importance of proper attitudes towards life and work:**

- Happiness is not outside us; it is within us.
- The same work, the same type of life can bring joy to one and or sadness to another; all depends on our inner attitudes; or on how we view life and work.
- We cannot change, at will, our health, our social status, our family, our economic condition, the circumstances of life. But we can change the way we look at things.
- We have the power to transform them, ny transcending them!

#### **b) We need to find meaning in life:**

- Life without meaning is crushing, drab, exasperating and brutish.
- Life without meaning is not worth living, it leads to satiety, disgust and despair.
- Life with meaning is bearable, lovable and satisfying. Nietzsche said: “If you know the why of life, you can live anyhow”.

- Let us find “meaning in life”. We are Christians; Christ brought meaning to our lives.

c). **Life is to be lived not for oneself but for God and others.**

- The first set of three people of the story felt desperate because they never thought of others, but only of themselves. They were locked in the narrow prison of their “egos”, that’s why they found life hopeless, hateful. They cursed themselves for being born.
- The second set of the people because they thought of others found their life brighter and joyous.
- We have to escape the prison of our self-centeredness and go out to others in service if we want to find joy in life.
- The third set of people, besides thinking of others, brought God into the landscape of their lives and so, life for them was radiant, promising, full, satisfying and worth living.
- In order to bring others and God into our lives, read the Good News. What’s the message of Christ in the Gospel? Luke 10:25-28.

d). **The full meaning of life is to be found in the joyous living of our vocation**

- Vocation means to live life in the place and in the circumstances God wants us to be and doing exactly what God wants us to do.
- Vocation means to be just that sort of person God called us to be.
- Vocation implies to live our human life to the fullest, accepting all that is human: beauty love, affection, self-assertion, self actualization
- Over and above being fully human , we should also be truly divine, imbued with the evangelical values Christ preached, :such as: love of God, charity, humility, self-sacrifice, worship, dedication to build the kingdom of God on earth.
- Vocation means to place ourselves and all our human potential at the feet of Christ. May use us as he wishes.

e) **Everybody has a vocation in life.**

- Some people think that only priests and sisters have a vocation in life.
- The coolie, the poor house-wife, the student of the story, all had a vocation as much as a priest, sister, and bishop or the pope himself! No one is left out in the plan of God.
- To build a stone Church for God, coolies are required, as much as architects and supervisors, engineers and stone cutters.
- In a similar way, to build the living temple of God, which we call the Church the kingdom of God on earth, coolies, priests, house-wives, students, missionaries, sisters, doctors, teachers, married men, etc. are wanted.
- The purpose of living and working in this world is the same for all, the only difference is in the type of job we do, or the place we occupy in life.
- That particular place; to be a coolie; or a priest: a house-wife or a sister; a doctor or a missionary, an office man or a social worker; a steno or a teacher; is what we call a “particular vocation or “special call”

f) **All of us have to discern both, our place, the why of our life on earth.**

- In order to find out which is our place and the why of our life - namely, our vocation – we need, prayer, thinking, guidance, and generosity
- The most important thing of is “**generosity**” namely, the willingness to surrender to God “our all”. (Matthew 19:16-22.)

## **5. Group Activities:** (Optional, time permitting.)

### **Preparation.**

Each small group will take one of the main thoughts that came up for discussion;

- Importance of proper attitudes towards life and work.
- Need to find meaning in life.
- Life is to be lived for God and for others.
- Vocation gives joy and meaning to life.
- Everybody has a vocation.
- All have to discern their own vocation.
- The goal of our actions is more important than the actions themselves.

Activities suggested are

Role-play Debate Case Study Bible Study Photo Story Poster Making  
Slogan Competition, Etc.

### **Presentation**

After each group presentation a short discussion and analysis of the same may follow.

## **6. Closing Prayer Session:**

- End the exercise with a common shared prayer session
- Fitting Bible Quotes for the prayer sessions could be:
- 1 Co 12/12-31 and Ro 12/4-13 **We all are members of one single body, the body of Christ. All of us build the Church the universal Family of God on earth.**