

SPIRIT OF PASTORAL CARE

Tasting Exercise

You have not strengthened the weak, you have not healed the sick, you have not bound up the injured, you have not brought back the strayed, you have not sought the lost, but with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, says the Lord God. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak. I will feed them with justice.¹

I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love, because you have seen my affliction; you have taken heed of my adversities, Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress; my eye wastes away from grief, my soul and body also. For my life is spent with sorrow, and my years with sighing; my strength fails because of my misery, and my bones waste away.²

Those judged to be lacking in the care of God will ask, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?' Then God will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'³

1. Touch **I hold a simple piece of food – symbol of Pastoral Care.**

I hold a simple piece of food, like bread, as a symbol of pastoral care. Pastoral comes from the Latin root 'pascere' (to feed), and thus to sustain and nurture.

I consider the hunger of people suffering discrimination, injustice or crisis, the thirst of those burdened with grief or anger, the famine of those seeking lost family members, the want of the alienated or vulnerable. Then there are those yearn to taste celebration at a time of birth, marriage, funeral, anniversary or cultural holiday.

Who would I add to those needing pastoral care?

2. Story **I share a small story of pastoral care.**

I remember a small story of pastoral care, of myself, or of one I serve. I share it in a circle of friends, listening to each story, feeling the heart of pastoral care.

3. Desire **I ask the Spirit for Pastoral Care.**

I read the prayer texts about the many needs for pastoral care and God's certainty that the least of his people should all be cared for when lost, injured, distressed or wasted.

I ask the Spirit to be a pastoral carer, to accompany, love and nurture the vulnerable.

4. Mystery **I live in the Caring Trinity.**

I imagine I am surrounded by the Caring Trinity. Father, Jesus and Spirit, address me by name, saying, 'Care for the perishing, heal the maimed, or nourish the least'.

But how do I care for the needs of so many? How do I care with so little means myself? Why does my heart care? I ponder such questions in the mystery of the Caring Trinity.

5. Caring **I breathe in the Spirit of Pastoral Care.**

I imagine the Spirit of Pastoral Care breathing friendship, kinship and fellowship with the least into me. I breathe them in deep, pause, then breathe them out to nurture those needing pastoral care. I repeat as desired – breathing, befriending, caring.

I conclude, with thanks, ready to offer what I have, or can give, to pastoral care.

PRAYER TIME: 30-40 minutes.

¹ Ez 34:4-5,15-16

² Psalm 31:7,9-10

³ Mt 25:44-45