

Every Day CATHOLIC

Suggested Group Process

Facing Life's End With Faith (G0509)

It is desirable that participants receive the publication in advance of the group gathering in order to have a chance to read it before coming together. If this is not feasible, the article and columns are short enough to be read quietly or quickly summarized as part of the process.

I. GATHERING, RELAXING, SETTLING IN (5 minutes)

II. REVIEW OF LIFE / LIFE EXPERIENCE (15 minutes)

- **Main Article: *Facing Life's End With Faith* (pp. 1 & 4)**
 - Refer to the title of the main article: *Facing Life's End With Faith*.
 - **Ask:** *When have you experienced the death of someone close to you? Was the death anticipated or sudden?* Share your thoughts and experiences with another.
- **“Making Connections” (p. 4)**
 - **Ask** the first question: *How do I feel about...?* Allow participants to express their views and experiences without judging, teaching or challenging them at this point.
 - **Invite** larger group sharing on this topic as time permits.

III. MESSAGE / DOCTRINE (50 minutes)

- **Main Article: *Facing Life's End With Faith* (pp. 1 & 4)**
 - **Invite** participants to read the main article quietly to themselves OR **Summarize** the main article.
- **“Making Connections” (p. 4)**
 - **Invite** responses to the second question: *How do my faith and...?*
- **“Putting Shoes on the Gospel” (p. 2)**
 - **Review** the profile of Sister Mary Giovanni Monge.
 - **Ask:** *What motivates Sister Giovanni in her care for the terminally ill? How might her faith help her to live daily with death?*
- **“Movie Moments” (p. 2)**
 - **View** the following clip from Chapter 3 of *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Some participants will have seen the movie, others not. Invite the group to view these clips with an eye to what they reveal to us about common attitudes and fears about dying—and living. Explain that this film depicts a young man who reconnects with a favorite college professor after 16 years. The professor, Morrie, is dying of ALS, Lou Gehrig's disease. The first clip begins as Mitch, a busy and successful sportswriter, visits with Morrie for the first time. Start the clip at Chapter 3 (0:12:49 approx.) with Mitch joining Morrie at a kitchen table and end at Chapter 3 (0:17:36 approx.) with Morrie saying...*When you know how to die, you know how to live.*
 - **Invite** comments and observations about the difference in attitude between Mitch and Morrie—concerning living and dying.

- **Ask:** *What are the things that Morrie judges to be most important in life? Is Mitch achieving success by Morrie's standards?*
- **If time permits, view** the following clip from Chapter 5 of the movie *Tuesdays with Morrie*. Explain that, since the first clip, Mitch has re-entered the busy pace of his life. He works to get the story, meet deadlines and juggle side jobs that make him more widely known. His girlfriend of six years is tired of being low on his list and has broken up with him. Mitch visits Morrie again. Start the clip at Chapter 5 (0:31:15 approx.) with Mitch asking Morrie's wife... *How does he do it, how does he stay so cheerful...* and end at Chapter 5 (0:34:57 approx.) with Mitch driving away from Morrie's home.
- **Invite** comments and observations about Mitch's lack of ease with talk of dying, feelings, touching.
- **Ask:** *Were you surprised when Mitch asked, "When can I come back?" Why or why not? What is Morrie in touch with that Mitch so desperately needs?*

IV. LIFE / FAITH CONNECTION AND RESPONSE (20 minutes)

- **"Passing On the Faith" (p. 3)**
 - **Review** the scenario and response.
 - **Invite** discussion about the topic and participants' own experiences of talking with children about death.
 - **Ask:** *What seems to be the most important message about death that we should share with the children in our lives?*
- **"Making Connections" (p. 4)**
 - **Invite** participants to consider the third question: *Commit to having...*
- **Prayer: A Little Wake (p. 3)**
 - Modify this prayer as appropriate for your group.

V. REFRESHMENTS AND SOCIAL

Additional questions for groups who view *Tuesdays with Morrie* in its entirety.

1. What is your first impression of Morrie? Is he someone you'd like to get to know better? Why or why not?
2. What is your first impression of Mitch? Is he someone you'd like to get to know better? Why or why not?
3. What happened in Mitch's life that prevented him from keeping his promise to stay in touch with Morrie after college graduation? Why doesn't Mitch keep in touch with anyone from college?
4. Morrie asks, "Why are people only comfortable when they're filling the air with words?" What commentary does this make of Mitch's life and career pursuits?
5. Morrie says, "When you know how to die, you know how to live." The converse is also true: "When you know how to live, you know how to die." How much does the way Morrie has lived his life affect his approach to his death?
6. When do you start to notice a change in Mitch as a result of his visits with Morrie?
7. In Morrie's favorite poem, W.H. Auden writes, "We must love one another or die." Apply this to your own life—are you loving or dying?
8. Do you think Morrie's attitude is unreal? Too upbeat for such a dire situation? Why or why not?

9. Morrie asks, “How can we spare people’s feelings by denying them?” Rate your own comfort with talking about death and dying.
10. Were you surprised when Mitch asked, “When can I come back?” at the end of his second visit to Morrie?
11. Do you think that Mitch started to record his conversations with Morrie because he planned to write a book? What meaning did Mitch find not only in Morrie’s lessons, but also in having Morrie’s voice deliver them?
12. Comment on what Morrie has to say about fear and running away.
13. How did Morrie’s mother’s death, his detached father and his loving stepmother all contribute to his emotional development?
14. How might your life be different if you had a bird on your shoulder saying, “Is this the day I’m going to die? Am I ready? Am I leading the life I want to lead? Am I the person I want to be?”
15. Where have you experienced the “tension of opposites” in your own life? (We learn from what hurts us as much as what loves us.)
16. How does meeting Morrie help Janine decide to give Mitch another chance?
17. Comment on Morrie’s words, “There is nothing innately shameful about being dependent.” Morrie is relatively at ease about depending on others while some people fiercely fight it. What have you been taught about dependency that colors your own view and experience of it?
18. What might Mitch have been “knocking loose” in addition to Morrie’s mucus when he helped with his massage?
19. How would you depict your perfect day? Were you surprised by Morrie’s description of his? Why or why not?
20. Morrie says, “Death ends a life, not a relationship.” How does this speak to your own experiences of losing a loved one to death? Does this ring true for you? How does it affect your feelings about your own death?

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