

Cor Session Guide

Encountering the Poor



Cover: Vincent van Gogh. *The Good Samaritan*. 1890. Oil on canvas.

About the image: The Parable of the Good Samaritan captures the essence of this session guide, which is about service to the poor and those in need. This famous parable – with its timeless message that everyone is worthy of respect and dignity if we see them through the eyes of Jesus Christ – is found in Luke 10:25-37.



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“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” – Matthew 25:40, RSVCE

Since its founding in 1882, the Knights of Columbus has been at the service of those most in need. Central to Blessed Michael McGivney’s vision for the Order was serving widows and orphans. This mission of helping the poor and those in need continues today through the efforts of Knights throughout the world.

Christ in the City is a Catholic ministry dedicated to forming missionaries, volunteers, and communities to know, love, and serve the poor, particularly the homeless. In this three-part video series, Christ in the City offers its experience in aiding the poor, to help Knights go even deeper in the service to the those in need that they already do.

The following themes will be addressed:

1. The Faces of Poverty
2. Reconciling Relationships
3. Model for Encounter

We encourage you to use all three videos in the order presented. Facilitators should watch each video prior to *Cor* to familiarize themselves with each session’s content. There is no need to use all the suggested questions; please use only what you think will be helpful for your group. Prior to the first session, facilitators are also encouraged to familiarize themselves with any existing opportunities to serve the poor and homeless through their parish and K of C council.

After the discussion questions, there is a section entitled “Council Connections+”. This optional section allows participants to reflect on how to apply the lessons from the videos, in a spirit of encounter, to their own interactions with their Brother Knights, fellow parishioners, and those they may already serve in various capacities.

Finally, on page 8, there is a short list of Faith in Action programs that your council can organize to serve your community. These are opportunities to put into action what you learn through the videos and discussions.

For more information about Christ in the City, please consult their website www.christinthecity.org.

You will need

- A copy of each session guide for each participant
- Links to the videos for each session
- A rosary and Rosary Guide for each participant



Cor Key Elements for these sessions:

Prayer: Pray the Rosary at the beginning of your time at *Cor*. End with the Prayer for the Poor, which you can find at the end of each session guide.

Formation: Watch the videos for the three sessions. Use the questions to prompt discussion as a group. Throughout each session, keep in mind the words of Matthew 25:40 to discern how to more readily see Jesus Christ in the people we encounter each day, especially in the poor and those in need. By caring for them, we care for Jesus himself.

Fraternity: The authentic and open discussion during each session will build the bonds of fraternity in your group. In addition to that discussion, if time allows, you can plan additional fraternal activities such as sharing a meal, playing a sport or outdoor game, or simply having time for regular conversation before and/or after a session. Consider having a meaningful ice breaker question for each session that will allow the men of the group to get to know one another better. Consult the *Cor* Startup Guide for additional examples. Additionally, in each session guide, the Council Connection+ section is for participants who are Knights and want to connect the discussed content to life within their K of C council. Lastly, the Faith in Action programs mentioned on page 8 provide examples of charity-oriented fraternal activities.

Love for the Lord, then, is one with love for the poor. The same Jesus who tells us, “The poor you will always have with you” (Mt 26:11), also promises the disciples: “I am with you always” (Mt 28:20). We likewise think of his saying: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). This is not a matter of mere human kindness but a revelation: contact with those who are lowly and powerless is a fundamental way of encountering the Lord of history. In the poor, he continues to speak to us.

– Pope Leo XIV, *Dilexi Te*, 5



Session One: The Faces of Poverty

Pray the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Watch Episode 1: The Faces of Poverty

For Discussion

1. How can we see service to the poor as more than merely a donation or offer of financial assistance, but an authentic demonstration of God's love and love for neighbor?
2. Mother Teresa said, "We think sometimes that poverty is only being hungry, naked, and homeless. The poverty of being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for is the greatest poverty." How do you encounter these spiritual (non-material) forms of poverty in your community, or a nearby community?
3. How can you make prayer the starting point of your service, rather than just one part of your service?
4. In the video, Patrick Lubrano shared about his blanket ministry for the homeless. What stands out to you about his testimony? How was he inspired to begin the blanket ministry? How did his local K of C council help him get this initiative off the ground?
5. Pope Leo XIV writes that "serving the poor is not a gesture to be made 'from above,' but an encounter between equals, where Christ is revealed and adored" (*Dilexi Te*, 79). How can you see the face of Jesus Christ in the poor, even those who are hard to love or do not seem to want your help?

Council Connection+

1. In your parish's or K of C council's programs, how do you also address the spiritual needs of the people you serve? What are some ways you could adapt your programs to better recognize the spiritual poverty in your community?

If you are a Knight and want ideas for charitable service, see page 8 for a list of suitable Faith in Action programs.

Closing Prayer

Take a moment to reflect on the video and what was discussed. Voice your special intentions and listen to the intentions of your brothers.

Prayer for the Poor

This prayer written by Pope St. Paul VI was often prayed by St. Teresa of Calcutta.

Make us worthy, Lord, to serve those people throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them through our hands, this day, their daily bread, and by our understanding love, give them peace and joy. Amen.





Session Two: Reconciling Relationships

Pray the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Watch Episode 2: Reconciling Relationships

For Discussion

1. How are ruptured relationships the root of all poverty in the developed world? Where have you seen ruptured relationships lead to poverty in its many forms?
2. How does the breakdown of healthy relationships lead to loneliness and isolation by making people feel unlovable? How does Christ in the City recommend solving these damaging issues?
3. In the video, Chuck is a formerly homeless man whose life radically changed after he met Christ in the City missionaries. Think about his testimony. What role does a lack of dignity and self-worth play in creating or perpetuating poverty? How did Christ in the City missionaries help Chuck recognize his inherent self-worth and motivate him to improve his life? How did the missionaries create a lasting bond and accompany him on his journey towards greater well-being?
4. How did Chuck see Jesus Christ in the Christ in the City missionaries who built a friendship with him? Does your parish or K of C council foster such friendship? When you serve those in need, how can you offer dignifying relationships rooted in love for your neighbor?
5. Pope Leo XIV writes, “Christian holiness often flourishes in the most forgotten and wounded places of humanity. The poorest of the poor – those who lack not only material goods but also a voice and the recognition of their dignity – have a special place in God's heart ... It is in them that the Church rediscovers her call to show her most authentic self” (*Dilexi Te*, 76). How can we rediscover the roots of Christian love through our service to the poor and those in need?
6. How have you seen Jesus Christ meet you amid your own poverty, whether material or spiritual, and help you see that you are lovable and valuable?
7. How can we become missionaries of hope to those we serve?

Council Connection+

1. What existing service programs are offered by your K of C council, parish, or diocese. How can you get involved or learn more?
2. In what ways do your K of C council's programs bring healing to ruptured relationships?
3. How can we see our own shared humanity and mutual dependence on Jesus Christ in those we serve or those assigned to our care? How can we fight against an “us vs. them” mentality?

If you are a Knight and want ideas for charitable service, see page 8 for a list of relevant Faith in Action programs.



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Session Three: Model for Encounter

Pray the Holy Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Watch Episode 3: Model for Encounter

For Discussion

1. What are potential situations where helping the poor may not *feel* good? How are we called to respond in those situations? How can we identify a situation we are not equipped to handle? What actions should we take in those situations?
2. How can we set the right expectations when ministering to the poor?
3. What is the role of prayer when we encounter the poor? What tips does Christ in the City provide about prayer?
4. What should our physical demeanor be when we encounter the poor? What are some small ways that we can approach those that we are serving with dignity, respect, and joy?
5. How can the HOPE (Hobbies, Occupations, Places, and Endearment) acronym help foster authentic conversations and deeper friendships with the poor?
6. Discuss some of the common mistakes to avoid when encountering the poor that were addressed in the video.
7. Jesus tells us, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25:40). How can we remind ourselves that an encounter with the poor is also an encounter with Jesus Christ?

Council Connection+

1. The Christ in the City videos highlighted best practices for serving those in severe material poverty – particularly the homeless. Sometimes, though, it may be hard to charitably serve those who are closer to home. How can lessons learned from these videos also apply to other programs that your council does around the parish (e.g. fish fries or pancake breakfasts, the Free Throw/Soccer challenges, other Faith in Action programs or even simple things like setting up for events)? How can you make sure these are also opportunities to be Christ to those you serve? How can you provide a “charity that evangelizes”?
2. How can you bring a spirit of service and encounter into your home? What are some concrete ways that you can recognize Christ in your wife and kids, heal ruptured relationships, and model behavior towards those in need?

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Closing Prayer

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Example Faith in Action Programs

Faith in Action provides information for K of C councils to not only implement Supreme-recommended programs, but also to create unique programs that help men to live out their commitment to the Catholic faith and their desire to serve family, parish, and community. Below are examples of existing programs that strive to fulfil the vision of charitable service discussed in the videos.

- **Helping Hands:** This program is designed to recognize the important work many councils already do to care for the most disadvantaged members of our communities – the homeless, the addicted, the elderly who may feel isolated and abandoned, and many others. The requirements for this program are very broad in order to allow councils to serve their community in whatever way is most needed. One idea is to partner with Cross Catholic Outreach to see how you can serve your local community. For additional information, visit kofc.org/helpinghands.
- **Coats for Kids:** Provide warmth for deserving children during cold winter months. Councils purchase new winter coats for children in need at a discount and distribute them in their local communities. For more information, visit kofc.org/coats.
- **Food for Families:** Help end hunger in communities around the globe. Council and parish families will raise funds to support their local food pantries, food banks, and soup kitchens. Though in-kind donation of food is valuable, leaders of hunger-relief organizations often comment that financial contributions can be stretched even further and allow nonprofits to procure the exact items needed by the organization and its clients. For more information, visit kofc.org/food.
- **Global Wheelchair Mission:** Change the lives of people with disabilities worldwide. The Knights of Columbus has partnered with the American Wheelchair Mission and Canadian Wheelchair Foundation, which falls under the umbrella of the Global Wheelchair Mission, to obtain wheelchairs at a discounted price. These wheelchairs help provide aid to those who lack the freedom of mobility in our communities. For more information, visit kofc.org/wheelchair.



How to Lead a Small Group Session

A small group session is an opportunity for a group to gather and discuss their thoughts, questions, and takeaways from a shared conversation that begins and ends with prayer. The task of a small group leader is to facilitate and direct the conversation, elicit contributions from all willing participants, resolve any conflicts that may arise, and summarize what is discussed.

As a small group leader, you are not asked to teach, but to make sure the conversation stays focused and respectful and includes all participants.

A small group is successful when there is meaningful discussion that helps people connect with each other and apply the concepts and themes to their daily life. You do not have to cover 100 percent of the material or questions. This is a framework for you to build upon that best meets the needs of the group you are leading.

General Tips to Lead a Small Group Session

Review and reflect before the session. As the small group discussion leader, make sure you review and reflect on the reading/video ahead of the session to familiarize yourself with the content.

Bring pens and paper. Consider providing paper and writing implements for the participants.

Ask questions that invite the participants to reflect on their experience. These small groups are designed for reflection, not a quiz on the content. Avoid yes-or-no questions unless you have a thought-provoking follow-up question. Make it comfortable for people to share their personal stories, but don't try to force them to do so.

Listen well. To facilitate a discussion, a leader must understand what everyone is saying. Sometimes it is easy to begin formulating your own response while another person is speaking, but that can compromise how well you are listening.

Rephrase, repeat, summarize, clarify. Together with listening skills, use these techniques to ensure each contribution to the discussion is heard and understood. Sometimes rephrasing a participant's idea to a sentence or two will help others in the room understand his or her contribution. Summarizing the course of the discussion occasionally will also help ensure that everyone processes what has been said as a group and encourage them to take the discussion to the next level.

Include all participants. In any group discussion, some members will speak up willingly, perhaps even dominating the conversation, while others will tend to be quiet. Not everyone processes information the same way or at the same speed. Some may need you to encourage them to share. Respect those who take time to process and who may not be as inclined to share.

Adapt the questions. Be aware throughout the small group discussion that the people in the group might be in diverse vocations or different stages in their lives. In such instances, adapt the question or encourage the participants to adapt their reflections accordingly.



Return to questions later if the answer is not known. If a particular question arises in a session involving Church teaching and the correct answer is not known, you can simply state you will ask your chaplain or pastor, or look to the Catechism, for clarification and share the answer during the next session.

Keep emotional discipline and mediate conflict. Some topics can be sensitive, so be prepared to diffuse anger and redirect the discussion in a constructive way. Diffuse the situation and help the disputing members find common ground or principles. If necessary, simply table the issue that is causing the tensions and move along to a new topic.

Know when it's time to advance the discussion. Moving a discussion forward too soon can lead to missing some good observations or contributions, but keeping a discussion going on too long can make the session boring or repetitive. Be mindful of how the discussion is progressing; when it seems to stall, it's time to move it forward.

Seek help when necessary. Sometimes, questions and situations occur that require outside assistance. A participant might have a particularly difficult question, require fraternal correction, or argue against Church teaching. In situations like this, it is best to talk to the participant out of the group setting. Most importantly, remember that it is best to reach out to your pastor for help in a situation you are uncomfortable with.

End with an invitation. If there are more group sessions to come, re-invite the members of the group and remind them of the date and time. These personal invitations offer the small group another opportunity to develop their faith. An invitation is especially important following your last small group.



Cor at a Glance

Cor Mission:

To help focus Catholic men on Jesus by building Christ-centered brotherhood through a flexible framework of prayer, formation and fraternity.

Cor Vision:

To aid in transforming the hearts of men through Christ-centered brotherhood. Rooted in prayer, formation and fraternity, men will be sharpened in faith and virtue as they cultivate authentic friendships with Christ and each other. We envision a future where *Cor* continuously helps sustain these men to lead their families, strengthen their parish communities and courageously evangelize the world as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ.

The Three Elements of Cor

PRAYER - LIFTING OUR HEARTS AND MINDS TO GOD

Through prayer, we encounter Christ and animate our faith and relationship with him. We must first know Jesus before we can share him with our families and communities.

Shared time in prayer will help men focus their minds and hearts on God and give depth and life to formation and fraternal brotherhood. Like all relationships, prayer requires commitment and consistency. Consider praying the rosary or spending time in Eucharistic Adoration.

FORMATION - BECOMING LIKE CHRIST

As disciples of Christ, the goal of Catholic formation is to become like Christ, taking on his character and virtue, his life of prayer, and his mission. He is the model of holiness.

Formation is life long and requires an intentional commitment. Alongside prayer, formation helps increase our knowledge and love of God and of neighbor. Intentional and structured times of formation help direct fraternity toward the shared pursuit of Christ, of holiness, and a life of faith and missionary discipleship. Formation requires the animation of prayer and the accountability of fraternity.

FRATERNITY - CHRIST-CENTERED BROTHERHOOD

Fraternity is not just friendship or hanging out, it is a true brotherhood centered on Christ. This type of brotherhood has depth and trust, where men sharpen one another and accompany each other as disciples of Christ.

Brotherhood made up of Christ-centered friendships is necessary for men to grow in holiness, as leaders, and as missionary disciples. Like prayer and formation, fraternity must be intentional, requires proximity and consistency, and the shared mission of evangelization.



To learn more about *Cor*,
visit www.kofc.org/cor



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