

VINCENTIANS IN ACTION POST-TRIP REFLECTION MEETING IDEAS

Purpose: *The Post-Trip reflection meetings are just as critical as the Pre-Trip reflection meetings. The purpose of the post-trip meetings is to gather together to listen closely for the CALL of your experience and immersion. The purpose is remembering, celebrating and honoring what we witnessed and experienced. What are you pushed and pulled to do now in your own personal lives and in the larger community?*

Students have found in the past that it works well to have the first Post-Trip meeting as a reflective meeting going back to the immersion experience and digger deeper into what the group learned and experienced. Quite often students haven't had the opportunity to share how they are since their return.

The second Post-Trip meeting is to develop both an individual and group Action Plan of how you will bring change back home to the DePaul community and Chicago. This is the meeting to make links to similar organizations here in Chicago as well as begin to delegate leadership and responsibility with the group. At this point in the group's development the leader is not the sole person responsible for the group's action plan.

Here are some recommended activities to integrate into the Post-Trip Reflection meetings:

***Check-In about Transition:** This is critical to get a pulse on how people are transitioning back. How was it to come back and spend the rest of winter break at home? How and with who did you share your story? Are there parts that you have not shared with anyone? Has it been difficult to come back? What concerns do you have about keeping the experience alive?

Hands Reflection: How are you holding your experience?: (Could be used as an opening reflection)

Close your eyes. Open your hands in front of you. Notice how they feel. Now clench your fists tightly. Pay attention to how it feels. Open your hands again, notice any difference. Clench them one more time. Open your eyes.

What did you notice about how it felt to open or clench your fist?

We are invited to consider how we are holding our experiences – is it with clenched fists holding it all to ourselves? Or are they open, ready to receive and give again? The hope is that you will hold your experiences with open hands so that they can continue to grow and speak to you. (Adapted from: From Mission to Mission *Remaining Faithful* book)

The HEART of _____: Return to your mission statement that you created as a group. How did you live this out during your week? How do you hope to continue to live it out now?

Re-Create a Mission Statement: Just as you developed a mission statement before you went on your immersion now that you are back consider developing a new mission statement of how you will Bring Change Back Home.

Photo Moment: Print off a photo from the immersion that captures a moment for each group member. Keep it face side down to begin. Lead the group in a reflection of going back to their experience. During the reflection, ask them to pick up the photo in front of them. Invite them to go back to the moment in the photo – how were they feeling? How did they experience VIA? How do they hope to integrate their immersion experience into their daily life now.

Journal: Some students have commented that it is difficult to open their journals and go back to the intense experiences from the immersion. Invite all participants to bring their journals. Together, spend some time reviewing your journal and looking back where you've been. Invite participants to share any story or entry that strikes them in a new way upon review.

Gifts under a Christmas Tree reminder: Imagine a Christmas tree with many gifts under it – all wrapped in colorful paper. Experiences such as what we’ve had are like these gifts under the tree. We will spend the next weeks, months, years of our life continuing to unwrap those gifts and discover new things! We need to take the time to unwrap them though.

Values: What were the values that you witnessed? Were these the same or different to the values and way you are living your life? Did you learn something that you would like to integrate into the daily choices you are making?

You Before and After - Lessons Learned: What are some of the lessons learned and how do you want to integrate that into your daily life? Do you notice any differences between how you were before or after your immersion experience? What is different? What is the same?

Roots of Our Belief: Invite participants to revisit what you wrote down as your beliefs before you went. Now after having the experience, what do you believe about the community you were with?

Letter writing: Are there people that you wanted to write letters to that you did not get an opportunity to do? Take time together to write thank yous or just letters to say hello. Check in with UMIN for contact information.

Letters to Future Immersion Participants: Write a letter to a future participant sharing some of the wisdom you now have from your immersion.

Local Connections: What local connections do we see to this issue? See if there is a DCSA group you would like to connect with on a weekly basis to continue to explore service and justice.

See – Judge – Act Activity

What did we see?

How do you understand that?

What action does that call you to?

Reunion: Invite someone who was on the trip in past years to come and share in the stories.

Take off Your Shoes: Just as many of you were asked to take off your shoes as you entered into a new place and experience do the same as you enter back into the familiar. Enter back home with the same curiosity and openness that you left.

“For Good”: Play the song from Wicked. Invite participants to remember the people you were with during the immersion. Let those faces and stories surface. Create a space of gratitude for the opportunity to know them. (Adapted from From Mission to Mission reflection)

“I Saw What I Saw”: Play this song by Sara Groves. Invite participants to reflect upon all they have seen.

Guided Contemplations can help us remember where we have been, what we have seen and experienced together. They are opportunities to go back to those feelings and emotions and notice who/what surfaces. What are the stories that have arisen for us and keep giving us deeper meaning? What images come to mind? The more detailed you can be at taking people back to these experiences the better. Be sure to use examples of all of the senses – what did you see, smell, taste, feel, touch etc. *See reflection book for detailed examples of guided contemplations.*

The Penguin is REAL! Read the story by Dean Brackley about the Penguin who showed up in Peru. Talk about the importance of community to sustain and remind us of what we SAW what is REAL! Decide as a group how you will remind each other of the ‘penguin’ you’ve witnessed together.

Tips for Sharing your Story

Sometimes it is difficult to share the experiences we have had with friends and family who may have never done something similar. It is important to share what you witnessed with those closest to you. Here are some ideas on how to begin...

- Be genuine. Be true to your ideals and your experience.
- Reflect on where your listener is coming from. Ask yourself: “Has this person ever had an experience like I have before? What is my relationship with this person?”
- Ask yourself: Are my parents/friends/coworkers ready to hear what I have to say? Don’t judge!
- Be prepared that some people will need you to tell them the essence of your story in just a few minutes.
- Focus on people you met, not statistics
- Do not take negative reactions or inattentiveness as a judgment of your experience. You know the true worth of what you have lived!
- Understand that no one can validate or legitimate your experience – that is your responsibility.
- Don’t forget what you have seen and where you have come from. Remember the importance of sharing the stories that are now a part of who you are.

- adapted from St. Vincent Pallotti Center

Meditation through the Senses (Adapted from Casa de la Solidaridad Re-Entry Packet)

We store memories in many ways . . . think of the feelings that a favorite song can evoke, smelling a freshly mowed lawn, feeling a particular ache, seeing certain color, eating your favorite ice cream and remembering the first time you tasted it.

This meditation is designed to take you back to someplace you've been that was significant for you, someplace that shaped you and changed you. Think about the significant places where you've spent time. Whatever place you choose, it's important to pick a specific place that had a significant meaning for you. Does everyone have their place picked out?

This meditation will take you back to that place by walking through the 5 senses. I invite you to get comfortable, to relax, to breathe deeply, and to enjoy. . .

Smell:

What memories are stored in smells?
Were there unfamiliar smells of places or people?
Were there smells that on remembering them fill you with a warm glow?
The smell of food cooked with love?
Strange smells that were new to you?
Smells that you never got used to?
Were there smells you could never figure out?

Taste:

What memories reside on your tongue and will forever remind you of this place?
Was there something you tasted for the first time?
Something pleasant or maybe not so pleasant?
Were there tastes that were unfamiliar and became familiar?
Were there foods that were familiar but tasted so different in this other place?

Sight:

How did the people and places enter through our eyes and what we saw?
Maybe seeing a familiar place through "new" eyes?
What did the faces of people you came to know look like?
Can you imagine the rooms and spaces where you spent time? What did they look like?
The light and shadows of the evening sky? The colors of the land, of clothes, of food, of peoples' eyes?

Touch:

How did the earth feel?
Do you remember the weight of your back pack, new sensations in your stomach, the heat or the cold, the feel of children's' hands, the grit or dirt on your body, your sweat?
How did your sensations change during your time in this place?

Hearing:

What are the sounds you remember?
How did the place and its people enter your heart through your ears?
What was the first thing you heard in the morning?
What was a sound that was ever present in the background?
Do you remember the sound of someone's voice?
How did nature speak? Through rain, wind, or maybe the absence of sound?
Do you remember any special music?

Closing Guided Imagery (Adapted From closing reflection with Casa de la Solidaridad, 2003)

Opening: Close your eyes. Take a restful posture and a deep breath. Let go of any tension which you may be feeling. It is important that your mind be quiet, restful and peaceful... allow images and feelings to come freely... During this meditation we will look back on some important feelings and themes from the past days.

In this guided imagery, I am going to invite you to reflect on various themes—various memories. We will reflect on these individually now and communally later.

Challenge

What is one experience that challenged you? Was it an experience in community... at your placement site... a personal encounter? * How were you pushed? Did you grow or resist growth as a result of this challenge? What did you learn about yourself? *

Compassion

Can you recall an experience when your heart went out to another person? A child rejected by his peers... a lonely old woman... a disabled beggar... a desperate addict... a scene of dehumanizing poverty? What did you feel at that moment? * Does the scene continue to haunt you? Have you prayed about it? Has it remained in your memory?

Loneliness

When did you feel lonely? Did you miss your family? Was there a friend you longed for? Were there birthdays, anniversaries, celebrations, or deaths which accentuated your distance from what you know as “home?” When did you feel alone? *

Fear

What made you fearful? What kept you awake at night and occupied your mind during the day? A particular class or relationship... conflict in community... an issue in your family or at home... something that happened over the last four months—or may happen in the future? * Did you share these fears with another person, your community, or with God? *

Peace

When did you feel peace? Think of a time when you experienced consolation—a feeling that: “Yes, this is the right place for me to be right now. There is no other place I would rather be in the world.” *

Anger

What made you angry? An absurd situation... an argument which escalated... a strained relationship... a rude stranger? Perhaps you perceived an injustice—was it an injustice to you or to another person? When were you angry? * Do you tend to keep your anger interior or do you express it? When did you lash out an innocent bystander or talk viciously about another person? Were you aware of this violence?

Anxiousness

When did you feel stress? How did it manifest itself? Physical tension... restlessness... obsessing... preoccupations during prayer? Was this resolved or does it remain unresolved? When were you stressed? * What could this anxiety teach you about yourself? *

Joy

Remember a time when you felt joy? What were the circumstances? Did you feel gratitude? How frequently do you feel content to this degree? Most days...occasionally...rarely? When did you experience joy?

Sorrow

Was there an occasion when you felt sorrow? Perhaps you hurt someone or were hurt by someone... Perhaps someone you knew was treated cruelly? How did you respond to this sadness? By journaling... walking alone... thinking... praying? When were you sad?

Friendship

Is there a person here you can call your friend? How has the friendship developed? What qualities do you find about that person? * Have you become a closer friend with God? * With yourself? *

Courage

Can you remember a time when you acted courageously? When you stood up for another person or an important value? * Perhaps, there was a courageous position to take but you realized that it wasn't your stand to make? * Were you able to step back? *

Humor

What memory of the past nine days has brought you a good laugh? Were you able to laugh at yourself? When were you laughing? *

Adventure

What types of adventure attracted you this past four months? As days became more routine did you still find "newness" or did you resign yourself to the tedium? Did you wait for the weekend excursions or holidays to find adventure or were you able to find excitement in your everyday experience? *

Love

Have you experienced a deepening of love and appreciation for another person... for a group of people... for God... for yourself... for life itself? How have others shown their love for you?

Closing

Take a moment to sit with these memories... Now open your eyes... with your imagination fresh with a spirit of gratitude... Spend a half hour in quite considering these questions. Feel free to journal. We will have the opportunity to share some of these experiences as a community later today.

Lyrics to I Saw What I Saw by Sara Groves

I saw what I saw and I can't forget it
I heard what I heard and I can't go back
I know what I know and I can't deny it

Something on the road, cut me to the soul

Your pain has changed me
your dream inspires
your face a memory
your hope a fire
your courage asks me what I'm afraid of
(what I am made of)
and what I know of love

we've done what we've done and we can't erase it
we are what we are and it's more than enough
we have what we have but it's no substitution

Something on the road, touched my very soul

I say what I say with no hesitation
I have what I have and I'm giving it up
I do what I do with deep conviction

Something on the road, changed my world

Lyrics to "For Good" from Wicked

I'm limited
Just look at me – I'm limited
And just look at you
You can do all I couldn't do, Glinda
So now it's up to you
For both of us - now it's up to you...

(Glinda):
I've heard it said
That people come into our lives for a reason
Bringing something we must learn
And we are led
To those who help us most to grow
If we let them
And we help them in return
Well, I don't know if I believe that's true
But I know I'm who I am today
Because I knew you...

Like a comet pulled from orbit
As it passes a sun
Like a stream that meets a boulder
Halfway through the wood

Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you
I have been changed for good
It well may be
That we will never meet again
In this lifetime
So let me say before we part
So much of me
Is made of what I learned from you
You'll be with me
Like a handprint on my heart
And now whatever way our stories end
I know you have re-written mine
By being my friend...

Like a ship blown from its mooring
By a wind off the sea
Like a seed dropped by a skybird
In a distant wood
Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
But because I knew you

(Glinda):
Because I knew you
(Both):
I have been changed for good
(Elphaba):
And just to clear the air
I ask forgiveness
For the things I've done you blame me for

(Glinda):
But then, I guess we know
There's blame to share
(Both):
And none of it seems to matter anymore
(Glinda):
Like a comet pulled from orbit
As it passes a sun
Like a stream that meets a boulder
Halfway through the wood

(Elphaba):
Like a ship blown from its mooring
By a wind off the sea
Like a seed dropped by a bird in the wood

Who can say if I've been
Changed for the better?
I do believe I have been
Changed for the better

And because I knew you...

Because I knew you...

(Both): Because I knew you...
I have been changed for good...