

Handout #9: Kenosis & Vowed Life

The *Kenosis* of Incarnation— The Call to Love

This is the *kenosis* of entering human reality deeply, of going to the very depths of human existence, of becoming and being totally and truly human (Phil 2:6-7; Lk 2:1-20; Jn 1:14a) through participation in what is weak, oppressed, and poor. This *kenosis* brings us closer to people, and especially to share in the life of those for whom Jesus opted (Lk 4:18; Mt 5:3-12). It calls us to solidarity and "insertion" into the reality of people in need of light and liberation.



There is a beautiful visual representation of what the Incarnation truly entails, and it comes to us from the volunteer artist for the Catholic Worker, Fritz Eichenberg. It is entitled *Christ in the Breadlines...* and depicts the Bread of Life standing in line with the hungry and homeless. It is a profound reflection on what the Incarnation entails, and why Christ underwent the baptism of John.

...This will demand of the missionary a willingness to give up preconceived ideas, privileges, pretensions, and hidden agenda. For a religious missionary, this *kenosis* requires the sacrifice of certain forms of human love and of building a family, in order to have greater freedom for the specific demands of mission. But the call to missionary incarnation is, above all, the call to encompassing life-giving love of others without necessarily being loved in return (cf. Jn 13:34; 15:12-13).

Could not the *kenosis* of incarnation be the missionary way to understand and live the vow of chastity?

The *Kenosis* of the Road— The Call to Justice and Solidarity

This is the *kenosis* of mobility, availability, and provisionality, the *kenosis* of walking with people, of setting out with people, and of a common search for truth, light, and hope. This *kenosis* will lead us to solidarity with people's movements and struggles and with people who are lost or on the run. ...It is the *kenosis* of missionary restlessness and daring, the *kenosis* of the ongoing search of the "lost sheep," and of the unconditional option for the poor. ... This necessarily demands a simple lifestyle and the sacrifice of all impediments to this commitment. ...Since we do not know where the Lord will lead us or how long the road is, this *kenosis* requires trust, patience, and the acceptance of weakness and vulnerability.

Could not the *kenosis* of the road be the missionary way to understand and live the vow of poverty?

The *Kenosis* of the Cross— The Call to Risky Choices

This is the *kenosis* of faithfulness to God and to people till the end, the *kenosis* of radicalism in going all the way like Jesus did (Phil 2:8; Mt 16:24; Mk 8:34), refusing to run away from threats, conflicts, or difficulties.

...For missionaries, the *kenosis* of the cross is very often the *kenosis* of not seeing the fruits of their efforts (cf. the missionary parable of the Sower), ...For some, it may be the *kenosis* of failure, loneliness, bitterness, or doubt. For many others, like for Jesus, the *kenosis* of the cross implies the experience of fear (Mt 26:37-38 // Mk 14:33-34; Jn 12:27), solitude, and abandonment (Mk 15:34). ... The *kenosis* of the cross is that of the sacrifice of our life: we are called to give up our life so that others may live. Yet we know that the cross, suffering, and death are not God's last words: *kenosis* is the way to the resurrection, to the fullness of life (Phil 2:9).

Could not the *kenosis* of the cross be the missionary way to understand and live the vow of obedience?

Reflection Questions:

➤ Kenosis of Incarnation:

- "...the call to missionary incarnation is, above all, the call to encompassing life-giving love of others without necessarily being loved in return..." Do I allow lack of acknowledgement of gratitude impede me from extending myself in service to others? Am I generous or kind only to those who are generous and kind to me? (Cf Matthew 5:46-48.)
- What "preconceived ideas, privileges, pretensions, and hidden agenda" might I need to let go of in order to be more able to listen to people's voices, questions, answers, and mysteries?
- What does the image of *Christ in the Breadlines* say to me at this time?

➤ Kenosis of the Road:

- With whom do I travel in community? (At what speed?)
- Who is on the roadside, and whom might I be passing by?
- How am I being asked to be vulnerable at this time to those with whom I live, work, minister, travel...?
- For whom do I pray... how do my intercessions reveal my awareness of and solidarity to the poor, marginal, suffering, and those on the roadside?
- What baggage do I carry that may prevent me from moving on and traveling with those around me, those to whom I am sent?

➤ Kenosis of the Cross:

- Where do I experience the challenge of the cross... how are my experiences of loneliness, doubt, bitterness, failure, fear and abandonment perhaps a part of my journey toward the cross? With Jesus, how do I choose to lay my life down?
- Where am I afraid to risk... where do I seek security and assurance of success before investing myself... is this an area in which I am being called to "let go and let God"?

Talk #9-- Kenosis & Vowed Life

[SLIDE 2]

There are two liturgies which form bookends, as it were, to the Christian life.

The [first is that of Baptism], by which a [person is made a member of the Christian community and the Body of Christ], and the other "bookend" liturgy is that of [Christian burial], when the Christian community [bids farewell] to one of its members and entrusts that person to the care of the Lord until that time when all shall be reunited in the Father's eternal kingdom.

[SLIDE 3]

Both rites speak of being clothed in Christ and [united to him in his death] so that we also may also be [united with him in his rising]. Both rites, thus, reflect the pattern of kenosis, by which we are poured out with Christ (by dying to self and allowing Christ to live through us) and with Christ exalted by the Father and raised to new life.

[SLIDE 4]

All Christians take promises to allow Christ to live through them... to be clothed in Christ and to reject all that is opposed to the kingdom of God and to walk in Christ's light. [But as religious, we have taken additional promises or vows, which speak of ways in which we will follow Christ and live out our baptismal pledge to live as members of his Body].

If the pattern of Christ's life is that of kenosis (sacrificial love) as we have been suggesting, then the vows by which we follow Christ must also reflect that pattern. With help from Fr. Ed Luc Nees, MJ¹, a member of the Missionaries of

¹ **EDWARD LUC MEES, MJ**, served for 22 years in Guatemala as a missionary among the Q'eqchi-Maya Indians. He was a professor of phenomenology of religion at the Universidad Rafael Landívar and the Instituto Centroamericano de Ciencias Religiosas (La Salle) in Guatemala City. He has taught at Maryhill School of Theology and at the Institute of

Jesus, I would now like to look with you at our religious vows in the light of kenosis as we have been speaking of it.

[SLIDE 5]

Jesus is the model of our vowed life. [We are celibate, we do not seek to perpetuate our own name nor pass on our own genes but [rather the name and reign of God is what we seek to birth and witness to, as did Jesus who remained celibate-- inclusive to all and exclusive to none. Our [vow of obedience calls us to listen with the heart of Jesus, whose final response to God was always ["I come to do your will, ...may your will be done." [Lady Poverty (to borrow a term from our brother Francis) reminds us that [we follow a Lord whose crown was thorns, not gold, and who lived detached [from the riches, power and prestige of earthly kingdoms in service to the Kingdom of God, breaking forth among the poor and lowly of the earth.

[SLIDE 6]

Our vows are modeled on Jesus, whose life itself was an outpouring and expression of the Father's love for all peoples. Several times in the Gospels we hear Jesus speak of how he was sent by the Father. [Thus, the vowed life, modeled and based upon the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus, is a missionary life... being sent by the Father and poured out in union with the Son, in service to God's kingdom, and all God's children.]

[SLIDE 7]

As we have seen, *kenosis* is the term used to describe the out-pouring, the self-emptying of Jesus in service to God's Kingdom. Often we may think of *kenosis* as pertaining only to the Incarnation, when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, or perhaps also of the Crucifixion, when the life of Jesus was fully poured out upon the cross and the process of self-emptying was, as Jesus said in his last breath, *finished*. Yet the entire life of Jesus was kenotic, an outpouring or self-emptying, a sacrifice of self in love for others. As Fr. Luc Mees notes:

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When we look at Jesus' life and ministry, we can distinguish three moments or dimensions of his *kenosis*: [the *kenosis* of incarnation (identification and solidarity with human reality)], the [*kenosis* of the road (being on the move, reaching out to all people, especially the most abandoned)], and the [*kenosis* of the cross (faithfulness in assuming the ultimate consequences of his mission)]. In the life of Jesus' disciples, these three dimensions are not to be considered chronologically but simultaneously, aspects of one and the same lifelong process. As such, they may also help us in our understanding of the religious vows.

Let us look further at these three dimensions of *kenosis* as outlined by Fr. Luc Mees, and see what they suggest to us about the vowed life.

First a word about being missionary, for this is the lens through which Fr. Luc Mees is considering the vows. We often think of missionary as being someone who goes to a foreign land or culture in order to spread the faith, establish the church, or help underdeveloped peoples receive a higher standard of living, both physically and spiritually. We often think of missionaries as those who leave homeland and work "over there" (wherever that is), and those of us who stay at home and don't venture far from home or homeland are not missionary.

[SLIDE 8]

Yet being a missionary is not based upon the Frequent Flyer Miles we total up, or the number of miles we travel to reach our new ministry site. Being missionary is not about being a worldwide traveler... it is rather about being one who is sent, sent not on my own mission, but on the mission or work of the one who sent me. [If we go back to the very beginning as spoken of in John's Gospel, we see that in the beginning was the Word. God SPOKE, the Word was sent out by the Speaker, and Creation came into being. In the beginning was the Word... which was SENT into our flesh and humanity because God so loved the world]. [This Word of God, who is God and who did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at, and who became flesh among us, we know as Jesus the Christ].

And just as Jesus was sent by the Father, so are we sent by the Son. All of us, whether we sit at home or travel abroad, are missionary... we are sent into the world, our neighborhood, our convent, to allow the Word of God to be spoken again today through our Voice.

[SLIDE 9]

Earlier this summer we celebrated the feast of the Birth of John the Baptist. Like his cousin Jesus, John never strayed very far from his birthplace. But he is for us a model of being missionary and living out kenosis. John was always clear with people that he was not the one who they were expecting... he was, rather, sent ahead to prepare the way. John was the Voice, but not the Word. He was the messenger, but not the message. It was John who said of himself, ["I must diminish and he must increase]." That is, perhaps, [the best and briefest description of what kenosis calls us to.]

Keeping in mind then that we are all where we are because we have been sent, and thus we are all missionary, let us look at the three moments or aspects of the kenosis and out-pouring of Christ, and see what these aspects say to us of our religious vows.

Again, Fr. Edward Luc Mees describes these aspects as kenosis of Incarnation, kenosis of the Road, and kenosis of the Cross.

[SLIDE 10] **The *Kenosis* of Incarnation— The Call to Love**

This is the *kenosis* of entering human reality deeply, of going to the very depths of human existence, of becoming and being totally and truly human (Phil 2:6-7; Lk 2:1-20²; Jn 1:14a³) through participation in what is weak, oppressed, and poor. This *kenosis* brings us closer to people, and especially to share in the life of those for whom Jesus opted (Lk 4:18⁴; Mt 5:3-12⁵). It calls us to solidarity and "insertion" into the reality of people in need of light and liberation.

² Birth of Christ and visit of the shepherds.

³ "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

⁴⁴ "The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord."

⁵ Beatitudes.

When Jesus began his public ministry, he gave what can be called an inaugural address in his hometown synagogue, and which explained his purpose and goal... his marching papers, as it were. Jesus used a text from Isaiah to explain why he was sent and what his agenda was: ¹¹ *"The spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord."*

[SLIDE 11]

Yet when the Word of God became flesh, God did not come among us as one aloof or above our condition. [God came to us as one who participates in our hunger and weakness.] When Jesus [came out of the River Jordan after his baptism by John, he feet were muddled]. Although he was the Son of God, [Jesus never used his privileged status to spare himself from the full human condition, which includes not only birth and joy, but sorrow and death]. There is a beautiful visual representation of what the Incarnation truly entails, and it comes to us from the volunteer artist for the Catholic Worker, Fritz Eichenberg⁶. [SLIDE 12] It is entitled ***Christ in the Breadlines***... and depicts [the Bread of Life standing in line with the hungry and homeless. It is a profound reflection on what the Incarnation entails, and why Christ underwent the baptism of John].

[SLIDE 13]

Incarnation means that we should "become flesh at the underside of history," and opt for the places where people are suffering or hurt in their dignity. [For missionaries, it also implies a respectful entering into the riches of other cultures and into the mysterious depth of different God-experiences]. [This is further expressed in an ongoing readiness and capacity to listen to people's voices, questions, answers, and mysteries]. [SLIDE 14] [This will demand of the

⁶ Fritz Eichenberg's traumatic experiences as a child growing up in Germany during World War I did not embitter him. Rather, they convinced him to use art – which wipes away language barriers – to help people understand each other. His illustrations portrayed the redemptive qualities he found in Russian literature: "through human suffering, one becomes purified...and that is the hope for which you are praying; for which you're working." He created life from blank woodblocks and the darkened surface of lithographic stones, choosing these mediums as ways of working from dark into light, with all the gradations. This sensitivity drew him beyond his paid work to a parallel career as volunteer illustrator for *The Catholic Worker* newspaper of Dorothy Day, whom he admired for standing by "the underdog – the oppressed, the poor, the weak – the ones who were easily discarded by society as 'hopeless cases.'"

missionary a willingness to give up preconceived ideas, privileges, pretensions, and hidden agenda. For a religious missionary, this *kenosis* requires the sacrifice of certain forms of human love and of building a family, in order to have greater freedom for the specific demands of mission]. [But the call to missionary incarnation is, above all, the call to encompassing life-giving love of others without necessarily being loved in return] (cf. Jn 13:34⁷; 15:12-13⁸).
[Could not the *kenosis* of incarnation be the missionary way to understand and live the vow of chastity?]

[SLIDE 15]

It is impossible to be sent somewhere if we do not leave the place from which we are sent. [But the degree to which we leave a place can vary greatly... and I suspect that the more of "home" we bring with us, the less entering into our new homeland, mission, or convent we are capable of]. In generations past, [missionaries often worked as an extension of the kingdom or land they came from]. They brought not only the Gospel to a new world, [but also their own culture, code of dress, food preferences, language, etc. Today we are challenged to bring the Gospel to others, but in terms that grow out of, resonate, and reflect the native culture (for God was there before our arrival, and has been active among this people or culture or race which we approach) to which we are sent to serve]. As Fr. Luc Mees notes:

[SLIDE 16]

If Jesus is the model of the missionary, and if *kenosis* is constitutive of Jesus' life and mission, our lives should follow, to the extent possible, this *kenosis*. This has profound implications for the life, ministry, spirituality, and basic attitude of the missionary. It will transform the aims, the priorities, the structures, and the methods for doing mission.

[In the past, missionaries have generally attached little importance to their role as servants. They did not adopt "the form of slaves or servants," but rather that of masters and patrons. Missionaries often went as supervisors, not as partners.]

[If the idea of *kenosis* would have guided missionary activity throughout history, we would not be facing today the consequences and difficulties of an exclusively western and often unattractive type of Christianity that has been

⁷ "I give you a new commandment: love one another; you must love one another just as I have loved you."

⁸ "This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends."

exported and imposed all over the world, in connivance with imperial conquests and colonial interests.]

This aspect of kenosis has implications not only for our general strategy for carrying out our mission mandates, but also for our personal assignments or situations. We are more and more becoming multi-cultural houses and communities. We seek to find the ways to make room for those coming in (not just in physical space, but in providing places and spaces in which their own culture and backgrounds and experiences can be received and heard), and we also find ourselves being emptied out as we move into a new location, house, or section of our house, as is the case when we must give up our private room and move into assisted care.

[Some small examples of how our being sent into a new community (either through our departure for a new one, or the reception of new members into our home) can entail us in the process of being emptied in service to the Other...]

**[SLIDE 17] The Kenosis of the Road—
The Call to Justice and Solidarity**

[This is the *kenosis* of mobility, availability, and provisionality], the [kenosis of walking with people, of setting out with people], and of a common search for truth, light, and hope. [This *kenosis* will lead us to solidarity with people's movements and struggles and with people who are lost or on the run. It will enable us to reach out to all, especially to those to whom the Lord urges us to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom]. It is the [SLIDE 18] *kenosis* of missionary restlessness and daring, the *kenosis* of the ongoing search of the "lost sheep," and of the unconditional option for the poor. [18-1 It is the *kenosis* of going "very far," to the outer boundaries of faith and hope. This necessarily demands a simple lifestyle and the sacrifice of all impediments to this commitment]. Like Jesus, [18-2 a missionary has to give up all ambitions, plans, and securities, and rid him/herself of any feeling of superiority]. This is the *kenosis* of not-having, of [18-3 renouncing extra luggage, powerful means, and even one's family (cf. Mt 10:9-10⁹; 19:27.29¹⁰), and of refusing to settle down, to

⁹ "Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the labourer deserves his keep"

look back, or to compromise] (cf. Lk 9:23-25¹¹, 59-62¹²; 14:26-27¹³). [SLIDE 19] It is the *kenosis* of non-installation (cf. Mt 8:20¹⁴), be it in works, occupations, commodities, or ideas.

[19-1 Since we do not know where the Lord will lead us or how long the road is], this *kenosis* requires trust, patience, [19-2 and the acceptance of weakness and vulnerability]. It is also [19-3 the *kenosis* of our willingness to share what we have and what we are (time, talents, skills, energy), and of our constant readiness to "move," to respond to more difficult or challenging calls, to "follow the Lord to Galilee]" (cf. Mt 28:7.10.16¹⁵), that is, to the periphery. [SLIDE 20] Only through this self-emptying will missionaries acquire the inner freedom and the prophetic frankness they need for their task, especially in demanding situations (cf. Mt 10:17-20¹⁶; Lk 21:12-19¹⁷).

[Could not the *kenosis* of the road be the missionary way to understand and live the vow of poverty?]

[SLIDE 21]

Consider again the beginning of this description of the *Kenosis* of the Road: "This is the *kenosis* of mobility, availability, and provisionality, the *kenosis* of walking with people, of setting out with people, and of a common search for truth, light, and hope." Notice how the mobility of this *kenosis* is acted out... what kind

¹⁰ "Then Peter answered and said, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you. What are we to have then? ... everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or land for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times as much, and also inherit eternal life.'"

¹¹ "...If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save it. What benefit is it to win the whole world and forfeit or lose his very self?"

¹² "Another to whom he said 'Follow me,' replied, 'Let me go and bury my father first.' But he answered, 'Leave the dead to bury their dead; your duty is to go and spread the news of the kingdom of God.' Another said, 'I will follow you, sir, but first let me go and say good-bye to my people at home.' Jesus said to him, 'Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.'"

¹³ "Anyone who comes to me without hating father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, cannot be my disciple."

¹⁴ "Jesus said: 'The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'"

¹⁵ "... go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and now he is going ahead of you to Galilee; that is where you will see him. ... Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; there they will see me. ... Meanwhile the eleven disciples set out for Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had arranged to meet them.'"

¹⁶ "... you will be brought before governors and kings for my sake, ... do not worry about how to speak or what to say, ... because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you."

¹⁷ Warning signs: "... you will be seized and persecuted; you will be handed over... Make up your minds not to prepare your defense, because I myself shall give you an eloquence and wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to resist or contradict."

transportation is suggested here. [21-1 It is walking with people... being available to them.]

This kind of travel is in stark contrast with the majority of travel which we do today. [21-2 Most of us drive to work, market, theatre, church, or wherever we may venture forth. We travel fast (much faster than walking!) and the journey of getting there is hardly as important as getting there (wherever there is!). We travel with the windows up on a hot day, rainy day, cold day... or any day, and carry with us our own environment. Passing through the world while shielded and closed off from the world. It is protective].

[21-3 But the travel mode of kenosis keeps us vulnerable. It makes us available]. [21-4 If someone is sitting on the roadside in need of help, it is much easier to drive on by... it happens so fast we hardly knew the person was there or had time to reflect on the situation]. [21-5 But it is much harder to just walk on by... it takes more time, even if we pick up the pace of our walk. We may still pass them by, but we feel even worse for doing it, for we haven't the protective, speedy reprieve of travel in a car].

[21-6 Jesus was on the road often... walking from one place to another. Often his travels had a goal... he was on his way to Jerusalem, Emmaus, the house of Jairus, the city of Nain, entering Jericho, returning home]... and [21-7 often on such journeys he is interrupted by someone along the way. And he responds to them. He is not on a speedy motorbike or car, but on foot. Slow, vulnerable, open travel]. [21-8 His feet get tired and dusty. This is the travel of *kenosis*.]

How do you get around... at what speed do you travel? [21-9 How we travel effects not just how we get there... but who we are when we arrive.]

[SLIDE 22] The *Kenosis* of the Cross— The Call to Risky Choices

[This is the *kenosis* of faithfulness to God and to people till the end, the *kenosis* of radicalism in going all the way like Jesus did (Phil 2:8¹⁸; Mt 16:24¹⁹; Mk 8:34²⁰), refusing to run away from threats, conflicts, or difficulties]. This is the *kenosis* of going "too far," the *kenosis* of [solidarity with the crucified people of today, shown in our commitment to help carry the crosses of the wretched of the earth, and in our protest against the crucifixion and massacre of the

¹⁸ "... he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross."

¹⁹ "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me."

²⁰ ... "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me."

innocent. It is also the *kenosis* of giving up our freedom in order to set others free].

[SLIDE 23] For missionaries, the *kenosis* of the cross is very often the *kenosis* of not seeing the fruits of their efforts (cf. the missionary parable of the Sower), the **[1- *kenosis* of having to endure the hardships of mission, even persecution. For some, it may be the *kenosis* of [2- failure], [3- loneliness], [4- bitterness], or [5- doubt]. For many others, like for Jesus, the *kenosis* of the cross implies the experience of [6- fear] (Mt 26:37-38²¹ // Mk 14:33-34; Jn 12:27), [7- solitude], and [8- abandonment] (Mk 15:34²²). Jesus showed us how to assume all these in total obedience to the will of the Father (Mt 26:39²³ // Mk 14:36 // Lk 22:42). [9- His final commitment culminated in a *kenosis* of total surrender in naked poverty as a sign of his love without limits] (Lk 23:46²⁴).**

[SLIDE 24] The *kenosis* of the cross is that of the sacrifice of our life: we are called to give up our life so that others may live. Yet we know that the cross, suffering, and death are not God's last words: *kenosis* is the way to the resurrection, to the fullness of life (Phil 2:9).

[Could not the *kenosis* of the cross be the missionary way to understand and live the vow of obedience?]

This can be, perhaps, the most painful of the kenotic moments or dimensions, not because of physical suffering or death, but because we experience lack of certitude or assurance that we are where we should be. We can experience doubt, failure, and loneliness or abandonment, even by God. This happened to Jesus... it could also be ours to share in.

It is difficult to contemplate just how radical was the sense of abandonment felt by Jesus on the cross. He looked down from the cross and saw that his disciples hung back or had fled in fear. He had just a few followers left... mostly women, and one teenage boy. **[SLIDE 25]** According to Jewish custom, a minyan, or quorum of ten male adults, would gather in the home of the deceased and perform the prayer ritual of Shiva for the deceased. Jesus didn't even have

²¹ ... "'Stay here while I go over there to pray.' He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him. And he began to feel sadness and anguish. Then he said to them, 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death.'"

²² ... "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

²³ "My Father... if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it."

²⁴ "'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' With these words he breathed his last."

enough followers around him to fulfill this basic Jewish ritual on his behalf. Most of us will die knowing that our communities will have an appropriate funeral service for us. Jesus did not even have that assurance.

This kenosis of the cross is also described by Fr. Luc Mees as entailing Risky Choices. We pour ourselves into a project, mission, or community, not knowing if we will succeed or be fruitful. We risk being failures.

[SLIDE 26] There is the story of the man who fell over the cliff, and on his way down to certain death, he caught hold of a small tree growing out of the side of the cliff. He hung on for dear life. He knew he couldn't hold on forever, so he prayed to the Lord: "Dear God, I know you are out there somewhere. Please, come to my aid and save me!" A kindly voice replied, "I am here my Child. Do you really believe that I can save you?" "Oh yes!" said the man fervently. "Then let go of the branch." came the kindly reply. There was a long pause and then the man said, "Is there someone else up there I can talk to?"

[The kenosis of the cross calls us to let go... even if we are not sure there is someone who will catch us.]

If we see kenosis of the cross as a way of understanding our vow of obedience, then we see that following Jesus on the way to the cross is rooted in listening... for that is the root of obedience. To obey is not simply to act, but to first listen, and then act upon what was instructed. **[SLIDE 27]** And so our *kenosis* of the cross is rooted in our listening **[to the whisper of God's word to us, and then responding. With Jesus, whose prayer book was the Psalms, we say: "Speak Lord, your servant is listening"²⁵ ... Speak Lord, I have come to do your will]... [to do your will is my delight, O God].²⁶**

²⁵ 1 Sam 3:10

²⁶ Cf: Ps 40:6-8

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: [SLIDE 28]

➤ [Kenosis of Incarnation:

- ["...the call to missionary incarnation is, above all, the call to encompassing life-giving love of others without necessarily being loved in return..." Do I allow lack of acknowledgement of gratitude impede me from extending myself in service to others? Am I generous or kind only to those who are generous and kind to me? (Cf Matthew 5:46-48.²⁷)
- [What "preconceived ideas, privileges, pretensions, and hidden agenda" might I need to let go of in order to be more able to listen to people's voices, questions, answers, and mysteries?
- [What does the image of *Christ in the Breadlines* say to me at this time?

[SLIDE 29]

➤ [Kenosis of the Road:

- [With whom do I travel in community? (At what speed?)
- [Who is on the roadside, and whom might I be passing by?
- [How am I being asked to be vulnerable at this time to those with whom I live, work, minister, travel...?
- [For whom do I pray... how do my intercessions reveal my awareness of and solidarity to the poor, marginal, suffering, and those on the roadside?
- [What baggage do I carry that may prevent me from moving on and traveling with those around me, those to whom I am sent?

[SLIDE 30]

➤ [Kenosis of the Cross:

- [Where do I experience the challenge of the cross... how are my experiences of loneliness, doubt, bitterness, failure, fear and abandonment perhaps a part of my journey toward the cross? With Jesus, how do I choose to lay my life down?
- [Where am I afraid to risk... where do I seek security and assurance of success before investing myself... is this an area in which I am being called to "let go and let God"?

[SLIDE 30] - LJC et MI

²⁷ For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Do not even the gentiles do as much. You must therefore set no bounds to your love, just as your heavenly Father sets none to his.