

Witness to a Better Place

Session 3: The Heart of Witness: Becoming Communities of Grace, Joy and Peace

Focusing Question:

How can we move the condition of the heart of our community from anxiety, moral indignation, and judgment to a common life that is marked by grace, joy, and peace?

Scripture Focus:

II Corinthians 3:18

Philippians 3:10-12; 4:21

I John 3:2

Question for Discussion, Part 1:

1. What was it about the experience and training of Perpetua, Felicitas and their companions, that their “habitus” had been so transformed?
2. Can you identify experiences in the church that have contributed to your own transformed “habitus,” things you know “by heart?”

Components of the Early Church’s Habitus:

- Meeting frequently
- Standing in prayer, arms raised
- Praising and thanking God
- Making the sign of the cross
- Eating together
- Giving the kiss of peace
- Memorizing biblical passages (Isaiah 2, Matthew 5-7)
- Visiting the poor, the sick, the prisoner
- Exercising hospitality
- Putting money in the collection box
- Replenishing the stocks of food and clothing
- Discerning carefully
- Being truthful
- Maintaining sexual purity
- The practiced patience to overcome impatience
- Being will to lose out
- Allowing people to leave the church
- Facing death without fear

Questions for Discussion, Part 2

1. When you think of the things you know “by heart” as a Christian, how did you learn them? What else do you wish you knew “by heart?”
2. When you think about your church experience, is your witness characterized more by grace, joy and peace? Or anxiety, disapproval, or cynicism?
3. Of the things listed in the habitus of the early church, which of these practices could be most transforming in the witness of your church? (See the facilitator’s guide for the list)