

Faith Weavers of St. Mary
Book Study Group
January 24, 2010

Summary of Discussion:

Laura Ruhle set the tone for the discussion group by introducing the book, *The Letters to Exodus Christians* by Fr. Edward Hays that is being studied by the group. She also reviewed the guidelines to follow in participating in the discussions. She gave us background on herself and had participants introduce themselves.

The three purposes of this study group are: reflect on the ideas presented in *The Letters to Exodus Christians*, consider how the book addresses our current life situation; and identify implication the book may have on how we weave faith into our lives.

We discussed the preface and first section of the book. Topics discussed included: what does it mean to be a Catholic today, how do we fit into the definition of a “good” Catholic, and how do we pray.

What does it mean to be a Catholic today?

1. People are not living their faith today in the way they were taught in their youth.
 - a. In the past Catholicism was seen as restrictive and full of sanctions and punishments. It was a mortal sin to miss mass on Sunday; one could not attend services in Protestant churches. The emphasis was on following the rules. The church was the institutional hierarchy.
 - b. We have grown beyond those days. We are more concerned about living Gospel values, e.g. feeding the hungry and visiting the sick, than following institutional rules. We are open to other faith traditions and respect their belief systems. The people of God are the church.
 - c. The movement by the clergy back to a pre-Vatican II concept of church makes one wonder if we are living an authentic Christian life.
 - d. Exodus Christian affirms the validity of our way of living the faith.
 - i. We are living the gospel values.
 - ii. The people are church not a building or the clergy.
 - iii. We have graduated from the pre-Vatican II status of perpetual child to a mature adult Christian. We must apply our adult faculties of intellect and will to make decisions on how we live our Christian call.

How do we fit into the definition of a “good” Catholic?

1. Fr. Hays emphasizes following Gospel values to be a genuine Christian. We are good Catholics when we celebrate the Sacraments together; feed the hungry; visit the sick and imprisoned. Etc. His approach is to turn to our Gospel roots to see what it means to be Catholic.
2. The clergy are emphasizing ritual and rules to define a good Catholic. Pay, pray, and obey seems to be the standard of a good Catholic. Affirming the bishop's position on birth control and abortion seems to be the acid test for being a good Catholic.

What is authentic prayer?

1. Fr. Hays talks of thinking of someone in a loving ways as authentic prayer. We can pray to the Spirit of God blessing others.
2. Prayer does not have to be formula prayer. It can be spontaneous and from the heart.

We concluded our Book Review with a reflection of a Spiritual Cinema Film entitled "The Second Life of the Sugar Bowl" of an elderly man who finds the sacred in many ordinary ways to give sight to his granddaughter who is blind as well as a prayer from Michael Morwood's book entitled "Praying a New Story."

For our next Book Review Meeting, we will continue to discuss Section 1 and move into Section 2. The date of our meeting will be February 28th at 4 PM – 5:30 PM in the Parish Hall.