

SESSION 4

Bearing Fruits of New Life



KAREN CALLAWAY PHOTO

OBJECTIVES

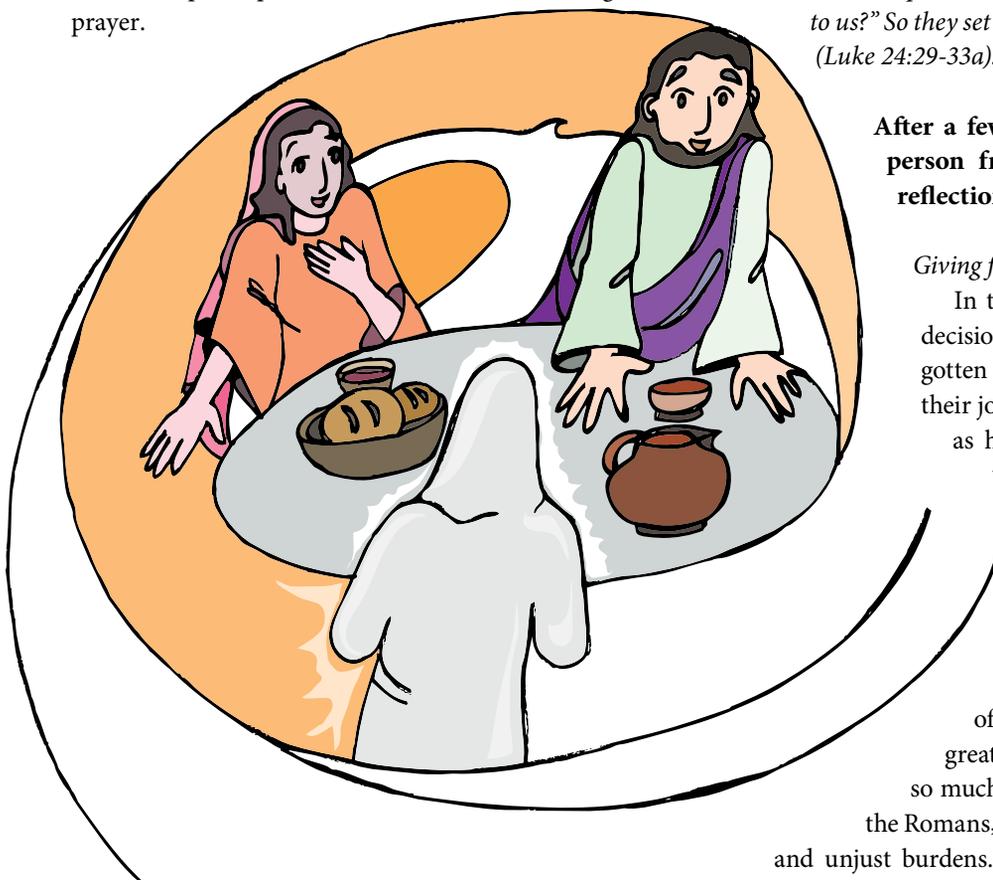
- Share the personal and communal fruits gathered during the past three weeks.
- Identify the fruits that remain to be cultivated in the faith community and the neighborhood where the parish is located.
- Reflect about the fruits of the Holy Spirit and their transformational power.
- Prepare for missionary action this week.

SYMBOLS

Candle (light), Bread (shared)

PREPARING THE SETTING

Before starting the session, prepare the space where the small group will meet. Arrange the chairs in a circle and place the image of a path in the center. Near that image, place a lit candle symbolizing the presence of Jesus and a basket with some bread to be shared. There should be a tea light for each participant to be distributed during the final prayer.



PRAYER



Song: *Ardía Nuestro Corazón/Our Hearts Burned Within Us* (Pedro Rubalcava) and the *Prayer of the V Encuentro*.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the fourth session of the V Encuentro. In this session we will share about the fruits that our missionary action has produced since we started the process of the V Encuentro. We will reflect particularly about the fruits of friendship, joy, the Eucharist, and mission.

The session starts with the following reading from the Scriptures:

“Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning [within us] while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?” So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem. (Luke 24:29-33a).

After a few moments of reflection in silence, a person from the group shares the following reflection on the reading:

Giving fruits of new life...

In this biblical passage the disciples make a decision—they invite a stranger that they had gotten to know as trustworthy in the course of their journey. We all know from experience that as human beings we feel more comfortable with people who are from our community, share our beliefs, customs, traditions, and values. It is also very human to feel suspicious or to assume a defensive attitude when we find ourselves facing someone from a different culture or nationality. This lack of trust and even fear of a stranger was even greater for the Jewish people, who had suffered so much at the hands of other nations, including the Romans, who had dominated their lives with taxes and unjust burdens. Mindful about our human nature, the



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Scriptures offer many references about treating the stranger well, being hospitable, and not harming others. After all, the Hebrew people were strangers in Egypt.

There is no doubt that the disciples on the way to Emmaus saw something in that stranger that inspired trust. Perhaps it was the way this stranger walks near them; the way he asks about their conversation; the way he kindly, yet directly, addresses their misreading of the events; the way he interprets the Scriptures; the way he signals that he is continuing on. Perhaps it was all these gestures of intimacy and tenderness that created trust between the stranger and the disciples, that generated a familiarity that would conclude in the breaking of the bread while sitting at table.

The fact that Jesus accepts the invitation to stay with the disciples, even when they do not recognize him, teaches us to gratefully welcome the trust and care that people extend to us when they invite us into their homes to eat with them, to continue the conversation that began during a catechetical session, the celebration of a sacrament, or the particular instance when we met them. Such encounters are invitations to have a more intimate experience of faith, sharing bread, and building a friendship in his name, so that the Risen Jesus can become present through us.

This is the moment that Jesus most likely anticipated when he came to his disciples and joined them along the way to Emmaus. Jesus is finally with his disciples in a safe space, a place of trust around a table, and ready to share. It has been a long and intense day, but they are now more relaxed and ready to quench their thirst and eat something before going to sleep. The disciples expected to continue the conversation with the stranger. It is in the gesture of breaking and sharing the bread that the grace of Jesus' walking with them comes to fruition. The eyes of the disciples are opened and they recognize the Risen Jesus. Now, the "confused travelers on the road to Emmaus" are filled with joy and hope and are recommissioned as disciples and missionaries. They immediately return to Jerusalem to share the good news of the Gospel of the Risen Jesus.

Our pastoral work gives us many opportunities to accompany so many people in our community of faith and in the periphery. This accompaniment is a work of the Lord's grace prompting us and which generates fruits of friendship, joy, hospitality, solidarity, and hope. The grace of the Risen One accompanies us as we accompany others, and leads to personal and pastoral conversion, as we have seen in the passage of Emmaus

SEE

The facilitator invites the participants to get ready to share in light of their own experience and to listen with an attentive heart.

This sharing can happen in pairs, making sure that while a person is sharing his or her experience, the other is listening without judging, without making comments, or giving advice. The person simply listens with all his or her senses and heart.

Let us consider for a moment how our intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus has been the source of many fruits that make it possible today for us to give witness as missionary disciples.

What are the spaces or moments when you feel closest to God and to his Son, Jesus Christ? Describe briefly one of those spaces and moments. How do you feel? What do you discover about God? What do you discover about yourself? What do you discover about others? How do these spaces or moments motivate you to live your faith in a more committed way? How are you changed/transformed after this personal encounter with Jesus?

If they asked you to identify one or two characteristics that define your identity as a Catholic, what would you say? What would you say is a characteristic that identifies your faith community as truly Christian? Why did you choose those particular characteristics?

Once participants have offered their thoughts, the facilitator shares with the group the following examples of accompaniment from the historical memory of the Catholic Hispanic/Latino people in the United States.

The Hispanic Catholic presence has been like leaven for the Church and for the rest of society in the United States. Sometimes this history is not properly affirmed and recognized, but it is important to know that many are the fruits produced and many more are being produced in our day.

The first Catholic communities in the United States territory were Hispanic. The first Catholic mission was established in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1566. A network of missions throughout the South and the West of the country made it possible for Catholicism to grow important roots in these parts of the country. The hard work of Franciscan, Jesuit, and Augustinian missionaries, among others, through catechesis and evangelization, transformed entire



communities. Today, we see the footprints of that influence in the architecture, the artistic expressions, many writings, and even the names of cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Sacramento, Corpus Christi, etc..

Today, the places where Catholicism grows fastest in the United States are the South and West of the country, and that is precisely due to the Hispanic presence. More than 4,500 parishes offer some form of Hispanic ministry; the majority of baptisms and First Communions in these parishes are of Hispanic children; almost two-thirds of U.S. Catholics younger than 18 are Hispanic, the great majority of these (93 percent) were born in the United States. This is a very special moment in which a new chapter of the history of the Church in this country is being written, a moment when Hispanics are playing an important role in the evangelization and transformation of society. More and more Hispanic Catholics have influence in the worlds of politics, education, the arts, business, sports, entertainment, and the legal system of the country. This is a moment for Hispanic Catholics to affirm and share the best of their cultural, social, and religious values and beliefs.

QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPANTS

- What do you think is the most notable contribution of Hispanics to the Church in the United States?
- In what areas do you think that the faith of Hispanic/Latino Catholics have most influence in the U.S. society?
- What challenges do Hispanic Catholics face, particularly Hispanic young people, in order to preserve their religious and cultural identity in the United States?

JUDGE

We were created for the glory of God. And the nature of God is love, relationship. It is when we place ourselves at the service of others that these gifts become fruitful and begin to affect others. In this way we give witness as disciples of Jesus Christ in our lives. The Word of Jesus frees us and guides us with his life and presence among us, through the Holy Spirit, in order for us to know and liberate the love of God to be given to others. In this way, we know God's love for us while loving our neighbors with freedom. God nourishes the Church and the world with the gifts he has entrusted us with. When we allow these gifts to be used for others, through our attitudes and behaviors, our words and actions, then we can actually see how Jesus is present in our own lives.

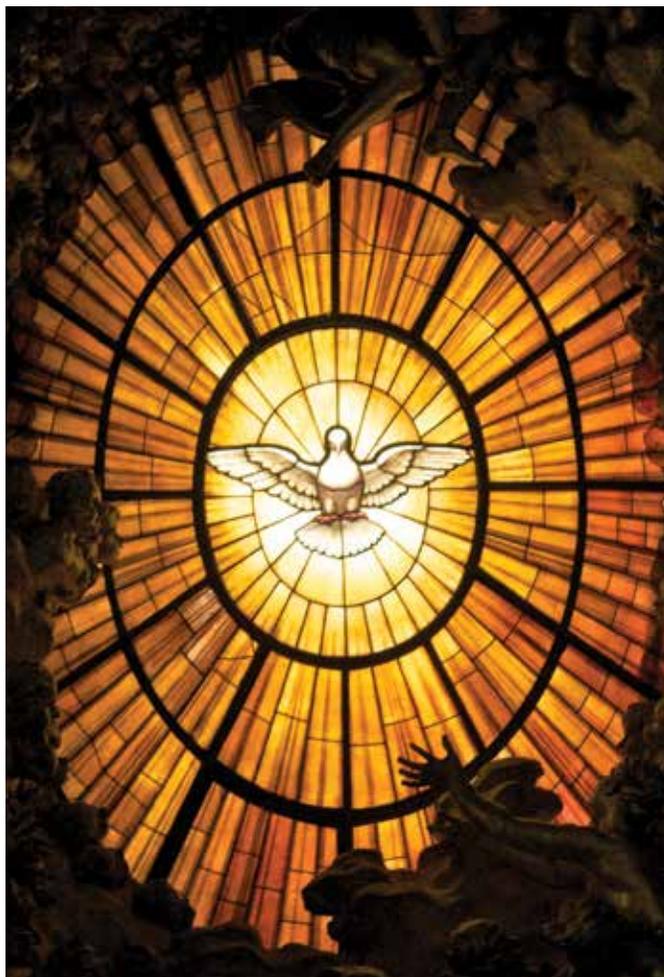
We Christians share in the conviction that the presence of the Holy Spirit produces evident fruits in our lives. We frequently speak of 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, generosity, gentleness, faithfulness, modesty, self-control, and chastity.

Pope Francis reminds us that a missionary disciple of Jesus, "finds a way to let the word take flesh in a particular situation and bear fruits of new life, however imperfect or incomplete these may appear. The disciple is ready to put his or her whole life on the line, even to accepting martyrdom, in bearing witness to Jesus Christ, yet the goal is not to make enemies but to see God's word accepted and its capacity for liberation and renewal revealed" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 24).

A tree is known by its fruit! If Christ is in the midst of our communities, we will be a reflection and continuation of his saving work and his healing presence. As he did back then with the disciples of Emmaus, he breaks the Eucharistic bread with us. At the same time, as he did with the hungry crowds gathered around him (see Jn 6:5-13), he breaks with

the poor the bread that nourishes the body. Our encounter with Christ at the table of the Word and at the table of the Eucharist becomes real as we open ourselves to the encounter with Christ in those who are poor and most in need among us, and those who live in the peripheries of society.

God accompanies us throughout our lives. We experience God's presence visibly and unmistakably through our Baptism, through the other sacraments, and the many expressions of popular Catholicism of our people. We feel God's presence when we generously share our time, talents, treasure, and love with others; when we forgive and are reconciled with someone who has trespassed against us; when we practice mercy and compassion toward those who need our presence, help, and encouragement; when we share our material goods, open the doors of our homes, visit the sick and the imprisoned, are present and console those who suffer, share with words and actions the Good News of Jesus Christ with those who need to hear them the most.



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- What fruits have grown in me as a result of my relationship with Jesus? With whom do I share those fruits?
- What fruits am I bearing in my ordinary life as a missionary disciple in my family, in the parish community, and in society?
- God works in the community through each one of us: How am I allowing the Good News of Jesus Christ to become part of me, and how do I share it with others?



CATHOLIC EXTENSION

ACT

Jesus' words are very clear: "By their fruits you will know them" (Mt 7:16). Christian witness cannot remain limited to words only, or mere good intentions. We need to act. It is urgent for our Christian commitment to become real through specific actions that translate into fruits of new life. The fruits that emerge from our Christian commitment confirm that the Holy Spirit continues to work in our lives and in our communities. These fruits are born of our intimate union with the Lord: *"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing"* (Jn 15:5).

According to the Christian tradition, one of the most concrete ways to bring to life the fruits of our relationship with Jesus Christ as his disciples is to *live in full solidarity* with Christ in those who are poor and those most in need: *"Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me"* (Mt 25:34-36).

The preferential option for the poor and the most vulnerable has been a constant dynamic in all the processes of Encuentro of Hispanic ministry in the United States. It still is today! In a world increasingly polarized by injustices and social inequality today, more than ever, we are called, as truly missionary disciples in the United States, to be a

prophetic voice and to act concretely on behalf of unborn children, immigrants, refugees, victims of human trafficking, workers who are exploited under different circumstances, people who are discriminated against, people who live in conditions of extreme poverty in rural and urban areas, families experiencing difficulties staying together, people who suffer the direct consequences of climate change, and many other sisters and brothers who are the face of Christ and thirst for someone to accompany them.

Where do we begin? Return to the young person or family you identified at the beginning of this process of Encuentro, with whom you were involved and whom you decided to accompany. Invite them to join you to:

- Celebrate the Eucharist in your parish or local community.
- Observe how your parish or community serves the poor and most vulnerable.
- Consider the possibility to join a parish or community group.
- Be a prophetic voice and to act concretely to bear fruit.
- Go to a periphery where there are people who are far away from the Church or are experiencing a major need for someone to listen to them, to get involved in their lives and accompany them.

During this week, make a missionary commitment to go out into the peripheries of local and global society.

CELEBRATE

Lord, your light is forever, your bread nourishes us



Song: *Un Pueblo en Marcha* (Silvio Cuéllar) or *Canción de San Francisco Javier* (Cristóbal Fones)

[A candle is placed high and should visibly light the room. Below it is a basket with enough bread for all participants.]

LEADER 1

The first Christians gathered on the eve of Sunday, the day of the Lord. The leader of the community would light a candle remembering Christ, who is the Light of the world, and sing hymns. Each baptized member of the community took their light from that candle. This celebration was called *the Lucernarium*. Let us also recall the evening meal at the home of the disciples in Emmaus and begin our prayer saying:

ALL

Stay with us, Lord; it is getting dark and we cannot see.
(The main candle is lit.)

LEADER 2

Darkness has no power. If we lose electricity at night, we worry that we might be disoriented, fall, or may break something. A small light is enough to restore our trust. Thousands of our sisters and brothers, and sometimes we, too, are in darkness and need light. A glimpse of the light of Christ in their hearts would be enough to restore courage and life. We must say over and over: darkness needs not have power, neither do the works of darkness. Injustice needs not have power. We just need the courage to defeat them. Lies have no power. We just need a spark of truth to conquer them. Let us pray for all who live away from the light.

- God of light, bring closer those who do not experience love: may they have the courage to cross their own boundaries.

R/May the light of Christ shine.

- God of light, instruct us when we are in error: may we recognize the way of truth.

R/May the light of Christ shine.

- God of light, raise us whenever we fall into vice: may our health be restored.

R/May the light of Christ shine.

- God of light, free the prisoners: so they may return to life.

R/May the light of Christ shine.

- God of light strengthen us when we are weak and lack courage: may we be nourished by the Gospel.

R/May the light of Christ shine.

- God of light, affirm anyone who feels rejected and misunderstood: may their dignity be restored.

R/May the light of Christ shine.

- God of light, rekindle the fire when we are lukewarm: that we may bear abundant fruit through works.

R/May the light of Christ shine.

LEADER 1

On the day of my baptism, Lord, you gave me the gift of your wonderful light; you led us out of the darkness and called us by name to be a light to the world.

ALL

Here we are, gathered in your name. We are your missionary disciples. Send us to be your light.

(Song. Participants come forward to light their individual candles).

LEADER 2

Jesus, we know by faith that you walk with us. You do not need our hospitality, and yet you give us your friendship when we invite you into our humble homes.

ALL

Stay with us, Lord, and bless our table.

LEADER 1

Lord Jesus, we walk with you without knowing you are the Bread of Life come down from heaven, the bread that nourishes and restores the strength of those who are overwhelmed by the journey of life. You are bread that gives itself, bread broken as an offering of solidarity, and bread shared in sincere hope.

ALL

Lord, give us of your bread to work together for the fruits of light: peace, justice, and truth.

[Leader says: As a community of faith, we celebrate the Mass which brings to us the real presence of Christ as the Bread of Life. In our daily lives, we share another type of bread, the bread of solidarity and hospitality, and the bread broken with the poor. That reminds us we are part of a community. We are not celebrating the Eucharist here, but sharing bread as a symbol of our union.]

The bread is broken and shared among all present.

LEADER 2

Lord, grant that all who are part of the process of the V Encuentro work for justice and hear your voice in the lament of the poor. May your light open our eyes to recognize the unmistakable gestures of a friend. May the Eucharist nourish us to be hospitable to others and face adversity with strength.

ALL

We want to be a Church that goes forth.
We want to be a missionary Church.
We want to bear abundant fruit.

LEADER 1

Christ, perfect image of God the Father, just as your disciples recognized you in the breaking of the bread, you recognize us whenever we are able to share our bread with the hungry, our clothes with the naked, our home with the stranger, or our presence with the sick and the imprisoned. May we one day hear our names being called as you welcome us into your presence: "Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The deepest yearning of our hearts is that you find abundant fruits in our lives and that this harvest be celebrated in union with the Father and your Holy Spirit forever and ever.

ALL

Amen.



Song: *Somos Discípulos Misioneros* (Albert Coppo) and the *Prayer of the V Encuentro*.

MISSION

During this week let us make a missionary commitment to go to the peripheries of our local or global society. What can we do to make our missionary action real? Here are some practical suggestions:

- Visit a nursing home or a prison, a hospital, someone who is sick and homebound, a family of farmworkers, a young person or a child who is alone . . .
- Feed the hungry and live in global solidarity through Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Rice Bowl: <http://crsricebowl.org/solidarity>
- Explore in more detail some of the efforts related to social services that the Catholic Church provides in the United States:



CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES

- Communities of Salt and light.
<http://www.wearesaltandlight.org>
 - Catholic Charities:
<https://catholiccharitiesusa.org>
 - Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD)
<http://www.usccb.org/about/catholic-campaign-for-human-development>
 - Justice for Immigrants
<http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org>
 - USCCB pro-life activities: www.usccb.org/prolife
 - Catholic Legal Network/Clinic
<https://cliniclegal.org>
 - Catholic Climate Covenant
<http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/>
 - Visit the electronic page of your arch/diocese or of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (<http://www.usccb.org>) in order to learn about projects at the local and national level to protect life, fight poverty, educate new generations, confront human trafficking, etc.
- Make sure to write in your *V Encuentro Mission and Consultation Journals* what you heard and saw during your missionary action and how the experience made a difference for those you visited and for you as well.