



Catholic
Charities
USA®

WHOLE HEARTED

FOR YOUNG ADULTS

PARTICIPANT JOURNAL

Credits

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All Scripture is from *The New American Bible, revised edition*, except Jer 29:11-13 in Session 4, which is from the *New Living Translation*.

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The quote from Pope Francis in Session 2 is from his address to detainees at the Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility, September 27, 2015.

Whole Hearted was written by Michael Carotta, Ed.D., and edited by Scott Hurd.



SESSION 1

Whole Hearted

We make commitments with our *whole* heart. We commit to our family, a friend, grades, a program, a goal. We commit to a relationship, God, a spiritual way of life.

Our commitments bring challenges and costs, potential and problems, responsibilities and purpose, mentors and tormentors.

Our commitments come from the heart, and what we experience along the way shapes our *whole* heart.

Your *whole* heart beats inside you today. Your heart has both fueled your journey and been affected by it. That is why this session invites you to begin by looking at your *whole* heart.



For Reflection

1. What have been some moments of grace or blessing for you? What moments have warmed your *whole* heart?
2. What moments of childhood grace do you still carry in your heart?
3. What has been one blessing experienced from a commitment you've made? Was it a relationship? An accomplishment? An experience?
4. Was this blessing a momentary or a longer-lasting one?
5. Who or what is "a solid" for you at this time, providing support or strength to you? (choose all that apply)

family member

friend

coach

social service provider

therapist or counselor

teacher

church program

church minister

financial or legal helper

a spiritual practice or resource

a quiet or special place

other

These people, places, prayers, or activities are "assets" that support and strengthen you. We will return to these assets in the last session of this program.

Collecting Moments of Grace

Most of us have had someone give us a memento, a small gift, or some sort of physical object as a token of appreciation and affirmation. We collected it and kept it as a heart-warming reminder.

Yet our *whole* heart can be nurtured by collecting moments of grace that do not come with concrete objects. These are moments when we see love, beauty, truth, a virtuous act, or vulnerability shared.

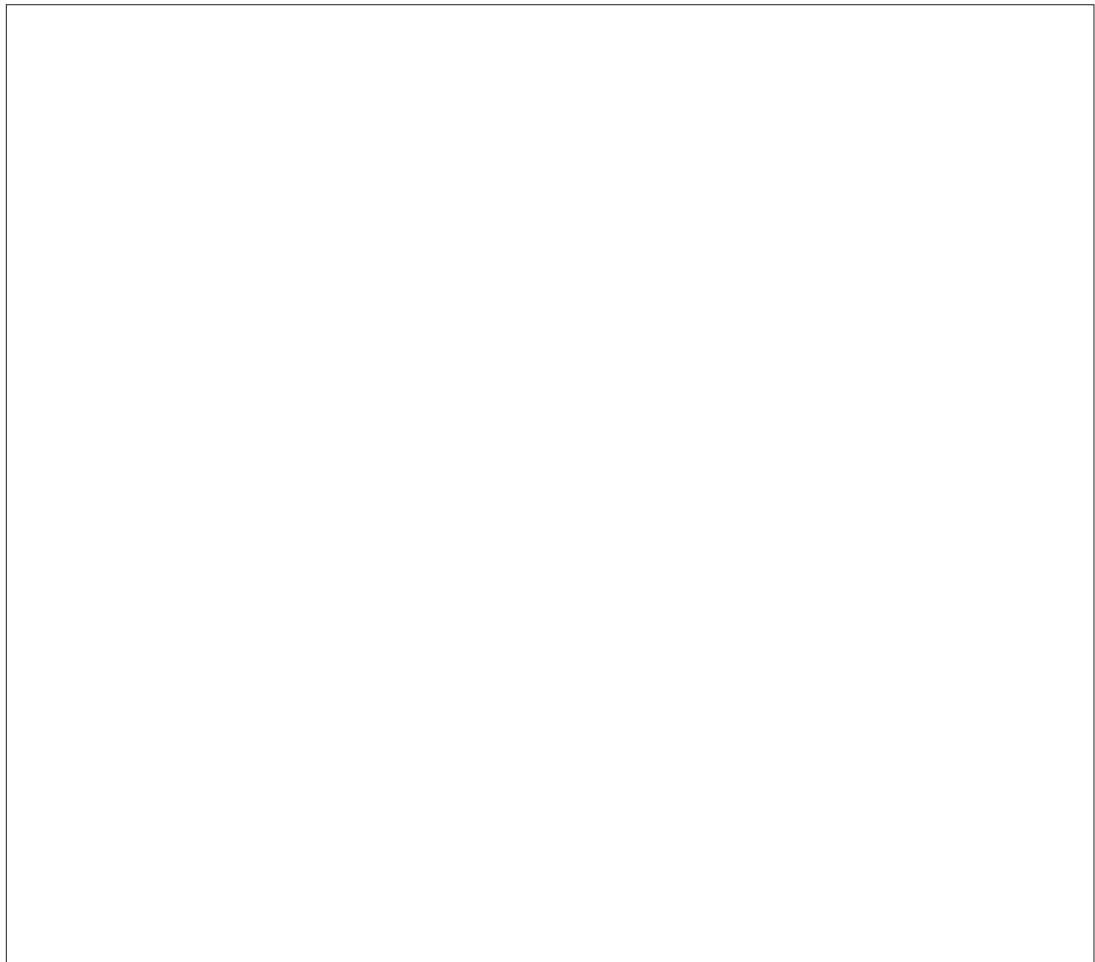
Collecting moments of grace like these — putting them in your memory box and calling them to mind once in a while — can help warm your *whole* heart when you need it. It requires an intentional and ongoing effort to engage in a process of recognition.

For Discussion

1. Feel free to share a moment of grace that you have collected and still keep with your *whole* heart. What you say will not be spoken of outside of the group.
2. When have you recognized or experienced a moment of dis-grace: something painful, unkind, damaging, demoralizing? The term "dis-grace" does not suggest that this was something to be ashamed about, but that it was not part of God's plan; it is the opposite of grace.

Personal Exercise

Sometimes it is better to express something without having to use words. Take a few minutes to draw a picture or symbol of a moment of dis-grace below. Take your time and don't worry about artistic talent.



Feel free to explain what you tried to capture in your drawing if you wish.

The *whole* heart you come with today has absorbed the spectrum of positive and negative experiences.

The *whole* heart you come with today has been shaped by all your commitments to relationships, school, work, and faith.

You are here today with everything your *whole* heart has seen, heard, felt, done.

You stand here today with your *whole* heart still working.

A Time for Everything



There is an appointed time for everything,
and a time for every affair under the heavens.
A time to give birth, and a time to die;
a time to plant, and a time to uproot the plant.
A time to kill, and a time to heal;
a time to tear down, and a time to build.
A time to weep, and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn, and a time to dance.
A time to scatter stones, and a time to gather them;
a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embraces.
A time to seek, and a time to cast away.
A time to rend, and a time to sew;
a time to be silent, and a time to speak.
A time to love, and a time to hate;
a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Which of these times have you been through? Which are you experiencing now?

Notes:

SESSION 2

wHOLE Hearted

Your parents' marriage is over.

Someone in your family is losing a battle with drugs.

A family member with mental health issues refuses treatment or meds and has become abusive.

You are assaulted.

A dream dies or is stolen.

Someone you trusted betrayed you.

You are publicly humiliated.

You can't pay the rent.

Years of verbal abuse have left their mark on you.

The electricity is turned off.

A flood has destroyed your house.

It is impossible to please those you care about.

and the stress has taken its toll on you.

“Hard Times” Exercise

Choose one of the situations above and try to put yourself in that person's shoes for a few moments. Remember that this is an imaginative exercise and stay grounded in the present.

Answer the following questions privately, or voluntarily take a turn in the group. Don't rush, enter into that person's experience, and keep it real.

- What does it feel like?
- What effect did it have?
- What helps to work through it?

The Impact of Trauma

Sometimes our heart suffers a serious wound and the injury has real consequences. We call it “trauma” when an experience changes how our brain works, or the way we talk, act, think, or cope through the day or the night.

It’s not the painful incident that is traumatic; it’s the impact it has on you that is traumatic. Trauma can come from events of different sizes and weights, but the impact can be the same. All trauma seems to result from loss, death, pain, betrayal, violence, illness, broken promises, broken dreams, lost innocence, or mental, verbal, or physical abuse. Trauma can also come from being part of something that is against your conscience, resulting in what is called “moral injury.”

It’s as if your *whole* heart has a **wHOLE** in it.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, signs of trauma include:

- Flashbacks, bad dreams, and frightening thoughts. Certain situations, objects, or words can trigger a re-experience of the trauma.
- Staying away from places, events, or objects that are reminders of the traumatic experience, and avoiding thoughts, feelings, or actions related to the traumatic event.
- Feeling tense and on edge, becoming easily startled, having angry outbursts, and difficulty sleeping.
- Difficulty concentrating on daily tasks, or even remembering details of the traumatic event itself.
- Negative thoughts about yourself and the world, distorted feelings of guilt or blame, and/or a loss of interest in things you used to enjoy.
- Self-isolation and detachment from friends and family.
- Depression, substance abuse, and anxiety.

We are not talking about the temporary or immediate impact of a trauma that can last a few weeks; we are talking about symptoms that last months and even years after a traumatic event. We are talking about the way you are injured. Again, sometimes a *whole* heart has a **wHOLE** in it.

You may find Whole Hearted difficult to engage with. That’s a normal and natural response to trauma. You are encouraged to do all you can to care for your safety and well-being. This may include stepping away from the program or seeking professional support, especially if you are unable to complete daily tasks, are thinking of harming yourself or others, are experiencing depression, or imagining things not real.

The Wire Fence

From *Prayers* by Michel Quoist:

The wires are holding hands around the holes;
To avoid breaking the ring, they hold tight the neighboring wrist,
And it's thus that with holes they make a fence.

Lord, there are lots of holes in my life.
There are some in the lives of my neighbors.
But if you wish, we shall hold hands,
We shall hold very tight,
And together we shall make a fine roll of fence to adorn Paradise.

For Reflection

How would you describe the **wHOLE** in your heart? (check one or add one)

On the mend An open wound One I keep scratching open Healed up

Other: _____

What part of "The Wire Fence" stands out to you?

Notes:

Working through Trauma

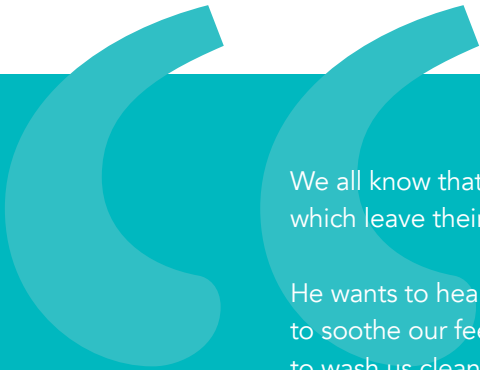
The path through trauma is a process that involves different dynamics such as grieving, blaming, prayer, despair, denial, depression, false hopes, and even the myth of a quick and easy remedy.

We all make our way through trauma in different ways and at different speeds. The process is neither all at once nor once and for all. But each of us has to be intentional about how we want to respond to our **WHOLE** heart in a healing manner.

Here are some ways you can attend to your **WHOLE** heart:

- Develop a regular routine of exercise, mindfulness, sleep, or other activities that help reduce stress.
- Try to maintain routines for meals even when you don't feel like eating.
- Set realistic goals and do what you can as you are able.
- Develop a regular form of prayer that suits your style and sustains your spirit.
- Keep company with trusted friends or relatives.
- Telling someone about your **WHOLE** heart.
- Avoid use of alcohol or drugs as a coping mechanism.
- Talk with your doctor about treatment options, and follow your treatment plan.
- Expect your progress to happen slowly, not immediately.





We all know that life is a journey, along different roads, different paths, which leave their mark on us. We also know in faith that Jesus seeks us out.

He wants to heal our wounds,
to soothe our feet that hurt from traveling alone,
to wash us clean of the dust from our journey.

Jesus comes to meet us, so that he can restore our dignity as children of God.

He wants to help us set out again,
to resume our journey,
to recover our hope,
to restore our faith and trust.
...to all of us he stretches out a helping hand.
Pope Francis

For Discussion

1. What physical, emotional, spiritual, mental, financial, relational, academic, or professional impact has trauma had on you?
2. Have you found a spiritual way to respond to trauma, and how has it helped the process? Please explain.
3. Have you made any attempts to respond or been given advice on ways to respond that was not helpful? Please explain.



So strengthen your drooping hands and your weak knees.

Make straight paths for your feet,
that what is lame may not be dislocated
but healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

Of the petitions in the scripture above, what would you like God's help with: strength, a straight path, or healing?

Notes:



SESSION 3

whOLE Hearted

As a child, she was sexually abused by an uncle. She wonders if her father, who left the family, knew about it the whole time. Several years of off-and-on counseling helped. Now she is 21, and the anger and resentment in her heart seem to be growing stronger.

His parents are struggling big time with stress or something. There's constant fighting, arguing and tension. He tries to shut things out, but it's weighing on him more and more.

She didn't make the team as she had planned. After years of training, she's no longer part of the program. She has never felt this lonely, bored and unhappy.

COVID-19 robbed him of a year of promise. A year he was waiting for. He's no longer as close with some of his friends. He's trying not to be pissed off and depressed, but nothing is the same.

She made a really bad decision sexually and regrets it. Plus, everyone knows. It keeps her awake at night. She feels powerless, and she doesn't know what to do about it.

The alcohol and verbal abuse around her are increasing. She wants to hang in there and see the good side of things. But it's chaotic, unhealthy and increasingly unsafe. She doesn't know what to do next.

His brother and sister are now out on their own and making crazy choices: bad relationships, unstable living conditions, dangerous lifestyles, debt, alcohol and who knows what else. After weeks of sleeplessness and loss of appetite, one of his parents heads to the church at midnight and finds a pew.

.



A clean heart create for me, oh God;
renew within me a steadfast spirit...

Restore to me the gladness of your salvation;
uphold me with a willing spirit.

Psalm 51:12,14

The Psalmist who wrote the words above knew that sometimes the healthiest step forward is to seek to change our **WHOLE** heart with one that is new.

Trauma may help us see the value in:

- Changing our original dreams about how life would be.
- Changing our expectations about how we'll get to where we want to go.
- Changing our perspectives.
- Changing the way we push on, pursue, plan, or participate.
- Changing how we relate to God.
- Changing the way we sustain the Spirit within us.
- Changing what we see as the most treasured things in life.
- Changing the company we keep.



Sometimes a change in heart involves forgiveness. Forgiveness is about deciding to let go of our resentment or grudge toward another. In that way, forgiveness lightens the burden we carry with our **whOLE** heart.

But forgiveness does not necessarily mean resuming a relationship, or enabling a pattern of harmful behavior.

Forgiveness is not about pretending the pain was not severe. Nor is it about automatically trusting someone again.

We often falsely believe that forgiveness offers us a quick return back to normal or a fast track to healing.

Forgiveness requires God's grace to cut the cord of a wrongdoing that still has its grip on our **whOLE** heart.

For Discussion

Trauma's impact on the heart is different for all of us. Trauma can leave us:

Cold-hearted: closed off from needs of others, no longer excited about relationships.

Hard-hearted: defensive when questioned, lacking in feelings.

Light-hearted: minimizing or denying impact of trauma, using pleasure to replace pain.

Heavy-hearted: burdened by the weight of it, focused on problems of yours or others.

Down-hearted or disheartened: loss of motivation, hope, energy, confidence, and/or willingness to engage with life.

Broken-hearted: deep pain and sadness; a fear that something once cherished is gone forever, sense that repair is not possible.

Take 10 to 15 minutes to discuss which of these comes closest to describing the way trauma has shaped your **whOLE** heart. You are welcome to pass if you wish.

Hit Refresh

You know how your screen stalls sometimes and you have to hit the Refresh button to activate things again? It's the same with moving forward from some of the stuff your **whOLE** heart is stuck on. You can help yourself in the process of renewal when you:

- Refresh your Playlist. Change the songs on your playlist with some that are fresh and new, as music can lift your spirit and renew your heart.
- Refresh your Hey! List. Reach out to a few people you haven't seen or spoken with in a while to get fresh conversations and companionship- even for a few minutes. This helps refresh the heart.
- Refresh your Pray List. Establish a new spiritual practice like: an evening prayer and examination before bed; blessing the new day each morning; reading a Bible passage every week; meditation; writing journal notes to God; or reciting an occasional aspiration (a one-sentence prayer like "God is good" or "Be with me Lord" or "Thank God for all things").
- Keep the Lord's Day in person or virtually depending on where you are at. Light a candle to signify your willingness to see things in a different and better light. Mental health pros tell us that ordered rituals, prayer and worship can help!
- Plant a new tree or bush as a way to symbolize your hope for new growth.
- Find something new to explore like a new type of food you want to eat or cook, a subject you want to learn about, or a place you want to visit.

Letting go of something from the **whOLE** heart doesn't mean you stop praying for a loved one's difficulties or the troubles of a close friend. It doesn't mean you stop caring. It means that you intentionally focus your energy, thoughts, and pursuits in a different direction and for a specific purpose.

Guided Imagery Exercise

Here is a prayerful exercise to do now. It is also something you can do again and again.

1. Begin by taking several slow and deep breaths.
2. Gently inhale, filling your lungs.
3. Then gently exhale, pushing your breath out as if you are trying to reach the wall on the other side of the room.
4. Do this three times to quiet yourself.

When you have slowed yourself down and are ready, read this summary account of an event found in the Gospel of John (Jn 20:19-29):

After Jesus' crucifixion, the traumatized disciples were gathered in a locked upper room. Jesus appeared to them and said, "Peace be with you."

They saw his wounds.

And again he said, "Peace be with you."

He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

The disciples had a change of heart when they saw him.

Thomas had not been there and did not believe them. "Unless I see the marks of the nails in his hands and the gash in his side I will not believe you."

A week later Jesus appeared to them again, and once more said, "Peace be with you."

He invited Thomas to see his wounds.

Thomas expressed his belief and Jesus asked him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed."

Please read it again slowly a second time.

After reading the passage a second time, once again take several slow and deep breaths. Gently inhale, filling your lungs. Then gently exhale, pushing your breath out as if you are trying to reach the wall on the other side of the room. Do this three times to quiet yourself.

Now imagine that you are alone in one of your favorite quiet places.

Imagine Jesus joining you there. He looks at you with a smile, says your name, and greets you the way he greeted the traumatized disciples.

“Peace.”

You can see some old scars on the hairline of his head.

He smiles and again says, “Peace.”

Described by the prophet Isaiah as “spurned, a man of suffering, knowing pain,” he says again: “Peace be with you. Receive the Holy Spirit.”

He sits next to you and you see the deep scars of trauma still on his hands.

He then says, “There are physical wounds and there are heart wounds. Our wounds and scars have a story. Tell me about yours.”

Take time now to do so. Slow yourself down with your breathing.

When you are finished sharing, he quietly says, “I have something I want to say about being wounded.”

You listen. What does he say? Remembering that the past is not the present, feel your feet on the ground and your back in your chair as you reflect on Jesus’ words to you.

Notes:

Praying a Psalm

1. Use the prayer of Psalm 51 at the top of this session as your own.
2. Take a slow, deep breath and, as you gently exhale, slowly say a line from the Psalm.
3. Rest a moment after each line before repeating the inhale/exhale process with the next line.

Inhale..... then exhale
A clean heart create for me, God;
Pause

Inhale..... then exhale
Renew within me a steadfast spirit.
Pause

Inhale..... then exhale
restore to me the gladness of your salvation;
Pause

Inhale..... then exhale
uphold me with a willing spirit.

Now pray it the exact same way a second time.

For Discussion

So far you have explored what you might need to let go of.
Now try to identify the commitments, interests, or relationships you still want to invest in.
What is it that still seems worthwhile and life-giving?

For Reflection

The writer of Psalm 51 asks God to “renew within me a steadfast spirit.”
Why do you think this process is described as *renewal*?

Peace by Piece: A Personal Prayer Experience at Home

You can privately conduct this deeply symbolic prayer experience, at home, asking God for a change of heart. To do so you will need five things:

- An old pillowcase
- A small inexpensive clay flower pot to go inside the pillowcase
- A cardboard shoe box or plastic tote in which to place the covered flower pot
- A hammer
- A permanent marker

Place the small flower pot in the pillowcase. Now place the pillowcase containing the small flower pot inside the shoe box or small plastic tote. Then:

1. Begin the prayer by silently thinking about the experience(s) that contributed to your **whOLE** heart.

When you are ready, strike the small clay flower pot hard with your hammer once or twice as a symbol of the pain caused by the experience(s). The plastic or cardboard container and pillowcase will prevent any piece of the flower pot from going airborne.

2. After a few moments of silence and breathing, reach into the pillowcase (or empty the pillow case into the container) and remove a piece of the broken clay flower pot. Hold it, look at it, and spend a moment or two determining the way that past painful experience(s) broke your **whOLE** heart.
3. On one side of that broken piece, use your marker to write a word, initial, or symbol that represents the way the trauma has shaped your **whOLE** heart. On the other side, write a word, initial, or symbol to indicate the change of heart you want to pray for.
4. Take a few slow deep breaths and slowly pray this prayer from Psalm 51, stopping after each line to take another slow deep breath:

*A clean heart create for me, oh God;
renew within me a steadfast spirit..
Restore to me the gladness of your salvation;
uphold me with a willing spirit.*

Then pray it the exact same way a second time.

5. As a prayerful sign of your sincerity and faith, offer the broken piece of the pot to God, both the pain in your **whOLE** heart and the change of heart you desire. You can put it away in a drawer and let it serve as a reminder of your prayer, whenever you see it again.



SESSION 4

Wholehearted

The author of Psalm 51 in the previous session not only prayed to be renewed but to be *restored*. When it comes to responding to trauma, *restoration* represents the *healthy, intentional, and hard work you set out to do for yourself with God's grace*.

To be restored is to be brought back to living the life God has given us, scars and all.

Think of restoration as getting your strength back.

Or getting your health back.

Your courage back.

Your faith back.

Think about it as getting your "Go For It" back.

Or getting your joy back.

Your ability to feel back.

Your ability to cope back.

Think about it as getting a clear head back.

Or getting your giggle back.

Your interests back.

Your "haven't talked to you in a while" back.

Restoration is the process of getting your God-given life back and going forward with it.

For Reflection

1. What have you noticed coming back to you, or what do you wish to see come back to you, as part of the process of *restoration*?

2. St. Paul writes:

*Do not conform yourselves to this age
but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,
that you may discern what is the will of God,
what is good and pleasing and perfect.*

Romans: 12:2

What word or phrase from this advice of St. Paul means the most to you at this time?

Wholehearted

How might we move forward with all that our hearts have experienced, including the blessings, holes, scars, and old ways that need to be adjusted or let go?

How might we move forward with our *Whole*, *wHOLE*, and *whOLE* heart?

Traveling forward in a *wholehearted* way is key to the process of restoration.

“Wholehearted” is defined by Webster as “*completely and sincerely devoted, determined, or enthusiastic. Marked by complete and earnest commitment.*”

- Completely and sincerely devoted
- Determined
- Enthusiastic
- Complete and earnest commitment

For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD.
They are plans for good and not for disaster,
to give you a future and a hope.
In those days when you pray, I will listen.
If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.
Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NLT)

Restoration is made up of financial, social, mental, academic, physical and legal components. And as the author of Psalm 51 points out, restoration also requires spiritual strength and grace.

When this program began, you were asked to identify who or what is a “solid” for you. Who or what provides support or strength to you these days?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> family member | <input type="checkbox"/> church program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> friend | <input type="checkbox"/> church minister |
| <input type="checkbox"/> coach | <input type="checkbox"/> financial or legal helper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> social service provider | <input type="checkbox"/> a spiritual practice or resource |
| <input type="checkbox"/> therapist or counselor | <input type="checkbox"/> a quiet or special place |
| <input type="checkbox"/> teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> other |

You may want to go back to Session 1 and look at the items you checked.

The process of restoration requires that you now intentionally invest in and enjoy these assets.

The Paschal Mystery

There is spiritual power available to us, as well.

The Paschal Mystery refers to Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. It is a core piece of Catholic spirituality. It shows us the mystery of God's love for humanity. The Son of God was not spared trauma. For our sake he suffered, died, and rose again.

The Paschal Mystery also shows what all of us will go through along the way: the traumatic sequence of Pain, Loss, and New Life.

The Paschal Mystery has been likened to the experience of being

- Shipwrecked
- Marooned
- Restored

This is our faith. God never promised to keep us free from life's trauma; God promised to help us get through it. Jesus never told anyone it would be an easy journey. In fact, he told us that it would be difficult at times. Yet he promised that the Holy Spirit would bring us comfort, strength, truth, and a little peace.

For Discussion

Where are you these days with the experience of trauma?

- In the midst of chaos and the fearful experience of shipwreck?
- In the lonely and solitary experience of feeling marooned?
- Feeling relief and the hopeful process of being restored to life?

Spiritual Practices

A *wholehearted* approach to restoration includes making use of all sorts of aids, including spiritual practices. Spiritual practices are intentional acts that, when done often, become habits that open us up to God's grace and make us instruments of God's grace.

The very word practice brings with it the idea of learning.
And any practice is awkward and difficult at first.
But it is necessary to attain any kind of proficiency
in the spiritual life.
Dorothy Day

Some spiritual practices take place inside our churches and some take place outside. Following are five that came from the Apostles and the first Christians. These practices helped them carry on after Christ's traumatic suffering, death, resurrection, and the trauma of their own persecution. Some refer to these as The Five Loaves (Tomaszek):

Offer radical hospitality: Welcome and assist others.

Seek the teachings: Pursue Christian wisdom and knowledge.

Pray all ways: Pray in a variety of meaningful ways.

Tell stories of grace and blessings: Share with others how goodness has touched your life.

Give your gifts: Being generous with your talent and resources.

There are many more spiritual practices that can assist in the process of restoration:

Singing: This ancient way of praying, also called Hymning, can be done privately or with others.

Keeping the Sabbath: Using the Lord's Day to worship and rest, remembering who you are and whose you are.

Reconciliation: Offering to mend a broken relationship.

Journaling: Writing in a way that takes what's "inside" and places it "outside."

Honoring the body: Physically taking care of, and respecting, your body.

Saying yes and saying no: Carefully and thoughtfully choosing what you commit to.

Bible study: A way of seeking the teachings in God's word, alone or with others.

Lectio Divina: An ancient monastic method of biblical meditation.

Rosary: A rhythmic and traditional Catholic devotion.

Centering prayer: A form of Christian mindfulness by "getting closer and listening."

For Discussion

Share your answer to one of these questions (your choice):

1. How have you experienced all three elements of the Paschal Mystery?
2. What does/will the process of restoration require of you?
3. Which spiritual practice(s) might be of interest to you?



Those who carry God in their hearts bear heaven with them, wherever they go.
St. Ignatius of Loyola

In Conclusion

Whole Hearted introduced you to three different and ongoing dynamics:

- **Sessions 1 and 2** were about Recognition: identifying your experience of trauma and evaluating your response to it.
- **Session 3** was about Renewal: praying for strength and newness.
- **Session 4** was about Restoration: doing the healthy, intentional, and hard work needed to move forward.

These three dynamics of *Recognition*, *Renewal*, and *Restoration* do not have to be followed in a sequence. They are more like three rooms in a dwelling, each with its own function or purpose. In dealing with the impact of trauma, you can spend as much time in each of these different spaces as you wish. You can go back and forth from one “room” to another as needed. Or you can spend more time on one dynamic than the other two.





The mission of Catholic Charities is to provide service to people in need, to advocate for justice in social structures, and to call the entire church and other people of good will to do the same.