



REFLECTION 2: Making Promises

“In God's plan, every single person is called upon to grow. Each life is a vocation. From birth, we carry within ourselves the seeds of personal growth. Each of us can bear the fruit proposed for him or her by God. This is progress.” *Populorum Progressio*

“What is happening to the earth indicated that we must think beyond local and national interests and define ‘the community’ in global terms. The way we live and the choices we make affect the lives of others: not only human life, in fact, but also the other forms of life found on earth.”

– *The Call of Creation, God's invitation and the human response, Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales: Introduction*

“Will I pay more for my shopping so that producers from poor countries make a fairer profit?”

Populorum Progressio, abridged

Dear Lord,
Help me to grow less
Less concerned by my wants
Less worried by my future
Less blind to others' suffering
So that you may grow more
More present in my life
Making me
More aware of my dignity
More trusting in your providence
More filled with love for all people

God of frugality and abundance
Give me less and more
Amen. -Evan Ellis

Readings and Articles

Here are suggested readings to introduce groups to *livesimply*. Use the reflection questions in the next section to guide your discussion.

Click to link to these readings

1. Living life to the Full, Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

([Link on CD "Extracts From Livesimply Anthology CAFOD"](#))

2. The Importance of Simplicity, Ignatius A. Kaima, Archbishop of Jos, Nigeria

([Link on CD "Extracts From Livesimply Anthology CAFOD"](#))

3. Do not forget the Creator, Pope John Paul II

([Link on CD "Extracts From Livesimply Anthology CAFOD"](#))

4. Unbridled Consumerism, Juan Hernandez Pico SJ

([Link on CD "Extracts From Livesimply Anthology CAFOD"](#))

Reflection Questions

Discuss the following in small groups, or reflect by yourself and share.

Rowan Williams describes living simply as living the full life of Jesus. Ask yourself:

How do I define a "full" life?

What keeps me from living simply?

What sort of person would I be if I reached the full human potential God wants for me?

Would I like to become that person? If so, what steps would I take?

What do I see as my vocation in life? Is my work meaningful and helps me to create a world that I am proud of?

Do my actions speak louder than my words?

What is good about my life at the moment? What do I enjoy most?

Archbishop Kaima describes the importance of simplicity. Think about your own life:

What do I spend most of my time doing? Is this the right priority for me at the moment?

What do I spend most of my money on? Is this the right priority for me at the moment?
Have I got too much of anything? Or just enough? How do I decide how much is
enough?
Is there one thing I could share more of – money, time, skills, resources?

***Pope John Paul II calls us to remember God and to respect creation. Ask
yourself:***

Am I living sustainably and making the wisest use of the earth's resources? Will future
generations be pleased about the way I took care of the earth?
How much of the earth's resources am I using every day? (eg car, heating, water, flights)
How much of that is essential?
What do you already do to protect creation?
Does my lifestyle respect those who are living in poverty?
How do my actions affect those around the world? How can I ensure that my lifestyle
promotes justice? Make a list of your actions that have an effect on people locally and
abroad.

Activities and Action

Use these suggestions for activities to put your thoughts into action!

Poems are one way to reflect upon our lifestyles and our relationships with the earth and
with others. Use this reading as a starting point to think more critically about your
everyday actions. Try to come up with your own prayers and poems as well!

Meditations for Mindful Living by Thich Nat Han

*In this food,
I see clearly
The entire universe
Supporting my existence.*

When we look at our plate, filled with fragrant and appetizing food, we should be aware
of the bitter pain of people who suffer from hunger and malnutrition. Looking at our plate,
we can see creation, the farm workers, and the tragedy of unequal distribution of
resources. We who live in North America and Europe are accustomed to eating foods
imported from other countries, whether it is coffee from Colombia, chocolate from
Ghana, or fragrant rice from Thailand. Many children in these countries, except those
from rich families, never see the fine products that are put aside for export in order to
bring in money. Before a meal, we can think about those who do not have enough to eat.
Slowly and mindfully, we recite this poem. May we find ways to live more simply in order
to have more time and energy to change the system of injustice that exists in the world.

How sustainable are you?

Calculate your carbon footprint online at www.change.ie. How large is your impact? Are there steps you can take to reduce your environmental impact?

Making Promises

Making a promise is making a commitment. Making a *livesimply* promise is a way to make your actions match your words and your faith. It's a challenge to think about how our lifestyles can reflect solidarity with people who are poor. You think of something you can do to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with people who are poor, and you encourage others to join you in making a promise. Not only are you being the best you can be, but also you're encouraging others to do the same and supporting each other when the going gets tough.

Here are some examples of promises other people have made:

I will use public transportation when I can and encourage my friends and family to do likewise...

I will use all the space in my exercise books so that no paper is wasted...

I will sort out one item that can be recycled by being resold, every week...

I will try to live more simply by only turning on lights when necessary...

I will promise to buy more fair-trade products...

I will only run my washing machine and dishwasher when full...

For ideas more on living more sustainably and justly, visit:

www.livesimply.ie

www.progressio.ie

www.change.ie

<http://www.presentationsistersunion.org/resources/default.cfm?loadref=270>