



Fact Finding: Small-Group Leader Directions

After the leader introduces this activity, facilitate a discussion with your small group based on the following questions:

1. Which of the facts do you find most surprising or upsetting?
2. Are there any issues (the ones that we've named or others) that you are motivated to act on now or that you have been involved with already?
3. What questions do you have about these issues?
4. What other issues or problems do you wonder about? Is there something you care about that hasn't come up yet?

When the above discussion is complete, each small-group leader should read the following passage to his or her group:

- Showing love and care for those whom the world has rejected sometimes startles or “scandalizes” others. People can be surprised, and even upset, when we show mercy to those who are considered outsiders. When Jesus healed lepers or spent time with people who were seen as sinners, people were shocked. They were scandalized. The Parable of the Good Samaritan was scandalous, because it points out that even the person seen as an enemy can be the neighbor you are called to love. Jesus crossed social boundaries to get to the people on the outskirts, the “people in the shadows.” Our willingness to help people who have been rejected by others is what Pope Francis calls the “scandal of mercy.” Pope Francis is following Jesus’ example. Even before he was the Pope, Francis surprised people by riding the public bus with poor people instead of being driven in a private car like most bishops. As Pope he has upset and even scandalized people by handing out sleeping bags to the homeless, having showers installed for them at the Vatican, and welcoming them to sleep in Saint Peter’s Square. He keeps reminding us that we must care for those who are poor.

Continue the discussion using these questions:

1. Who are the people in our community who are “living in the shadows,” and what would it look like to show them scandalous mercy? As a group, make a list of the people in need in our community. (*Hint:* Think about the statistics from your fact-finding mission, and consider the following groups: immigrants, refugees, the elderly, people in hospitals, people in nursing homes, those who are poor, the unemployed, those who are homeless, and the people “that society would prefer would just go away,” as Bishop Frank said.)
2. If you were to take action and help one or two of these groups through service, who would you want to help? In what way would you like to serve?
3. Do you know what is already being done to help these groups and who (what groups or agencies) is doing it? In what ways could you participate in these efforts, or how might you help in ways that the groups or agencies don't have the time or people power to do themselves?

