

The Significance of The Review of Life

The See-Judge-Act method is at the heart of Joseph Cardijn's plan to form young leaders and forms the basis of how to go through a "Review of Life".

SEE

This stage is an opportunity for young people to speak freely and openly about things that are happening in their lives and around them. They experience being listened to by others and realise that others take them seriously. They know that their life is seen as important and that they won't be criticised for sharing the situations they face.

The "See" helps to create an atmosphere of feeling accepted and of being at home. It builds a place of safety and belonging, which many young people long for in a world which is often broken, precarious and threatening. Everyone in the group, not just the group leader, has the responsibility to create a community of attentiveness and openness, of welcome and tolerance, of friendly concern and care for the other.

The "See" is descriptive. The young people are not asked to give opinions or abstract theories, but should rather draw a verbal picture of the concrete events of their life and the lives of their friends. This starting point is very important, especially for young people who are not at ease with words, who lack confidence, or who think they have nothing important to say. On the events of their own life, they are the experts.

JUDGE

The "Judge" stage is a time for deeper thought. It affords young people the opportunity to move beyond their immediate reaction to a situation and to reconsider the way they give value to things. It is a time to reflect on values and how we receive them. The "Judge" allows life to be touched by the witness of others and by the light of God's Word. NB. Judge does not mean judging people but rather weighing up situations.

We need to be clear what we expect from this part of the process. It is not, for example, a time for getting all the answers - some answers sometimes maybe - or doing a theological study. It is simply a moment when the young people try to grasp the meaning of the teaching and example of Jesus and the Church in a way that is relevant to their life. More still, it is an experience of meeting Christ through his Word, even if that word is to begin with, just one hesitantly spoken phrase or a faint memory from an RE class.

The reflection on the Word of God or Church Teaching can inspire the group in two ways-

- It can shed light on the particular situation they are discussing by affirming a particular value, countering a way of thinking that is commonly accepted or holding up an ideal. The words and actions of Jesus give a model for their own behaviour.
- It can set on fire and enliven their desire to take action. It can increase their love and sustain their hope. It leads them to discover the immense love that God has for young people and how much he wants their lives to be ones of true quality and dignity as his sons and daughters.

ACT

The “Act” stage offers the group a decision-making moment, a challenge in an area of life where we would like to see change. It is an opportunity to make a difference. This gives a special character to the group. It is not just a talking-shop, a discussion group but a movement towards action, a way of living, of making choices, of changing the world around us.

It offers them the chance to discover abilities and qualities in themselves that have gone unrecognised so far. Even the smallest action could commit them to draw on personal resources within themselves which they may have never used.

Action has a faith dimension. It is an experience of active cooperation with God, of sharing in the building of God’s kingdom, of being an active player in his plan. He has poured out his Spirit upon us so that young people can “dream dreams” and work to see them become reality.

REVIEW

Although not mentioned as often as SEE-JUDGE-ACT the review is equally important. This is a moment when the group reflects on an action taken and explores what has been learnt and what remains to be done. An action that is reviewed becomes more fruitful in terms of the young peoples’ development. They can be helped to see more clearly what they have achieved and to celebrate it. The review can highlight their growth in confidence and ability to take responsibility. It can also be a time to mark how the action resonates with their faith and values. Even if the action did not appear to be a great success the group or individual can be helped to see the positive and learn lessons for the future. Results are not everything, the process of trying is a valuable formative experience.