

LENTEN EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE FOR YOUTH

Fr Dominic Meehan is a priest for the Archdiocese of Cashel and Emly. He travelled to Honduras with Trócaire in 2016 to witness our work on the ground there. Based upon his experience there, he has written the following examination of conscience for use during the season of Lent. This is a resource he uses himself whilst working with groups of Confirmation retreatants.



Groups can consist of anywhere between 25 to 35 children/young adults. Seats are set up in a circle with a sacred space in the centre. The sacred space might include a Trócaire Box as the focal point. This examination of conscience can easily be adapted for older or younger age groups.



Trócaire's work in Honduras mainly focuses on these three areas:

1. Education around gender-based and gang violence
2. Advocacy around the issues of land ownership
3. Protection of natural resources and the environment

STEP 1:

We begin our examination by speaking about the poverty in Honduras and the fact that many people exist on \$2 or less per day.



Ask the retreatants to think about what they have in their own lives. Are they grateful to their parents/guardians/God for everything they have? Or do they moan and complain about what others have, wishing they could have the same and placing unfair pressure on their parents/guardians to get these things?

The question could be expanded to include issues of self-image/self-worth.

STEP 2:

We continue our examination by speaking about the violence that exists in Honduras, both domestic violence and violence in society at large (eg. gang violence).



Ask the group to reflect on their own relationships. How do they interact/treat/get along with people at home, their parents/guardians/siblings? How do they interact/treat/get along with people at school/outside of school/at play/at work?

This could be expanded to treatment of boyfriends and girlfriends.

STEP 3:

Another huge issue in Honduras is the problem of 'land grabbing' whereby the ruling families/classes take advantage of the country's mineral-rich land. Examples of such practice include building palm plantations on land used by smallhold farmers, harnessing rivers for hydroelectricity and building holiday homes along the otherwise unspoiled Pacific coastline.



The group are asked to reflect on this. Do they think it is okay to take what belongs to someone else? Have they ever taken something that belonged to someone else?

This could be expanded to address the issue of wanting what they haven't got and feeling entitled to do so?

STEP 4:

Honduras is a beautiful country, but it is extremely susceptible to tropical storms due to its geographical location between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It is also vulnerable to climate change. Climate around the world has changed and continues to change at a staggering rate and this is evident in countries like Honduras.



Ask the group to reflect on the causes of climate change; for example, our over-reliance, use and abuse of electricity, carbon fuels and water. Are we responsible in our use of the planet's resources? What can we do? Do we leave the lights on around the house? Do we leave the TV or radio on when we aren't watching or listening? Is the thermostat always set to high in the house? Do we let the tap run when we wash our teeth? There are so many little things we can do to show greater respect for earth, which is our home, and also to help our vulnerable and suffering sisters and brothers throughout the developing world.

STEP 5:

Cuyamel is a beautiful village on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. It is home to Maria, her mother, Miriam, and their friends and community. The area has been greatly affected by rising sea levels and regular tropical storms. The family and community need to evacuate at least five times each year because of the storms. There is another problem that affects this beautiful place – litter! Just a few miles north of Cuyamel lies Guatemala, and this is where much of the litter comes from. It is thrown aside, swept into rivers or the ocean and eventually ends up on the beach at Cuyamel.



Ask the group to reflect on a picture of litter. Again, this addresses the question of respect for the beauty around us, for the environment and the planet, also respect for Maria and her community, who have to live with the consequences of the carelessness of others.

This could be expanded to discuss how everything we do, no matter how unimportant we might think it is, has an effect on others and the world around us.