

# Listening to the call for meaning in our hearts 20-21 May 2017

## **A) INTRODUCTION – SEARCH FOR MEANING**

### **01) 09.30 – U - Introduction – Viktor Frankl (30')**

Practice of our sharing (being aware of what makes sense): 1) we will concentrate on the topic + 2) we will say only what is useful.

### **02) 10.00 – Five examples (5 x 18' = 90')**

Five examples to start our reflexion.

- 1) **Viktor Frankl - U          Salvation of mankind is through love and in love.**  
Have you experienced the freedom to choose one's attitude toward any set of circumstances? What difference did it make?  
What does Life expect from you rather than what is the meaning of your life? Does it change something?
- 2) **Tibhirine - Y          Resistance + being witness (not depending on response by others).**  
How do you understand "I am complicit in the evil that, alas, prevails over the world" and "happy thieves in Paradise"? How does it relate to the ability of being a witness and not depending on the response of others?
- 3) **Etty Hilesun - U          Joy despite the dreadful context.**  
How do you understand: "My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with You, oh God, one great dialogue"?
- 4) **Eva Mozes Kor - Y          Forgiveness as self-healing.**  
How do you understand: "Forgiveness is really nothing more than an act of self-healing and self-empowerment. I call it a miracle medicine. It is free, it works and has no side effects. I do it for myself." If it is such a miracle medicine, why do we resist it so much?
- 5) **St Francis of Assisi - U   Living itself as meaning / process.**  
How do you understand this text "What is perfect gladness?"

**Summary: We "create" the meaning.**

## **11.30 – MORNING TEA**

### **03) 12.00 – U - What keeps you alive? (45')**

**Ex:** What keeps you alive and what gets you out of bed in the morning? List a minimum of 10. Which of these are a question of life and death for you? Which are linked to your particular circumstances now and which would you embrace in any circumstances?

**Summary: Mostly immaterial meanings that are not related to what we do.**

## **13.00 - LUNCH**

## **B) SOCIAL VALUES - CONFORMISM**

### **04) 14.30 – Y - Chain of transformation (60')**

Facts – perception – interpretation – choice

Facts happen around us. Before we react to them, there is long chain of transformations that happen:

1) First perception through our senses transforms facts into sensation (information). 2) Secondly this perception is transformed again when it is interpreted by our mind, and 3) thirdly, according to this interpretation that we just created, we make decisions: we make choices. There is a chain of transformation: from facts to perceptions, from perceptions to interpretations, from interpretations to choices, and from choices to acts or new facts. Each step of transformation in this chain creates a new fiction that is further away from what we call reality. It is how our mind is not reliable. But we trust it, because we have no other tool.

Example: When we were born we had no frame of reference. Our past, our memory, our upbringing, our education, our experience, our spiritual path have slowly provided us with a frame of references (good or bad). If I got burned by hot water as a child, I'm afraid of water. If I had good experiences with water, I enjoy its contact. In both cases water remains the same; are then these personal references trustworthy? Often the frame seems so fragile, and justified by chance, or hurts, or privileges, or needs for security more than motivated by an authentic search for truth. Our primitive instinct impacts too on the chain of transformation, even if the signal gets treated also by mental faculties or memories, it does not mean the instinct does not play a role anymore. Our basic functions: survival (fight or flight), food, security, sex... continue to constitute leading energies.

**Ex:** Read the story by T de Mello. Then analysis: we tell (discuss) what is 1) the fact, 2) the perception, 3) the interpretation, 4) the choice.

1) Interpretation: What are the references that allow us to give a meaning? Could we imagine many different paths of interpretation? Where are the crossroads (possibilities to diverge)?

2) Value of the choice: we have to take a stand. Do we? Choices: taking stands constitutes our very life. What is the frame of reference for our choices? How far do we question our habits?

**Summary: We make the world in which we live.**

### **05) 15.30 – U - Byron Katie (60')**

The method:

1) The stressful situation or person (anger, resentment, expectation). 2) The Worksheet as a tool.

3) The 4 questions to be answered. 4) The turnaround of one / many sentences.

**Ex:** A) Choose an example in your life (not too complex so that you can share it with others).

B) Fill the worksheet. C) Answer the 4 questions. D) Play with the turnaround.

Seeing despite our hurts or privileges. Link it to V. Frankl's "free attitude".

**Summary: Seeing what is – loving what is.**

## **16.30 - AFTERNOON TEA**

### **06) 17.00 – Y - The values that guide our society (60')**

The social context has a strong impact on our behaviour and beliefs (conformism, economic pressure, etc). What guides people? Economic model / advertisement / fashion / ideology / beliefs.

A) What are the leading images in Australia today.

**Ex:** Chart of the guiding forces in OZ (4 columns): 1) Image of ourselves. 2) Image of the others. 3) Image of our social, economic and political life. 4) Oppose your own (with – / +). Describe in a minimum of words the driving patterns and values of each one including yours (max 10 words each). Do not waste time in chatty commentaries! On top of the chart, write the most permanent. At the bottom, the most impermanent. (20 min in groups of 2).

B) Us and the others. The image of the "others" is not an expression of what they are but an explanation why we relate to them in the way we do. Illustrate! Bring (counter)examples.

C) Examine now, in comparing column 4 with the other 3, how much difficulty we have detaching from the official image: the official discourse determines the way we think / we judge / we learn. We tend to integrate what others have said before us. Most learning / searching is usually going deeper into what has been defined by others instead of creating our own path. How do we break that hold?

Frankl's freedom to choose.

**Summary: How society defines our values and how we tend to reinforce this influence.**

## **18.30 – EVENING MEAL**

### **FILM**

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## **SUNDAY MORNING**

### **07.30 - MEDITATION**

## **C) THE PERSONAL SEARCH**

### **07) 09.30 – U - What did we learn so far? (30')**

What was the most striking in what we did yesterday?

Film: what was the evolution into deeper meaning of each of the 3 characters in the film?

### **08) 10.00 – Y - Meaning arising: teaching and experience (45')**

Two poles: 1) The field of experience (everyday life). 2) The teaching (tradition, books, personal work). + the synthesis: 3) Making it yours (assimilation).

**Ex:** Try to summarise in only a few (2-3) sentences what each one (experience / teaching) has taught you (20 min preparation). Describe how they relate to each other. Which personal practice makes it alive and yours?

**Summary: The need for embodiment (every day) to grow spiritually.**

### **09) 10.45 – Y - The inner / private sphere – hidden / protected space (45')**

2 poles: 1) Personal beliefs, inner experience (contemplation + reflexion), 2) Public practice, the way we do things, relationships.

A) Rootedness and conformity: being oneself or behaving like the others? The acceptance of outer powerlessness (based on inner freedom and strength) helps us to resist pressure for conformity.

B) Rootedness and suffering: peace in oneself and yet compassion for the suffering in the world (see Etty).

C) Rootedness needs a protected inner space to grow.

**Ex:** Walk on the land and try to answer the following questions (20 min.):

1) What prevents you from being rooted in yourself?

2) What is the role of powerlessness in your life? How does it fundamentally change your attitudes?

3) Why is there a necessity to protect this inner space? What kind of protection is this?

**Summary: The need for protection. The inner garden and the many attacks.**

## **11.30 – MORNING TEA**

## **10) 12.00 – U - Resistance (45')**

2 forms of resistance:

A) Resistance to Truth: we resist seeing what is and understanding the laws of the Universe.

B) Resistance to evil: we have to be testimonies to resist evil. Even if we are the last one.

Read Martin Niemoeller.

**Ex:** (prepare for 20 min. in groups of 2)

1) What prevents you from seeing what is (list of 10 words)?

2) How do you resist evil? What is evil in Australia today?

**Summary: Rootedness and negative resistance (to truth) / positive resistance (to evil)**

## **13.00 – LUNCH**

## **D) THE DIVINE**

### **11) 14.30 – Y - Community (60')**

Community is more than the group of local people who use the same services (shopping, trades, health, sport infrastructures, etc.). This is a further stage of development when we learn how to link with one another and form a wider body made out of different “organs” (you, me). The whole is more than the addition of the parts. Community is the place for sharing and supporting each other (Sangha, Body of Christ, Umma). Community as the further stage of development (Teilhard de Chardin). Community does not mean conformity (melting pot) but, on the contrary, differentiation (specialisation and diversity). Read Gregory of Nyssa + Teilhard de Chardin.

**Ex:** (prepare for 20 min. in groups of 2)

1) How does community help us to find meaning? What is true community?

2) Diversity / interdependence / complementarity. How do we learn to be ourselves and different from others? What is the difference between belonging and identifying? How do we cope with differences (especially the insecurity it awakens in us)?

3) How do you understand community to be a further stage of humanity?

4) What would be the right conditions in order to implement this form of community sharing?

**Summary: Rediscovering community and practising it.**

### **12) 15.30 – U – Life and Love (60')**

**In summary we could say:** Life is what remains when everything has disappeared (cf Etty, St Francis). To remain aware of this truth we need our inner protected space of “utmost sincerity and ultimate solitude” (Frankl) because silence is where Life makes us alive beyond anything we can control.

It is helpful to imagine, as well as we can, how we would behave when everything has been lost except life. It helps us to see what is essential in our life (Life and love) that does not depend on anything else than being alive. This is a situation which we will all have to face at the moment of our Death. How will we die? Preparing for that final moment is of tremendous help in living here and now.

Text Pedro Arrupe, SJ

**Ex:** 1) What is the practise of silence in your life? If you do not practise it, what do you do to access this protected space which we do not control?

2) What is essential in your life and not dependent on anything?

3) What is essential and dependent on external conditions?

4) Then reflect on what you concentrate in your own life.

**Summary: The essential of life: Life and love.**

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