

Best Group Ever

I kid you not. After 40 years of leading Living Waters groups, I just finished the best one ever. These twenty weeks rolled out like a dream. OK, chalk it up to extraordinary co-leaders (Marco and Becky) and inspired worship (Abbey singing at piano as we bowed before the Tabernacle and Divine Mercy).

Maybe it had something to do with diversity. I led one of many small groups alongside my coleader from IHOP; we accompanied a Reformed lay leader, a priest, a therapist, and two other Catholics—some single, some married, various kinds of lust—all unified in our commitment to becoming chaste gifts. Awesome.

Perhaps it was the team. Having done the group at my parish for six years now, we are gaining traction with lay leaders emerging from the group who now serve others. Every teaching, we had a man and a woman exchange well-honed, embodied reflections. God's image in humanity—broken, being healed, hopeful—unfurled before us every week. It convinced me again that lay leaders, properly equipped, are the best witnesses and (practical) expositors of redemption.

The goal and apex of Living Waters: restoring honor between women and men. We admitted diminishment in our gender gift due to how we bruise each other. Perpetrators and victims all: still, the women bore more hurt, and it was humbling to witness these sassy, effectual career women and mothers weep before the Cross as Jesus accessed the damage done by sins of misogyny. We men squirmed, subject to the good shame over our misogynistic lusts and narcissism; we were also subject to toxic shame, which deadens us with self-hatred and tempts us to make women the problem. At the Cross, Jesus met us and bound up our shame, as well as misandry: the more subtle ways that women dishonor us.

Heavy stuff. Impossible without Jesus among us. The Cross is enough. When we bypass Jesus in the gender wars we can only seek to control or be controlled. Docile before Jesus, through the Cross, we spoke specific blessings over this 'other' whom God made in distinction from us. He is teaching us through the Cross to love each other, to honor His whole image.

The last meeting, during team prayer, many of us--wearied and distracted by the demands of the day--wondered: 'What have I to give tonight?' I received a picture of a golden mantle over us. I could see the anointing of Living Waters resting on the parish and us; unified, we as a team were extending that mantle. I felt the Lord whispering to us: 'Just enter into My work tonight. It is Mine. I delight in giving you a little share in preparing a people for Myself.' With that, we rested, and went forward into an intensive night. We remembered the work was His and were grateful to share in it. Frankly, I can't wait to start again.

Please take time to watch our video and become ['Chaste Together.'](#)