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Gathering Around the Word of God

SCHIMMERT, The Netherlands - During the recent Lent, the young confreres organised weekly meetings under the theme “Journeying together towards Easter”. There were six meetings, each held on a Thursday or Friday evening. The Lectio Divina focused each time on the Gospel for the coming Sunday, from the first Sunday of Lent through to Palm Sunday. All the meetings took place in the small living room of the presbytery of Schimmert parish. We began with a prayer to the Holy Spirit. Father Stefan then invited the participants to read the Gospel together and subsequently to reflect on it personally in silence. Afterwards, everyone was given time to reflect on

simple, personal questions: what does this text say to me? Which words or events touch me most? What feelings does this evoke? Are there any questions? Participants could write down their thoughts to share later.

Sharing with one another was a key part of the gathering. Everyone was given the opportunity to speak calmly and openly about what they had discovered in the Gospel. Participants were asked first to listen in silence, without reacting or commenting straight away. This attitude of listening helps us to truly take in the other person's story of faith and to enrich one another. This fosters a synodal spirit: journeying together, listening to one another and being open to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Only then, if necessary, was there space for a joint discussion to explore certain themes in greater depth. In this way, the gathering became a place where everyone felt heard and supported. We concluded with intercessory prayer, a hymn and the priest's blessing.

It was wonderful that the participants came not only from the parish of Schimmert, but also from neighbouring parishes. This shows that the desire to grow in faith is still very much alive. In a context where churches are closing in the Netherlands, the number of believers is declining and parishes are under financial pressure, such gatherings are a sign of hope: the Church is alive where people gather around the Word of God and encourage one another.

Through these gatherings, people are also rediscovering the value of community, something that is becoming increasingly rare in today's society. Many come not only to gain a better understanding of the Gospel, but also to share their lives and faith. Afterwards, participants always linger for a long while, chatting over a cup of coffee or tea. These simple moments strengthen the bonds between them and stir a desire to meet again.

Given the current situation of the Church in the Netherlands, we are focusing our Montfortian mission primarily on building a community of faith—following the example of the community of the first disciples who gathered together, prayed and shared. After all, the Church is not primarily a building or a structure, but a community of believers. That is why we try to hold these kinds of gatherings on a regular basis.

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