

## **-\*THE FLOATING CITY OF MERCY**

### **Intent of the Story.**

- ✓ *This story was prepared to initiate a discussion on the relevance of our ministries and works in our world today.*
- ✓ *The point emphasized was that merely 'spiritual and charitable' works and ministries will not suffice in the circumstances of to day's world.*
- ✓ *Today, in our ministries, we need to stress not only the works of charity and the promotion of faith, but equally, with the same intensity, we have to struggle for the promotion of justice.*

### **A STORY.**

Once upon a time, a group of very religious and charitable minded people made up of Bishops, Priests, Religious, Brothers and Sisters, and countless devoted and highly motivated; lay people – doctors, teachers, social workers – formed a religious and humanitarian society.

Their aim was to instill into the people the fear of God, moral and upright living and also to alleviate the sufferings of the handicapped, the orphans, the sick, the aged, and the rejects of society.

In their great desire to help others and carry out humanitarian work, they bought an old large passenger ship which they turned into a floating city of mercy. Part of the ship was turned into large and beautiful chapel and prayer room, where, people were taught the word of God and where inspiring religious services were held for one and all. Another part of the ship was changed into a good school where destitute children were imparted good education. Elsewhere in the ship, they built an orphanage.

Still another part of the huge liner was reshaped into a modern hospital, where numberless poor patients were lovingly cared for. Other parts of the ship were remodeled to serve as a home for the aged, a crèche, a rehabilitation centre for alcoholics and drug addicts and many other charitable, educational and social works. Truly that mighty liner had become a 'Floating City of Mercy'.

Working in the ship there were large numbers of zealous priests, dedicated sisters, brothers, nurses, teachers and social workers. Their dedication and devotedness was admirable!

One day, the floating City of Mercy sprang a leak and the sea water slowly began flooding the hold of the ship. A lonely visitor to the ship happened to detect the leak and immediately raised the alarm.

He went to the Doctors and Sisters and said: "Doctors, Sisters there is a leak in the ship. Hurry up! Do something about it!" But the Doctors and Sisters replied: "We are

Doctors, we are sisters, our duty is to care for the patients, not to engage in ship-repairing work” And they went on looking after the sick with single minded dedication.

Then, our man ran to the Religious and Teachers. He said: “Rev. Mothers, Dear Teachers, there is a leak in the boat. Please do something. It’s urgent! But raising their eye brows they mumbled: “Oh no! Our vocation is to reach poor children and give them the best available education. God never called us to do mechanical works!

Finally, in despair our man ran to the Priests and to the Church authorities. He cried out: “Listen! There is a leak in the ship. We are sinking! Slow down your preaching. Run to the hold and repair the leak! It’s an emergency! Hurry up!” “Not at all!” they replied. “Priests are supposed to do the work for which they were ordained. They cannot neglect their priestly ministries and lofty vocation! Let the lay people see to it!”

And so, in the Floating City of Mercy, the Priests and Religious, Brothers and Sisters, Doctors and Social workers dedicatedly and most inspiringly went on with great zeal doing the work their vocation had called them to.

Everything looked fine and peaceful, only that a few days later, the ship with all its pupils, patients, orphans, old people sank to the bottom of the sea along with their dedicated band of Priest, Sisters, Brothers, Doctors, Teachers and other highly motivated helpers.

### **POINTS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION**

1. What does the liner represent in the story?
2. And what does the ‘religious a humanitarian society’ founded by priests and zealous lay people stand for in the story?
3. What could be the meaning of the ‘leak and of the sinking’ ship?
4. Whom does the ‘lonely visitor’ to the ship represent?
5. Why no one paid heed to the lonely visitor?
6. The religious and charitable works and ministries carried on the ship were praiseworthy, yet, the ship sunk. Why?
7. What did finally happen to the charitable society, and to its zealous members and to their good works?
8. In the situation of a sinking ship, which works should be given first priority? Why?
9. In the context of today’s world situation, discuss the following:
  - “How relevant are some of our ministries and works? What could be done?
  - Should The Church forget the spiritual character of her ministries today? Why?
  - Can the ‘promotion of faith’ be combined with the ‘promotion of justice’? How?
  - Are the ‘promotion of faith’ and the ‘promotion of justice’ to be viewed as two different goals or priorities? Why?
  - Are they mutually exclusive or inclusive? How?

- How to create awareness among the members of Church and of society about their social responsibilities?

### **SYMBOLIC MEANING OF THE THE STORY.**

1. The liner represents the world, and world structures.
2. The society for religious and humanitarian objects stands for the Church and for other societies whose objects are the promotion of religion and .charity.
3. The leak and the sinking of the ship represent the crumbling socio-political and economical structures of our world
4. The priestly ministries, the teaching, hospital work, and charitable deeds represent the service the Church and other societies render to the world.
5. The urgent repairing work needed to save the ship stands for the promotion of justice in our world.
6. The works the Church and other similar societies did and do are excellent. But they have to be seen and judged in the context of today's world situation. In the actual circumstances we could question the priority value of some of them. .
7. Some good works could be suspended for a time, or combined with repair works – 'promotion of justice'.
8. All the members of the church and other religious and humanitarian societies – the priests and religious included- are citizens of the world.
9. All have inescapable social, civic and political obligations to make our society a better and more just one.
10. The visitor to the ship stands for the social activists and those who try to conscientize people.