



CAP TIPS #10 ***To Improve Public Awareness***

Sermon Ideas for Multi-Faith Clergy Members

Introduction

The 2010 National Crime Victims' Rights Week (NCVRW) theme – “Crime Victims' Rights: Fairness. Dignity. Respect.” – opens numerous opportunities for clergy of faiths that engage in congregational worship to highlight NCVRW in a sermon to “kick off” NCVRW. We are very grateful to national victim advocate Janice Harris Lord and her husband, the Reverend Richard Lord, who developed the sermon outlines below to promote the 2010 NCVRW theme to multi-faith communities.

The three themes of 2010 NCVRW – fairness, dignity, and respect – are highlighted with references to various faith's scriptures. In addition, this CAP TIP includes guidance for leaders of the seven major faith communities in the United States:

1. Judaism.
2. Christianity.
3. Islam.
4. Buddhism.
5. Bahai.
6. Jainism.
7. Sikhism.

You can provide the relevant references included in this CAP TIP to leaders of your state's or community's multi-faith communities, and encourage them to address the 2010 NCVRW theme to their congregations on Sunday, April 18th.

Previous CAP TIP # 4, “Engaging Multi-faith Communities” offers additional suggestions for outreach to multi-faith communities that can enhance your NCVRW public awareness and related activities.

Theme I: Fairness through Journey

Scripture: Surah 94, “The Expanding,” The Qur'an

“In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful,

Have we not expanded thee thy breast, and removed from thee thy burden, the burden that weighed down thy back? Did we not raise high the esteem in which thou art held?

So, truly, with hardship comes ease, so truly, with hardship comes ease.

Therefore, when thou art free from thine immediate task, still labour and to thy Lord turn all thy attention.

Sermon Outline:

- Introduction: Unwarranted suffering and mourning requires hard emotional labor. The weight of unfairness cries out for explanation, but there is none.
- A supportive community allows the unburdening of turmoil as the sufferer tells the story of what happened again and again.
- Over time, the shared wisdom of those who walked similar paths and survived enhances the esteem and hope of the sufferer.
- Reaching out to the One God restores the resiliency of the human spirit.

Theme II: Dignity through Blessing

Scripture: Matthew 5:4

“Blessed are those who mourn.”

Sermon Outline:

- Introduction: Who would dare to suggest to a person in mourning that may be blessed? Jesus did.
- It can be a blessing to be challenged to receive rather than to give.
- It can be a blessing to be challenged by the fragile nature of life, recognizing it as a gift, not a possession.
- It can be a blessing to be challenged by the need for a deeper faith or recognition of the Presence of God in the midst of darkness.

Theme III: Respect through Presence

Scripture: Job 2:11-13

“Now when Job’s three friends heard of all this evil that had come upon Him, they came each from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zopah the Naamanthite. They made an appointment together to come to condole with him and comfort him. And when they saw him from afar, they raised their voices and wept; and they rent their robes and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. And they sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

Sermon Outline:

- Introduction: Name crimes that have been suffered by persons within the congregation, using their names only with their permission
- Job's friends came to him. They did not wait for him to invite them.
- Job's friends expressed their sorrow in culturally-appropriate symbolic acts. The symbolic acts speak more loudly than words.
- When there is nothing to be said, the friends are silent and respectful. Words do not comfort as much as presence.

The World's Major Religions All Emphasize Fairness, Dignity and Respect in Human Relationships

Judaism: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the entire Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and learn."

Christianity: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Islam: "No one is a believer until you desire for another that which you desire for yourself."

Buddhism: "Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful."

Bahai: "Blessed are those who prefer others before themselves."

Jainism: "In happiness and suffering, in joy and in grief, regard all creatures as you would your own self."

Sikhism: "Be not estranged from one another for God dwells in every heart."

For More Information

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