



A Discussion Guide for
**THE TELLING TAKES US HOME:
TAKING OUR PLACE IN THE STORIES THAT SHAPE US**
A People's Pastoral from the Catholic Committee of Appalachia

INTRODUCTION: WHY WE TELL STORIES

*Wherever we are,
and whatever our relationship to these hills,
telling our stories
connects us once again,
take us home,
and gives us a place
from which we can act for justice. (3)*

- How do stories help us “to make sense of our lives, and to create meaning within them” (4)?
- How can the stories we tell about one another, especially those told by the powerful, contribute to injustice?
- What is your Appalachian story? That is, what is the story that connects you to these hills?

PART ONE: SEEING THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

*We remember and recommit
to hearing the voices of the poor and of Earth
and to voices we are still learning to discern...
Earth itself is a kind of magisterium
with its own authority that must be respected...
[T]here are authorities
to which all of God's people,
including the powerful,
must bow in humility and reverence. (7-8)*

- In what sense are the poor and Earth “authorities” for us? How can we better attend to and respect this authority?

*The loss of livelihood,
without anything to replace it,
is an old story in Appalachia
which has only worsened with time...
Many people impacted by fracking
cannot help but think
that this is but a new chapter
in the same old story
of resource extraction in Appalachia... (16, 21)*

- How has economic vulnerability been both a cause and effect of the problems faced by the people of Appalachia?
- Why are these voices often so difficult to hear, and why is it important to listen to all voices when trying to understand these realities?

*It will not do, however,
simply to insist that this region is
just as diverse as other places,
or that racism in Appalachia
is no different than in other places. (21)*

*Gay experience in Appalachia
is complex and contradictory. (24)*

- How are the experiences of diversity and inclusion (as well as of racism, sexism, and homophobia) distinctive in Appalachia? That is, what are the particular challenges or signs of hope that are experienced by people of color and LGBT persons in the region?
- Are there still other voices that we should listen to more attentively?

*The story of Appalachia
is the story of what many call a “sacrifice zone,”
one of the many places of suffering in our world
that are exploited for the sake
of a global capitalist economy
that seeks the “maximization of profit” at any cost
and funnels wealth to those at the top. (25)*

- Have you ever thought of Appalachia, or any other place, as a “sacrifice zone”? How does this image affect how you see the region and its connection with other places the world?

PART TWO: REFLECTING ON THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES

*The idol is present,
lurking in a number of popular
– and largely unquestioned –
economic, political, and cultural ideas.
These ideas work together like a constellation
to create a worldview that gives the idol life,
such that the image of God in the human person
and in the natural world
becomes obscured, disgraced,
or even destroyed. (30)*

- Read the list of “idolatries” on page 30 carefully. Are any of these particularly striking (or close to home) for you?

*Solutions which pit people
and the environment against one another
will not do, says Francis.
Rather, “everything is connected.”(32)*

- How do you understand Francis’ term “integral ecology”?
- What forces or factors stand in the way of promoting an integral ecology in Appalachia?
- How is the promotion of an integral ecology dependent upon a “culture of encounter” (e.g., 33)?

*We crucify Earth and each other
in many ways.*

*But we believe in a God
who brings the dead to life
and who is bringing about
a new heaven and a new Earth. (43)*

- Where do you see death and resurrection taking place most clearly in Appalachian communities?

PART THREE: RESPONDING TO THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES IN ACTION

*The word “activism” is often
met with suspicion
in the church and in Appalachia....
But for [many of us],
activism, faith, and Appalachia
are all a part of what it means*

*to follow the Spirit in this place.
We believe that Jesus showed us
that life in the Spirit
must be incarnate in our bodies
and in our world.
We believe that we are called
to be the Body of Christ in the world
and participants in God’s action in history. (51)*

- How does the word “activism” make you feel? How can activism be linked to faith in Appalachia?

*...many young people who leave Appalachia
for education or employment opportunities
have a shared sense of connection to home
and a deep love of the region...
Others have chosen to come back
to the communities they left
to start businesses and projects
which create new opportunities
in the places they love. (57)*

- What qualities of Appalachia draw young people to it (or back to it)? What untapped potential exists in the region?

*This is the church we desire,
and yet,
we know that we are the church
and that we must become the church
we wish to see in the world,
beginning now,
here in Appalachia and beyond. (57)*

- What concrete steps can your community take (or has taken) to become more attentive to the poor, more committed to partnership, more planetary, more rooted in place, more prophetic, and more reflective of the vision of the Appalachian pastorals (57)?
- Where do you find signs of hope and space for creativity in light of this message?

Read the entire People’s Pastoral or order additional physical copies at www.ccappal.org. Or contact us at:

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