Overview of the Formation, Prayer & Reflection Experience

The focus of this Formation, Prayer & Reflection experience is life of Edmund Ignatius Rice. We begin our experience by considering what we already know of Edmund using a series of pictures and a reconstructed image of his face. After this we will look at four scenes from Edmund’s childhood and early life in 18th Century Ireland: British power in Ireland; family faith life; hedge schools; and the hospitality of Edmund’s home.

Aims of this Formation, Prayer & Reflection Experience

Through this formation, prayer & reflection experience Staff or Board members will:

- Explore people’s understandings of Edmund’s life by reflecting on a variety of images of Edmund Rice;
- reflect upon their own images of Edmund and what has shaped these images;
- pray together as a community.

Preparing a Space for Formation, Prayer & Reflection

Today’s reflection is contained in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, so you will need to ensure that you have the necessary resources to present it. This might also affect the atmosphere of the Formation, Prayer and Reflection Experience, as it will focus people’s attention on the screen.

- You may still wish to light a candle as part of your gathering for prayer.
- You might also wish to give participants a copy of a handout that contains several images and some text from the presentation as well as a copy of Kyne’s Icon.
- If this is the case, you could also assign various members to read the pieces of text on the handout.

Outline of Formation, Prayer & Reflection Experience

The following outline is broken into five parts to help you lead your community in prayer.

1. Moving into the formation, prayer & reflection experience;
2. Using the PowerPoint presentation;
   i. Using images of Edmund to explore others’ understandings of Edmund;
   ii. reflecting upon our own images of Edmund and what has shaped these images; and
3. Praying together as a community.

Part One: Moving into the formation, prayer & reflection experience

Leader: We acknowledge the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples of Australia] as the traditional owners and custodians of the land of this school. We are inspired and nurtured by their wisdom, spirituality and experience. We commit ourselves to actively work alongside them for reconciliation and justice.
**Leader**: We gather tonight in the presence of God the Creator of all, in the memory of Jesus, who came to show us the way and in the communion of the Holy Spirit.\(^1\) [Pause]

[As someone lights the candle]: As we light this candle, may it draw our attention to God’s continued presence amongst us. May it remind us of the stories of our ancestors in faith: particularly Blessed Edmund Rice. [Pause]

**Part Two: Using the PowerPoint presentation (including praying together)**

Slide 1

Edmund Rice was a very humble man who did not allow his portrait to be painted during his lifetime. Some of the common images we have of Edmund are actually paintings of friends or relatives of the artists who painted them! So what *did* Edmund look like? // (to next slide)

Slide 2

This is a common image of Edmund painted by Don Gallagher (Canberra). What do you think the artist is trying to say about Edmund? [Dignified, reading the Bible, Icon of the Virgin and Child behind him shows devotion to Mary etc.] //

Slide 3

This is a portrait of Edmund and his wife. She has traditionally been called Mary. Though we have no historical proof for the accuracy of this name, we do have evidence in the form of a death notice for her in a Waterford newspaper. “Died today, the wife of Edmund Rice.” What do you think Hugh Sharpe is trying to show us about Edmund? //

Slide 4

This statue of Edmund comes from Ignatius Park in Townsville. It was created by a sculptor from the Atherton Tableland called Newell. What was the sculptor trying to show us about Edmund? //

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\(^1\) Alternately you could use the Sign of the Cross: “We gather tonight in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit.”
When Edmund’s body had to be moved to a new tomb at the Edmund Rice Heritage Centre in Waterford Ireland, the brothers employed a team of forensic scientists from the University of Dundee to carry out an in-depth, CSI-style reconstruction of Edmund’s mortal remains. (Pictures: The Chapel, Original school and sign at the Edmund Rice Heritage Centre Mt Sion in Waterford, Ireland) //

The Team undertook the task of reconstructing Edmund’s facial features to show what he looked like at the time of his death in 1844, at the age of 82. They used pictures of his skull and forensic science methods perfected by police forces to make a life-sized model out of resin and clay. //

The face the team has reconstructed is that of a man who has lived strenuously, giving his all. Even in his last year, his face is still strong, the face of a man who has known success and failure, happiness and sorrow. It is the face of a man who did not flinch from looking reality in the eye. //

This reconstruction of Edmund’s face is not sentimental and may not be to everyone’s liking. He lived through difficult times – his personal struggles, the challenges of founding a religious congregation, and the misery surrounding him in the lives of the poor he served – and these are reflected in his face. This new image of Edmund is a call to us to give generously and unselfishly of ourselves in the mission to which we have been called //

In pairs share:
• What images of Edmund do you bring with you today?
• Where do these images come from?

[You can give participants time to reflect on these questions silently. This could take 2-3 minutes. If you choose to take responses from the group or have people, you will need to allow more time for sharing] //
We Pray Together

God, we thank you for the life of Edmund Rice. He opened his heart to Christ present in those oppressed by poverty and injustice. May we follow his example of faith and generosity. Grant us the courage and compassion of Edmund as we seek to live lives of love and service. Live Jesus in our hearts… Forever!