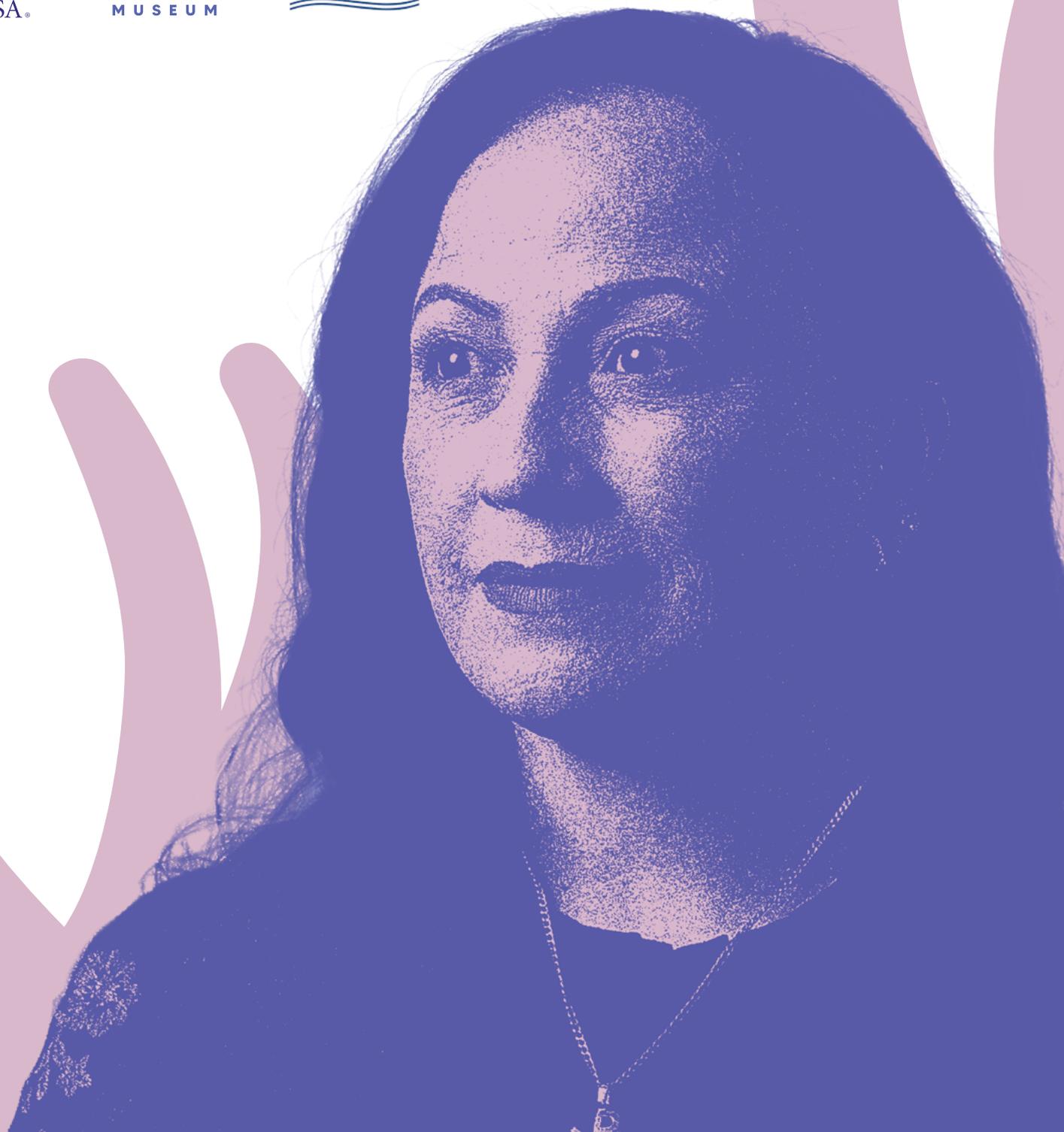


# Reflecting on Catholic Charities USA's People of Hope Museum

EDUCATOR & FACILITATOR GUIDE



# A Note to Educators and Facilitators

Thank you for taking the time to engage with Catholic Charities USA's nationwide storytelling museum, *People of Hope: Faith-Filled Stories of Neighbors Helping Neighbors*. We are grateful for your commitment to accompany others as they reflect on the power of Christian service and its transformative impact on both giver and receiver. By bringing students or parish groups into the People of Hope Museum and creating space for conversation afterward, you will play a vital role in helping them encounter a faith that is vibrant, living, and healing.

We recognize, however, that the full impact of this encounter does not always take shape automatically, and that some of the stories heard in the museum may raise questions and emotions that benefit from careful reflection. Talking through these experiences can help your community members make sense of what they encountered, see how it connects to the story of their lives, and help them share that learning. This kind of support can allow special moments, like the museum visit, to bear fruit for years to come.

This discussion guide was created to support you in facilitating thoughtful conversations with the people in your community. It is meant to help you:

- Create a space for participants to reflect on their own reactions and assumptions,
- Promote empathy by centering real people and lived experiences,
- Explore how the Christian faith animates service and community engagement, and
- Discern next steps in supporting neighbors in need.

Provided by Springtide Research Institute, the instructions and prompts in this guide draw on social scientific best practices for how to ask questions that invite reflection and deepen meaning making. They are flexibly designed for you to adapt to your context, whether you are in a classroom, a parish group, or another setting.

We hope that the People of Hope Museum will inspire people to continue writing their own stories of faith in action. We are deeply grateful for your partnership in this work.

# Instructions for Facilitators

## Overview

This discussion guide is designed for educators and facilitators who are accompanying groups through the People of Hope Museum. This resource is intended for trusted leaders who are already in relationship with their groups and are looking for a clear, supportive way to help participants reflect meaningfully on the experience and inspire faith in action.

This discussion is designed to take approximately 60 minutes so as to allow participants to slow down and revisit the experience while learning about the perspectives of others.

That said, the guide is intentionally flexible:

- It can be shortened by selecting fewer questions.
- It can be extended if used in a retreat or longer formation setting.

Facilitators may wish to allow additional time (10 to 15 minutes) for participants with more life experience or with prior exposure to the museum's themes, as the guide may surface more questions and reflections. In these cases, groups may benefit from having space to explore the prompts more fully.

You do not need to have any prior expertise on the social issues addressed in the People of Hope Museum. Your role is to offer a space in which participants can reflect honestly on the museum visit and begin to notice how faith and service intersect in their lives.

## How to Prepare

Preparation for this discussion should be light and manageable. We designed this guide so that facilitators can feel confident without doing extensive planning. Before leading the conversation, we recommend that you:

- 1 Review the discussion flow and questions, familiarizing yourself with the overall arc, rather than memorizing every prompt. You can even anticipate which questions feel more relevant and appropriate for your group.
- 2 Reflect briefly on your own experience at the museum. Consider what stayed with you, what surprised or unsettled you, and where you felt a spark of hope or possibility.
- 3 Consider your group's context. Think about the age and developmental level of your group, prior exposure to service or social justice conversations, time constraints, and group size. The guide is adaptable so you can easily make changes that suit your group's needs.
- 4 Prepare the physical or virtual space for reflection. We recommend arranging seating to encourage conversation, if possible. Round tables or groups of chairs work best for encouraging small-group conversations while remaining connected to the broader

community. Have a way to track time so that the conversation does not feel rushed at the end. With smaller groups (fewer than 20), you may find that forming one circle works better to encourage conversation.

- 5 Notice what participants say out loud and what remains unspoken or is communicated through nonverbal cues. These moments can signal ideas that participants are still working through. You can gently acknowledge what you notice (without forcing disclosure) in order to deepen the conversation and normalize uncertainty.

## Discussion Guide

### *Introduction (10 minutes)*

#### **Facilitator Script:**

"We're going to spend some time talking about the People of Hope Museum we visited. This isn't a quiz or a debate, and there are no right answers to any of the questions we are going to talk about today. The goal is to share our own experiences, listen to each other, and make sense of what we saw.

Talking about this experience may help us process things we've seen but not actually noticed. And it will be great to unpack how the museum helped us think about some of the ways faith and volunteering connect to real people's lives, including our own."

You may consider saying a prayer here for your group and for the real people they encountered in the People of Hope Museum.

"Okay, let's set a few group norms together to make the most out of this time. Can you think of a few times where you've had great class or group discussions? What were some of the things that made those discussions go so well?"

Invite participants to share some of these characteristics—for example, norms about minimizing distractions like technology, having one person talk at a time, being respectful and paying attention when others are sharing their opinions.

"We've now talked about how [name some of participants' contributions] can contribute to a great discussion. Let's keep all of these in mind as we discuss our visit to the People of Hope Museum."

### *Discussion Prompts (40 minutes)*

These questions are intentionally ordered. You can choose to discuss all these questions or pick and choose ones that feel most relevant and appropriate to your context. Just keep in mind that early questions are more for "warming up," meaning they are designed to break the ice and foster group connection, while later questions invite deeper reflection that may first require trust in the facilitator and peers.

### *Re-Entering the Experience (10 minutes)*

- 1 What did you think when you first heard that we were going to a museum inside of a trailer truck? How did the visit compare to your initial expectations?
- 2 Why do you think the museum is in a truck? What did you get out of this experience that you may not have gotten out of it if it was just like any other museum you've visited?
- 3 We heard so many stories, saw so many images, and learned so many facts during our visit. What are the top two or three things that you remember most clearly? Why did they stand out to you?

### *Noticing People and Experiences (10 minutes)*

- 4 What did you learn about the lives of people showing up in these stories—both those receiving care and those giving it?
- 5 Did any story challenge an assumption you had about poverty or vulnerability? What helped you see that differently?
- 6 What made the acts of service shared in the museum feel real or genuine, rather than just “helping out”?
- 7 What was the role of faith in these stories—how did it show up through actions, relationships, choices, or inspiration?

### *Mutual Impact and Transformation (10 minutes)*

- 8 How do you think the people serving were changed by what they were doing?
- 9 What did the stories suggest about how service affects both sides of a relationship?
- 10 Why do you think relationships might matter in this kind of service work?

### *Meaning and Personal Reflection (10 minutes)*

- 11 How did this experience make you think differently about faith, service, or the responsibility we have to be good neighbors?
- 12 Was there a moment that made you feel hopeful? Uncomfortable? Curious?
- 13 What questions do you still have after this experience? What are some things you can do to dig deeper to try to understand it better?
- 14 What is something you might like to do—something that feels realistic, meaningful, and respectful?
- 15 How have you changed from who you were when you first stepped into the museum?

## *Closing and Integration (10 minutes)*

### **Facilitator Script:**

"Before we wrap up, I want to pause and give us a moment to reflect on everything we've heard and are taking with us from this conversation."

Pause briefly here. You may consider framing this as a moment of quiet prayer.

"Many of the stories we heard at the People of Hope Museum discuss complex issues that don't have simple solutions. We don't need to have everything figured out. But I hope this experience has helped us see the range of human experiences that are happening in our shared world, and prompted us to think about our own stories, and how we are all part of each other's stories, too.

To close out, I'm going to invite each of you, if you'd like, to share one short response. You can keep it to a word or a short sentence, or if you'd like to pass, that's okay too."

Choose one of the following prompts to read:

What's one word that describes what you're taking with you from today?

What's one thing from the museum that you'll remember?

After participants have shared:

"Thank you for being thoughtful and respectful as we reflected on our museum experience, grew in empathy for others, and shared how our faith compels and empowers us to be generous with our neighbors."

*You may consider closing with a prayer.*

