MOCA – The Ministry of Contemplative Action

We make choices each day to act on things but what happens if we put contemplation in front of the action? This is what three ECW women did when we had a hard topic to act on and why we want to share this MOCA model with you. We realized if we took little “sips” of contemplation, action and reflection we could stay energized without burning out. Action seems to present itself easily but we then wonder where the passion went that we had for this in the beginning?

The three of us: Dana Sommers, Carol Folbe and I had an action to do, which was to go to a human trafficking coalition meeting to hear the statistics, stories of victims and the need to educate.  We were nervous, each in our own way, but we had each other and we knew our faith was calling us into this tough issue. We told each other our worries and fears of this topic and this is where the model of MOCA began. We would take a sip of this action: this one meeting, and because of our faith practice, we knew we first needed a sip of prayer. We planned to take a sip of reflection after the meeting in a sacred meeting place, which was around the corner from the government building where the meeting took place. We took the time to plan our contemplative action and this made all the difference.

How do we plan for contemplation? Dr. Gerald May says, “Contemplation happens to everyone. It happens in moments when we are open, undefended, and immediately present.” I interpret the word contemplation by breaking it down to “con-temp, “which for me means,”with-time”. Slowing down with the pause before opening a door, answering the phone or telling someone how I feel often enhances the action. When my mind tells me something is so urgent that I don’t need to say a prayer or take a deep breath first, and then I need my MOCA practice to slow me down before the action.

We did take a sip of contemplation with a prayer before we went into the meeting; we did take a sip of action: went to the meeting and listened; we did end our time with a sip of reflection at that sacred place I mentioned earlier, Mission Conception, the oldest unrestored stone church in America, dedicated in 1755. As we walked around the sacred spaces outside the church and inside the thick stone walls, we asked each what could we do that is realistic? And we could have missed the birth of MOCA because it came out as an idea and asked each other how do we do these hard actions around human trafficking prevention and education without burning out? If we hadn’t preplanned our sip of reflection of meeting at Mission Conception, we would have left the meeting in the government building full of knowledge but not having processed our thoughts and feelings from the meeting. MOCA reminded us of mocha coffee, which are equal parts coffee, sugar and milk. We proposed to each other equal parts (or sips) of contemplation, action and reflection.

When I am moving too quickly into action, I can count on my MOCA friends to remind me we have time. Come have a sip with us on this faith journey of the Ministry of Contemplative Action. We all need more MOCA friends.

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