

The Amen Effect: Ancient Wisdom to Mend our Broken Hearts and World

Introduction

1. Threshold Moments

Purpose: *Mark the transition from daily life to sacred encounter.*

- Greet people with soft music, low lighting, and a visual centerpiece a photo of your loved ones on a table next to a lit candle.
- Opening prayer: *Let us pray; God of Presence, help us to see each other as You see us. May we hold space for each other with reverence. We ask this in your holy name. Amen*

2. Sacred Sparks

Purpose: *Create curiosity and open hearts.*

- Pose this provocative question.
 - *Can you remember a time someone's presence meant everything—even if they said nothing?*
- Have people whip around the circle with their answers.

3. Chambers of the Spirit

Purpose: *Share lived faith experiences in sacred listening circle.*

- Invite everyone to share the answer to one or more questions.
 1. Rabbi Sharon Brous names the very human longing for connection—in our most intimate relationships, in community, with strangers, and perhaps even with God—as “*The Amen Effect*.” She describes it as the sacred power of showing up for one another. What do you call this longing? How have you experienced it in your own life of faith or relationships?
 2. Brous quotes Heschel, “*Religion didn’t decline because it was refuted—it declined because it became irrelevant, dull, oppressive, and insipid. What we need now is spiritual audacity, intellectual guts, and the power of defiance.*” Do you agree with Heschel/Brous’s critique? Have you witnessed or felt this kind of decline in religious relevance? What might “spiritual audacity” look like in our Catholic context?

3. Brous challenges her community with the question: “*Given our faith and our history, who are we called to be in this time of moral crisis?*” How might Catholics respond to this question today? In what ways are we being called to show up—as individuals and as Church—in a world marked by injustice, division, and suffering?
4. Brous asserts that *training the heart in compassion and curiosity is both a social and spiritual necessity*. How can the Catholic Church cultivate this kind of heart formation today? Where in our tradition—sacraments, saints, Scripture, or community life—do you see this already happening, or needing to happen more intentionally?

4. Intentional Sending

Purpose: *Leave inspired and committed to live the faith.*

- Use a ritual action:
 - Relight the candle
 - Invite everyone to share the one word or phrase they would like to take into the next week/month (depending how often you are meeting).
- Close with a prayer of sending.

Ask the participants to make their prayer petitions.

Let us pray...

O God, as you once told Jeremiah

I will transform their anguish into joy, uncovering solace and even delight amidst their heartache, (Jeremiah 31: 13). Be with us, and help us to walk with others in their anguish and may we welcome others who comfort us. Amen.