

*When we are grappling with an abstract concept like faith, it may be helpful to use a metaphor, the way Jesus did in his parables. When your chapter discusses what faith means to you, please consider the following article translated from the Spanish version, which appeared in the July/August issue of **No Tan Lejos del Horizonte**.*

EASY MEETING:
FAITH: THE CHICKEN & THE EAGLE
 Lizbeth Gramajo – Guatemala Chapter

Preparation:

1. **Read** through these two pages.
2. **Plan** who will read the passages and lead discussions of the questions. The story has been divided among three readers—narrator, farmer, and naturalist. If your chapter prefers, one reader can read the entire story.
3. **Determine** which discussion questions to use at your meeting and who will lead the discussions.

MEETING PLAN

Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I pray that you never deny me your light, which I need so much, so that I can find the way of salvation.

Lord, you are the hope of the whole world.

Lord, accompany me so that I may feel in my innermost heart that love, faith, peace, life, and hope of salvation.

– Sr. Joan Uhlen, MM,
Maryknoll Book of Prayer, p. 226



Photo by Paula Schaffner

Reading:

Introduction:

Few know the origins of the metaphor of the eagle and the chicken. This story was told by James Aggrey, a popular educator from Ghana who is considered one of the pioneers of African nationalism and Pan-Africanism. This small African country, situated between Cote d'Ivoire and Togo, has a long history

of colonization by the British, Dutch, French and Portuguese. Because it was rich in gold, this region was called Gold Coast. Aggrey thought liberating this colony would require freeing the consciousness of the people, which was enslaved by the colonizers' ideas and values.

In 1925, at a meeting of popular leaders with divided opinions on the best way to free Ghana from colonization, Aggrey took the floor and told a story:

Narrator: Once upon a time a farmer went to the neighboring forest to hunt a bird to keep in his home. He caught an eaglet and put it in the coop with the chickens. It ate the same share of corn as the chickens, though it was the king or queen of all birds. Five years later a naturalist visited the farmer. While walking in the garden, the naturalist observed,

Naturalist: That bird there is not a chicken. It is an eagle.

Farmer: Sure, it is an eagle. But it was raised as a chicken. It is no longer an eagle; it has become a chicken like the others, despite its nine-foot wing span.

Naturalist: It cannot be. It is and will always be an eagle. It has heart and that heart will one day make the eagle will fly to the heights.

Farmer: No way! It has become a chicken and will never fly like an eagle.

Narrator: Then they decided to try a test. The naturalist took the eagle, lifted it high, and challenging it, he said,

Naturalist: Since you're an eagle, you belong to heaven, not the earth; spread your wings and fly!

Narrator: The eagle stayed perched on the naturalist's arm.

Then it looked around distractedly, and when it saw the chickens below, scratching for grain, it jumped down to their side.

Farmer: I told you! It has been converted into a simple chicken.

Naturalist: That can't be; it is an eagle, and an eagle is always an eagle. We'll try again tomorrow.

Narrator: The next day, the naturalist went up to the rooftop with the eagle. He whispered,

Naturalist: Eagle, since you're an eagle, spread your wings and fly!

Narrator: But when the eagle saw the chickens down below, digging in the ground, it jumped down to join them. The farmer smiled and repeated his position.

Farmer: See, as I told you already, it has become a chicken!

Naturalist: No, it is an eagle and will always have the heart of an eagle. Let's try one last time. Tomorrow it will fly.

Narrator: The next day, the naturalist and the farmer got up very early. They grabbed the eagle and took it out of town to the top of a mountain, away from civilization. The rising sun gilded the summits of the mountains. The naturalist picked up the eagle very high and ordered,

Naturalist: Eagle, since you're an eagle, because you belong to heaven and to earth, open your wings and fly!"

Narrator: The eagle looked around and trembled as if experiencing a new life. But it didn't fly. Then the naturalist held him firmly, facing the sun, so that their eyes could be filled with the brightness of the sun and the vastness of the horizon. At that moment, it opened its powerful wings, gave out a 'kau-kau' typical of eagles, and straightened, taking control of itself. And it began to fly, to fly to the heights, flying each time higher and higher. It flew, ...flew, ...until it blended with the blue of the sky.



[Note: This is the version Leonardo Boff told in the book, *The Eagle and the Chicken: A Metaphor for the Human Condition*.]

Conclusion:

On March 6, 1957, the Gold Coast became the first African colony to proclaim its independence, and the country regained its old name: Ghana. Although James Aggrey, who died in 1927, did not see the liberation of Ghana, his liberating education inspired many men and women to work for it.

Please share the topics and resources that led to an especially effective meeting for your chapter. We could feature them in future issues. Send to nsfa@maryknollaffiliates.org.

Discussion Questions:

Personal Reflection:

When have I felt like the chicken?

What do I need to work on to be like the eagle?

Would I have acted like the farmer consigning the eagle to life with the chickens?

When have I acted like the naturalist, helping an eagle to discover its inner power?

Community Reflection:

- How can we help in the process of liberating our own communities and countries so they can stop feeling like chickens and fly like eagles?

Maryknoll Affiliate Reflection:

- The eagle and the chicken represent two fundamental dimensions of existence: the chicken—the dimension of rootedness, of its limitations; the eagle—the dimension of openness, of being unlimited. How can we achieve a balance between these two dimensions?

- How can we use the 4 pillars of Maryknoll Affiliates (Spirituality, Global Vision, Action, and Community) to maintain a balance between these two dimensions of our existence?

- Leonardo Boff says, "All colonization—be it ancient: invasion of territories, or modern: forced integration into the global market—always signifies an act of very great violence. It involves blocking the autonomous development of a people.

"How can we, in our work as Maryknoll Affiliates, support the process of our people's autonomous development?"

Closing Prayer (in the style of your chapter)

Resources:

Boff, Leonardo (2006). *The Eagle And The Hen: A Metaphor For The Human Condition*. 4th ed. Madrid: Editorial Trotta (in Spanish).

Boff, Leonardo (2000). *The Flight Of The Eagle: How Humans Learn To Fly*. México: Ediciones Dabar (in Spanish)

