Opening session by OL Leader (guest speaker or clergy) in main Zoom group:

20 minutes

**Opening Question:**

*(Leader should ask the group)*

How would you fill in this blank: “Gentleness is --------.”

Have campers answer this question on paper or a notebook.

**Teaching:**

You may have heard the following verse: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Mt 5.5). Meekness is a way of being gentle. Jesus Himself was meek. The apostles of Christ taught meekness. Saint Paul mentions it in all his writings and Saint James insists upon it.

*Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This wisdom is not such as it comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits . . .* (Jas 3.13–17).

To be meek means to be gentle, and to be empty of all selfishness and earthly ambition. It means never to return evil for evil, but always in everything to overcome evil by good (cf. Rom 12.14–21).Meekness means to distrust and reject every thought and action of hate and violence, which in any case can never produce love

Meekness is to have the firm and calm conviction that the good is more powerful than evil, and that the good ultimately is always victorious. Meekness is a balance between gentle and firm.

An example of this isthe cleansing of the temple when Christ is often seen in a moment of “anger”. However, the Temple was a holy and sacred place in which God’s people were called to worship Him. In those days, the Temple was being utilized as a marketplace and for tax collection. Not only this, taxes were being collected during the Passover, which is considered one of the most sacred holidays, no different to how we regard our passover “Pascha” (Easter). Imagine if during Easter Sunday, the church was being used to collect large sums of money. It is this that caused Christ to display a moment of holy or divine anger. This example of “holy anger” does not resort to physical violence, but rather it is a moment when a Christian is called to defend and uphold what is God’s.

**Teaching 2:**

Gentleness gives strength and hope to others. We must choose to be gentle, gentle with others and ourselves. No one is perfect, and we will all fall short and make mistakes. If we are gentle with one another and ourselves in our mistakes and shortcomings, we can help bring love to negative situations instead of strife and anger.

Here, we see Christ to be the ultimate example of gentleness. He was not only a leader who taught others, but was God Himself, and yet in humility and obedience, He allowed Himself to be betrayed, beaten, and killed out of love for us. In humility and with real love for every person, He was always gentle, most especially with those who approached Him in repentance. In the face of constant persecution, He was gentle. He answered meekly, if at all, when He was challenged. These are the qualities we are called to emulate.

Gentleness does not mean being a pushover. It is strength to stand up for what is right, in a soft way.

Panagia is a mother to all of us. She was strong in her life but treats each of us gently. Through the Small Paraklesis service, we come to her and in humility we ask her to be gentle to us and pray to her Son on our behalf. Being a mother, she is strong in her request for us but pleads in a gentle way. We each should strive to emulate her gentleness.

**Wrap-up**

Provide the breakout questions to the entire group. Provide the instructions to the breakout activity.

*Note: Campers and Staff are moved from main Zoom room to their Breakout rooms*

**Discussion Questions** (for breakout groups):

* In what ways are we called to be meek (gentle but firm)? Have you ever had a moment when you were not?
* Has there been a time when you were angry, upset, or even resorted to violence? Where do you think those feelings stemmed from? Where were they directed?
* Can you come up with other examples of the “fine line” between gentle and firm?
* What does it look like to be gentle in the face of anger or hate?
* Can you think of a time when you were corrected harshly? How did it make you feel?
* What is a better way to be corrected?

**Devotional (Cabin Talk):**

“You cannot be too gentle, too kind. Shun even to appear harsh in your treatment of each other. Joy, radiant joy, streams from the face of one who gives and kindles joy in the heart of one who receives. All condemnation is from the devil. Never condemn each other, not even those whom you catch committing an evil deed. We condemn others only because we shun knowing ourselves. When we gaze at our own failings, we see such a morass of filth that nothing in another can equal it. That is why we turn away, and make much of the faults of others. Keep away from the spilling of speech. Instead of condemning others, strive to reach inner peace. Keep silent, refrain from judgement. This will raise you above the deadly arrows of slander, insult, outrage, and will shield your glowing hearts against the evil that creeps around.”

- St. Seraphim of Sarov

* What stood out to you?
* What is Saint Seraphim trying to teach us?
* What is gentleness?
* How can you be more gentle in your daily life?