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## The experience of small parish communities – Advent 2014

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### Week 5 – December 14-20

(Maximum 2 hours... but could be shorter)

#### 1. Welcome.

Quietly listen to three minutes of tranquil, meditative music.

#### 2. Introduction.

Let us share those moments where we have seen signs of the presence of God in our lives since our last meeting. If I have been watchful, paying attention to the people around me through whom God makes himself present, if I took the time to look at the events which have shaped my days, certainly I can see glimpses of God there. It is this “watchfulness” in my heart that, through my faith, allows me to see that God is not absent, that he is present, and that his presence IS love. In this third week of Advent, St. Paul urges us to always be joyful because Jesus is always with us, especially during the most difficult times in our lives.

#### 3. Lectio Divina

- a) The Gospel according to John 1; 6-8, 19-28
- b) Reading from the first letter of Paul to the Thessalonians 5; 16-24

John the Baptist says to us : *among you stands one whom you do not know*. Jesus is present in our lives, and often we are not aware that he is near us because we don't really know him. Use this time of waiting which is Advent, to ask the Lord to fully reveal himself to us. In this way, we can recognise him when he is at our side every day of our lives.

##### 1. Read the *Lectio Divina* guide before reading the Bible text.

(I prefer that the participants use their own Bible rather than copying the text)

##### 2. Do the *Lectio Divina*.

#### 4. After the “lectio” and while the participants think of their service, play a CD of calm, meditative, and inspirational music.

#### 5. Time of communal prayer – together

Start with the Our Father.

Take a moment of silence to reflect on the intention for which we will pray.

Finish with a decade of the rosary : one Our Father, ten Hail Mary's, and one Glory Be.

#### 6. A participant reads the weekly contemplation (no discussion, simply read it).

## Contemplation on "Watching" – Week 5

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Do you know the feeling in matters of this life, of expecting a friend, expecting him to come, and he delays? Do you know what it is to be in unpleasant company, and to wish for the time to pass away, and the hour strike when you may be at liberty? Do you know what it is to be in anxiety lest something should happen which may happen or may not, or to be in suspense about some important event, which makes your heart beat when you are reminded of it, and of which you think the first thing in the morning? Do you know what it is to have a friend in a distant country, to expect news of him, and to wonder from day to day what he is now doing, and whether he is well? Do you know what it is so to live upon a person who is present with you, that your eyes follow his, that you read his soul, that you see all its changes in his countenance, that you anticipate his wishes, that you smile in his smile, and are sad in his sadness, and are downcast when he is vexed, and rejoice in his successes? To watch for Christ is a feeling such as all these; as far as feelings of this world are fit to shadow out those of another.

He watches for Christ who has a sensitive, eager, apprehensive mind; who is awake, alive, quick-sighted, zealous in seeking and honouring Him; who looks out for Him in all that happens, and who would not be surprised, who would not be over-agitated or overwhelmed, if he found that He was coming at once.

And he watches *with* Christ, who, while he looks on to the future, looks back on the past, and does not so contemplate what his Saviour has purchased for him, as to forget what He has suffered for him. He watches with Christ, who ever commemorates and renews in his own person Christ's Cross and Agony, and gladly takes up that mantle of affliction which Christ wore here, and left behind Him when he ascended.

Excerpt of Sermon 22. Watching – Cardinal John Henry Newman