

Lent 2015: Fifth week.... March 16 - 22

(Maximum 2 hours... but it can be less)

1. Welcome..... Three minutes of silence..... Let's be still.

2. Conversation: We have been doing the "contemplation" exercises for a few weeks now. What has touched you most so far? Share your thoughts. Another question: Where did you see the hand of the Lord this week? (Please be brief)

NOTE: This is the week we prepare for confessions, Sunday, at M.Q of Peace from 2 to 7 pm

3. Read John 12: 20 – 33 (this is not the lectio divina text)

4. Reread the lectio Divina guide, before reading the text (if necessary)

5. Lectio Divina: a) Hebrew 5: 7 - 9
b) (if you have time) Jeremiah 31:31 – 34

Begin the Lectio Divina.....

6. When "lectio" is finished, play a few moments of an inspirational CD of music as we think about our "service" or "actio" this week. Can we consider doing something together?

7. Time of prayer together (This will be time of Spontaneous prayer. People take turns to pray... as they wish. There are two parts....)

a) Spontaneous prayer of thanks; praise; blessings

e.g. I thank you Lord for.... I praise you Lord for.... I bless you Lord for....

b) Prayer of petition (e.g. I ask you Lord for... I pray for this.... situation...)

8. Read the contemplation for this week.

9. The meeting is ended. Please consider praying for the members of your group during the week.

Contemplation: Week 5 CONFESSION week
I need to be redeemed /saved

One of the most difficult elements of the spiritual life is to get a handle on my need for redemption. I know I need to be saved, but it not always clear for me, from what. We all vaguely know that we "sin", but unless there is something in our life which is outstanding and sticks out as an obvious problem in our lives, we don't generally feel the deep need for redemption. The risk is that, in confession, I repeat the "same old stuff", and never really make any spiritual progress. Oddly, people can be quite mean, or jealous, or rigid, and not seem to really notice it, nor feel real conscience pangs. One of the great truths of the spiritual life, is this: People become much more aware of their sin the closer they draw to God. The more holy a person, the more they see their sin and their profound need for God. Strangely, the further someone is from God, the less they seem to see their sin (even if it is so obvious to others)! Can you think of examples of this?

The Garden of Eden is within. The life of God, the Trinity, dwells deeply within me. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, actually live within my heart, where no one, not even the devil, can touch and see. This is a secret garden, wherein the Lord wants to have a conversation of love with me. Many people are not the least aware of this. They live their lives indifferent to the interior presence of the Master... and some can miss it their whole lives.

It is in part because the shining presence of the Trinity within is covered over by my darkness and my sin, that I do not see God. Genesis chapter 3, the fall of Adam and Eve, uses language to describe human attitudes towards our sin: I hide, I blame, I deny, I accuse, but I surely do not take responsibility for my darkness. My inattention, my selfishness, my self-preoccupation, my lack of gratitude, and much other stuff, hides the garden within, like a dark cloud. My sin scares me. I pretend it is not there. There is a kind of "deep separation from God", because of things within that I dare not face. This darkness can be experienced as discontent, insecurity, fear, hopelessness, loneliness, sadness, disappointment, self-pity, jealousy, stress, feelings of inferiority, guilt, indifference, anger, rage, abandonment, and so forth. All of this, I hide. So, I cover this darkness with a thick skin of "indifference and denial", and carry on with life as best I can. When people point out my limitations, point to "this or that", I become quite defensive, and angry: "How dare you suggest this and that about me!" So I remain distant from God.

The spiritual masters tell us that when we go into the desert of "contemplation", these dark aspects within, begin to surface. Like Jesus in the desert, we begin to face the interior, "wild beasts" (Mark 1:12). It is a little scary! Sooner or later, if we are to grow, we must face this darkness. We must face the beasts.

Contemplation, in silence and stillness will sooner or later bring to the surface some of this darkness. This must, however, be faced and accepted. This will create a crack in the protective layer within, allowing me to perceive the "darkness within", and my need for a saviour. As I contemplate in silence, I may suddenly be aware that I am really self-centred. Do not run away. Just observe that you are self-centred... see it, and then hand it over to the Lord. I may suddenly be aware that I am jealous. Do not run away. Face it. See it. Recognize that this is true of me, and then hand this over to the Lord. Perhaps I may notice that I am angry. See this, accept it and hand it over to the Lord. In this way, the Lord begins the slow process of "purgatory in me". He begins to deal with the original "sin" darkness which separates me from his Divine presence deep within, in the Interior Castle. I see my darkness. I don't run away. I see it, accept it, and then hand it over to the Lord. As cracks begin to break the darkness, and I begin to humbly accept my condition of a "fallen individual", the light of the Lord begins to grow. I start to perceive the castle within, where the Master lives. St. Theresa of Avila continually repeated: Self-knowledge is a key to healthy spiritual growth.

Exercise in contemplation: If you have been faithful to the weekly contemplations, what we discussed now is not totally surprising. As you sit quietly, you will see things about yourself which are a little scary or bothersome. This is a grace. Til now, you had just ignored them. Now sit quietly, for 10 minutes every day. Breathe in the name of Jesus, and be quiet in His presence. If you see some "dark stuff", inside of yourself, do not worry. See it. Recognize it for what it is. Give it to the Holy Spirit. You may want, afterwards to write this down, and at confession, bring this to the Lord, through the presence of the priest.

When you finish the prayer of quiet, say a little prayer: **"Lord, Holy Spirit, I give you all my sin and darkness. I experienced this..... (Fill in the blank with your sin). Please heal me by the cross of Jesus, and His precious blood.** Then pray, **Our Father.....**