

The experience of small parish communities – Advent 2014

Week 1 – November 16 - 23

(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 Matthew 25; 14-30
- b) Reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians 5; 1-6

In this month of November, we are approaching the end of the liturgical year. The fall of the autumn leaves also reminds us that everything has an end. For the next three Sundays, the Church offers us passages which invite us to watchfulness for the Coming of the Son of Man. Take note of the first words of the Gospel: *Jesus spoke to his disciples of his coming*. This sentence will also start the Gospel of the next two Sundays. What message does the Lord want to send?

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!).

Meditation on “Vigilance” - Week 1

This time in human history is the time of the absence of God. We are put to the test. Yes, our lives go along with indications that God is absent and has retreated in order to give the initiative to his creatures. In acting this way, he makes us see that he trusts us and that he shows us enormous respect.

God trusts me, he entrusts his belongings to me. Here on Earth, I must manage his belongings, his property, which are not mine but those of the Creator. This management is an active cooperation designed to build his Kingdom, because that is exactly what he entrusts in me: his Kingdom, his belongings, to make his graces grow.

It is my responsibility, mine, to this Kingdom which he has entrusted to me, through the gifts I have received. I am not alone in the construction of his Kingdom; each one of us has his place, each one of us has his responsibility. I ask myself the following question: what is my unique role, what are the talents that I alone have the power to develop? We must take the time to ponder this point. Don't rush it. In God's eyes I am irreplaceable for the task which is mine, with my abilities, my qualities, the graces he gives me.

The time during which the Master is absent is long. It is a time of faithfulness, and this time is difficult. I could even, in the end, imagine that God will never return, that he is dead, inexistent. I could arrange my life as if God didn't exist. Be careful though. I mustn't be under the illusion that God doesn't exist. I am called to “watch”... there would be nothing worse than being irresponsible. God will do me the honour of holding me accountable like a responsible adult.

God expects a lot of each one of us, each one according to his abilities; God doesn't want me to be afraid to stick my neck out for him. Taking on the interests of God - that's the beautiful risk of faith! Jesus came on behalf of his Father to accomplish his mission, and in leaving he entrusted me with his responsibility : to bring about the Kingdom.

Take the time this week to meditate on the amazing trust that God has in me.