

## The experience of small parish communities – Advent 2014

### Week 2 – November 23 - 29

(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; 31-46
- b) Reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians 15; 20-26.28

In Matthew’s Gospel this Sunday, we find the following first words: *When the Son of Man returns in his glory... then he will sit on the throne of his glory.* This text reminds us that Jesus will return to judge us according to our actions on Earth. Since we don’t know when this time of judgement will come, we should be ready for this final day, to “watch” that we follow in the footsteps of Jesus by being of service to our neighbours.

- 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 2

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Year passes after year silently; Christ's coming is ever nearer than it was. O that, as He comes nearer earth, we may approach nearer heaven! O, my brethren, pray Him to give you the heart to seek Him in sincerity. Pray Him to make you in earnest. You have one work only, to bear your cross after Him. Resolve in His strength to do so. Resolve to be no longer beguiled by "shadows of religion," by words, or by disputings, or by notions, or by high professions, or by excuses, or by the world's promises or threats. Pray Him to give you what Scripture calls "an honest and good heart," or "a perfect heart," and, without waiting, begin at once to obey Him with the best heart you have. Any obedience is better than none,—any profession which is disjointed from obedience, is a mere pretence and deceit.

Any religion which does not bring you nearer to God is of the world. You have to seek His face; obedience is the only way of seeking Him. All your duties are obediences. If you are to believe the truths He has revealed, to regulate yourselves by His precepts, to be frequent in His ordinances, to adhere to His Church and people, why is it, except because *He* has bid you? and to do what He bids is to obey Him, and to obey Him is to approach Him. Every act of obedience is an approach,—an approach to Him who is not far off, though He seems so, but close behind this visible screen of things which hides Him from us. He is behind this material framework; earth and sky are but a veil going between Him and us; the day will come when He will rend that veil, and show Himself to us. And then, according as we have waited for Him, will He recompense us.

If we have forgotten Him, He will not know us; but "blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching ... He shall gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants," [Luke 12; 37-38.] May this be the portion of every one of us! It is hard to attain it; but it is woeful to fail. Life is short; death is certain; and the world to come is everlasting.