

Small community Advent 2014

Week 3 - November 30 – Dec. 4

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

1. Greetings

Play three minutes of quiet, meditative music. Let's be still.

2. Introduction

Let us now share those moments where we have witnessed signs of God's presence in our lives since our last meeting. If I was attentive to the people around me through whom God makes His presence known, and if I took the time to notice the events that were shaping my days, I am certain that I "could see" in them God winking at me. It is this vigilance in my heart, which, through my faith, allows me to realize that God is present and that His presence IS love. We begin advent this week, a time to prepare for the celebration of the great mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. The Lord is coming. Let us open our eyes!

3. Lectio Divina:

- a) Gospel according to Saint Mark 13, 33-37
- b) A reading from the first letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians 1, 3-9

A new liturgical cycle starts with the first Sunday of Advent. As of now, liturgical readings of year B are dedicated to Mark. And just like in Matthew in the gospels of the last few Sundays, we find the same beginning words: *Jesus spoke to his disciples of his arrival*. We are always called upon to be vigilant so as not to miss his arrival, which is often so inconspicuous...

1. Read the Lectio Divina guide, before reading the text of the bible.

(I prefer people use their own bibles, rather than us copying a text)

2. Do the Lectio Divina

4. After the "Lectio", and while people are thinking about their service, play a peaceful, meditative, inspirational CD of music.

5. Time of community prayer - together

Start with an "Our Father".

Take a moment of silence to decide in your heart what intention you will be praying for.

Finish with one decade of the rosary: one Our Father; ten Hail Mary; one Glory to the Father.

6. Someone reads the contemplation for the week (no discussion, just reading)

Contemplation on "Vigilance" - Week 3

"Keep watch" was Jesus's instructions before his departure. Lord, You insist that I should remain "vigilant". You know how I tend to forget, to not see, to close my eyes. You come, and it happens that I don't recognize You in my brothers and sisters who surround me; often, I stand alongside You in those I don't like much, because I find it so difficult seeing Your presence in them... and yet, You keep on repeating to me: "open your heart's eyes", always keep vigil, don't give up on me... you will see me.

Exercising vigilance does not happen without a struggle. The word "vigilance" is often used to describe a state of acute awareness. For this session of meditation, it means that I should consistently be on the lookout, on my guard, so I can pay close attention to what the Lord tells me when I read His Word, otherwise I might walk right past Him without "seeing" Him. I must "be careful" not to believe those who predict the future as if they knew it. All kinds of prophecies, throughout the ages, have tried to predict the end of the world, whereas You, Lord, tell me: *"you do not know the moment"*.

Vigilance reminds me that I can easily doze off and slip into what feels like the state of drowsiness that envelops you after too many sleeping pills. A diminished level of alertness is a danger that's always lurking for me. It may prevent my defensive reflexes to work as they should... like when a drunk driver steers his car right into some obstacle. Christian life is a struggle against powers that may be stronger than me. I pray: *"Lord, keep me vigilant. I don't want to live in a dream, or in the past or in the future; I ask You to help me concentrate on the present, on the today of my life."* That is vigilance! It is what allows me to always be ready to "see" the Lord when He passes through my life.

The apparent absence of God is not a time of misfortune or anguish, but a time for taking responsibility: each one of us has been assigned a task, a job. It is as if this apparent absence of God happens on purpose to make us feel more important so that we assume our responsibilities. It is as if God was telling me: *"you are no longer a child: make decisions! Think! I trust you! Take care of your family, do your job well, be aware of the way you act towards your neighbor, towards the*

association to which you belong, and towards the needs of your Church". This makes me think about night watchmen. They are of great importance to their employers, defending them against potential robbers. So, when guarding a private home or an office building, they don't allow just anyone to come in.

Keeping vigil at night. Keeping vigil in hard times. Maintaining hope even when I am in the dark. Holding strong when all seems to crumble. It is at night that it is beautiful to believe in the light. God will come, as He promised. God always comes unannounced, unexpected, by surprise! One can even say that this is His particular "trademark". And it is so because He is the "Wholly Other".

It is the start of Advent, the time to "keep vigil". "Lord, keep me from the numbness and drowsiness that would once more make me miss noticing Your incarnation at Christmas".

Meditation inspired by Noël Quesson
Divine Word of God