

Lent 2015

Parish Small Community: First week Feb. 16 to 22.....

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

1. Welcome..... And let's start. Bring a bible, please!

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

3. Introductions: Tell the others a little about myself..... one fact of interest I don't mind telling people, about myself (e.g. hobbies, or something which happened in my life, or...) Please be brief..... 2 minutes each person

4. Read Genesis 9: 8 – 15, and 1 Peter 3: 18 – 22, but NO lection Divina

5. Read the lectio Divina guide, before reading the bible text.

(I prefer people use their own bibles, rather than a copy of a text. This will force Catholics to actually open the book, and read it... imagine?!!) They can use various translations. This will allow for a more interesting conversation.

6. Lectio Divina text: Do lectio divina with Mark 1 : 12 – 15

If you have time, you can also do lectio Psalm 25 : 4 – 11

7. After the "lectio" is ended, and while people are thinking about their service, play a peaceful, meditative, inspirational CD of music

8. Time of community prayer together

Start with an Our Father

Take a moment of silence to decide in your heart what intention you want to pray for.

Finish with a decade of the rosary: One Our Father; ten Hail Mary; Glory be.....

9. Have someone read the contemplation for this week. (We will discuss it next week. Right now, just read it)

10. The meeting is ended. It is time to head home, til the next meeting. There should be no coffee and cookies after the meeting.....

Contemplation Week 1: Being still

It is imperative that Catholics move into a deeper relationship with the Risen Jesus. He is alive. We can speak to Him moment by moment. As with marriage, either your relationship is

improving, or it is getting worst. There is no such thing as a homeostasis marriage, or homeostatis friendship. It is either moving towards “better and best”, or it is moving “downhill and worst”. This is true of the spiritual life. Are you growing? Or shrinking?

A maturing spiritual life moves interiorly towards contemplation, and exteriorly toward an ever kinder and palpable charity. Our life begins to glow of Christ! This series of meditations will focus on deepening the “interior journey”: Contemplation. The first step is “being still”.

Contemplation requires silence and solitude. Contemplation (“being” without thinking) is very restful. Discursive “thinking”, “judging”, and “making decisions”, is draining. To contemplate is to take a long loving look at things and people. It is to pay attention. To contemplate is to let my senses (smell, touch, sight, hearing, taste) be bathed by the light of beauty, silence, and stillness. When the senses are overstimulated, we are quickly exhausted. Not surprising that our society today suffers from stress and aggression. We are constantly stimulated by noise, action, phones, iPads, smart phones.... Lord! What does this do to our spirits?

At the beginning of the spiritual life, thinking and talking (reading special prayers, etc) play an important role in the development of a faith life. However, in the second half of the spiritual life, we need to move from “thinking”, to “being still”. Moving from “thinking” to “passive perception” (simply being “aware”) is absolutely essential. It is of no surprise that prayer groups which begin with lots of singing and out loud praise (charismatic; Pentecostal types of prayer), sooner or later, shift to a more silent mode of interiority... or else people quit because “they get nothing out of it”. This is normal. We call this a spiritual “desert”, or “night of the senses”.

In our natural lives, the first step in growth is “awareness”. Babies are aware of their surroundings. They listen, watch, and observe. Then, they shift to perception, form concepts, then begin to think, and then gradually it becomes endless interior noise. As adults, we are constantly thinking, planning in our heads, argue, fight, and debate.... all in our little heads. To recover spiritual healthy, we must return, as it were, back to where we started, with “awareness”.

How do we cultivate ‘awareness’? First, we must quiet the brain, and focus on our “senses”. This is difficult to do. We need to cultivate awareness of the “present moment”, and stay there. We must shut off the brain, and simply, “be”. In this regard, the physical exercise of Yoga and such things can be very helpful. These do not give us Christ, but they help to quiet the interior.

Exercise for week 1: Every day this week, take a quiet walk for 10 minutes. Resist walking fast. Walk slowly, and deliberately. Be aware of your breathing, and focus on looking, smelling and hearing. As you breathe, breathe in the **presence of the Lord**. Be aware of the loving

presence of the Lord. Do not analyze it. Do not think about it. Just be aware of Him... as you breathe in, and breathe out. Do not think about what you hear, smell, and see: Just do it. Look, smell, and hear and be aware of what this is like. When you observe a plant, a flower, a beautiful hillside or snow, see a lovely cloud, or anything which catches your attention, just "be still for a while". Try not to think about what you see. Just see it. Be still. Cultivate attentiveness and stillness of spirit. Just look. Smell. Listen carefully, and enjoy the moment. Enjoy the Lord! Every time your mind wanders, return to awareness of your breathing. Simply try to be present to the moment. Forget about tomorrow. Let go of yesterday. Enjoy right now. The Lord is here, and so are you. Do this 10 minutes every day. Finish by giving the Lord thanks for allowing you to be in His presence. After this 10 minute walk, ask yourself: What was this like for you? Did you like the stillness? Was it hard? Please be patient, because all of this takes time to learn.