

## **Lent 2015 : Third week....March 2 - 8**

(maximum 2 hours, but it can be less)

- 1. Welcome.** Let's start..... (Perhaps have some meditative music as people are coming in.)
- 2. Turn off the music.** Take three minutes of silence... just silence... stillness. Be aware of the Lord's presence. Don't think. Just be present.
- 3. Sharing:** Let's take a few moments to discuss last week's meditation about "bad news" and "grace". How was it. Please be brief. Please note that we always try to keep the conversations of these meetings confidential. Please respect this. If you did not do the meditation, please speak of the "highlight of my week".
- 4. Read** 1 Cor. 1: 18 – 25. Do not do *Lectio Divina* with this text.
- 5. Reread the *lectio Divina* guide.**

- 6. Lectio Divina** a) Exodus 20: 1- 17 for *Lectio Divina*  
b) John 2: 13 – 25 (if you have time)

*Do the Lectio Divina* (Use your bible. It is best the group use various translations. This will allow for a more interesting conversation.)

**7. While people are thinking about "service",** short interlude of music, from some inspirational CD

**8. 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... )

**9. Read the contemplation for this week.** (do not discuss it... 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 3**  
***God-centred* thinking, versus, *self-centred* thinking.**

To contemplate is to have a “God-focussed” life. To contemplate is to look inwards, BUT to see NOT myself but someone else, who is outside of me..., that is, the Holy Trinity. This is the paradox of faith: Someone else is within me! The gaze is inward, but not on me!

Much of the day our thoughts and concerns are on ourselves. We think about our comfort and our plans. This is very natural. We speak to ourselves. We think things through, and at times we argue with ourselves! A balanced self-concern is important and healthy. To have dreams and a stream of thoughts is normal. However the Christian revelation, coming from the Lord, is this: We are not alone in our inner core. The Trinity dwells within. There are two of us: Me and the Lord. Says St.Luke: “The Kingdom of God is not here nor there. Look. The Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20). Saint John says the same thing: “Anyone who loves me, (the Father and I) shall come and make a home in him” (John 14:23). To have a constant dialogue with the “friend” within, is the essence of a faith filled contemplative living.

The result of unfaith filled living, is loneliness. Loneliness is a big problem today. We all require human companionship. We all need friends, and people around us who care, and when we do not, we get lonely. However, the root of loneliness is far deeper than this. We are existentially lonely. The loneliness of man is deeper than just the need for friends. If we have no relationship with God who dwells within, then no one human being can fill that inner “hole” deep inside. No one can fill that “God-shaped hole” except the Lord. Like the children’s game, where they try to fit the blocks into various holes on a board: The star piece fits into the star, the circle into the circle hole, and the rectangular one into the proper rectangular hole. So with our deepest self. There is a hole which friends fill. There is also a “God shaped hole” which only He can fill, and until that happens, we will always feel empty. St.Augustine said: “Our hearts are restless and remain restless until they rest in Thee, O Lord”. This is the way we were made. We are made for an inner dialogue with God.

When this does not happen, and our spiritual life is immature and our thinking remains largely narcissistic. All eyes are on myself. I get caught in the quagmire of “me centred living”. Contemplation heals this deeply unhealthy tendency and corrects three unhealthy tendencies: (1) a search to be seen and admired (**pride**), (2) the desire to have things for myself (**greed**), and finally (3) a desire to have dominance over others (to be better, smarter, faster, greater)(**power**). All of this is sin, and is light years away from genuine love of neighbour. It is distant from humility, and real care for others.

Imagine an air plane pilot stopping all contact with the control tower. He is having such a good time, chit chatting with the stewardess, the co-pilot and his pet dog (whom he brought on

board), that he forgets to check with the control tower about his bearings. The plane drifts here and there, and in no time is lost in the obscurity of never never land. "Roger. Where are you??"

Our prayers are often immature and self-serving: "God please give me this, and give me that. Please do this or that for me, ... or else, I will not be pleased". This is not prayer. This is akin to adolescent wishful thinking at best, and self serving egoism at worst. Prayer, on the other hand, is to look at the beloved and express gratitude. To pray is primarily to focus on the OTHER and express praise and affection. Prayer is to look at the Lord and love Him.

In looking at Him, and by turning my eyes off myself, I am healed. I am healed of a self-centred focus and thinking. Slowly, I can look at others and see their pain, their concerns, and their worries, rather than on mine. Faith filled contemplation helps to heal the heart so that others become the object of my attention and love. I develop genuine and humble admiration of other's talents, abilities, and generosity. I learn to rejoice in the joy of others. I can laugh with you and not at you. Your joy becomes my joy. All of this is a shift in the inner vision and it is the result of contemplation. **We need to shift from a self-focussed to "Lord focussed existence"**.

**Exercise: Each day**

Occasionally, as you mind drifts away to your concerns, your thoughts, your self focussed issues, gently turn to the presence of the Lord. Repeat His name. Try to be still. Just try to "be". Stay present to Him. Focus upon your breath. Repeat the name, "Jesus", over and over. If ideas pop up, then let these float by, like clouds in the sky gently wandering off into the distance, and get back to your breath, and to His name. Look not at the cloud passing by (your idea), but at the wide blue sky of the Lord's presence.