

## Lent 2015 : Fourth week.... March 9 - 15

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

**1. Welcome.....** and let's start (quiet meditative music as people are coming in)

**2. Three minutes of silence.....** . Let's be still.

**3. Conversation:** Share a few thoughts about the meditation on "self centred living, versus God-centred living", from last week. What did you get out of it? If you did not read it, perhaps another earlier meditation was helpful to you. Here is a second question: Where did I see the Lord's presence this past week? How did God reveal Himself to me? Please remember that what is discussed in these meetings, is confidential to this meeting, and not to be discussed with others.

**4. Read** John 3: 14 – 21 (this is NOT the lection divina text)

**5. Reread the *lectio Divina* guide, before reading the text.**

Please use your own bible, and not a photocopied text

**6. Lectio Divina:** a) 2 Chronicles 36: 14 - 23

b) and (if you have time) Ephesians 2: 1 – 10

Begin the Lectio Divina.....

**7. When "lectio" is finished,** play a few moments of an inspirational CD of music , as people think of the "actio", or "service", for this week.

**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. Bye-bye... Have a nice week.** Please no cakes or cookies...

#### **Contemplation week 4: Detachment.....**

This story is told about Pope Francis. Apparently, shortly after being elected pope, he came out of his room to walk into the corridor, and was surprised to see a Swiss guard standing at his door. The pope engaged the young man in conversation, wondering why he was standing at his door. The young fellow told him that this was his assignment, to make sure the pope was safe. The pope was surprised. "Did you stand here all night", he asked? "Yes", answered the young man. Pope Francis then went back into his apartments and came out with a chair. "Here. At least you can sit down", he said to him. Returning, again, to his apartments he came back bringing a coffee and a sandwich for the young guy. In its utter simplicity, this is Catholic living at its best. Nothing complicated about being kind. God is kind. Detached from his other concerns, Pope Francis responded to the need of the moment.

To live a Catholic contemplative life, is to live detached of my own "stuff" and preoccupations, in order to see the call of the moment. How I can serve "you". To do this, requires that we cultivate of a deep sense of detachment.

What do we mean by detachment. Think of all the things you have. Think of all the stuff you have, and could never part with. Think of all the comforts you have, without which you think you could not live. Think of the kitchen you have which is never good enough, and needs to be renovated the sooner the better, your bed which surely needs to be changed, of the sofa which is not good enough, inadequate this and that... and the list goes on. Now focus on another reality. There are millions of refugees in Syria, Iraq, Cameroun, and Nigeria, fleeing from terrorists, and living with little or nothing. Imagine yourself, for a moment, in their shoes. What would it be like to lose your home, your goods, your clothes, your car, and all these items. Hard to imagine!

It is not a bad thing to have the things we own. They are a gift from the Lord. But that is precisely the thing: a gift. A gift held onto too tightly, is one which creates a bondage such that I become attached. I live in the illusion that I cannot live without this or that. We so easily forget that our lives are fleeting. Everything we have we will eventually give up: my license to drive; my home; my room; family members will die; in sum... all is pure gift. All is here today and gone tomorrow. Yet, I hang on, as if there would be no tomorrow. It is when the electricity cuts off, during a storm, or when the furnace breaks down that I am thankful to have heat. It is when I realize I am still alive after a terrible car accident, that it dawns on me that all is gift. The wisdom of contemplative living is to be deeply THANKFUL (Eucharistic, we say as Catholics) and this is born of HOLDING LIGHTLY to all that I have. Catholics go to mass every Sunday, to say THANKS.

Regrettably, it frequently takes a tragedy before we refocus on the essential. When this happens we discover the true value and place of things and people. We touch the overwhelming mystery of God: In the loss is the possibility of total gain!

What are you attached to? Think of your family. What would you do, should they, "disappear"? Life is a constant "letting go". We spend years caring for our children, building a home, and then they leave. Things change. Their rooms are empty, and their friends don't call any longer. We want to hang onto the past, rather than receiving the new gift of God. Everything passes. The Lord alone, remains the stable point of life.

For this reason, Jesus tells us: To find freedom, you must "sell everything and come follow me". He does not mean to get rid of everything physically, but to hold onto them lightly, that they would not possess me. Contemplation is an exercise in emptying, a foretaste of "nothingness". Detachment is a **key to JOY**. Only when I imagine losing all am I able to rejoice in what I have. This is the springboard for true Thanksgiving. Jesus says: "He who keeps his life will lose it. He who loses His life for my sake, will find it".

**Contemplation exercise:** Sit quietly. Take a few moments to reflect on the theme of "detachment". Think of simple things you are attached to: milk in your tea; your comfortable bed; this painting; your car; this book, this .....What would happen if you lost "this"? Think about your opinions and ideas to which you are not willing to re-question? Listen to yourself when someone contradicts you. How defensive we are! We are very attached to our way of seeing things.

What about people? Supposing you lost those precious people whom you love? A tragic unexpected accident. Be aware of how precious these people are to you.

Start with this sentence: "If ever life took this away from me then.....", and fill in the blank. A bit scary, no? Such is the detachment of contemplation which Christ asks of us, if we are to grow in wisdom. From this springs joy! Christ is all.

**NOW....** Be quiet. Listen quietly to the voice of the Lord. Hear your breath. Be still.

Resist praying for family members, or situations. Just sit quietly, and focus on your breath, and on the name of JESUS. Feel the air coming in, and the air going out. As you breath in, breath in the present moment. Breath in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Do not think about the Holy Spirit, but just breath in His presence. Repeat the name "Jesus" or, "Jesus, have mercy". Breath slowly, experiencing the stark and empty feeling of "nothing". Just sit and "be".