

Small community Advent 2013... week 1

November 4 - 10

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

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

2. Introductions: Please present yourself, if the group does not know one another by now..... what is something interesting which happened to me this summer? Tell us about one interesting person you met in the last number of months. (If the group know each other well, perhaps the animator can suggest a question which may be of greater interest to the members) Please be brief..... 2 minutes each person. If the group already know one another, please discuss the following question: "What has happened in the last month which has been a blessing to me".

3. Lectio Divina: a) 2 Maccabees 7: 1 – 14 (first reading for Sunday Nov.10) b) Psalm 17 (16) c) Luke 20: 27 – 38 (gospel for Sunday)

These bible texts are a little bit complicated, so I would like you to **read my commentary**, before doing the lectio. The books of Maccabees were written about 100 years before Jesus. They refer to a terrible struggle in Israel around the year 160 BC. The Greeks, under the leadership of the despicable Antiochus Epiphane, wanted to wipe out the Jewish religion. They essentially wanted to outlaw their religious practices, and ridicule their religious activities and symbols. A great Jewish leader, Mattathias stirred up the people to fight for their religious freedom and their ways of life. He initiated a battle to fight the Greeks, and eventually he won (I spare you complicated details about it all) In this text, the king (Greek king) forced the Jews to do things against their religion (eat pork). The courageous sons of an even more courageous mother refused. He decided to torture them, cut off their tongues, and kill them. The lady had 7 sons, who all perished, as did she. One son, in today's reading, makes reference to a justice after death, the Resurrection of the dead. This was NEW in Jewish teaching. The Holy Spirit revealed something new. Jesus in today's gospel, when people try to ridicule the idea of "resurrection", confirms that INDEED there is a resurrection in our body. However, this reality is quite different from anything we can imagine today. We really don't know much about it, but the promise is true.

1. *Read the lectio Divina guide, before reading the bible text.*

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

2. *Do the Lectio Divina*

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

5. Time of community prayer together 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 Marys; Glory .

6. Have someone read the text below, about "Daily Catholic Religious practices". (take some time to discuss it, and if there is time, share some thoughts about it)

Daily Catholic religious practices

When daylight came, he left the house and made his way to a lonely place (Luke4:42)

This advent, I would like to revisit with you some daily Catholic religious practices. Many of us have forgotten the basics of Catholic life, and so this will be, I hope, a gentle reminder.

The first and basic practice, happens when you drag yourself out of bed! Ah! The anguish of getting out of bed. I love sleeping in bed. Getting up is the very first act of heroism of the day.

So what do we do? Brush out teeth? Head for the fridge? Rush to the bathroom? Put my teeth in? Screw my head on? The first thing to do is this: to Kneel down and worship our Creator and Lord, Jesus. This first practice is called a **morning offering of my day**. As the day begins, and I step into the unknown of this new adventure, today, I need to get things right: Turn to the Lord for help. Today, ask for eyes that can see, for ears that can hear, and for a heart to listen and love. This day is totally unknown to me. I know about yesterday... but today is a question mark. Sure, I may have plans, but what will actually happen may be most surprising. Who will I meet? What surprises will I encounter? Will I notice the beautiful cloud formation sent to delight me, by my Father in heaven. Or will I be too busy to see it?

God is in love with you. He does not just love you. God is IN LOVE with you, and this day is His chance once again to make you know and feel this. There is energy in His love. He will place people and situations which will require your heart to be attentive, your pace of life to be prayerful and your courage to be mustered. You may have a quiet day, or it may be the most difficult day of your life. You may have terrible physical pain, as you may enjoy great health. Who knows! You must be ready. A Catholic must be ready and armed with a gentle heart, a ready smile, no matter what life throws at him. God is the pitcher. I am the catcher. He pitches His love. I must be aware enough to receive it in all its various forms.

When you get out of bed, I suggest you kneel (of stand... or whatever suits), and offer your day, in your own words, but this may help:

Dear Lord and Father,

I offer you all that I have and all that I am. It is your gift, I gladly give it to you. I offer you all that I do, all the people I meet, all the situations I will face. I offer my work, my pain, my struggles, my confusion, my laughter, my moments of relaxation, the friends, and give it all to you for your glory.

Please join all of this to the great mystery of Jesus' sacrifice. I join all that I do to His sacrifice of the cross and the Resurrection, so that I too can participate in the saving of this world. I seek with you to build your kingdom of Charity and faith.

Guide me, O Holy Spirit, to be a witness to the gospel, both through my words, but especially by my life. Help me to do little things with great love. Whatever happens to me today, I trust you Lord. I entrust everything and everyone to your great kindness and mercy.

I offer you my life today. Take it. Lead me. Make me a channel of your peace today. I love you Lord.....

Each day is too precious to simply be barged into mindlessly. Each day is a gift, and is unique. Let's treat it, first thing, with prayer.....