

Small community Advent 2013... week 3

November 18 - 24

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

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

2. Introductions: This week is the FEAST of CHRIST the KING. Alleluia!! This is the end of the liturgical year, a kind of culmination of the year. We have meditated on Jesus' mysteries for a whole year. We are hopefully more mature and solid in our faith. This is how liturgy works: Each year we meditate more deeply on these great mysteries of our faith, and hopefully have grown spiritually. The group sharing today will be about how I have grown in my faith this year. This is the end of the YEAR of FAITH. What new insights do I have. Do I feel closer to the Lord? Maybe not. What obstacles have I encountered. What was one of the highlight blessings of the year?

3. Lectio Divina: a) Psalm 122 (121) b) Colossians 1: 12 – 20 c) Luke 23: 35 - 43

Before reading these Sunday bible texts, I would like to make these remarks. The psalm talks of the joy of knowing Christ. Colossians tells us that Jesus is Lord of all. But, is He lord of your work, your home, your thoughts, your relationship with your family and friends, of your money, or your possessions.... or do you only give Him access to part of your heart and life? Colossians tells us that He is head of all, abides in all, is the very centre of all Creation! Eternal life will be to live with and contemplate His beauty, and that of the Trinity. The deeply moving story of Luke, is of a man, most unworthy of grace, a criminal, pleading humbly of Jesus His mercy. Jesus has not a vengeful bone in His body. All is mercy, patience, and kindness. "Of course. Come with me", he says to the man. In the same way, God is deeply humble and most gentle with each one of us.

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. Then talk about the practices presented the last few weeks. Has this been helpful?

5. Have someone read the text below, about "Daily Catholic Religious practices". Then, share a few thoughts about the challenge of what you read below.

Daily Catholic religious practices: Take the time with those I love

Last week, we looked at the Catholic practice of the examen, by St. Ignatius. The week before we considered the importance of a morning offering. This week, we encourage you to spend real heartfelt quality time with those I love.

Pope Francis seems to have one important theme in his pontificate so far: Our Catholic faith is about building relationships! The Divine Trinity is all about relationships of love. The Father loves the Son with all that He has. The Son receives all of this affection with a totally open and humble heart. The love and conversation between the Father and Son is so deep, it is actually a Divine person: The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the electricity of love between Father and Son, but as a Divine Person. God is relationships. We human beings are made in God's likeness and in that, we cannot find inner joy nor happiness outside of honest, heartfelt and deep human contact. Two persons having a genuine talk about their vulnerabilities, fears, joys, laughter, our dreams makes for true human interaction. Without this kind of communication, we remain distant and isolated from others, we become lonely and scared. Nothing is more terrifying than feeling entirely alone in our human experience.

The truth is that we all feel the same fears, joys, challenges, and need to be loved. The way this gets lived out will vary as the stars of the sky, but essentially, we are all HUMAN. Humans need to be cared for, heard, cherished and valued. This is true, regardless of my religious, colour of skin, cultural background or language: We all need deep human contact.

A society such as ours' which, because of its technology driven nature, lends itself very poorly to true human contact. Contact is quick, utilitarian, driven by immediate need for answers, information, or some thing. This is corrosive for human contact. Such an environment quickly leads to human dissatisfaction, loneliness and for elderly, or weaker persons, a sense of being useless and sidelined in the great race of life. This was never God's intent.

The Catholic exercise this week is simple: Take the time each day for at least one real conversation with someone. It can be someone I deeply love, or perhaps an elderly or young person I encounter, but with whom I have a real conversation. Many children feel this abandonment deeply. Their parents do lots of things for them... but what children really need is a listening heart. This takes time. You cannot do this "quickly" (quality versus quantity, they say, in trying to fool us). No. We need quantity too. We need not be rushed. Children, especially, need to hear that their parents, too, are at times scared, worried, tired, happy, hungry for love, and so forth. "Give us this day our Daily bread", can mean many things, but it also means, a daily true, heart to heart conversation where I interact as a human person with someone. We are made for this. We need to be hugged. We need to be cherished and told that our life is precious. All of us need to hear this... even the "sans abri". This is our Catholic challenge this week.

6. Time of community prayer together Take a moment of silence to pray for the members of your group. Pray that Christ might be King of their lives in a much more deep and beautiful way. This prayer can be done spontaneously, by the various members of the group. Finish by rereading the psalm.