

## Small community Advent 2013... week 5

Dec. 2 - 8

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

**1. Greetings.....** Play three minutes of quiet music and light the second purple candle of the advent wreath. Let's be still and think of God who is in love with me.

**2. To start:** This is the second week of advent. Last week, our theme of meditation about daily Catholic practices was encountering the poor. Perhaps we could take some time to talk about:

a) Where did I see, or encounter the poor this week?

b) What new insight about Christmas might have come to me during this week

..... if you do not have a new insight, then perhaps talk about a happy Christmas memory.....

**3. Lectio Divina:** a) Isaiah 11: 1 - 10

b) Romans 15: 4 – 9

(if you have time... Matthew 3: 1 – 12)

Just a few remarks about the readings this week. We are in the advent season celebrating the great revelation of the PRINCE of PEACE: Jesus. In some fabulous prophetic insight, Isaiah intuits the coming of a great leader who would bring a restoration of peace in this troubled world. He had no idea who that might be (that it might be GOD Himself, would have shocked Isaiah beyond belief). Isaiah captures in a beautiful image, a situation of peace. He intends, when he speaks of serpents and bears and cows, not to speak about animals. He is really speaking about people... about personalities... about the fighting going on between individuals. Imagine the cow and the bear getting along! Do you know any cows... or bears.. ? Are you one? Or a lion? Or a viper? Human beings need a saviour to live in harmony. This is what St. Paul refers to in Romans. When Christians know repentance, know grace, humbly ask for help daily, go to confession in regular fashion, the Lord does calm us down, and we do grow in sanctity. Naturally the vision of Isaiah will only be realized in heaven, but there are saints amongst us!! Can you see some? How about you? How are you growing?

*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,** think about a service to accomplish this week. Music?

**5. Time of community prayer together** Let's pray to be renewed in heart. Look at the advent wreath. Finish with spontaneous prayer and a decade of the rosary, that Mary may accompany us.

**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: Why the Eucharist?

**For the tradition I received from the Lord, and handed onto you is this..... (1 Corinthians 11: 23)**

This week, we will focus on a simple and basic Catholic practice: The weekly Eucharist. The Eucharist is the proper name of the mass ("mass" comes from the last words of the latin mass "Ita misa est", which translates roughly, ' go do the missionary work of Christ now'). The proper name of the mass, is Eucharist, which in Greek means "give thanks with all your heart". This is primarily why we come to Church each Sunday: To give THANKS to our Lord for our very existence. To give thanks for grace of being alive, and being in relationship of friendship with others, and for this beautiful world.

Our thanks, however, gets amplified through the immense THANKS which Jesus gives the Father on our behalf, as He gives the total offering of His life out of love for us. He offers His life, that we might become Holy and honour the Father by our lives. We don't do this on our own. We do it "through Jesus, and with Jesus". In turn, we give our lives for others. Parents are especially conscious of this.

The mass expresses the basic attitude of creatures towards our maker: THANKS for all. After all, our lives are a pure gift. The Father has given us life, and in return He only asks the affection of our hearts. We are His children. We are the King's kids, and He wants us to struggle, grow, be courageous and win with Him, the crown of glory. This same circle of love exists in the Holy Trinity.

In the Eucharist we find the weekly strength to follow Jesus. Just as every married couple needs, at the very minimum, to have a weekly date to keep their friendship strong, so Catholics need a "weekly date" to keep the friendship with God strong. When we forget, our spiritual lives become feeble, our hope wanes, our faith slips into superstition, and hearts grow cold. Marriages fall apart.

The Eucharist has two basic parts: (1)The liturgy of the Word (the bible readings), and the (2) Liturgy of the Eucharist (the preparation for and communion). To simplify (please forgive the over simplification), it is as if the first part were the reading of the terms of the contract (with God). The second part, is the signing of the deal! In the first part, God speaks a special Word to us, which the priest expounds in the homily. Each week, a different angle to the "contract" with God is presented. The signing of the "agreement" takes place not by signing a paper, nor by swearing an oath, but by sharing a meal. It is a very simple meal, but it does involve food. In eating together, the Lord and His people share in a sacred gesture of friendship and agreement: **I will be Your God, and you will be my people.** The term contract is inappropriate. The technical word for the Catholic "contract" with God is "covenant". "This is the blood of the new and everlasting COVENANT", is you recall. A contract is temporary and can be broken. A covenant is like marriage: it is your whole life given to the other. No holds barred. I give my life, nothing less.

Be most careful when you go to mass. You are giving your life away, little by little, to the Lord!

It is most helpful to come to mass prepared. Prepare the terms of the contract, by reading the readings ahead of time. Prepare your heart to sign the "covenant with God", by prayer. Occasionally it is good to get to confession so that the heart is really disposed to receive Him. Some devout Catholics like to go to mass each day. We call them "daily communicants". This is a lovely act of love.

The Eucharist is our treasure on the journey of life. How privileged we are to have this great gift from the Lord.