

Small community Advent 2013... week 2

November 11 - 17

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

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

2. Introductions: Let us begin by sharing with each other a moment, or perhaps an event which happened this week, when I saw the presence of God. One of the habits of a mature Catholic life, is to see the hand of God more and more readily in our daily lives. God is forever active. He is in love with you, and gives a multitude of signs of this daily. But because the Lord is subtle, and gentle, for the most part, many people are simply unaware of this. Sharing our insights helps us all to see His loving hand in our daily existence. Give everyone a chance to talk.

3. Lectio Divina: a) Malachi 4: 1 - 2 b) Luke 21: 5 – 19 (gospel for Sunday)

Before reading these bible texts, I would like to comment on them briefly. We are near the end of the Catholic year. It ends with the Feast of Christ the King (generally mid November). New Year starts with the first Sunday of Advent (early December, late Nov). Our Sunday readings are based on a cycle. We start by meditating on Christ's birth (December), his miracles and life, his passion (during lent), and then end the year thinking about the "end of the world". The "end" can mean the end of all, or even "my personal end... my death". This last part coincides nicely with the Fall season. The readings today refer to "end of the world" type of events, to get us thinking about it. The prophet Malachi (first reading), refers to some final events which will bring all creation to an end. He gives no details, of course! The gospel refers specifically to a terrible event in the life of the Jews. In the year 72, Jerusalem was sacked by Tito, Caesar's son, and the temple was completely demolished. All that was left is what we see today in Jerusalem (Luke's gospel was written AFTER this event, hence it clearly makes allusions to it). All of this reveals something unique about Judaism and Christianity: We see history as linear, and moving toward a goal. Unlike some religions which see history as circular and repetitive, we see all things moving to an end... just like our personal lives. The gospel tells us that the process will not be easy. We always march towards the cross!

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 pray for the members of your group. All of us go through hard times. We pray the Lord give each strength in their own personal challenges. 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: Evening 'Examen'

Stay sober and alert. Your opponent, the devil, is prowling around looking to devour (1 Peter 5:8)

Last week, we looked at the Catholic practice of morning prayer. Now, we look at a suggestion given us by St. Ignatius of Loyola. He says that every evening, before going to bed, we should do an **examen** of our day. This is more than just an examination of conscience.

An examination of conscience, understood traditionally, is to look and evaluate all the bad I have done this day, and repent of it. St. Ignatius insists that this is insufficient, and not helpful. An examen, as understood by this saint, is to take the time, before going to bed, and review my day in a much deeper way, and to see the hand of God. Here is what to do:

First of all, be quiet, and still your heart and mind. Perhaps put on some very quiet meditative music if it helps. Review the day: Who did you meet? What did you talk about? What surprises were there, and what did you accomplish today? What beautiful thing happened? Where were you touched, and perhaps had tears in your eyes. A full life, as some say, is not counted by the number of breaths you take, but by the number of events which take your breath away! What took your breath away? Whose presence brought deep love to your heart? What was difficult today?

After reviewing the day, for a few minutes, ask yourself now, two questions:

- a) Where did I see the hand of my loving Lord today? What events of brought me to sense His loving hand upon me? Remember, that the Lord's presence is felt primarily through movements of consolation in the heart: My heart is warmed by explicable and sometimes inexplicable touches of joy. Where did you experience it today. Be attentive. God is gentle and subtle.
- b) Second. Where did I resist His call in my life today? What did I do which I regret? Perhaps I said something, or gestured in a way which disfigures the image of Christ in me. Where did I miss the mark? When you become aware of this, ask the Lord for His pardon.

Some Catholics make a habit of writing (a) and (b) in a notebook, for their personal use. This way, when we have a bad day they reread their notebook, and refer to the moments of joy they had in the past, when they experienced God's presence. This keeps things in perspective. As well, when people prepare for confession, they reread some of the (b) issues. This can help to see patterns of sin in our lives and make our confession more meaningful, helpful and real.

The **examen** should really be done, as much as possible, daily. St. Ignatius insists that if you do nothing else in your day, you should at least do this spiritual exercise, as it will help you to grow in your life of holiness in the Lord.