

Small community Advent 2013... week 4

November 25 – Dec. 1

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

1. Greetings..... Play three minutes of quiet and light one of the advent candles of the advent wreath. Let's be still and think about this great season of Advent.

2. To start: We begin advent this week, a time of immediate preparation to celebrate the great mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. I encourage our brief sharing to be about two things:

a) Where did I encounter the presence of Christ this week.

b) What touches me about this great mystery of our Catholic faith: that God our Creator became human, walked amongst us, and showed us His heart.

For Jews and Moslems, in particular, this Catholic belief is shocking and scandalizes them. This, however, is what we think God has done.... shown His face and revealed His inner mystery. Please give everyone a chance to talk.

3. Lectio Divina: a) Romans 13: 8 - 14

b) Isaiah 2: 1 - 5

The scriptures this week end, challenge us to remain awake. By awake, of course, the authors are not talking about being physically awake. They are really speaking about being spiritually alert. To be alert, is to have one's heart attentive to the moment by moment promptings of God's inspiration, to be attuned to what is happening around us, and to see others with the eyes of Christ. The word "love" which Paul uses in his letter to the Romans is "Agapé". It is a Greek word, which means "to give your heart in service of". It is not just a question of being polite, or smiling... it involves much more. It refers to the warmth of human fellowship which should characterize the life of a Christian. All forms of sins (he refers in particular to adultery, stealing, and killing) are a form of abuse of the other. All of this is contrary to God's inspiration. All of the above "sins" are various ways of treating others as dispensable, as an object, as a thing. This is the root of "war", as Isaiah refers to it. God's plan, in becoming human, His revelation, is to teach us how to become human again.

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. You can play some peaceful, meditative, inspirational CD of music

5. Time of community prayer together Let's take the time to pray that this Advent season will be a blessed time of renewal for all of us. Perhaps some time of spontaneous prayer, and finish with a decade of the rosary, asking Mary to prepare our hearts to receive Christ more deeply .

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: Service of the poor

In so far as you did it to the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me (Matthew 25:40)

This week, we will focus on the simple basic daily stuff of Catholic life: Serve the poor. The problem, of course, in using this phrase, is that we don't always notice the needy around us. Our minds are frequently enwrapped in our own worries and preoccupations, we are at times insensitive to the obvious around us. So who are the poor?

We all go the super market to pick up groceries. It is always surprising to see the number of older persons who make their way down the aisles and go unnoticed by people. We are busy. Some of these people, not all, may be living alone and have no one to talk to. Going shopping is one of their only outings because of necessity. A smile, and friendly word is a simple gesture to make human contact with these folks. You may be the only person they have a conversation with that day.

If we are really attentive, we notice that some folks have very little in their push carts. Naturally, this could be because they have little grocery shopping to do. Not infrequently, some of these folks live on bread and a minimal sustenance because of extremely limited financial means. We don't see this, of course, when we are racing around preoccupied with our needs... but perhaps we can slow down, be more contemplative, and look. What to do, of course, is a more difficult issue, but at least we begin by seeing. Then we can be creative....

It is surprising the number of stories of Jesus who simply observes the needy in his vicinity. He notices a elderly widow putting in small coins into the "alms drum". He notices the lame and blind by the sidewalks. All of these most people ignore. Jesus' heart is attentive.

In our daily walks, perhaps we spot an elderly person needing a hand across the street; an overwhelmed young mother with some babies in a carriage needing a hand with something; some elderly person sitting alone who might enjoy a short conversation; who knows. A surprising number of seniors and widows live alone in residences, but have no family. A monthly visit by our family and children to these places with no other objective than to have a conversation with people could be a ray of sunshine in their life! We are keen to bring our children to hockey, but to visit the lonely...?

Would the number of poor and lonely in the Pierrefonds area, warrant that we offer a monthly friendship meal at the rectory to gather some of these folks we might know? Could we, at special times in the year, like Christmas and Thanksgiving, invite people whom we know are alone, lonely, or new immigrants (Christian or not) to join us for some of the seasons "fixings". That would be a great "Jesus party". Jesus says: "When you have a meal, do not just invite your friends, but the lame, the blind, and the sick..." (Luke 14:13)

"Lord make me a channel of your joy. Where there is sadness and loneliness, may I bring your light and hope". Let us ask the Holy Spirit this week, to inspire in us a sensitivity to this basic call of the gospel: Serve the poor.