

Small community Advent 2013... week 6

Dec. 9 to 15

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

1. Greeting..... Play three minutes of quiet and light the pink advent candle. Pink symbolizes the JOY of the time of anticipation. Think of the joy of having God (Jesus) living amongst us!!

2. To start: Christmas is around the corner. Let us share about something lovely which happened to us this week. Perhaps we received from the Lord some anticipated Christmas gift, in something which happened. Christ gives us Christmas gifts too! As well, share what gift you might be asking of the Lord this Christmas.

3. Lectio Divina: a) Isaiah 35: 1 – 10

b) Psalm 146

(If you want another reading, you can use the gospel: Matthew 11: 2 – 11)

God's plan, in becoming human, His revelation, is to teach us how to become human again. This is what Isaiah captures in his text. The joy of becoming more human, more holy. This brings great joy! The lame (people who have nasty tongues) walk again (become kind), the blind (some see others as enemies) have their sight restored (see people as unmet friends), the mute (people who can never say a civil word) have their tongues freed (they can say kindly things). All of this requires immense courage. The Lord wants to strengthen weak knees, give courage to those who are fearful. As Catholics, we are to reach into people's hearts and spread the courage which comes from knowing God is in love with you! Your life is precious. The psalm speaks of this news being spread to the weakest members of society.. the widows and orphans. In the gospel, Jesus tells John the Baptist that this dream of God is now becoming real... slowly... slowly... but real nevertheless.

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 how you plan to serve the Lord this week. Play some peaceful, inspirational CD of music

5. Time of community prayer together Let's be quiet for a few moments as we pray together.

Pray for the members of your little group, that this season of Christmas might be blessed. You might want to spontaneously pray a blessing for each member of the group. Finish with a prayer to Mary.

6. Have someone read the text below, about "Daily Catholic Religious practices". (If there is time, you can briefly discuss it, but take it home to think about)

Daily Catholic religious practices: Why the Eucharist Part 2

He took bread, gave THANKS and broke it, and gave it to his disciples

Without faith, the mass is a useless activity. It does not raise money. It does not provide entertainment. It does not give you exercise. The Eucharist is an activity which is entirely gratuitous: We come to give Glory and Praise to our Creator. Without faith, the standing and sitting, the quiet and closed eyes, the listening to the priest's prayers, all of this is quite meaningless without a growing love for and attachment to the Lord. The purpose of this is all is to glorify Our Lord, to be filled with His Holy Spirit, and to unite our lives to the saving mystery of Jesus!

The mass is a timeless activity. Jesus died 2000 thousand years ago, but to the Father, His death is still present. Just as for the Father, He is watching both your birth and death, and everything in between, in an instant of time, everything is PRESENT to the Father, so Jesus' life, birth, and suffering are eternally present to the Father. As a result, through the mass, and through our act of faith, we are participating in, and present with Jesus as He teaches, He heals, He suffers, He dies and He rises from the dead. We are there with Him. So we do not "remember" some distant past stuff. We are actually participating through faith in His life today! We are actually at the cross. We are actually at His Resurrection. We are actually there when He heals the blind man. We are there, and living it in faith! Imagine! This is the deepest sense of the Eucharist.

If this last paragraph makes sense (and it is a deep mystery), then the mass takes on a whole new depth. When we make the sign of the cross, we are inviting Jesus into our life anew. When we do the penitential rite (Lord have mercy), we are like the sinners of Jesus' time, asking Him to overlook our moodiness, our jealousy, our pettiness, and to grant us forgiveness and mercy. The Church is NOT a gathering of perfect people. Church is a hospital for spiritually sick people, who need Doctor Jesus to heal and sometimes "operate" on them. We need Him to heal us of our ugly attitudes, heal us of our fears and to restore our peace. Mass is a healing activity. Jesus is the surgeon!

After asking mercy, we give God glory, by singing the "Glory to God". Yes, we praise the Lord for His great healing mercy and praise Him, as we anticipate His message to us today. We then sit to hear the scripture passages. We pray the readers do a good job! After the first reading is over (when God speaks to us), we respond to Him by singing a song, called a Psalm. "Yes, Lord, hear the cry of my heart!"

At the gospel we all stand, because Jesus (present through the ministry of the priest), speaks to us and we must be respectful and attentive: Please stand. We then sit for the homily as the priest teaches us about the Lord's message today. Some priests do a good job. Some... not so good. But the Holy Spirit can teach us regardless. Let us listen with the heart.

At the communion, we receive the actual physical body of Jesus in us. This is not a symbol. This is not a "memory". Jesus is actually there, in person, but visible physically under the appearance of bread. Without faith, we cannot see this. He actually comes into our little body, as a seed of eternal life. "He who eats my body and drinks my blood has eternal life. I will raise her up on the last day". We walk in the communion line, as a result, with great wonder, great humility, and with great expectation.

The Eucharist is central to our life as Catholics. We need beg the Lord to help us understand more about this great mystery. We need to pray for so many who have forgotten about this great gift!