

ADVENT 2017



LONGING FOR THE COMING OF THE LORD

*Prayer and Reflection programme
by the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton*

Lectio Divina Guidelines

Lectio Divina is about an encounter with Jesus Christ, who is the Word of God. It is prayer, using Scripture, not a Bible study for knowledge or information.

*“Lectio Divina (Holy Reading)
enables us to listen to God’s Word
in a way that is simple and refreshing
...It is truly wonderful to realise
that God wishes to say something to you and to me,
as individuals whom he has formed and whom he loves.”*
(Bishop Richard Moth)

There is no single set of guidelines for the practice of Lectio Divina, but it should incorporate the following elements: Reading, Meditation, Prayer and Contemplation. We suggest that you use the following guidelines for this programme, but feel free to use your own preferred method, ensuring a focus on a personal response.

1. Read the passage aloud, slowly.
2. Pause.
3. Read the passage aloud, for a second time.
4. Allow for two minutes of silent reflection/meditation.
5. Invite participants to share a word or phrase that struck them. No elaboration is offered at this stage.
6. Read the passage aloud, slowly, for a third time.
7. Allow for two minutes of silent reflection/meditation.
8. Invite participants to elaborate a little further on what they feel God is saying to them through this passage.
9. Read the passage aloud, slowly, for a fourth and final time.
10. Allow for three minutes of silent prayer for participants to respond to God, with the questions, intercessions or thanksgiving that meditation on the passage has called forth.

Reflecting on the experience. If there is time, you might discuss what was received during this time of Lectio Divina.

LISTENING TO THE WORD

(Excerpt from *The Coming of God* by Maria Boulding)

Personal communication, the kind of speaking by which someone reveals and commits himself, requires a listener. It does not work as a simple monologue. Anyone who has tried to continue a phone conversation after the other person has hung up, or to go on writing letters to someone who never replies, or to talk in a truly human way to someone who has closed his mind and is stone-walling, is aware of this simple fact. Genuinely personal speech is not possible unless both parties involved are in some degree committing themselves. We cannot really speak unless there is receptivity and response; even God cannot. Nor can we really listen to another person without openness, acceptance, humility and something akin to love. Silence can be very different according to our attitude.

This is what Revelation is: God speaking, not to present us with a list of truths we must believe or rules we must obey, but to utter *himself*.

He formed Israel, the people of the Word. Partially, fitfully they listened, but often they were deaf and didn't want to know. God's word of self-giving love was not truly heard until it was received in the human mind of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the first listener. The word is heard elsewhere - in the Church and in our own hearts - only because it is first heard there. God gives himself, makes himself known as the one who wants to be known, not in some external way only but in the deepest, most personal, most human centre of our race, in the mind and heart of Jesus Christ. Self-giving, self-revealing God meets self-giving, responding, participating, receptive man.

QUESTIONS

What will it cost to commit to listen to God this Advent?

How can I listen with the mind and heart of Jesus Christ?

Introduction

Welcome to this programme of reflections for Advent 2017.

This year's material is in two parts, the first part focuses on the Gospel for each Sunday of Advent, either by using the method of Lectio Divina or, for groups who are not yet comfortable with that method of prayer, group discussion inspired by both the Gospel passage and the reflection provided. The second part contains excerpts from the book *The Coming of God* by Maria Boulding. Dame Maria Boulding (1929-2009) was a Benedictine nun of Stanbrook Abbey

The material is best used in preparation for each Sunday of Advent.

The booklet is written primarily for group use, but there is no reason why these should not be used for private reflection. The format followed each week is:

- A. Opening Prayer** - Suggested prayer
- B. Gospel** - Using Lectio Divina or the Reflection
- C. The Coming of God** - Excerpt from Maria Boulding's book
- D. Closing Prayer** - Intercessions with suggested prayer

Please adapt the material to best suit the group

Each year the feedback shows that the material that inspires one group may dismay another. Different groups can respond to the same programme as too basic, too challenging or just right. Therefore it is vital for groups to be ready to adapt the booklet to suit their own situation. This can be done in a variety of ways, for example, by including a hymn, or additional prayers, or if time allows, reflecting on additional readings of the Sunday etc.

For advice on how best to use the material, contact David Wills.

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E-mail: david.wills@dabnet.org

WEEK ONE

First Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Isa 63:16b-17,19b, 64:2-7; Ps 79 (80); 1 Cor 1:3-9; Mk 13:33-37

Welcome and Opening Prayer

*Invite people to say what they hope to gain from the group. It is suggested that you begin your first session by reading and discussing the excerpt from *The Coming of God called Listening to the Word* on p.3*

Begin with a time of silence, suitable music, or simply light a candle.

Then pray together using the following prayer or similar words:

Lord Jesus, we come as we are to this time.
As we are,
Whether we are agitated or peaceful, sad or happy, calm or angry.
You always met people at their point of need.
We trust you will come to us in the same way.

As we are all unique,
We will each have our unique response to You in Your Word,
Which we are listening to in our lives, our particular circumstances.
Help us to trust this response
And trust one another to hold tenderly each other's sharing
And be as You would be.

GOSPEL

MARK 13:33-37

Choose to either follow guidelines on Lectio Divina from page 2 of the booklet OR listen to the Gospel once or twice and use the reflection as a basis for discussion.

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!"

Take several minutes to read through this for yourselves again. Watch out for any word or phrase that comes alive for you. Share these with the group afterwards before reading the reflection.

Reflection

The writer of this reflection is sharing the fruits of her own experience of praying with this Gospel passage using Lectio Divina. It is offered as an example of the difference between Bible study and personal response to God's Word. The aim is not to replace but to stimulate your own response in your particular situation.

Reading this gospel/good news I initially feel anxiety; am I asleep or awake? Both? How can I move from that anxiety Lord, that question of “am I good enough?” to trusting that I have responded to Your call and I am trying to walk Your way.

This Gospel can seem like a 'hard saying' from Jesus with which to begin this season of Advent, and we can be tempted to overlook it; therefore can I hear the words of Jesus to His disciples “what I say to you I say to all”? Can I welcome this saying as being for us, the followers that were to come, for me personally?

This passage from the Gospel begins and closes with the exhortation to “stay awake” – perhaps it is ok that I feel uncomfortable? If I get too comfortable then I run the risk of being asleep, and unable to see, literally and figuratively, what is happening or what is coming, to where the Lord is calling me. Being awake means seeing, being present, in the immediacy of my life but also the bigger picture.

This Advent can I be more “awake” to the invisible? Do I only see truth in the Church and my Christian friends or do I really believe that You come to me, if I am open, in the person who is homeless and no one touches, or the lonely, or the noisy neighbour or unfriendly fellow Christian? Do I really believe that and look, stay awake, to see You coming to me there? It's so easy for us as Christians to focus on Your second coming and hope it will all be better and turn away from suffering, from messy lives and welcome only those that fit into our world view.

Help me Jesus to stay awake to my sisters and brothers, those whom, like in Your day, were rejected, excluded, totally ignored.

Share what strikes you about this? Then allow time for group discussion

Read the excerpt aloud; Take a moment to reflect and perhaps underline any word or phrase that particularly spoke to you.

If you want God, and long for Union with him, yet sometimes wonder what that means or whether it can mean anything at all, you are already walking with the God who comes. If you are at times so weary and involved with the struggle of living that you have no strength even to want him, yet are still dissatisfied that you don't, you are already keeping Advent in your life.

*All your hopes and disappointments, your joy and suffering, your achievements and failure, your ups and downs; none of it is wasted. Providing only that you consent, and hold to that consent without qualification, the work of grace is going on in you through the whole business of living, to hollow you out, to make you **capax Dei** as the old mystics used to say, able to receive God*

We are an Advent people. The season of Advent celebrates in symbolic form a reality of our own lives and of all men's destiny with God, because he who came in weakness at Bethlehem is he who will come again.

Constantly he comes. He came as a man into our human situation, accepted human experience as his own and lived it through to the bitter end, in order that what was bitter might be turned into sweetness and human experience become an expression of his sacrificial, redeeming love. He has transformed it from the inside, and offered us the possibility of allowing him to transform it in our lives too. The one historical, unique birth at Bethlehem makes possible his birth in the many lives of those who will receive him, to whom he gives the power to become children of God. He is born in us continually as our minds, our actions, our reactions, our relationships, our experience and our prayer are Christified. But this is a lifetime's task, and we need to pray constantly from the still pre-Christian areas in us, 'Come, Lord Jesus'.

(Taken from Chapter 1- LONGING FOR GOD, pages 1,7 &9)

Share what strikes you about this? Then allow time for group discussion

Closing Prayer

Use this time for open prayer, ending with the Our Father and then together use the Concluding Prayer from Divine Office for 1st Sunday of Advent.

Grant, almighty Father,
that when Christ comes again
we may go out to meet him,
bearing the harvest of good works
achieved by your grace.

We pray that he will receive us into the company of the saints
and call us into the kingdom of heaven.
(We make our prayer) through our Lord.

WEEK TWO

Second Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Isa 40:1-5, 9-11; Ps 84 (85); 2 Peter 3:8-14; Mk 1:1-8

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Begin with a time of silence, suitable music, or simply light a candle.

Then pray together using the following prayer or similar words:

Lord Jesus, we come as we are to this time.
As we are,
Whether we are agitated or peaceful, sad or happy, calm or angry.
You always met people at their point of need.
We trust you will come to us in the same way.

As we are all unique,
We will each have our unique response to You in Your Word,
Which we are listening to in our lives, our particular circumstances.
Help us to trust this response
And trust one another to hold tenderly each other's sharing
And be as You would be.

GOSPEL

MARK 1:1-8

Choose to either follow guidelines on Lectio Divina from page 2 of the booklet OR listen to the Gospel once or twice and use the reflection as a basis for discussion.

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

*Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;
he will prepare your way.
A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight,*

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, "Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

Take several minutes to read through this for yourselves again. Watch out for any word or phrase that comes alive for you. Share these with the group afterwards before reading the reflection together.

Reflection

The writer of this reflection is sharing the fruits of her own experience of praying with this Gospel passage using Lectio Divina. It is offered as an example of the difference between Bible study and personal response to God's Word. The aim is not to replace but to stimulate your own response in your particular situation.

Mark opens his Gospel with this assertion "The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God."

The beginning – is this story carrying on now? As followers we must then be part of the story, us now, part of Christ's coming to the world. And there is more of the story to come! How do we feel about this? Do we feel part of it or outside it? Excited? Scared?

Mark then quotes Isaiah to introduce John the Baptist as a messenger who cries in the wilderness. What is wilderness? A physical place, an inner state? A place that is dusty, barren, empty, with few people. Do we see that as a good or bad thing? Where are we in our lives? Have we experienced wilderness times? It can be a place to connect with God or feel abandoned by God.

John was in the wilderness for a reason: to call and be heard. "All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem" made their way – that's incredible; what made them respond as a whole body of people, be baptised and receive forgiveness? They did not respond so to Christ; they were more divided. Perhaps what John was offering was more familiar – water, repentance and forgiveness. What Christ offered was less familiar – the Messiah

actually arriving, baptism with the Holy Spirit (very unfamiliar!) and disciples being called to do “greater things than I.” (John 14:12). Nothing had gone before that told them what to do, how to respond.

Perhaps they had to trust their response to their personal experience of You Lord? As did the Prophets, as did Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, John, the Apostles and those of the leaders of Israel who believed You were the One. Do we believe and trust that You want a personal relationship with each of us....that You call us to the same baptism and life in the Holy Spirit?

Share what strikes you about this? Then allow time for group discussion

The Coming of God

MARIA BOULDING

Read the excerpt aloud; Take a moment to reflect and perhaps underline any word or phrase that particularly spoke to you.

The Christian Fathers delighted to speak of three comings of Christ. At his first coming he was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, at his last he will be clothed in light as in a garment; at his first coming he endured the cross, despising the shame, at his last he will be exalted in majesty. In between these two there is a secret coming in the lives of all who will receive him. His first advent was in the flesh and in weakness; his secret advent now is in spirit and in power; his final advent will be in the open glory of God.

The three comings are linked. In the twelfth century the Cistercian abbot Gueric of Igny expressed the connections like this in an Advent sermon:

As our bodies will rise up rejoicing at his final coming, so our hearts must run joyfully to greet his first...between these two comings of his, the lord often visits each one of us in accordance with our merits and desires, forming us to the likeness of his first coming in the flesh, and preparing us for his return at the end of time. He comes to us now to make sure that his first coming should not have been wasted, and that his last coming may not have to be in anger. His purpose now is to convert our pride into the humility he showed when he first came, so that hereafter he may refashion our lowly bodies into the likeness of that glorious body which he will manifest when he comes again...Grace accompanied his first coming, glory will surround his

last, this intermediate coming has in it something of both, since by it we experience in the consolations of his grace a foretaste of his glory.

(Taken from Chapter 9 – THE FINAL COMING pages 145)

Share what strikes you about this? Then allow time for group discussion

Closing Prayer

Use this time for open prayer, ending with the Our Father and then together use the Concluding Prayer from Divine Office for 2nd Sunday of Advent.

Almighty and merciful God,
let neither our daily work nor the cares of this life
prevent us from hastening to meet your Son
Enlighten us with your wisdom
and lead us into his company
(We make our prayer) through our Lord.

WEEK THREE

Third Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Isa 61:1-2, 10-11; Ps Lk 1:46-50, 53-54 R. Isa 61:10; 1 Thess 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Begin with a time of silence, suitable music, or simply light a candle.

Then pray together using the following prayer or similar words:

Lord Jesus, we come as we are to this time.
As we are,
Whether we are agitated or peaceful, sad or happy, calm or angry.
You always met people at their point of need.
We trust you will come to us in the same way.

As we are all unique,
We will each have our unique response to You in Your Word,
Which we are listening to in our lives, our particular circumstances.
Help us to trust this response
And trust one another to hold tenderly each other's sharing
And be as You would be.

GOSPEL

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

Choose to either follow guidelines on Lectio Divina from page 2 of the booklet OR listen to the Gospel once or twice and use the reflection as a basis for discussion.

*A man came, sent by God.
His name was John.
He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
only a witness to speak for the light.*

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, "I am not the Christ." "Well then," they asked "are you Elijah?" "I am not" he said. "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you? We must take back and answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?" So John said,

*"I am, as Isaiah prophesied:
a voice that cries in the wilderness:
Make a straight way for the Lord."*

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, "I baptise with water; there stands among you - unknown to you - the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap." This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

Take several minutes to read through this for yourselves again. Watch out for any word or phrase that comes alive for you. Share these with the group afterwards before reading the reflection together.

Reflection

The writer of this reflection is sharing the fruits of her own experience of praying with this Gospel passage using Lectio Divina. It is offered as an example of the difference between Bible study and personal response to God's Word. The aim is not to replace but to stimulate your own response in your particular situation.

Why do we hear a similar gospel twice in a row on the 2nd and 3rd Sundays of Advent? It must be really important in helping us to prepare and be ready to receive Him.

Are we looking forward to Christ's coming? When we look forward to something, whether that be a special occasion or simply meeting a friend, we enjoy it more because of the anticipation and our hearts become more open as we wait.

St Ignatius of Loyola reminds us that the Creator wants to communicate directly with the creature and so we can be expectant as we listen to His word. God doesn't wait for us to be perfect or until we think we are "holy enough" to receive God; God is not waiting for this, God invites us now. What or who helps me to be ready to open to Jesus Christ? Is it Prayer, Scripture, Mass, People, Nature?

John the Baptist is described as being a witness four times in the first eight lines of this Gospel. What is a witness? It is a person who has seen or can give first-hand evidence, who confirms the genuineness of something. John pointed to Christ with his words and actions. He did not even need to be recognised by name.

Are we witnesses to Christ in our lives? Being a witness rests on who we experience Christ to be. Who is Christ for me? If I relate to Christ primarily as a judge I will inevitably witness to that; if as a brother I will witness to that; if as Love/Mercy and so on. My answer is impacting my life all the time and how I am with others as myself and as a Christian. Do people find me merciful, truth speaking (in love), peacemaker (not peace keeper!).

Share what strikes you about this? Then allow time for group discussion

The Coming of God

MARIA BOULDING

Read the excerpt aloud; Take a moment to reflect and perhaps underline any word or phrase that particularly spoke to you.

Painfully we have to unlearn our mistaken notions about glory, so that we can learn Christ's values and learn discipleship, consenting to serve and to be emptied and to let the light shine through us. For Christ's first nine months on earth Mary was his only visible medium; he shone only through her, as the sunlight shines with a special colour through the windows at Chartres. Today, believers are his transparencies. If the light is to come through we have to be servants of the covenant-love, wherever and in whatever way may be required, not for our own aggrandizement but in self-forgetting; and this is indeed glorious, although it does not feel like it. Jerusalem stands not only for the Church as a whole, but for every lover of God; 'and the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb' (Rev. 21.23). It is not your

glory but his, and you have to consent to be transparent, to be the lantern not the light, like John the Baptist. Are you prepared to let this glory shine through you, through your unselfish loving, your smiling, your unselfseeking service and humility? Are you prepared to let the joy of the Lord radiate to others through you? In no other way will 'the glory of the Lord be revealed, and all mankind together see it'. It will be visible only if we allow Christ to be born in our lives and shine through us.

He is leading you to glory. It works out in ordinariness, tedium, drabness, routine and the humdrum quality of most of our experience, and there is an over-whelming sense of how unglorious it all is. But the Spirit recycles this unpromising material, and the glory will be revealed in its time.

(Taken from Chapter 7 – GLORY REINTERPRETED pages 123- 124)

Share what strikes you about this? Then allow time for group discussion

Closing Prayer

Use this time for open prayer, ending with the Our Father and then together use the Concluding Prayer from Divine Office for 3rd Sunday of Advent.

Grant, almighty God, that looking forward in faith to the feast of our Lord's birth, we may feel all the happiness our Saviour brings, and celebrate his coming with unfailing joy.
(We make our prayer) through our Lord.

WEEK FOUR

Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year B)

2 Sam 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14, 16; Ps 88 (89); Ro 16: 25-27; Lk 1: 26-38

Welcome and Opening Prayer

**Begin with a time of silence, suitable music, or simply light a candle.
Then pray together using the following prayer or similar words:**

Lord Jesus, we come as we are to this time.
As we are,
Whether we are agitated or peaceful, sad or happy, calm or angry.
You always met people at their point of need.
We trust you will come to us in the same way.

As we are all unique,
We will each have our unique response to You in Your Word,
Which we are listening to in our lives, our particular circumstances.
Help us to trust this response
And trust one another to hold tenderly each other's sharing
And be as You would be.

GOSPEL

LUKE 1: 26-28

Choose to either follow guidelines on Lectio Divina from page 2 of the booklet OR listen to the Gospel once or twice and use the reflection as a basis for discussion.

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, "Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you." She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, "Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the house of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end."

Mary said to the angel, "But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?" "The Holy Spirit will come upon you" the angel answered "and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called the Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God." "I am the handmaid of the Lord," said Mary "let what you have said be done to me." And the angel left her.

Take several minutes to read through this for yourselves again. Watch out for any word or phrase that comes alive for you. Share these with the group afterwards before reading the reflection together.

Reflection

The writer of this reflection is sharing the fruits of her own experience of praying with this Gospel passage using Lectio Divina. It is offered as an example of the difference between Bible study and personal response to God's Word. The aim is not to replace but to stimulate your own response in your particular situation.

Mary was not praying or asking for anything: God came to her, the Angel was "sent."

Rejoice so highly favoured, full of grace/beloved: I feel some discomfort initially as I long to be good enough but feel my imperfections. But I stand in the truth, again, that because of Christ there is no barrier or separation; we are all blessed, as the world and we were in our original state – "God saw all that He had made and it was good." So I am here now and God wants to give.

I think of Zechariah who also received a visit from Gabriel and was made mute for asking a question! But his question was different to Mary's – he said "how can I believe this?" and she said "how can this be?" Mary shows, to me, belief, acceptance and just a request for information. Mary is receptive. She, her womb, is a place where God can dwell. Zechariah is more defensive, closed. How am I with God?

It strikes me that Mary shows such confidence in her experience. She doesn't doubt it. Can I say the same? Mary knew the expectations of her people for a Messiah...the long journey and waiting that was their lived reality. She also knows that as an engaged woman she could be stoned to

death for being pregnant with what people will assume is another man's child. What does that tell me about Mary? She trusts in her experience, her encounter and in Gabriel, in God. She must have strength in herself to so believe, to not be overwhelmed, that she is going to be the bearer and mother of the Messiah, the long held hope of Israel! She shows me that when God acts we know it deeply and securely.

Her encounter also shows me that God is active; Jesus went to people in their reality, physically but also emotionally/ psychologically. He did not sit in the synagogue and wait for them; he didn't wait until they were religiously perfect (like the Pharisees demanded) before he healed them, invited them to full life and to follow Him. And this is for me too – the offer is for me. Emmanuel, God with us, with me.

Share what strikes you about this? Then allow time for group discussion

The Coming of God

Read the excerpt aloud; Take a moment to reflect and perhaps underline any word or phrase that particularly spoke to you.

In the full light of Easter and Pentecost and the Church's pondering of the mystery of Christ, Luke could write the Annunciation story in this poetic, allusive, theologically developed way, and we can rejoice in it, but to the people within the story it did not look like that.

As the poor and faithful of Israel had said 'Yes' to God in anguish of spirit, not seeing how things could work but conscious only of the tearing away from what had gone before and the venture forward into the dark unknown at God's word, so Mary was being asked to make the leap of faith in response to God's self-offer and invitation. There were no models for understanding, no comforting precedents, because this thing had never happened before. The flesh-taking of the Son of God was much more than a fulfilment of Israel's expectations, much more than a satisfactory tying-up of all the strands of hope; it was the unheard of gift, the breaking in of the wholly new thing.

Like the prophets and the anonymous believers before her, she let go of familiar, intelligible patterns and ways of relating to God and the universe, of those frameworks which had genuinely supported meaning hitherto, and

were indeed God-given. She said her 'Yes' to the Beyond, she let go of her securities, faces the misunderstanding, bore the shame, accepted her own bewilderment and risk. She was herself reborn to a new existence, that she might bring forth life for many. There was joy for her, and in newness of life she danced with the Beyond that was within.

(Taken from Chapter 2- THE RISK OF PROMISE, pages 24-25)

Share what strikes you about this? Then allow time for group discussion

Closing Prayer

Use this time for open prayer, ending with the Our Father and then together use the Concluding Prayer from Divine Office for 4th Sunday of Advent

Lord, open our hearts to your grace.
Through the angel's message to Mary
we have learned to believe
in the incarnation of Christ your Son.
Lead us by his passion and cross
to the glory of his resurrection,
(We make our prayer) through our Lord.

Feedback Form

1. How did you obtain a copy?
 - a. Purchased booklet from DABCEC/parish
 - b. Downloaded from website
2. How did you use the material?
 - a. Group _____ (Size of Group) _____
 - b. Private reflection _____
3. How did you rate the material? *1(very poor) to 5 (excellent)*
 - a. Structure of sessions
 - b. Lectio Divina
 - c. Reflection (if used)
 - d. Coming of God excerpt
4. What did you most appreciate?

5. What needs further development?

6. Any further comments?

Please return this page to:

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email david.wills@dabnet.org



Acknowledgements:

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APPENDIX

Thoughts on using Lectio Divina in personal prayer time

Hello. I have the privilege of offering you my experience of Lectio. What I like about Lectio is that it does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the Living Word; Christ's title of the Word of God means the Word is Him, alive and active. Just like we consume the Eucharist we can consume the Word.

When I read the Gospels it seems to me that when Jesus meets people, He shows He wants to meet them where they are at in their lives and so, if we believe He is present by His Spirit, He wants to meet us where we are.

Lectio is a way to enable that meeting to take place. In any friendship we value we spend time with the person. We don't talk about the theory of friendship; rather we are present to that person and them to us. Equally we don't just meet them in groups or religious settings, but rather meet them one to one. Most of us will have a friend whose company enriches us and we feel freer in our true selves having been with them. I believe that is what Christ wants for us...personal connection for us to move towards the freedom of becoming who we are created to be.

This is what Lectio offers. When we find ourselves drifting into theory the practise of Lectio gently leads us back to the personal. However imperfectly I attempt it, God always speaks and my prayer is that you can trust that will happen for you too.

One little tip I was given is always stick with the time decided for your prayer time, not more or less, as that allows you to relax into the time in trust and God works within that. It will also be different for each person as Christ meets us in our lives, our particular circumstances, we what we receive from Him, how we hear His words, will be unique to us and our needs.

From the writer of the Gospel reflections, which were based on her own Lectio Divina

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Booklets can be ordered from the DABCEC bookshop:

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A downloadable version is available from the diocesan website:

www.dabnet.org/Resources

*“If you want God, and long for Union with him,
yet sometimes wonder what that means
or whether it can mean anything at all,
you are already walking with the God who comes.
If you are at times so weary and involved with the struggle of living
that you have no strength even to want him,
yet are still dissatisfied that you don't,
you are already keeping Advent in your life.”*

Maria Boulding, *The Coming of God*

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