

Nurturing the Seed



**A series of six meetings for a group to use
following a week of guided prayer**



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The Christian Life Community (CLC) is a worldwide community composed of small groups. Each group meets regularly, enabling each other to deepen their life of prayer and to support one another in their response to God's love. CLC's special characteristic is the spirituality of St Ignatius, helping members to integrate prayer with daily living. The characteristics of CLC are community, spirituality and mission.

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Nurturing the Seed

Following on from a week of Guided Prayer

During the Week of Guided Prayer you were praying with Scripture in a certain way - allowing yourself to be moved by the passages you read, allowing God to speak to you through His Word - to touch your life through a deeper understanding of your relationship with the Trinity.

Hopefully the following meeting patterns will help you to continue the journey from "heady" Bible Study to the heart language where you and God are in tune. From that place you might like to share about prayer and life with each other to support and encourage each other on the Journey deeper into God's Kingdom.

At each meeting, **we open with a prayer** and remind ourselves that everything is for the greater praise, glory and service of God.

- **We ask God for what we desire** deep in our hearts to draw closer to God - our hopes, dreams, longings.
- **We share a time of stillness** to help us to be aware of being in the presence of God, to quieten our thoughts and relax our body so that we are better able to listen and receive what God is revealing to us.
- **We listen to God's word** in the Scriptures and let it speak to us, - perhaps it connects with something going on in our life. We talk to God (or perhaps to someone featured in the reading)
- After a suitable time (10 or 15 minutes, but this can be flexible) **we share what we want to**. While people are sharing, we listen with respect and without comment or interruption, after everyone has shared there may be something we want to feed back to each other.
- At the end of the meeting **we again have a quiet time to** reflect on what we have heard; learnt; desire. We finish with a prayer of praise and thanksgiving.



GUIDELINES FOR A WAY OF DAILY PRAYER

- ❖ **Choose scripture passage.**
- ❖ **Read the passage twice, aloud.**
- ❖ **Allow scene to play itself out to you - visually - with your senses - sight, touch, taste, smell and hearing.**
- ❖ **Listen to the words spoken.**
- ❖ **Is there any movement going on in you?**
- ❖ **Where do I feel touched/moved?**
- ❖ **Talk to Jesus/Father about this - allow it to enter your life - where you are with God - with others.**
- ❖ **What is your response?**
- ❖ **What is in your heart?**
- ❖ **How will this affect self - family - neighbours - wider community?**
- ❖ **Share this experience with others as far as you feel you can.**



Review of Week/Fortnight/Previous Meeting

(in preparation for your next meeting)

- ❖ Thank God for "His" Goodness and Presence during this time.

- ❖ Ask God to show you the pattern or movements experienced;

- ❖ Reflect on: Events; people; relationships; meetings; conversations; special insights in prayer etc. Times when God seemed close / faraway

- ❖ Notice:
The moments which were life-giving/energizing to yourself or others.
The moments that were draining, diminishing.
When you and God were working together.
When you were doing things your way - being in control - instead of letting God in.

- ❖ Make your response of thanks and/or sorrow.

- ❖ Focus on one thing you would like to thank God for. Perhaps this is what you might like to share with the group.
(You may like to keep a notebook)



1st Meeting

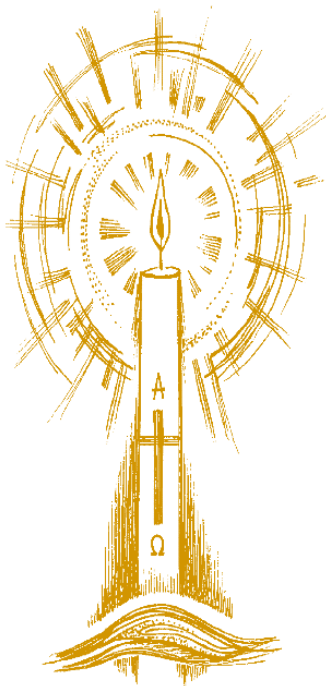
Opening Prayer: Our Father

Ask: That God will reveal Himself as Father

Stillness:

Relax in chair - taking weight of body - become heavy , notice hands in lap and allow them to feel heavy. Notice their position. Are your fingers straight, curled, relaxed? Notice your thumbs? Feel them resting on your lap, the touch of your clothes. Do they feel hot/cold. How have you used your hands today?

(Longer pause.....)



Go back to the time when you were a child- what did it feel like for someone to hold your hand? Explore your feelings around that. Remember your parents holding your hand if you can, or if not, someone who cared about you. Be aware of holding your father's hand (real or imaginary)

How does it feel?

Remember something about your father - good or painful? Touch into the good qualities of a father - or if your experience is not "life giving", how you would like a father to be? Link these qualities with God? Allow God to be your Father. How do you see him?....*(longer pause)* How do you feel? Sit down next to God your Father and talk to him about all that has been going on in your life for the past week (2 weeks)- what has pre-occupied you, your prayer, your mood; the high points, the low points; where God has been. Now God is there, is there anything you want to change? Is God saying something to you?

Listening:

When you feel ready, share what you feel comfortable with. Listen to each other without interrupting or making comment.

When everyone has shared, take time to reflect on how you see God as Father; how you feel about God as Father. Notice how your understanding has grown (or not) - How your feelings have changed or deepened. If not, see if you are resisting God in some way and ask to be freed.

What are you going to take from this meeting about God as Father? You may like to share a word or sentence with the group.

Prayer of Thanks: Psalm: 145 8-21

2nd Meeting

Opening Prayer: e.g. Our Father

Ask: That Jesus will reveal Himself to us.

Stillness Exercise:

Relax body in chair.

Listen to sounds/silence.

With eyes still closed, visualize each person in the room and call to mind something you know about each person's life.

Place them before God.

Place yourself and your life there too.

Be still.



John 1: vv. 35-39. Read the passage aloud twice (2 different people)

1: Build the Scene: Visualize the place- take your time- it need not be "accurate" – it is your place. The river, the surroundings, the road etc. ... dusty/cool; hot, dry, breezy; time of day; the people - the way they are dressed; what they are doing, what they might be saying. See Jesus - what does he look like, what is He doing. - The meeting with the two disciples - their looks, words, feelings (shy, embarrassed, bold, curious etc.) Hear their question. Hear Jesus reply - His invitation.

Silence.

2: Allow yourself to be drawn into the scene and be aware of your own feelings – your response to the invitation - allow yourself to be shown where Jesus lived. If He is showing you now, what would He be showing you? - Where does He live? - Are you aware of being drawn or attracted to anything? Does anything strike you? – Let Jesus show you.

Silence.

3: How is this affecting you? Have you a response?

- Yourself

- in your parish

- The local community

- Time for silent reflection

Take it in turns to share and listen within the group - Just listen prayerfully to each person without comment - receive each others' words. When everyone has had a chance to share, you may like to explore further your response - as individuals - as a group.

Reflect: What am I going to take away from this meeting?

Prayer of thanks: Ps. 122 vv. 1 & 2

3rd Meeting

Opening Prayer.

Ask: That Jesus will open our eyes so that we can follow Him.

Stillness Exercise:

Relax body, close eyes: remember something that you have seen today that has touched (moved) you. Visualize the room where you are now; the people. Be aware that everyone has special needs in their life where they need help, support. Pray silently for each other.



Mark 10 vv. 46-52. Read the passage aloud.

1: Build the scene: by visualizing it or having a perception of it. - The road into the town - wide? straight? stony? dusty? Time of day - hot, cool - What is going on in the town? People, movement, noise, smells - See a crowd of people gather - they are excited about something - see them along the road - waiting -talking - what do they look like? What are they doing?

Notice a blind beggar - where is he - sitting, crouching? How is he dressed? What is his cloak like? His begging bowl? How is the crowd treating him? Ignoring him? Telling him what is going on? Hear the beggar begin to call out - hear the people telling him to be quiet.

2: How do you think the beggar is feeling? What is his life like? What would he be feeling when he heard Jesus was coming - his hopes, fears - how does he feel about the crowd? How does the crowd feel about him? See Jesus,- his disciples,- a crowd of people coming along the road - see Him stop as he hears Bartimaeus calling amongst the rest of the noise around. Hear Him tell the crowd to bring him- how the people react. (Where are you? Amongst the crowd? With Bartimaeus?) Bartimaeus gets up and puts aside his cloak and goes to Jesus How? Jesus says "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord that I may see" immediately his sight is returned.....and he sees Jesus.....and follows him.

Again allow yourself to be drawn into the scene with Bartimaeus - be aware of your own feelings - knowing Jesus is coming Your own longings, desires towards Jesus. What is the "cloak" you need to leave aside which may hamper you on your way to Jesus? What gets in the way? Hear Jesus say to you "What do you want me to do for you?"Listen and speak to Jesus about this.

Pause for silent reflection

Listen attentively as each person shares.

What am I going to take away from this prayer?

Prayer of Thanks

4th Meeting

Opening Prayer.

Ask: To have a more open relationship with Jesus.

Stillness Exercise.

Become aware of your body being supported by the chair – how does it feel? Be aware of your feet being supported by the floor.

Gradually work through each of the muscles in your body, tightening then relaxing them. Become aware of the muscles in your face, relax them - perhaps by allowing your face to smile. Be aware of the rhythm of your breathing breathe out any cares, worries... As you breathe in allow God's gift of life to enter.....filling every part of you..... areas which may seem closed gradually opening up to God just be still and receive God's presence



Luke 19 vv. 1-10 Read the passage aloud

Imagine the Scene - the place - time of day - weather - buildings - road- people. -the sounds - smells and so on... Feel the buzz of activity - people coming and going - taxes being paid and collected - buying and selling... a sense of excitement anticipation? People line the road - they are expecting someone - listen to their conversation. Zacchaeus comes from his office to join the crowd - how do they react?

Notice the tree, its size and shape... ..Zacchaeus climbs the tree. What is the feeling of the crowd? Zacchaeus? What is going on in Zacchaeus.....his desire? Jesus comes along the road with his disciples..... the reaction of the crowd.....Zacchaeus in the tree..... Jesus draws nearer and stops.....He looks up.....He speaksHe asks to be invited in..... Zacchaeus comes down and takes Jesus to his home.....

Allow this scene to replay and be aware of the feelings of the crowd.....of Zacchaeus.. ..the desire of Jesus. Notice where you feel moved or affected... ..where your sympathy lies.. ..Talk this over with Jesus... tell Him what is going on in your heart....

After a time of silence, listen to each other as you share how you have been affected- touched - moved - deeper understanding, etc...

Close with a prayer or some verses of **Psalm 34**

5th Meeting

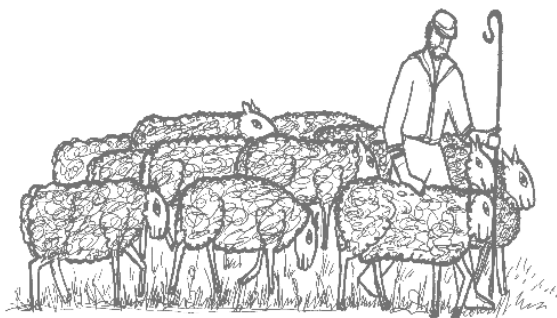
Opening Prayer

Ask: To be found and rescued by Jesus, the Good Shepherd. Openness to recognize need.

Stillness Exercise:

Allow your body to relax in the chair. Feel its support. Stiffen all the muscles in your body and allow them to relax one by one, starting from your feet or from your head. Be aware of new sensation - a deeper relaxation - if any muscle is still tense. Go back and feel the tension, then relax, (or imagine someone relaxing each one in turn for you)

Matt. 18 vv. 12 - 14



1. Imagine a road - bright sun - dust - a flock of sheep - - See the way they move along the road - Hear their bleating - the feel of their fleece -their smell etc.. See the shepherd walking in front - See the sheep jostling each other - One is edged off the road - see its difficulty. It brushes by a thorn bush and its fleece is caught –it is dragged back -struggles to be free – bleating for attention to its plight. Notice how the fleece becomes more and more entangled - the fierceness of the thorns - the thickness of the bush. Be aware of the growing tiredness – helplessness- hunger - thirst - feeling of abandonment. Imagine the sun going down, the light fading - the sheep held so fast it is almost part of the bush.. As evening falls it sees in the distance the figure of the shepherd searching -it begins to struggle again and bleats feebly to attract attention - really weak and helpless. The shepherd sees the sheep and comes – get right in among the thorns - untangles each strand of the sheep's coat one by one - slowly- carefully - gently - not minding the scratches. Feel his hands as he lifts the sheep free – the feeling of being carried home...

2. As you stay with this reflection, allow yourself to be sensitive to anything that seemed to resonate with you – what touched you? How were you moved? How does it link with anything in your life now - in the past ? where might you feel caught – imprisoned -not free?... .lost - abandoned?

3. What do you feel you need - would like? How can you be freed? Jesus the Shepherd wants to find you - release you - untangle you - take you home..... Talk to Jesus - your longings – your needs - desires.- your struggles. Allow yourself to become still and helpless.

Listen to each other as you share what this prayer experience has meant to you.

Closing Prayer: Psalm 23.

6th Meeting

Opening Prayer:

Ask: To have more time to see God in my life.

Stillness Exercise.

Relax body. Be still. Feel heavy. Screw up muscles in face and relax them.. Clench fists and relax hands. Scrunch up toes relax feet.. Arch back - relax muscles in back and feel support of chair. Be aware of your body - aches and pains - tiredness, etc..

What have you been doing today? How have you used your body? Reflect on activity/inactivity of the day. Notice what you feel about the day - satisfied/ disappointed/ peaceful/ agitated/lonely/ overcrowded/ overworked etc...

Luke 10 vv. 38 - 42 Read the passage slowly

1. Imagine the scene - the house- the garden - the road it is in.....the inside of the house - its door - rooms -the kitchen... The cooker - pots and pans. Imagine the smells. Feel the heat. Sense the activity .. Become at home in the scene. Who is there? What do they look like? What are they doing?... .Saying? Listen to their conversation as they prepare for their visitor..... Watch as Jesus arrives is he alone? - or with others? How do Martha and Mary meet him? What do they say/do?

2. How does Martha differ from Mary? Who do you feel for most? How do you react to Jesus' words? How are they affecting you? Do you identify with Martha or Mary- How does it feel to be that person?

Now look at the scene from the other person's angle (if you sympathised with Martha, look at Mary; if with Mary, look at Martha) Has anything changed in you? Do you understand what Jesus was saying? How do you feel about Martha? - Mary? Who would you like to be?

Reflect on your own way of life - the pattern of your days - what is important to you

How much time do you give to yourself?

- for others?

- for sitting with Jesus?

- Talk to Jesus about all that this prayer time has triggered for you – your desires, difficulties etc... Sit still and listen.....



Listen to each other without interruption or comment as you share on what this prayer time has meant to you

Closing Prayer: Psalm 131

7th Meeting

Opening Prayer

Ask: That God will show us His will.

This meeting will be an opportunity to look back on the past weeks of meeting together.

Stillness Exercise

Take time to come to stillness. Listen to the sounds outside – in the room - to the sound of your breathing - as you breathe out, let go of any cares/ worries/ anxieties As you breathe in, be aware of God's gift of the air we breathe - the gift of life - the gift of God's Spirit....

As you reflect back over the past meetings, be aware of what comes to the surface of your mind - don't force anything -just allow things to present themselves to you.

What have you found helpful?

What have you found unhelpful, or difficult?

What would you like to change?

What will you take with you?

Do you want to continue to meet?

Listen to each other as you share your reflections, hopes, dreams.

How can you best support and encourage each other on your journey to God?

Close with a **prayer of thanksgiving**.

You may want to try a few more Scripture passages on your own as a group (e.g. John 2 v 1-10; 1 Samuel 3 v 1-10; Jeremiah 18 v 1-7; Luke 5 v 1-11 , etc..)



Some useful contact addresses for the future:

*Open Door Retreats (Retreats in daily life)
Sr. Winifred Morley (Cenacle Sister)
020 - 8346 -7028*

*For further copies of this pack and/or other publications please contact:
Christian Life Community in England and Wales
CLC Office, 114, Mount Street, London W1K 3AH.
Email: literature@clcew.org.uk
Web: www.clcew.org.uk*

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