

The life of God

CRACKED WIDE OPEN

Diocesan Lent Course 2021

in the paschal mystery

The suffering, death, resurrection
and glorification of Jesus

Diocese of Chichester Lent Course 2021

Week One
Guidance Notes

In addition to these Guidance notes you will find the following on the website:

- Study notes for last Sunday's gospel – for a bible study group or use by disciples in their own devotions and as background to the conversation between Bishop Ruth and Bishop Will.
- An outline order of service for use by a larger gathering. This order contains suggestions as to how it might be used.
- A prayer diary. For use liturgically and by people in their daily devotions. Please pray deliberately for the three bishops and their specific prayer requests. In this way we grow in relationship with them and their ministry.
- A video from Bishop Martin for use as a post-communion reflection on Sunday. There is also a sound only file. For those places where it isn't possible to either watch or listen to the bishop, his text is provided so that it can be read aloud in a reflective manner.
- A video of a conversation between Bishop Ruth and Bishop Will. There is also a sound only file.

- Background reading – this can be reproduced for all participants as could these notes.

For use by study groups wherever gathered, real or virtual, and their coordinators.

The filmed conversation for this week is the longest of the five. In total it lasts about 30 minutes. The suggestion below is that this is split in half in the way suggested. This is, ultimately, a matter for the leader/coordinator/facilitator of each group.

It was decided to leave the conversation at this length for week one so that the groups might get to know each of the bishops who are both still quite new. Don't forget, you can contact their offices to see if it might be possible for one of them to join your group if you are meeting virtually.

The trajectory for our Lenten study is as follows:

1. The weekly assembly last Sunday – gathered around the presence of Jesus in Word and Sacrament. The gospel (Mark 1:9-15) was read and then proclaimed. We received Jesus in his Word and then in sacrament. Then Bishop Martin reflected with us as we prepared to go out to proclaim the Good News.
2. From the conversation between the two bishops we are asked to move onwards and think about, discuss and pray over matters concerning our lives as individual disciples and our common life within the baptized community.
3. How might we be more open to the given unity of this community?
4. This week our group conversation needs to encompass:
 - The role and ministry of bishops and how this could be experienced in such a way as to speak clearly of our unity as a diocese. Be specific and use the extracts from the Ordination of Bishops included under ‘background reading’ to think about it – why not dream!
 - What of the wider unity of the universal Church?

The extracts from TCTCV in ‘background reading’ are there to help.

- How can I, and we, be effective signs of the Kingdom of God for others?
- What of the relationship between this effective sign and the question of unity?

Reminders (details in the introductory material):

Essentials for the Church – bold indicates sub-theme for this week

- a) **Bishop** ...
- b) bible ...
- c) water/bread and wine ...
- d) disciples ...
- e) the world in which to live and witness

The purpose of the Church – bold indicates sub-theme for this week

- a) **Sign** ...
- b) instrument ...
- c) foretaste ...
- d) of the Kingdom ...
- e) for the world...

The words taken by Bishop Martin for his Sunday reflection:

Creation and worship

Theme of the bible study notes

Surrender to being driven by the Spirit

Suggestion for gathering together the above themes

For the vast majority in Christian history, it has been agreed that baptism is only administered once. Regrettably, there are now some exceptions to this generally accepted rule. It is the sacrament of unity as reflected in the quotation in the bible study notes from Cyprian who was born at the start of 200's and became Bishop of Carthage in 248/9, "the Church is a people called into unity – from the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Post baptism the Christian life – like that of Jesus – is one of surrender to the Father. We are drawn to the Father by a revelation of his glory which is too much for us to know and understand fully – it is such a glorious vision that we journey towards it in a spirit of wondrous adventure and discovery. Our life of discipleship is one that needs formation and growth, shape and sustenance. As we journey in the Way we witness to others with whom we have any contact or relationship. We need to be signs to them of the vision that inspires us. To assist us on our journey there are leaders, the bishops, who were originally the ones who admitted people to the Way through baptism.

They are also the ones with the prime responsibility of presiding at our worship and thereby drawing us deeper into the mystery of God's love for his creation.

The most frequent experience that people have of the ministry of a bishop is when they come to confirm. It is important that this element of initiation isn't overlooked. Originally those who came to faith received water baptism in the name of the Trinity, the laying on of hands and then holy communion – all administered together at the same service. It is significant to note that this 'full rite' initiation is included first in new liturgical books produced within our Common Worship publications. All three elements were, and increasingly with adult conversions are now, administered together by the bishop. To miss out on Confirmation is more than just omitting one part of the unified rite. Confirmation by the bishop is centrally important because (s)he is the focus for unity of the local church (the diocese) and through *him/her* with the/an extended college of bishops – at least geographically, if not universally. So the elements of the initiation services relate intimately to the questions at hand – the unity of believers and the ministry of the bishop.

Suggested timetable:

Gather and pray	5 minutes (5)
Read the gospel passage (Mark 1:9-15)	3 minutes (8)
Play video of conversation until 13:48	14 minutes (22)
Group conversation	15 minutes (37)
What most struck you in this first part of the conversation?	
Where did you find encouragement for your life of discipleship?	
What other ways do you gain encouragement in your journey of faith?	
Play remainder of video	16 minutes (53)
Group conversation (See below for topics and questions)	30 minutes (83)
Time for silent reflection and closing prayer	5 minutes (88)

Possible questions to start

discussion

(Please do not to feel constrained by these nor complete all of them!):

The following are questions taken directly from TCTCV extracts in the introduction section:

- “How can we identify the Church which the creed calls one, holy, catholic and apostolic?”
- “What is God’s will for the unity of this Church?”
- “What do we need to do to put God’s will into practice?”

And others may include:

- From the conversation between the two bishops and in the light of the extracts from TCTCV, what do we think would build our relationship with our bishops in such a way as to better equip us to be signs of the Kingdom?
- How effective are we as signs, pointing to the fullness of the life of God? Any suggestions as to what might improve my own life in this way?
- The nun’s challenge to Bishop Will was direct – Are you giving yourself to Christ? Are you/we? What holds us back?

