

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 Four
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 15 minutes. The suggestion in the timetable below is that you watch it in one sitting. However, if the person leading would like to stop it at any point for group discussion, that is entirely up to them. The use of all material within Cracked Wide Open is entirely at the discretion of the local leadership. You should use it as best suits the needs and opportunities of the people assembled.

Don't forget, you can contact the offices of [Bishop Ruth](#) or [Bishop Will](#) 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 (John 3: 14-21) 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. Now we have a time with Bishop Ruth and Bishop Will in conversation. They take as their starting point the gospel passage from Sunday. Their conversation is open and honest; it is intended to assist us as we seek to grow in unity with Christ and within his Body, the Church.
3. 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.
4. How might we be more open to the given unity of this community?
5. This week our group conversation needs to encompass the following:
 - The centrality of the Eucharist (and in passing the other sacraments/sacramentals) in the life of the Church.
 - The purpose of the sacraments to equip, sustain and shape disciples for the journey towards the Kingdom
 - whilst journeying, how being in communion relates to reception of holy communion
 - Whether our usual Holy Communion celebration of the Eucharist could be described as a foretaste of the Kingdom

Suggested timetable:

Gather and pray	5 minutes (5)
Read the gospel passage (John 3.14-21)	3 minutes (8)
Play video of conversation	15 minutes (23)
Group conversation	45 minutes (68)
See below for topics and questions	
Time for silent reflection and closing prayer	15 minutes (83)

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:

Exposure and glory

Theme of the bible study notes

Life shaped by the Cross

Suggestion for gathering

together the above themes

The themes this week direct us towards a deepening understanding of the fact that it is hard to stand 'with and for Jesus'. The traditionally understood 'four-fold' action of the eucharist – take, bless, break and give – when applied to us are serious reminders of this. However, as usual, God never leaves us un-changed/challenged. At the eucharist, the offertory represents us, all of our lives in every dimension. They are taken, blest, broken and given ... back! We receive ourselves back from God but changed and transformed, in communion, as the Body and Blood of Jesus – his life. So, sent out, we are the Body of Christ in and for the world. This Eucharistic action is traditionally understood not just to be the liturgy within the building, but

also the life of disciples visible and active in the world. The action of the eucharist is discipleship lived in the public square – lives lived like Jesus, taken, blest, broken and given. Lives lived in the light not the darkness. Lives that are, therefore, exposed to the glare of others. No wonder we often prefer to be like Nicodemus! But it is the brokenness of death that is the gateway to glory – eternal glory and the banquet.

Possible questions to start discussion

- *“The earthly and spiritual dimensions of the Church cannot be separated. The organizational structures of the Christian community need to be seen and evaluated, for good or ill, in the light of God’s gifts of salvation in Christ, celebrated in the liturgy.”* This is from paragraph 26 in the background reading. It could provide the basis for a very fruitful discussion.
- *“The communion into which the newly initiated Christian enters is brought to fuller expression and nourished in the eucharist, which reaffirms baptismal faith and gives grace for the faithful living out of the Christian calling.”* From paragraph 42 in the background reading. What proportion of those baptised in your community are likely to be

nurtured into Eucharistic fellowship?

- The following question is taken from TCTCV following paragraph 44. Some attention to it this week could provide some context for next week’s discussion: *Further, are there ways in which fuller mutual understanding can be established between the churches which celebrate these rites and those Christian communities convinced that the sharing of life in Christ does not require the celebration of sacraments or other rites?*
- In the light of the conversation between the bishops concerning Nicodemus, what emphasis should be placed on sacraments/ sacramental acts and nurture in the faith? Are they related?
- Does the following quotation from St Anselm relate in any way to the bishops’ conversation and the encounter between Nicodemus and Jesus? *“For I do not seek to understand in order to believe, but I believe in order to understand. For I believe this: unless I believe, I will not understand”?*
- Should the celebration of the Eucharist enable us to look ‘up and out’ or ‘down and in’? Which is your dominant experience?
- The bishops talk a lot about John’s use of contrasts. Light

and dark; blind and sight etc. Last Christmas people seemed to put the lights up earlier and in greater number.

- Does/should light raise us up and encourage movement forward in anticipation? It does seem that lights are attractive. How can we shine as lights in the world?
- Bishop Will talks about the journey through the church building as equating with our life journey. Where and how are you fed for this?