

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 Three
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 19 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 2.13-22) 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 bullet points:
 - That an assembly of disciples is essential to our unity and mission. At the heart of what it is to be the Church lies a group of people who have been called out to follow Jesus. The Greek word *ekklesia*, which we translate church means to call out. Hence the repeated use of words with this root in TCTCV. Led on their journey by the bishop it is these disciples who witness to and proclaim the truth of revelation.
 - What a group of disciples needs to equip, sustain and shape them for the journey towards the Kingdom
 - How, whilst journeying, various groups can be recognized as being in communion with each other
 - What ‘the Kingdom’ looks like and how it is kept in focus as we travel
 - The relationship between groups of disciples (the Church) and the Kingdom

Suggested timetable:

Gather and pray	5 minutes (5)
Read the gospel passage (John 2.13-22)	3 minutes (8)
Play video of conversation	19 minutes (27)
Group conversation	45 minutes (72)
See below for topics and questions	
Time for silent reflection and closing prayer	15 minutes (87)

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:

Reverence and freedom

Theme of the bible study notes

Living as the temple of the Holy Spirit

Suggestion for gathering

together the above themes

A focus upon Jesus gathers this week's themes! Not surprising really, is it?

He is the one who calls us to himself and invites us to follow him. He gathers us and sends us to live in perfect unity with him, bearing witness to his love in the world. As he sends us he tells us that we shouldn't be afraid since he has overcome the world – that, in him, the fullness of the Kingdom has dawned, the dayspring from on high has brought light to the whole world and all are invited to share in his glory.

Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom. An essential part of this proclamation was the dignity of all people as made in the image of God and therefore all these people, and the world that

should be revered by being afforded their God-given dignity and destiny. In a section towards the end of this week's conversation Bishop Ruth spells out that Jesus wasn't interested in impressing the crowd. What drove him was the bringing in of the Father's Kingdom – not by winning the favour of others but rather by a focus on the Word of God and the will of the Father. In our discipleship we are set free of constraints (whereas the pandemic experience has, necessarily had the opposite effect) and released into being citizens of the Kingdom and called to announce that as good news for the world.

In Christ we are part of the Temple, which is his Body. That is, places of worship, encounter and exchange. The Temple ... the Body of Christ ... a place that stands at the inter-section of time and eternity.

Possible questions to start discussion

(it is really important not to feel constrained by these nor to think you have to deal with them all!):

There is plenty to talk about this week! Try not to get stuck in talk about the internal machinations or structures of the Church. We can feel quite comfortable there; unless, that is, we are prepared to be constructive about where they don't

serve the tasks of mission and to be open to some disturbing and demanding questions about *koinonia*, unity and our common life.

It is really important to ponder:

- The content of the note from the Study Guide contained in 'background reading' concerning *koinonia*. The central significance of this concept cannot be overstated.
- If it were to be acknowledged that we really are in a missionary situation where should we as a Church
- (congregation, Diocese, CofE to begin with) place our resources and efforts?
- Are the present 'structures' (synods, PCCs, committees etc) effective in building up disciples for a united journey into God's wonderful future? How might they be changed for the better?
- Is your discipleship well supported? If so, by whom and with what?
- The bishops in conversation refer to the challenges of being a Temple of the Holy Spirit. They also ponder how uncomfortable it is to be cleansed! What of repentance and forgiveness in your life – both individual and corporate?

- Bishop Ruth raises the question of the corporate holiness of the Church. How is this affected by divisions?

Note: Holiness = the most basic use of the word “holy” in the Bible is applied to God, and refers to God’s apartness. God’s people are to be “holy” because God is “holy”. They are “set apart” from all that is alien to God’s righteousness. This has clear moral implications, but it is important to remember this background and not regard “holiness” as merely a matter of moral rectitude. The ethical way of life that should characterize Christians follows from the fact that they have been “set apart”; it cannot be properly understood apart from it.

- What of the Kingdom? As Christians, where is our citizenship?
- The bishops comment that the gospel passage has the background of an unjust and dishonest system with a bias towards the wealthy and local. This makes Jesus angry. How do I/we respond when confronted by such things in the world today? Is the response adequate in your view?
- Do I stand up for the disadvantaged?