

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 Two
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 – for printing and copying for each participant, together with a copy of these guidance notes.

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

The filmed conversation for this week is 18 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 (Mark 8:31-end) 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 Bible as essential to our unity and mission. The background reading provides extracts from the Canons of the Church of England that relate to the Bible. Extracts from the 39 Articles are also reproduced since it sets out those books that we consider to be contained within the covers of ‘a bible’. It is important to note that, within worldwide Christianity, there isn’t agreement concerning exactly which books have authority for the life and doctrine of all God’s holy people. Therefore, when talking about the Bible, we should be clear what we mean. Within various worldwide communions there are processes which declare what the content of scripture is. This includes our own - cf the 39 Articles. This is a further indication of the essential connection between the Bible and Tradition. This is, potentially, an area for profitable discussion; it is important that such discussion is clear and well informed.
 - what understanding is there with other churches in respect of this question of Bible and Tradition? The extracts from TCTCV in ‘background reading’ are there to help.

Suggested timetable:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Gather and pray | 5 minutes (5) |
| Read the gospel passage (Mark 8: 31-end) | 3 minutes (8) |
| Play video of conversation | 18 minutes (26) |
| Group conversation | 45 minutes (71) |
| See below for topics and questions | |
| Time for silent reflection and closing prayer | 15 minutes (86) |

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:

Trade and Revelation

Theme of the bible study notes

Harsh words – the cost of discipleship

Suggestion for gathering

together the above themes

The words that Bishop Martin chose at the start of his reflection on Sunday are the perfect links into the themes set before us this week. They are “trade” and “revelation”. Of course, the bishop is saying that in our response to revelation it isn’t up to us to enter into negotiation with God.

As Bishop Martin assures us, the gift of God is totally free and simply (if only it were so) to be received. Trade is how human beings deal with each other but it is alien to our relationship with God – or, should be! Part of our Lenten discipline might be to identify where trade features in our prayers/expectations and how they might be more characterized by openness to receiving.

Scripture is authoritative precisely because it bears primary witness to the truth of God's revelation of himself. As the Articles say the Scriptures, "containeth all things necessary for salvation". In the Preface to the Declaration of Assent (possibly looked at last week) it is said that the Church of England professes the faith, "... uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds ..." the various articles of which are part of the Tradition. Note the capital "T". A helpful way of looking at this is to say that, 'Tradition is the living faith of the dead; not the dead faith of the living'! This isn't entirely accurate since there must surely be a way in which those who are currently part of the church have a role to play in the receiving of this Tradition, living it out in faithfulness and passing it on to the next generation? Maybe effectiveness at this reception and communication of the Tradition is a sign of whether the faith of the living is dead or alive?

Bishop Will and Bishop Ruth talk about social action and, in that context, raise questions about the prophetic ministry of the church as being instrumental in bringing Kingdom values to bear. The bible study notes speak of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (no stranger to this diocese, of course) and costly discipleship. In history and also in the contemporary church there are examples of various ways in which the prophetic voice has been heard.

A scalpel could be described as the surgeon's instrument of choice. What is the tool of choice within the Christian community? We should bear in mind that our calling is to be instruments in the hands of the Father and all of our dealings with each other, both in the Church and in our proclamation of the Kingdom to others, need to be signs of God's revelation.

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!)

The following questions are those raised above:

- How can I, and we, be effective instruments for the in-breaking of the Kingdom of God for others?
- Is the Bible useful in our engagement to bring Kingdom values to others?
- Is carrying a placard with a biblical quotation sufficient use of the bible as an effective instrument?
- How could a Church united as one be a better instrument for the in-breaking of the Kingdom? What blunts present effectiveness?

- How effective is our local faith community as an instrument of the Kingdom?

And others may include:

- From the conversation between the two bishops and in the light of the extracts from TCTCV:
- Bishop Ruth speaks of how the truth of God is a matter of revelation and not something we discover. Bishop Will says that we need to keep our eyes on the divine. How do we see and receive these things? What have you found helpful?
- In your experience has the Church (however manifested) been effective as an instrument of the Kingdom in recent months?