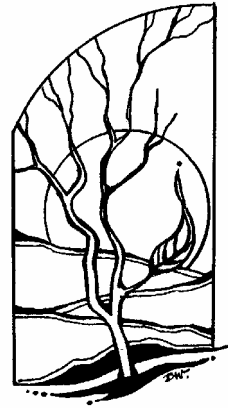


There Will Be Signs...

First Week of Advent - Year C Meditation & Ritual



Artwork by Dorothy Woodward rsj

Scripture Focus: 1Thess 3: 12 – 13; 4: 1

Sacred Space: Advent Wreath, Word of God opened at the above text, one small white candle for each person and a sand tray near the Advent Wreath to place the candles in.

Song During the Meditation: **Shekinah** (Meditation version on *Quiet My Soul* CD - Monica Brown)

Concluding Song: **Lifted** (Lifted CD – Emmanuel Worship)

Preparation For the Meditation: Talk with the students about the Advent Wreath and this time of Advent. Begin playing some quiet instrumental music. Light the first of the Advent Candles as the following introduction is said:

As we light this first Advent candle, we turn our hearts and minds to God, aware that God is the source of all life and the light that brightens our darkened world. This wreath and candle stand as a sign to us of the coming of Jesus into our world. Look for the signs of his coming.

Let the music continue while several students read, in a reflective tone, different lines of the above text. When the text has been read, give them a minute or two of silent reflection and then invite them to share a word or phrase that spoke to them from the reading. *This is not a discussion, simply naming the word or phrase that touched them.* Talk with the group about how the reading reminds us that love is the most prominent sign of God's Presence. In looking for signs of God in our lives and in our world, we need to look for the qualities of love that give life. Ask them to try to name some of these in their own community and in our world. Invite them to think about their own lives; where are the signs of love that indicate that God is near to them? Let this lead into the meditation.

Meditation:

Having attended to the preparation of this quiet time and meditation, (see meditation notes on the Meditation Page of this site), when the group are settled and still, gradually bring up the quiet reflective music to a suitable level. After a minute or two, invite them to let the music take them to a place where they most want to be right now, a place of beauty or peace or comfort for them. Give them time to imagine this. Support them by asking them to visualize this special place,

its outlook, colour, smell, sounds etc. Leave them with this for a minute or so. Direct them to visualize themselves there in that place. Leave them with this for a short while. Invite them to think of a person in their life who embodies the qualities of love that nourish and give life to them. Having identified that person, direct them to visualize that person coming into their special place with them now. Leave them with this for a minute or two. When you feel the time is right, simply say in a reflective tone, *“these are the signs that God is near...”* Repeat this phrase two or three times in a more reflective tone each time. Gradually fade out the instrumental music and begin playing the meditative song, **Shekinah**. When this song ends and you feel it is appropriate bring the meditation to closure. (See meditation notes on the Meditation Page on this site).

Ritual:

Have the group sit up around the sacred space. Explain to them that you are going to create together a litany type prayer about the signs of God’s Presence in their lives and in our world. Instruct them that all they need to do is complete the phrase, **“There will be signs...”**, with a word or phrase that indicates the nearness of God. For example, “There will be signs...”, a smile from a friend, a word of appreciation, a sunrise, a helping hand, a home for the homeless, justice for the oppressed, peace and healing, etc.....

Explain to them that after each person makes a statement, they come forward to the sacred space and light a small white candle from the Advent candle and place their candle in the sand tray in the sacred space. *In order to ensure the ease and flow of this, direct the group to begin with the first person on the right and move clock wise round the group. This prevents the awkward situation of several people speaking and moving at the same time or people not knowing when to come in. It doesn’t mean however, that every person has to say and do something. When it comes to each person, if they choose not to say anything they simple nod to the next person.*

When all are clear about the ritual, settle them and begin the ritual with the following statement:

We gather now and proclaim together, the signs that tell us, in faith, that our God is near.

Prayer Leader: “There will be signs...”

Individual student: E.g. “A smile from a friend”

The student then lights a candle

Prayer Leader: “There will be signs...”

Individual student: E.g. “A word of hope”

The student then lights a candle

Prayer Leader: “There will be signs...”

Individual student: E.g. “A helping hand to those in need”

The student then lights a candle

Continue on until all who wish have participated. Conclude by inviting them to sing together



Artwork by Dorothy Woodward rsj

Prepare a Way for The Lord...

Second Week of Advent - Year C Meditation & Ritual

Scripture Focus:

Luke 3: 2- 6

Sacred Space: Advent Wreath, Word of God opened at the above text and a small glass container of incense. Have in another place that is not visible in the room or outside it, a thurible, charcoal and a small portion of incense, as found in the Church sacristy. This will be lit after the meditation, at the beginning of the ritual, and carried into the sacred space when required. *Ensure when using this incense that the charcoal is ignited enough so that the incense can burn properly. Seek the help of someone who is familiar with this, such as the sacristan or local priest. Also ensure that the room is well ventilated for those who have respiratory problems, so that the incense is not overwhelming. Direct those who do have problems to sit near the ventilated area. While this may seem problematic, using this traditional kind of incense is well worth the effort.*

Song During Meditation:

You Raise Me Up (Secret Garden/
Contemporary Song – Once In A Red Moon CD)

Song During the Ritual:

Prepare Ye The Way of The Lord (Godspell)

Concluding Song:

Do Something Beautiful
(Do Something Beautiful – Graham Kendrick)

Preparation For the Meditation: When all are settled, light the first and second Advent candles as the following is said:

As we light the first and second Advent candles, we turn our hearts and minds to God, aware that God is the source of all life and the light that brightens our darkened world. This wreath and these candles stand as a sign to us of the coming of Jesus into our world. We prepare a way for his coming.

Have a student read the Gospel from Luke. When the student has finished reading the Gospel, after a short pause, have her/him repeat several times in different tones, the phrase, “*Prepare a way for the Lord...*” Invite the group to think about

where in their own lives and in our world, do we need to prepare a way for God. Into what area of our lives do we need God to come? Give examples such as... 'into the struggle to forgive someone, into the fear that prevents us from being ourselves, into the sense of failure we have..' etc. Talk with them about this and about ways we can prepare by opening ourselves to God's grace. Let this lead into the meditation.

Meditation:

Having attended to the preparation of this quiet time and meditation, (see meditation notes on the Meditation Page of this site), when the group are settled and still, gradually bring up the quiet reflective music to a suitable level. After a minute or two, invite them to become aware of themselves, how they feel about themselves, how they see themselves. Assist them in this by posing questions such as, "What is it about yourself that makes you feel good?" Leave them with this for a minute or two. Then ask, "What is it about yourself that disturbs you or worries you?" Leave them with this and then ask, "What is it in your life that causes you stress..., pain... or heartache...?" Allow them time to become aware of this and then say in a reflective tone,

"Prepare a way for the Lord.." Repeat this one or two times in a different tone. When you feel it is appropriate, fade down the instrumental music and play the song, ***You Raise Me Up***. When this song ends and you feel it is appropriate, bring the meditation to closure. (See meditation notes on the Meditation Page on this site).

Ritual:

Have the group sit up around the sacred space. Have someone outside light the charcoal (*keep in mind it takes a few minutes for the charcoal to ignite*). As this is happening, talk with the group about the many places and situations in our world where the presence of God is needed. Invite them to think of some and name them. For example, war torn countries, such as Iraq or the Middle East, refugee camps and detention centres, sweat shops where women and children are used for cheap labour, homeless ghettos, etc. Remind them of how they created a litany last week and invite them to do the same here, focusing on the areas of our world that need the Presence of God. Instruct them that all they need to do is name some of the areas or situations in our world that need God. They simply complete the phrase, **"Into ..."**, e.g. the lives of all who are oppressed..." or "countries that are gripped by war and injustice," or "homes that are without love..."

Instruct them that when they are ready to make their statement they come forward to the sacred space, and as they make their statement, they take a piece of incense from the small glass container and place it on the burning charcoal in the thurible. As the incense burns, all respond with, **"Come Lord Jesus, Come"**. *In order to ensure the ease and flow of this, direct the group to begin with the first person on the right and move clock wise round the group. This prevents the awkward situation of several people moving at the same time or people not knowing when to move. It doesn't mean however, that every person has to come forward. When it comes to each person, if they choose not to come forward they simply nod to the next person.*

When all are clear about the ritual, settle them and begin the ritual by singing together ***Prepare Ye The Way Of The Lord***. As this is sung the burning thurible with incense is carried in and placed in the sacred space near the Advent Wreath in such a way that the candle light catches the incense as it rises. (*Ensure that whoever has lit the charcoal in the thurible has placed some incense on it so that when it is brought into the sacred space the incense is burning and can be seen rising upward.*)

Prayer Leader: We pray together Come Lord Jesus, come!

Individual Student: Into.... E.g. our broken world

Place the incense into the thurible

All: Come Lord Jesus, Come!

Prayer Leader: We pray together Come Lord Jesus, come!

Individual Student: Into.... E.g. all suffering hearts

Place the incense into the thurible

All: Come Lord Jesus, Come!

Prayer Leader: We pray together Come Lord Jesus, come!

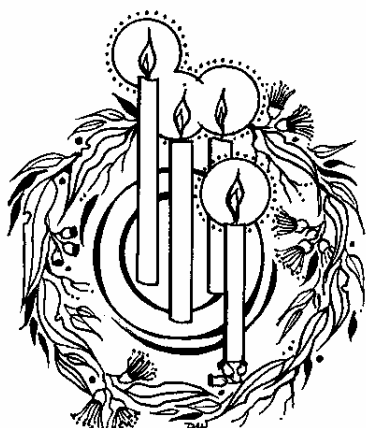
Individual Student: Into.... E.g. countries ravaged by war

Place the incense into the thurible

All: Come Lord Jesus, Come!

Continue on until all who wish have participated. Conclude by inviting them to sing together or listen to the song, ***Do Something Beautiful***.

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Artwork by Dorothy Woodward rsj

Be Happy ...God Is Near

Third Week of Advent - Year C **Meditation & Ritual**

Scripture Focus:

Phil 4: 4- 7

Sacred Space: Advent Wreath, Word of God opened at the above text, and a small basket containing folded strips of paper with scripture quotes on them, one for each person. (See below)

Song During Meditation:

Open My Eyes

(Manibusan – as One Voice/Vol 1)

Concluding Song:

Walk By Faith (Lifted CD - Emmanuel Worship)

Preparation For the Meditation: When all are settled, have someone come forward and light the first, second and third Advent candles as the following is said:

As we light the first, the second and now the third Advent candle, we turn our hearts and minds to God, aware that God is the source of all life and the light that brightens our darkened world. This wreath and these candles stand as a sign to us of the coming of Jesus into our world. We rejoice that he is near.

Have a student read the Gospel from Luke. When the student has finished reading the Gospel, after a short pause, ask the group to think about what really makes them happy. Allow time for flippant responses and then lead them into more serious reflection, such as when they know they have done well, when they experience acceptance and love, when they can give or do something worthwhile for others, etc. Let this lead into the meditation.

Meditation:

Having attended to the preparation of this quiet time and meditation, (see meditation notes on the Meditation Page of this site), when the group are settled and still, gradually bring up the quiet reflective music to a suitable level. After a minute or two, invite them to let the music take them to a place where they most want to be right now, a place of beauty or peace or comfort; a place where they are truly happy. Give them time to imagine this. Support them by asking them to visualize this special place, its outlook, colour, smell, sounds etc. Leave them with this for a minute or so. Direct them to visualize themselves there in that place.

Leave them with this for a short while. Invite them to imagine Jesus coming into this place where they are. Give them some support in this, such as directing them to imagine sensing his presence there or imaging how he would look, how it would feel if he were there. Allow them a few minutes with this and then fade down the instrumental music and begin playing the song, **Open My Eyes**. When this song ends and you feel it is appropriate, bring the meditation to closure. (See meditation notes on the Meditation Page on this site).

Ritual:

Have the group sit in a circle. Talk with them about the difference Jesus can make to our lives. Refer to some of the Advent scriptural imagery (see scripture quotes below) and how it speaks of God's promise to bring change, new life and transformation. Invite them to discuss the meaning of some of these images from the Prophet Isaiah, e.g. "the desert will bloom"(Is 35: 6), " a light will shine in darkness"(Is 9: 1), "the wolf will lay down with the lamb"(Is 11:6), "he will wipe away every tear" (Is 25:8), 'he will heal the broken hearted"(Is 25), "the deaf will hear" (Is 29: 18) "After the shadow and darkness, the eyes of the blind will see" (Is 29: 18). Ask them to reflect about the difference they want God to make in their lives, for example, do they want his peace, his strength, his love, his protection etc

Explain to them that a basket with scripture quotes will be passed around the group and they are to take one and read it silently. When all have taken their quote they will read them out, beginning with one person and moving clock wise round the group. Encourage them to sit silently and listen carefully to each other. When all are clear about this, play some quiet instrumental music and begin the ritual.

When all have finished reading their quotes to the group, conclude by directing them to put their quote in their pocket and take it home with them. Suggest to them that they keep it somewhere special where they can refer to it throughout the coming days and weeks, in order to remember the difference Jesus can make to their lives. Conclude by singing together the song, **Walk By Faith**.

Scripture Quotations:

(These quotes will need to be printed and each quote cut into a small strip and folded over. Repeat some of the quotes if necessary to ensure there is a quote for each person)

Do not let your heart be troubled, trust in God...John 14:1

Peace I leave you, my own peace I give you...John 14:27

I have come that you may have life, life to the full...John 10:10

Do not be afraid I am with you...Isaiah 41:10

I am holding you by the right hand...Isaiah 41:13

You are precious in my eyes...Isaiah 43:4

You are honoured and I love you...Isaiah 43:4

My love for you will never leave you...Isaiah 54:10

Do not be afraid I am with you to protect you...Jeremiah 1:8

As the clay is in the potter's hand, so you are in mine. Jeremiah 18:6

Come to me you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest.

Matt11:28

What do you want me to do for you? Mark 10:51

Do not let your heart be troubled or afraid. John 14:27

Ask and you will receive...John 16:24

You are my beloved, my favour rests on you. Luke 3:22

When you call to me I listen to you....Jer 29:13

... And God will dance with shouts of joy over you. Zeph 3:18

God will always guide you, giving you relief in desert places. Is 58:11

God will strengthen and support you. 1 Peter 10

Be at peace among yourselves. 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Live a life of love. 2 John 6