

DISCERNMENT Retreat

Journey of faith

Scrutiny 1 John 4: 5-26

Deepening our personal relationship

With Christ

'Whoever drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again.'

John 4:13



Theme: Never Thirst Again

Scrutiny 1: John’s Gospel 4: 5-26 The Samaritan Woman at the Well.

About this resource:

This Parish resource offers a framework for RCIA groups to provide a simple discernment retreat during the Lenten Season.

Parishes may prefer to book a retreat centre or even a neighbouring parish hall to differentiate between the weekly RCIA meeting and this retreat.

It is also preferable to choose an environment with a garden setting for participants to sit quietly amidst God's creation. This provides sacred space and time for the discernment of their RCIA conversion journey.

The time frame is at the discretion of the retreat leader and can be adjusted accordingly.

Each booklet is for the personal diarising of the participants. Therefore sharing of thoughts should be left open and at the discretion of the participants.

Focus Group:

The Discernment Retreat is intended for the Parish RCIA Team, the elect, and sponsors.

Purpose of Discernment Retreat:

The purpose of the discernment retreat is to provide opportunity for each person to spend time reflecting on their own journey of faith, guided by the Gospel of the particular Scrutiny from Year A in the liturgical cycle.

Music: suggestions only-you may prefer your own selection of hymns

It is recommended gentle background music be played during times of reflection to support the participants discernment and contemplation over the questions posed.

Below is listed a few suggested hymns in keeping with the Gospel theme from commonly used Parish resources:

Gather Australia:

- No. 42 Psalm 63: *My Soul is Thirsting*
 - No. 176 *Water of Life*
 - No. 403 *Come to the Water*
 - No. 450 *Thirsting for God*

As One Voice:

- No. 29 *Amazing Grace*
 - No. 31 *Come as You Are*
 - No. 37 *Come to Me*
 - No. 90 *Here I am Lord*

Theme: Never Thirst Again

Scrutiny 1: John's Gospel 4: 5-26 The Samaritan Woman at the Well.

Prayer suggestions:

- Opportunity for the Parish Priest or Deacon to offer anointing of catechumens (only) with the Oil of Catechumens. Refer RCIA Text #190-194
- Opportunity for the Parish Priest or Deacon to offer The Ephphetha Rite: '*that is, be opened*'
- Refer RCIA Text #184-186
- The Gospel read in the style of Lectio Divina (refer attached)
- Taize prayer experience
- General intercessions offered spontaneously
- Hymn reflections
- Small group—communal prayer sharing
- The day presented for private prayer reflection and/or journaling
- Provide moments of sacred silence
- Formal Prayer
- Presentation of The Lord's Prayer Refer RCIA Text #136,165-167
- Presentation of The Creed Refer RCIA Text #180-183
(scrolls of The Lord's Prayer and The Creed may be downloaded from the Centre for Liturgy web site:)

Please note Exorcisms may only be performed by the Parish Priest or an experienced Deacon.



Lectio Divina

Opening Prayer:

“Lord Jesus, you who are the Son of the Living God,
Teach me to listen to what you tell me in the holy
Scriptures, and to discover your face there.”

[Guigo II]

Guigo II

- Guigo was a 12th century Carthusian monk who developed the four steps of prayer developing our spirituality on praying the Scripture, called *Lectio Divina*.
- These four steps being:
 - i. *Lectio* - reading
 - ii. *Meditatio* - meditating
 - iii. *Oratio* - praying
 - iv. *Contemplatio* - contemplating



Living in Christ

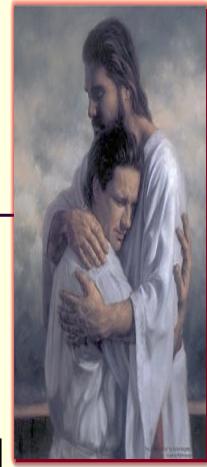
- What key words; phrases; images touched your heart?
- Allow them to ignite and act in you today.
- Encourage the moment of Lectio Divina to be revisited in your heart today...

Reading...context

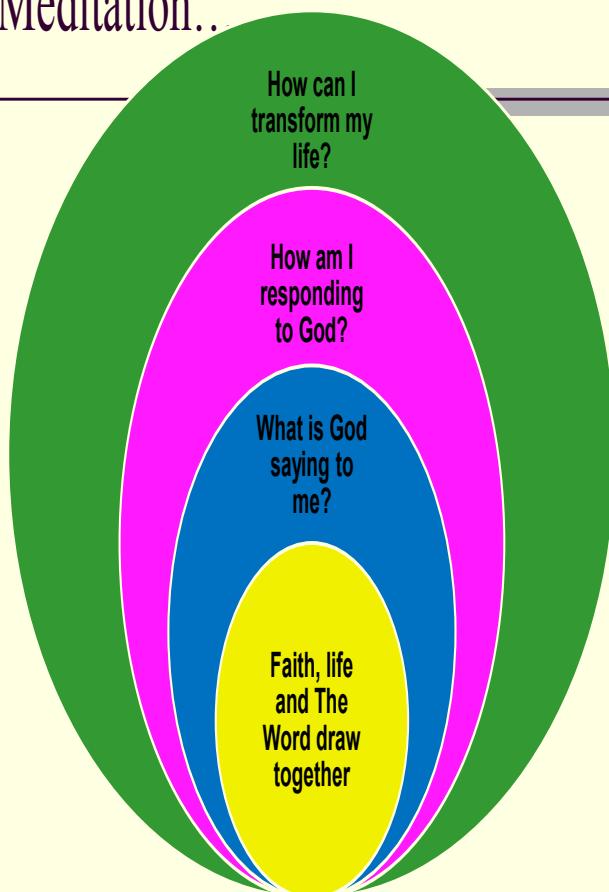
- Who – key characters
- Where – place setting
- When - history
- What – key words; phrases; images
- Why – speak to the heart; how does this relate to me.

Prayer...

- Allow the reading of Scripture to emerge within us.
- Prayer is our response to God.
- How do we feel?
- Do we need to go back and read the passage again?
- What key words; phrases; images stand out and ignite or challenge our heart?



Meditation..



Contemplation..



- God responding to us.
- Be open and without expectation.
- We do not control the events...rest in God.
- Allow an exchange to happen naturally...trust in God.

Leaders Notes:

Within this retreat pack are various choices/ suggestions for prayer, music, and other helpful hints.

It is at your own discretion how the retreat unfolds and the time you allocate for the whole retreat.

A basic explanation of *Lectio Divina* has also been provided p. 4-5

It is preferable for sponsors to attend and support ‘the elect’ for the retreat.

Read through the pack 1st.

Format:

1. Prepare a prayer focus: provide a minimum of the Bible opened at the Gospel text; candle; liturgical colour purple.
Other suggestions may be to offer a pitcher of water; an icon or picture of the Gospel
2. Offer welcome and share the theme of the retreat. You may wish to introduce the Gospel by reading the Prologue.
3. Begin with the Opening Prayer. You may prefer to choose your own prayer.
4. Select a person to read the Gospel in its entirety the 1st time.
5. Have someone (may be the same person) read the Gospel sections in the 2nd reading of the Gospel. The leader reads the leader’s parts indicated in blue.
6. The pack poses questions to assist the participants to reflect and discern their conversion journey. The leader may also wish to read aloud these sections p. 14-19. Break up the Gospel reading by allowing time for reflection after each section.
7. Allow time for stillness and personal reflection with quiet background music to instil the ambience of the retreat.
8. You may also allow sufficient time for discernment of the overall conversion journey using the tree-diagram page 20
9. Conclude with Final Prayer. You may prefer to choose your own prayer.

Please note Exorcisms may only be performed by the Parish Priest or an experienced Deacon.

Background:

In the early first century, the Jewish diaspora had reduced the Jews to a desolate and downcast community, hanging on by threads to the fabric of their cultural past. The collapse of the Jewish State left a gaping wound, which the Jewish community naturally was sensitive to protect.

The Gospel of John is broken into 3 sections being: [1:1-18] The Prologue; [1:19-12:50] The Book of Signs; [13:1-20:31] The Book of Glory.

Scrutiny 1 (Jn 4: 5-26), within Year A of the Liturgical cycle, is found within the section known as the *Book of Signs*; The focus being '*Whoever drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again.*'

The tone of John's Gospel, written [100—120A.D.] projects the deep division and resentment between the Jews and John's community. The Temple had been destroyed in 70A.D. and the early Christian community was expelled from the synagogue and Jewish society.

Conflict between Jesus and the Jews is highlighted through Jesus' approaching and speaking with a Samaritan Woman. This is the second time Jesus uses a Samaritan to teach an important lesson. [Good Samaritan Lk 10:25-37]
The Samaritans are distant cousins of the Jews. They are exiled and despised by the Jews because they assimilated when the northern Kingdom of Israel was taken by Samaria.



Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,
Sent by the Father and anointed by the Spirit,
when You read in the synagogue at Nazareth,
You fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah
that proclaimed liberty to captives and announced a season of for-
giveness.

We pray for these Your servants to open their ears and hearts to Your word.

Grant that they may grasp Your moment of grace.

Do not let their minds be troubled or their lives tied to earthly desires.

Do not let them remain estranged from the hope of Your promises or en-
slaved by a spirit of unbelief.

Rather, let them believe in You, whom the Father has established as uni-
versal Lord, and to whom He has subjected all things.

Let them submit themselves to the Spirit of grace, so that, with hope in
their calling, they may join the priestly people and share in the abundant
joy of the new Jerusalem, where you live and reign for ever and ever.

Amen.



The journey of faith we are all engaged upon has been richly marked with the signs of God's presence and activity. One of the necessary tasks (and Joys) of the Christian life is to be attentive to these signs of grace and to reflect on what we are being called to - what dreams a gracious God has in mind for us.

[Becoming Easter People p.5]

The Gospel of John 4: 5-26



So He came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by His journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink'. (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to Him, 'How is it that You, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God, who it is that is saying to you, "Give me a drink", you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.' The woman said to Him, 'Sir, You have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do You get that living water? Are You greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?' Jesus said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.' the woman said to Him, 'Sir give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.' Jesus said to her, 'Go, call your husband, and come back.' The woman answered him, 'I have no husband.' Jesus said to her, 'You are right in saying, "I have no husband"; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true! The woman said to Him, 'Sir, I see that You are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on the mountain, but You say that the place where people must worship is Jerusalem.' Jesus said to her, 'Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; We worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.'

The woman said to Him, 'I know that the Messiah is coming' (who is called Christ). 'When He comes, He will proclaim all things to us.'

Jesus said to her, 'I am He, the one who is speaking to you.'

The Gospel of The Lord

All: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ

The Leader may prefer to read the blue sections and have a 2nd person read the Gospel sections

The Gospel of John 4: 5-26

Context: each of us comes from different places.

We arrive here at Jacob's Well, tired and thirsty.

It is the 6th hour: the Samaritan woman came to the well at a time she knew the well would be deserted.

I'd like you to reflect back on the beginning, when you 1st came to Enquire. Let's put this Gospel into that time frame.

Think back to how you were feeling.

(Allow a few minutes for quiet reflection)

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water,
Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.'

Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman, which was completely out of character for Jews to speak to Samaritans, let alone a woman.

His disciples' had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink? – Jews in fact, do not associate with Samaritans.

The woman highlights this fact to Jesus: note that at this stage there appears to be no warmth or even politeness in their exchange.

Jesus replied: 'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.'

Now a softening takes place.

Jesus offers the woman more – He introduces God into the conversation, and sparks something He know already exists in her:

Samaritans are cousins to the Jews, despised none the less, since when Israel was divided into the North and south, the Samaritans intermarried with the people of Samaria, which to the Jews was tantamount to betrayal of the purity of their Jewish faith.

But Samaritans still know and are familiar with the Jewish story.

This verse echoes the Rite of Acceptance you experienced; it was a moment when you discerned whether or not you wanted more of the conversation and relationship you began at the Enquiry night. Much more was clearly on offer.

'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water?

Jesus has sparked something within the woman.

She becomes curious about where Jesus is leading her now.

Discernment of who Jesus is begins to bubble inside her.

Consider the Catechumen journey you have experienced.

There were questions developing in you, and you began to find out the answers.

Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?

This strikes at our human nature.

All of us draw on our own history and knowledge as we question and learn more. Jesus was challenging this woman's cultural traditions and beliefs.

Jesus replied: 'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.'

Jesus is not concerned with this woman's cultural background.

What He is offering are universal graces, which all are welcome to drink from.

This is the universality of God's love offered to all of us.

Christ is looking into the very heart of this woman.

'Sir,' said the woman 'give me some of that water so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water.'

This is typical of our human nature.

Don't we all want a quick fix to our problems so that they won't bother us?

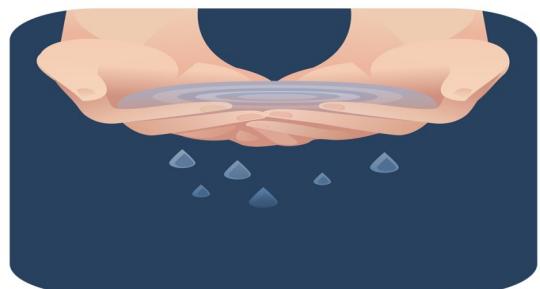
God is asking far more of each of us.

'Go and call your husband' said Jesus to her 'and come back here.' The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' He said to her you are right, you have had five, the one you have now is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.

The conversation has taken another twist.

Jesus is revealing His intimate knowledge of this woman's past sins.

He is not accusing her, but putting a very personal challenge to her.



'I see you are a prophet, sir' said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.'

Now the woman has changed her tone dramatically.

She now refers to Jesus as a prophet.

Notice the growth in her. From the 1st time she spoke to Him she used no title or pleasantries; next she calls Him Sir; now further into the conversation she uses the title Prophet.

Something significant has happened here. It is a growth and deepening in relationship which mirrors our faith journey.

Jesus said: 'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know; for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour will come – in fact it is here already – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship spirit and truth.'

The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.'

This is the climax of the story.

It is *the woman* who now introduces the realisation of the Messiah – the Saviour, into the conversation.



'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus 'I am He.'

Jesus reveals who He is.

This is amazing!

His best friends still don't yet realise Jesus is the long awaited Messiah. Yet within this short conversation with the woman, He reveals His true identity to her...and she believes Him.

This is about your journey of faith.

It is an unfolding, gradual and deepening relationship with Christ Jesus that is personal.

Over the Catechumen journey, Jesus has looked deep into your heart and you have been open to sharing the depths of yourself with Him.

Soon you will come to the well – the living water although it has heavy Baptismal symbolism - directs us to The Mass. In the Mass we each come home to be nourished by His Word, and very soon at Easter you will be nourished by God's Real Presence in the Eucharist, which is the meal of Thanksgiving.

The story goes on that the woman rushes back to the village, the same village where she was despised and looked down upon as a sinner.

Her enthusiasm about the meeting of this Jewish Prophet, Jesus, is contagious and she convinces others she has met the Messiah.

We are each called upon to spread The Good News.



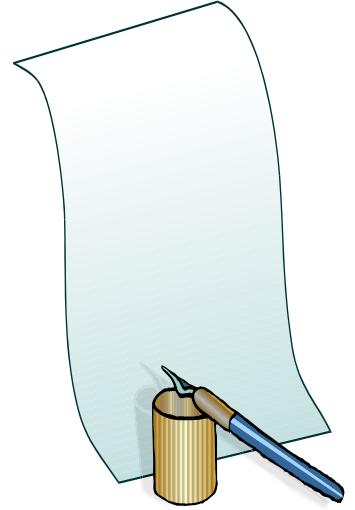
How would you describe yourself when you began the RCIA process?



Reflection On Jesus

Let your mind go back to the feelings and/or events that prompted you to begin the RCIA journey.

What recollections do you have of when you first identified Jesus in your life?



How has your relationship with Christ deepened?

Are there any obstacles you can identify in your relationship with Jesus? If so, what are they?

Reflection On The Gospels



Consider the knowledge you had of Jesus' life and ministry when you began the RCIA journey.

You may wish to note down a few ideas that have changed over the RCIA journey?

Did any Gospel story or Scripture stand out in your mind, or challenge your views?

How have you related to the sharing of The Word? Have you enjoyed reading and discussing the Sunday readings?

Reflection On Your Prayer and Worship



Consider what your prayer life was like when you began the RCIA process.

Can you describe your feelings/difficulties/style of praying to God?

How has your prayer life changed along your faith journey?

Reflect on your feelings and impressions of worship within a community of faith.

Reflection On The Parish Community



As Christians we cannot live in isolation.
Our relationship with God, demands we express this in a
community of faith.

Have you enjoyed joining with the Parish
Community of _____, and celebrating the Sunday Litur-
gies?

Do you feel welcomed and do you have a sense of be-
longing within the Parish?

Do you feel supported and encouraged within this com-
munity of faith?

Reflection On The Understanding of Service

Christ's love for us is expressed in His love of others.

Jesus gave us Himself as the perfect example of The Father's love for us:

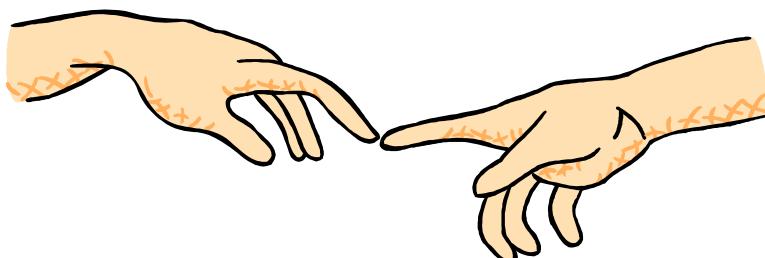
'love one another as I have loved you'.

Consider your life; your relationships/vocation/profession/lifestyle/hobbies and interests.

In any of these how do you offer service?

Are you aware of the various ministries of service within the Parish?

Has your journey through RCIA changed the manner in which you live?



Time for Discernment....Spend some time in quiet reflection discerning your conversion journey...

Our faith and relationship with Christ is a living reality.



With strong roots in faith, we are better able to weather the struggles in life.

With strong roots in faith the fruits of our character are better perfected to reflect our Christian faith and how we live our life.

Reflect on the growth of your relationship with Jesus, from when you 1st began your conversion journey and now

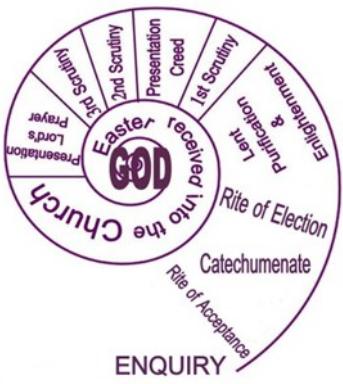
Has your familiarity with Christ's Gospel teaching deepened your understanding of Jesus and His call of discipleship....

How will you live out your Christian mission?

Through your RCIA journey has your time spent in prayer and worship strengthened your relationship with Jesus?

Do you feel a sense of belonging and acceptance within your parish community?

You may like to write your thoughts on the following page....



CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, we ask You to guide us as we approach this season of Lent. May we deepen our understanding of what You are calling us to do and draw ever closer to You.

All: May we never be thirsty again.

Lord as we approach the Easter Sacraments, may we reflect deeply on Your Gospel teachings and be open to receive Your message of salvation.

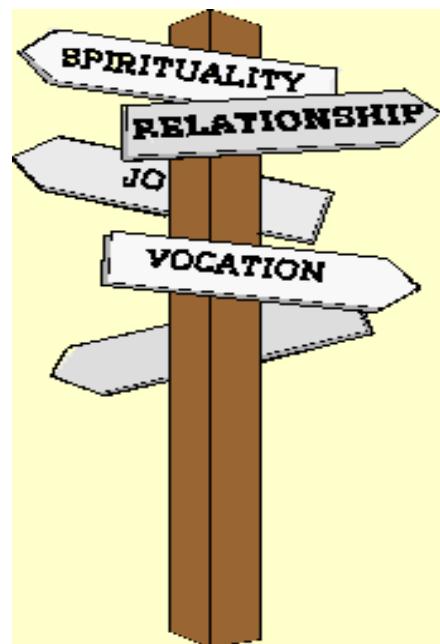
All: May we never be thirsty again.

Lord, may we be strengthened through prayer and in worship of You to face life's challenges with Your courage and grace.

All: May we never be thirsty again.

Lord, as we gather together in our community of faith may we encourage and support each other as we journey home to You.

All: May we never be thirsty again.



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Lectio Divina

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Challenge to Change

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