

DISCERNMENT RETREAT

SCRUTINY III

JOHN 11: 1-45



Theme: "I Am The Resurrection and The Life"

Scrutiny 3: John's Gospel 11: 1-45 *The Raising of Lazarus*

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. 28 *Psalm 27: Do Not Be Afraid*

No. 405 *The Light of Christ*

No. 471 *Come to Me*

No. 486 *Micah's Theme*

As One Voice:

No. 29 *Amazing Grace*

No. 31 *Come As You Are*

No. 37 *Come To Me*

No. 126 *I have Loved You*

Theme: “I Am The Resurrection and The Life”

Scrutiny 3: John’s Gospel 11: 1-45 *The Raising of Lazarus*

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 journalling
- 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.

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. 5-6

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; represent the liturgical colour purple. Other suggestions may be to offer an icon or picture of the Gospel. You may have your own creative ideas.
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 in purple to assist the participants to reflect and discern their conversion journey. The leader may also wish to read aloud the purple sections. Break up the 2nd reading of the Gospel by allowing time for reflection after each purple section.
7. Allow time for stillness and personal reflection with quiet background music to instil the ambience of the retreat.
8. Allow sufficient time for discernment of the overall conversion journey using the tree-diagram page 17
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.

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

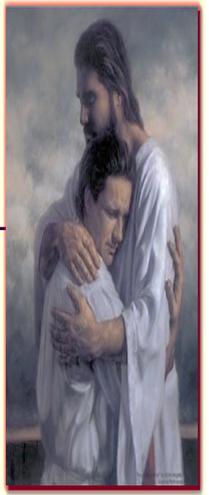
- What key words; phrases; images touched your heart?
- Allow them to ignite and act in you today.
- Encourage the moment of Lectio Divina to be revisited in your heart today...

Reading...context

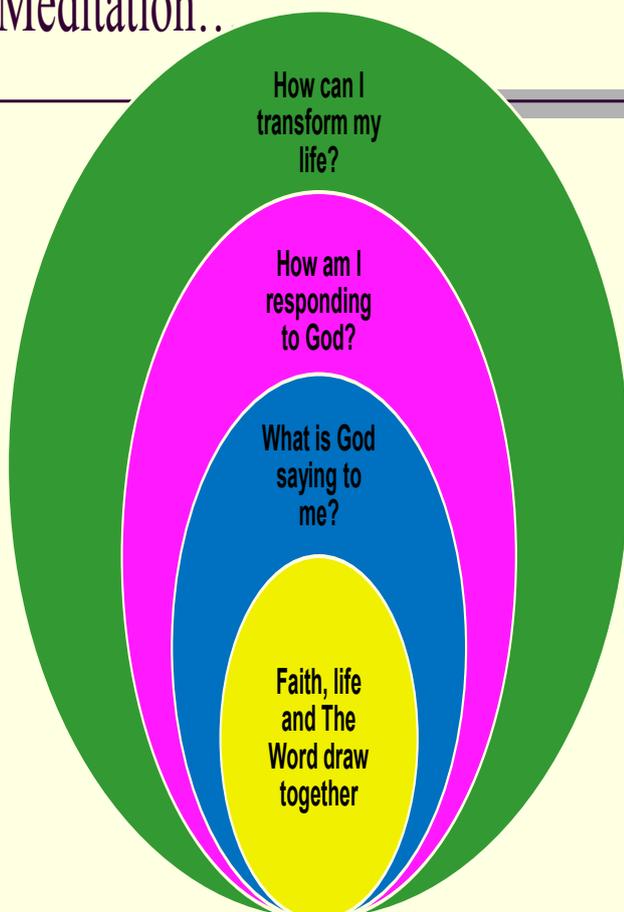
- Who – key characters
- Where – place setting
- When - history
- What – key words; phrases; images
- Why – speak to the heart; how does this relate to me.

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.



Background:

In the early first century, the Jewish diaspora had reduced them to a desolate and down-cast 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.

The narrative of *'The Raising of Lazarus'* in John's Gospel [11: 1-45] is the seventh and final sign in the Book of Signs. The characters in this Gospel are already familiar to us. Jesus' signs of healing are usually narrated with people who cross His path. Martha and Mary are dear friends.

Jesus travels from the other side of the Jordan River to Bethany which is only 2km from His final destination. He turns towards Bethany with heavy heart, since this journey leads to Jerusalem, His Passion, and the final act of His earthly mission.

The raising of Lazarus echoes the circumstance of the 2nd Scrutiny. The death of Jesus' close friend Lazarus, is an opportunity to again reveal God's power. Jesus, evoking the name of the Father reveals His power over death as a prelude to His own death.



Opening Prayer:

Lord Jesus,

You have been raised from the dead and appointed by God as the Lord of Life and ruler of all things, seen and unseen.

In our journey of faith, in becoming Your disciples, we ask that we be guided to the fullness of the truth that You have revealed to us.

May we learn to make Your mind one with our own.

All: Amen

May we strive to pattern our life on the teachings of the Gospel and so love You and our neighbour, as you commanded.

All: Amen

May we hear Your call and follow You as our perfect example.

All: Amen

[Adapted from Option C #52 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]

God of power,

Look upon all gathered here today as we deepen our understanding of the Gospel.

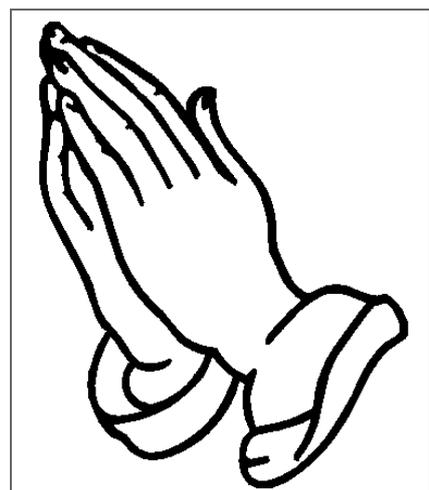
Grant that we may come to know and love You and always heed Your will with receptive minds and generous hearts.

Teach us through this time of preparation and enfold us within Your Church, so that we may share in Your holy mysteries both on earth and in heaven.

We ask this through Christ our Lord

All: Amen

[Adapted from Option C #52 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]



John 11: 1-45

1Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill.³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."⁴But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,⁶after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."⁸The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?"⁹Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world.¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them."¹¹After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him."¹²The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right."¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep.¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead.¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away,¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.²¹Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him."²³Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."²⁴Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day."²⁵Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"²⁷She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."²⁸When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you."²⁹And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.³¹The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.³²When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.³⁴He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."³⁵Jesus began to weep.³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days."⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me.⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

The Gospel of The Lord

All: Praise to You, Lord Jesus Christ



Jesus' love for His close friends Lazarus, Martha and Mary does not correspond as we would expect in this Gospel from John. Jesus delays attending to the needs of His friends. The mystery of the divine plan challenges us to trust in God, the true message is yet to be revealed.

¹Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.²Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill.³So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."⁴But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."⁵Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus,⁶after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.⁷Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

[CCC#992] *"God revealed the Resurrection of the dead to His people progressively."*

- ◆ Spend a few moments considering the progressive nature of your journey of faith.
- ◆ What were your beliefs, doubts, fears when you first began in the Enquiry period?
- ◆ What may be your doubts now?
- ◆ What changes have occurred in you?
- ◆ You may wish to discuss any concerns you have with your sponsor, RCIA Coordinator or Parish Priest.

[CCC #993] *"Faith in the Resurrection rests on faith in God who is not God of the dead, but of the living."*



⁸The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?”⁹Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world.¹⁰But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.”

Often our own needs take precedence over others.

Jesus refers to a light within.

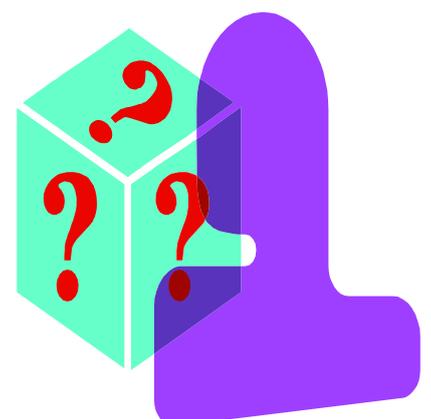
“Conscience, often misunderstood as free choice, or one’s own opinion, is an echo of God deep within every person.” (Living Biblically, p.42)

The theme of the retreat: *I am the Resurrection and the Life*, is understood since “Jesus is the light of the world.” (Living Biblically, p. 40) When we walk with the light, the integrity of God shines out from within us. God’s grace and light, active in us, may be offered as light to others.

¹¹After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him.”¹²The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.”¹³Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep.¹⁴Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead.¹⁵For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.”

Jesus analogises sleep with death. Similarly to the Gospel account of *The Man Born Blind* [Jn 9: 1-41] Jesus will use Lazarus death as a sign of The Father’s glory, “so that you may believe”.

- ◆ Through your RCIA journey, have you had moments of doubt?
- ◆ How did you work through these, and did you find light in darkness?



¹⁶Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

¹⁷When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.¹⁸Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away,¹⁹and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother.²⁰When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home.

Thomas who became famous as the great doubter (*doubting Thomas*), here reveals confidence in Jesus his leader.

Doubting Thomas, shows great faith. After Pentecost he becomes a great missionary who travels as far as southern India, spreading the Good News. The Gifts of The Holy Spirit knows no bounds.

- ◆ Take a moment to appreciate those we may often right off after an error.
- ◆ We need to be open to embracing good and bad in all, since no one is perfect.

Lazarus has been entombed for 4 days! He is well and truly dead!

Martha is always portrayed as the active sister, who sets out to meet Jesus at the outskirts of the village. Mary, remains unmoved, waiting for the Lord.

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things, there is need of only one thing." [Lk 10:41]

- ◆ Often in our lives we rush to control all the events.
- ◆ Consider how you may be able to slow life down and allow the light of Christ to shine out in you.



²¹Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”²²But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.”²³Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”²⁴Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”²⁵Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live,²⁶and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”²⁷She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

Jesus always meets us where our faith is at.

Martha, a devout Jewish woman believes in the final resurrection of the Pharisees.

Jesus’ response challenges Martha “*I am the resurrection and the life*”. He questions Martha’s faith in Him, not her Jewish belief in the resurrection.

Martha takes up Jesus invitation of faith and offers her own *Creedo* of belief in Him.

- ◆ Through the period of the catechumenate, you have become familiar with the Sunday readings.
- ◆ How has Jesus personally challenged your faith?
- ◆ Has your faith strengthened and deepened through hearing The Word of God?

²⁸When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.”²⁹And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him.³⁰Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him.³¹The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.³²When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

Mary has a habit of throwing herself at Jesus feet: Lk 10:38-42; Jn 12:3

Mary echoes the view of her sister. though Martha and Mary both have very different relationships with Jesus.

- ◆ Each of us has a personal relationship with Christ.
- ◆ Have there been times when you have been confused or struggled to express your faith in Christ?



³³When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved.³⁴He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see."³⁵Jesus began to weep.³⁶So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"³⁷But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"³⁸Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it.

"Jesus began to weep." - "deeply moved" - Jesus is distressed for His friends since He knows He could have saved their grief over these past 4 days.

Within these verses is the example of the judgement in our human nature; often we criticise when we don't fully understand the circumstances of a situation.

The Jews who are criticising Jesus' absence affectively is the same as Martha and Mary's, yet the Jews are doubting Christ's love of His friend.

Martha and Mary speak in friendship, recognising Jesus as The Messiah. The Jews are judging Jesus the healer, impersonally, blaming Him for His late arrival,

Mary had strong faith in Jesus, but had so far only witnessed His healing abilities for the living. This Gospel stretches her faith, since her brother is already dead.

Jesus is also *"greatly disturbed"*, the last hurdle He must conquer is death.

The living relationship you have with Jesus is real, and involves ups and downs.

Do you have any doubts or fears about your faith in Jesus?

³⁹Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days."⁴⁰Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

Practical Martha! Previously Martha's statement of faith acknowledges Jesus The Messiah—Jesus again stretches her faith, since The Messiah will reveal the glory of God.

John's Gospel 3:16 summarises Christian faith in a nutshell.

Spend a few moments reflecting on it:

*"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son,
so that everyone who believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life."*

⁴¹So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me.⁴²I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."⁴³When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"⁴⁴The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

⁴⁵Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

The theme of today's retreat, *'I am the Resurrection and the Life'* calls us to reflect on our relationship with God. There may be times we feel constrained or bound up. May we spend time in quiet prayer with Christ, Who will *unbind us and let us go free*.

- ◆ Are there times when you feel God is not listening?
- ◆ Consider if you have any examples in your life where you have seen the hand of God at work.
- ◆ What or who has drawn you to this RCIA conversion journey?
- ◆ Spend time reflecting on your journey: are there any highlights? Are there any low points that have challenged you?



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 out life.

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

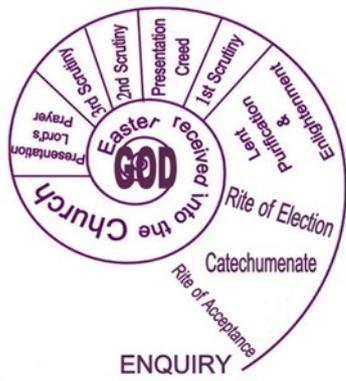
Has your familiarity with Christ's Gospel teaching deepened your understanding of Jesus and His call of discipleship....

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....



ENQUIRY

Final Prayer: (Retreat Leader)

Father of love and power,
It is Your will to establish everything in Christ and to draw us into His all-embracing love.

Guide 'the elect' of Your Church:

Strengthen them in their vocation,

Build them into the kingdom of Your Son,

And seal them with the Spirit of Your promise.

Amen

[Adapted from Option B #122 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]

Lord we pray,

That these elect may be given the faith to acknowledge Christ as the resurrection and the life, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer

Lord,

We ask that we all may be freed from sin and grow in holiness that leads to eternal life, we pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer

Lord,

We ask that the Eucharistic food, which the elect are soon to receive for the first time, may make them one with You, the source of life and of resurrection. We pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, hear our prayer

Lord,

We pray that all of us may walk together in the newness of life and show to the world the power of the risen Christ. Lord hear us.

All: Lord, hear our prayer

[Adapted from #161 Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults]

Let us all pray together: *The Lord's Prayer...*



Bibliography

- **Bible (NRSV) Gospel of John 9: 1-41**
HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1999
- ***Catechism of the Catholic Church***
St Pauls, Homebush N.S.W., 1994
- ***The New Lion Handbook To The Bible***
Lion Hudson, Oxford England, 2001

- ***Living Biblically***
Hickey, Barry J Archbishop of Perth
Record Books, Leederville WA , 2008
- ***Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults***
St Pauls, Strathfield N.S.W., 2003
- ***The Only Necessary Thing***
Nouwen, Henri J.M.
The Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 1999
- ***Lectio Divina***
Bishop David Walker DD (ACBC
Www.bbi.catholic.edu.au
- ***Challenge to Change***
Magee, Dympna
McCrimmons, Essex UK, 1995

Images':

- www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CP051GOSPELMAPS.htm
- Clipart