



ADVENT WEEK I: LISTEN

“The Synod offers us the opportunity to become a Church of closeness, that does not stand aloof from life, but immerses herself in today’s problems and needs, bandaging wounds and healing broken hearts with the balm of God.” Pope Francis

Opening Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, “Come Lord Jesus!”

Amen.

Henri J.M. Nouwen

Jeremiah 33:14-16

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I am going to fulfil the promise I made to the House of Israel and the House of Judah:

‘In those days and at that time, I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David, who shall practise honesty and integrity in the land.

In those days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell in confidence.

And this is the name the city will be called: The-Lord-our-integrity.’

Luke 21:25-28

Jesus said to his disciples *“There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand”.*

Psalms 24: 4-5

Lord, make me know your ways. Lord, teach me your paths. Make me walk in your truth, and teach me: for you are God my saviour.

Time for prayer and silent meditation (you may wish to light a candle)

Reflection

'The gift of being a compassionate listener, a gift which requires constant practice, is perhaps the most healing gift anyone can possess, for it allows the other to be, enfolds them in a safe space, does not judge or advise them, accepts them as they are without desiring to change them, and communicates support at a level deeper than words.'

Gerard W. Hughes SJ in "Cry of Wonder"

THEMES FOR REFLECTION

In exploring the themes below participants are invited to:

- Listen actively and without judgment to the Holy Spirit and to others
- Pay attention not only to the words, but also to the tone and feelings of the speaker
- Listen actively to yourself, mindful of your own thoughts and feelings as you speak

Opening question - What has your faith meant to you these past 18 months living with Covid?

How do I listen to God? How do I listen to others?

Who do I listen to?

Do I listen to minorities, the discarded, and the excluded?

How do I foster a culture of encounter?

How does our parish listen to others? How does our Parish listen to God?

To whom should our parish be listening? Are there groups we don't listen to?

How is everybody in our parish listened to?

Does our parish talk to believers of other religions and with non-believers? What is their perception of how we listen and worship?

How do we as a Church listen to others? How do we as a Church listen to those outside the church?

How do we promote a free and authentic style of communication in the global church?

How does the wider Church relate to the society of which we are a part?



The next step will be for the facilitator/scribe to share the group's reflections with the Synodal working group. But this process doesn't end there. This listening process will become part of a longer-term shift in the way we walk together as Christians and helps us grow in faith as individuals and as a Church.