



Week Leading up to 3.14.21: Why did God become Man?

***(Start with reviewing the previous Meetings Challenge or discuss prior to sharing this week's challenge.)**

Let's Begin: Think about how the challenge went for the last session. What went well? What was difficult?

Opening Prayer:

Begin with a brief moment of silence shaking off any and all distractions or difficulties of the day and remembering that God is always with us.

Read: Jn 3:14-21

After the Reading Conclude with this prayer:

Dear God the father, we thank You for Your unwavering Love. You have so graciously given us Your son, Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer in a world full of darkness. By His shining light we can now see more clearly. Shower us with Your grace, which we need to live lives that bring us to eternal life with You. Amen.

Or

Consider doing an imaginative prayer exercise found on the next page.

Reflection or Discussion Question:

1. What do you think/feel this verse from the reading today means "But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God."?

YouTube Video: When God became Man, Everything Changed with Dr. Andrew Swafford (6:23)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytpubDwajnc>

Reflection or Discussion Questions: {Leaders: This video has a lot to cover. No need to cover all of the questions as long as the discussion is fruitful. This is a template, so modify the questions as needed.}

2. What do you think/feel is the difference between atonement and acquittal? Which would offer greater healing?
3. Dr. Swafford explains that one of the reasons that Jesus came was to make us partakers in God's Divine nature. What does this mean to you? Do you find it difficult to believe that God loves you this much?
4. How has Jesus been a model for you or what difference has your faith in Jesus made to your life?
5. Do you have an example to share where God offered you healing through reconciliation? Were you transformed in any way from this healing?
6. Dr. Swafford shares in the video that the Lord meets us in the present moment where time and eternity intersects. What do you think/feel this means?
7. What suggestions can you offer that you have found help you to more fully share in Christ's risen life?

Session Challenges: {Choose one, two or all }

- Refocusing our minds back to God through self-sacrifice can help us to enter more fully into God's Divinity. Evaluate how you have been doing on your Lenten sacrifices. Re-commit to them if you need to.
- Consider how much more of the Divine life you want. Write down the deepest desires of your heart and a habit that you could implement this next year that would draw you closer to God's heart.
- In prayer take 10 minutes to spend with Jesus and ask Him to share with you how much He truly loves you. Next, ask God if there are any sins holding you back from fully sharing in His risen life. If you haven't gone to reconciliation yet this Lent, consider doing so to more fully feel God's love. Refer to this reflection on the 10 commandments to help you prepare: <https://mycatholic.life/catholic-prayers/examination-of-conscience/>

Closing Prayer: (Leaders: We recommended offering time during the closing prayer for participants to offer personal intentions.) *Dear God our Father, You have allowed us to share in Your Divinity through the pure sacrifice of Your son Jesus. As Easter draws closer, may we continue to turn away from the darkness and toward Your light. Amen*

{Optional additional Readings} Sunday Reading 1: [2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23](#) Sunday Reading 2: [Eph 2:4-10](#)

Optional Imaginative Prayer – 4th Sunday of Lent Year B

Source: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/arts-faith-lent-fourth-sunday-imaginative-prayer-exercise-2/>
- slight modifications made for use in ESG.

To Prepare – Estimate 10-15 minutes. Show the image from the link above before starting. Ask participants to pay attention to the posture of the two people sitting and hold the picture in their mind as you begin.

The union in openness of body and mind and heart that is prayer begins with attention to each.

First your body: Sit upright, legs crossed or not, feet on the floor or not, lower back pressed against the chair. Breathe.

Now the mind: As you are able, let these words spill through the mind and down your spine into the earth. Let your thoughts puff away with each breath. As new ones come—knotted as they are with joy or pain—hold them like wounded birds. Set them aside to heal. Breathe.

And the heart: Vulnerability means *able to be wounded*. Of course, there is resistance. Notice it. With your breath and with energy, pull back the vines and push open the gates. Breathe.

Tilt your chin up to the heavens and, with eyes open or closed, look back at the One who gazes at you with great affection. Breathe.

Demanding Depth

Let's begin...Nicodemus is an influential man, a ruler amongst his people. He has something to lose by coming to Jesus, the man who overturned the tables in the Temple, a man who brings miracles and causes conflict wherever he goes. Not yet ready to risk coming to see Jesus in the light of day, Nicodemus instead comes at night.

- *What is it that makes Nicodemus take the risk of coming to see Jesus?*
- *Have you been fascinated by someone, drawn to them despite consequences?*
- *How do you imagine Nicodemus feels as he walks familiar roads in darkness on his way to Jesus' house? Is he nervous or excited?*
- *How does the night air feel to him? Can he see the stars? Does it take courage to announce his presence as he arrives at Jesus' home?*
- *How does he feel as he walks into the room? Is he expected? Welcomed?*
- *What is Jesus like as he slips off his sandals and steps forward on the mat?*

Having begun the conversation with Jesus by proclaiming what he knows of him—that he is “a teacher who has come from God”—the last words we hear Nicodemus speak take the form of a quiet question: “How can this be?”

- *Alone in the lamplight, seated next to him, what questions would you like to ask Jesus?*
- *Does he listen to your questions? Does he hear?*
- *In words or gestures, in imaginations or memories that bubble up within you, in feelings that stir in your heart—in any of these ways—does he respond?*
- *Does he reach out to take your hands? Is there an image that arises in response to your question? In a moment of quiet, trust the response that comes.*

The Jesus we come to know in John's Gospel is unsatisfied with shallow relationships. He demands depth from us would-be disciples. It's this desire for depth and this endless desire of the Lord for friendship with us that lead him to speak so clearly of light and dark and of judgment in the words of Scripture we hear today.

- *How does Nicodemus respond as Jesus asks for more from him? How do his whispered responses sound?*
- *Is he grateful for such an invitation? Excited that the one with whom he is fascinated desires depth of friendship with him?*
- *Or is it fear that leaks from Nicodemus into the shadowed room? Coming to the light will have consequences, and he is a man with responsibilities. Is Nicodemus afraid of what will happen, what will be asked of him, if he accepts this invitation to love?*
- *What of you? What stirs inside you as you speak with this Jesus who is unsatisfied with simply being an acquaintance? How do you react to his relentless love?*

Speak with him. Speak with him about any hesitations, any joys you feel. Speak with honesty about what has happened in your prayer. You were invited into his home during the night, so speak with him as close friends do in the darkness. We will pause for a minute or two in silence now.

Concluding Prayer

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen.

Please open your eyes.

Do you feel calmer? Is there anything you would like to share with the group that came to mind?