



# Anima Advent Series

## Meeting Outline

### Session 1: Crux

#### General Meeting Outline Time Guideline:

Social Time, Opening Prayer: 15-20 Min

Total Video Time: 12-15 Min

Total Discussion Time: 20-25 Min

Closing Prayer Time with Challenge: 5 Min

#### Reflection Question from the Challenge for the Week:

Do you have anything you would like to share about the challenges from the previous session?

#### Introduction

Welcome to the first week of this Advent study. Advent is a season to prepare the way for Christ at Christmastime, something that can be easy to lose sight of amidst the busyness of the season. The aim of this study is to help you guide your group and/or family by prayer and discussion to focus on the true meaning of the season and to grow in faith. In this session, *Crux*, with Bishop Donald Hying is our guide, we will explore the most fundamental question of the human heart: What is the purpose of my life? Traditionally, the Church focuses on the virtue of hope during the first week of Advent. We have so much to hope for because the answer to the fundamental question of our hearts will be answered in the most unexpected way, in a manger on a starry night in Bethlehem.

#### Opening Prayer:

##### Act of Hope

*O Lord God, I hope by your grace for the pardon of all my sins and after life here to gain eternal happiness because you have promised it. You are infinitely powerful, faithful, kind, and merciful. In this hope, I intend to live and die. Amen.*

**Play Video:** (12 Min), <https://vimeo.com/114207403>

#### Small Group Questions (Choose those that fit your group best):

1. The video ends with a question: “What experiences in your life can only be explained by God?” How would you answer that?
2. How do you see hopelessness affecting our world?
3. Sometimes the word “hope” is used interchangeably with “wish.” (“I hope it doesn’t rain.” “I hope Grandma made those cookies again.”) Traditionally, however, hope is defined in relationship to eternity, to heaven. Pope Benedict XVI wrote in his encyclical *Spe salvi* (Saved in Hope): “The present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey” (*Spe Salvi*, 1). How does this sort of hope differ from wishful thinking or optimism?

4. Bishop Hying states that dwelling on the past or fixating on the future can often rob us of the peace and joy found by living in the present. How have you experienced this to be true?
5. Bishop Hying goes on to say that we need silence. How can silence relieve pressure from the anxieties of life?
6. What are some of the obstacles that keep you from building a daily discipline of silence and prayer?
7. Before Jesus ascended to heaven, he promised to remain with us: “I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:20). Bishop Hying states, “he so fell in love with us that he decided to stay”? How does Jesus remain with us?  
*(Jesus remains with us in the Eucharist. The catechism teaches: "Under the consecrated species of bread and wine Christ himself, living and glorious, is present in a true, real, and substantial manner: his Body and his Blood, with his soul and divinity" [1413]. Not only can we receive Jesus in the Eucharist at Mass, but we can adore Jesus in Eucharistic adoration outside of Mass. Finally, Jesus is spiritually present to us in sacred scripture which "is living and active" ... "discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:1).)*

### **Individual Challenge for the week:**

Advent is about preparing ourselves for the source of our hope: Jesus. But as we discussed, we need to make room for silence so we can make room for Him. This week, commit to making room for silence at a time you normally have background noise. For example, turn the radio off in the car or choose not to turn on the television. In one of those moments, become aware of God’s presence and have a conversation with him. Be ready to share your experience in our next meeting.

### **Closing 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.*

### **Additional Helpful Information:**

The title of this video is Crux, from the Latin word meaning “cross.” Traditionally, we meditate on the cross during Lent. However, it is also appropriate to focus on the cross during Advent. As Ven. Archbishop Fulton Sheen said, “It was not so much that his birth cast a shadow on his life, and thus led to his death; it was rather that the Cross was there from the beginning and it casts a shadow backward to his birth” **The word “crux” is commonly used in English to describe a decisive moment. When it comes to the cross, what does a decisive moment look like for us?** *(The decisive moment for us is whether we are going to place our faith in Jesus. The catechism defines faith as “a personal adherence of man to God” and “a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed” as “it is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says” [150]. In other words, are we willing to surrender our lives to Jesus and believe everything he proposes for our belief through the Church. The title of this video is Kenosis, a Greek word meaning “emptying.” The word can be found in Philippians 2:5–8.*

# Emmaus Small Group: Anima Advent Series

## Session 2: Kenosis

### Reflection discussed during Social Time:

How did your challenge of making time for more silence go last week?

### Introduction:

*Kenosis* is a Greek word that means “emptying.” This week we will explore the Person of Jesus, who emptied Himself to become human in the Incarnation. It is the Incarnation that is both the central mystery of our faith and precisely what we are preparing to celebrate at Christmas. In the second week of Advent the Church focuses on faith. It is our faith in the Incarnation which enables us to see Jesus in our brothers and sisters who are in need and to help them through love of Him. Jesus gives us great dignity as human beings and invites us to imitate His gift on the cross by sacrificing for others.

### Opening Prayer:

*“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.”* —(Philippians 2:5–8)

**Play Video:** (12.31 Min), <https://vimeo.com/116693977>

### Small Group Questions (Choose those that fit your group best):

1. The video ends with a question: “What draws you most to Jesus?” How would you answer that?
2. In your estimation, why has “Merry Christmas” become so controversial?
3. Bishop Hying describes the Incarnation—God becoming flesh—as the central mystery of our Faith. Why is the Incarnation central to everything we believe? (*The Incarnation shows God's love for us and his desire to be with us forever in Heaven.*)
4. Bishop Hying speaks of doing works of justice and charity and serving people on the fringes as the mission of the Body of Christ. Why is this so important? (*There is a profound saying that goes: “You may be the first and only gospel someone ever reads! In other words, people can come to know and love Jesus through our love and witness to them.*)
5. Can you share a story of how serving others has inspired your faith?
6. St. Teresa of Calcutta became known the world over for her incredible love, faithfulness, service, and wisdom. People would often ask her advice on how they, too, could make a difference in the world. Mother Teresa was known to say, “If you want to change the world, go home and love your family.” What is profound about this advice? (*St. John Paul II wrote in Letter to Families that “the family is the center and the heart of the civilization of love” [23] and “the history of mankind, the history of salvation, passes by way of the family” [13].*)

7. In this season of Advent, we buy gifts for others and anticipate receiving gifts from others. However, Jesus example of kenosis calls us to something even greater—making a gift of ourselves to others. What might this look like for you with the people who are presently in your life?

**Individual Challenge for the week:**

The commitment this week is to consciously decide to do something "self-emptying" every day. Be ready to share your experiences with the group next week.

**Closing Prayer:**

**Act of Faith**

*O my God, I firmly believe that you are one God in three divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I believe that your divine Son became man and died for our sins and that he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe these and all the truths which the Holy Catholic Church teaches because you have revealed them who are eternal truth and wisdom, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.*

*In this faith I intend to live and die. Amen.*

**Additional Helpful Information:**

Additional information for Question 2:

(Jesus claims are controversial: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me" [John 14:6]. His call to conversion is controversial: "whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" [Matthew 16:25]. His effect on people is controversial: "Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division" [Luke 12:51]. And, Jesus warned his disciples that this would be the case: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you" [John 15:18]. Wishing someone a "Merry Christmas" is to suggest our joy is found in the Christ child. Tragically, many have not discovered that joy. Ironically, the preferred "Happy Holiday" is derived from old English "Happy Holy Day" which begs the question: Why is Christmas a Holy Day?)

Additional information for Question 3:

In Jesus, there is a hypostatic union—the combination of divine and human natures. Jesus assumes humanity in the Incarnation, redeems humanity in his crucifixion, glorifies humanity in his Resurrection, and elevates humanity to the right hand of the Father in his Ascension. This is our path of salvation. Jesus forgives us of our sin, gives us the grace to heal and become holy, raises us from the dead, and unites us to God for all eternity in Heaven. The incarnation is the central mystery of our faith because without it there is no salvation.

# Emmaus Small Group: Anima Advent Series

## Session 3: Blaze

### Reflection discussed during Social Time:

The commitment this week is to consciously decide to do something "self-emptying" every day. Does anyone have anything they would like to share about this?

### Introduction:

*Blaze* is a reference to the fire of the Holy Spirit falling upon the Apostles on the Feast of Pentecost. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Apostles were sent to spread the good news and be a light to the world. This is the beginning of the Church which continues to be a light for the world today. We, as members of the Body of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and are called to be the hands and feet, the eyes, and the love of God in the world. This week, we will explore the reality of what it means to be Christ's own presence on earth, as well as practical ways we can be active members of His Body.

### Opening Prayer:

*Read Acts 2:1-13*

*Slowly read the Scripture passage three times, taking a moment of silence between each reading. Think about a word or phrase that stands out to you as this is read.*

**Play Video:** (14.49 Min), <https://vimeo.com/129395409>

### Small Group Questions:

1. What in the video stood out most to you?
2. Bishop Hying spoke of knowing the Holy Spirit by the difference he makes. Who in your life can you identify as different because of their relationship with God? What makes them different?
3. How would you respond to someone who says they are spiritual but not religious? In other words, they believe in God but don't want the Church. *Bishop Hying quotes Colossians 1:18: "Jesus is the head of the body, the Church." He says the head cannot be separated from the body. While many will argue that Jesus came to defy established religion, Matthew 16:18 makes it clear that he intended to establish a Church. Think of the Christmas song "Joy to the World." One verse reads: "He rules the earth with truth and grace." How does Jesus rule the earth with truth and grace? It is through the Church that we have access to the fullness of truth and the grace to live it!*
4. G.K. Chesterton said, "Let your religion be less of a theory and more of a love affair." What practical steps can we take to make this true of our own Catholic faith?
5. How do the sacraments (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Holy Orders, Marriage, and Anointing of the Sick) enhance your relationship with Jesus? *"We need sacraments in order to outgrow our petty human life and to become like Jesus through Jesus: children of God in freedom and glory. In Baptism, the fallen children of men become cherished children of God; through Confirmation the weak become strong, committed Christians; through Penance the guilty are reconciled; through the Eucharist the hungry become bread for others; through Matrimony and Holy Orders individualists become servants of love; through the Anointing of the Sick the despairing*

*become people of confidence. The sacrament in all the sacraments is Christ himself. In Him we men, lost in selfishness, grow and mature into the true Life that has no end. We can and should come to God with all our senses, not just with the intellect. That is why God gives himself to us in earthly signs—especially in bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ. People saw Jesus, heard him, could touch him and thereby experience salvation and healing in body and soul. The sensible signs of the Sacraments show this same signature of God, who desires to address the whole man—not just his head." [YouCat 173-174].*

6. The video ends with a question: “What human encounter has drawn love and service from your heart?” How would you answer that?
7. How can you practically participate in being the Body of Christ?

**Individual Challenge for the week:**

Reconnect with the love of Christ in His Church and experience God’s love and mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) either as a group or as individuals.

**Closing 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.*

**Additional Helpful Information:**

*Blaze* is a reference to the fire of the Holy Spirit falling upon the Apostles on the Feast of Pentecost. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that the Apostles were sent to spread the good news and be a light to the world. This is the beginning of the Church which continues to be a light for the world today. We, as members of the Body of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and are called to be the hands and feet, the eyes, and the love of God in the world. This week, we will explore the reality of what it means to be Christ's own presence on earth, as well as practical ways we can be active members of His Body.