

Diocese of Chichester Year of Prayer Lent Course 2018

- Lent Course 2018
- Inspiring Vision
- How the visual arts provide inspiration and pathways to prayer.
- The Trinity, Challenging Times, Discipleship, Prayers of Praise, Prayers as Life evolves and the Experience of Forgiveness are all explored across 6 weeks of reflection, discussion and listening.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury and Dame Patricia Routledge are amongst the guest contributors.

Through Lent 2018, as a central aspect of Diocesan year of Prayer, we have asked six people to choose their favourite painting, picture, or work of art and to explain what their choice says about prayer.

Contributors include the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dame Patricia Routledge, Lucy Winkett (Vicar of St James, Piccadilly), Caroline Spelman (First Estates Commissioner) and Charles Harrison (Director of Music at Chichester Cathedral).

For each week of Lent there is a chosen painting, a podcast, a special wall chart and notes of leaders and individuals following the course.

The opening introductory session is presented by the Bishop.

Each week, Lent groups and individuals are invited to reflect on the chosen painting by listening to a specially produced podcast (of around 15 minutes) in which the guest explains the significance to them personally of the chosen work.

But in so doing, the guests raise questions for all of us about our own prayer life and how our prayers develop as we mature, journey on our pilgrimage and discover more about the divine mystery as God speaks to us in good times and bad.

An accompanying set of notes for each session suggest Scripture Readings and exercises for us in response to what we see and hear.

By the end of the six weeks we hope that each participant's focus on their own prayer life will have been invigorated and challenged as a key aspect of our Year of Prayer.

WEEK ONE: Inspiring Vision. Prayer and the Trinity

Guest: The Bishop of Chichester

Painting: *Holy Trinity* by El Greco

Bishop Martin Warner introduces the Lent Course and reveals his chosen painting. We will be challenged to look at how The Trinity inspires our prayer life and how the different persons of the Trinity guide and cajole us in our spiritual lives.

You may like to open the session with this prayer and a moment of silence.

Almighty and eternal God,
you have revealed yourself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
and live and reign in the perfect unity of love:
hold us firm in this faith,
that we may know you in all your ways
and evermore rejoice in your eternal glory,
who are three Persons yet one God,
now and for ever. Amen.

Post-Communion, Trinity Sunday (Common Worship)

Look at the image that has been chosen for this session. Discuss among yourselves for a couple of moments what your initial reactions to, and feelings about, it are. It may be a picture that is new to you, or one that is very familiar. What captures your imagination as you see it now?

Now listen to the podcast.

Keep silence and reflect on what you have heard and how that might have changed your own understanding or response to the painting.

Opening questions:

1. 'Art can do things that words can't'. How might this impact the choices you make when, for example, you are planning an act of worship?
2. Discuss what it means to pray 'in and through and with' the Trinity.
3. How did it make you feel when you heard Bishop Martin say that your body is also part of the life of the Holy Trinity?

Read the Scripture passage

In our prayers for you we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the gospel that has come to you. Just as it is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world, so it has been bearing fruit among yourselves from the day you heard it and truly comprehended the grace of God. This you learned from Epaphras, our beloved fellow-servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, and he has made known to us your love in the Spirit. For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you may lead lives worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, as you bear fruit in every good work and as you grow in the knowledge of God. May you be made strong with all the strength that comes

from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Colossians 1.3-14

How does the painting enrich your understanding and interpretation of the Scripture passage?

Further questions:

1. 'We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love that you have for all the saints.' How well connected do you feel to the prayer life of the Church of England as a whole, and especially to our diocese of Chichester? What are the things which we might all be holding in prayer at this time?
2. Have you explored any new form of prayer in worship? How might you go about experimenting with different forms of prayer?
3. How often do you pray alone? Do you feel stuck, or dry, in your prayer life? Does God seem close or distant? What might rekindle the flame for you?

Suggested activity:

Bishop Martin said it is natural for us to want to draw, referring to cave paintings in Lacaux in France, and Banksy's graffiti. Have a go at drawing a picture which describes your relationship with God: you may use an image or shapes, or simply colours (allow about ten minutes). If in groups, swap your pictures and ask others what they see in your drawing, then, if you feel comfortable, explain what you intended.

Close the session by repeating the prayer from the beginning, and/or say the Lord's Prayer and/or the Grace together.

Recommended reading: Michael Ramsey, *Be still and know: a study in the life of prayer* (Cowley Publications, 1983).