



ORIENS 2023 SMALL GROUP OUTLINES

Week One

Lesson: Lectio Divina

Fr. Joel's Thoughts: This page is meant to be used at the end of Week 1. If your group meets in the middle of the week, you may need to save half the questions for next week. If any of your participants ordered a book and it hasn't arrived yet, direct them to download the Preview PDF from my website (it contains the first week). Group leaders are encouraged to participate in the live Virtual Bible Study. Learn more and sign up at www.pilgrimpriest.us/book You are welcome to show parts of that video to your group, but don't post the video link to social media or email it to people that are not subscribed to the virtual Bible study. You might review [Small Group Etiquette](#) at the first meeting.

Small Group Bible Study Outline

1. **Opening Prayer:** (*Leader, in these or similar words*) Heavenly Father, thank you for creating the world. Thank you for filling it with life. Thank you for all the things that live and move and have their being. Help us to wonder anew at the marvel, mystery, and miracle of your Creation. Open our eyes to the mystery of your love all around us. Bless our meeting today and our Advent journey this week. Amen.
2. **Introductions.** Does everyone know each other? If not, share name and one interesting detail about yourself, like what you love or hate about the Christmas season or a favorite Christmas movie.
3. **Open discussion** as time allows. Suggested questions:
 1. Do you have a designated prayer space? Do you have a designated prayer time?
 2. Did you have any experience this week that made you wonder at the marvel, mystery, and miracle of creation?
 3. Which one of this week's prayer passages spoke most strongly to you?
 4. Was there anything that frustrated or discouraged you as you began your Advent journey?
 5. Was there an "Emmanuel moment"—an experience in prayer or during your week that made you feel especially close to God? Or, can you recall a time you felt close to God?
 6. What do you really want for Christmas?
4. Group leader should **close with a prayer**. Perhaps invite participants to name prayer intentions. Then conclude with an Our Father all together.



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Week Two

Lesson: Imaginative Prayer

Fr. Joel's Thoughts: Some people may have missed the first week. I encourage them to read the Introduction (pp. 9-12) and then the section on Lectio Divina, p. 21. Then skip ahead to the Week Two section on Imaginative Prayer, p. 53. Then pray with today's date. You're all caught up!

If an image of God's loved emerged during your prayer time this week (p. 49), save it for later. We will keep returning to it at the beginning of every prayer time. This helps us begin with gratitude. Take your time each day, if you can, and resist the urge to "get 'er done" quickly. Enjoy your time with God.

Small Group Bible Study Outline

1. **Opening Prayer:** Creator God, we thank you for surrounding us with a world full of marvel and mystery. Above all we thank you for creating us out of love and for love. We realize that we have been given the opportunity to choose life or death. We pray for the guidance of your Holy Spirit in our meeting today. Help us to taste how much you long for communion with us. Amen.
2. **Group Check-in:** A burden and a blessing from each person, and/or one place you saw God this week (go around in a circle).
3. **Open discussion** as time allows. Suggested questions:
 1. Was there one prayer time that was particularly powerful for you this week? Which one was it, and what struck you about it?
 2. In what way does the Cain and Abel reading shed new light on current world events, or on your own family history?
 3. How do you feel about the way God treated Cain?
 4. When God comes with power to feed his flock, is there something you desire him to give you?
 5. Have any particular fears been surfacing during your prayer times?
 6. Was there anything that gave you comfort, strength, or peace?
 7. Did you discover any obstacles to prayer? How did you overcome them, or did they get the best of you?
4. Group leader should **close with a prayer**. Ask your group if anyone has any prayer intentions. Then pray for them from your heart and conclude with an Our Father all together.



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Week Three

Lesson: Countdown to Christmas

Thoughts from Fr. Joel: Some people take to imaginative prayer like fish to water. Some folks struggle with it. If someone is really having a hard time, they can use Lectio Divina instead, if that is what works for them. Sometimes people struggle because deep down they don't want Jesus to really meet them in their prayer time. They want to stay in control, and to keep prayer as a kind of intellectual exercise rather than allowing it to be a conversation. Regardless of where they are at, they will be rewarded if they persevere. So encourage anyone who has doubts to keep putting the time in and be patient. This week was familiar passages, but they are so full of meaning. We need to be open to all the little "aha" moments that God will send us along our journey.

Small Group Bible Study Outline

1. **Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, as we experience your love for us, we realize you have put in motion a plan to rescue us from sin and draw us closer to yourself. Help our eyes be opened to the presence of "Emmanuel" in our meeting today. Bless our conversation today and draw us closer to the heart of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.
2. **Group Check-in:** A burden and a blessing from each person, and/or one place you saw God this week (go around in a circle).
3. **Open discussion** as time allows. Suggested questions:
 1. Was there any one particular scripture passage or prayer time that really spoke to you?
 2. How do these familiar passages shed new light on the Christmas story?
 3. Where and how have you experienced God this past week?
 4. Has God surprised you with little moments of his presence, his care? Can you share one of them?
 5. What have you found most challenging or frustrating this past week?
 6. Have you settled on a consistent prayer place and time? When are you best able to pray?
 7. What did you really love about Christmas last year?
 8. What are you hoping for – or dreading – at Christmas this year?
4. Group leader should **close with a prayer**. Ask your group if anyone has any prayer intentions. Then pray for them from your heart and conclude with an Our Father all together.



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Week Four

Lesson: Lord, When Did You Get Here?

Thoughts from Fr. Joel: Perhaps Christmas was the most amazing experience of your life. Or perhaps you found yourself disappointed by the busyness or chaos. A lot of people find it really hard to pray this week because family is home, people are off from work or home from school, and we are out of routine. Do the best you can to at least pick up your book and read the Scripture passage. I find I'm a better human being when I take time away from people to connect with God, and I encourage you do do your best to keep praying. Don't give up if you fell behind. Just pick up your book and begin again by praying today's prayer time well. If Christmas wasn't particularly wonderful or prayerful, don't fret. Mary probably got more out of pondering Christmas than she did on the day itself. Remember we are on a pilgrimage and the journey continues. Keep your eyes open for the more that Jesus wants to give you.

Small Group Bible Study Outline

1. **Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, thank you for accompanying us through this beautiful Octave. Help us to trust every more deeply in your loving presence, in your power to overcome obstacles. Help us to open our hearts to the King who became man to save us from sin and death. Help us to know more deeply the presence of Emmanuel, God with us. Amen.
2. **Group Check-in:** A burden and a blessing from each person, and/or one place you saw God this week (go around in a circle).
3. **Open discussion** as time allows. Suggested questions:
 1. What was your most blessed moment or experience this week?
 2. Was there a place or moment when you saw or felt God's light shining?
 3. Were you able to find rest, spiritually or physically?
 4. In what way are you being called to be more faithful to Jesus Christ?
 5. Was there a place where things felt dark or heavy?
 6. Was there a person who was Christ to you? Were you Christ to someone else?
 7. What are you excited about, or nervous for, as we move into the New Year?
4. Group leader should **close with a prayer**. Ask your group if anyone has any prayer intentions. Then pray for them from your heart and conclude with an Our Father all together.



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Week Five

Lesson: Well Begun Is Half Done

Thoughts from Fr. Joel: I think it is really important to pause and reflect at the beginning of our prayer time each day. I use the same text for the intro because I can't find a way to say it any better. But it's important for you to look at it with fresh eyes each day. We want to begin and end every prayer time with grateful hearts. This week carried us through a lot of feast days and into the New Year.

Small Group Bible Study Outline

1. **Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus Christ. We thank you for the blessings of this Christmas season. We pray for a deeper sense of peace and joy in the birth of Jesus, and we pray for a deeper sense of our identity as Your beloved child. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
2. **Group Check-in:** A burden and a blessing from each person, and/or one place you saw God this week (go around in a circle).
3. **Open discussion** as time allows. Suggested questions:
 1. Did anyone make New Years resolutions?
 2. Did anyone look back and take time to be grateful at the end of 2023?
 3. Take a look at your very first prayer time, pp. 24-25. What were you desiring for Advent? What was God desiring to give you? What happened?
 4. If Advent didn't go as well as you had hoped, what did you find yourself focusing on when you should have been focusing on prayer? How can you use this lesson to focus more on what is important?
 5. Have you grown in your identity as a beloved child of God?
 6. How does this Christmas look different as a result of your participation in Oriens?
 7. Did any of the feast days or prayer times really speak to you?
 8. Did you make time to bless your home at Epiphany?
4. Group leader should **close with a prayer**. Ask your group if anyone has any prayer intentions. Then pray for them from your heart and conclude with an Our Father all together.



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Week Six

Lesson: *Keep The Christmas Light Burning Brightly*

Thoughts from Fr. Joel: Advent is a season of watching and waiting. It's not really that Jesus comes once and we need to make sure not to miss it. Rather, as we learn to see Jesus in the bright Christmas season, our eyes become more accustomed to seeing him in our everyday life. As we moved into Ordinary Time this past week, hopefully you continue to walk with Jesus in prayer and see him in your daily life.

Small Group Bible Study Outline

1. **Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gifts and blessings of our Christmas season. As we move into Ordinary Time, open our eyes to your presence in our daily life. Help us to see each moment in the light of our Savior Jesus Christ. Help us to hear his voice calling us to, "Come, follow me." Bless our prayer time and give us the grace to pray each day. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.
2. **Group Check-in:** A burden and a blessing from each person, and/or one place you saw God this week (go around in a circle).
3. **Open discussion** as time allows. Suggested questions:
 1. Can you name a God moment in your life?
 2. When/how did you most clearly see God in your Christmas season?
 3. How have you been seeing him in your everyday life?
 4. Have you taken down all the Christmas decorations or did you leave some up yet?
 5. What was your favorite prayer time, passage, or experience this past week?
 6. Did you find new meaning in the Baptism of the Lord?
 7. How did you experience the call of Jesus this past week?
 8. How did you respond to that call?
 9. Who needs to hear the Good News? Perhaps say a prayer for someone.
4. Group leader should **close with a prayer**. Ask your group if anyone has any prayer intentions. Then pray for them from your heart and conclude with an Our Father all together.



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Week Seven

Lesson: Relational Prayer (ARRR)

Thoughts from Fr. Joel: Relational Prayer is a great tool for understanding our experiences in the light of God's love, and also for letting God love us in our everyday lives. Last week we talked about hearing God's call. You might be called to pray with someone this week using relational prayer. God often blesses us with gifts and then invites us to share those gifts with others. So don't be afraid if you are called, and rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Small Group Bible Study Outline

1. **Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for calling us to be disciples of Jesus. Help us to be a light in the darkness. Give us the grace to wonder more deeply at the gift of human life, to cherish every human person, and to more deeply appreciate the love with which the Lamb of God laid down his precious life for us. In Jesus' name, amen.
2. **Group Check-in:** A burden and a blessing from each person, and/or one place you saw God this week (go around in a circle).
3. **Open discussion** as time allows. Group leader should write some questions during the video to prompt discussion. Suggested questions:
 1. What was your favorite prayer time, passage, or experience this past week?
 2. What prayer time really broke your heart?
 3. How does it feel that the Lamb of God was sacrificed for you?
 4. How have you been fed by the Lamb of God?
 5. In what way does Jesus, the Lamb of God, want to set you free?
 6. Have you felt called to share the love of God with people who are struggling? When or how?
 7. Oriens continues for two more weeks. You might want to start preparing for how you will continue that prayer time after Oriens. There are suggestions on page 295-6 of your book.
4. Group leader should **close with a prayer**. Ask your group if anyone has any prayer intentions. Then pray for them from your heart and conclude with an Our Father all together.



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Week Eight

Lesson: Discernment of Spirits

Thoughts from Fr. Joel: We continued the discipleship journey this week by moving very quickly to the end of Mark's gospel and hitting all the highlights. These are familiar passages but you may not have thought of them as applying to your own life. The Gospel was not written for other people; the Gospel was written for us. Oriens will be coming to a close soon. I hope you are able to continue strong in the habit of daily prayer you are building. It's worth reflecting on the pieces you need in order to pray well, and make sure those are in place as you move into Lent.

Small Group Bible Study Outline

1. **Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, we thank you for the gift of your son Jesus, the Light of the World. May his light scatter the darkness in our hearts and fill us with peace. Help us to follow your Son more closely as his faithful disciple. Bless our conversation today, through Christ our Lord. Amen.
2. **Group Check-in:** A burden and a blessing from each person, and/or one place you saw God this week (go around in a circle).
3. **Open discussion** as time allows. Suggested questions:
 1. Have you found it easier or harder to pray now at the end of January?
 2. In what way have you heard Jesus calling you to come and follow him? In what way did you respond?
 3. Do you feel welcome at Jesus' table? Whom should we be welcoming to our tables?
 4. How have you experienced being sent on mission?
 5. What does it mean to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Jesus?
 6. Where have you seen Jesus' power working in your life and in the lives of others?
 7. What powerful things seem to stand in the way of preaching the Gospel?
4. Group leader should **close with a prayer**. Ask your group if anyone has any prayer intentions. Then pray for them from your heart and conclude with an Our Father all together.



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Week Nine

Lesson: The Feast of the Presentation

Thoughts from Fr. Joel: You made it! What seemed like such a long journey at the beginning is now all in the rearview mirror. Consider staying in touch with your small group during the year.

Small Group Bible Study Outline

1. **Opening Prayer:** Heavenly Father, as see Simeon and Anna welcome the Christ Child in the temple, let us open our hearts to a visit from our King. We ask for the grace to truly welcome Christ into our hearts and to make his love the center of our lives. May the light of faith, given to us in Baptism, burn ever brighter in our hearts. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.
2. **Group Check-in:** A burden and a blessing from each person, and/or one place you saw God this week (go around in a circle).
3. **Open discussion** as time allows. Suggested questions:
 1. What was your favorite or most moving prayer time this week?
 2. Was there anything you struggled with?
 3. How has God's light illuminated your life and brought new things to light on your Advent journey?
 4. How have you been a light to others?
 5. If you got a chance to do the Review of Reviews, what emerged as some key themes during the nine week journey?
 6. What did God really want to give you for Christmas?
 7. Was there a particular God moment, image, or experience of his love that will stick with you?
 8. How is your prayer/faith/life different now than it was at the start of Advent?
 9. Would you recommend Oriens to a friend? Would you do it again next year?
 10. How do you plan to continue prayer after the Oriens pilgrimage ends?
4. Group leader should **close with a prayer**. Ask your group if anyone has any prayer intentions. Then pray for them from your heart and conclude with an Our Father all together.