



VENITE ADOREMUS!

'Encounter' Parish Resources
Advent/Christmastide 2018-19



Diocese of Nottingham

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INTRODUCTION

As we begin to lay the spiritual foundations for the renewal of our diocese, we have been asked to look at three key themes of:

Encounter **Discipleship** **Missionary Discipleship**

As Bishop Patrick reminded us in his recent Pastoral Letter, this is not about a one size fits all diocesan programme which we will do together, but rather it is about a change of heart and minds, of having personally encountered Christ and responded to his call in our lives. It is an invitation for each of us to encounter afresh, or even for the first time, the personal love that God has for each of us, to respond and grow as disciples of Jesus Christ; becoming faith-filled, joyful and outward-looking missionary disciples through an openness to the Holy Spirit.

Beginning with 'Encounter', the bishop hopes that this 'Advent and Christmas [will] be a time, when we all encounter afresh the amazing love of God our Father in sending us his Son and ponder again on Mary's openness to receiving that love.' (Pastoral Letter, November 2018).

With that in mind, this short booklet provides a few suggestions for what this emphasis on 'Encounter' might look like in your own parish context: they are simple, adaptable, practical ideas, and can be built around existing parish life. They are an invitation to look at what we are already doing in parish life and to ask how this can enable greater encounter with Jesus Christ and help people to meet personally with a God who loves them and desires a personal, life transforming relationship with each of them - from the youngest to the oldest members of our diocesan family.

You are encouraged to share what you are doing in your parishes around 'Encounter' through social media, tagging the Bishop (@BishopPMcKinney) or the Diocese (@NottsDiocese) on Twitter. Alternatively, you can send your stories to formation@nrcdt.org.uk As a diocese we will be revisiting the theme of 'Encounter' over the next few years, so please do share your stories about what you have been doing in your parish around this theme. It would be great to build up a bank of stories and experiences from around the diocese and to share these with each other over the coming years.

We pray that this Advent and Christmastime will be an opportunity for you and your parish to encounter anew the love of God the Father, which was made incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ, and offered continually to us in the power of the Holy Spirit. 'In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' (John 1:4-5)

Bishop Patrick on Encounter

Some excerpts taken from the bishop's Pastoral Letter, November 2018, which can be accessed here:

http://www.dioceseofnottingham.uk/application/files/5015/4133/8513/PastoralLetter_31stSundayofOT_041118.pdf

ENCOUNTER: I would like to ensure that people of all ages in our parishes, schools and chaplaincies are helped to discover, or discover more deeply, the importance of a personal ENCOUNTER with Christ; so that they can become convinced that they are each loved by God and are invited to grow in their relationship with him. In particular I would like to see the development of times of Eucharistic Adoration in our parishes, schools and chaplaincies.

Each year, over the next three years, we will try to deepen our understanding of, and our response to, these core spiritual themes. I wish to emphasise that this is not just another diocesan plan. These themes remind us of what Jesus asks of his disciples, 'Go make disciples of all nations,' they remind us that the Church is called to be missionary.

So, beginning this year, we will explore in our schools, parishes and chaplaincies the theme of 'Encounter' during Advent and Christmas, 'Discipleship' during Lent, and 'Missionary Discipleship' from Easter to Pentecost. I would love to see these spiritual themes become more and more a living reality in each of our lives, and in the life of the whole diocese.

Because when we truly encounter the Lord and his love for each of us and hear afresh each day his Gospel invitation to change our lives and follow him as his disciples, we will find that we want to share with others the difference that knowing and serving Christ makes to our lives.

Why do I believe this foundational encounter with the Lord is so important and needs such emphasising? Because without it, we cannot become effective disciples. If we ourselves have not allowed the Lord to invite us into his friendship and to guide our lives through his Holy Spirit, then how can we speak of this to others? It has been my experience over forty years of pastoral ministry that many Catholics dismiss such talk of a personal encounter or relationship with Christ as something Protestant, and so somehow alien to Catholicism. However, the truth is that the development of a personal relationship with Christ is absolutely central to a Catholic understanding of faith.

Suggestion No. 1: Feast Days as Points of Encounter

There are a number of feasts during Advent and Christmastide which can be great opportunities for encountering Christ afresh. These can often provide a great context for building some of the simple ideas, listed further on in this document, around and encouraging people to do a little something extra on these beautiful feast days.

Immaculate Conception

This feast day is often mistaken for the Incarnation, with people often thinking that it is Jesus who is immaculately conceived in the womb of Our Lady. Of course, we know this is the conception of Our Lady in the normal human way but being free from the stain of original sin.

Our Lady was chosen from the moment of her conception to be the Mother of God; she was invited into a relationship with God with her calling or vocation becoming clearer at the Annunciation. There are a number of things we can take from this as points of encounter:

- We are chosen – Christ has chosen us in our context to be his 'handmaid/servant'. Mary received the grace in her Immaculate Conception to be the Mother of Christ. God has also given us the grace in our baptism to live out our calling. This can be a day to remember our baptism, the moment we were first called to follow God, in the lead up to Christmas. A time to find and light our baptismal candles either at home or in Church, blessing ourselves with holy water and asking anew for God to show us what he is asking of each of us in our lives.
- What Mary receives is promised also to us – we are promised the grace to resist sin; in baptism we are freed from original sin. A good time for the Sacrament of Reconciliation to be available so that we can prepare spiritually for Christmas.
- A time of Adoration with Marian devotion – the Rosary, the Seven Sorrows of Mary, an act of Consecration to Our Lady or to renew our Baptismal Promises (the reason for this, as mentioned above).
- This is also the Diocesan Patronal Feast Day and can be a time for us to pray for our Diocese, our Bishop and our mission in this part of the country.

Christmas

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day can be a wonderful but sometimes stressful occasion for a parish, with many visitors and returning parishioners joining in the celebration of Mass. This time is of course a great opportunity for people to encounter Christ for the first time or for a renewed encounter. Things to consider can be:

- Joy – The secular focus on Christmas is on finding our happiness in things, food, drink, and presents. It can be helpful to build upon this by speaking of the gift of joy and peace that is waiting for us in the crib, in the gift of the child Jesus.
- No room at the Inn – with the influx in people it can sometimes feel that there is barely room to move in the Church. How do we help our visitors to feel welcome and 'comfortable'? How are we preparing to greet the visitors to our parish: do we have enough Mass leaflets (and parish bulletins) so they can follow what is happening? Are there materials that can help them engage with other events in the parish? Do we truly welcome people and take an interest in their presence?
- The Nativity Scene – The crib scene is a great gift for us to draw upon. How can we use this to help people encounter Christ? Invite people to take a piece of straw home to their own crib, this straw will unite their crib to that of the parish Church; with the straw could be a brief prayer that can be said every day at home in Christmastide. Have slips of straw coloured paper (plain paper is fine) for people to write prayers or prayer intentions that can be placed in the parish crib. This act is a gift to Jesus of our prayers. Beside the parish crib could be a prayer that accompanies this action.
- The Blessing of the Bambinelli is a Roman Tradition, celebrated by the Pope each year on the third Sunday of Advent. Children bring the Baby Jesus (Bambinelli in Italian) from the family nativity scene forward for a blessing. Something similar could be done in a parish, and it acts as a beautiful teaching point for preparing our hearts and homes for the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

'Therefore that "Bambinello" which we place in a stable or a grotto is the centre of all things, the heart of the world. Let us pray that every person, like the Virgin Mary, may accept as the centre of his or her life the God who made himself a Child, the source of true joy.' (Benedict 16)

'I address you in particular, dear children. Christmas is the feast of a Child. Therefore it is your feast! You wait for it impatiently and prepare for it with joy, counting the days until 25 December. I gladly bless the figurines of the Christ Child and the cribs you are making at home.' (Saint JP2)

Epiphany

The Epiphany is the sign that Christ's coming is not just for Israel, it is for all peoples, as these Magi were the first gentiles to come to worship him. Our celebration each year of this Feast is a reminder that not only did Christ come for all people then, but he comes for all people now.

- People could be encouraged to host neighbours or friends for a drink or a meal to bring out an aspect of this Feast.
- The feast of the Epiphany is also a traditional time to bless our homes for the year ahead. Chalk is blessed in Mass and then handed out at the end of with a short booklet for how to do this blessing at home. Again, this can be a great

time to invite neighbours or friends to take part. The rite of this can be found in the Appendix of this document.

Baptism of the Lord

The Baptism of our Lord is the start of the turning away from the infant Jesus to the adult Christ as he begins his public ministry. It is the return to Ordinary Time and the day to day living out of our faith. This could be an opportune time to review how our parishes can be a continual place of Encounter, a time to commission or highlight our parish groups our weekly faith formation, bible studies, Adoration groups, and present how we can live out the great things of Advent and Christmastide throughout the year.

It is important to remember that the declaration from God the Father comes before Jesus has publicly done anything! He is pleased with Jesus for who he is not what he has done. God the Father looks at us in the same way, he is pleased with us because we too are, in Christ Jesus, his beloved sons and daughters. This solemnity can be an opportunity again to return to God as our loving Father, to just be in his presence and allow him to encounter us. The Catechism has a wealth of good reflections on the 'Our Father', a prayer that due to its familiarity can lose its radical meaning. Jesus draws us to the Father because it is through Jesus that we see and know the Father. Time on this feast can be dedicated to:

- Stillness – taking a few minutes at Mass or at home to just be with God.
- Exploration of the Our Father – a reflection or examination of each line on a prayer card that can be used in public or private prayer.
- Adoration as way to express our love for God our Father - the Eucharistic Sacrifice is offered by the Son, through the Holy Spirit to the Father. A time of Adoration that focuses on images of the amazing love of the Father in Scripture.

Presentation of Our Lord

The Presentation of Our Lord has always been the time when the candles for the year ahead have been blessed; a reminder that at the Presentation of the Lord is a time when Jesus is revealed as the Light of the World; actions that can help us refocus on this:

- Encouraging people to take a candle that is blessed home to pray with as a family. Or a few tea lights that can be lit and then given to others, neighbours, family, friends, etc., as a sign that they have been prayed for.
- This would also be an opportune time to put on a Nightfever or similar event that encourages people to come into church to light a candle and say a prayer. This can be a time also to highlight votive candles in Churches and the symbolism of them.
- An evening Mass on this feast day could also be celebrated by candlelight, much like the first part of the Easter Vigil Mass

Suggestion No. 2: Sacraments as Moments of Encounter

"In particular I would like to see the development of times of Eucharistic Adoration in our parishes, schools and chaplaincies...

...I also believe that we can be helped to see each of the sacraments as opportunities for personal encounters with the Lord, as heart to heart moments; times when we are each invited to encounter the loving heart of the Lord, truly present and active in these sacraments, who wishes to encounter us as we open our hearts to him."

(Bishop Patrick, Pastoral Letter)

This suggestion is simply building on what is currently offered in parishes and thinking about how these can be better promoted, spaces created around them for moments of encounter, simple resources provided to help facilitate encounter, and some creative outreach ideas around adoration which might suit your parish context.

HOLY MASS

The celebration of the Mass is the main opportunity to experience an encounter with Christ in the week. Here our daily lives are offered up to God and become part of the Divine but the Sunday Mass can slip into our routine of the week and be another job on the to do list. Here are some suggestions of how we can prepare for the Mass as a point of encounter:

- Silence – Elijah encountered God not in the earthquake or the fire but in the silence. Our lives are full of noise and goings on, having the Church of a place of silence before the celebration of Mass creates a clear contrast to our other daily activities. Obviously, a community coming together want to catch up and talk this can be encouraged in the foyer or in the after-Mass tea & coffee. Alternatively, the silences that are encouraged in the Mass could be highlighted: during the penitential act, between the 'Let us pray' and the start of the collect, between the readings, after the homily, or most importantly after the distribution of Holy Communion.
- The Rosary – Advent is a great journey with Our Lady, the rosary does not just have to be focused on during October! A decade or even a whole rosary before Mass with a reflection on the decades as moments of encounter can be a wonderful way to prepare.
- Catechesis – after the changing of the translation of the Roman Missal in 2011 it was encouraged to have times of catechesis on these changes before Masses. It has now been 7 years since those changes. 5 minutes before the start of Mass, there could be a short input on a part of the Mass (as a point of encounter) with the four Sundays in Advent this could be the Introductory Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Dismissal, on each of the Sundays. Or this could also be done in the first few weeks of the new year.

- Adoration – a time of Adoration could help encourage silence before the start of Mass and also help remind all present that the same Jesus who we kneel in adoration of will be coming present to us so intimately in Holy Communion.
- A time of prayerful reflection – one parish has stopped giving out the bulletin before Sunday Mass. Instead what is given out is a sheet with the readings of the Mass on one side (pre-printed by the Catholic printing company) and the other side the parish priest puts a few thoughts to think about with the reading that links to the homily. At the end of Mass this is exchanged for the bulletin so that it can be used at other Masses. The priest has said that there has been a great increase in silence before Mass. An example of this is in the appendix.

CONFESSION

Resources such as examinations of conscience, penitential services etc could be repurposed from the Year of Mercy to emphasise Confession as a place of personal encounter with the Lord. This could be further supported by highlighting and promoting Confession times in parishes. Resources from the Year of Mercy can be found on the Diocesan Adult Faith Formation website:

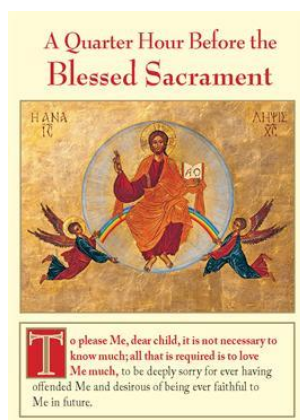
<https://www.bemerciful.co.uk/category/resources/>

ADORATION

Information Leaflets and Adoration

Do parishioners really understand what Adoration is? Here is a simple resource created by the Diocesan Adult Faith Formation Office for an Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Some people might need it explain 'what to do'. It's simple because it explains what it is, how to do it, and how to feel the presence of The Lord? One is for Leaders, one is for congregation. Why not organise an Advent or Christmas time of Adoration in your parish?

<https://www.bemerciful.co.uk/adoration-resource/>



CTS also produce small prayer cards helping guide people through 15 minutes of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament which people might find helpful:

<http://www.ctsbooks.org/a-quarter-hour-before-the-blessed-sacrament-fold-out-prayer-1>

Talks and Adoration

A simple idea from a parish has been to have 2-3 evenings of Adoration in the parish with a simple focus for Advent/ Christmas tide. This could be done on deanery level or with neighbouring parishes. A small talk (10 minutes) is given at the start of the evening reflecting on a particular theme; this could be given by a priest, deacon, religious or lay person. The Blessed Sacrament is then exposed and, if a priest is available, the Sacrament of Reconciliation could be offered. During the remaining 45 minutes of prayer time can be interspersed with short scripture readings linked to the theme, or relevant music can be played or sung (see below for more suggestions regarding music), but there should be periods of silence to allow Jesus to speak to people's hearts and to allow them to reflect on what they have heard through the reflection and scriptures. The final five minutes would consist of the Divine Praises and a simple Benediction. Themes:

Advent/ Christmas Encounter:

- Word became flesh – Jesus in the Crib
- Word became flesh – Jesus in the Eucharist

Mary as the Model of Encounter:

- God's request
- Mary's Yes – 'Your will be done'
- Magnificat
- 'She pondered all these things in her heart'

Christmastide Encounter:

- Epiphany
- Baptism of Jesus
- Presentation of the Lord

More information and reflections on these feasts and themes can be found in the preceding suggestion.

Nightfever

NightFever began in Germany after World Youth Day 2005 in Cologne. It began as an idea from two students and has spread to over 90 cities in Europe and North America. The idea behind Nightfever is simple: Open the church, invite people in, and let Christ work. And the effect is remarkable.

For this to work best, the church needs to have decent footfall of people passing outside. The church is lit by candles, gentle music plays (this can be live or other), the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, parishioners pray inside the church for the volunteers who go out and for those they may bring to light a candle. Then the volunteers in twos go onto the streets with candles to invite passers-by to come in

and light a candle. Some light a candle and leave, others may sit in the church for some time. Some are not Christian, others may take the opportunity to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the first time in many years. Through this simple outreach, hearts are helped to encounter Christ and there can be healing and transformation, not only in those who were invited in but also in the volunteers themselves. It can be an outstanding experience of Christ's love for all involved.

More information can be found at: <https://nightfever.org/us/location/gb/london/>

This has been done in a number of parishes across the diocese and for more information contact Fr Neil Peoples: neilapeoples@hotmail.co.uk

NightFever style events for Parishes without footfall

Many Catholic parishes do not have the footfall for NightFever given their location, however some of the same ideas of outreach, adoration and encounter can be applied in similar ways. One such event was held in a parish over a '24 hours for the Lord' style Adoration - giving parishioners a candle to bring back to Church and light during a specific period of Adoration.

At the weekend masses the week prior to the event, a short explanation was given at the end of Mass about the '24 hours for the Lord' to be held in the parish and people were given a candle (of a decent size, more votive light, that burns for about 12 hours in a plastic case) to take home with them. They were encouraged to come back during the event and to light their candle – perhaps for themselves, for family, for friends, in thanks for something, for something they were worried about etc. They were encouraged to drop into Church even just for 30 seconds or more if their busy schedules allowed, to light the candle before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and then to stay if they wished. About 300 candles were returned to the Church over the 24 hours, and benches were placed before the altar for people to leave them there. There were also bowls with little pieces of scripture on "God's word for you" so that people could receive a word for themselves to reflect on. More often than not, people stayed much longer than 30 seconds but just need gentle encouragement to come to Church and the Lord does the rest!

This event was simple and, while parishes might not be able to hold 12 hours of Adoration on a Friday/Saturday, you might be able to open the Church on an evening or Saturday morning for 1-3 hours etc and encourage people to return during this time to light their candles.



Early Bird Adoration

This was held in a parish with a lot of busy working professionals. Adoration was held from 6:30am to 7:30am every morning in Advent and Lent in the Parish Hall (easier to heat) and people were encouraged to drop in even if just for a few minutes before work as their schedule allowed. A small group of parishioners had committed to being there everyday, and others just dropped in as their busy lives allowed. There might be a piece of music played on a CD Player/iPod etc to break the time up, but it was essentially in silence and was concluded with Morning Prayer of the Church at around 7.15 for those still present and a simple Benediction. Tea and coffee and biscuits were set up self-serve style in another part of the Parish Hall, so people could help themselves at any point to a quick coffee before heading off to work.

Touch the Hem of the Garment/Healing Events

A night of healing prayer before the Blessed Sacrament based on the healing of the woman who just wanted to touch the hem of Jesus garment as she knew she would be healed.

'Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from haemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, for she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.' (Matthew 9:20-22)

Pulling together a Holy Hour around this Gospel:

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed and a stole or piece of fabric is simply draped around the base of the monstrance. This Gospel is proclaimed and a short Homily could be given, opening up the themes of healing and Jesus' desire to meet us in our brokenness, weakness and fragility; his desire to encounter us personally. The homily concludes with an invitation for people, at any point during the course of the Holy Hour, to come to the foot of the altar and kneel (if able) before the Blessed Sacrament; and to touch 'the hem' of the stole/fabric as an expression of their desire to develop or to deepen their personal relationship with Christ or to pray for healing of some kind. During this time gentle music could be sung or played, with plenty of time for periods of silence. It concludes with simple Benediction.

This could also be done 'Youth 2000' style, where people line up along the steps of the altar, kneeling if able, then the priest or deacon carrying the Blessed Sacrament stops before each person and they touch the humeral veil and offer their intentions.

Images illustrating both versions are shown below and contemporary music suggestions are further on in this document.



Adoration and Ale

Adoration and Ale is a monthly group for the Men of The Assumption, Beeston parish, part of the Catholic Man UK network. The men of the parish gather in the Adoration Chapel and have a Holy Hour. This is mostly silent with some prayers topping and tailing it, though if anyone has a thought, prayer or reflection to share they are free to do so. Afterwards they go to the local pub for a drink and social time. It has really built up the community links amongst the Parish and helped many men their work and their lives as Catholic men. Best of all, there is nothing to organise! It all happens naturally.

Music for Adoration

Music can be a simple way to make Adoration a little different, it can help people open up their hearts to what Jesus desires to share with them, and it can be especially helpful if people are coming to Adoration for the first time or after a long time. We live in a busy, noise-filled world, and music can bridge the gap between that world and silent contemplation of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Music can act as bookends/midpoint... but time should be allowed for silence, to allow Jesus to speak to people's hearts. Begin with a short time of Adoration if parishioners aren't used to this, and then expand it gradually.

Traditional chant and hymns are a good starting point. Taize chant is also popular, modern praise and worship, particularly acoustic tracks are often very focused on 'encounter', scripture based and repetitive, so people can sing prayerfully with them. In parishes where musicians aren't available or don't know this music, you could simply use an iPhone/laptop plugged into a speaker and play this in church. Here are some suggestions, which can be found on YouTube:

Elevation Worship: O Come to The Altar

HouseFires: Build My Life, This Love

United Pursuit: Lay it All Down, Simple Gospel, Nothing I Hold Onto, Set a Fire

Hillsong Acoustic: What a Beautiful Name, New Wine, Nothing Like Your Love, Christ is Enough, One Thing, From the Inside Out

All Sons and Daughters: Great Are You Lord, Brokenness Aside

More suggestions for Adoration Services (particularly for young people and children) including scripture readings, reflections and more can be found in the Diocesan document: ENCOUNTER HIM – A RESOURCE FOR SCHOOLS

Suggestion No. 3: Daily Prayer Routine

This was introduced into a parish at New Year. It was set up and explained during a weekend homily and then a hand-out was given to each parishioner. The idea was to help parishioners develop a daily prayer life, with a few helpful pointers and the encouragement to start with a minute on each point, and then to increase that as they get used to daily prayer and as their schedule allows. It was introduced in the New Year, as a 'New Year's resolution' and the challenge to parishioners to think about what just 4 minutes, at the start and end of each day, given to the Lord might do in their hearts and lives. The feedback in subsequent weeks was overwhelmingly positive, with comments from those who had never prayed in a structured way daily before, to those who used it as a tool to shake up their current prayer routine a little. See the Appendix of this document for this all on one A4 sheet of paper. Launch this in your parish with a homily over the weekend, and then distribute it the same weekend with people at the back of church handing the sheets out as people leave church.

The text of the daily prayer routine is given below:

A MORNING PRAYER ROUTINE

THANK YOU

Begin by thanking God in a personal way for whatever you are most grateful for today.

I OFFER

Make a personal 'offering' of the events of the coming day to the Lord.

Think of situations/meetings when you want the Lord to guide you in your decisions or to help you in some particular way (e.g. With patience, sensitivity, thoughtfulness towards others, etc.)

HELP ME

Ask for the Lord's help that you may walk closely with him in thought, word, and deed throughout the day.

FINAL PRAYER

Prayer of St. Richard of Chichester

Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

SUGGESTION

To begin with, just spend 1 minute on each aspect of prayer, and then expand each as they begin to feel more comfortable and as your time of prayer allows.

A NIGHT PRAYER ROUTINE

THANK YOU

Begin by thanking God in a personal way for any times in the day when you have 'sensed' the help/guidance of God's Holy Spirit (eg. with patience, sensitivity, thoughtfulness towards others, etc.)

I'M SORRY

Think over the events of the day and ask God to forgive you for any wrongs you committed in thought, word, deed or omission.

Then make a simple act of contrition

I love you, Jesus, my love above all things. I repent with my whole heart of having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

INTERCESSION

Bring before God anyone you wish to pray for (family, friends, parishioners, colleagues, neighbours), asking God to bless and help them.

FINAL PRAYER

Pray the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be, and then ask God to grant you restful sleep.

SUGGESTION

To begin with, just spend 1 minute on each aspect of prayer, and then expand each as they begin to feel more comfortable and as your time of prayer allows.

Suggestion No. 4: Bulletins/Social Media

A simple way to introduce these themes to parishioners can be through the inclusion of a quote in the parish bulletin or the parish social media accounts. These can be from Saints, Popes, the Bible, the Bishop etc and are an effective way of helping parishioners reflect on 'Encounter' as many take the bulletin home with them. It is also a good way to include the housebound, if they receive the bulletin when they receive visits from the parishioners/priest etc. It is just some food for thought, for prayerful reflection. Some suggestions around the theme of Encounter are linked below:

'I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since "no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord" The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.' (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 3)

'This is an encounter, not with an idea or with a project of life, but with a living Person who transforms our innermost selves, revealing to us our true identity as children of God. The encounter with Christ renews our human relationships, directing them, from day to day, to greater solidarity and brotherhood in the logic of love. Having faith in the Lord is not something that involves solely our intelligence, the area of intellectual knowledge; rather, it is a change that involves our life, our whole self: feelings, heart, intelligence, will, body, emotions, and human relationships. With faith everything truly changes, in us and for us, and our future destiny is clearly revealed, the truth of our vocation in history, the meaning of life, the pleasure of being pilgrims bound for the heavenly homeland. However—let us ask ourselves—is faith truly the transforming force in our life, in my life? Or is it merely one of the elements that are part of existence, without being the crucial one that involves it totally?'

(Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, The Transforming Power of Faith, 2012-3)

'The most beautiful and stirring adventure that can happen to you is the personal meeting with Jesus, who is the only one who gives real meaning to our lives... you perceive it in the depths of your heart; all that is good on earth, all professional success, even the human love that you dream of, can never fully satisfy your deepest and most intimate desires. Only an encounter with Jesus can give full meaning to your lives.' (Pope St John Paul 2)

'Thanks, solely to this encounter- or renewed encounter- with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we

let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelisation. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others?’

(Pope Francis, Evangelii Gaudium, 8)

‘The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps. Faith is a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, making of oneself his disciple. This demands a permanent commitment to think like him, to judge like him and to live as he lived. In this way the believer unites himself or herself to the community of disciples and appropriates the faith of the Church. This ‘Yes’ to Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of the revelation of the Father, is twofold: a trustful abandonment to God, and a loving assent to all that he has revealed to us. This is possible only by the action of the Holy Spirit.’
(General Directory for Catechesis, 53, 54)

‘Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us”.

We have come to believe in God's love: in these words, the Christian can express the fundamental decision of his life. Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.’ *(Pope Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est, 1)*

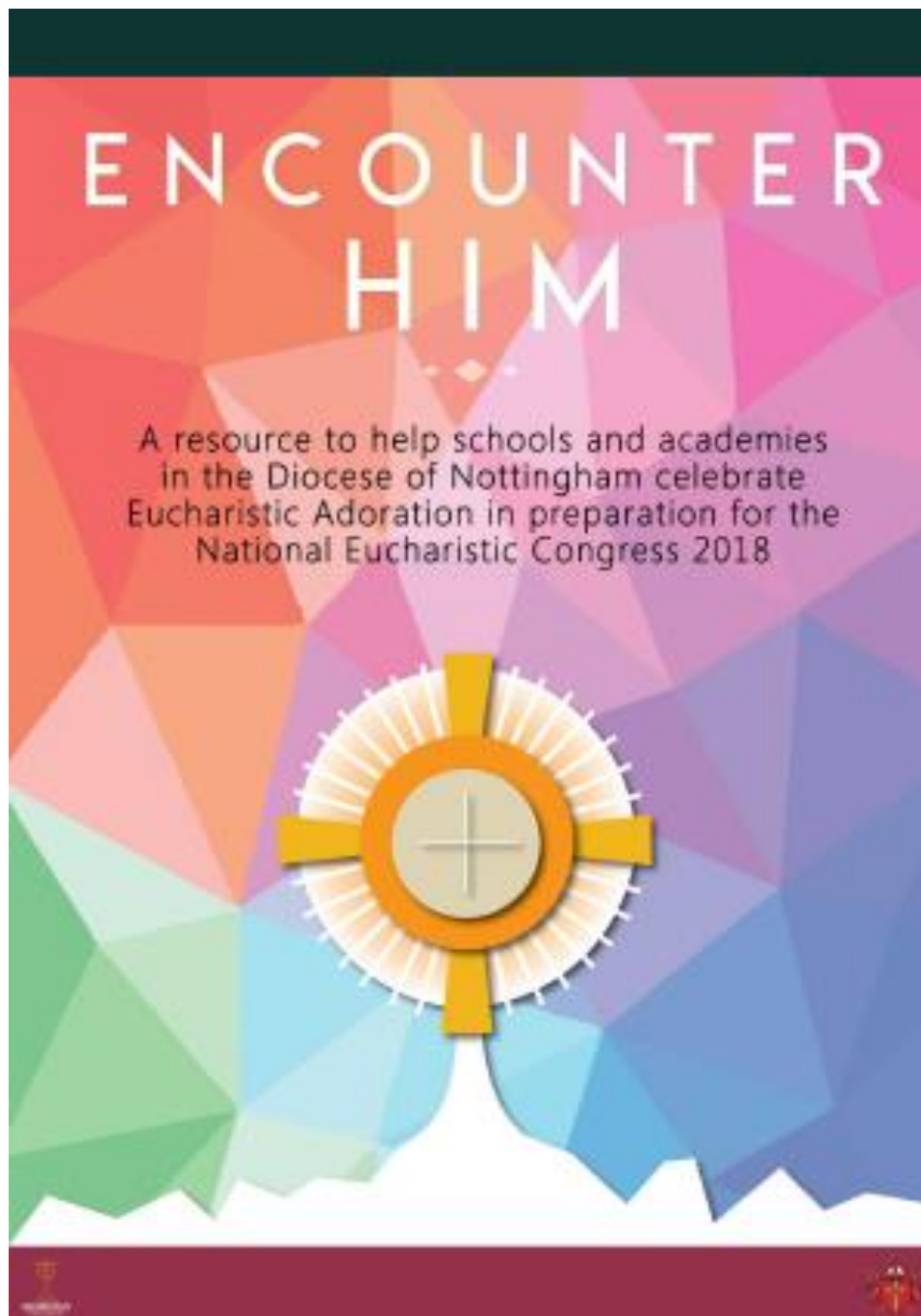
‘Because when we truly encounter the Lord and his love for each of us, and hear afresh each day his Gospel invitation to change our lives and follow him as his disciples, we will find that we want to share with others the difference that knowing and serving Christ makes to our lives.’ *(Bishop Patrick McKinney, Pastoral Letter, November 2018)*

‘God the Son became human in the person of Jesus so that we could know him, approach and encounter him, turn to Jesus and ask him to enter your life (maybe for the first time, maybe for the ten millionth time)! When we encounter Jesus with an open heart we are changed for the better, in ways we can only dream of.’ *(Unknown)*

Suggestion No. 5: Adoration as a Place of Encounter for Young People and Children

See the 'Encounter Him' Resource for Schools and Young People on the link below, a variety of suggestions for setting up Adoration and helping to facilitate 'Encounter' for children and young people of all ages which can be easily adapted for parish settings:

<https://www.bemerciful.co.uk/adoration-resource/>



Suggestion No. 6: Encountering Jesus in His Word

'Our prayer must be firmly rooted in meditation on that Word otherwise we run the risk of constructing our own image of God in place of the true God revealed in Jesus Christ. St. Jerome made it clear that 'ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ.' The Catechism puts it succinctly and eloquently: "The Church 'forcefully and specially exhorts all the Christian faithful . . . to learn 'the surpassing knowledge of Jesus Christ' (*Phil* 3:8) by frequent reading of the divine Scriptures. . . Let them remember, however, that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that a dialogue takes place between God and man. For 'we speak to him when we pray; we listen to him when we read the divine oracles.'" (CCC 2653).

In this context, I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of *Lectio divina*: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 25). If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church - I am convinced of it - a new spiritual springtime. (*Pope Benedict XVI*)

In this season of Advent and Christmastide we remember how the Word became Flesh and dwelt amongst us; how Mary pondered all these things in her heart and this helped her come to understand what this calling she received truly meant.

Time set aside for study and prayerful reflection of God's Word can be done communally in parish groups or individually. A number of resources are available for free or for reasonable prices across the Internet

Methods of Prayer: Lectio Divina Guide

<https://www.companionscross.org/sites/default/files/Methods%20of%20Prayer%20&%20Lectio%20Divina.pdf>

Walk with Me

<https://www.alivepublishing.co.uk/publications/walk-with-me/>

Bible Alive

<https://www.alivepublishing.co.uk/publications/bible-alive/>

FOCUS Bible Studies

<https://focusoncampus.org/find-a-study>

Blessed is She Daily Devotions (for women)

<https://blessedishe.net/devotions/>

SUGGESTION NO. 6: Talks/Programmes/Input

"The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church": it must be preceded by evangelization, faith, and conversion. It can then produce its fruits in the lives of the faithful: new life in the Spirit, involvement in the mission of the Church, and service to her unity.' (CCC 1072)

The Catechism teaches that for the Eucharist to produce fruit in the lives of believers, new life in the spirit and involvement in the mission of the Church, then its reception must be preceded by evangelisation, faith and conversion (see above). For many parishioners, it could have been many years since they had significant catechesis around the Eucharist and key tenets of their faith, and therefore it can be helpful to facilitate programmes in the parish which revisit areas of the faith in new ways and encourage people to respond afresh to the Lord's call in their lives. There are some good programmes for initial evangelisation and catechesis which can be used to help people explore what it means to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and provide opportunities for them to commit or recommit their lives to the Lord.

Some of these programmes are available for free, and a typical evening could consist of a simple bite to eat together, showing the programme, then a chance to talk in groups and offer feedback. In some parishes these evenings have been preceded by a short time of Adoration (say for 30 minutes before the main event starts at 7:30pm) and parishioners are encouraged to drop in as their schedule allows. This allowed the Lord to open people's hearts more fully to the teaching they would receive and, as the programme progressed, it was found more and more people would make use of the time of Adoration. A number of these programmes have moments of 'commitment', giving people the opportunity to respond to the Kerygma/Gospel message afresh, and some parishes have made use of the 'touch the hem of the garment' style Adoration event listed above to enable people to make that personal response to the Lord.

Alpha

Alpha is a series of sessions exploring the Christian faith. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation. Alpha is run all around the globe, and everyone's welcome. It runs in cafés, churches, universities, homes — you name it. No two Alphas look the same, but generally they have three key things in common: food, a talk and good conversation. More information here:

<https://alpha.org/catholic-context/home>

Sycamore

Sycamore is a new programme of evangelisation and catechesis for use in parishes, chaplaincies, schools and other settings. It consists of ten films that explore some of the core questions often put to Christian believers: How can I find true happiness? What is the meaning of life? Does God exist? Who is Jesus Christ? It deals with

topics such as the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Bible, the Christian Tradition, faith, prayer, love, vocation, and the purpose of life. People are invited to learn about the Christian faith, and to share their own ideas and questions without fear of being judged. More information here:

<https://sycamore.fm/>

Catholicism

This course could be used either as an initial evangelisation tool, drawing people into the faith through beauty as Bishop Robert Barron travels the world in this visually spectacular series opening up the catholic faith. It might also be suited as a tool to help parishioners explore the specifics of their Catholic faith more after an initial experience of the Kerygma. Journey with Bishop Robert Barron to more than 50 locations throughout 16 countries. Be illuminated by the spiritual and artistic treasures of this global culture that claims more than one billion of the earth's people. Learn what Catholics believe and why. Discover the full meaning of the faith. More information here:

<http://catholicism.wordonfire.org/#about>

The Gift

A Life in the Spirit course. An inspiring and practical series aimed at people of all ages to help them encounter the Holy Spirit and empower them to share their faith. Presented by well-known international speakers; David Payne, Michelle Moran, Charles Whitehead and Jenny Baker. More information here:

<https://faithcafe.org/collections/the-gift/products/the-gift-dvd-course-download>

ChristLife

ChristLife equips Catholics for the essential work of evangelization so that all people might personally encounter Jesus Christ and be transformed into His missionary disciples. More information here: <https://christlife.org/about>

Daily Prayer Routine

A MORNING PRAYER ROUTINE

THANK YOU

Begin by thanking God in a personal way for whatever you are most grateful for today.

I OFFER

Make a personal 'offering' of the events of the coming day to the Lord. Think of situations/meetings when you want the Lord to guide you in your decisions or to help you in some particular way (eg. with patience, sensitivity, thoughtfulness towards others, etc.)

HELP ME

Ask for the Lord's help that you may walk closely with him in thought, word, and deed throughout the day.

FINAL PRAYER

Prayer of St. Richard of Chichester

Thanks be to you, my Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits you have given me, for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.

O most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may I know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. Amen.

SUGGESTION

To begin with, just spend 1 minute on each aspect of prayer, and then expand each as they begin to feel more comfortable and as your time of prayer allows.

A NIGHT PRAYER ROUTINE

THANK YOU

Begin by thanking God in a personal way for any times in the day when you have 'sensed' the help/guidance of God's Holy Spirit (eg. with patience, sensitivity, thoughtfulness towards others, etc.)

I'M SORRY

Think over the events of the day and ask God to forgive you for any wrongs you committed in thought, word, deed or omission.

Then make a simple act of contrition
I love you, Jesus, my love above all things.
I repent with my whole heart of having offended you. Never permit me to separate myself from you again. Grant that I may love you always, and then do with me what you will.

INTERCESSION

Bring before God anyone you wish to pray for (family, friends, parishioners, colleagues, neighbours), asking God to bless and help them.

FINAL PRAYER

Pray the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be, and then ask God to grant you restful sleep.

SUGGESTION

To begin with, just spend 1 minute on each aspect of prayer, and then expand each as they begin to feel more comfortable and as your time of prayer allows.

Welcome to Mass!

Nineteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time, 11th/12th August 2018

Please turn over for the texts of today's Mass

PREPARING FOR MASS

Bread come down from Heaven

In last week's Gospel, we heard how Jesus spoke about himself as the Bread of Life, which has come down from heaven. Read this week's Gospel on the other side of the sheet.

- The people have heard Jesus say he is the Bread of Life come down from heaven. They take him at his word. They find this difficult to take, for they know exactly who he is—he's Jesus from Nazareth, and they know his family too! We too get very used to Jesus, and he can become commonplace to us, and we can take him for granted. Ask the Lord to help you to come to a new realisation of who he is.
- The people presume to know the fatherhood of Jesus, because they knew St Joseph. But Jesus is drawing them into knowing him in a new way. Not in relation to his family, but in relation to his heavenly Father. He has come from the Father in heaven, to make him known and to draw people to a new relationship to the Father. Jesus is still wanting to do this for you!
- Every day we eat food to live. It gives us energy and life. But one day we will stop eating this food. Eating food won't keep us alive forever. Jesus says he himself is the food which will keep us alive—to live forever.
- It is in the Blessed Sacrament that Jesus gives us himself as the true bread from heaven to eat. Jesus says we need to eat his flesh which gives life to the world. Ask for greater faith in Jesus' real presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

St Thomas Aquinas—prayer before Mass

Almighty and everlasting God, behold I come to the Sacrament of Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: I come as one infirm to the physician of life,

as one unclean to the fountain of mercy, as one blind to the light of everlasting brightness, as one poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. Therefore, I implore the abundance of Thy measureless bounty that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to heal my infirmity, wash my uncleanness, enlighten my blindness, enrich my poverty and clothe my nakedness, that I may receive the Bread of Angels, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, with such reverence and humility, with such sorrow and devotion, with such purity and faith, with such purpose and intention as may be profitable to my soul's salvation. Grant unto me, I pray, the grace of receiving not only the Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood, but also the grace and power of the Sacrament. O most gracious God, grant me so to receive the Body of Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, which He took from the Virgin Mary, as to merit to be incorporated into His mystical Body, and to be numbered amongst His members. O most loving Father, give me grace to behold forever Thy beloved Son with His face at last unveiled, whom I now purpose to receive under the sacramental veil here below. Amen.

Our Lady of the Assumption

Immaculate Virgin, Mother of Jesus and our Mother, we believe in your triumphant assumption into heaven where the angels and saints acclaim you as Queen. We join them in praising you and bless the Lord who raised you above all creatures. With them we offer you our devotion and love. We are confident that you watch over our daily efforts and needs, and we take comfort from the faith in the coming resurrection. We look to you, our life, our sweetness, and our hope. After this earthly life, show us Jesus, the blest fruit of your womb, O kind, O loving, O sweet virgin Mary.

PLEASE LEAVE THIS SHEET BEHIND AFTER MASS FOR USE AT ANOTHER MASS

☆ The Epiphany Eve Blessing ☆ of Incense, Water and Chalk

The old Roman Ritual provided a blessing of incense, water and chalk in church so that they could be distributed and taken home for the blessing of homes on Epiphany. The custom might well be preserved:

THE BLESSING TAKES PLACE IN CHURCH

After the intercessions of the Mass or after Evening prayer:

Blessed are You, Lord God of all creation:
by the guidance of a star You led the magi to Your child,
and by the light of faith You bring us to know Christ as Lord,
the Messiah You have sent.

Bless us as we burn this incense,
a sign of the fragrance of prayerful lives offered up before You;
bless us as we use this chalk to mark our doors in Your honour;

bless us as we sprinkle our homes with this water,
sign of the Lord Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan.

May the homes where these things are used in faith
be dwelling places of goodness, humility, self-control,
mutual respect for one another,
hospitality toward strangers,
and loving obedience to Your word.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. *℟/ Amen*

These are then distributed or made available to be taken home after Mass or Evening Prayer



NB: Attractive water holders are easy to come by and inexpensive if you purchase pint food containers from a restaurant supply store or even your local deli. If you order them in advance, most supermarkets can get them for you without any writing on them.

Chalk in quantity can be bought from stationers or school supply stores.

Incense can be burned in the home without charcoal simply by heating it in any metal container on the stove.

After lighting the incense (which can be held over a small candle flame within the foil) the leader says

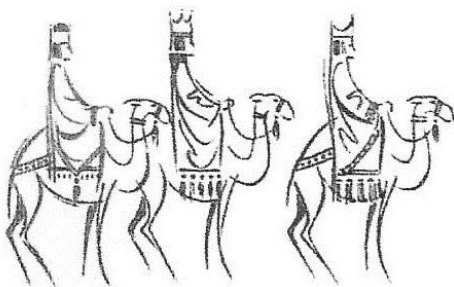
Jesus, Child of Mary and foster son of Joseph hear our prayer to Your Eternal Father. May all who come into our home this year rejoice to find You Jesus living amongst us; and may we seek and serve, in everyone we meet, Jesus who is Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit for ever. Amen

The rooms of the home are then sprinkled with the blessed water, a sign of the River Jordan. The incense should fragrance the home during a festive meal and the leader writes above the lintel or to the side of the main door

20+C+M+B+18

(the initial letters stand for "Christus Mansionem Benedicat" or "Christ bless our home and contain the three Crosses of blessing separating the letters and Regnal year of the Lord's Incarnation".

2018



**Epiphany House
Blessing**

20+C+M+B+18

When the song of the angels is stilled
when the star in the sky is gone
when the Kings and princes are home
when the shepherds are back with their flocks

the work of Christmas begins:

to find the lost
to heal the broken
to feed the hungry
to release the captive
to rebuild nations
to bring peace among the people
to make music in the heart.