



DIOCESE OF
SHREWSBURY



Shrewsbury Diocesan Schools

Journeying together as Pilgrims of Hope

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PILGRIMAGE OF THE JUBILEE ICON OF THE VISITATION

Introduction

We have a beautiful gift in the Church in the praying of the Rosary. Through the eyes of Our Lady, we can meditate on the life of Jesus and come to understand the Mystery of the Incarnation ever deeper. The Rosary begins with the Joyful Mysteries that tell of Jesus' early life, his hidden life, beginning with the Annunciation, the focus of the Angelus prayed in many of our schools at noon each day. The second joyful mystery, the Visitation, is a wonderful opportunity to meditate on the journey taken by Our Lady to meet her cousin, Elizabeth; to offer her help, support and hope in her time of need.

The Visitation is the inspiration for one of the windows in the Cathedral in Shrewsbury. Created by eminent stained-glass artist, Margaret Rope, of the Arts and Crafts Movement, the window depicts the young Mary, who travels 'with haste' after she is visited by the angel Gabriel, to meet her cousin, Elizabeth.



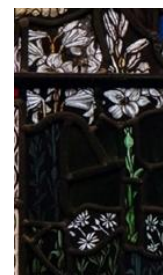
Elizabeth kneels before Mary recognising the great gift to the world that she carries: Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Elizabeth gives us the opening words of the Hail Mary exclaiming, *“Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!”* (Lk 1:42). Depicted alongside Mary and Elizabeth is St Cecilia, the patron saint of music. One might imagine St Cecilia offering musical accompaniment to Mary as she sings her great song of praise to God, the Magnificat (Lk 1:46-55).

It is this depiction of the Visitation by Margaret Rope that Bishop Mark has chosen for schools to mark this Jubilee Year of Hope. This icon will make a pilgrimage journey from school to school as a beautiful symbol of hope for us as a Diocesan family of schools to meditate upon, for the icon depicts the hope of Our Lady for the safe delivery of her unborn child to be the Saviour of the world, and the unfailing hope of Elizabeth in God's providence which bestowed upon her the gift of motherhood despite her advanced years. Indeed, Pope Francis spoke of Our Lady as *the pilgrim of hope* declaring, *“Hope finds its supreme witness in the Mother of God. In the Blessed Virgin, we see that hope is not naive optimism but a gift of grace amid the realities of life”*.



Reflecting and meditating upon this icon in the Year of Jubilee highlights the hope that is illustrated in the flora and fauna of spring that provides a backdrop to the three women. This depiction of the springtime in Margaret Rope's window evokes the passages from the Song of Songs that St John Henry Newman drew upon in his celebrated sermon *The Second Spring*, "*Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land.*" (Song of Songs 2: 10-12).

Newman used the imagery of spring as a metaphor for the renewal and flourishing of our faith and hope in God in the second spring of the Catholic Church in this land. A renewal and a flourishing of faith are calls echoed by Pope Francis for this Jubilee Year. Newman invoked the intercession of Our Lady, Mother of God, who with her maternal charity calls us to renewed hope, for the bleakness of winter fades and the flowers of spring bring hope, new life and a *time of singing*: "*Shine on us, dear Lady, with thy bright countenance, like the sun in his strength...O Mary, my hope, O Mother undefiled, fulfil to us the promise of this Spring.*" (Sermon 10, The Second Spring – St John Henry Newman)



Our Lady, Help of Christians, the primary patron of our Diocese, comes 'with haste' to



help us in our time of need, just as she came to the aid of her cousin, Elizabeth, in hers. Devotion to Our Lady, Help of Christians, cements her position as one who can intercede on our behalf, for just as she interceded at the wedding at Cana, prompting Jesus' first miracle, Mary continues to intercede for her children, the Church, bringing our needs and petitions to her Son. The title 'Help of Christians' acknowledges Mary's unique participation in the redemptive mission of Christ. Through her fiat, her

yes at the Annunciation, Mary became the God-bearer (Theotokos) and played an integral role in the Incarnation. At the Visitation, Elizabeth recognises Mary is 'full of grace.' It is this grace that The Second Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium* tells us "*began with the consent which she gave in faith at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross and lasts until the eternal fulfillment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this salvific duty, but by her constant intercession*

continued to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation. By her maternal charity, she cares for the brethren of her Son, who still journey on earth surrounded by dangers and cultics, until they are led into the happiness of their true home.” (LG 62). Mary’s cooperation with God’s plan of salvation extends beyond her earthly life, as she continues to assist Christians in their pilgrimage journey of faith. So, just as Mary travelled in haste to come to the aid of her cousin, *“so too does she shine forth on earth, until the day of the Lord shall come, as a sign of sure hope and solace to the people of God during its sojourn on earth”* (LG 68). Our Lady comes quickly to help and comfort us in all our needs and shares with us her son, Jesus, who is our light and our hope.

Three images of this Jubilee Icon will travel around the Diocese. These were blessed by Bishop Mark during the Mass of the Sacred Chrism at St Anthony’s, Wythenshawe, before the Easter Triduum. In his homily that evening Bishop Mark said, *‘It is the pure and sinless Heart of Mary which is of all hearts most closely aligned to the Heart of Jesus. And so, I wish this evening to send an image of Our Lady, as she is depicted in our Cathedral in the joy of her Visitation, to every school and college of the Diocese. As Pope Francis spoke of Our Lady as truly the pilgrim of hope, for he declares, “Hope finds its supreme witness in the Mother of God. In the Blessed Virgin, we see that hope is not naive optimism but a gift of grace amid the realities of life”’.*

It is hoped that this Jubilee Icon of the Visitation will be an opportunity in this Jubilee Year for us, pilgrims of hope, to grow ever closer to Jesus through his mother, Mary. In our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us ask Our Lady, Help of Christians, to come to our aid, secure in the knowledge that is her pilgrimage, that is her desire and that is her place in the Christian life.

Our Lady, Help of Christians, *pray for us.*

Whilst the Jubilee Icon of the Visitation is with you, we hope you will share the beauty and significance of this image and take time with your school community to pray for hope, renew your devotion to Our Lady, Help of Christians, and deepen your relationship with Jesus, who is our Lord, our light and our hope.

PILGRIMAGE OF THE JUBILEE ICON OF THE VISITATION

Practicalities

- The first school will be visited by a member of the Diocesan Education Team who will lead the celebration of the word (p7) in that first school to receive the icon.
- After this, representation from the first school will journey with the icon to the next school on the schedule.
- Please mark the handing of the icon from one school to another with the celebration of the word (see p7).
- The celebration of the word may be led by the receiving school or the school who is journeying with the icon. This can be decided when organising the handover.
- This pattern will be repeated until all schools have been visited.
- We are hopeful that all schools will be able to follow the schedule but if this proves impossible then please feel free to arrange a swap with another local school.
- **NB:** Please let Maggie know if there are any changes so that she can amend the master schedule.
- The icon will stay with each school for 2 days, Monday and Tuesday or Thursday and Friday with a handover on Wednesday and Monday mornings.
- With the icon, there will be an easel for display, a Jubilee year banner, a copy of all resources that have been shared electronically and a journal. Please make sure all these items travel with the icon.
- Whilst the Jubilee Icon of the Visitation is with you, please display the icon and banner in your school so that the whole school community may be invited to venerate it. *How* the icon is venerated whilst it is visiting your school will be dependent on individual contexts, for example, it may be possible to include the local parish in your prayers, reflections and meditation.
- There are suggestions for how the school community might engage with the icon included below (p10+).
- We would like each school to complete a page (or two) in the journal before it continues on its journey. If practical, include pictures of your time with the icon, and perhaps record thoughts and prayers representative of the school community.

We appreciate that more work will follow once the icon has moved on and the school community have been inspired. We look forward to hearing about and seeing the graces



and fruits of this wonderful opportunity offered by Bishop Mark, perhaps as your school's contribution to the Diocesan arts competition.

Thank you for your part in enabling this Pilgrimage of the Jubilee Icons of the Visitation to take place.

PILGRIMAGE OF THE JUBILEE ICON OF THE VISITATION

Celebration of the word for receiving the image

(to be led by the school that presents the image to the receiver school)

Gather

Music: Marian Hymn on entry

Leader:

This image of the beautiful window of the Visitation can be found in our Cathedral in Shrewsbury. The window was created by an artist called Margaret Rope. This image, this Jubilee Icon was blessed by Bishop Mark at this year's Chrism Mass, just before Easter. You will have seen the video of Bishop Mark explaining why he chose this icon to send on a pilgrimage of hope around our Diocese during this Year of Jubilee. By the end of this year this Jubilee Icon will have visited all the schools in Shrewsbury Diocese.

The Jubilee Icon depicts the Visitation, when Mary 'with haste' travelled to help her cousin, Elizabeth, who was soon to give birth to her first child.

Our Lady, Help of Christians, the primary patron of our Diocese. Our Lady comes 'with haste' to our help in our time of need, just as she came to the aid of her cousin, Elizabeth in hers.

(Name of School) receive this Jubilee Icon of the Visitation as a sign of our commitment as a Diocesan family to be pilgrims of hope to each other and to all we meet just as our patron, Our Lady Help of Christians, is for us.

Word

Leader:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to St Luke

Glory to you, O Lord.

[Leader reads the Gospel]

The Visitation Luke 1:39-45

[NB: for older pupils, **Luke 1:39-55** could be proclaimed.

This would include the Magnificat]

Leader:

Let us pause for a moment to allow God's word to enter our hearts and our minds.

In the Gospel of St Luke, we hear of Mary's pilgrimage journey to meet her cousin, Elizabeth. Having said 'yes' to God's call, with the Son of God growing in her womb, Mary may have set out on the road, apprehensive and anxious, but also full of hope, that even though the future was uncertain, she could be certain of God's great love for her and that he would be with her every step of the way. She carried the joy and hope of salvation with her as she travelled to visit Elizabeth.

Our Lady, Help of Christians, comes to our aid for that is her pilgrimage, that is her desire and that is her place in the Christian life. Our Lady comes quickly to help us in all our needs and shares with us, her Son, Jesus, who is our light and our hope. And so, we turn to him now in prayer...

The response to the prayer is

Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope

Mary, our Mother, is a model for the Church through her faith and trust in God. May we, like Mary, never waver, but remain steadfast in the Lord, living each day in faith and hope.

We pray to the Lord

Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope

May we, like Mary, answer God's call to share the Good News of God's love with all those we meet and come to the aid of those in need.

We pray to the Lord

Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope

Elizabeth recognised the Lord Jesus in Mary's womb and was filled with the Holy Spirit. May the Holy Spirit guide us to see God in all things

We pray to the Lord

Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope

The child in Mary's womb 'leapt for joy'. May the joy of the Gospel be always in our hearts and visible for all to see.

We pray to the Lord

Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope

In this Jubilee Year, we pray for all in our school communities, especially those who feel hopeless and lost. May we be a light in their darkness and an anchor in their storm.

We pray to the Lord

Guide us on our journey as pilgrims of hope

We ask Our Lady, Help of Christians, to come to our aid and pray with us, and for us, as we say

Hail Mary...

Respond

Leader:

We invite you to spend a few moments in silent contemplation of this beautiful image of the Visitation.

Perhaps you might want to take this time to be open to God's voice, speaking directly to you.

Perhaps you wish to ask Our Lady, Help of Christians, to help you to listen for God's voice.

Perhaps you have a special intention you might ask Our Lady, Help of Christians, to intercede for.

[you may wish to play some quiet music in the background, for example, the Magnificat or the Hail Mary put to music]

Mission

Leader:

It is hoped that this image of the Visitation will be an opportunity in this Jubilee Year for us, Pilgrims of Hope, to grow ever closer to Jesus through his mother, Mary. In our devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, let us ask Our Lady, Help of Christians, to come to our aid, secure in the knowledge that is her pilgrimage, that is her desire and that is her place in the Christian life.

Our Lady, Help of Christians,

Pray for us

[Consider closing this time of prayer together with another suitable Marian hymn, or a sung version of the Magnificat]

PILGRIMAGE OF THE JUBILEE ICON OF THE VISITATION

Suggestions for prayer, reflection and activities whilst the icon is with you (and after it has moved on).

Please record the visit of the Jubilee Icon of the Visitation to your school on a page in the **journal** before taking it to your neighbouring school. The actual icon can only be with each school for a few days but hopefully will continue to inspire us as it progresses on its journey.

Prayer

Devotion to Our Lady through Marian prayers e.g.

Hail Mary

Magnificat

Angelus (pray at midday each day)

You may also wish to ask for Our Lady's help and intercession through [praying of the Memorare](#) (listed in the PLD p78).

Older pupils may wish to [explore the *Sub tuum praesidium*](#). This is an ancient prayer to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the oldest known version of which is found on an Egyptian papyrus from the 3rd century. This prayer is used in Litanies to the Blessed Mother and as a concluding prayer to Compline. A partial indulgence is granted to the faithful who recite it. The papyrus is currently preserved in the John Rylands Library, Manchester.

Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei Genetrix. Nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus¹, sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta. Amen.

'We fly to thy patronage, O holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.'

[Pray a decade of The Rosary](#) meditating on The Visitation as a Joyful Mystery

Visio Divina (see sample script in the Appendix, including an adapted version for younger children)

Lectio Divina (see sample script in the Appendix)

Music: sing/listen to Marian hymns

Hail Mary (Boyce and Stanley: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kBicrhrcf8>); version with sign language and movement - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VZQjVI-P55w>)

Hail Mary (Mike Stanley – with signing - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PglEF7mTf2E>)

The Magnificat (CJM: <https://www.cjmmusic.com/songs/magnificat/>)

As I kneel before you (Maria Parkinson: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaDeqSotwoc>)

Holy is Your name (David Haas: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgwAuyccxes> to the tune of Wild Mountain Thyme)

Ave Maria (Schubert: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2bosouX_d8Y)

Sites of Pilgrimage – for in person or virtual pilgrimage; for research

Marian pilgrimage sites Walsingham, Lourdes, Knock, Fatima

Jubilee sites Shrewsbury Cathedral (visit the original window), St Joseph's Stockport

Our Lady, St Elizabeth, St Cecilia (Is there a parish/ school dedicated to Our Lady, St Mary, or St Elizabeth that you know of?)

Sub Tuum Praesidium (The oldest known invocation to Mary, in Greek on papyrus acquired by the John Rylands Library, Manchester)

The Arts and Wider Curriculum

Margaret Rope

Margaret Agnes Rope, born in Shrewsbury on 20th June 1882, was an eminent stained-glass artist of the Arts & Crafts Movement. Margaret often depicted women in her windows as she was inspired by the holy women in scripture and in the Church. Find out more about Margaret Rope, her life and work, here:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0493hfy>



<http://www.arthur.rope.clara.net/intro.htm>

Explore the life and work of the artist Margaret Rope. She has created many stained-glass windows in the Diocese. Perhaps there is one in a church near to you.

Artwork inspired by the icon

Drama work inspired by the icon

Musical composition inspired by the icon

Track the journey of the icon

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME TO BE A PILGRIM OF HOPE?

Creative competition for schools

Individuals, groups, schools are invited to respond to the question above in a creative way, for example, through art, creative writing, music or song. As school communities are celebrating this Jubilee Year and engaging with the theme chosen by Pope Francis, we know there will be many opportunities for our children and young people to explore this question in depth.



Schools may wish to hold a competition internally and then share the top three entries with the Department of Education. The deadline for entries is **Friday 26th September**.

Alternatively, schools may wish to enter the competition as a school, or as key stages. In these circumstances there is no need to hold a competition internally. Entries can be sent directly by the deadline.

NB: All entries must be submitted digitally (e.g. if the entry is a piece of art, please take a picture of it/scan it and send the digital image).

Please send all entries to education@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

QUILTED BANNER OF HOPE:

Instructions

The Department of Education would like to make a patchwork banner with the logo/badge from every school uniform in our Diocese to commemorate this Year of Jubilee. The banner will be simple English-style handsewn paper piece quilting.

For this quilted banner to be realised, we would like each school to make their own patch following the instructions outlined below. The link at the bottom of p15 takes you to 4 step-by-step videos that accompany the written instructions.

Please share the patches as soon as possible so they can be sewn together gradually but definitely share by the end of the Summer Term 2025. If anyone would like to get involved in the big sew together then please get in touch: jackie.walker@dioceseofshrewsbury.org

The aim is to have the quilted banner finished for the close of the Year of Jubilee.

You will need

- A piece of fabric with your school badge/logo on (the thinner, the better preferably a t shirt or polo shirt)
- Scissors
- A sheet of cm squared paper
- Pins
- A needle
- Thread in a contrasting colour to your fabric

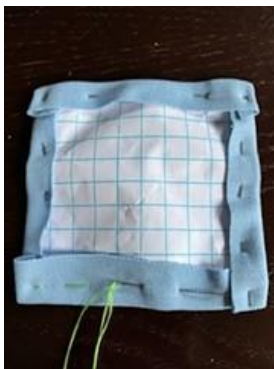


Method

- Cut out a 10x10 cm square from your squared paper
- Cut a slightly bigger square (11x11cm approx) out of your school fabric with your school badge in the centre



- Place your fabric on the table right side down, with the school badge facing the table.
- Place your paper square on top of the fabric. I find it useful to pin them together with a pin in the centre at this stage.
- Take each side of the fabric in turn and fold it over using the paper as a template to make a little hem and pin in place. I find it useful to pin from the corners.
- Focus on your corners making sure the fold is neat where the two hems meet.
- Take your contrasting thread and sew around the hems to make them secure.



- Remove the pins!
- Give your completed patch to your School Support Officer or post to Jackie Walker

Edging for the quilted banner

In addition to the school badge, if you have a spare school tie, could you make a 3 x 3 cm square out of the material so it can be used for edging the school logo/badge patches? Alternatively, please send in the tie with your completed logo/badge patch.

c/o St James' Catholic Primary School
Cheriton Close
Hattersley
Hyde
SK14 3DQ

If you have any queries, please email jackie.walker@dioceseofshrewsbury.org
Thank you!

Videos

APPENDIX 1

Lectio Divina: *The Visitation*, Margaret Rope

Lectio Divina will require someone to lead it with those who have gathered. If this is the first time the group have encountered this way of praying, it may be helpful to share this introduction.

Give at least 10 minutes for Lectio Divina, though with older pupils and staff this time of prayer could last 30 minutes. With each step, time and space should be given for Jesus Christ to speak to us, so do not rush.

Speak slowly and offer plenty of pause – between instructions, between questions.

[Busted Halo says, *Lectio Divina is a way of becoming immersed in the Scriptures very personally. It draws on the way Jews read the Haggadah, a text read during Passover that retells the Exodus story. Haggadah means “telling” and along with being a physical text, the word captures the practice of telling and retelling a story.*

The Christian form of Lectio Divina was first introduced by St. Gregory of Nyssa (c 330- 395) and also encouraged by St. Benedict of Nursia (c 480-547), the founder of the Benedictine order. It’s a way of developing a closer relationship with God by reflecting prayerfully on His words...

...When we practice Lectio Divina, we can imagine we’re actually involved in the events of Scripture. It’s an intensely personal experience. ([Busted Halo.com Lectio Divina beginners guide](http://BustedHalo.com))]

Introduction

Lectio Divina – sacred reading - is a time of prayer that allows God to speak to us through scripture, most especially in the Gospels, the good news of Jesus Christ, his Son.

Take time to relax.

You may wish to close your eyes and focus on your breath. Take slow, deep breaths in and out.

Concentrate on your breathing, blocking out any external distractions.

Invite the Holy Spirit to give you the grace to be open to listening to the voice of Jesus.

Jesus said, ‘*where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them*’ (Mt 18:20). As we light this candle, let us remember that Jesus is here with us. We are in the holy presence of God. (Light a candle, reverently.)

Make the sign of the cross

Lectio (Read)

To begin, simply listen to the word of God

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Luke

*[leader reads the account of the Visitation – Lk 1: 39-45 - slowly and with meaning
This could be extended to Lk 1:39-55 with older pupils]*

Long pause

Meditatio (Reflect)

Contemplate this passage again.

If it helps, imagine yourself in the narrative.

[leader reads the account of the Visitation. Again, read slowly and with meaning]

Pause

Is there a phrase or an image that stands out to you from the Gospel reading?

What is Jesus saying to you today through this reading? What message does he have for you?

Long pause

Oratio (Pray with the image)

What would you like to say back to Jesus?

What would you like to share with Jesus in this moment?

Take time to have a conversation with Jesus?

Long pause

Contemplatio (Contemplate the image)

Now let us sit quietly for a moment in the presence of God

Enjoy the loving closeness of his Son, Jesus.



Enjoy the stillness and the peace.

Long pause

We will close our time of prayer together with the words Jesus gave us:
Our Father...

APPENDIX 2

Visio Divina: *The Visitation*, Margaret Rope

Visio Divina will require someone to lead it with those who have gathered. If this is the first time the group have encountered this way of praying, it may be helpful to share this introduction.

Give at least 10 minutes for Visio Divina. With each step, time and space should be given for God to speak, so do not rush.

Speak slowly and offer plenty of pause – between instructions, between questions.

Introduction

Visio Divina – sacred seeing - is an ancient spiritual practice that involves reflecting on visual artwork. Using this gift of art and visual expression we invite Jesus Christ to speak to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. This reflective and prayerful practice motivates us to slow down and to listen to the voice of Jesus in a unique way. God speaks to us through scripture, most especially in the Gospels, the good news of Jesus Christ, his Son, and a visual representation of Gospel events can help to draw us closer to Jesus.

Take time to relax. You may wish to close your eyes and focus on your breath. Invite the Holy Spirit to give you the grace to be open to listening to the voice of Jesus.

Jesus said, ‘where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them’ (Mt 18:20). As we light this candle, let us remember that Jesus is here with us. We are in the holy presence of God. (Light a candle, reverently.)

Make the sign of the cross

Visio (Look at the image)

I invite you to slowly gaze at the entire picture in front of you. Notice the images; the colours; the light.

Notice the details in the foreground. Notice the details in the background. Where is the focal point of the art?

Work to understand the story told by the image. What do you notice about the expression of the women in the image?

Meditatio (Meditate on the image)



What questions do this image make you want to ask?

Note what has drawn your attention. Just like Lectio Divina, Jesus is guiding you to a treasure that is just for you in this image.

Take time to meditate on the part of the picture that has drawn your attention. If it helps, imagine yourself in the scene. Where do you place yourself? What do you see? What do you hear?

Oratio (Pray with the image)

As Jesus comes to speak with you through this artwork, this is your opportunity to speak with him.

Dialogue with Jesus about what you see in the image and what you think. Ask him to reveal what he wants you to understand through the image.

How is Jesus speaking to you?

Why do you think that Jesus has drawn yourself to a particular part of the image?

Is a message conveyed that is pertinent to your life today?

Do you sense an invitation?

Do you hear a call?

Has a memory come to mind?

Allow these thoughts to descend into your heart. What emotion has this image evoked in you? What word describes your inner stirring as you embrace this feeling? Allow the message Jesus offers to 'land' in you.

Take the opportunity to respond to the divine. Allow your words to be born in the recesses of your soul. What is your response? What is your prayer? Articulate any yearnings or desires that arise.

Contemplatio (Contemplate the image)

Quietly examine the image again.

Words are never sufficient to express our deepest selves. Turn to silence and simply rest in communion with our Creator – the God who loves you beyond measure.

Enjoy the loving closeness of his Son, Jesus, who has visited you this day.

Savour the stillness. Be soothed by Love.

We will close our time of prayer together with the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father...

APPENDIX 3

Visio Divina: *The Visitation*, Margaret Rope (adapted)

Visio Divina will require someone to lead it with those who have gathered. If this is the first time the group have encountered this way of praying, it may be helpful to share this introduction.

Give at least 10 minutes for Visio Divina. With each step, time and space should be given for God to speak, so do not rush.

Speak slowly and offer plenty of pause – between instructions, between questions.

You may wish to offer brief moments for the children to share their thoughts, if they wish too, before you move from each stage, but this opportunity should not be offered at the expense of the prayerful atmosphere. Return to silence after sharing before moving to the next stage of the time of prayer.

Introduction

Visio Divina – sacred seeing - is a time of prayer that allows Jesus to speak to us through art.

Make sure you are sitting comfortably.

Close your eyes and focus on your breath. Notice your breath in and your breath out. Try to take slow, deep breaths.

We invite the Holy Spirit into our time of prayer so we can be open to hearing Jesus speaking to us in our hearts.

Jesus can share a message with us through this image we are going to focus on in our time of prayer.

I will help you as we pray by asking you questions about the picture we are going to look at. Think about your answers in your head.

And as we light our candle, we remember that Jesus is here with us, just as he promised he would be whenever we gather to pray. (Light a candle, *reverently*.)

I invite you to join with me in making the sign of the cross

Visio (Look at the image)

To begin, slowly look at the picture in front of you.

What do you notice in the picture? What can you see? Have a really good look at the whole picture.

Notice the flowers and the animals. How many different flowers and animals can you see?

Notice the colours in the picture; notice the women in the picture. Who do you think they are?

What Bible story do you think is being told in the picture?

What do you think the women might be saying to each other?

Meditatio (Meditate on the image)

What questions do you have about this picture?

Are your eyes focussing on a particular part of the picture?

Sit with the part of the picture you are focussing on.

If it helps, imagine yourself in the picture. Where would you be? How would you feel if you were there?

What can you see? What can you hear?

Oratio (Pray with the image)

This is a picture of the story of the Visitation, when Mary hurried to stay with her cousin Elizabeth who was soon to have a baby.

Ask Jesus to show you what he wants you to know through spending time with this picture.

Have a conversation with Jesus about what you see in the picture

Does Jesus have a special message for you today?

What do you want to say back to Jesus?

How do you feel as you have this conversation with Jesus?



Contemplatio (Contemplate the image)

Quietly look at the picture again.

Sit in silence enjoying the loving closeness of Jesus.

Enjoy the stillness.

We will close our time of prayer together with the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father...

“Authentic God experience always expands your seeing and never constricts it...In God you do not include less and less; you always see and love more and more.” Richard Rohr *The Universal Christ*

Both adapted from the Visio Divina prepared by Sarah Bannister, St Winefride’s, for the formation afternoon on prayer.