



CHAPTER 3

Facilitating the Seeing the Word Reflection Guide

The *Seeing the Word Reflection Guide* is a necessary resource for *visio divina* for individuals, families, and small faith-sharing groups. It can be adapted for use with other whole community and liturgical events.

Individual

Individual meditation or *visio divina* on the illuminated Word increases a person's understanding of the Scriptures and relationship with God. In addition, it prepares one for the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist or a small faith-sharing group. The pastoral leader or chaplain might also use *Seeing the Word* on a pastoral visit with someone who is homebound, in the hospital, or incarcerated to explore suffering, end-of-life issues, healing, and hope. Particularly helpful illuminations for pastoral visits are the Raising of Lazarus, The Crucifixion, and The Resurrection. Some may wish to send *Seeing the Word* to a young adult who is away at college or in the military as a way for them to stay connected to the parish community. (For suggestions on using *Seeing the Word* for individual reflection, see handout 3 on pp. 94–95.)

Visio divina over time leads one deeper into meditating on the illuminated Word and contemplating the face of Christ and the movement of God in his or her life. For an example of *visio divina* on the Sower and the Seed, see handout 4 on pp. 96–100.

Family/Home-Centered

Most families have some kind of small shrine that honors their family and past generations. Most notable is the collection of family photos

parading down the hallway and over the mantel. Others will have a treasure chest that holds memorabilia of years past: pictures; graduation certificates; notices about marriages, births, and adoptions; memories of first footsteps and first words; and souvenirs from proms, college, military service, or first jobs. The church too has a treasure chest of Scripture stories, saints, sacraments, and church teachings. *Seeing the Word* will assist families in hearing the church's story.

Seeing the Word provides an opportunity for telling God's story—the family and the church's. Families can create their own rhythm for using *Seeing the Word*. It will most likely be dependent on the size, life cycle, and structure of the family. It is best if members can commit at least one family night or afternoon a month to *Seeing the Word*. While parents are the primary catechists for their children, some don't feel equipped for this task because they don't feel prepared to pass the faith on in a formal way. Parents should be reassured that *Seeing the Word* with the eyes of faith is deceptively simple and that the *Seeing the Word Reflection Guide* has both the knowledge and spiritual wisdom they need to get started. (See pp. 101–2 for handout 5: A Process for Using *Seeing the Word* at Home with Families.) The outcome of *Seeing the Word* is not about doing the process the “right way.” Rather, it moves people toward “being together” as they read the Scriptures, share faith, pray, and rest with their thoughts, images, and inspirations.

Parish Gatherings with Families

To nurture the practice of *Seeing the Word* in families, consider three models that incorporate both parish and home gatherings. Hosting seasonal gatherings for families in the parish provides an opportunity to check in, pray together, support one another, and build community.

Model 1. Year-long involvement with *Seeing the Word* with families committing to an in-home gathering once a month and three parish gatherings.

Example: Parish Gathering

September Parish Gathering: Launch *Seeing the Word* for families
(pp. 42–44)

Advent Parish Gathering: Birth of Christ (Luke 2:1–7)

Lenten Parish Gathering: The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)

Example: In-home Gatherings

See table 7 for a suggested series, p. 57.

Model 2. Advent commitment to *Seeing the Word* at home with families committing to a parish launch session the first week of Advent followed with three in-home sessions. The initiative can be called "Seeing Christmas." Appendix 3 provides a correlation of illuminations to use during the Advent/Christmas liturgical season.

Example: Seeing Christmas

Week 1: Parish launch for families (pp. 42-44). Families come to the parish to prepare for the Advent season at home.

Week 2: In-home session: Messianic Prediction (Isaiah 7:13-14; 9:6-7)

Week 3: In-home session: Word Made Flesh (John 1:1-5, 10-14)

Week 4: In-home session: Birth of Christ (Luke 2:1-7)

Model 3. Lenten commitment to *Seeing the Word* at home with families committing to a parish launch session. The initiative can be called "Seeing Easter." Appendix 3 provides a correlation of illuminations to use during the Lent/Easter liturgical season.

Example: Seeing Easter

Week 1: Parish launch for families (pp. 42-44). Families come to the parish to prepare for the Lenten season at home.

Week 2: In-home session: Creation (Genesis 1:1-5; 1:31-2:3)

Week 3: In-home session: The Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8)

Week 4: In-home session: Raising of Lazarus (John 11:38-44)

Week 5: In-home session: The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)

Week 6: In-home session: The Resurrection (John 20:11-18)

Week 7: In-home session: Road to Emmaus (Luke 24:28-35)

A Suggested Format for the Initial Parish Launch for Seeing the Word with Families

Set one or several volumes of *The Saint John's Bible* as a focal point in the room. They can easily be placed open on a music stand, adjusting the

height of the stand for younger children. You may want to assign a person to each volume to turn pages so families can see the fullness of *The Saint John's Bible*.

6:00 p.m.: Begin with a shared meal that can either be sponsored by the parish or families bring a food to contribute to a potluck dinner. Another suggestion is to end with an ice cream or dessert social.

6:30 p.m.: Welcome families to *Seeing the Word*. Have families introduce themselves and respond to the question, "Where in your house is your favorite place to pray?" or "What is your favorite Bible story?"

Encourage families in their vocation as domestic church and primary catechists of their children with these notes:

- Every generation of a family is challenged to leave the world a more beautiful and beneficial place than it inherited.
- The family is the first and primary community in which one's faith is formed and supported.
- As the domestic church, the family is seen as an evangelizing agent to its own household and to the wider community.
- As families grow in holiness and in their relationships with one another, they are able to mirror the household of God, reaching beyond themselves in love and hospitality.
- Remind families that the parish community promised to support them in the raising of their child in the faith at their child's baptism.

6:40 p.m.: Read aloud the story *From Illustration to Illumination, Part 1* to the families (see handout 6 on pp. 103–4). This will help to build a bridge between telling a family story and connecting it to God's story. Using *Seeing the Word* with families will help them share common values, heal family memories, keep their heart open to their neighbors, spread God's love, and fill the room with stories of a God who is very near. It will help them understand the movement from an illustration or snapshot of family life to an illumination of God's movement in their family life.

6:50 p.m.: Show the video “*In the Beginning . . .*” Fill in some of the historical development of *The Saint John’s Bible* from pp. 7–9.

7:00 p.m.: Lead families through an experience of *Seeing the Word* using the Sower and the Seed *Reflection Guide*. Have them sit with their family. Follow the same script for families that they will use at home on handout 5 (see pp. 101–2).

7:45 p.m.: Provide or create a ritual symbol for the family to take home to be a part of their sacred space for *Seeing the Word*. One suggestion is for a family to paint together a small clay pot and give them a vine with roots or seeds to plant. Another suggestion is for the family to write an opening prayer they will use when they gather in their sacred space at home for *Seeing the Word*.

8:00 p.m.: Gather families for their sending forth. Provide each family with their *Seeing the Word Reflection Guides*, a template for facilitating *Seeing the Word* at home (handout 5), and a schedule of family gatherings for the coming year at the parish.

Be mindful that family life is diverse and that those gathering will not all have the same family structure. Some will have two parents and children; others will be single-parent or blended families. Grandparents may be raising grandchildren. Some children may have parents who are in difficult situations and cannot make seasonal sessions. It provides a wonderful opportunity for families present to invite these children into their family group.

In the parish system, there may be other gatherings that draw together families or parents. Parent classes for preparing infants and children to receive the sacraments of initiation provide a natural place to introduce *Seeing the Word* and encouraging the practice at home.

1. Incorporation of *Seeing the Word* into parent preparation for children receiving the sacrament of baptism. (30-minute format)

Suggestions for *Seeing the Word*:

- Baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:4-11)
- Word Made Flesh (John 1:1-5, 10-14)
- Birth of Christ (Luke 2:1-7)