

METHOD

Thanks to all those who decide to use our Lenten Scripture Sharing this year.

We hope that the format of these Scripture Sharings may be of use to people who wish to reflect on the Lenten readings, but for different reasons cannot join a group.

We know that there are many well-established groups both in Kildare & Leighlin and outside who may wish to use these booklets perhaps by Zoom or other media this year... thanks for your faithfulness!

Here are some guidelines to help those who are reflecting in groups:

- Wherever you gather, some focus might be very useful, such as a lighted candle or an icon. This can be very simple but serves to remind people that we gather in the presence of the God who wants to speak to us through his Word.
- Before you begin, it might be an idea to use a small Taize chant or a well-known hymn, just to set the atmosphere.
- It would be good to pray the opening prayer together as a group.
- Take time at the reading of the Gospel passage. This is the most important part of the gathering. Allow for some minutes of silence afterwards.
- Arrange with someone beforehand to read the Reflection. Again, after the reflection, please allow for some time of silence. This can be followed by a time of sharing, but no-one should be put under pressure to say anything!

- The prayers given can be supplemented with prayers for the parish or community, or other needs as present themselves.
- The “Final Thought” is meant to give a small idea for people to take away with them. It can be read out loud, or people can read it in their own time.

Thank you once again for your faithfulness to this reflection of the Gospels. We hope it brings you the joy and peace that comes to those who ‘hear God’s Word and keep it’!



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge our newly appointed Deacons, Vincent Crowley, serving Tullow Parish, Liam Dunne, serving Rathvilly Parish & Chaplain in Carlow College & Eugene Keyes, serving Portlaoise Parish, for generously giving their time to contribute to our Lenten Scripture Sharing with such wonderful reflections and prayers. May these reflections and prayers inspire us all



1ST SUNDAY OF LENT

PRAYER

We come here to listen to your Word my God.

We keep vigil in these days with Christ, our brother.

Help us to have his openness to the fragility of our lives here on earth.

Bring us a new sense of our own dependence on you.

The time has come once more.

Help us to open our hearts, to turn around and hear the Good News.

With Mary, we pray:

Hail Mary

READING

It is a good idea to read the Gospel a number of times, at least twice. Give some time to silence then....

Remember, this is the most important part of the time of prayer.

First Reading: Gen. 9:8-15

Second Reading: 1 Pet. 3:18-22

Read the Text

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness, and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. *'The time has come' he said, 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'*



WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

Our ancestors noticed that the days *lengthen* at this time of year – and the word lengthen became *Lent*. These early people rejoiced in their season of Lent, as they set to work in preparation for the new life and the new challenges in the year ahead.

Christian Lent is based on our Gospel reading today. Jesus is in the wilderness. He is exposed to temptation and ‘with wild beasts’. He stands up strongly to these challenges. But why is Jesus fasting out in the wilderness? The answer is that the words ‘*The time has come, and the Kingdom of God is close at hand*’ signal the start of the Ministry of Jesus on earth. Jesus has gone to the wilderness to get closer to God through self-denial and prayer.

Let us follow the example of Jesus this Lent. Let us draw closer to God through acts of self-denial and prayer. Let our Lent be a preparation for the new challenges and new life in the days ahead of us. If we do, we will be in keeping with both the original understanding of Lent held by our ancestors, and the example of Jesus in the Gospel today.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes’ silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God calls us every day. We have a choice. We can respond to the call or choose to ignore it. Today let us ask God to open our hearts and minds to the call of God.

- We pray for those who have lost their way in recent times. In particular those who feel a sense of hopelessness. We ask God to restore in them the sense that they are Children of a God who loves them and can bring them Hope.
Lord hear us.
- Christ entered into ministry after his forty days in the wilderness.

Let us realise that in the wilderness of our world today, God gives meaning to our daily lives.

Lord hear us.

- We remember our own prayers, spoken and unspoken. We pray for these special intentions which are close to our hearts.

Lord hear us.

Together we pray to the Father in the words our Saviour gave to us.
Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

May, today, there be peace within you.
May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.

May you not forget the infinite possibilities, that are born of faith.

May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.

May you be content knowing that you are a child of God.

Let his presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, and to bask in the sun.

It is there for each and every one of you.

**Saint Teresa of Calcutta –
prayer for contentment.**



2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

PRAYER

God our Father, we gather once more in your name. In these unstable times we are encouraged by the assurance of the promise of eternal life glimpsed by Peter, James and John, during the Transfiguration.

We are also on a climb to the mountain top to find you in your Glory. Most of our Journey to you is shrouded in cloud and mystery. We earnestly pray for the Hope and the resilience needed to continue our climb.

With Mary, we pray:
Hail Mary

READING

Once again, spend some time over the reading, do not rush! God wants to talk to you in these words. Allow a number of people to read in turn, with a little pause for silence. If alone, read the Gospel text several times and pause each time for a little quiet reflection.

First Reading: Gen. 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18

Second Reading: Rom. 8:31-34

Read the Text

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark 9:2-10

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured; his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. *'Rabbi,'* he said, *'it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us*

make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and there came a voice from the cloud. *'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.'* Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them anymore but only Jesus. As they came down the mountain, he warned them to tell no one what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They observed the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what *'rising from the dead'* could mean.



WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

Just before today's Gospel section, Jesus revealed fully to the disciples who he was, the fate that awaited him, and what they should do when he was no longer with them. Jesus, The Messiah, saviour of the world, would soon die, he would then rise from the dead. After his Resurrection, the disciples should take up their cross and follow him. These are the essential messages of the Ministry of Christ. Belief in these makes us Christians.

Jesus then reveals a promise to the disciples. He brings them with him to meet Moses and Elijah, two of the great prophets of Judaism. Both prophets lived thousands of years before the birth of Jesus. Moses gave the Jews their Ten Commandments; the rules they live by. Elijah spoke with God. Uniquely he did not die but was taken up into heaven. Seeing Jesus with Moses and Elijah confirmed to the disciples that Jesus was Divine. It confirmed, beyond doubt, that there was a heaven, a next life with God, the ultimate promise of Jesus.

The Transfiguration ends with an instruction on how to receive this promise 'This is my son...Listen to him' This is also the message for each of us today.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

- We pray for honesty in our relationship with God as we look at our lives. God said we should listen to his son. Some of us will choose not to listen. Some are unable to hear the call through the noise and rumble of life around us. We pray that modern life does not drown out the voice calling to us.
Lord hear us.
- Christians believe that there is more to life than what we can see and what we can know here on

earth. We believe that our God promises a new life with him if we listen to his son. We pray that we do not lose sight of that promise

Lord hear us.

- Let us never forget the three-thousand-year legacy left to us by the prophets Moses, Elijah and the Messiah Jesus, which outshines the short term glory and short term wisdom of the world around us.

Lord hear us.

- Many people struggle with addictions. We pray that God will grant them resilience and courage in their fight for a new way of living. We pray for strength for their family members, friends and professionals who give them great support.

Lord hear us.

We pray through the intercession of Jesus
Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

The meaning of things and their purpose is in part now hidden but shall in the end become clear. The choice is between the mystery and the absurd. To embrace the mystery is to discover the real.

It is no more than a flicker of light through the cloud of unknowing. A fitful ray of light that is a messenger from the sun that is hidden from your gaze. You see the light but not the sun.

When you set yourself to look more closely, you will begin to see some sense in the darkness that surrounds you. Your eyes will begin to pick out the shape of things and persons around you. You will begin to see in them the presence of the One who gives them meaning and purpose and that is he who is the explanation of them all.

Mystery
(From the writings of Cardinal Basil Hume)



3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we come here today to touch the reality of your presence in our world, to renew ourselves in our understanding of your presence in our lives. Routine and habit can sometimes rob us of our zeal and enthusiasm. As we listen to your Word here today, renew within us the sense of urgency and enthusiasm for your Word. Each of us is a Temple, wherein your glory dwells, help us to clear ourselves of clutter and false joys that we might know true hope and faith.

With Mary, we pray:

Hail Mary

READING

Again, ask a few people to read the Gospel text. Keep it slow! Take your time; remember that God wants to speak to you in these words.

Allow for a few minutes of silence.

First Reading: Ex. 20:1-17

Second Reading: 1 Cor. 1:22-25

Read the Text

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John 2:13-25

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattering the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, *'Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market'*. Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, *'What sign can*

you show us to justify what you have done?' Jesus answered, *'Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up.'* The Jews replied, *'It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?'*

But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said.

During his stay in Jerusalem for the Passover many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he gave, but Jesus knew them all and did not trust himself to them; he never needed evidence about any man; he could tell what a man had in him



WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

Christ is angered. This is the image of Christ we find here. It is an image that has been abused in two ways. For some, they do not accept an angry Christ. They put this down to 'something like' anger, but the truth is that Christ here is angered about something that is important to him. Others use this image to terrify people, to present Christ as a very strict, authoritarian figure, who will 'deal with' those who oppose him in the long run. Neither image is true to the Scripture.

Anger is a natural phenomenon. It occurs, strangely, most frequently in gentle people. Nature allows them to get angry to protect what is important to them, which might otherwise be taken from them because of their gentle disposition. People get angry to protect what is truly important to them, what counts. It is an expression of what is important, what is truly valued.

It is significant that this happens just before the Feast of the Passover. Passover was a feast of God's care for his people. It was a feast that reminded the people of God's saving act, God's continuous Providence and their special Covenant relationship with him. The Temple was the place where the people were particularly reminded of God's presence to them.

When Christ enters the Temple, he finds it full of traders and merchants. Through loopholes in the Law, people had allowed this type of compromise and abuse. Here, in the presence of God, they had allowed exploitation and commercialism. These took over, to the extent that God's presence may even have been forgotten.

Christ clears the Temple. It is simple, clear and radical. For Christ there is no compromise, there is only clear-sighted zeal for the presence of God. It is as clear and as simple as that. Here we have his simple clear enthusiasm that will not tolerate compromise and half-heartedness.

This is perhaps one of the most challenging Gospels we read.

Compromise comes into our lives so easily. We compartmentalize God. God is in this, God is in that, we box him and package him and pay our lip service to him, but God will not be compartmentalized! The challenge here is, once again, to stretch the parameters we have set on God in our life and in our world; to allow God to be God, and to have a real enthusiasm and zeal for life, for faith, for service and for the call to seek God and to follow him.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

John the Evangelist tells us that Jesus is angered as he protects the Temple which is truly important to him. Throughout our world many too are angered with a sense of abandonment as they witness the effects of the coronavirus on our daily lives.

Today we pray that we may experience the presence of God in our lives through the witness of others.

- For all who are affected by coronavirus, through illness or isolation or anxiety, that they may find relief and recovery.

How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth!

- For those who are guiding our nation at this time, and shaping national policies, that they may make wise decisions.

How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth!

- For all the front-line workers, doctors, nurses and medical researchers, that through their skill, insights and care many will be restored to health.

How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth!

- For the vulnerable and the fearful,
for the gravely ill and the dying,
that they may know your comfort
and peace.
**How great is your name, O Lord
our God, through all the earth!**
- For your own personal intentions.
**How great is your name, O Lord
our God, through all the earth!**

We commend ourselves, and all for whom
we pray, to the mercy and protection of
God, as we pray:
Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

I am convinced that all human beings
have an inborn desire for God . . .
this desire is our deepest longing
and our most precious treasure.

Gerald May

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4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you have sent Jesus Christ among us to be the light of the World. At this time of year, the light returns. The days stretch bit by bit. Our world sees new life and growth. Help us to look to your Word and recognize Jesus your Son as the Light of the world, the light that overcomes our darkness.

With Mary, we pray:

Hail Mary

READING

The reading today is deceptively short, but every word is loaded with meaning. It would be best to read it at least two or three times. Allow a silent pause between each reading for personal reflection.

First Reading: 2 Chr. 36:14-16, 19-23

Second Reading: Eph. 2:4-21

Read the Text

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:

'The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life. For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has refused to believe in the name of God's only Son.

On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world people have shown they prefer

darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the person who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what they do is done in God'



WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

Nicodemus comes to Jesus. He is impressed by him and the works that he has done, but he is at the same time perplexed. He knows that he comes from God, that is obvious from his works, but what message does he bring from God? That is what is really bothering Nicodemus. What must he do? How must he respond to God's message?

We all feel like that a little from time to time. What road must I take? Should I marry this person or not? Should I take this job or not? Should I think of priesthood or religious life or not? Nicodemus comes to Jesus 'by night'. That is more than just timing. He comes in the night of human uncertainty and human difficulty. He comes in the night of that great question that all honest people ask, 'What does God want of me?' Yes, this man has come from God. Nicodemus decides to ask him.

Jesus begins by reminding people of the story of Moses and the serpent in the desert. During their time in the desert, the people were attacked by serpents. Anyone who was bitten by a serpent risked serious illness and death. Moses prayed and was instructed by God to fashion a bronze serpent. Those bitten by serpents were to come and look at this bronze serpent and they would recover. The image of the bronze serpent was the image of God's saving power for his people in the desert.

Now it is different. God's saving love is shown in the Son who has come among us. This time people who are bitten by the serpents of human weakness and hurt, bitten by the serpents of self-doubt or fear, bitten by the serpents that question us and hinder us, can look at the Son, who comes from God with this simple message, God loves us so much that he sent his Son among us, so that everyone who believes in him can come to the fullness of life with God.

God's Son did not come for judgement. Judgement is for us to make. Sure, we are

often confused and unsure, but often we start with the wrong question. It is not so much in tormenting ourselves about various things that we respond to God, but rather in looking to the light that has come into the world with Jesus Christ. This is the first thing to be done, to choose Christ, to choose the light, to live by that truth and then to do everything in that light.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

- Gathered in the light of faith, in the light of Jesus Christ, we pray for ourselves and the world around us; We pray for the blind and for those whose sight is impaired.
Jesus, light of the world, we believe!
- We pray for ourselves. We leave with God all the areas of our life that are in darkness.
Jesus, light of the world, we believe!
- We ask God to give us a renewed sense of the wonder of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that place where our darkness can come into the light of God's mercy.
Jesus, light of the world, we believe!
- We leave with God all the many prayers of our hearts (short pause).
Jesus, light of the world, we believe!

With confidence and hope, we pray
Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

Some people will be familiar with the book by J.R.R. Tolkien 'The Two Towers'. At the end of the book, there is a siege. The heroes are driven into the very

last refuge of the fortress. They have held out for almost three days. Now the dawn is breaking; they hear the enemy battering at the door. They are too few and too badly wounded to defeat them. Their situation seems utterly hopeless. It seems inevitable that they shall simply skulk in the darkness until their doom falls upon them.

A few rays of light fall into the darkened room. They begin to take courage. No, they will not sit and wait for the inevitable! They will ride out and face the rising sun rather than sit and wait in misery. In a flurry of excitement, they mount their horses and ride out to face their enemy, riding towards the morning sun.

What happens next? Before such bravery, enemies flee. Also, from the East, illuminated by the Rising Sun, reinforcements arrive. Their decision to ride out into the light rather than skulk in the darkness has made all the difference. Christ challenges us to do the same in the Gospel today, to move out of our darkness of self-doubt and discouragement to face the rising sun that comes from God.



5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

PRAYER

Loving Father grant us the wisdom to understand your will for our lives. Help us to detach from the mundane and to seek to produce much fruit from the single grain that we are, which we choose to nourish and ripen through your Word. Enable us to always feel your presence during difficult times and to place our trust in you, that when we feel entombed, that is when we are about to see the fruits of our labour. With Mary, we pray:
Hail Mary

READING

Once again, in the reading today, we are brought to a sense of the drama of living and dying. Please spend some time on reading this text, even if it seems long!!

First Reading: Jer. 31:31-34

Second Reading: Heb. 5:7-9

Read the Text

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John 12:20-30

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, *'Sir, we should like to see Jesus.'* Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them: *'Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life. If a person serves me, they must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my*

Father will honour them. Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour.

Father, glorify your name!'

A voice came from heaven, *'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'* People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, *'It was an angel speaking to him.'* Jesus answered, *'It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours. Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself.'*

By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.



WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

In today's Gospel reading, Philip and Andrew tell Jesus that some Greeks, most likely gentiles (non-Jews), wish to see him. They are probably delighted that even non-Jewish people are celebrating Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem with great fanfare. They most likely feel delight that Jesus' years of ministry have come to fruition and he has gained more followers. You can imagine what their confusion must have been when Jesus' response is *'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone, but if it dies, it produces much fruit.'*

What we see in Jesus' reply is that God has much bigger plans than we could ever understand, and a much different way of bringing about spiritual fruit that we humans could ever devise. The visiting gentiles are only a taste of what God has planned as Jesus tells us this when he says; *'And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself.'* Jesus reminds us that God works through death and resurrection, and it is through this way that God brings about spiritual fruit. The fruit cannot be borne unless the seed is placed in the earth.

Jesus is the seed of eternal life. Although in distress, he is willing to die so that new life will be brought to many. He is that seed that is laid within the earth, and after three days emerges, bringing new life, hope and vindication for having placed full trust in God.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Father, we open our hearts to you in prayer, bringing our needs and the needs of the whole world to you in confidence of your loving response.

- May we become like the grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies so that it might bear much fruit. May we leave behind the sinful parts of our lives. This is where we come to fruition in Jesus; in the letting go, the emptying, and the dying, to make space for new life to arise.

We pray to the Lord

- Following a very difficult year throughout the world due to the coronavirus pandemic, may we experience new growth in our care for one another and continue to foster the renewed community spirit that has developed in the worldwide fight against the virus.

We pray to the Lord

- In the same way that Jesus taught his disciples in today's Gospel reading, grant us the wisdom to understand that God has much bigger plans than we can imagine, and a much different way of bringing about spiritual fruit than we can ever contemplate.

We pray to the Lord

- In our lives, we also have moments like Jesus, when we know we need to make a journey that will be difficult and painful. Help us to surrender ourselves into God's hands. Make us trust God to be with us. Set within us the firm belief that God also will strengthen and console us.

We pray to the Lord

From the depth of our heart we pray:
Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

Often it seems that God does not exist all around us we see persistent injustice, evil, indifference and cruelty. But it is also true that in the midst of darkness something new always springs to life and sooner or later produces fruit. On razed land life breaks through, stubbornly yet invincibly. However dark things are, goodness always re-emerges and spreads. Each day in our world beauty is born anew, it rises transformed through the storms of history. Values always tend to reappear under new guises, and human beings have arisen time after time from situations that seemed doomed. Such is the power of the resurrection, and all who evangelize are instruments of that power.

Pope Francis (Evangelii Gaudium #276)

PALM SUNDAY



PRAYER

Whenever the time for change comes, and things become hard to do, and we feel lost or hesitant, Lord, help us to remember the final journey that your Son made with his disciples. Give us the strength to journey into the unknown and to feel your presence by our side. May our journey be one of peace and allow us to see the things you see, so we can follow you in your path.

With Mary, we pray:

Hail Mary

READING

Instead of the Passion, we suggest reading the text of the Gospel for the Procession with Palm branches. The entire Passion is too long. This text also has the advantage of allowing people to concentrate on the coming of Christ into their lives at the end of this time of Lent. Read the text several times, allowing due time for quiet reflection.

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7

Second Reading: Phil. 2:6-11

Gospel: Matt. 14:1-15, 47

Read the Text

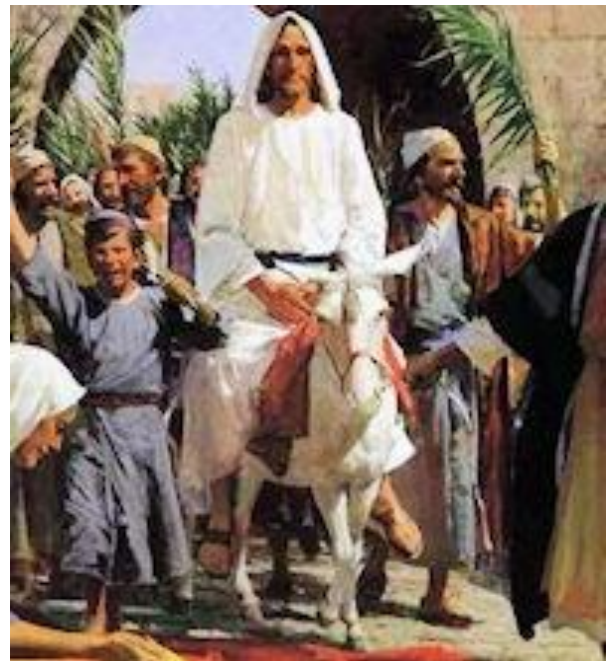
A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mk. 11:1-10

When they were approaching Jerusalem, in sight of Bethphage and Bethany, close by the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, *'Go off to the village facing you, and as soon as you enter it you will find a tethered colt that no one has yet ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you are to say this, 'The Master needs it.'*' The messengers went off and found everything just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owner said, *'Why are you untying that*

colt?' and they answered, *'The Master needs it.'*

So they took the colt to Jesus, and throwing their garments over its back they helped Jesus on to it. As he moved off, people spread their cloaks in the road, and now, as he was approaching the downward slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole group of disciples joyfully began to praise God at the top of their voices for all the miracles they had seen. They cried out: *'Blessings on the King who comes, in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens!'*

Some Pharisees in the crowd said to him, *'Master, check your disciples,'* but he answered, *'I tell you, if these keep silence the stones will cry out.'*



WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

REFLECTION

Jesus uncharacteristically makes a request on his own behalf. He sends two of his disciples to retrieve a colt from another village which he will sit upon to enter Jerusalem.

This is unusual for Jesus because he walked everywhere with his followers, and it was customary for pilgrims, those travelling to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, to travel on foot. The use of the colt has great significance. His mounted entry was a dramatic way to convey his status. He is a King riding a King's mount. A King would ride a horse into battle, but a donkey when he came in peace.

How could something as insignificant as a mere donkey be of any use to God's Kingdom? However, Jesus used it for his grand entrance as he was about to fulfil the Old Testament prophecy (Zechariah 9:9-10) and enter Sion as king. The lesson for us is that God can take our humble offerings and make them great. He can accept our modest gifts in ways that we could never anticipate. It is not a matter of providing the most useful gift, but making ourselves' available to God's call, and being ready to answer that call. If we do, we can be assured that God will make something important of us and our faithful service.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

- As we enter into the holiest week of the liturgical year, let us consider our call to bring the power of Christ's redeeming love to those who suffer crucifixion in our own times: to refugees who make perilous journeys only to be turned away; to those of minority ethnic cultures who are not given a voice; to those who campaign so hard for climate change policy; to those

who suffer religious persecution throughout the world.

We pray to the Lord

- We pray for all world leaders, that they may aspire to journey in humility and peace in their work to bring unity to all nations.

We pray to the Lord

- Bless all nations, Lord, with your mercy, and allow justice to prevail through them all. Let your triumph roam free in all lands as we strive for peace and freedom. Have compassion as you judge us when we stand before you.

We pray to the Lord

- Lord, open our eyes to see the importance of what seems insignificant in our lives. Let us see what you want us to see. Help us all to have the confidence not to waver in our faith but to be steadfast in our hearts.

We pray to the Lord

Jesus was always focused on the Father and on God's kingdom.... we pray that our lives may be focused on God as we pray for the coming of the Kingdom.

Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

Heavenly Father keep us reminded to live our lives to the fullest, despite the troubles that may lie ahead for us. For the road may go uphill all the way 'til the end, and the journey takes a long time, and those who accompany us may fall away before the journey's end, but once we affirm our trust in you, we can face the challenges life gives us with unwavering bravery.

Lead us to always trust you and to place ourselves in your hands. Help us to stand firm wherever we go. Grant us the fortitude to bring love where hatred lies and to heal and pardon the injustices against us.



HOLY THURSDAY

God Our Father
we thank you for the gifts you
have given us.
Today we remember how perfect
Christ's love is,
a love made flesh in humble service of
others.
We celebrate today the gift of Christ to
all his followers;
In him we see and taste your
goodness!
Be with us all our days
and help us to live the new
commandment of love.



HOLY SATURDAY

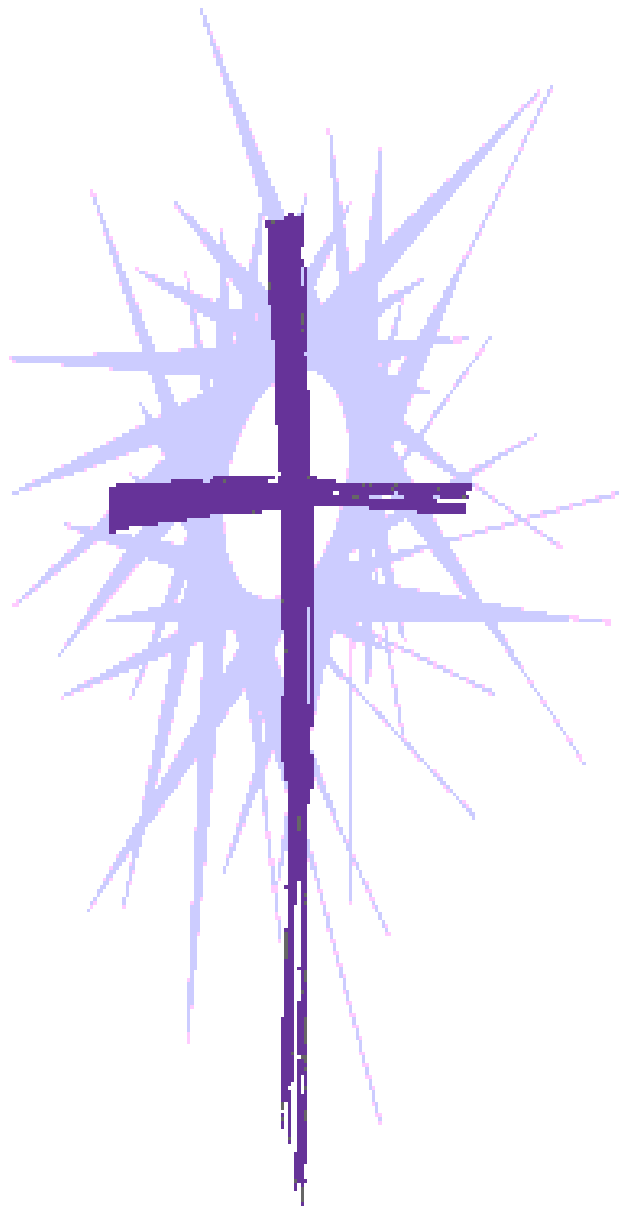
The world waits today in a strange
silence,
night awaits dawn,
darkness awaits the light,
sins await forgiveness,
hurt awaits healing,
despair awaits hope.
Mary in tears waits by the Empty
tomb.....



GOOD FRIDAY

It is cold on the Hill of Calvary Lord.
Mary knew it; she was a mother whose
heart broke to see her son die.
John knew it; he was faithful and felt
the blows rain down on his friend.
Mary Magdalene knew it; she had
loved too much and that was her crime
and her pain.
Others know it in our world,
those whose lives are ruined by drugs,
those whose homes are far away,
those who have lost all they own,
those who are frightened of what the
day may bring.
They too ask, 'Have you abandoned
us?'
Let them know that you are with
them!
With you there, it is not so cold on that
hill.





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