

SCRIPTURE SHARING



Lent 2022

METHOD

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

We hope that the format of these Scriptures 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 ... thanks for your faithfulness!

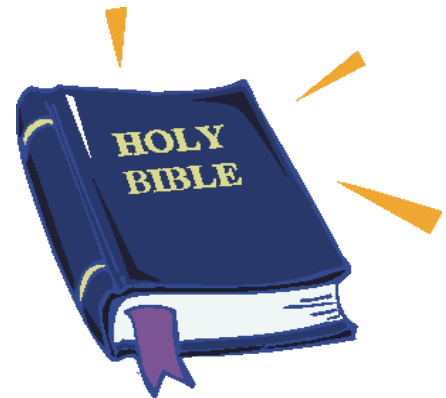
Here are some guidelines to help those who are reflecting in groups:

- 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 some of our retired & semi-retired priests, Mgrs. Brendan Byrne & Caoimhín Ó Neill, Frs. Tom Lalor, Francis MacNamara, Noel Dunphy & Denis Harrington 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

When he calls, I shall answer ‘I am with you.’ I will save him in distress

PRAYER

Blessed Michael, the Archangel, defend us in the hour of conflict.

Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

May God restrain him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O prince of the heavenly host, thrust Satan down to hell, and with him, all the other wicked spirits who wander through the world for the ruin of souls.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, we place all our trust in you. (x3)

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: Deut. 26:4-10

Psalm 90:1-2, 10-15

Second Reading: Rom. 10:8-13

READ THE TEXT

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 4:1-13

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time, he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, ‘*If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.*’ But

Jesus replied, ‘*Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone.*’ Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, ‘*I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours.*’ But Jesus answered him, ‘*Scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.*’ Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. ‘*If you are the Son of God*’, he said to him ‘*throw yourself down from here, for scripture says: He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you*’, And again: ‘*They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.*’ But Jesus answered him, ‘*It has been said: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.*’ Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him, to return at the appointed time.

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 was tempted ‘*by the devil for forty days*’; ongoing, not just on the 40th day. Three areas of temptation are recounted by Luke, giving us the conversation between the two protagonists. No doubt the Tempter makes similar proposals to ourselves. Have I the faith to make my own the reply of Jesus?

1. ‘*Jesus was led by the Spirit through the wilderness.*’ No food, no fruit, plenty of stones. ‘*He was hungry.*’
Tempter to Jesus: Quietly turn a few of these stones into bread. No one is around. No one will know. Hunger won’t be distracting you then. You’ll

have more comfort and energy to pray.

Tempter to me: No need to fast; no need to be hungry. Take the choicest food, drink, entertainment, reading. Be comfortable. Important for your health. You'll pray better.

Jesus' reply: *'Man does not live on bread alone.'* There's more to life than bodily comforts. It is challenging to accept physical discomfort. What is the true meaning of life?

2. *'Leading him to a height'*. Key moments in Old and New Testaments occur on mountain tops – Sinai, Carmel, Sermon on the Mount, Transfiguration, Calvary. That is where power is handed out.

Tempter to Jesus: Isn't this what you came on earth for, to have power over the kingdoms of the world? Now, that's mine to give you. Use this political power to secure faith in you. You can have it all if you show me a bit of respect.

Tempter to me: Enjoy the luxuries of modern life. That's normal now. If anyone is poor, it's their own fault. Why should you help them? Extra goods will give you prestige and power with extra authority. You'll be respected. You'll get things done and won't waste time.

Jesus' reply: *'You must worship the Lord your God and serve him alone'*, not the powerful leaders and industrialists of this world. *'My kingdom is not of this world.'* The world's luxuries are the false gods of today.

3. *'Then he led Jesus to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple'*, the symbolic centre of power; Capitol Hill, the Kremlin, Beijing... all rolled into one. No better place to jump from to make a truly spectacular arrival.

Tempter to Jesus: After 30 years of hiding your talent, jump and the world will believe in you right away and see you for who you are. Scripture assures you your angels will guard you and you'll come to no harm. That's the easiest possible way to achieve your purpose and realise your dreams, without years of struggle and the pain and disgrace of Calvary.

Tempter to me: How can you say Jesus is God for he never answered your sincerest prayer. Isn't he cruel when he allows good young people so needed here to be murdered, or young mothers die of cancer? Isn't he uncaring or helpless when thousands die in tsunamis, earthquakes, famine or drought? World hunger must remove any belief in a loving God. A real God might not change stones to bread but would acclimatise crops for better yield and less failure and leave clear evidence of his existence. Earth's poorest are always the worst victims. Some God of love!

Jesus' reply: *'You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'* Man's small mind cannot understand God's ways. They are miles apart. I'll hear this again: *'Let him come down from the cross now and we will believe in him'*.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

- In the desert of this Lent, Jesus, help me reflect on what life is really about, what's important and what's not.
Jesus, listen to my prayer.
- Jesus, you were so hungry that you thought of turning stones into bread. What can I say No to this Lent?
Jesus, listen to my prayer.
- No hearse has a hitch for a trailer. Jesus, imprint in my mind the fleeting nature of this world.
Jesus, listen to my prayer.
- Jesus, the wheels of your mill turn slowly. Give me the patience not to rush your plans.
Jesus, listen to my prayer.
- Convince me of your presence, Jesus, and renew my confidence in your words: *'I am with you. I will save you.'*
Jesus, listen to my prayer.
- Jesus, I mingle my pain, sickness and worries with your passion and death. Lift them up with your resurrection.
Jesus, listen to my prayer.

Together, we place our lives in the hands of the Father who loves us:

Our Father...

FINAL THOUGHT

At the heart of all temptation... is the act of pushing God aside because we perceive him as secondary, if not actually superfluous and annoying, in comparison with all the apparently far more urgent matters that fill our lives.

Pope Benedict XVI





2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

Master, it is wonderful for us to be here

Note for leaders: It would be very appropriate, today, to have an icon of Christ, maybe particularly an icon of the Transfiguration, or even, simply, a Sacred Heart picture as a centre-piece.

PRAYER

Lord, help me to be aware of your presence in my life. Help me to be aware of your presence in the world. Gift me with the gift of faith and help me to appreciate the wonder of your creation. I make this prayer through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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 a number of times and pause each time for a little quiet reflection.

First Reading: Gen. 15:5-12, 17-18

Psalm 26:1, 7-9, 13-14

Second Reading: Phil. 3:17-4:1

READ THE TEXT

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 9:28-36

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed, and his clothing became brilliant as lightning. Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were

speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, *'Master, 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 he was saying. As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, *'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.'* And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

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

On the mountain the face of Jesus revealed the inner glory of God. The glory of God shone through Jesus brilliantly for Peter, James and John. It was truly a special experience. Invited to join Jesus in prayer the heavens really opened for them. Coming back down the mountain they saw things differently. They had a new way of seeing things. Even though the realities of life closed in around them, this experience was embedded in their hearts and souls. Much later in life, Peter was able to say, *'We were eye-witnesses of his glory on the mountain.'* The world is alive with the glory of God. Snowdrops, daffodils, crocuses, birds nesting. Buds on trees ready to burst into leaf, new lambs, new babies, new boys and girls. It is good for us to be here.

From Patrick Kavanagh:

‘O give me faith that I may be alive when April’s ecstasy dances in every whitethorn tree.

O give me faith that I may see the angel of the mountainy places of dream’s infinity.’ May I be blessed with a little bit of faith that will open my eyes to the glory of God that surrounds me; to the glory of God that fills my being.

It was good for Jesus to be there too. He was on his way to Jerusalem and trouble was staring him in the face. So many of the prophets had met a sad ending there. But Jesus in his prayer was totally aware of God’s love for him. ‘This is my Son, the chosen one, listen to him.’ Aware that he was loved by God helped him to face the agony, the torture, even death. On Calvary, there was no voice from heaven, no sign of God around. ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ and yet before he died, Jesus was able to say, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.’

God loves each of us. God loves me. God loves you. Totally convinced of this tremendous truth we are capable of coping with all life’s difficulties. ‘With God on our side, who can be against us.’ (St Paul) In conclusion, a short poem by Emily Dickinson:

Exhilaration is the breeze
that lifts us from the ground
and leaves us in another place
whose statement is not found;
Returns us not, but after time
we soberly descend
a littler newer for the term
upon enchanted ground.

*Allow for a period of five to ten minutes’
silence*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Confident that we are loved by God we present our needs and prayers to him.

- May we learn to appreciate those special moments of joy, love, excitement and peace. On those occasions may we stand in wonder and awe at the presence of God.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- May our awareness of God’s love for each one of us fill us with confidence to face the difficulties of life
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- May we care for the earth as we should. May we leave a gentle footprint wherever we go. Help us to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- May world leaders do what should be done to ensure the safety of planet Earth
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- May people everywhere learn to live in peace and harmony together.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.

As God’s beloved children, we pray:
Our Father ...

FINAL THOUGHT

Lift me up, strong Son of God, that we may see further.
Strengthen our faith that we may see beyond the horizon.
And when the valley closes in help us to remember the view from the hilltop.’

Flor McCarthy



3RD SUNDAY OF LENT

The Fruits of Love and Forgiveness

PRAYER

Almighty God, you are Father of us all.
You created the human family to dwell
forever with you and to praise your glory.
Now is the time for your people to turn back
to you and to be renewed in Christ, your son.
A time of grace and reconciliation.
Open our ears to hear your voice so that we
may return to you with sincere repentance
for our sins.
Teach us to see in you Our Loving Father.
You are full of compassion.
You are ready to forgive us for turning away
from you.
Each one of us is a fig tree planted in the
vineyard of God.
God is calling us to a life that will bear fruit.
He offers us a life of unimaginable
fruitfulness.
Restore your gift of new life to us which
alone brings true happiness, so that we may
return to our Father's House and share your
Table now and forever. **Amen.**

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. 3:1-8, 13-15

Psalm 102:1-4, 6-8, 11

Second Reading: 1 Cor. 10:1-6, 10-12

READ THE TEXT

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 13:1-9

Some people arrived and told Jesus about
the Galileans whose blood Pilate had
mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this
he said to them, *'Do you suppose these
Galileans who suffered like that were
greater sinners than any other Galileans?
They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you
repent you will all perish as they did. Or
those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam
fell and killed them? Do you suppose that
they were more guilty than all the other
people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I
tell you. No; but unless you repent you will
all perish as they did.'*

He told this parable; *'A man had a fig tree
planted in his vineyard and he came looking
for fruit on it but found none. He said to the
man who looked after the vineyard, 'Look
here, for three years now I have been
coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and
finding none. Cut it down: why should it be
taking up the ground?' 'Sir,' the man
replied 'leave it one more year and give me
time to dig round it and manure it: it may
bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut
it down.'*

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

A teacher friend of mine was preparing
second class for First Confession. It was
before Covid 19. They were having
difficulty with the word 'forgiveness'.

Teacher gave them this example, she asked them if they were ever caught by Mammy or Daddy doing something wrong at home. How did Mammy or Daddy feel about it? How did they feel about it? Did they give a hug to their Mammy or Daddy? One girl, whom she had corrected a few minutes beforehand for not paying attention, stood up and walked up to the teacher and gave her a hug.

This is what forgiveness does. It seems to break all the rules and introduces something new: Salvation.

The silence of sin is a lonely place to be. Silence is Night; just as there are nights with no moon or stars when we are totally alone. Nights with no light; no hope.

I am alone in my guilt without forgiveness, without love – and then the joy of forgiveness comes; nights with silences that are peaceful and reflective; when my heart wants to sing out with joy, when I feel I am no longer alone. When I remember a couple of words I read from a poem; when I lose myself in a Hail Mary or the voice of a prayer. When I leave all talk to the angel who brought the silence and the peace.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray to the God of our Salvation . . .

- For the children of Second Class who are preparing for First Confession and First Holy Communion, that they may grow strong in Faith and Love.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.

- For those who seek renewal in civil and cultural life, that they may be guided by authentic human values.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- We pray for those whose freedom is compromised by patterns of sin or addiction. May they experience the joy of forgiveness.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- For our loved ones and all our faithful departed whose lives are changed but not ended, that they may be transformed by God's mercy and live in his presence.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.

Our Father . . .

FINAL THOUGHT

We are like the fig tree . . .

We are planted . . .

We are growing . . .

Listening to God's word and acting on it . . .
bearing fruitfulness





4TH SUNDAY OF LENT

PRAYER

St. Augustine famously said ‘You have made us for yourself O Lord and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you’ In our culture, where thousands of voices are vying for our attention and our custom, it is difficult to find peace. Yet there are havens of peace and quiet all around us.

The monastic sites around our diocese are sacred places, hallowed by centuries of prayer. They are sacraments of the past which make the past present in a mystical way.

This Lent might be a good time to visit the sacred sites which dot our diocese and be reminded of our ancestors search for God and their appreciation of the beauty of creation as balm for the soul as they pursued their ultimate goal of holiness and fulfilment and peace in Christ.

Lord still our hearts this Lent.

Through walking in the footsteps of our native saints may we find the grace of peace and be renewed in faith and hope.

With Mary, we pray:

Hail Mary ...

READING

First Reading: Josh. 5:9-12

Psalm 33:2-7

Second Reading: 2 Cor. 5:17-21

READ THE TEXT

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. ‘*This man*’ they said,

‘*welcomes sinners and eats with them.*’ So, he spoke this parable to them:

‘*A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me.’ So, the father divided up the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery. When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, ‘How many of my father’s paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants.’ So, he left the place and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to celebrate. Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling to one of the servants he asked what it was all about. ‘Your brother has come’ replied the servant ‘and your father has killed the calf*

we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound.’ He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, ‘Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property, he and his women, you kill the calf we had been fattening.’ The father said, ‘My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life, he was lost and is found.’”

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

There is no doubt about the focus of the parable of the Prodigal Son. It is a profound and moving statement of God’s love and mercy. Great artists have portrayed the various protagonists in the parable: the father ever watchful, waiting for his son’s return, and full of joy at the return of the wayward one: the wretched son, ragged and remorseful and unsure of himself and of the reception he might get; the older brother retiring and resentful of all the fuss about his younger sibling.

The scholars tell us that this parable is best understood if read with two others, the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the lost coin. In all three the emphasis is on finding that which was lost. Clearly all three parables emphasize God’s care for the lost and the stray but it must have been galling for the self-righteous Pharisees to see so much attention being given to the one sheep as against the ninety nine others and to the one coin as against the nine others, not to

mention the huge focus on the son who squandered his inheritance as against his brother who was so constant and so faithful. Of course, neither the ninety-nine nor the nine could express their frustration at being taken for granted, but the elder brother could. Jesus gives him a cameo role in the story and his voice is worth listening to. What about us? He is saying, what about us the righteous ones? Do we not matter? The truth is that Jesus recognizes that most people are good and decent and live honorable lives. Goodness is its own reward. But society is only as good as its weakest link and those who fall off the wagon need the care and concern which the parable portrays. Standing back and looking askance at our wayward fellow human beings achieves nothing.

We the Christian community must be actively involved in caring for the weak and welcoming home the spiritually and psychologically wounded. There is no room for passivity in the Christian project and less room for judgement.

The father of the prodigal son, the good shepherd and the widow who sweeps incessantly until she finds the lost coin all point the way for us. To be true followers we must be active and caring and we must be alert and responsive and be there when the stray turns up.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

- For the Church: that we may share the light of the Gospel with all who are struggling to recognize good from evil, truth from lies, and selfless love from self-serving activity.

Lord, hear us

- For the growth of our faith: that God's love for us may be a light for us as we face our daily challenges and draw us into a deeper relationship with God.
Lord, hear us.
- For all who find it difficult to believe in God's love, may their lives be illuminated by the light of God's presence.
Lord, hear us.
- For all whose lives are darkened by alcohol, drugs, or other addictions: that the light of the Gospel may shatter their darkness and open a path to living a new life.
Lord, hear us.

Our Father . . .

FINAL THOUGHT

If it is to be true to the mind of Christ, the Church must be not just a forgiving church but a caring church. The father of the Prodigal son cared so much about his spendthrift lad that he was always on the watch awaiting his possible return. This suggests that a Church ought to be an institution which exists as much for the benefit of non-practicing or wayward members as for the faithful and the righteous ones.

I think of this when I am celebrating Eucharist in the comfort of a warm church surrounded by good people whose sincere focus is on the integrity of their liturgy but who are not always aware of the pain and brokenness that exists outside the church door.

I wonder too if we all, pastors and people, should do more to be actors in the drama of life as the forgiving Father of the prodigal son was, rather than passive members of the

audience as the older brother seems to have been.

The Lenten scriptures, the Trocaire campaign and our own self-imposed Lenten discipline can help align us to the mind of Christ and to act accordingly.





5TH SUNDAY OF LENT

Neither do I condemn you

PRAYER

Lord we come together to reflect and pray. Bless us as we continue our Lenten journey. Open our minds and hearts to listen to you as you speak through the Scripture, and through each other in the reality of our daily lives. Give us ears to hear, eyes to see and hearts to respond to the promptings of your Holy Spirit.

With Mary we pray:

Hail Mary ...

READING

Read the text slowly, several times, as if it were the first time you had encountered it. What strikes you? Maybe, there is one phrase which you never noticed before; stay with it and allow yourself to be led by God's Spirit. Try to visualize Jesus, his kind face, his gentle voice, the loving look in his eyes. What do you hear him say?

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalm 125

Second Reading: Phil. 3:8-14

READ THE TEXT

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John 8:1-11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak, he appeared in the Temple again; and, as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, *'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered*

us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?'

They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, *'If there is one of you who has not sinned let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'* Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this, they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, *'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'* *'No one, sir,'* she replied. *'Neither do I condemn you,'* said Jesus *'go away, and don't sin anymore.'*

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

'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I condemn you.'

These words of Jesus are truly Good News to this woman.

The scene as it unfolds is dark and upsetting when we consider the treatment of the woman, the plot to entrap Jesus and the self-righteousness of the accusers. We see the vulnerable accused woman totally stripped of dignity and respect with little hope of mercy.

'God looks at the heart.' (1 Samuel 16:7)

Jesus focuses the attention on human sin but against the backdrop of God's mercy.

'If there is one of you who has not sinned let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'

Without condoning her sinful action Jesus restores her to peace and friendship with God. *'Has no one condemned you?'* *'No one Sir.'* *'Neither do I condemn you.'*

In this moment of encounter with Jesus the

woman experiences true love and forgiveness and a call to live a better life. 'Go and sin no more.'

This Gospel story is a call to reflect deeply on the boundless mercy and compassion of God. 'The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.' (Ps 102) During these last two weeks of Lent, we continue to take a close look at our lives, acknowledge our sinfulness and rekindle our friendship with God.

I pray for the grace to open myself in my sinfulness and fragility to the compassion and love of God. Lord help me to forgive myself as you forgive me.

I also reflect on my attitude to other people. When I judge or speak ill of others, I am like the religious leaders in the Gospel failing to understand God's love and mercy.

Am I able to reach out to those who have hurt me?

Can I forgive as readily as Jesus forgives?

'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us' (Mt 6:12)

Our society harbours many injustices especially towards the most vulnerable.

As I continue the Lenten journey, I pray that I may do all in my power to alleviate the suffering of others caused by injustice and poverty.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

- We pray for Pope Frances and all who serve people in the ways of God's Love. May our Church be a place of welcome, inclusion, tolerance and acceptance.
Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.
- We pray for those who find it difficult to believe in God's love and

compassion. May their lives be filled with a sense of God's abiding presence.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

- We pray for peace in our world especially in Ukraine. May the Lord inspire world leaders to work together to bring about a just and lasting peace. May the Ukrainian people who are suffering intensely find hope through the support and kindness of their European neighbours.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Our Father . . .

FINAL THOUGHT

'Whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms.'

'The Joy of the Gospel'. Pope Francis





PALM SUNDAY

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

PRAYER

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end, nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore, will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

Thomas Merton

**With Mary we pray:
Hail Mary**

READING

The reading for Palm Sunday has many echoes of the Old Testament and resonates with the hopes of ordinary people. Beneath the cheering, however, if you listen carefully, you might just catch the silent sorrow of a man aware of what is about to take place. Knowing this, he does not walk away but mounts the colt and so his Passion is about to begin ...

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7

Psalm 21:8-9, 17-20, 23-24

Second Reading: Phil. 2:6-11

READ THE TEXT

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 19:28-40

Jesus went ahead, going up to Jerusalem. Now when he was near Bethphage and Bethany, close to the Mount of Olives as it is called, he sent two of the disciples, telling them, *'Go off to the village opposite, and 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

'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!'

Jesus, Universal King, gentle bearer of the Good News, humbly enters Jerusalem riding

on a donkey, ready to complete his mission as Saviour of the World. His disciples convinced that he is the Messiah because of what they had witnessed, in their great excitement and jubilation, lay down an improvised 'red carpet'. They hail him King, believing that he was the One to free the country of Roman Rule. The Pharisees sternly warn Jesus 'Check your disciples', which is as much as they could get away with at that time, amidst the euphoria. But they have already decided that an end must be put to all this. He had drawn people away from them and from the established religion. They get to work within the next few hours making plans to finally deal with him in the way their ancestors had already dealt with the Prophets. Have him executed.

Jesus had often made it clear in words similar to what he said to Pilate later, 'Mine is not a kingdom of this world.'

We are in the world, but not of it. We 'walk in the Spirit' on our pilgrim way to the New Jerusalem as disciples of Jesus. We have a responsibility to live by, and promote 'The Kingdom' of love, peace, justice, faith, hope, human dignity, freedom and fair play for all.

God Our Father, as we reflect again on the life of Jesus, we are amazed at the patience he showed towards followers who misunderstood his mission, and the extraordinary patience he showed to those who bitterly opposed him. Thank you for waiting patiently for us to reach a better understanding of our own mission in life. Please forgive all that time that was wasted dealing with matters which were of little importance. Forgive us for not listening. Forgive us for the times we were 'too busy' to pray. Forgive the indifference we showed to people 'on the margins', people who needed the support we could have provided. Help us to see more clearly. Thank you for your patience.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Gathered together in Holy Week we are conscious that we are joining with our brothers and sisters around the world in celebrating the great events of this week.

- We pray that our Church will be purified of all evil. We pray for commitment to Jesus on behalf of all members within our Church. We ask for strength and freedom for members of our Church who are suffering persecution.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- For the gift to see God in people and in nature, and that people everywhere will respect our earth as we should.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- That Christians will always have in mind our obligation to the poor.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- That people around the world will cherish life in all its stages, from the baby in the womb to the person of old age.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- That those who are neglecting their faith will return to God who loves them.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.

- For the conversion of people who are deeply involved in evil ways.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.
- For ourselves; for family and other friends; for the people of our parishes, that during this Great Week we will follow Jesus most closely.
Let us pray to the Lord
Lord, hear us.

Our Father

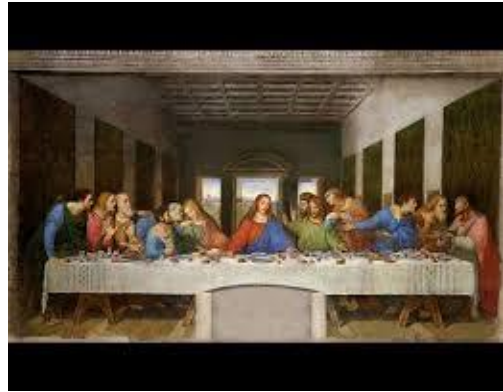
FINAL THOUGHT

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
lean not on your own understanding,
in all your ways submit to Him,
and He will make your paths straight.



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.



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.



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 ...

