

SPIRIT AND TRUTH

The Power of Christ Revealed



Lenten Companion 2023

Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney







Table of Contents

Introduction

Parish Renewal Team Page 4

How to use this Resource

Lectio divina Page 5

Lenten Observances

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving Page 6

Fasting

Reflection by Fr John Nguyen OFMCap Page 7

First Sunday of Lent

Reflection by Sister Joanna Marie Collins OP Page 8

Second Sunday of Lent

Reflection by Daniel Ang Page 10

Third Sunday of Lent

Reflection by Fr Lewi Barakat Page 12

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Reflection by Mat De Sousa Page 14

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Reflection by Anna Harrison Page 16

Palm Sunday

Reflection by Elizabeth Flynn, MCR Page 18

Easter Sunday

Reflection by Bishop Richard Umbers Page 20

Stations of the Cross

Meditations by St John Paul II Page 22

Examination of Conscience

Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP Page 26

Final Prayer

A Prayer for Renewal Page 28

Cover Image: *Christ and the Samaritan woman at the well* by Angelica Kauffman, circa 1796. Credit: Art Gallery ErgsArt / Flickr, Public Domain

Entry into Jerusalem by Giotto, circa 1305-06.
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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Thank you for making use of this Lenten Companion. May it be a means of grace for you today and throughout Lent.

Sometimes we think that our Lenten sacrifices of penance, prayer and almsgiving are required to make us worthy to accompany Jesus in His Passion on Good Friday and to celebrate His Resurrection in the Easter season. In other words, we might think, 'If only I can be a better person then God will love me more.'

In fact, the purpose of Lent is the opposite: Jesus wants to show us that He loves us so much that He died for us, and that He providentially guides us so that we can become the fullness of what He created us to be. Having first loved us, He invites us to respond in love by being his friend, and tangibly centring our lives on Him by making those small sacrifices. The fact that we will all fail in our Lenten resolutions in some way simply reminds us that Lent is primarily God's work in us, that we cannot impress Him and that we depend on His mercy and grace to accomplish in us what we cannot change in ourselves.

I invite you to use this Lenten Companion to draw near to Christ, first in prayer, allowing Him to tenderly reveal His love for you as you read the Scriptures and pray the Stations of the Cross. Second, come to Christ in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, concretely receiving the mercy He pours out from the Cross. Thirdly, share the love of Christ with others who may not yet know the peace and freedom that only He brings.

Be assured of our prayers for you.

Sister Anastasia Reeves OP

Parish Renewal Team

How to use this *Lenten Companion*

This is a suggestion for how individuals and small groups could use this Companion. Put aside time during the week leading up to each of the Sundays, or on the day itself.

1. **Begin with the Opening Prayer** in which you entrust the time to God and ask for His grace.
2. **Prayerfully read the Gospel passage.** An ancient method of doing this is *lectio divina* (divine reading), which is outlined briefly on this page. You may find it helpful to read the Gospel passage more than once.
3. **Read the Gospel Reflection.**
4. **Take some time to pray** using the questions as a guide to consider more deeply the Gospel passage and the reflection. You may find it helpful to use a journal to write down your thoughts. Groups may choose to discuss the responses to the questions together.
5. **Conclude with the Closing Prayer** in which you thank God and entrust your needs to Him.

Scripture from *The Jerusalem Bible*, © 1966, 1967 and 1968, Darton, Longman and Todd. Used by permission of the publishers.

Lectio Divina

Lectio (reading)

Begin by reading the passage slowly and gently either aloud or silently. It is helpful to savour each portion, constantly listening for a word or a phrase which speaks to your heart. It is helpful sometimes to read the passage again, going back to certain words, repeating them, memorising them and allowing them to sink in more deeply.

Meditatio (meditation)

Ponder more deeply on the words or images which speak to you, allowing the words to move from the head to the heart. Continue to sit with these words, ruminating on them, engaging your mind, and reflect on what God might be saying to you through them. Give this to God and allow the light of the Word to shed new levels of meaning on them.

Oratio (prayer)

Speak to God in response to the Word or the thoughts which arose during meditation. This dialogue or prayer can take many forms – thoughts, ideas, writing, images or simply sitting in deep silent awareness of God's presence. The important thing is to speak to God just as we would with someone who knows and loves us.

Contemplatio (contemplation)

In this step, our words and thoughts subside and give way to silent presence where we rest in God's embrace. This experience may last for only a short time, or for a longer period, depending on the individual and the grace of God. Here we allow God to take over and we simply let go and receive.

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Visit www.jamberooabbey.org.au/prayer/lectio-divina-praying-with-the-sacred-scriptures/



Lenten Observances

It is a temptation to treat this Lenten Season as mere routine. The standard practice is that we think about what we are going to give up and what we are going to do for others.

Whatever we choose to do, the most important thing we need to focus on is our relationship with God. The point of Lent is doing something for our holiness. Penitential practices (prayer, fasting and almsgiving) without conversion are pointless. *What is the point of giving up lollies if it does not lead me to grow in holiness as a disciple of Christ?* Choose something that will free you to become a faithful follower of Christ.

Penitential practices, done faithfully, lead to true conversion. Penance is not just a 40-day thing but should be a common practice in our lives. On all Fridays of the year, including the Fridays of Lent, penance reminds us of our need for the mercy of God. It is a visible expression of turning away from sin to a life of grace. Lent is our yearly reminder that conversion is that continual, never finished work of being a disciple of Jesus Christ: *fasting, prayer, and almsgiving* “express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1434).

- Fr Noel Custodio

Note: In Australia, abstinence from meat, and fasting, must be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. All who have completed their eighteenth year and have not yet begun their sixtieth year are bound to fast. All who have completed their fourteenth year are bound to abstain.

*Conversion
in relation to God*

Prayer

For example, attending weekday Mass; family prayer; a visit to a church or chapel; reading the Bible; making the Stations of the Cross; praying the rosary.

*Conversion
in relation to oneself*

Fasting

For example, not eating meat, sweets or dessert; giving up social media or limiting time spent on smart phones or technology.

*Conversion
in relation to others*

Almsgiving

For example, giving to or helping someone in need – the poor, sick, elderly or someone who is struggling.

Advent Candle Photo Credit: Randomsoleil / Flickr, CC BY-ND 2.0

Fasting

Fasting for the forty days of Lent is definitely a challenge. Some people struggle to fast for even just one day.

St Francis of Assisi took fasting seriously and "earnestly prayed for the Saviour's mercy and, lacking confidence in his own efforts, he cast his care upon the Lord." Fasting revealed his dependence on God. This was one way that he prepared himself to share more fully and to celebrate more readily, Jesus' Life, Death and Resurrection.

Not everyone is a Franciscan, but we can all be inspired by and share in St Francis' serious and prayerful attitude towards fasting.

Whatever food or drink you deny yourself this Lent, may you discover or rediscover your dependence on God as you journey towards Easter. Wherever we are in our faith, we all need God in our lives to provide for all our needs.

May the Lord bless you abundantly for your fasting this Lent!

- Fr John Nguyen OFMCap

Christ in the Wilderness by Ivan Kramskoi, c. 1872.
Credit: Google Cultural Center/Public Domain





First Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we thank you for the gift of this Season of Lent. As we pause now to listen to your voice speaking to us in this Gospel passage and reflection, may we come to recognise your power to heal and transform us, and may we receive the grace we need to worship you in Spirit and Truth.

Gospel of St Matthew (4:1-11)

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' But he replied, 'Scripture says:

Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God' he said 'throw yourself down; for scripture says:

He will put you in his angels' charge, and they will support you on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'

Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says:

You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'I will give you all these' he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me.' Then Jesus replied, 'Be off, Satan! For scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.'

Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

Gospel Reflection

By Sister Joanna Marie Collins OP

'Immanuel' - God with us. This name given to the coming Messiah by the prophet Isaiah was not some sentimental notion, but an essential reality to be proclaimed, one that echoes throughout the Scriptures. God wants to enter into our reality, our joys, sorrows, struggles, even our sins.

Jesus' whole life bore witness to this truth. To begin His public ministry, Jesus receives a baptism of repentance, not for His own sins - as He is sinless - but in order to take on the sins of us all. As He enters into the waters, He immerses Himself into the chaos and ugliness of sin.

Immediately afterwards, Jesus is led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted, and how does the devil seek to tempt him? In the same way he has sought to tempt humankind since the Fall of Adam and Eve. When Satan says to Jesus, "If

you are the Son of God," he is sowing the seed of doubt, trying to break down Jesus' identity as the Son of God by breaking down His trust in His Father.

How often the evil one tries this tactic with us, tempting us to take full control of our lives, making us think that God doesn't love us, doesn't see our suffering and won't help. Jesus shows us that the opposite is true, that God is close to the broken-hearted and that in the end, His life and love will triumph over the worst suffering.

This Lent, God wants to enter into our lives more fully, as Immanuel, Saviour, and Friend. He asks us to draw closer to Him, to learn to trust Him more fully with our lives which are more precious to Him than to us, that in learning who He is, we might come to know our own identity as His sons and daughters.

"Jesus shows us that ... God is close to the broken-hearted and that in the end, His life and love will triumph over the worst suffering."



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great love for us. Help us find the strength we need to resist all temptation. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we come to know more deeply that we are your beloved sons and daughters, through the revelation of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel or the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. What is one way that I can draw closer to Jesus this Lent and trust Him more fully with the cares of my life?
3. How can I bear witness to the truth of the presence of God in my life?

The Threefold Temptation of Christ by Michael Pacher, circa 1481. Credit: Uoaeil / Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0



Second Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we thank you for the gift of this Season of Lent. As we pause now to listen to your voice speaking to us in this Gospel passage and reflection, may we come to recognise your power to heal and transform us, and may we receive the grace we need to worship you in Spirit and Truth.

Gospel of St Matthew (17:1-9)

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone. There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' When they heard this the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them. 'Stand up,' he said 'do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but only Jesus.

As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, 'Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.'

Gospel Reflection

By Daniel Ang

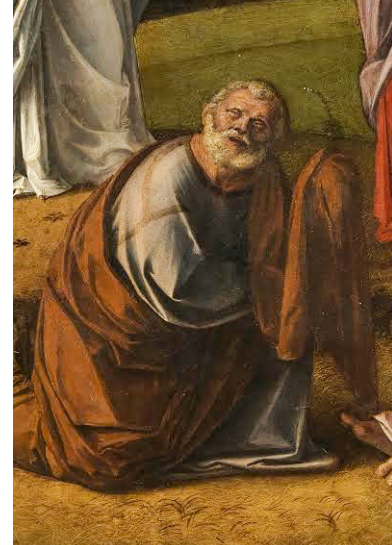
As we journey toward the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, we have here an intense moment of revelation in the life of Jesus and of His disciples. Like Moses and Elijah before Him, Jesus ascends the mountain. However, in this new encounter the patriarch and prophet of old converse with the one who is Himself God's revelation in person, the one in whom God's glory and Kingdom have drawn near. Jesus is revealed even now as the fulfilment of God's promises, in His radiant glory as the Beloved. He is "light from light" and "true God from true God" as we profess in the Nicene Creed. The appearance of God's glory and power in Jesus comes with the command to "listen to him," to be attentive, receptive and turn toward Him who enjoys God's favour.

Like the first disciples, we too are invited to lift up our hearts to the Lord, in their light and shadow, and cast aside those things which prevent us from seeing the glory and

truth of God in Jesus. We are invited to fix our gaze upon Jesus in whom God has turned to us both powerfully and personally. We are invited to entrust ourselves to his Word and radiant light, a light which reveals God's face to us and in so doing reveals us to ourselves.

"The Lord does not will us to be afraid in His awesome presence but to welcome His power and grace in our lives."

As sons and daughters of God, we are not to be like the trembling disciples at the Transfiguration. The Lord wills us, not to be afraid in His awesome presence, but to welcome His power and grace in our lives; for the Lord loves us and reaches out to us, constantly touching our lives in moments of grace, of thanksgiving, and in times of emptiness or despair. We are invited to 'stand up' in these moments of encounter, to see Christ and to recognise God's glory and power in Him anew. We are called to listen attentively to His Word, and eagerly await His Resurrection at Easter in which His glory, and our hope and destiny, will be fully and universally revealed.



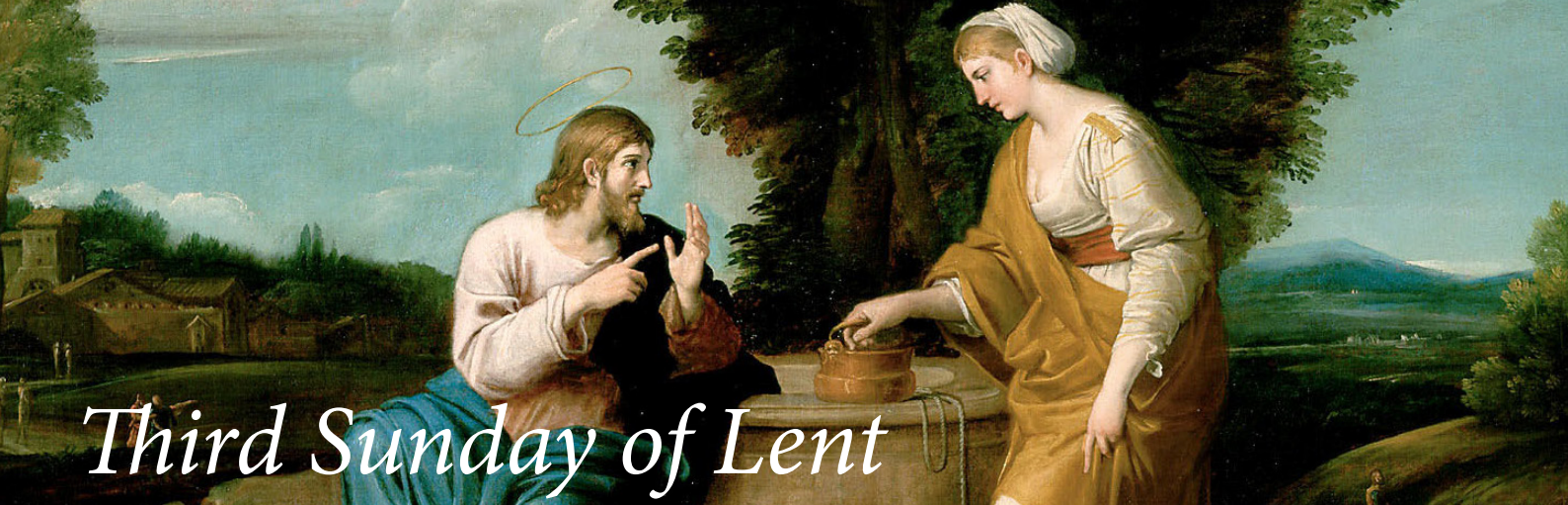
Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great love for us. Help us to climb the mountain of holiness where we can be with you alone. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we reflect your glory, and always listen to your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel or the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. What is one moment of grace in my life, when Jesus reached out to me in my emptiness or despair?
3. How will I encourage others to fix their gaze upon Jesus?

The Transfiguration of Christ by Giovanni Bellini, c. 1480. Credit: Lluís Ribes Mateu / Flickr, CC BY-NC 2.0



Third Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we thank you for the gift of this Season of Lent. As we pause now to listen to your voice speaking to us in this Gospel passage and reflection, may we come to recognise your power to heal and transform us, and may we receive the grace we need to worship you in Spirit and Truth.

Gospel of St John (4:5-30)*

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus, tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?' – Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied: 'If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and he would have given you living water.' 'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied: 'Whoever drinks this water will get thirsty again; but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give will never be thirsty again: the water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.' 'Sir,' said the woman 'give me some of that water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water.' 'Go and call your husband' said Jesus to her 'and come back here.' The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' He said to her, 'You are right to say, "I have no husband"; for although you have had five, the one you have now is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.' 'I see you are a prophet, sir' said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said: 'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know: for salvation comes from the Jews. But the hour will come – in fact it is here already – when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.' 'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus 'I am he.' At this point his disciples returned, and were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, though none of them asked, 'What do you want from her?' or, 'Why are you talking to her?' The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people. 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did; I wonder if he is the Christ?' This brought people out of the town and they started walking towards him.

**(This is an excerpt of the reading of the day, John 4:5-42)*

Gospel Reflection

By Fr Lewi Barakat

Jesus goes into a Samaritan town. He has entered the territory of those who, according to popular custom, should not associate with Him. There is no barrier that Jesus will not overcome to get to us.

The Messiah, the Christ, has come in search of the stray and to save the seeker - dare I say, "Sinners like me"? No longer shall relationship with God be limited by land, place or race. The transcendent God walks the earth so that we can discover the way to Heaven.

In an ever-changing world, people can readily cling to the customs of a culture (or sub-culture), with its own intrinsic beliefs and practices. In these spaces people are looking for stability and security. But it is the self-professed sage who suggests it doesn't matter which path you choose. Those in denial of their fallen state of life – the fear of that sin word – think all paths lead to Heaven, or to Hell.

Jesus shows us that even the various cultures that people cling to need saving! Whether it be the resurgent fascination with

indigenous spiritualities or the new online sub-cultures, none can bear the weight of our salvation; only Christ can, and He does it on the Cross.

Salvation is God's initiative. True wisdom comes from above. For us to live freely, and for authentic culture to flourish, our beliefs need

to be rooted in the Truth, and our worship in the Spirit of God who has revealed Himself to us.

For humans to discover right relationship with God, we need the person of God the Son who leads us to Divinity by way of His humanity. As St Athanasius says, "God has become man that man might become

God" - even in our weakness! Likewise, St Augustine says, "He fashioned us by His strength, He sought us by His weakness." The all-powerful God who created the world, was tired for us! Jesus sat by the well, weary, so that He could meet us in what makes us weary. We are reminded that "the weakness of God is stronger than man" (1 Cor 1:25).

"For us to live freely ... our beliefs need to be rooted in the Truth, and our worship in the Spirit of God."

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great love for us. Help us to draw from the spring inside of us, the place where you dwell, that wells up to eternal life. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we worship you in spirit and truth, and witness to the power of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel or the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. How do I allow Jesus to meet me in my 'weariness'? In which ways do I put up barriers to try to block Him?
3. Considering our current culture, how can I encourage others to worship God in Spirit and Truth?

Christ and the Woman of Samaria by Annibale Carracci, circa 1605. Credit: Lluís Ribes Mateu/Flickr, CC BY-NC 2.0



Fourth Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we thank you for the gift of this Season of Lent. As we pause now to listen to your voice speaking to us in this Gospel passage and reflection, may we come to recognise your power to heal and transform us, and may we receive the grace we need to worship you in Spirit and Truth.

Gospel of St John (9:14-38)*

It had been a sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the sabbath.' Others said, 'How could a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' 'He is a prophet' replied the man. However, the Jews would not believe that the man had been blind and had gained his sight, without first sending for his parents and asking them, 'Is this man really your son who you say was born blind? If so, how is it that he is now able to see?' His parents answered, 'We know he is our son and we know he was born blind, but we do not know how it is that he can see now, or who opened his eyes. He is old enough: let him speak for himself. His parents spoke like this out of fear of the Jews, who had already agreed to expel from the synagogue anyone who should acknowledge Jesus as the Christ. This was why his parents said, 'He is old enough; ask him.' So the Jews again sent for the man and said to him, 'Give glory to God! For our part, we know that this man is a sinner.' The man answered, 'I don't know if he is a sinner; I only know that I was blind and now I can see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He replied, 'I have told you once and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it all again? Do you want to become his disciples too?' At this they hurled abuse at him: 'You can be his disciple,' they said 'we are disciples of Moses: we know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' The man replied, 'Now here is an astonishing thing! He has opened my eyes, and you don't know where he comes from! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to men who are devout and do his will. Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of a man who was born blind; if this man were not from God, he couldn't do a thing.' 'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away. Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir,' the man replied 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you.' The man said, 'Lord, I believe,' and worshipped him.

**(This is an excerpt of the reading of the day, John 9:1-41)*

Gospel Reflection

By Mat De Sousa

As the Lenten journey draws closer to our Lord's Passion, we find that Jesus increasingly reveals His true identity as the Messiah. In today's Gospel, Jesus makes His messianic claim clear by asserting His authority over nature by healing a man who was blind from birth. He performs this divine act on the Sabbath and thus places Himself above man and alongside God, since it was God Himself who had instituted Sabbath rest.

Everything about Christ's revelation was intentional, and, although we are called to reflect on *why* He chose to reveal His Divinity to us, there is much to gain by looking at *how*. Using His spittle and mud, Christ makes clay and places it on the blind man's eyelids. He then tells the man to wash in the pool of Siloam before he miraculously gains his sight. Why didn't Christ simply will the man's sight into existence? Why did He use human action to bring about His godly intervention?

We humans are both corporal and spiritual beings; that is, incarnate spirits, who encounter God through physical things. Ever desiring to

touch our spiritual and physical lives, God lowers Himself to our level, literally through His Incarnation, in order to communicate His grace to us. In raising the dead, healing the sick and calming the storm, we witness Christ bestowing His blessings in this manner throughout His life.

However, our Lord did not end this corporal way of conferring compassion at the time of His Death and Resurrection. In fact, Christ continues to do so today as the Church administers God's grace through the Sacraments. He who allowed John to baptise Him with water in the River Jordan, now baptises us with the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Baptism. He

who fed the multitudes, now nourishes us daily in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. He who asked God to forgive those who had Him whipped and crucified, now forgives our sins in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

This Lent, let us actively go out to meet Christ, as the blind man did, in His Sacraments and receive the outpouring of His grace.

*“God lowers
Himself to our level,
literally through
His Incarnation,
in order to
communicate His
grace to us.”*

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great love for us. Heal our blindness so that we can see your presence in our lives. By the power of the Holy Spirit, give us the gift of faith so that we may believe in, and acknowledge before others, your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel or the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. What step can I take this Lent to actively meet Jesus in the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist?
3. When have I had the courage to profess my belief in the power of Jesus to heal or transform me?

Christ Healing the Blindman by Gerardus Duyckinck, circa 1725–30. Credit: Friends of the American Wing Fund, 2014/Public Domain



Fifth Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we thank you for the gift of this Season of Lent. As we pause now to listen to your voice speaking to us in this Gospel passage and reflection, may we come to recognise your power to heal and transform us, and may we receive the grace we need to worship you in Spirit and Truth.

*Gospel of St John (11:20-45)**

When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.' Jesus said: 'I am the resurrection and the life. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' 'Yes, Lord,' she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.' When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, 'The Master is here and wants to see you.' Hearing this, Mary got up quickly and went to him. Jesus had not yet come into the village; he was still at the place where Martha had met him. When the Jews who were in the house sympathising with Mary saw her get up so quickly and go out, they followed her, thinking that she was going to the tomb to weep there. Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died!' At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, could he not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him, 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied, 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said: 'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. I knew indeed that you always hear me, but I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me, so that they may believe it was you who sent me.' When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!' The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.' Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

**(This is an excerpt of the reading of the day, John 11:1-45)*

Gospel Reflection

By Anna Harrison

"Jesus wept" - the shortest verse in the Bible. This human experience speaks profoundly of the Incarnation. Christ felt both sorrow and pain, deeply.

This Gospel passage calls to mind a multitude of questions, feelings and themes that may provoke anguish at the fundamental problem of pain. Why death? Why suffering?

Many of us relate to Martha's accusatory question towards Jesus, asking Him why her dear brother had to die and why Jesus had not prevented it.

Each of us knows all too well the heartache of loss and pain. And yet here we are presented with the model of a real, human, and holy response to such situations. While grappling with loss, Jesus was able to sympathise with humanity's hurt and confusion. Christ, God Himself, did not use a magic formula to erase all sorrow, nor

did He make light of the pain and simply undo it. Instead, He used the opportunity to pray to the Father in humble surrender and trust, allowing the disciples to recognise that God is the one who has the power to bring about a miraculous and beautiful transformation.

There is no guarantee that when we question God in our raw rage or hurt, that He will necessarily give us what we want. However, we can reflect on this passage and come to learn that Jesus has given us a precious two-fold gift: the comfort in knowing that Christ shares and feels our sorrow with us, and the clear call to surrender

and trust. Regardless of the outcome, we can rest assured that Christ's confidence in His Father's will is what we too can imitate, knowing that He is always close to us in our times of struggle.

*"The disciples
... recognise
that God is the
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and beautiful
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Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great love for us. May we profess with confidence the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to surrender to you in moments of darkness, and to be transformed by the love of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel or the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. Do I trust in the will of the Father? How can I surrender to Him more fully in times of suffering?
3. How can I reach out to someone I know who is suffering and lead him or her to the consoling love of Christ?

The Raising of Lazarus Icon. Credit: pxhere.com/Public Domain



Palm Sunday

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we thank you for the gift of this Season of Lent. As we pause now to listen to your voice speaking to us in this Gospel passage and reflection, may we come to recognise your power to heal and transform us, and may we receive the grace we need to worship you in Spirit and Truth.

*Gospel of St Matthew (27:33-54)**

When they had reached a place called Golgotha, that is, the place of the skull, they gave [Jesus] wine to drink mixed with gall, which he tasted but refused to drink. When they had finished crucifying him they shared out his clothing by casting lots, and then sat down and stayed there keeping guard over him. Above his head was placed the charge against him; it read: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.' At the same time two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. The passers-by jeered at him; they shook their heads and said, 'So you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself! If you are God's son, come down from the cross!' The chief priests with the scribes and elders mocked him in the same way. 'He saved others;' they said 'he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him. He puts his trust in God; now let God rescue him if he wants him. For he did say, "I am the son of God"'. Even the robbers who were crucified with him taunted him in the same way. From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' that is, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood there heard this, they said, 'The man is calling on Elijah,' and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he dipped in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. 'Wait!' said the rest of them 'and see if Elijah will come to save him.' But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit. At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead, and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people. Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said, 'In truth this was a son of God.'

**(This is an excerpt of the reading of the day, Matthew 27:11-54)*

Gospel Reflection

By Elizabeth Flynn, MCR

"Where does Christ dwell but in suffering?" These words of thirteenth century Italian mystic, St Angela of Foligno give us a novel way to understand Jesus' haunting cry from the cross: "My God, my God why have you deserted me?" This cry resonates deep within each of us. Who has never

cried out either in silence or in tears these same words? Who has never suffered the pain of feeling abandoned or betrayed by one's nearest and dearest? When we do experience such moments of existential darkness, today's Gospel reminds us to respond as Jesus does.

This is the moment, St John of the Cross teaches, when Jesus experiences the feeling of extreme abandonment. Darkness pierces the depths of His wounded humanity, yet it is there, in this suffering, that He makes a home for each of us. In our own moments of agony, therefore, when we feel abandoned not just by friends and family,

*"In His death
on the cross He
teaches us how
to live: in free
abandonment
to God."*

but by God himself, the crucified Christ is our dwelling place. Gazing at Him there, we know our suffering is no longer meaningless and thus we find comfort and rest.

This is also the moment when Jesus accomplishes His greatest work. As He cries out in desolation to the Father, Jesus

paradoxically expresses profound trust, reconciling and uniting humanity with God through grace. Then Jesus willingly relinquishes His life, actively giving up His spirit.

Our lives and deaths must be patterned on Christ's. In His death on the cross He teaches us how to live: in free

abandonment to God, choosing to give up attachments to apparent truths and clinging on firmly to divine Truth. In this way, we freely allow the transformative power of the Cross to take root within us. Whatever our suffering, we are assured, Christ will make His dwelling place there, uniting us to Him.



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great love for us. May we profess with confidence the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to surrender to you in moments of darkness, and to be transformed by the love of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel or the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. How can I cling more firmly to divine Truth? What 'apparent' truths might I need to detach from in order to do this?
3. How do I witness to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God? If I don't do this, how can I begin?

Stained-Glass Window depicting the Christ on the Cross. Credit: pxhere.com/Public Domain



Easter Sunday

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we thank you for the gift of this Season of Lent. As we pause now to listen to your voice speaking to us in this Gospel passage and reflection, may we come to recognise your power to heal and transform us, and may we receive the grace we need to worship you in Spirit and Truth.

Gospel of St John (20:1-9)

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb' she said 'and we don't know where they have put him.'

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

Gospel Reflection

By Bishop Richard Umbers

Mary longed to see Jesus but had no power to make that happen. He was dead, and He was buried. God worked a great feat – she found the stone had been moved and the tomb empty. The One who had made her heart and filled her with a thirst for Truth had intervened and begun to lead her towards the satisfaction of that desire. And Peter and Simon were led by Mary's discovery to a clarity that had eluded them till this moment. Jesus is not here because He has risen as foretold.

God believes in man. Having made us He did not abandon us to death when we sinned. Instead, He came in search of us, became one of us, and bought us back from sin and the wages of sin through His own death ... and glorious Resurrection. What the prophets proclaimed was brought to fulfilment. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Is 9:2).

"Those who believe, see; they see with a light that illumines their entire journey, for it

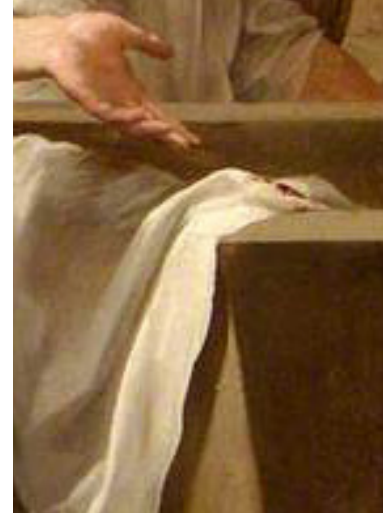
"Thanks to the Gospels, in Jesus we see who we are and who we are called to be."

comes from the risen Christ, the morning star that never sets" (*Lumen Fidei*, 1).

Not all would believe. They would remain with Mary's initial puzzlement and hold to the belief that 'they' have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we don't know where they have put Him. 'They' follow a will-o-the-wisp in a never-ending night.

"Faith was thus understood either as a leap in the dark, to be taken in the absence of light, driven by blind emotion, or as a subjective light, capable perhaps of warming the heart and bringing personal consolation, but not something which could be proposed to others as an objective and shared light which points the way" (*Lumen Fidei*, 2).

Thanks to the Gospels, in Jesus we see who we are and who we are called to be. We see what leads to Life and what spells eternal death. Faith is light that comes from God, borne of an encounter with the living God who bequeaths us this supernatural gift.



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your great love for us. May we never tire of running to you in our time of need. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we be filled with joy, and firmly believe in the Resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel or the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. Am I filled with a thirst for the Truth? How might I take a step closer to Jesus so that I can see who I am called to be?
3. How will I witness to the joy of the Resurrection of Jesus this Easter?

St John and St Peter at the empty tomb of Christ by Giovanni Francesco Romanelli, circa 1641. Credit: Wikemida Commons/Public Domain

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS BY SAINT JOHN PAUL II

After announcing each station, repeat the following:

Prayer: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.* Response: *Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*



Station 1: Jesus is condemned to death

"You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." Pilate said in answer: "What is truth?" Jesus, the Son of the living God, the Redeemer of the world, [was] condemned to death by crucifixion. Over the centuries the denial of truth has spawned suffering and death.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, you accepted an unjust judgment. Grant to us and to all the men and women of our time the grace to remain faithful to the truth. Do not allow the weight of responsibility for the sufferings of the innocent to fall upon us and upon those who come after us. To you, O Jesus, just Judge, be honour and glory for ever and ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 2: Jesus takes up his Cross

The moment that Jesus of Nazareth took up the Cross in order to carry it to Calvary marked a turning-point in the history of the cross. The symbol of a shameful death, reserved for the lowest classes, the cross becomes a key. From now on, with the help of this key, man will open the door of the deepest mystery of God.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, who accepted the Cross at the hands of men to make of it the sign of God's saving love for humanity, grant us and all the men and women of our time the grace of faith in this infinite love. By passing on to the new millennium the sign of the Cross, may we be authentic witnesses to the Redemption. To you, O Jesus, Priest and Victim, be praise and glory for ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 3: Jesus falls the first time

It was our sins that crushed the divine Condemned One to the ground. It was our sins that determined the weight of the Cross that he carries on his shoulders. It was our sins that made him fall. The Redeemer of the world addresses in a wordless way all those who fall. He exhorts them to get up again.

Prayer: O Christ, as you fall under the weight of our faults and rise again for our justification, we pray, help us and all who are weighed down by sin to stand up again and continue the journey. Give us the strength of the Spirit to carry with you the cross of our weakness. To you, O Jesus, crushed under the weight of our faults be our praise and love for ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*

Meditation and Prayers by Saint John Paul II (abridged)
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Station 4: Jesus meets his Mother

On the way of the Cross Mary shows herself to be the Mother of the Redeemer of the world. It is the Sorrowful Mother who speaks, the Handmaid who is obedient to the last, the Mother of the Redeemer of the world.

Prayer: O Mary, who walked the way of the Cross with your Son, your mother's heart torn by grief, but mindful always of your fiat and fully confident that He to whom nothing is impossible would be able to fulfil his promises, implore for us and for the generations yet to come the grace of surrender to God's love. Help us, in the face of suffering, rejection, and trial, however prolonged and severe, never to doubt his love. To Jesus, your Son, honour and glory for ever and ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 5: Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus to carry his Cross

We can imagine that Simon did not want to do this and objected. Carrying the cross together with a convict could be considered an act offensive to the dignity of a free man. In a unique way, the Son of God has made him a sharer in his work of salvation.

Prayer: O Christ, you gave to Simon of Cyrene the dignity of carrying your Cross. Welcome us too under its weight, welcome all men and women and grant to everyone the gift of readiness to serve. Do not permit that we should turn away from those who are crushed by the cross of illness, loneliness, hunger or injustice. As we carry each other's burdens, help us to become witnesses to the gospel of the Cross and witnesses to you, who live and reign for ever and ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 6: Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

The Redeemer of the world presents Veronica with an authentic image of his face. The veil upon which the face of Christ remains imprinted becomes a message for us. In a certain sense it says: This is how every act of goodness, every gesture of true love towards one's neighbour, strengthens the likeness of the Redeemer of the world in the one who acts that way.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, you accepted a woman's selfless gesture of love, and in exchange ordained that future generations should remember her by the name of your face. Grant that our works and the works of all who will come after us will make us like unto you and will leave in the world the reflection of your infinite love. To you, O Jesus, splendour of the Father's glory, be praise and glory for ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 7: Jesus falls the second time

Here in the dust of the earth lies the Condemned One. Crushed by the weight of his Cross. His strength drains away from him more and more. But with great effort he gets up again to continue his march. To us sinners, what does this second fall say? More than the first one, it seems to urge us to get up, to get up again on our way of the cross.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, you fall under the weight of human sin and you get up again in order to take it upon yourself and cancel it. Give to us, weak men and women, the strength to carry the cross of daily life and to get up again from our falls, so that we may bring to future generations the Gospel of your saving power. To you, O Jesus, our support when we are weak, be praise and glory for ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

MEDITATIONS AND PRAYERS BY SAINT JOHN PAUL II

After announcing each station, repeat the following:

Prayer: *We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you.* Response: *Because by your holy Cross you have redeemed the world.*



Station 8: Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem

“Do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.” These are the words of Jesus to the women of Jerusalem who were weeping with compassion for the Condemned One...If, as we follow Christ on the way of the Cross, our hearts are moved with pity for his suffering, we cannot forget that admonition.

Prayer: O Christ, you came into this world to visit all those who await salvation. Grant that our generation will recognize the time of its visitation and share in the fruits of your redemption. Do not permit that there should be weeping for us and for the men and women of the new century because we have rejected our merciful Father's outstretched hand. To you, O Jesus, born of the Virgin Daughter of Zion, be honour and praise for ever and ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 9: Jesus falls the third time

Falling to the ground for the third time on the way of the Cross, he cries out loudly to us once more the mystery of himself. Let us listen to his voice! This Condemned Man, crushed to the ground beneath the weight of the Cross, now very near the place of punishment, tells us: “I am the way, and the truth and the life.” (Jn 14:6)

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, through your humiliation beneath the Cross you revealed to the world the price of its redemption. Grant to the men and women of the third millennium the light of faith, so that, as they recognize in you the Suffering Servant of God and man, they may have the courage to follow the same path which, by way of the Cross and self-emptying, leads to life without end. To you, O Jesus, our support when we are weak, be honour and glory for ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 10: Jesus is stripped and offered gall and vinegar to drink

“When he tasted it, he would not drink it” (Mt 27:34). He did not want a sedative, which would have dulled his consciousness during the agony. He wanted to be fully aware as he suffered on the Cross, accomplishing the mission he had received from the Father.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, who, with supreme dedication, accepted death on the Cross for our salvation, grant to us and to all the world's people a share in your sacrifice on the Cross, so that what we are and what we do may always be a free and conscious sharing in your work of salvation. To you, O Jesus, Priest and Victim, be honour and glory for ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*

Station 11: Jesus is nailed to the Cross

From the Cross, Christ draws us by the power of love, divine Love, which did not recoil from the total gift of self; infinite Love, which on the tree of the Cross raised up from the earth the weight of Christ's body, to counterbalance the weight of the first sin; boundless Love, which has utterly filled every absence of love and allowed humanity to find refuge once more in the arms of the merciful Father.

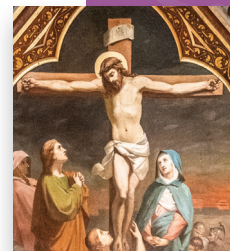
Prayer: O Christ lifted high, O Love crucified, fill our hearts with your love, that we may see in your Cross the sign of our redemption and, drawn by your wounds, we may live and die with you, who live and reign with the Father and the Spirit, now and for ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 12: Jesus dies on the Cross

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Lk 23:34). At the height of his Passion, Christ does not forget man, especially those who are directly responsible for his suffering. Jesus knows that more than anything else man needs love; he needs the mercy which at this moment is being poured out on the world.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, in the moment of your agony you were not indifferent to humanity's fate, and with your last breath you entrusted to the Father's mercy the men and women of every age, with all their weaknesses and sins. Fill us and the generations yet to come with your Spirit of love, so that our indifference will not render vain in us the fruits of your death. To you, crucified Jesus, the wisdom and the power of God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 13: Jesus is taken down from the Cross and given to his Mother

In the arms of his Mother they have placed the lifeless body of the Son. The Gospels say nothing of what she felt at that moment. It is as though by their silence the Evangelists wished to respect her sorrow, her feelings and her memories. Or that they simply felt incapable of expressing them.

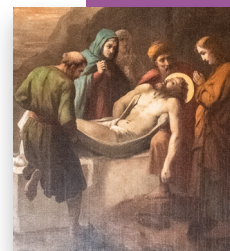
Prayer: Implore for us the grace of faith, hope and charity, so that we, like you, may stand without flinching beneath the Cross until our last breath. To your Son, Jesus, our Saviour, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, all honour and glory for ever and ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



Station 14: Jesus is laid in the tomb

The lifeless body of Christ has been laid in the tomb. But the stone of the tomb is not the final seal on his work. The last word belongs not to falsehood, hatred and violence. The last word will be spoken by Love, which is stronger than death.

Prayer: Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you were drawn by the Father from the darkness of death to the light of a new life in glory. Grant that the sign of the empty tomb may speak to us and to future generations and become a wellspring of living faith, generous love, and unshakeable hope. To you, O Jesus, whose presence, hidden and victorious, fills the history of the world, be honour and glory for ever and ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



AN AID TO YOUR EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

BY ARCHBISHOP ANTHONY FISHER OP

I am the Lord your God: you shall not put other gods before me.

Positive value: Reverence for God.

- What are my priorities in life? Do I put God first and love Him with all my heart or do I put something or someone before God?
- Do I pray daily?
- Do I receive the teachings of Christ and His Church with an open heart and profess them openly? Or have I resisted less convenient teachings or denied them so as to get along?
- Do I receive Holy Communion often (at least annually in Eastertide), and prepare well for this? Or have I gone to Communion thoughtlessly, ungratefully or without first confessing grave sins?
- Do I go to Confession whenever I have committed a serious sin and am I honest when I go to Confession?
- Have I engaged in any occult, satanic or superstitious practices?
- Have I avoided activities that I know can be occasions of sin for me?

You shall not take God's name in vain.

Positive value: Respect for the things of God.

- Do I give due honour to God, His holy name, sacred ministers and sacred things?
- Have I used the name of the Lord (God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit...) disrespectfully, or the names of Mary or the saints?
- Have I deliberately harboured hatred or resentment towards God?
- Have I cursed or wished evil on another person?
- Have I lied under oath or violated a vow?

Keep the Lord's Day holy.

Positive value: Worship of God.

- Do I make worship of God a priority in my life?
- Is Sunday my day of rest, prayer and dedication to my family, avoiding unnecessary work and shopping?
- Have I missed Mass on Sunday without a serious reason? Or on a Holy Day of Obligation (in Australia: 25 December and 15 August)?
- Do I try to be there for all of Mass and try to be engaged with God, his Word and the sacred actions while I am there?
- Do I fast and do penance at the proper times (Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, other Fridays)? Do I fast for an hour before receiving Holy Communion?

Honour your father and mother.

Positive value: Reverence for family.

- Do I love, honour and respect my parents, other older people, and those in authority?
- Have I shown appropriate care for my spouse, children, siblings, other family?
- Have I neglected the aged, sick or lonely?
- Have I tried to ensure that my children receive the sacraments, are given good religious instruction and practice their faith?

You shall not kill.

Positive value: Reverence for life.

- Do I uphold the dignity of every person?
- Do I love others appropriately and forgive those who hurt me? Or do I harbour hatred, grudges or prejudices?
- Have I deliberately harmed someone, physically, emotionally, or in reputation?
- Do I care for my own physical, emotional, and spiritual health?
- Have I abused alcohol or drugs or driven 'under the influence'? Do I act recklessly?
- Have I had an abortion or helped someone else to have one?

VI You shall not commit adultery.

Positive value: Reverence for sex and the body.

- Do I reverence my own body and have I been faithful to my state in life (married, vowed, single)? • Am I a flirt? Have I engaged in immodest or sexually inappropriate behaviour? • Do I honour my own marriage / family and support others in their family life? • Have I committed sexual acts outside of marriage? • Have I used bad language or told impure jokes? • Have I used or encouraged others to use contraception or sterilisation? • Have I viewed pornographic magazines, film or websites?

VII You shall not steal.

Positive value: Reverence for earthly goods.

- Do I honour the goods of the earth and of other people and try to contribute to the improvement of this world? • Do I share with those in need, giving generously to charities and contributing to the material needs of the Church? • Have I stolen, pirated or damaged other people's property? • Have I cheated someone or failed to make just restitution? • Do I gamble excessively or spend wastefully? • Do I act justly with respect to my employer, employees and in my tax affairs?

VIII You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

Positive value: Reverence for truth.

- Do I always seek to know and speak and live by the truth? Or have I lied, exaggerated or sworn falsely? • Do I gossip or reveal confidences without good reason? • Have I damaged someone's good name or failed to defend those unjustly criticised? • Have I plagiarised or been academically dishonest?

IX You shall not covet your neighbour's wife or people.

Positive value: Reverence for persons.

- Do I reverence other people's bodies and state in life? • Do I guard my senses, imagination and memory? Or have I wilfully lusted after another person or entertained impure thoughts? • Am I envious of the abilities, talents, beauty, friendships or success of others? • Do I ridicule, humiliate or manipulate others? • Do I encourage others to live good lives? Or have I encouraged them to engage in a sin or wrongly assisted them in doing so?

X You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

Positive value: Reverence for higher things.

- Do I put the higher things first in my life or am I materialistic and part of the consumer culture? • Am I excessively attached to material goods or envious of what others have? • Do I show respect for the earth? Or do I unnecessarily damage the ecology? • Have I desired or planned to steal, destroy or damage the property of another? • Do I trust God to provide or fail to be grateful when He does?

"Merciful
and gracious
is the Lord,
slow to anger,
abounding in
mercy."
(Ps 103:8)



A Prayer for Renewal



lessed are you, Father,
who, in your infinite love
sent us your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,
that we may have life, and have it in abundance.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,
renew our Eucharistic communities.

May they be places of encounter
with the living Christ,
centres of evangelisation and outreach
to our community in love and mercy.

Grant us the gifts of faith, hope and love
to be faithful disciples of Jesus and
radiant witnesses to the people of Sydney.

Our Lady, Help of Christians. *Pray for us!*

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelisation. *Pray for us!*

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. *Pray for us!*



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