

Receive the Grace to

**GO MAKE
DISCIPLES**



A Lenten Companion

Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney

Dear friends in Christ,

The season of Lent is given to us each year by our Mother Church, to help us to grow and mature in the Christian life. It is an opportunity to make space for time with God in prayer, to strengthen our resolve and our wills, and to turn our hearts and hands to the needs of others. We use this precious time to prepare our souls for a springtime of renewal at Easter: nourishing our spiritual lives with prayer and good works, and pruning whatever prevents us from flourishing. Lent is a time of coming closer to Jesus; of spending time with Him and following Him to the foot of the Cross so that we can also experience His Resurrection. The closer we come to Jesus, the more we will become like Him, and the more we will be able to witness to Him in the world. Let us sit at the feet of the Master this Lent, so that we can receive the grace we need to go and make disciples.

Pax,

Elizabeth Arblaster

Parish Renewal Team, Sydney Centre for Evangelisation

Conversion

Before calling the twelve disciples, Jesus first spent forty days in the desert fasting and praying. In doing this, He models for us the way of surrender to the Father, which is necessary for discipleship and mission. For us, the freedom required for such surrender is fostered by penitential practices. These are undertaken more intensely during Lent (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1438). Of the various forms that this penance can take, the Church teaches the importance of “fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, which express conversion in relation to oneself, to God, and to others.” (CCC 1434)

Fasting

Conversion in relation to oneself

Giving up certain things that we crave helps us to be able to choose freely what we will do and consume, rather than submitting to impulsive desires.

Prayer

Conversion in relation to God

Spending time in prayer brings us closer to God, so that we can strengthen our relationship with Him, and experience His love and mercy.

Almsgiving

Conversion in relation to others

The practice of giving to others from our riches, whether it be our material goods or our time, helps us to become less selfish and to grow in love of our neighbour.

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.

How to use this Lenten Companion

A suggestion for the use of this Companion by individuals or small groups is:

1. During the week prayerfully read the Sunday Gospel. An ancient method to do this is *lectio divina* (divine reading), which is outlined briefly on this page.
2. Read the *Gospel reflection*.
3. Use the *reflection questions* to more deeply consider the Gospel and the reflection. Groups may choose to discuss the questions together. Individuals may speak to the Lord in private prayer or use a journal to reflect further. Finish with a prayer thanking God and asking Him to help you with all your needs.
4. On the Fridays of Lent, follow Jesus in prayer on the Way of the Cross, using St John Paul II's *Stations of the Cross*. See pages 18-21.
5. Experience God's mercy and grace during Lent by undertaking an *Examination of Conscience* and then receiving the Sacrament of Penance (also called 'Confession' or 'Reconciliation'). For An Aid to the Examination of Conscience, see pages 22-23.

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.

This is adapted from an outline of the practice of *lectio divina* on the Jamberoo Abbey website. Visit www.jamberooabbey.org.au/prayer/lectio-divina-praying-with-the-sacred-scriptures/ for the full version.

Preparation

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross. Take a moment to become aware that you are in the presence of God who loves you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be attentive to what is being said to you today.

Gospel of St Mark (1:12-15)

Immediately afterwards the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him. After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. 'The time has come' he said 'and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News.'

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

Christ in the Wilderness by Moretto da Brescia, ca. 1515–20. Image: Rogers Fund, 1911/Public Domain

Gospel Reflection (Evangelisation)

By Fr David Braithwaite SJ

The wilderness or desert in our spiritual tradition is a layered and paradoxical phenomenon. On the one hand, it's the symbol of the inward journey, of 'retreat' and of stillness. On the other hand, it's the place of danger and threat to body and soul. In both cases it's the place of extremes that confronts me with the stark reality of what is at stake in the spiritual life. It's a time and place for spiritual truth-telling of the sort that can be hard to hear and bear. The question arises in the stillness of the desert night: whom do I truly serve? God, mammon, myself? The answering of that question requires the peeling back of the layers of delusion, rationalisation and fear. The spiritual life is an adventure not for the timid.

Quite rightly much is made of our duty to evangelise as Catholics. The urge to spread the Good

News is a sign of a vibrant spiritual life. After all, if I have received from above, something beautiful and life-changing, why wouldn't I want to share that with others? And yet, it needs to be tempered by the prior Christ-like journey into the wilderness where I confront my own shadows and the Father of Lies. I must stare down the fear and shame that stands between me and Jesus' unbreakable love for me. The fruit of this confrontation is the peace that comes from resting entirely on the gentle grace of God. But that takes courage and resolution to live inwardly and deeply spiritually lest what I spread be not the Good News but my own narcissistic wounds and fantasies. This Lent let's embrace the wilderness for what it offers us as disciples who seek to live by God's will alone.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the spiritual reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. How would I like to grow as a disciple? What spiritual gifts would I like to ask God for in order to do this?
3. Disciples share the Good News they have received. How might God be asking me to share what I have been given?

Prayer

What do you want to thank God for? What do you want to ask God for? Speak honestly to God about these things, trusting in His help. Finish by slowly praying the Lord's Prayer.



Preparation

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross. Take a moment to become aware that you are in the presence of God who loves you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be attentive to what is being said to you today.

Gospel of St Mark (9:2-10)

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter spoke to Jesus: 'Rabbi,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah'. He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and there came a voice from the cloud, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.' Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus.

As they came down from the mountain he warned them to tell no one what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They observed the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what 'rising from the dead' could mean.

6

The Transfiguration. Image: Pixabay.com

Gospel Reflection (Community)

By Mother Hilda Scott OSB

Some of you will be very familiar with Rublev's icon of the Trinity. Three beings, Who form their own community, sharing at some deep level a mystery into which the viewer is invited. Here in this Gospel we read that Peter, James and John were likewise invited into a deep experience of mystery and they didn't ever forget it. Indeed none of us can "unsee" what we have seen, or truly "unknow" what we have come to know. This experience too made them witnesses to something beyond themselves, and a witness by definition not only sees, but then shows. And what about us? Haven't there been times when you too have known mystery? Known things that are beyond you? Because God is God in our very midst, transfigurations just don't happen on mountains, they happen every day.

It happened one day that I was making my way back from the airport in a crowded train at peak hour. There was no seat and a young man with a healthy number of tattoos, pierced body parts and spiked hair, got up and gave me his seat. When I left the train, I turned and mouthed 'thank you', his gracious smile answered me. At that moment there were only two people at Wollie Creek Railway Station, this young unnamed man and me. The whole train was transfigured and I have never forgotten. Transfigurations so often happen, as they did in this Gospel, within the context of God's finest creations, us, we, the community in which we live, pray and are challenged. There God awaits us, there we will see Him, and there we will become witnesses to that which we can never forget.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the spiritual reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. In what ways have I experienced the presence of God through a community?
3. How might I be called to assist others in experiencing the presence of God through my parish community?

Prayer

What do you want to thank God for? What do you want to ask God for? Speak honestly to God about these things, trusting in His help. Finish by slowly praying the Lord's Prayer.



Preparation

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross. Take a moment to become aware that you are in the presence of God who loves you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be attentive to what is being said to you today.

Gospel of St John (2:13-25)

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, 'Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market'.

Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, 'What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?' Jesus answered, 'Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up'. The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said.

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

Gospel Reflection (Worship)

By Peter Holmes

Jesus is angry. So angry He turns over tables, makes a whip and chases certain people out of the House of God. This part of Jesus' life may seem hard to reconcile with the loving God we are taught about elsewhere in Scripture.

If we take a closer look at the details of the story, it starts to make more sense. Jesus is upset at the dove sellers and money changers. While a normal family could have brought a lamb for sacrifice, extremely poor families were allowed to bring two small doves. This meant that even the poorest of the poor could catch a few doves for free and come into God's presence and receive His forgiveness, life and fellowship with God. The dove sellers were exploiting this need and making a profit out of the poorest people who wanted to worship God.

This is why Jesus is angry. God has given His gifts freely, and He calls us all to worship Him, to receive the amazing gifts of grace, mercy, salvation and fellowship from His holy altar. Jesus does not permit people to put barriers between God's gifts and those who need and ask for them. Jesus calls all people to Himself in worship. To those who come with humble hearts to ask, God freely gives forgiveness. To those who ask for help in their earnest struggle to live and love as God does, God freely gives His grace in the sacraments. To those who seek to know and love God more closely and dearly, Jesus gives Himself, body, soul and divinity in the Mass. He gives Himself freely, and calls us to give ourselves to Him in return.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the spiritual reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. Can I think of a time when I have received God's grace, mercy, salvation and fellowship? How do I show gratitude for the gifts God has freely given me?
3. How can I lead others to be sensitive to God's gifts and to be grateful for them?

Prayer

What do you want to thank God for? What do you want to ask God for? Speak honestly to God about these things, trusting in His help. Finish by slowly praying the Lord's Prayer.



Preparation

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross. Take a moment to become aware that you are in the presence of God who loves you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be attentive to what is being said to you today.

Gospel of St John (3:14-21)

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

On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world men have shown they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God.’

Gospel Reflection (Formation)

By Professor Tracey Rowland

The Light of Christ entered the world on the First Christmas night. A young Fr Joseph Ratzinger once described the birth of Christ in Bethlehem as ‘the winter solstice of humanity’ by which he meant that just as the days begin to get lighter and longer as we move forward from the winter solstice into spring and summer, so too, in human history, the birth of Christ, the Incarnation of God in human flesh, enlightens humanity, taking us out of the darkness of sin and ignorance. Light brings sight, knowledge of what is real, and light also brings warmth and is a necessary element for growth. The light of Christ is thus a critical part of our intellectual formation. The theological virtue of faith works on the human intellect to lead it to truth, just as the theological virtue of love works on the will to lead it to good-

ness and the theological virtue of hope works on the memory affirming its experience of beauty and the splendor of creation. The Light of Christ is thus a special grace, a divine gift for the sanctification of humanity and the whole world. The splendor of this light was revealed to the Apostles at the Transfiguration but it also continues to be revealed in the lives of the saints who are exemplary specimens of humanity precisely because of the work of Christ’s light within them. In order to place ourselves within this light we need to be attentive to the words of Scripture and pray that the theological virtues will strengthen our souls. The stronger the light of Christ in our souls, the more glorious our lives will be. Light and glory go together, as was made evident at the first Transfiguration.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the spiritual reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. Can I recall a time I have received light from the Word of God? I give thanks for this gift. What steps might I take to be more attentive to Scripture?
3. My parish community is called to be a witness to the Light of Christ. What gifts do I have that could contribute to this mission?

Prayer

What do you want to thank God for? What do you want to ask God for? Speak honestly to God about these things, trusting in His help. Finish by slowly praying the Lord’s Prayer.



Preparation

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross. Take a moment to become aware that you are in the presence of God who loves you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be attentive to what is being said to you today.

Gospel of St John (12:20-33)

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus'. Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them: 'Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life. If a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him. Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name!' A voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.' People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, 'It was an angel speaking to him'. Jesus answered, 'It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours. Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself.' By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

12

*Fresco of Jesus Christ as Gardener by Karl von Blaas, circa 1858.
Image: sedmak/123rf.com*

Gospel Reflection (Leadership)

By Fr Chris Ryan MGL

People sometimes ask the question: Is there anything distinctive about Christian leadership? That is, is there anything that should distinguish a Christian leader from other kinds of leaders? The Gospel today indicates that there is. When Jesus speaks of the grain of wheat falling to the ground and dying, He is referring to Himself. He is speaking of His own death and the mysterious fruit it will bear for the life of the world (Jn 12:24). But Jesus immediately goes on to say that those who serve Him must follow Him. That is, they must follow Him by sharing in the mystery of His dying and rising. When we consider this passage, the most distinctive feature of Christian leadership immediately becomes apparent. Christian leaders are to model themselves, and their

leadership, upon Christ. Just as He laid down His life, a Christian leader is to lay down his or her life in imitation of Jesus. What does this look like in practice? First and foremost it means that leadership for Christians is an act of love. Before inspiring people to adopt a vision, before developing a strategy to accomplish that vision, leaders who serve Jesus Christ love. What do they love? The people that they are called to serve. And the kind of love they are to show is the same sacrificial love that Jesus exemplified throughout His life, culminating in His death upon the Cross. The promise of Jesus in this passage is that such self-sacrificial love will bear fruit. In other words, it will bring about results. Fruitful leadership starts, and ends, with love.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the spiritual reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. In which relationship do I need to exercise Christian leadership by dying to myself? How?
3. How am I called to support Christian leadership in my parish?

Prayer

What do you want to thank God for? What do you want to ask God for? Speak honestly to God about these things, trusting in His help. Finish by slowly praying the Lord's Prayer.





Preparation

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross. Take a moment to become aware that you are in the presence of God who loves you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be attentive to what is being said to you today.

Gospel of St Mark (15:16-39*)

The soldiers led [Jesus] away to the inner part of the palace, that is, the Praetorium, and called the whole cohort together. They dressed him up in purple, twisted some thorns into a crown and put it on him. And they began saluting him, 'Hail, king of the Jews!' They struck his head with a reed and spat on him; and they went down on their knees to do him homage. And when they had finished making fun of him, they took off the purple and dressed him in his own clothes. They led him out to crucify him. They enlisted a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, father of Alexander and Rufus, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross. They brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of the skull. They offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he refused it. Then they crucified him, and shared out his clothing, casting lots to decide what each should get. It was the third hour when they crucified him. The inscription giving the charge against him read: 'The King of the Jews'. And they crucified two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his left. The passers-by jeered

at him; they shook their heads and said, 'Aha! So you would destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days! Then save yourself: come down from the cross!' The chief priests and the scribes mocked him among themselves in the same way. 'He saved others,' they said 'he cannot save himself. Let the Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross now, for us to see it and believe.' Even those who were crucified with him taunted him. When the sixth hour came there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood by heard this, they said, 'Listen, he is calling on Elijah'. Someone ran and soaked a sponge in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink saying; 'Wait and see if Elijah will come to take him down'. But Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The centurion, who was standing in front of him, had seen how he had died, and he said, 'In truth this man was a son of God'.

14

* This is an excerpt of the shorter reading of the day, Mark 15:1-39.
The Crucified Christ by Diego Rodrigues Velazquez. Image: Museo Nacional del Prado

Gospel Reflection (Discipleship)

By Dr Paul Morrissey

Earlier in Mark's Gospel, Jesus says to the crowd, "If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mk 8:34) As we read the passion of Jesus we realise just how high the cost of discipleship is. As Jesus takes up His cross (literally) He is seemingly rejected by the whole world: civil and religious leaders, the military, the citizens, and His own people. This rejection is verbal and physical, humiliating and painful beyond words. And yet the passion and death of Jesus is the way to life. In three simple verses (Mk 15: 37-39) we see the full meaning of this way. Jesus breaths His last and completes the sacrifice (Mk 15:36). Immediately the temple veil is torn in

two (Mk 15:37). This veil separated the mercy of God (the holy of holies) from the people and thus the death of Jesus opens the mercy of the Father to all people. We then return to the foot of the cross (Mk 15:39) to witness the Roman centurion, a gentile, who having seen these extraordinary events, cries out, "Truly this is the Son of God!" Are we ready to walk the way of Jesus? Yes, this is the way of the cross, but it is a way that leads to life, for us and for others. The great paradox of Christianity is that I truly gain my life by dying to myself. My real life, my true identity is to become the image of God, forged in the fire of self-giving, of taking up the cross each day.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the spiritual reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. What crosses are in my life? I ask God for the grace to carry them with trust.
3. What crosses do I see in the wider community to which my parish is present? How can my parish community be another 'Simon', helping others to carry their crosses?

Prayer

What do you want to thank God for? What do you want to ask God for? Speak honestly to God about these things, trusting in His help. Finish by slowly praying the Lord's Prayer.

Preparation

Begin by making the Sign of the Cross. Take a moment to become aware that you are in the presence of God who loves you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to be attentive to what is being said to you today.

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 (Resurrection and Renewal)

By Fr Kelvin Lovegrove

As we enter our parish churches this Easter Sunday, St John's gospel reminds us of the discovery of the empty tomb by Mary Magdalen, and then her declaration to Peter and John that the Lord is not in the tomb. The experience of the empty tomb is not unlike our own experience as we enter our churches at Easter. A few years ago, we watched as Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris was gutted by fire. I came upon this story at the time, by a young Parisian who reflected upon his Easter before the tragedy: *"Mass begins in the Cathedral in complete darkness. Worshippers light their candles from the Paschal candle. All of a sudden, you see the place completely differently. Because of the dancing light along the vaults, the place seems mysterious, more alive. One day I want my children to have the same experience as I do. Something has been given to us... not only to be admired, but to be believed."* The disciple John says at the end of his gospel on entering the tomb: '...he saw and he believed.' (Jn 20:8) For us, our faith in the Resurrection of Jesus from

the dead is something to be believed. Indeed our hope is that everyone can come to believe in the Resurrection of Christ. Easter is our time of renewal and new life. We enter the tomb with Jesus to die, in order to rise again. Our lives are centred on this belief and hope. Our challenge, like the first eye witnesses, is to bring that faith and hope to all our brothers and sisters. The mission is not an easy one for us, as it was a challenge for the first disciples. But we have to believe personally and communally in the Resurrection of Jesus for the message to begin to reach the hearts of all. Pope Francis says of the Resurrection: 'Jesus is not in the tomb; He is risen! He is the living One who always renews His body, which is the Church, and enables it to walk by drawing it toward him.' Let Easter be our time of renewal. Allow the light of faith to penetrate our minds and hearts, that we, like the young Parisian at the doors of Notre Dame can say: *'...something has been given to us... not only to be admired, but to be believed.'*

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the spiritual reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. Can I recall a time where I have received renewal from the Lord? How did it affect my life?
3. What would renewal look like in my parish? Ask God for this renewal.

Prayer

What do you want to thank God for? What do you want to ask God for? Speak honestly to God about these things, trusting in His help. Finish by slowly praying the Lord's Prayer.

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...*

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.

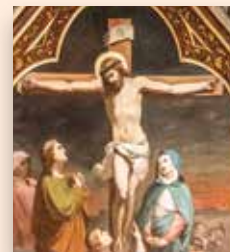
Prayer: O Christ lifted high, O Love crucified, fill our hearts with your love, that we may see in your Cross the sign of our redemption and, drawn by your wounds, we may live and die with you, who live and reign with the Father and the Spirit, now and for ever. *Our Father...Hail Mary...Glory be...*



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 plagiarized 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 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?



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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