



Mercy and Healing Await

COME BACK TO ME



Lenten Companion 2022

Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney



Dear friends in Christ,

God is all-powerful but He is no bully. He doesn't shout at us or try to intimidate us. Scripture tells us He is not in the storm or the earthquake or the fire. Rather, He is in the "still, small voice" (1 Kgs 19:12). Every day, that still, small voice gently beckons us, "listen, and your soul will live" (Is 55:3). God calls to us in the gentle figure of the Christ-child, the quiet presence of the Blessed Sacrament, the tiny events of our day, through Scripture, and the beauty of creation. The Lord of the whole universe humbly awaits our 'yes' to His daily call.

Lent is a chance to say 'Yes, God, I want to go deeper with you, I want you to change my heart.' May this Lenten Companion help us to say yes by entering into practices which our Mother Church tells us bring renewal to the human heart: praying, giving alms, fasting and availing ourselves of the healing power of Confession. Lent means springtime. I pray that the Lord may bring a springtime to each of our hearts and, through us, bless our families, parishes, and communities.

Pax,

Elizabeth Arblaster

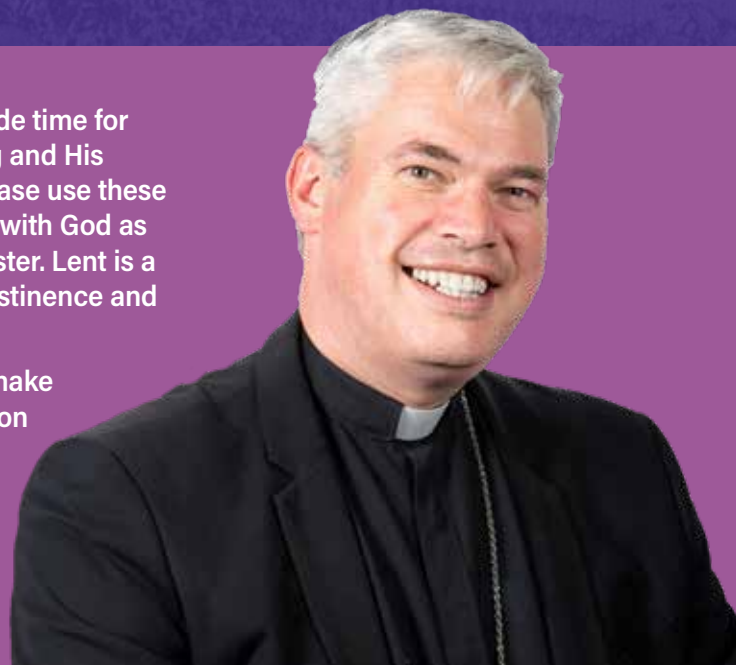
Manager, Parish Renewal Team

During this Season of Lent I encourage you to set aside time for reflection on Jesus Christ – to consider His suffering and His sacrifice, His life, death, burial and resurrection. Please use these days to strengthen your faith and deepen your relationship with God as you prepare your hearts and minds for Good Friday and Easter. Lent is a rich tradition of our Church, a time of prayer, fasting and abstinence and preparation.

Pope Francis reminds us that "Lent is a favourable time to make room for the Word of God. It is time to switch off the television and open the Bible. It is a time to separate from mobile phones and connect to the Gospel."

Bishop Richard Umbers

Auxiliary Bishop of Sydney



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 Reflection 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 for His mercy and healing, and entrust your needs to Him.

Additional Material

Lenten Observances and the Sacrament of Confession

Discover how we can receive God's mercy and enter more deeply into this Season of Lent as Fr Noel Custodio explains the Lenten Observances and the Sacrament of Confession (also called 'Penance' or 'Reconciliation'). See pages 4-5.

Way of the Cross

On Fridays during Lent, pray the Way of the Cross using the meditations and prayers of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. See pages 20-25.

Examination of Conscience

In order to prepare well for the Sacrament of Confession, you may find it helpful to use the Examination of Conscience on pages 26-27.

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 that 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).

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.

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

Sacrament of Confession

Lent is a Season in the year when we focus particularly on conversion. An important practice in assisting with our conversion is the Sacrament of Confession (Penance or Reconciliation).

It is best to start at the beginning. At the heart of the mystery of the Sacrament of Confession is a question: "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9). This is the first question that God asks Adam after the first sin. It is also the first question that God asks in the Bible. It is not as though God did not actually know where Adam was hiding. His question was an opportunity: *an opportunity to confess*. Adam, like many of us when we sin, responds by pointing the finger: "It was the woman you put with me; she gave me the fruit, and I ate it" (Gen 3:12). Eve also points the finger: "The serpent tempted me and I ate" (Gen 3:13).

Imagine God asking you the same question as you begin this Lenten Season: "Where are you?" God is always present to us, but we are not always present to God. He offers us love and grace to live the Christian life with freedom and joy, but still, we choose to turn away by opting for the forbidden fruit of sin, destroying the life of grace in us.

The Archdiocese of Sydney is calling all the faithful to a life of missionary discipleship. It may seem like this call is just for those who are overly enthused. No! Faith is the greatest adventure. St. Augustine famously said: "To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek him the greatest adventure; to find him, the greatest human achievement." A life of missionary discipleship is for all the Christian faithful and part of the Great Commission to go make disciples.

The adventure of discipleship requires the freedom to "run the race" (2 Tim 4:7). However, as Vinny Flynn writes: "Our sins are chains. Our doubts, worries, and anxieties are chains. Our idols are chains. Our wounds are chains, our feelings of unforgiveness are chains. They come in all different lengths and weights, but they're all chains, and they weigh us down" (*7 Secrets of Confession*, 143). To run the race, we need to let go of our chains. The Sacrament of Confession is your path to being unbound and free to run again.

On the fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday), we are invited to ponder the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Notice the repentant heart of the son when he decides to confess: "I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son'" (Lk 15:18). While the son was yet at a distance, it is the father who runs: "His father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him" (Lk 15:20).

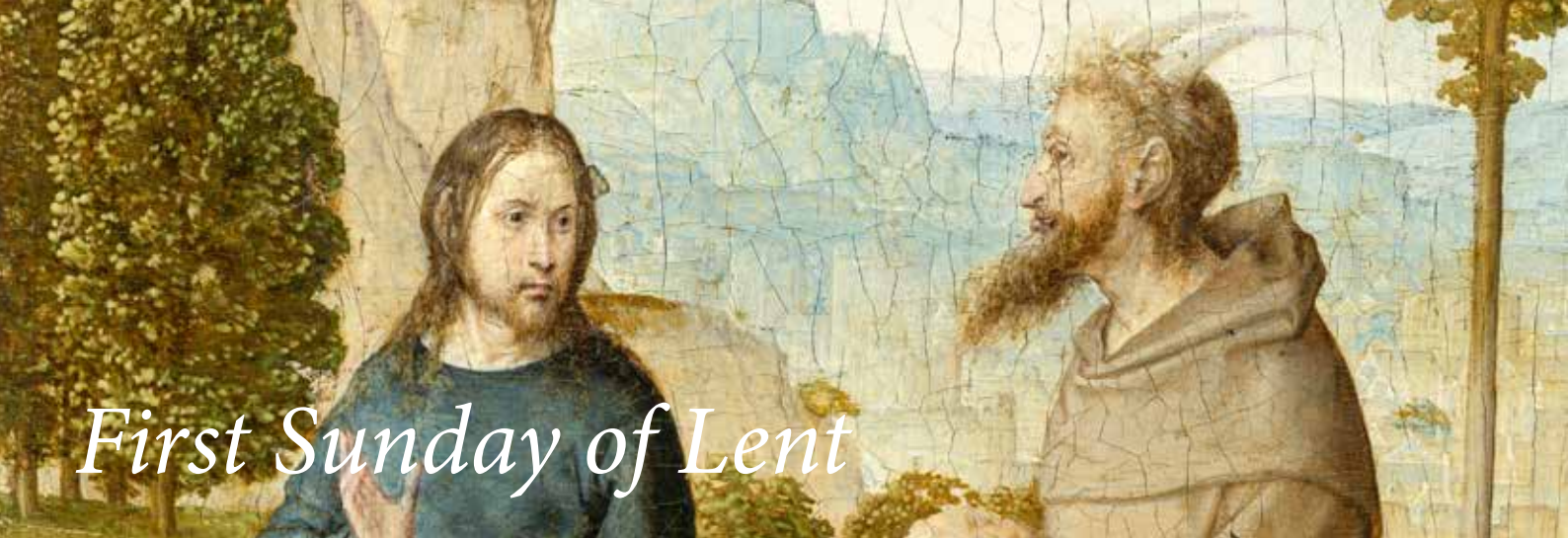
At the end of the parable, the father rejoices at his son's return; his son who was "dead and is alive; he was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32).

"Where are you?" God asks. I invite you to the Sacrament of Mercy this Lent. Be *found*.

- Fr Noel Custodio

The Confession by Giuseppe Molteni c. 1838. Credit: Fondazione Cariplo/CC BY-SA 3.0





First Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Merciful Jesus, thank you for this beautiful Season of Lent. We come before you now with hearts open, ready to hear your voice speaking to us through Scripture and the Gospel Reflection. Give us the grace to respond to your Word. Amen.

Gospel of St Luke (4:1-13)

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.' But Jesus replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone.'

Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours.' But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says:

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

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said to him 'throw yourself down from here, for scripture says:

He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you, and again:

They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'

But Jesus answered him, 'It has been said:

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

Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him, to return at the appointed time.



Gospel Reflection

By Dr Peter McGregor

In His wilderness, Jesus recapitulates the temptations faced by Israel for forty years in their wilderness. The three temptations that both He, they, and we face are to rely on our own strength, to pursue worldly riches, power, and glory, and to presumptuously 'put God to the test.' All three temptations are, in essence, temptations to not trust God.

To turn stones into bread refers to Israel's complaint that they had no food. In response, God feeds them with manna. The response of Jesus refers to this event when He says that "man does not live on bread alone" (Deut 8:3).

To worship the devil refers to Israel's worship of the Golden Calf. Again, Jesus refers to this event when he says, "you must worship the Lord your God, and serve Him alone" (Deut 6:13). To cast Himself down from the parapet of the Temple refers to

"Jesus was not alone. We are not alone in our temptations, and we can be led by the Spirit in our resistance to them."

how the people of Israel put God to the test when they had no water at Massah in the desert. To this, Jesus replies, "You must not put the Lord your God to the test" (Deut 6:16). The temptations that Jesus underwent in the wilderness were

a necessary part of the preparation for His mission, and they are a necessary part of our purification for our share in His mission.

What we should note especially was that Jesus was not alone. Before He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days He was filled with the Spirit after His baptism. We are not alone in our temptations, and we can be led by the Spirit in our resistance to them. Finally,

we are told that the devil left Jesus, but that he would return "at the appointed time." We too will have our "appointed times" for spiritual warfare (Eph 6:12).



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your mercy and healing. May we be open to receive your grace this Lent. By the power of the Holy Spirit, give us the strength to resist all temptation, and bestow on us every gift that we need to share in your mission to bear witness to your Son, Jesus Christ.

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. Jesus faced the temptations of relying on His own strength, seeking worldly riches, power and glory, and putting God to the test. Which of these temptations do I most struggle with, and need the strength of the Holy Spirit to resist?
3. How has the Spirit prepared me for mission in the past? In what ways do I need His grace to be a better witness?

The Temptation of Christ by Juan de Flandes, c. 1500/1504. Credit: Ailsa Mellon Bruce Fund Public Domain



Second Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Merciful Jesus, thank you for this beautiful season of Lent. We come before you now with hearts open, ready to hear your voice speaking to us through Scripture and a Gospel Reflection. Give us the grace to respond to your Word. Amen.

Gospel of St Luke (9:28-36)

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

Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' – He did not know what he was saying. As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.'

And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

Gospel Reflection

By Prof. Renée Köhler-Ryan

What was it like to be Peter, James, or John at this moment? There is Christ, revealed in His glory. Alongside Him are Moses and Elijah. How pleased they must have been that, though “heavy with sleep,” they managed to remain awake. And how different from that moment later in time, when they cannot stay awake, and their Lord sweats blood all alone, and is hauled away to die on the wood of the Cross.

The transfiguration is, after all, a point in Scripture that provides both provocation and consolation. With the apostles, we wonder at the glorified Lord. And, when we later contemplate Christ suffering on the Cross, we are reminded of this point in His life. The transfigured Christ is undeniably beautiful. Christ on the Cross challenges us to find that beauty. In both cases, Christ’s love is the key point: calling us, challenging us to be like Him.

*“We reflect
God’s glory
when we
turn ourselves
toward Christ
by carrying out
His mission.”*

To be Christlike is to become transfigured. In *Veritatis Splendor*, Saint John Paul II points out that the call of every Christian is to become glorified like Christ on the mount. This is the point of the moral life, which is motivated above all by a Christlike love. We

reflect God’s glory when we turn ourselves toward Christ by carrying out His mission.

At this point then, Christ sends us out, with the knowledge that through suffering, love emerges. Even at the darkest moments, Christ’s light, His love, has the power to convert us. He may be hidden in the shadows, but we know He is there. Our conversion enables us to go out into the world. When we listen to His voice, we are transformed, and can carry Christ’s light to others. Thus our transfiguration mirrors that of Christ and we become made in His image.



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your mercy and healing. Help us to be truly transformed by your love. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we reflect your glory in the world and witness to others the glorious light of your Son, Jesus Christ.

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. When has the love of Christ transfigured me in the past, and allowed me to become more like Him?
3. In which relationship or situation is God calling me to witness to Him and to reflect His glory?

Altar of Transfiguration by Raphael, c. 1520. Credit: Art Gallery ErgsArt, Flickr, Public Domain



Third Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Merciful Jesus, thank you for this beautiful season of Lent. We come before you now with hearts open, ready to hear your voice speaking to us through Scripture and a Gospel Reflection. Give us the grace to respond to your Word. Amen.

Gospel of St Luke (13:1-9)

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

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



Gospel Reflection

By Rev. Dr Gregory M W Morgan

"What's wrong with the world?" Early in the 20th Century, a British newspaper famously addressed this question to a number of prominent writers. One such writer was the literary genius and courageous convert to Catholicism, G K Chesterton. His response was pithy but inspired. "Dear Sir, I am."

Chesterton's four-word-reply did not blame the external events of the world for what's wrong with the world. Instead, he called attention back to the state of the individual human heart. For every worldly struggle that takes place before our eyes takes place first in the human heart — the struggle between good and evil, truth and falsity, light and darkness, fruitfulness and unfruitfulness.

Similarly, Our Lord in today's Gospel cautions us not to make hasty assumptions about the state of other people's hearts by trying to interpret the significance of external events. Instead, He, too, invites us to contemplate the fruitfulness of our own spiritual lives; making it clear that fruitfulness – which is always borne

“Repentance is precisely what this world needs as the antidote to all that might be wrong with it.”

out of holiness – begins with, and depends upon, repentance. Repent or perish!

Repentance is precisely what this world needs as the antidote to all that might be wrong with it. For what is repentance but the experience of divine mercy! If you even begin to scrape the surface of our society, you discover how so many people are riddled

by anxiety; insecurity; moral pain; and self-doubt. Every human heart yearns for mercy — to be unburdened from the yoke of guilt; to be freed from addictive behaviours; to be healed from broken relationships. It is these incredible existential pains that only Christ and His Church can heal for it

is through the Sacraments, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that we are able to experience the true joy of repentance.

Perhaps therein lies the possibility of a brighter future. If we want the world to change then, following Our Lord's wisdom, it is we who must change first. A change that begins with a good Confession.



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your mercy and healing. Help us to contemplate the fruitfulness of our spiritual lives. By the power of the Holy Spirit, allow us to experience the true joy of repentance, and with the Sacrament of Reconciliation, receive forgiveness and healing through your Son, Jesus Christ.

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 is one occasion in my life when Jesus helped me to grow in holiness?
3. Is there a time when I have experienced the joy of repentance? How can I witness to the divine mercy of God?

The Vine Dresser and the Fig Tree by James Tissot, c. 1886-1894. Credit: Brooklyn Museum, 00159.82_PS2.jpg



Fourth Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Merciful Jesus, thank you for this beautiful season of Lent. We come before you now with hearts open, ready to hear your voice speaking to us through Scripture and a Gospel Reflection. Give us the grace to respond to your Word. Amen.

Gospel of St Luke (15:1-3,11-32)

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he spoke this parable to them: 'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me." So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery. 'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father. 'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate. 'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening." 'The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found."

Gospel Reflection

By Steven Buhagiar

We do well to ponder the putrid reality of the younger son's situation after he had squandered his inheritance having lived, as the Gospel indicates, a "life of debauchery."

What does a pigsty smell like? What degradation must one feel to hunger for the spillage that an unclean pig leaves behind? What annihilation of spirit exists when others care more for the pig than for the actual person?

Empathising with his pitiful condition allows us to readily sense the tumultuous state of his soul, the same state which impounds a sinner chained down by the shackles of fear and shame. Yet it is here, in a sty of filth and degradation, that the Father's hand of mercy enters in and extends a graced invitation to repent and begin life anew!

Heaven abounds with those blessed men and women who were raised from the graves and pigsties of sin by a loving Father who

ever sought them out despite the stench of their faults and failings. Whenever we open our hearts to receive the gift of the Father's love and mercy, we allow the parched desert of our very being to come alive. It is His work that is coming to fruition in us...a

most beautiful work of the Father's own creation!

This is how we should approach, too, the grace-laden opportunity that is the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Here, the Father wants to do something new and beautiful in us every time we respond with receptivity to His bountiful gift of mercy.

Let us always remember that as we are absolved, blessed and sent on our

way from this Sacrament, we are in fact commissioned by the Father to be His ambassadors of mercy to a world that hungers so very desperately for a graced encounter with His ever-loving and merciful face.

*"Whenever we
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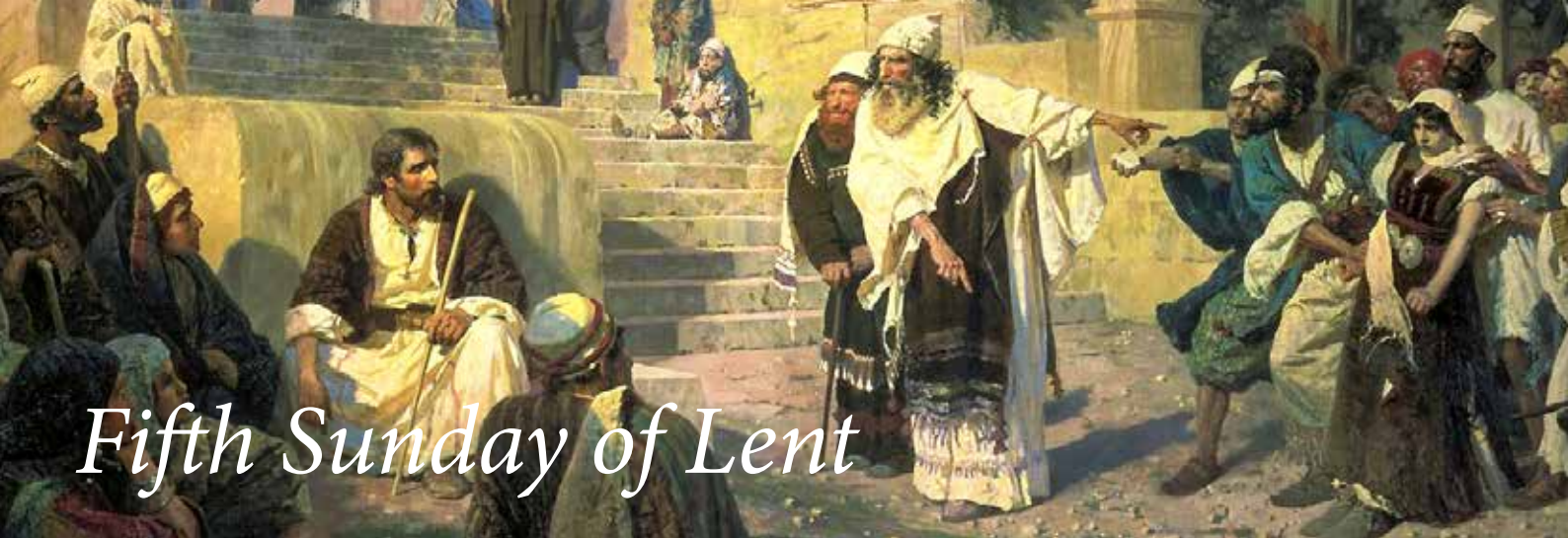
Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your mercy and healing. May we truly know that we are your beloved sons and daughters. By the power of the Holy Spirit, open our hearts to receive the gift of your love, and may we be faithful ambassadors of the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ.

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. Have I ever experienced a time when the loving Father sought me out despite my faults and failings?
3. When I have I been an ambassador of mercy? If I have not as yet, what do I need to do to become one?

The Prodigal Son by Pierre Puvis de Chavannes, probably c. 1879. Credit: Chester Dale Collection/Public Domain



Fifth Sunday of Lent

Opening Prayer

Merciful Jesus, thank you for this beautiful season of Lent. We come before you now with hearts open, ready to hear your voice speaking to us through Scripture and a Gospel Reflection. Give us the grace to respond to your Word. Amen.

Gospel of St John (8:1-11)

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus 'go away, and do not sin any more.'

Gospel Reflection

By Helen Wagner

When we hear this passage, we may wonder what Jesus was writing on the ground that caused the scribes and Pharisees to depart. While this is certainly intriguing, do we consider the more astonishing point, which is the mercy shown toward the woman who had committed a grave sin? Let us pause and think about this for a moment; God forgives our sins. It is a fact and it is truly amazing.

This passage reminds us that sin is real. Every time we choose our own will over the will of God, we sin – that is a fact. But God's mercy is real too, and sometimes we forget this or take it for granted. We read that after everyone went away, Jesus was left alone with the woman. It is like this for us too.

As disciples, we belong to the community of believers, but as sinners, we stand alone before Jesus. This is itself a mercy, because unlike the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus does

not parade our sins before others; He simply desires that we come to Him and receive His mercy. Pope Francis reminds us that "God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking His mercy."

God's mercy prompts a response in us.

We do not merely confess our sins and then skip along on our merry way; no, we skip along and try to *change* our ways. In the Sacrament of Confession, Jesus gives us the grace of conversion to "go and sin no more." And this grace inspires in us a desire for others to receive God's mercy too. It allows us to recognise the burden of sin that others bear, and rather than condemning them "in

full view of everybody," we can lead them to Jesus so that they too can receive from His heart, an abundance of mercy that He longs to give us.

"This passage reminds us that sin is real. But God's mercy is real too, and sometimes we forget this or take it for granted."



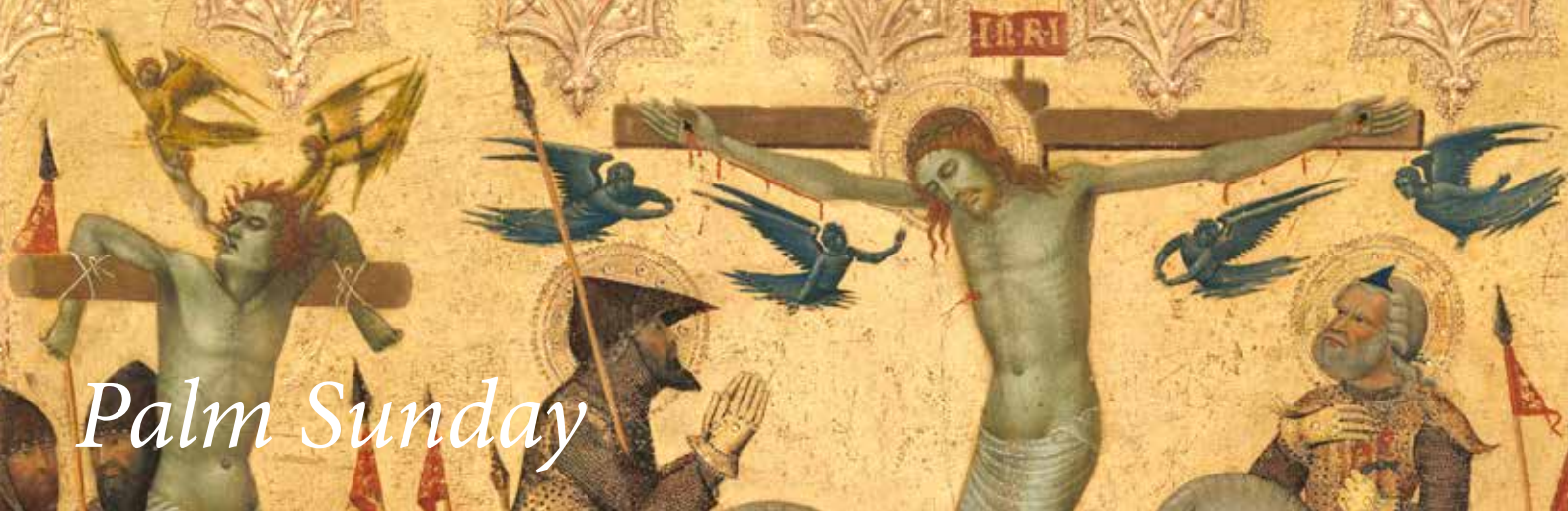
Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your mercy and healing. Give us the grace of humility and repentance. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to acknowledge that we are sinners, yet may we never tire of coming to receive the mercy of your Son, Jesus Christ.

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. Do I give enough thought to my own sins, or am I more preoccupied with the sins of others? Do I seek the mercy of God?
3. How can I help others to unload the burden of sin, by leading them to the mercy of Jesus?

Christ and the woman taken in adultery by Vasily Polenov, c. 1885. Credit: Art Gallery ErgsArt, Flickr, Public Domain



Palm Sunday

Opening Prayer

Merciful Jesus, thank you for this beautiful season of Lent. We come before you now with hearts open, ready to hear your voice speaking to us through Scripture and a Gospel Reflection. Give us the grace to respond to your Word. Amen.

Gospel of St Luke (23:32-49)*

Now with him they were also leading out two other criminals to be executed. When they reached the place called The Skull, they crucified him there and the two criminals also, one on the right, the other on the left. Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.' Then they cast lots to share out his clothing. The people stayed there watching him. As for the leaders, they jeered at him. 'He saved others,' they said 'let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One.' The soldiers mocked him too, and when they approached to offer vinegar they said, 'If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.' Above him there was an inscription: 'This is the King of the Jews.' One of the criminals hanging there abused him. 'Are you not the Christ?' he said. 'Save yourself and us as well.' But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing wrong. Jesus,' he said 'remember me when you come into your kingdom.' 'Indeed, I promise you,' he replied 'today you will be with me in paradise.' It was now about the sixth hour and, with the sun eclipsed, a darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour. The veil of the Temple was torn right down the middle; and when Jesus had cried out in a loud voice, he said, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' With these words he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he gave praise to God and said, 'This was a great and good man.' And when all the people who had gathered for the spectacle saw what had happened, they went home beating their breasts. All his friends stood at a distance; so also did the women who had accompanied him from Galilee, and they saw all this happen.

** This is an excerpt of the shorter reading of the day, Luke 23:1-49.*

Gospel Reflection

By Mother Hilda Scott OSB

When I was just a child in year two, I heard the story of conversion of "The Good Thief."

Given my particular circumstances I had already made an assessment of my character as the least intellectual child in the class, the ugliest, the child most suited to an adult life of crime, the child most worthy of no consideration from anyone, hence it never surprised me when all this was pointed out in one way or another.

Of course I look back now and realise how misinformed that really was. However, sitting at my little desk, I heard this totally loving, accepting, generous and forgiving act on the part of Jesus. I heard that even I could count on one day walking with Him in paradise, not because I deserved it, but because God was good and could be counted on to come and get me. I walked

into the playground that day a changed person, life was worth living.

Conversion is about having your vision realigned with the vision of God; seeing as for the first time; allowing your life to be shaped by God. All of that will leave you

happily at the disposal of God for whatever He chooses which will be a mission of some kind or other. Best of all, you won't choose your mission; God will invite you into it.

To know what that is, is simple. We need only claim who we are, good and not so good, to know where we have need of God, and take all that

TO God, as "The Good Thief" did. We need to feed our lives with the life giving words of the Scriptures, to be in open communication with Him each day, in whatever way works for us, and then let God do the rest.

"We need to feed our lives with the life giving words of the Scriptures, to be in open communication with Him each day."



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your mercy and healing. May we never fail to depend on your generous love for us. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to recognise and respond to the mission that you have chosen for us, so that our lives may give witness to your Son, Jesus Christ.

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. Do I allow God to communicate with me through the Scriptures? When has His word helped me or guided me in the past?
3. When has God invited me to share in His mission in the past? How might I better respond to His invitation to witness to Him in the future?



Easter Sunday

Opening Prayer

Merciful Jesus, thank you for this beautiful season of Lent. We come before you now with hearts open, ready to hear your voice speaking to us through Scripture and a Gospel Reflection. Give us the grace to respond to your Word. Amen.

Gospel of St Luke (24:13-35)

Two of the disciples of Jesus were on their way to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking together about all that had happened. Now as they talked this over, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but something prevented them from recognising him. He said to them, 'What matters are you discussing as you walk along?' They stopped short, their faces downcast. Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him, 'You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days.' 'What things?' he asked. 'All about Jesus of Nazareth' they answered 'who proved he was a great prophet by the things he said and did in the sight of God and of the whole people; and how our chief priests and our leaders handed him over to be sentenced to death, and had him crucified. Our own hope had been that he would be the one to set Israel free. And this is not all: two whole days have gone by since it all happened; and some women from our group have astounded us: they went to the tomb in the early morning, and when they did not find the body, they came back to tell us they had seen a vision of angels who declared he was alive. Some of our friends went to the tomb and found everything exactly as the women had reported, but of him they saw nothing.' Then he said to them, 'You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?' Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself. When they drew near to the village to which they were going, he made as if to go on; but they pressed him to stay with them. 'It is nearly evening' they said 'and the day is almost over.' So he went in to stay with them. Now while he was with them at table, he took the bread and said the blessing; then he broke it and handed it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognised him; but he had vanished from their sight. Then they said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?' They set out that instant and returned to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven assembled together with their companions, who said to them, 'Yes, it is true. The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.' Then they told their story of what had happened on the road and how they had recognised him at the breaking of bread.

Gospel Reflection

By Fr James Baxter OP

We meet a glum pair in this passage. Other disciples have been running around Jerusalem, proclaiming with excitement that Jesus is risen. Not these two. Instead of running, like people with joyous news to share, they are walking, and walking away from Jerusalem to boot. What use are they for the mission of the Gospel? What do they have to give? Hesitancy, befuddlement, and a sad old story. But by the end of the passage, the transformation couldn't be greater. There is now an urgency and passion about them. They return to Jerusalem, where they have the honour of being evangelists to the apostles.

What changed them? A personal encounter with the risen Jesus, certainly. But it was only at the end that they realised it was actually Him. Up until then He was transforming them as a stranger. This stranger told them that they had been foolish. That could have made

them defensive and resentful, but instead it humbled them, as He revealed a depth to the Scriptures that had escaped them. Even before they recognised Him as Jesus in the breaking of the bread, the experience was exhilarating. Their testimony, as with all the witnesses to the resurrection, was simple:

this is what we saw, this is what we heard.

In the stories of great Christian converts we see Jesus acting in the same way: humbling, teaching, and encouraging. But even if we have been committed disciples for many years, the need to change and learn from Jesus will last throughout our earthly lives. As with

these disciples, our conversions are for us, but not for us alone. Throughout Lent, and today when we renew our baptismal promises, He has been preparing us anew for our mission—to go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.

“Even if we have been committed disciples ... the need to change and learn from Jesus will last throughout our earthly lives.”



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your mercy and healing. Open our eyes to always recognise your presence in the world. By the power of the Holy Spirit, transform our hearts with your love so that we may proclaim with joy the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ.

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. Which areas of my life should I seek to change and learn from Jesus?
3. How can my personal testimony help others to believe in Jesus? With whom could I share about this?

The Supper at Emmaus by Bartolomeo Cavarozzi, c. 1615-1625. Credit: J. Paul Getty Museum/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain

Way of the Cross

Meditations and Prayers by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

After announcing each station, repeat the following: *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

The Judge of the world, who will come again to judge us all, stands there, dishonored and defenseless before the earthly judge. Pilate is not utterly evil. He knows that the condemned man is innocent, and he looks for a way to free him. But his heart is divided. And in the end he lets his own position, his own self-interest, prevail over what is right. Nor are the men who are shouting and demanding the death of Jesus utterly evil...But at that moment they are caught up in the crowd. They are shouting because everyone else is shouting, and they are shouting the same thing that everyone else is shouting. And in this way, justice is trampled underfoot by weakness, cowardice and fear of the dictat of the ruling mindset. The quiet voice of conscience is drowned out by the cries of the crowd. Evil draws its power from indecision and concern for what other people think.

PRAYER: Lord, you were condemned to death because fear of what other people may think suppressed the voice of conscience. So too, throughout history, the innocent have always been maltreated, condemned and killed. How many times have we ourselves preferred success to the truth, our reputation to justice? Strengthen the quiet voice of our conscience, your own voice, in our lives....Grant us, ever anew, the grace of conversion.



Station 2: Jesus Takes up His Cross

Jesus, condemned as an imposter king, is mocked, but this very mockery lays bare a painful truth. How often are the symbols of power, borne by the great ones of this world, an affront to truth, to justice and to the dignity of man! How many times are their pomps and their lofty words nothing but grandiose lies, a parody of their solemn obligation to serve the common good! It is because Jesus is mocked and wears the crown of suffering that he appears as the true King. His sceptre is justice (cf. Ps 45:7). The price of justice in this world is suffering: Jesus, the true King, does not reign through violence, but through a love which suffers for us and with us. He takes up the Cross, our cross, the burden of being human, the burden of the world. And so he goes before us and points out to us the way which leads to true life.

PRAYER: Lord, you willingly subjected yourself to mockery and scorn...You carried your own Cross and you ask us to follow you on this path (cf. Mt 10:38). Help us to take up the Cross, and not to shun it. May we never complain or become discouraged by life's trials. Help us to follow the path of love and, in submitting to its demands, to find true joy.

Station 3: Jesus Falls the First Time

Man has fallen, and he continues to fall: often he becomes a caricature of himself, no longer the image of God, but a mockery of the Creator...In Jesus's fall beneath the weight of the Cross, the meaning of his whole life is seen: his voluntary abasement, which lifts us up from the depths of our pride. The nature of our pride is also revealed: it is that arrogance which makes us want to be liberated from God and left alone to ourselves, the arrogance which makes us think that we do not need his eternal love, but can be the masters of our own lives...The humility of Jesus is the surmounting of our pride; by his abasement he lifts us up. Let us allow him to lift us up. Let us strip away our sense of self-sufficiency, our false illusions of independence, and learn from him, the One who humbled himself, to discover our true greatness by bending low before God and before our downtrodden brothers and sisters.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, the weight of the cross made you fall to the ground. The weight of our sin, the weight of our pride, brought you down. But your fall is not a tragedy, or mere human weakness. You came to us when, in our pride, we were laid low...Lord help us; we have fallen. Help us to abandon our destructive pride and, by learning from your humility, to rise again.



Station 4: Jesus Meets His Mother

On Jesus' Way of the Cross, we also find Mary, his Mother. During his public life she had to step aside, to make place for the birth of Jesus' new family, the family of his disciples...Even before she conceived him bodily, through her obedience she conceived him in her heart. It was said to Mary: "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son. He will be great and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David" (Lk 1:31ff.). And she would hear from the mouth of the elderly Simeon: "A sword will pierce through your own soul" (Lk 2:35)...Now it all takes place. In her heart she had kept the words of the angel, spoken to her in the beginning: "Do not be afraid, Mary" (Lk 1:30). The disciples fled, yet she did not flee. She stayed there, with a Mother's courage, a Mother's fidelity, a Mother's goodness, and a faith which did not waver in the hour of darkness: "Blessed is she who believed" (Lk 1:45). "Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (Lk 18:8).

PRAYER: Holy Mary, Mother of the Lord...you became the Mother of all believers, the Mother of the Church. We beg you: teach us to believe, and grant that our faith may bear fruit in courageous service and be the sign of a love ever ready to share suffering and to offer assistance.



*Meditations and prayers by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (abridged)
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Station 5: The Cyrenian Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

The Cyrenian, walking beside Jesus and sharing the burden of the Cross, came to see that it was a grace to be able to accompany him to his crucifixion and to help him. The mystery of Jesus, silent and suffering, touched his heart. Jesus, whose divine love alone can redeem all humanity, wants us to share his Cross so that we can complete what is still lacking in his suffering (cf. Col 1:24). Whenever we show kindness to the suffering, the persecuted and defenceless, and share in their sufferings, we help to carry that same Cross of Jesus. In this way we obtain salvation, and help contribute to the salvation of the world.

PRAYER: Help us to appreciate with joy that, when we share in your suffering and the sufferings of this world, we become servants of salvation and are able to help build up your Body, the Church.



Station 6: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus

Veronica embodies the universal yearning of the devout men and women of the Old Testament, the yearning of all believers to see the face of God...[S]he at first did nothing more than perform an act of womanly kindness: she held out a facecloth to Jesus. She did not let herself be deterred by the brutality of the soldiers or the fear which gripped the disciples...Yet her act of love impressed the true image of Jesus on her heart: on his human face, bloodied and bruised, she saw the face of God and his goodness, which accompanies us even in our deepest sorrows. Only with the heart can we see Jesus. Only love purifies us and gives us the ability to see. Only love enables us to recognize the God who is love itself.

PRAYER: Lord, grant us restless hearts, hearts which seek your face...Give us the simplicity and purity which allow us to recognize your presence in the world...Impress your face on our hearts. May we encounter you along the way and show your image to the world.



Station 7: Jesus Falls for the Second Time

Throughout history the fall of man constantly takes on new forms...think, in more recent times, of how a Christianity which has grown weary of faith has abandoned the Lord: the great ideologies, and the banal existence of those who, no longer believing in anything, simply drift through life, have built a new and worse paganism, which in its attempt to do away with God once and for all, have ended up doing away with man. And so man lies fallen in the dust. The Lord bears this burden and falls, over and over again, in order to meet us. He gazes on us, he touches our hearts; he falls in order to raise us up.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus Christ, you have borne all our burdens and you continue to carry us...Lift us up, so that we may lift others up. Give us hope at every moment of darkness, so that we may bring your hope to the world.

Station 8: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem who Weep for Him

Hearing Jesus reproach the women of Jerusalem who follow him and weep for him ought to make us reflect. How should we understand his words? Are they not directed at a piety which is purely sentimental, one which fails to lead to conversion and living faith? It is no use to lament the sufferings of this world if our life goes on as usual...[A]s we contemplate the sufferings of the Son, we see more clearly the seriousness of sin, and how it needs to be fully atoned if it is to be overcome.

PRAYER: Lord, to the weeping women you spoke of repentance and the Day of Judgement, when all of us will stand before your face: before you, the Judge of the world. You call us to leave behind the trivialization of evil, which salves our consciences and allows us to carry on as before...Grant that we may not simply walk at your side, with nothing to offer other than compassionate words. Convert us and give us new life.



Station 9: Jesus Falls for the Third Time

What can the third fall of Jesus under the Cross say to us? We have considered the fall of man in general, and the falling of many Christians away from Christ and into a godless secularism. Should we not also think of how much Christ suffers in his own Church? How often is the holy sacrament of his Presence abused, how often must he enter empty and evil hearts! How often do we celebrate only ourselves, without even realizing that he is there!...[Furthermore, what] little respect we pay to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where he waits for us, ready to raise us up whenever we fall! All this is present in his Passion.

PRAYER: Lord, your Church often seems like a boat about to sink, a boat taking in water on every side...It is we who betray you time and time again, after all our lofty words and grand gestures. Have mercy on your Church...Save and sanctify your Church. Save and sanctify us all.



Station 10: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments

Jesus is stripped of his garments. Clothing gives a man his social position; it gives him his place in society, it makes him someone. His public stripping means that Jesus is no longer anything at all, he is simply an outcast, despised by all alike. The moment of the stripping reminds us of the expulsion from Paradise: God's splendour has fallen away from man, who now stands naked and exposed, unclad and ashamed...The Lord passes through all the stages and steps of man's fall from grace, yet each of these steps, for all its bitterness, becomes a step towards our redemption: this is how he carries home the lost sheep.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus, you were stripped of your garments, exposed to shame, cast out of society. You took upon yourself the shame of Adam, and you healed it...Clothe us in the light of your grace.





Station 11: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross

Jesus does not drink the numbing gall offered to him: he deliberately takes upon himself all the pain of the Crucifixion...Let us halt before this image of pain, before the suffering Son of God. Let us look upon him at times of presumptuousness and pleasure, in order to learn to respect limits and to see the superficiality of all merely material goods. Let us look upon him at times of trial and tribulation, and realize that it is then that we are closest to God. Let us try to see his face in the people we might look down upon. As we stand before the condemned Lord, who did not use his power to come down from the Cross, but endured its suffering to the end...Let us nail ourselves to him, resisting the temptation to stand apart, or to join others in mocking him.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus Christ, you let yourself be nailed to the Cross, accepting the terrible cruelty of this suffering, the destruction of your body and your dignity. You allowed yourself to be nailed fast; you did not try to escape or to lessen your suffering. May we never flee from what we are called to do. Help us to remain faithful to you. Help us to unmask the false freedom which would distance us from you. Help us to accept your "binding" freedom, and, "bound" fast to you, to discover true freedom.



Station 12: Jesus Dies on the Cross

[Jesus] is indeed the king of the world. Now he is truly "lifted up." In sinking to the depths he rose to the heights. Now he has radically fulfilled the commandment of love, he has completed the offering of himself, and in this way he is now the revelation of the true God, the God who is love. Now we know who God is. Now we know what true kingship is...He takes to himself the whole suffering people of Israel, all of suffering humanity, the drama of God's darkness, and he makes God present in the very place where he seems definitively vanquished and absent. The Cross of Jesus is a cosmic event. The world is darkened, when the Son of God is given up to death. The earth trembles. And on the Cross, the Church of the Gentiles is born. The Roman centurion understands this, and acknowledges Jesus as the Son of God. From the Cross he triumphs – ever anew.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus Christ, at the hour of your death the sun was darkened. Ever anew you are being nailed to the Cross. At this present hour of history we are living in God's darkness. Through your great sufferings and the wickedness of men, the face of God, your face, seems obscured, unrecognizable. And yet, on the Cross, you have revealed yourself. Precisely by being the one who suffers and loves, you are exalted. From the Cross on high you have triumphed. Help us to recognize your face at this hour of darkness and tribulation. Help us to believe in you and to follow you in our hour of darkness and need. Show yourself once more to the world at this hour. Reveal to us your salvation.

Station 13: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

Jesus is dead. From his heart, pierced by the lance of the Roman soldier, flow blood and water: a mysterious image of the stream of the sacraments, Baptism and the Eucharist, by which the Church is constantly reborn from the opened heart of the Lord...And now, at the end of his sufferings, it is clear that, for all the dismay which filled men's hearts, for all the power of hatred and cowardice, he was never alone. There are faithful ones who remain with him. Under the Cross stand Mary, his Mother, the sister of his Mother, Mary, Mary Magdalen and the disciple whom he loved...In this hour of immense grief, of darkness and despair, the light of hope is mysteriously present. The hidden God continues to be the God of life, ever near. Even in the night of death, the Lord continues to be our Lord and Saviour. The Church of Jesus Christ, his new family, begins to take shape.

PRAYER: Lord, you descended into the darkness of death...Faith has not completely died; the sun has not completely set. How often does it appear that you are asleep? How easy it is for us to step back and say to ourselves: "God is dead". In the hour of darkness, help us to know that you are still there. Do not abandon us when we are tempted to lose heart. Help us not to leave you alone.



Station 14: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Jesus, disgraced and mistreated, is honorably buried in a new tomb. Nicodemus brings a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight, which gives off a precious scent. In the Son's self-offering, as at his anointing in Bethany, we see an "excess" which evokes God's generous and superabundant love. God offers himself unstintingly. If God's measure is superabundance, then we for our part should consider nothing too much for God...At the very moment of his burial, Jesus' words are fulfilled: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24). Jesus is the grain of wheat which dies. From that lifeless grain of wheat comes forth the great multiplication of bread which will endure until the end of the world. Jesus is the bread of life which can satisfy superabundantly the hunger of all humanity and provide its deepest nourishment. Through his Cross and Resurrection, the eternal Word of God became flesh and bread for us. The mystery of the Eucharist already shines forth in the burial of Jesus.

PRAYER: Lord Jesus Christ, in your burial you have taken on the death of the grain of wheat... Like the grain of wheat which rises from the earth...you could not remain enclosed in the tomb: the tomb is empty...you did not see corruption. You have risen, and have made a place for our transfigured flesh in the very heart of God. Help us to rejoice in this hope and bring it joyfully to the world. Help us to become witnesses of your resurrection.



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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Polding Centre, 133 Liverpool Street, Sydney 2000

Tel: (02) 9390 5100 • Website: www.gomakedisciples.org.au