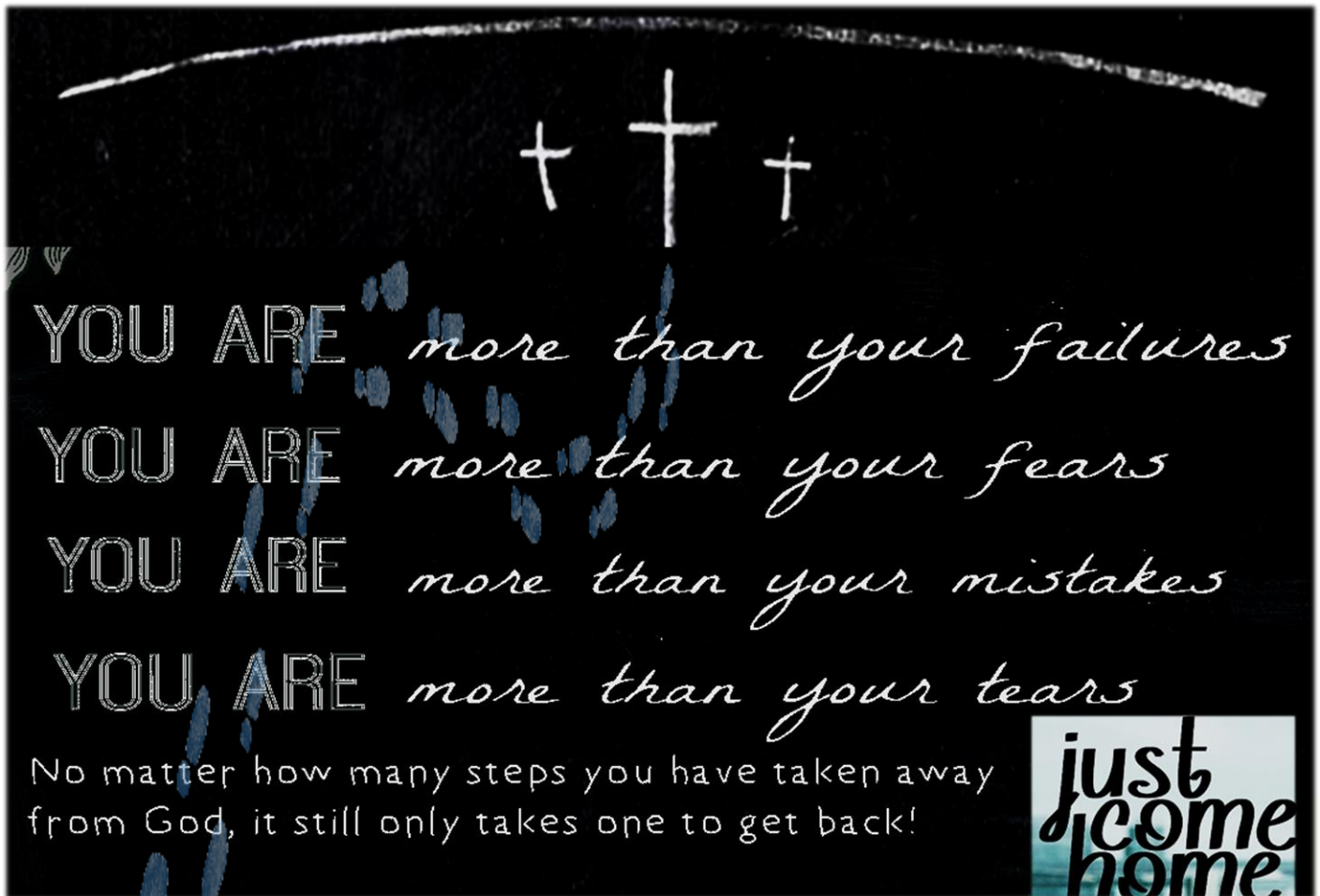


Something Different for Lent 2022



MY LENTEN REFLECTIONS

Busy Person's
Retreat

A collection of short prayers, reflections and exercises for **BUSY PEOPLE**
based on a Gospel reading each week to help aid you on your journey
through Lent to Easter

My Lent in Prayer

LENT IS UPON US. What does that even mean? In a fast-paced, full-schedule culture, Lent is an invitation to stop, to be, and to breathe. Lent is a season of emptying and filling. We empty ourselves of our attachments, distractions, and addictions so that we can find new places in our lives for our relationship with Jesus. Lent is a transforming time, a time for renewal & rediscovery, enabling us to stop and breathe and take stock of our lives. We are all busy...

At the very core of our being we need to know that we belong, that we are accepted and that we are lovable. Jesus was able to meet these needs in the people he encountered. It was when Jesus came face to face with a person, when he spoke with them, listened to them, healed or challenged them, that a person left the encounter with Jesus, feeling known, whole and loved.

As we journey through Lent towards Easter, the same longing is there in each of us.

This is an opportunity to take a few moments each day on your journey to Easter to dare to come face to face with others, ourselves, with nature and our God. To know that we are more than our faults and failings – we are loved, loveable and we can share this love. We are worth it!

We need to gift ourselves a few minutes out from our hectic world each day and to give ourselves a little space and time. Let these 5-15 mins each day be your gift to yourself as you prepare for Easter. In the Gospels we are told that Jesus frequently goes away to a quiet place to pray, to escape the crowds, to spend time with God – even just to **refuel the tanks!** With the pull of work, family, commitments, even with the best intentions, this can be hard to find – even an envied luxury!!

So this is a collection of short prayers, reflections and exercises based on each of the Sunday Gospels to hopefully help aid you, **in your own time & at your own pace,** on your Journey through Lent to Easter!

Thanks for joining us.

Remember

*The reflections and suggestions on these pages are meant as a guide.
You can do some of them or all of them. Take your time, go at your own pace & be gentle with yourself.*

Lord, in my busy-ness, this Lenten Season with

Your help I will try to...

Give up complaining	Focus on gratitude.
Give up pessimism	Become an optimist.
Give up harsh judgments	Think kindly thoughts.
Give up worry	Trust in God.
Give up discouragement	Be full of hope.
Give up bitterness	Turn to forgiveness.
Give up hatred	Return good for evil.
Give up negativism	Be positive.
Give up anger	Be more patient.
Give up gloom	Spread joy.
Give up jealousy	Pray for trust.
Give up gossiping	Control my tongue.
Give up sin	Try a little harder.
Give up giving up,	Hang on in there

I start this Lenten retreat from where I am. I will be true to who I am and bring what I have. I will be open to Your presence journeying with me and trust in your transforming love for me.

Amen

First Sunday of Lent

“Jesus was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ...”

Welcome to the first week of our Lenten retreat. Each week there is a little reflection and some practical suggestions that will be a guide for you to spend some more time in prayer and reflection throughout Lent. It is an opportunity to gift yourself a little time out each day. Feel free to take a few and encourage others!

We begin our Lenten retreat by allowing ourselves to be led into the ‘wilderness’. We need to *gift* ourselves time for ourselves, something we are not always good at because of the many demands made on us and which we place on ourselves. In the Gospels we are told that Jesus frequently goes away to a quiet place to pray, to escape the crowds, to spend time with God. Where is your quiet place? Make a promise to yourself this week to make some quiet time for yourself each day – it doesn’t have to be *forty days*! Maybe just 10 – 15 minutes each day.

Tasks for this week:

Firstly, you are invited to create a **simple sacred space** in your home. This could be in the corner of your bedroom or sitting room. It should be somewhere that you can go for some quiet time each day. Use some symbols in your space – such as a cross, candles, a bible or some significant symbol for you. You can add to it as the weeks go by - significant prayers, events, people, symbols, etc. The colour for Lent is **Violet** so you may like to use that colour in your sacred space. You could even create your own mini desert using some sand and stones. *Be creative yet keep it simple*. Let it be your little oasis, sanctuary.



Secondly, some people like to carry something with them in their pocket during the weeks of Lent, like a **small stone or pebble**. As you do so, pray and reflect on where in your life you are in need of God’s mercy. It can be a reminder of the things that weigh you down, or a worry or concern that prevents you from living as freely and as fully as you can. Take your stone out once every day and hold it in your hand. By the end of the five weeks, you will know every part of it as well as you know your inner self. Some also carry the stone in their pocket to remind them, whenever they touch it, to look for something to be grateful for, to say thank you for, and even to remind themselves to do something merciful – a small act of kindness ... you might want to try it. At night leave your pebble in your sacred space as you leave all the worries & works of that day in God’s hands.



Thirdly, in Lent most try to give something up. This year, for this retreat (and hopefully beyond) make a commitment to yourself to **consciously** do at least **1** thing each day to help another. Doesn’t have to be anything huge (*or could be if you’re that way inclined*).

Give an unexpected gift Make a new friend
Pick up litter Say "hello" Call a lonely person
Open a door Help carry a load Plant a tree
Pass a kindness on Buy someone's meal
Cheer up a friend Thank a teacher Give blood
Read to a child Do one kind act every day
Leave a thank you note Offer your seat
Tip generously Be TOLERANT Let another go first
Bake cookies for emergency workers Tutor a student
Give a compliment Pay the next driver's toll
Lend a hand Give a balloon to a child
Offer a ride Celebrate the day Respect others

ARE YOU READY?

The reflections and suggestions on these pages are meant as a guide.

You can do some of them or all of them. Take your time, be gentle with yourself – you have a full week.

Prayer suggestions for the week:

Breathing exercise: Try to do this at least once a day. Be still. To start, take four deep breaths... inhale for a count of four, then exhale for a count of four (*all through your nose, which adds a natural resistance to the breath*). **Then, close your eyes and focus on your normal breathing. On the in-breath be aware that your breath is life-giving, nurturing, a gift from God. On the out-breath be aware that you are feeding the plants and trees around you; you are blessing the world around you. Stay with that for a while: The in-breath as a gift from God; the out-breath as your gift to the world.**

Read Sunday’s Gospel, two or three times (Luke 4:1-13) – Come back to it a few times during the week



Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If

you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

- **Sit with the text and pick a word or phrase that stands out to you. Repeat that word or phrase in your mind.**
- **Why is that word or phrase relevant to you at this moment?**
- **How do you deal with temptation or distractions? Do you trust God will help?**
- **What is the 'Good News' that Jesus is saying to you today?**

Something to think about:

Jesus was brought out of the ordinary into a place where he was tempted off course. Three temptations...to comfort, power, wealth. Three ways that can take us over. Like us all. Money, power and comfort can lead us astray – wanting wealth, to be no.1 and prioritise comfort in various ways. The words of Jesus are to use all in service of God and the neighbour. He goes back to the word of God to find strength and insight to fight off evil. Words he learned at home, school. A big source of energy for us is the word of God. On Ash Wednesday the invitation was to believe the good news. That is where we may find life and strength.

Our faith depends on Jesus Christ. The word of God remains life-giving and strong. Today's scripture shows that temptations happen which can take us off the path. We can feel let down by church life and scandals. We need to remember that the same Spirit who led Jesus into the desert and who kept him strong there can do the same for us.

Suggestions for the week:

- *Have a look at and reflect on the short video by **Bishop Eugene Hurley** - www.youtube.com/watch?v=ifS2WNT9RXA*
- *Before choosing 1 conscious, kind work to do each day to help another during Lent, familiarise or reacquaint yourself with the **Corporal Works of Mercy** – It may give you some inspiration!! If your parish has a Lenten Garden be sure to include it in this.*
- *Why not download the Lenten Audio Conversations from Creighton University to your phone and dip into it during the week - <http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/?CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/Audio-Conversations/Lent-Conversations.html>*

Thoughts for the Week:

God can handle your doubt, anger, fear, grief, confusion, and questions. You can bring everything to God in prayer. ~ Rick Warren

I had many friends to help me to fall; but as to rising again, I was so much left to myself, that I wonder how I was not always on the ground. I praise God for His mercy; for it was He only who stretched out His hand to me. May He be blessed for ever! Amen. ~ Teresa of Avila

When I don't really know what to pray or how to pray, I take God's words and make them my prayers. - Dannah Gresh

Wilderness Prayer – by Devon Spier

I was in the wilderness.
You couldn't tell at the time.
The sand dunes were as heavy as my silences.
Far gone from my destination, I pretended that I arrived.
But the walking kept me from disappearing.
And the weeping became the well from which I drew my healing.
Not all at once.
A few gradual sips of the sunrise.
And then more.
Drinking in the colours, distance, and vision.
The notion that every sunset is followed by this beginning.
But that's still not reason to wander.
Being lost taught me to linger.
And that every single moment is worth more than forever.
Aimless steps stretch out time.
Reminding us that our desert thirst is worth more the mythic homes we set out for.
And to walk is greater than to grasp.

My thoughts, prayers & scribbles this week -



Second Sunday of Lent

"Master, it is good for us to be here, ..."

Welcome to **week 2** of our Lenten Retreat. How are you doing? Did you manage to create a sacred space for yourself last week? If not, don't worry, you can still do it with some candles, symbols, the colour **Violet** for Lent! How is your stone/pebble doing? How are the little works of kindness going? **Remember you can and do make a difference!!**

This week's **task** is to find some space and time for yourself. Jesus is calling us to do that this week - to join him on the mountain. You don't have to go up a high mountain to be alone. Decide what is best for you – 10 or 15 minutes in the morning or evening? While out walking? Gift this time to yourself, turn off phones, computers, social networks... schedule it in your diary and let friends and family know that you won't be available for these 10 to 15 minutes every day. **Keep it as precious.** Jesus takes the disciples up a mountain this week, is with them on this journey and dispels their fears ~ He walks with you! *Maybe write or print out your favourite prayer and put it in your prayer space.*



The reflections and suggestions on these pages are meant as a guide.

You can do some of them or all of them. Take your time, be gentle with yourself – you have a full week.

Prayer suggestions for the week:

Breathing exercise: When you come to prayer. Be still. To start take three breaths... inhale for a count of four, then exhale for a count of four (*all through your nose*). **Then, close your eyes and focus on your normal breathing. Do this for as long as you like. Be still. This is the breath of life. Thank God for this gift of breath and life. Repeat the following slowly as you breathe: "My God and my All" (St. Francis).**

Gospel reflection ~ Read **Lk 9:28-36** two or three times, slowly.
Come back to it a few times during the week

Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.



Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" – not knowing what he had said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

Is there a word, phrase, idea that strikes or surprises you? Maybe something about the Gospel story that you hadn't heard before? Stay with this for a few moments and ask yourself – Why is this significant to me, now?

Consider the following:

- Have you ever asked yourself who the Person of Christ is? Does your vision of the identity of Jesus correspond to that proclaimed in this gospel?
- God wants to share His glory with us! We get a glimpse of this in today's gospel. God is constantly reaching out, giving us many glimpses throughout our lives, throughout our day! Sadly, many can be missed. What have been the experiences, opportunities, the moments of insight that have clarified your understanding & relationship with God?
- On the mountain the three apostles had a favoured glimpse of Jesus' prayer and glory. His prayer here is a conversation with Moses and Elijah. They talked about his passion and death. This is a down-to-earth conversation about the shape of Jesus' life. Is your prayer like that?
- The encounter was a journey that involved the climbing and descending of a mountain, a moment of fear, awe, anxiety; a touch and comfort from a loved one and a mission – Who has comforted you in moments of uncertainty and anxiety on your journey? Who has inspired your faith? How? Give thanks for these encounters & people.

Something to think about:

Our lives are inevitably shaped by our images of God and invariably reflect the God we really believe in and are searching for. When we are being calculating, grasping, fearfully holding on or back, when clenched rather than open fists embody the attitude of our hearts, then regardless of what we profess with our lips, we have not yet come to believe in or understand the God of Jesus Christ. But when trust, mercy, generosity and compassion characterise our daily interactions, then we are most fully human, most truly ourselves, because we resemble as best humans can the God in whose image and likeness we are made. Each day we are given countless opportunities. Do we miss them because *that's not the Jesus I am looking for?* Do they pass us by because we are *too busy building our tents?* But if we take a moment, if we truly take a moment to look... we realise that Jesus is transfigured every day at every moment in the world around us. He is transfigured in the guise of the hungry, the poor, the refugee, the oppressed worker, the homeless, the sick, the forgotten, ... in the very beauty and awesomeness that is creation. We might not have access to one great dazzling mountaintop moment where we encounter the transfigured Jesus, but if we have the eyes to see, we encounter the transfigured Jesus every moment of every day. The glimpse of God's glory, God's loving presence is there right before us.



C.S. Lewis referred to this transfiguration of the everyday as being burdened with the weight of the glory of others, in the world around us. If we were attune to it, we would be overwhelmed, he wrote, to see that the world is populated with those whom we might refer to as gods and goddesses if we were to see the full glory of God that is in them and in creation. To carry the burden of upholding the image of God in our neighbour, to see in them the transfigured Jesus, is our daily task of discipleship. It is not as simple, but what a truly transformative task it is!!

(Adapted from: *I believe in God*, by Father Eamon Conway & *Transfiguring the Everyday* by Julie Clawson)

Suggestions for the week:

- **When you wake up in the morning:** Stay in the silence of that moment without radio, mobile phone or T.V. Become aware of your breathing. Tune in to the sounds in your house; listen to the 'dawn chorus' of the birds. ***I thank you, God, for the gift of life and creation. What can I do this Lent to show that I am a steward of God's creation? What can do I today to be attuned to encountering God's glory around me?***
- Now a week into this retreat have a look at the short video – **40 Acts2016: You are here** - And give thanks for the difference you make & the difference others make to you.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bejv4Ecdrbw>

We are always looking for signs. We are always asking for God to 'speak' to us. But those signs are all around us. They are in everything. God is always 'speaking'. The question is whether we are listening.
— Yasmin Megahed —

Prayer for the week: (adapted from Trócaire's Lent 2016 penitential prayer service)

God our Creator, our life, our saviour, I give you thanks for the gift of all that you have created, And I pray, ... Give me a share in your passion for life, your vision of a world loved by all and sustaining all. May my Lenten observances help me restore balances in my own living that become a quest for a balance in all aspects of life. May my eyes and ears be opened to learning of you, hearing of you even glimpsing your glory in the world you have created, so that in all things I may rest safe in the knowledge that in your hands are all things and the life-breath of all humanity. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen

Thoughts for the Week:

"It can be difficult to believe in, and connect with, something that cannot be seen. Perhaps this is because although God is in all things He is felt and experienced on levels that relate directly to the condition of our own hearts." ~ Marta Mrotek

"Do not get down on your knees to pray just to show God that you always remember him. Instead stay on your feet, and always do as God would do in place of him." ~
Suzy Kasseem

Be Still and Know

By Katy Kauffman

"Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"
Psalm 46:10, NKJV

My thoughts are crowded by doubt and fear
Anxiety and stress are ever present here
I try to calm them, to hush the storm
But inner turmoil has become the norm

I look to the heavens, the clouds are gray
I close my eyes and start to pray
"God, if You're with me, make Yourself clear.
Are You close, do You still hold me dear?"

I still my thoughts, my heart as well
I strain to listen, but it's hard to tell
I start to recall His love, His goodness, His power
I remember His name is a mighty and strong tower

I remain still, not stirring at all
My heart grows stronger, I hear His call
His words of love and comfort, direction and grace
His command to trust Him, to live in His embrace

I know I'll make it and endure the trial
Because You're here with me, walking every mile
Every day I will be still and read Your Word
I will calm my heart so You can be heard

Speak to my soul words of life and wisdom
Make me stronger to serve Your kingdom
My trial won't keep me from doing my assignment
Anxiety won't keep my heart in confinement

I will serve You where I am, I will love You more each day
I ask that You go before me to show me the way
Be my guide through life, on this earth I trod
Help me to be still and know You are God

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My thoughts, prayers & scribbles this week -



Third Sunday of Lent

**“A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard;
and he came looking for fruit on it but found none”**

Welcome to **week 3** of our Lenten Retreat. How did last week go for you? Did you find anything particularly difficult? Why? Are you more aware of God at work in your life, in the world around you? Have you gifted yourself a little space each day to pray? Keep it up!

This week's **task** to remember your **stone/pebble** in your pocket! Whenever you feel pressured this week, slip your hand into your pocket and feel the pebble. Take a deep breath, exhale slowly, and remember *you are never alone God walks with you*.

Remember as you journey each day be confident that -

- *Because the Lord is my rock, God will smooth out the rough edges of life with unconditional love.*
- *Because the Lord is my fortress and my Saviour, I can rest in God for protection.*
- *Because the Lord is my shield, what have I to fear? I am safe in God.*
- *Because the Lord is my strength, I never face any burden alone.*
- *Because the Lord is my stronghold, I am safe in God's loving care.*
- *Because the Lord walks with me, I am not weak and timid! God's love is my strength.*

And at the end of the day place it in your prayer space entrusting all your burdens & troubles of the day to God.

The reflections and suggestions on these pages are meant as a guide.

You can do some of them or all of them. Take your time, be gentle with yourself – you have a full week.

Prayer suggestions for the week:

Breathing exercise: As you have been doing for the past two weeks when you come to prayer, **Be still**. Take three deep breaths... inhale for a count of four, then exhale for a count of four, **then focus on your normal breathing. Do this for as long as you can. Build up the time each day to reach 5 mins (or more). This is the breath of life.** Thank God for this gift. Repeat the following slowly: **“My God, in you I trust” (Psalm 25:2)**

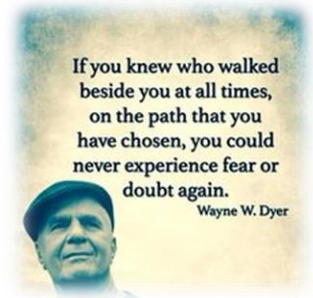
Gospel reflection: Read **Luke 13:1-9** come back to it again a few times during the week. *It can be a difficult one!!* **Is there a word, phrase, idea that strikes you? Maybe something about the story you haven't noticed before? In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind. Stay with this for a few moments.**

There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way, they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So, he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still, I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ He replied, ‘Lord, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Consider the following:

- This is a challenging reading and one not easy to sit or stay with, but it is one that calls me to growth and bear fruit. *How can I do this?*
- We may be surprised at Jesus' harshness – ‘... unless you repent you will perish as they did’. But indifference and apathy are harsher still. The Gospel is a living word that transforms. What moves me to action?
- How does the Gospel message bear fruit in my life? What injustices do I see around us? In my community? In my country? In my world? What can I do about these injustices? How does God's love bear fruit through my life?
- With the deluge of agendas, political and otherwise, from news sources & social media, what can I do or learn to be able to find the truth in world events?



Something to think about:

There is a saying that having a child is like putting limbs on your heart and setting it free in the world. As parents we have this intense love for our children - no matter what - that indeed makes us vulnerable.

Imagine that love we have as parents is merely a small reflection of the vulnerable, all-invested love that God has for us all. God's heart walks this earth by the billions. God carries a perfect love, even greater than that of a parent for a child, for each and every one of us. For me, that's unfathomable. Jesus tries to give us a sense of it in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but as we know, Jesus used parables to give people a glimpse of understanding into something far greater than they could possibly comprehend. Thus, that parable shows us that the love of the forgiving father is just the beginning.

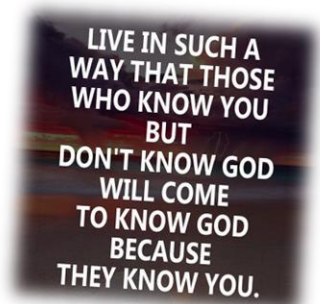
Now here's the challenge. The all-invested, life-changing love that a parent has for a child is also just the beginning. We are called to be disciples on this earth, to serve others, to be agents of God's love and mercy, and to treat others as Jesus would. Does that not mean that the intense love between a parent and child should be the same love we offer every child of God? ...

Father of us all, teach us to love all of your children as we love our own, so that everyone of this earth may glimpse the unfathomable love you have for us. Amen

Adapted from *Lenten Meditations: Growing in Friendship with God*

Suggestions for the week:

- Have a look at and reflect on the short video by **iEmanuella**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgwSbYazftg>
- **Who inspires your faith?** Who inspires you to be kind? To be loving? To be generous? Sometime during this week take a few moments to write a list of people who inspire you and ask yourself why or how they do? What is it about them that inspires you? Leave your list in your prayer space and say a prayer of **thanks** for these people. Ask yourself if there is a possibility that you may be named on **someone else's list**?
- **A simple, concrete action** - Trócaire have asked us to call on our politicians to enact climate change legislation that is based on science, on fairness and on human rights standards. Contact your politicians by letter or email, through social media or face to face at your local clinic. *You might also consider inviting them to a climate justice event organised a group that you're involved with!?!*
<http://www.trocaire.org/getinvolved/climateaction>



Thought for the Week:

Withhold a smile only when the smile can hurt someone. Otherwise, let it bloom forth in a riot. ~ Vera Nazarian

Christ has no body now but yours.
No hands, no feet on earth but yours.
Yours are the eyes through which He looks compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which He blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are His body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

~ Teresa of Ávila

Loving Father,
Inspire us today to be people of faith
people of action
people in love with God and all creation.
May we be makers of peace in a wounded world.
May we be creators of justice in a broken world.
May we be passionate and compassionate in an indifferent world.
Help us to learn from the good example of others
and to give good example to everyone.
Aid us in overcoming difficulties
and carrying our crosses.
You who travelled the road before us
be with us as you promised.
May the example of your pilgrim heart encourage us
on our journey
Amen

My thoughts, prayers & scribbles this week -

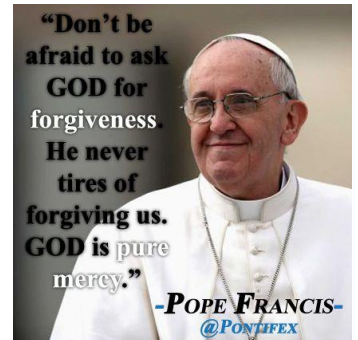


Fourth Sunday of Lent

“While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion.”

We are now on **Week 4** of our Lenten Retreat. How has it been going for you? Were you able to make a list & give thanks to those inspirational people in your life? Have you made any changes to your routine? Can you be the inspiration for others?

The **task** this week is to reflect a little more on *forgiveness*. Why does the sacrament of Reconciliation seem to almost be the forgotten sacrament? When you truly see Jesus and allow Jesus to truly see you (*warts and all*) you can feel vulnerable and maybe fearful for there may be things *you'd rather not see in yourself or, indeed, admit to yourself!* The focus is not on the sin committed, but on the self awareness, the willingness to change and do better and, most of all, the love and mercy tirelessly awaiting with open arms.



If you were given a sheet of paper and asked to write 10 good things about yourself on one side and 10 things you don't like about yourself on the other, *which side would get filled quicker* and *which side would you struggle with*? If you were then asked to bring someone else to mind and do the same exercise on a separate sheet of paper for them – which would you find easier to do? *This may be an exercise you'd like to try.* If you do, put your sheet in your sacred space and bring it to prayer. But remember God loves you in your brokenness, forgives you even if you find it difficult to forgive yourself, walks with you, never tires of forgiving you and asks you to be an agent of forgiveness and mercy to others. *Allow yourself to be forgiven!*

Prayer suggestions for the week:

Breathing exercise: When you come to prayer, take three deep breaths... inhale for a count of four, then exhale for a count of four, then focus on your normal breathing. Thank God for each breath. Do this for as long as you can. Then begin to repeat the following slowly: *'Search me, O God, and know my heart'* (Psalm 139:23)

The reflections and suggestions on these pages are meant as a guide.

You can do some of them or all of them. Take your time, be gentle with yourself – you have a full week.

Gospel reflection: Read Luke 15:1-3, 11-32. It is a gospel verse that most know well so take care to read it carefully. *Is there a word, phrase, idea that strikes you or disturbs you? In the stillness, repeat that word or phrase in your mind. Stay with this for a few moments. Is there anything that you hadn't noticed before?* Come back to it again a few times during the week

Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So, to them Jesus addressed this parable: “A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, ‘Father give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’ So, the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So, he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger.



I shall get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers.””

So, he got up and went back to his father. While he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him, and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, embraced him and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son.’

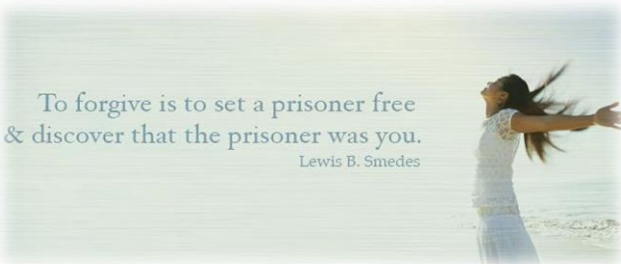
But his father ordered his servants, ‘Quickly bring the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Take the fattened calf and slaughter it. Then let us celebrate with a feast, because this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ Then the celebration began.

Now the older son had been out in the field and, on his way back, as he neared the house, he heard the sound of music and dancing. He called one of the servants and asked what this might mean. The servant said to him, 'Your brother has returned, and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' He became angry, and when he refused to enter the house, his father came out and pleaded with him. He said to his father in reply, 'Look, all these years I served you and not once did I disobey your orders; yet you never gave me even a young goat to feast on with my friends.

But when your son returns who swallowed up your property with prostitutes, for him you slaughter the fattened calf.' He said to him, 'My son, you are here with me always; everything I have is yours. But now we must celebrate and rejoice, because your brother was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"

Consider the following:

- Like most I love this week's gospel. But if asked - What one word would sum up this story for you? Why?
- Read the story and try put yourself in the place of each of the characters – The Pharisees & Tax Collectors, The Father, The Younger Son, The Servants, The Older Son. How might they tell the story differently? What would they have been feeling as the story unfolded?
- What character in the parable appeals to you most? Which do you most identify with, Why?
- The older son may have felt rightly hard-done-by as his wayward brother receives the plaudits. But Jesus is teaching us that God's love is a gift freely given, not earned. And like any gift we have to recognise it, accept it and allow it to transform our lives and relationships. Where/when have you felt this love from others? And when has this made you think of God's love for you?
- To truly know that in our darkest hour, when we feel at our most alone we are always loved is Good News. Do we accept we are loved by God who is always ready to welcome us with open arms?



Something to think about:

The story is almost too familiar to all of us. The younger son returned home, and the older son stayed home. *What is being asked of us?* We are challenged to go deeper into the story and to become the father...to BE **home** for others. But, for a moment, what if God isn't the father in this story? What if God instead is the prodigal who seems so irresponsible? What if God is the God who also comes to us in the disguise of those

we most despise, those who have hated and killed us, those who shun us and ignore us, those who have rejected us and abandoned us, those who annoy and frustrate us most, argue or disagree with us; those who are excluded? In the guise of the sinner, the debauched, the prostitute, the unclean, the enemy, the unchurched, the unsavoury, ... What if God comes to us and challenges us to participate in a radical, irresponsible, gospel hospitality that turns the rules of polite society and comfortable religiosity upside-down?

And if God comes to us as this, how do we respond? As the father does... subverting social norms, forgiving and opening his life to the chaos the prodigal brings? Or as the brother does, maintaining society's values but closing off his life to loving or accepting the Other? What if the challenge of this story is whether or not we will run out to meet Jesus with open arms when we see him lost, alone, bedraggled, ignored, neglected and abused; whether we will be eager and expectant to do the irresponsible thing of living out the Good News of radical mercy, forgiveness, inclusion, love and welcome. What if...?

Do I, like the father in the story, have the generosity to accept Jesus as he appears; or like the brother, do I demand that he not be so irresponsible and insist that he comes to me only in the ways I find acceptable?

*Adapted from **God is the Prodigal Son...** by David R. Henson*

Suggestions for the week:

- Think & pray for one person this week you find it hard to forgive – **Let go & let God!**
- For every fault you see in yourself think of two things you like in yourself – **Thank God**
- Where is home? Where do you feel comfortable, accepted and that you belong? – **Just come home!**
- Find out about what ceremonies and activities are happening in your parish this week – **make a point of going!**

Thought for the Week:

I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples. ~ Mother Teresa

Always pray to have eyes that see the best in people, a heart that forgives the worst, a mind that forgets the bad, and a soul that never loses faith in God ~ Anonymous

My thoughts, prayers & scribbles this week -



Fifth Sunday of Lent

"...Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her"

Almost there! **Week 5**. Believe it or not, we are almost in the final stages of Lent. How have you been doing so far? Did you manage to get involved in parish ceremonies and activities last week? If not, make a special effort to do so this week.

Sacred space: If you have carried the stone with you from week one of our Lenten retreat *it is time to let it go*. If not, then maybe put a stone in your prayer space that symbolises this week's gospel. *We all throw stones from time to time*. Hold the stone in your hand during prayer this week. Let it be a symbol of all that weighs you down, all that oppresses and hurts. Whenever you are ready, take and place the stone into the Lenten space in the Church, as a sign that you are ready to welcome God's love & relationship into your life, that you are letting this burden go and that you are willing to share this mercy with others. If your church has created a **Lenten Garden** maybe leave your stone back into this! Give all that weighs you down or holds you back, to God and trust in God's *unconditional love, forgiveness, mercy and compassion*.

Our focus this week is **Action**. **Prayer is important but we must also be open to action** (*Trocaire*). How attentive are we to the needs of those around us? Do we notice those who have no voice? Are we aware of how you are connected to others? Do you truly believe you can be an inspiration, be the difference for others?

**AGAIN, MERCY IS
LITERALLY LOVE
IN ACTION**

Prayer suggestions for the week:

Continue your breathing exercise as you have been doing for the last number of weeks remembering

- This is the breath of life. Thank God for this gift. When you breathe in you are bringing energy and life to your body. When you breathe out, you are giving a gift to the world, feeding the plants and the trees, playing your part in nature. Stay with these thoughts as you breathe. **Repeat** *Lord, you are closer to me than my own breathing - St. Teresa* **Continue this exercise for as long as you can**
- Can you add a symbol to your sacred space this week to remind yourself of **solidarity** with the poor and your connectedness to those around you?

The reflections and suggestions on these pages are meant as a guide.

You can do some of them or all of them. Take your time, be gentle with yourself – you have a full week.

Gospel reflection: Read **John 8:1-11**. Two or three times this week. **Is there a word, phrase, idea that strikes you or disturbs you? In the stillness repeat that word or phrase in your mind. Stay with this for a few moments.** Come back to it again a few times during the week

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and began to teach them.

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground.

When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."



Consider the following:

- Who are you in this story? Try to put yourself in the woman's place: What were her feelings at that moment?
- If Jesus were to write a quiet message on the ground for you, what would it be?
- Jesus is the one who never condemns, even when we are most condemnatory of ourselves. Hear in your heart the words spoken to each of us - *'I do not condemn you.'*
- Who is excluded in your community? What steps can and should be taken to accept those excluded?

Something to think about:

Jesus may not have had a chalkboard, but he had the dirt from which we were formed and His finger as chalk. And, He had a lesson to teach. For a moment, let's place ourselves in this scene, but not as the Pharisee, Jesus, or the woman caught in adultery. No, I want us to put ourselves in the crowd. A woman has been cast into the centre of the town square – vulnerable, probably barely clothed, petrified, and ashamed. We don't know who the man is or if they claimed to be in love, or if either one of them was married to others. We just know that their sin, inflicted primarily on her, has been exposed. She is exposed in a way she never imagined she would be. And we witness this scene like we view a car crash on the side of the motorway. How many times are we that crowd? We hear rumours about the about people. About parents, neighbours, young people and their marital, health or addiction problems, about teens' reputations at school, or about parties they attend and participate in on the weekends? People's lives are often exposed to us without their knowledge. Other times they may come to us to talk and seek advice, anxious we will judge them for the choices they have made, or even worse, in some way, let us down... disappoint us.

I've encountered fearful people, hesitant to tell others they have difficulties or are facing problems; young people who shake in fear as they struggle to talk to anyone about sexual orientation and confused as to how they can overcome their pornography, drug, alcohol, or gambling addiction. Inside, they have already cast the first stone... at themselves. So, you hear rumours, allegations or people come to you, do they experience compassion as this woman experienced Christ? Do they feel loved unconditionally? Is it our job to hold them accountable? Is our first reaction one of judgement or disgust? Do we try to 'fix' them? Or do they experience Christ in you even when the discussion is difficult? Do they understand through your loving words and actions the mercy of God? Do they know you will protect them when others speak poorly of them, praise them for their honesty and desire to reconcile, and pray with them in the midst of their struggle? When a person leaves your company, do they walk away feeling as if no one condemned them? *"No one, sir."* (John 8:11) This Scripture should be on every church door in the world. No condemnation here! All are welcome! We must be a Church open to receiving everyone. We are a church of sinners seeking the mercy of God... And we sinners are called to let ourselves be transformed, renewed, sanctified by God." 'Being with' Christ does not mean isolating ourselves from others. Rather, it is a 'being with' in order to go forth and encounter others." (Pope Francis) When mercy & forgiveness is received, we can freely give it to others.

Adapted from Arise and Shine (John 8:1-11) by TRICIA TEMBREULL

Suggestions for the week: In baptism we are all called and commissioned to be ambassadors of God's forgiveness & mercy – *Live that call, Live LOVE!*

Go out and proclaim the merciful, loving embrace of the Father

You are commissioned as an ambassador of forgiveness & mercy to live God's tender grace of love
Go out to those who are burdened by pain and failure, who feel that their lives are empty, and
proclaim the folly of a loving Father who wants to anoint them with the oil of hope,
the oil of salvation

You are commissioned as an ambassador of forgiveness & mercy to reach out to those who long to be lifted
up with love Go out with the ointment that soothes wounds and heals hearts

You are commissioned as an ambassador of forgiveness & mercy to carry the gift of healing into your
community Mission is always the fruit of a life which knows what is to be found & healed,
encountered & forgiven

Go in confidence knowing that you are never alone, in peace with the blessing of Saint Columba in your heart:

*Be a bright flame before me, Be a guiding star above me, Be a smooth path below me, Be a kindly
shepherd behind me, Today, Tonight and Forever. Amen*

- **How can I make a difference?** We all have a part to play in Our Church, in our community of faith. We are all called to ministry through our baptism. And if one of us is missing the rest are lessened by their absence. Is there a group, a ministry, an outreach in your local parish that you could be involved in? *If not, why not start one?* This week make a commitment to see if you could play a more active role, no matter how small you think that may be, in your local parish. ***Be the inspiration for others!***
- **Listen and reflect** on the words of the song – *Circle of Mercy* - www.youtube.com/watch?v=3YEvRsODqW4

Thought for the Week:

This then is what we are about. We plant the seed that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that the future holds promise. We lay foundations that will need further development... We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in that... This enables us to do something and do it well... We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers not master builders, ministers not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own. *Attributed to St Oscar Romero*

My thoughts, prayers & scribbles this week -



Palm Sunday & Holy Week 2022

“...Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise”

This is the **last week** of Something Different for Lent. I hope it has been a worthwhile journey for you. I pray that this DIY retreat has helped you to find some space during your day for yourself; that it has helped you to pray & reflect; that it has made you aware of God who walks with you and helped you realise that you can and do make a difference. Well done for staying with it!! Your Lenten journey is coming to an end as we approach Easter. During Easter week it would be good to finish your retreat by participation as fully as you can in the Holy Week services in your own local parish. I hope these reflections have been helpful in your Lenten preparation & your fuller involvement in this year's Easter Celebrations.

Please keep me in your prayers and if you have any thoughts by all means drop me an email!

Thank you & God bless.

A brief walk through our retreat

It is always good to take a moment to reflect, take stock and learn from the journey taken!!

- We began by preparing for the journey ahead ... creating our prayer space, choosing our pebble and committing to do at least 1 good thing each day to help another.
- We then realised that we need to create time and space for ourselves. *Continue to gift some time each day for yourself.*
- In this space we took a moment to be aware of Jesus transfigured every day at every moment in the world around us. God constantly reaching out to us through our daily encounters. *Give thanks for the glory of God as it unfolds in your life.*
- There was then a challenge to trust in God remembering you are never alone; God walks with you. *God's love is my strength.*
- We reflected on those who inspire our faith and inspired us to be kind and questioned whether we truly believed we could be that inspiration for others. *Remember you can and do make a difference!!*
- We took time to reflect on forgiveness. God loves us in our brokenness, forgives us even if we find it difficult to forgive ourselves, never tires of forgiving us and asks us to be an agent of forgiveness and mercy to others. *Allow yourself to be forgiven & bring that forgiveness to others.*
- Last week our focus was action. Prayer is important but we must also be open to action. Remembering that mercy is love in action and *we are called to be ambassadors of God's Forgiveness & Mercy*



Was there any part, aspect of this retreat that you found more difficult than others? Is there anything that challenged or was new for you? What is the one reflection, thought, memory... that you will take with you onwards?

Can you continue this during Holy Week and beyond? It is not always easy but we remember -
*'No one can put limits on God's love, for he is always ready to forgive' &
'One goal for each day: to convey the tenderness of Christ to those who are most in need.'*

Prayer suggestions for the week:

You may have created a sacred space in your home for prayer during this Lenten retreat.

Consider that space now:

- Can you continue to use it as part of daily prayer, especially during Holy Week but also after Easter?
- Has it changed over the course of this Lenten journey? What have you added/taken out?
- Is there a symbol, a reflection, prayer, a word/phrase that has stood out for you over the past 6 weeks? What is it? Why is it significant for you?
- Perhaps you can place a palm branch in that space to symbolise the beginning of our journey into Holy Week.

Palm branches are a symbol of rejoicing, solidarity, welcoming and community. In Pre-Christian times, Palms were a symbol of triumph and in Roman times the word 'palma' could even be substituted for the word for *victory*. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem this Palm Sunday (Luke 19:28-40) reminds us of the humility of Jesus' earthly life, from beginning to end.



Gospel reflection: Luke 22:14-23:56 or, shorter version: Luke 23:1-49

This Sunday's Gospel is often known as 'the long Gospel'. Don't let that put you off otherwise you miss the drama of the journey that this week offers you. Luke's version emphasises the mercy, compassion and prayerfulness of Jesus. It is a story that most know and reveals the drama of the week ahead. It is also the only gospel during the year that the congregation plays an active role in. Try to read all of today's Gospel, or part of it each day, this week. **Read it as if hearing the story for the first time!**

- We hold up our palms singing "Hosanna, Hosanna" as we prepare to follow Jesus into Holy Week. *How can we enable this to be a personal 'moment of opportunity' for us too?*
- What does it actually mean to be a follower of Jesus? *What does this self-emptying on the cross challenge us to do this Easter season?* (Amanda Dillon ~ Intercom)
- What parts of the story are uncomfortable? What parts are easier to read? *Why?*
- Which characters in the drama of this week appeal to you? *Why?*
- Think about the fact that Jesus' love, his love shown on the cross is the ultimate sign of his love, mercy and his glory. Remember that suffering is never the will of God, but the cross shows us that God is *with us* in our suffering – we are never alone. *What will the love of God, the mercy of God, as revealed by the cross, empower you to do?*

A Prayer for Holy Week

Lord Jesus Christ,
in this sacred and solemn week
when I see again the depth and mystery
of your redeeming love & Mercy
help me to have the courage;

to follow where you go,
to stop where you stumble,
to listen when you cry,
to hurt as you suffer,
to bow my head in sorrow as you die,
That I may share in and mirror the
endless love and boundless joy, mercy &
compassion of your resurrection. **Amen**

Adapted from "Celebrating God's Presence"

Something to think about:

Holy Week is *not* an event but a profound journey. It encompasses all our human and spiritual feelings, emotions and longings. It is a journey that ebbs through darkness and light, from lows to highs, from suffering to joy, from loneliness to elation, from devastation to glory. Our natural reaction may be to move quickly to the resurrection and skip past the rest. Or to get stuck in one moment that horrifies or appeals. But try, this Holy Week, to stay 'in the moment' with the story of each day as it is unfolding. Move with the story and feel the emotion, the drama, the fear & the elation - *Allow this week to speak to your own story.*

One night, a man had a dream. He dreamed that he went to Hell. He looked around and was surprised to find out that Hell looked remarkably like a beautifully appointed formal dining room. Long, dark wood tables were covered with rich, expensive fabrics and piled high with sumptuously prepared foods of all kinds: perfectly cooked meats, excellent cheeses, fresh fruits and vegetables, all of the finest wines. There was an overabundance of food; plenty for all and to spare. Then the man looked more closely at the occupants of Hell, who were all seated at these long tables before this magnificent feast. They were all starving. Everyone. Emaciated, corpse-like souls were groaning in agony at their eternal hunger. The dreaming man did a double-take, and discovered that the souls of Hell had no elbows. They couldn't feed themselves, and were wasting away in front of a feast suitable for, well, for Heaven. The man shook his head sadly, and woke up.

The very next night, the man dreamed he was in Heaven, and was surprised to find it exactly the same as Hell; same furniture, same decorations and trim, and of course the same stunning, mouth-watering feast. And the souls of Heaven had exactly the same handicap as those in Hell: no elbows. They couldn't feed themselves. But everyone was well fed, laughing, enjoying each other's company, and having a glorious time with one another. It didn't take the dreaming man long to figure out why Heaven was so different from Hell: Here in Heaven, they were feeding each other.

Adapted from a Japanese and Chinese folk tale

Thoughts for the Week:

*On this Easter Sunday.... Forgive someone. Tell someone you love them.
Let your light shine. ~ Author Unknown*

*"Do not abandon yourselves to despair. We are the Easter people and hallelujah is our song." –
John Paul II*

*Jesus's resurrection is the beginning of God's new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven. That, after all, is what the Lord's Prayer is about
~ N.T. Wright*



My thoughts, prayers & scribblings this week -



The Parish Grouping of Saggart, Rathcoole, Newcastle & Brittas,
www.SRBNparishes.ie or

 @SRBNparishgrouping

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*A special thank you to the Revd Ken Rue, Assistant Priest,
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