



*"Your face,  
O Lord,  
I seek"*

(Ps 27:8)

*lectio divina*

PRAYING THE SCRIPTURES  
IN LENT AND HOLY WEEK  
Year B 2012

# *Lectio divina*

*Lectio divina* is the meditative reading of a text of God's Word, the Scriptures, alone or with others, which leads to prayer, transformation of life, and, through that transformed life, the sharing with others of the mystery of God entrusted to us. This practice of prayer involves the whole person. Through our senses we read, we meditate using our reason and imagination, and we pray and transform our life with our will. It is not just an interior practice but one that engages with the issues of our Christian life and prompts us to work with them. At different times, the emphasis may be on different aspects of the prayer. But it would be unwise to omit any of them altogether.

In the light of what has been said, we can look at the presuppositions that underpin this form of Scriptural prayer. Firstly, it embraces the Scriptures as God's Word speaking to us. It emphasises that this practice is a personal encounter with the eternal Word, who is Jesus. It sees, as the source and goal of this prayer, the life of Christian discipleship.

The image of the arch is sometimes used to speak of prayer. Prayer is designated as the keystone of the arch, the stone at the top which takes the strain, and stops the sides of the arch from falling in. However, the keystone will not stay up there by itself: it needs the sides of the arch. The sides of the arch are working with our life; to root out the vices and to practice the virtues. The practice of *lectio* is not a discrete or isolated event, totally sufficient in itself: it takes place within the living of Christian discipleship. It arises out of the conscious determined effort to live as disciples of Jesus and has as its goal to strengthen that determination and effort. Transformation of life is an essential element of praying the Scriptures.

*Lectio divina* arises out of a faith relationship with Jesus and reaches its fulfilment in the transformation of that faith relationship. The Scriptures are more open to those active disciples who love God and who are endeavouring to transform their life in conformity with their faith. It is the heart filled with this loving faith that will be most open to the spiritual message of the Scriptures. Active effort to live a life of Christian virtue is an important preparation for reading the Scriptures.

# Contents

|                                             |    |
|---------------------------------------------|----|
| Bishop David's Introduction .....           | 2  |
| How to use this booklet .....               | 3  |
| The Season of Lent .....                    | 4  |
| Ash Wednesday .....                         | 9  |
| First Sunday of Lent .....                  | 12 |
| Second Sunday of Lent .....                 | 16 |
| Third Sunday of Lent.....                   | 20 |
| Fourth Sunday of Lent.....                  | 23 |
| Fifth Sunday of Lent.....                   | 27 |
| Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord..... | 30 |
| Holy Week .....                             | 38 |
| The Sacred Paschal Triduum .....            | 40 |

## Bishop David's Introduction

Each year the season of Lent invites us to recognise our failure and sinfulness, to seek forgiveness and resolve once more to grow deeper in faith, more fervent in love and stronger in hope through prayer, fasting and good works. Through the readings, signs and bywords which characterise the forty days of Lent, the Church challenges us to turn our gaze away from self in order to look at God which is precisely what we mean by repentance. Might there not be another aspect of this season which merits our consideration, for Lent is not merely a time for making a change in our direction, in our mind and heart?



On the Feast of Pentecost this year, the Australian Bishops will invite us to enter into a Year of Grace, a time for deepening and renewing our relationship with the Risen Lord. This invitation sheds light on an often forgotten Lenten perspective – to see Lent as the reason for putting on the mind and heart of God revealed to us in Christ Jesus.

Patricia Sanchez<sup>1</sup> suggests this shift of focus, toward which Lent prompts us, might become clear by looking at William Zdinak's painting, *In His Image*. At a point in his life, when frustrated with the seeming emptiness of his success as an artist, Zdinak was commissioned to produce a picture for a religious art show. We're told that for weeks he stared at the empty canvas, unable to formulate an idea and unwilling to resort to the sentimentality that too often characterises religious art. And the words of Thomas Merton haunted him: "If there were no other proof of the infinite patience of God with men, a very good one could be found in God's toleration of the pictures that are painted ... under the pretext of being in God's honour."

As Zdinak prayed to the God of patience, his attention turned away from himself toward God and he began to paint. He created a likeness of Christ in ruddy skin tones, with kind eyes and handsome Mediterranean features but the finished work was not unlike so many others which were hung on display for the art show.

When viewers drew near to the painting, they were surprised to find that Christ's head was actually a composite of scores of smaller faces representing men, women and children of every ethnic background, of all races and walks of life. Among the myriad faces were notables like Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Abraham Lincoln, John Kennedy as well as his wife, three sons and daughter. When viewers drew back from the painting, the mosaic of human faces blended once again to reflect the image of Christ. (To view this artwork, please visit [www.printsforinspiration.com](http://www.printsforinspiration.com)).

We stand at the threshold of another Lenten season. William Zdinak's painting may remind us that this is truly the acceptable time for directing our eyes and our energies away from ourselves and focusing on the person and mission of Jesus Christ. May we find therein the faces of all our sisters and brothers, whose needs we are called to recognise and serve.

Assisted by our faithful presence to God's Word through the Lenten *Lectio* may we find ourselves renewed in the life of the Risen One with whom we journey over these Lenten days.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David L. Walker".

**David L. Walker**  
Bishop of Broken Bay

<sup>1</sup> Sanchez Archives, Celebration Publications – used with permission

## How to use this booklet

This booklet invites you to prayerfully and meditatively reflect on readings during Lent and Holy Week.

A brief outline of meditative and prayerful reflection is offered on the inside covers of this booklet, which can be used as bookmarks throughout the period.

To find out more about *lectio divina* please visit <http://www.dbb.org.au/ourworks/Pages/LectioDivina.aspx>

This booklet is an instrument that can be used in a variety of ways. Please use it in whatever way suits you best.

## A Brief Introduction to the Season of Lent

# The Season of Lent

“A pure heart create for me, O God” (Ps 50:10)

The word “Lent” itself provides us with a starting-point in our reflection on the background and spiritual tradition of preparing to celebrate the Easter Mystery. The Old English word *lencten* originally meant “spring” or “springtime”, because in the northern hemisphere the forty-day fast coincided with the reawakening of nature after a long winter. It was natural to make spiritual connections: as new growth began to push through the cold, hard earth, so divine grace would work within the human heart and soul to bring about the miracle of transformation.

This springtime theme is shown clearly in the Easter hymn “Now the green blade rises”:

Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,  
Wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;  
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:  
Love is come again like wheat that springs up green.  
*(from an old Provençal carol, words by John M. C. Crum)*

We can see here a marriage of ideas: nature regenerating in the season of springtime and the prophetic words of Jesus the Christ, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest” (*Jn 12:24, NJB*). These words of Jesus are a clear reference to his approaching Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

This Lenten integration of the phases of nature and of the phases of the human journey to God are enshrined in the various seasons of our liturgical calendar. The mystery of the Incarnation was celebrated at a time based on the **solar calendar** linked to the winter solstice (the Christmas/Epiphany season). But the Western Christian tradition of Lent and Easter was set at a time determined by the **lunar calendar**. This was because Jewish Passover has always been fixed to the 14<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan, the first day of the full moon after the spring equinox. Christian tradition has always set the date of Easter in accordance with this date, which of course varies from year to year as our fixed calendar adjusts to the lunar phases.

## *Lent in the Southern Hemisphere*

Our experience in the southern hemisphere is not of hard, cold earth and the oncoming of spring. For us, the change of seasons is not such a stark contrast. Yet there is a noticeable period of change-over. There is a change of pace, after the height of summer and the often hectic “end of year” scramble. Depending on where we live in Australia, autumn can be for some people a more reflective time, cooler and maybe quieter. In the north of our continent, the wet season is over and things begin to settle down a bit. And as we near the end of Lent, we see the wonder of the big full paschal moon as it rises.

The evolving of the Lenten season: A brief history

Exploring the roots of a long-standing tradition is not just an academic exercise of delving into the past. Key concepts emerge which are relevant to us in the here and now:

- In the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries, the fast before Easter was compulsory. The whole community kept a 40-hour fast on the Friday and Saturday before Easter Sunday when no food or drink was taken whatsoever. It was seen as emblematic of one’s membership of the Church and the best formative way of ecclesial preparation for the profound experience of grace in the revelation of the Easter Mystery, the **Pascha**.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> century saw an extending of this period of preparation to what we now call “Holy Week”. The whole week was marked by fasting but not a complete fast as in the final two days.
- Finally, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the tradition of the full 40 days of Lent became a widespread custom and was seen as the natural preparation for Easter. The 1st Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325 AD) clearly took a 40-day Lent for granted (*cf Canon 5*).

## *Why 40 days?*

From the Church’s earliest times a strong spiritual movement sprang up, based on union or solidarity with Christ in every aspect of the Paschal Mystery. It became the custom to synchronise the daily round of prayer to correspond with the times of the various events of his Passion and Death, as the writings of the Fathers show. In this same spirit of union with Christ, the early monks relived his forty days in the wilderness through rigorous fasting, penance and prayer. Outside monastic circles, this rapidly spread throughout the Church as a central theme in preparing for Easter.

In biblical tradition, “forty” corresponds to the span of a human generation (40 years) and so is used to express completion or fulfillment. Because of the corruption of humanity, rain inundated the earth for forty days, annihilating every living being, except Noah and his family (*Gen 6-8*) and a new world emerged. Escaping from Egypt, Moses and his band of people wandered for forty years until they became the Chosen People with whom God at last made the Covenant which had been promised to Abraham (*Exodus 34*).

Finally, the Word of God became flesh and blood in the person of Jesus (*Jn 1: 14*). He was truly human, “tempted in every way that we are, though he is without sin” (*Heb 4:15*). Anointed by the Spirit of God, he embraced Messiahship with all its implications and immediately that same Spirit “drove him out into the wilderness and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan” (*Mk 1: 12-13; Mt 4:2; Lk 4: 1-2*). This was the sign that the incarnation was completely fulfilled, and the divine Son of God was truly one of us in the deepest sense, the complete model of our human nature. Our Lent, then, is a time for us “to be moulded by God to the pattern of his Son” (*cf Rom 8: 29*).

## *The baptismal dimension of Lent*

Beginning early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the Easter Vigil (**Pascha**) was seen as the prime time for celebrating the rites of Christian Initiation. Justin, Martyr, in his **First Apologia**, 66 (c. 150 AD) is the best witness to this. During the long period of catechumenate, in some places as long as three years, the prospective Christian underwent an intensive inculturation in the Faith. Then, after final acceptance, the catechumen embarked on the last phase of preparation during the 40 days of Lent.

In 4<sup>th</sup> century Rome, catechumens were given an intensive three weeks of Lenten preparation for Baptism which included daily services of prayer and instruction. Over time, these were opened up to the whole community. A course of scriptural readings, particularly suited to the baptismal journey of faith, was given pride of place in the Lenten lectionary. This ancient tradition has been revived in our modern lectionary where these readings, notably the Johannine Gospel readings, occupy a special place on the Sundays of Lent, Year A. Those already baptised are invited to use the Lenten Journey to revitalise their own baptismal conviction and sense of ecclesial solidarity with Christ and his Church.

## *The Church’s traditional Lenten method*

Lent, then, is a time for personal conversion and change of heart in order to be “moulded to the pattern of his death” (*Phil 3: 10*). We can never presume that our conversion is complete, or that what has been planted in our hearts and souls over our lifetime does not need careful tending and cultivation. Three things stand out in the Church’s traditional Lenten **kerygma**, an ancient Greek word with a christianised meaning which means the life-changing **revelation** carried out by Christ, the living Word, himself: Fasting, Prayer, and Almsgiving. These things are set out clearly in the first few days of Lenten readings, as well as the inner attitude we should have in fulfilling them.

## *Fasting*

The ancient practice of avoiding certain foods or drink in Lent and of restricting the amounts we take is not aimed merely at a degree of detached hardship or discipline. Ultimately, it is meant to have a certain **anamnetic** quality – a “calling to mind” of the



person of Jesus and his complete surrender and sacrifice. Fasting can have the effect of centring a person on the true nature of one's relationship with Christ and what to put aside in oneself in the interests of furthering that oneness. In today's context, fasting could well be extended to things other than food and drink. For example, the amount of time we spend in a day in saturating ourselves in multimedia sound and image often means that we fail to appreciate the place and spiritual effects of silence.

## Prayer

As well as being a time for fasting, Lent has always meant a deeper concentration of prayer. But instead of an emphasis on the quantity of prayers we say, it is the quality and destination of prayer that is at the heart of Lent. If one of the main ancient themes of Lent is, as we are suggesting, conformity to Jesus Christ and the recreation in us of the pattern of his person and his sacrifice, then the model of prayer that he himself gave us is the starting point *par excellence*.

The number of Gospel references to the times Jesus spent in solitary prayer to his Father, especially before turning points in his mission, is striking. And the language he used in addressing his Father – the language of blessing, and of self-forgetfulness – could well form the basis of our own personal intercommunication with each Divine Person of the Holy Trinity. This is where **Lectio Divina** can become a major tool in our being formed according to the person of Jesus, especially in our Lenten journey.

## Charity

The Lenten aim in almsgiving is not merely about **contributing** but about giving in a way that helps us to learn the meaning of compassionate service. When Jesus looked around at the poor, the oppressed, the homeless, the sick and disabled he was profoundly moved to the depths of his being, as the original Greek verb implied. This was far more than simply “feeling sorry for them”, as in our English translation (Mt 9:36). This same inner movement of divine compassion and service inspired Jesus to wash the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper (Jn 13) and to teach them to do the same. Thus **Project Compassion** is well-named, but in many ways poorly understood among people generally; it is really a lesson in “Christlikeness”.

# Prayer of Pope Clement XI

Lord, I believe in you: increase my faith.  
I trust in you: strengthen my trust.  
I love you: let me love you more and more.  
I am sorry for my sins: deepen my sorrow.  
I worship you as my first beginning.  
I long for you as my last end.  
I praise you as my loving protector.  
I want to do what you ask of me:  
In the way you ask, for as long as you ask, because you ask it.  
Let me love you, Lord, as my god.  
And see myself as I really am: a pilgrim in this world.  
A Christian called to respect and love all those lives I touch.



*"Your face,  
O Lord,  
I seek"*

(Ps 27:8)

*ash wednesday*

Joel 2:12-18  
2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2  
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

*A*sh Wednesday dazzles us with gift and newness and possibility. This day burdens us with the tasks of the day, for we are already halfway back to committees and memos.

This day has become a virtual sacramental of Catholic identity, as people throng to “get ashes,” which, paradoxically, is just what the Gospel counsels against – external signs of devotion.

Karl Rahner captured so eloquently the meaning of this sign: “When on Ash Wednesday we hear the words, ‘Remember, you are dust,’ we are also told that we are brothers and sisters of the incarnate Lord. In these words we are told everything that we are: nothingness that is filled with eternity; death that teems with life; futility that redeems; dust that is God’s life forever.” (*The Eternal Year*, p. 62)

## Joel 2:12-18

Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD, your God?

Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her canopy.

Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep. Let them say, ‘Spare your people, O LORD, and do not make your heritage a mockery, a byword among the nations. Why should it be said among the peoples, “Where is their God?”’

The Lord became jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.

## 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain.

<sup>2</sup> For he says, 'At an acceptable time I have listened to you, and on a day of salvation I have helped you.' See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!

## *Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18*

Beware of practising your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

'So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

'And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.'



*“God created  
humankind  
in his image”*

(Genesis 1:27)

*first sunday of lent*

*Genesis 9:8-15*  
*1 Peter 3: 18-22*  
*Mark 1:12-15*

*T*hrough our baptism we share in the baptism of Jesus. During the baptism rite we pray over the waters of the font asking God to send down the Spirit to open those waters. 2000 years ago when Jesus was baptised, in answer to the prayer of the prophet Isaiah prayed 600 years before, the heavens were torn open and the Spirit was sent by the Father to the Son. Today the Spirit is sent by the Father to empower the waters of baptism into which we are immersed.

In the prayer over the font we reflect on the role of water throughout salvation's history. The Spirit breathed life on the waters that covered the earth and life teemed from those waters. Water covered again the earth at the time of the great flood, with Noah and his family protected from those waters by God. The waters of the Red Sea parted as the Israelites passed through them, emerging to a new life in the desert. Jesus was baptised by John in the waters of the River Jordan. Jesus willed that blood and water pour from his side as he hung dying on the Cross. Having been raised to new life, Jesus instructed his disciples to baptise all in the name of Father, Son and Spirit.

In today's first reading we hear of the covenant made by God with Noah and with all humanity. The covenant made was one of life over death. Never again will the waters cover the earth. Water will give us life, not death.

In the Gospel we hear that, having been filled with the Spirit at his baptism, Jesus was driven into the desert where he was tested. The desert was a place of spiritual and physical preparation. The Israelites spent 40 years in the desert preparing to become the people God willed them to be. They entered the desert as slaves. They emerged as warriors who gave praise and glory to the one true God.

Jesus emerged from the desert filled with the Spirit preaching repentance and belief in the Good News. Filled with the Spirit at baptism, we are called to proclaim the same Good News to all. We are to follow where Jesus leads us.

In our second reading St Peter reminds us that on receiving the waters of baptism we make a covenant with God to follow Jesus. Usually the person being baptised is a child and the covenant to follow is made by the parents on behalf of their child. At some time in our lives we must claim that covenant for ourselves. We must stand humbly before our God and pray from the depths of our soul that God is our Lord and Saviour.

In Lent we reflect on our journey through the waters of baptism. We reflect on our trials in the desert of the life we live. We follow Jesus into the waters of baptism. We marvel at the rainbow of life, the sign of God's covenant that

we will live. We follow Jesus into the desert and out again into life in and through Jesus our Lord and Saviour. We take time to stand humbly before our God, the source of all life and pray, “My Lord and My God”. Don’t we?

## Genesis 9:8-15

God said to Noah and to his sons with him,

“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark.

I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:

I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.”

## 1 Peter 3:18-22

Christ suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison

In former times these did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, *during the building of the ark*, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.

Baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you – not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

## Mark 1:12-15

After Jesus was baptized, the Spirit drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness.



Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee,  
proclaiming the good news of God, and saying,

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come  
near; repent, and believe in the good news.”



*"We wish  
to see Jesus"*

(Jn 12:21)

*second sunday of lent*

Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18  
Romans 8: 31-34  
Mark 9: 2-10

In today's 1<sup>st</sup> reading and Gospel we have two sons and two fathers on two mountains. In the 1<sup>st</sup> reading Abraham has taken his son Isaac up to a mountain in Moriah. He has been asked by God to sacrifice Isaac. Trusting in God, Abraham does what God has asked him. His trust is vindicated when the Angel of the Lord stays his hand and spares his son.

Were God to ask you to sacrifice one of your children could you do it? Do you have the same faith in the Lord as Abraham did? I don't think I could. Hopefully we will never be put to the test.

Do we trust in God? Do we allow God to take control of our lives? Do we let go and let God? Abraham did. Can we?

The Gospel for this week is the beautiful story of the Transfiguration. Jesus takes Peter, James and John up a high mountain. There Jesus allowed the God within to shine through his humanity. The voice in the cloud, God the Father, told the disciples that Jesus is God's Son whom God loves. God told the disciples to listen to Jesus.

God was on Mount Horeb with God's Son, Jesus the Christ, just as Abraham was on the mountain in Moriah with his son, Isaac. God spared Abraham's son Isaac from death. God did not spare Jesus from the same fate. The death of Jesus was the inevitable result of his fidelity to his father, a fidelity which aroused hostility and hatred in some. Jesus willingly became human. Jesus willingly lived the life of the Good Shepherd, showing us how to live and to love. Jesus willingly allowed humanity, you and me, to crucify him for our sins. Jesus descended into hell to raise those who had died and those who were to die to new life. God the Father raised Jesus, us and all humanity to new life, new eternal life.

Before the disciples went up the mountain with Jesus, Peter was admonishing Jesus for professing that he, Jesus, was to go to Jerusalem where he would die. While Jesus was on the mountain with Peter, James and John, the other disciples were arguing amongst themselves who was the greatest of them. Who was the greatest? Jesus had told them that he would die and rise again, yet they were foolishly considering themselves as great. They all ran away when Jesus was arrested. That may make them human, but not great.

Do we listen to Jesus? Do we listen to the meaning behind the preaching and teachings of Jesus. Trusting in God the Father, do we listen to God the Son? Do we live our lives as children of God and as disciples of Christ, humbly, lovingly, trustingly?

St Paul in our second reading reminds us that Jesus the Christ, having died for us and having been risen from the dead by the Father, stands at the right hand of

the Father pleading for us. How humbling is that? Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God, our Redeemer, our Saviour, our Shepherd, took on our humanity, lived for us, died for us, was risen from the dead for us, is the bridge to the Father for us to follow and for all time will stand at the Father's right hand advocating for us.

'This is my Son, the Beloved. **Listen to him**' In view of all that Jesus has done for us and continues to do for us, how could we do any less?

## *Genesis 22:1-2, 9-13, 15-18*

After these things God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains that I shall show you."

When they came to the place that God had shown him, Abraham built an altar there and laid the wood in order. He bound his son Isaac, and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then Abraham reached out his hand and took the knife to kill his son.

But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham looked up and saw a ram, caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your offspring shall all the nations of the earth gain blessing for themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

## *Romans 8:31-34*

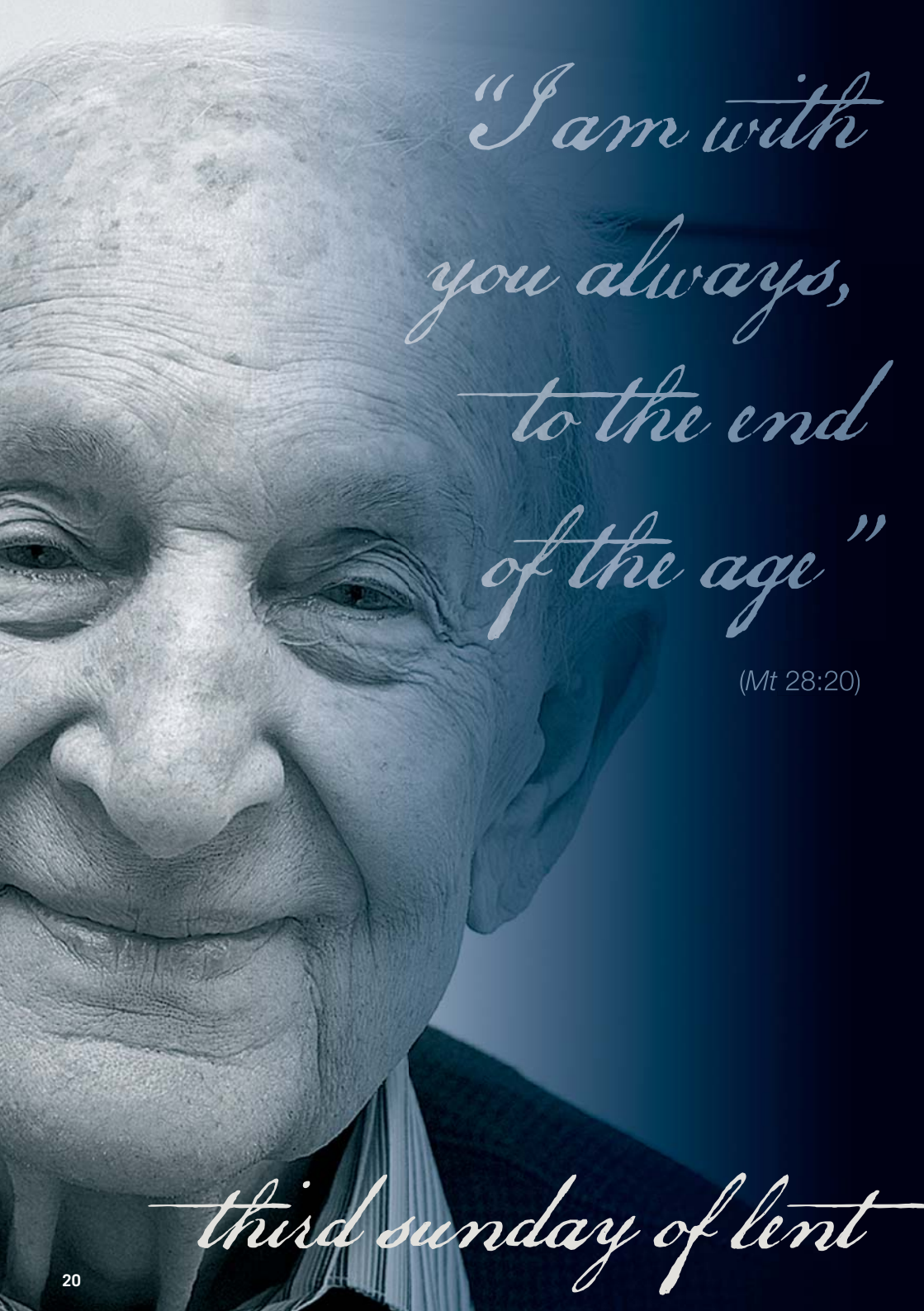
What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us.

## Mark 9:2-10

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.



*"I am with  
you always,  
to the end  
of the age"*

(Mt 28:20)

*third sunday of lent*

*Exodus 20:1-17*  
*1 Corinthians 1:22-25*  
*John 2:13-25*

Today is the third Sunday of Lent – the halfway point you may say. Have you had the chance to use Lent as a time of preparation – it is not too late. We are told that during Lent, we should practise almsgiving, prayer and fasting – we should choose one, or a combination, so that our preparation for the death and resurrection of Jesus is personal and meaningful.

Two of the three readings this Sunday may well be familiar to us.

In the first reading from Exodus, the Ten Commandments are listed. These are a list of guidelines that help us to live a good Christian life.

However, we know that when Jesus came onto the Earth he fulfilled them with his own law of Love – Love one another as I have loved you. This fits in well with the Old Testament commandments, as the motivation to follow the Ten Commandments is love – that is, if we love everyone, we would follow the Ten Commandments.

The Gospel today is from John. It is here we see Jesus quite angry about what is happening in the Temple – Jesus is fed up with the mockery of God and God's commandments in the Temple. We rarely see this side of Jesus but he demands respect for God's house, even to the point of his own safety.

Jesus then speaks to those gathered that if they destroy the temple, then he would rebuild it in three days. Those gathered took him literally and didn't understand what he was speaking about. He was talking about the Temple of his body, and his own death and resurrection. He knew what his fate would be.

*Exodus 20:1-17*

Then God spoke all these words: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns.

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

### *1 Corinthians 1:22-25*

For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

### *John 2:13-25*

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!"

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.





*"Your face,  
O Lord,  
I seek"*

(Ps 27:8)

*fourth sunday of lent*

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23  
Ephesians 2:4-10  
John 3:14-21

*a* *bomination, pollution, wrath of God, mocking, despising, scoffing, burning, breaking down, destroying, desolation, exile, snakes ...* with this sort of language we begin our readings for the fourth Sunday of Lent! How horrible this sounds, and how ruthless and unforgiving! The God portrayed in *Chronicles* is not the one with whom we are likely to want to spend eternity! The powerful image presented is literally soul-destroying, and reminiscent of the worst of dictators and despots. And yet ... many of the people portrayed are not unlike some we see on Television every day, people who are lost in the darkness, from whom the light seems to be hidden and who are choosing death rather than life!

Paul and John introduce us to a richer understanding of God, the God who permeates the darkness with light, who has sent his Son Jesus that we might live in the light, that we might have life, abundant life, life from God, eternal life. We are introduced to an understanding of God who, far from wanting to punish and cajole those whose lives are permeated by darkness, yearns for all creation to take up the great gift God offers freely, abundantly, to those who can trust in what the light reveals.

We are brought face to face with a salvation that is all about the healing of broken relationships. Light dispels the darkness, trust is restored to the proper bond of true kinship with Godliness. But it remains that we are given the choice: between belief and unbelief, between light or darkness...

John's message in the Gospel reading is actually quite simple and even logical! Isn't that why John 3:16 appears so often on Christian billboards? "God so loved the world that he gave us his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life..." God loves the world, the whole world, without any qualification, hesitation, exception, prior demand. The Son is sent to come among us, to be one of us. Those who recognise the Son, who form a relationship with him, also become part of the family of God. As family members they too become heirs of the kingdom, with the right to call 'Abba Father', and inherit the power of the Holy Spirit, and therefore the capacity to act in truth with love.

We are not saved by anything we can do, we are not redeemed by working for a God who is even a merciful ruler. Salvation, the reign of God, is assured in our lives when we live in right relationship with God – and all of God's creation. Once we recognise this God who loves us unconditionally, our lives are changed forever. When we let God in, when we are disturbed by the overwhelming abundance of God's love for us, for me, then it becomes our business, our greatest desire, to proclaim with trumpet blast, the love of God in Christ Jesus for everyone and all creation. We become true disturbers of all the examples of false peace that surround us! We are compelled to right wrongs and

dream dreams of the true reign of God: the kingdom in which justice and peace prevail, where the lion lies down with the lamb, where the pathways lead straight to the heart of God. We can claim eternal life here and now, for Emmanuel is indeed among us!

## *2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23*

All the leading priests and the people also were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of the LORD that he had consecrated in Jerusalem. The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD against his people became so great that there was no remedy.

They burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious vessels. He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfil seventy years.

In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfilment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also declared in a written edict: “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him! Let him go up.”

## *Ephesians 2:4-10*

But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved – and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

## *John 3:14-21*

Jesus said to Nicodemus

“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son

of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

“And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

*"God created  
humankind  
in his image"*

(Genesis 1:27)

*fifth sunday of lent*

*Jeremiah 31:31-34*  
*Hebrews 5:7-9*  
*John 12:20-33*

*J*he prophet speaks of a new covenant – not the one given to Noah nor the one revealed to Moses, but a new covenant, one etched in our hearts: ‘I will be their God and they will be my people.’ Such an exuberant claim suggests the deep love between parents and a young baby. There is a possessive and heightened sense of belonging because the flesh you hold is your own flesh. There is a profound protectiveness in this loving bond. It is not an intellectual decision; rather, it is one that comes from the heart. This is not taught or learnt, it is our heart!

Not only are we now in a heart covenant but all our sinfulness is forgiven and forgotten.

St Paul sees Christ’s suffering as his way to ‘learn obedience’. Christ prays fervently with ‘loud cries and tears’ to be saved from suffering. His prayers were heard and yet his suffering remained. In this way he reaches perfection.

We know about praying to be saved from suffering. Maybe we are learning obedience and humility. Maybe it is our way to eternal salvation.

This passage from John describes the events of the last Passover. In these verses Jesus replies to a group of people who have requested to see him. His response describes his death and subsequent glorification. The language used by Jesus is highly figurative and symbolic.

The grain of wheat must die in order to bear fruit. So, too, Christ must die to give us life in all its fullness. ‘Anyone who loves his life loses it’ – those people who hate their life here will inherit eternal life. These are strong warnings.

Perhaps they need to be qualified by the next phrase that we must learn to serve and follow Jesus constantly if we want to inherit eternal life. Our life then is not centred on what we love but how we are following Christ. In this way we find the Father.

Jesus finally announces that the voice of God is not there for his own sake but for our sake. The death and resurrection of Jesus is for our sake, for all people, forever. Jesus will draw all people to himself.

*Jeremiah 31:31-34*

The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt— a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD.

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

### *Hebrews 5:7-9*

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

### *John 12:20-33*

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.”

Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.

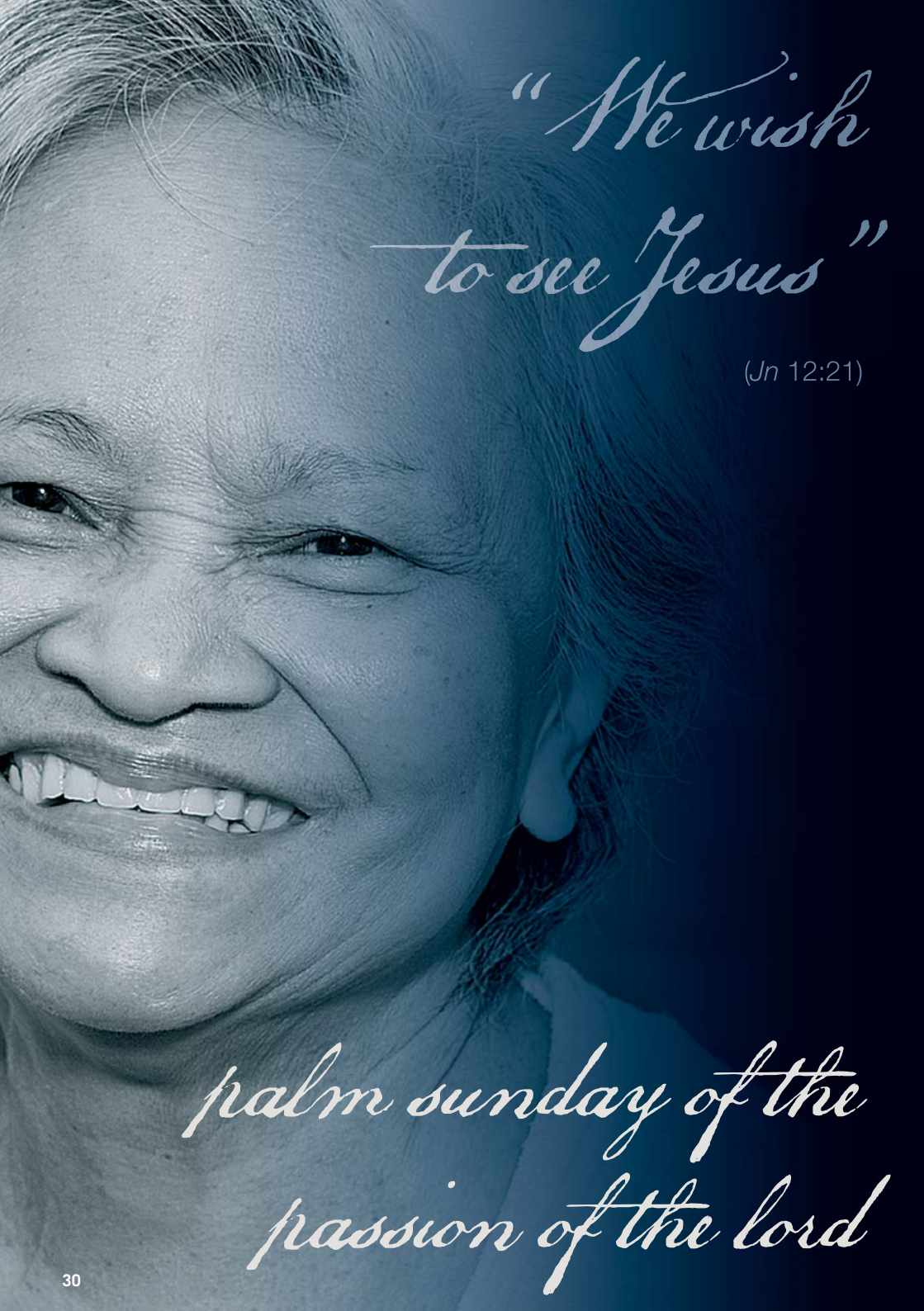
Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”

Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.



*"We wish  
to see Jesus"*

(Jn 12:21)

*palm sunday of the  
passion of the lord*



*Isaiah 50:4-7*  
*Philippians 2:6-11*  
*Mark 14:1-15:47*

To be born in human likeness (*Phil 2:6*). What is it that characterises the human spirit? Is it as Isaiah writes, 'to sustain the weary with a word' or, is it according to Mark's Gospel, to be 'deeply grieved'? The way of the human is to tread the path riddled with pain and suffering, but pursued with hope and truth.

As we prepare for the most holy and solemn of occasions, the passion and death of Jesus and the hope of the Resurrection, we are called to remember the agonising last hours of Jesus' earthly ministry. On this Palm Sunday, one asks, why is there so much emphasis on pain, injustice and death?

Lest we forget, in a world where all our needs must be met immediately, Holy Week reminds us there is a greater story to be told and heard. The story of Jesus' passion is the story of all humanity. It is a story that makes us uneasy with ourselves because it is not about meeting our needs and dreaming a happy ending where all things are just right. Jesus' crucifixion reminds us there is injustice and that untruth will continue to dominate unless we stand up for righteousness. Jesus' death calls us to reassess what it is to be born in human likeness.

Do we tolerate the pain and suffering that is ongoing around us? Do we shut it out and cushion our lives with needs that should be met and with delicious chocolate Easter eggs? Or do we enter the heart of the Passion, with its relentless questions, its darkness and sin, its hatred and death, and like *Is 50:7* in today's first reading, choose to 'set my face like flint, and I know I shall not be put to shame.'

The story of the Passion, crucifixion, death and Resurrection of Jesus is the greatest story ever told. It is the prime example of what characterises the human spirit, so exemplified in Jesus. Easter is that ongoing invitation to be truly human, to be faithful to the truth, to live with unconditional love and justice, despite forces that choose to obscure one's path. As we prepare this Sunday for that great and Holy Week of Jesus' Passion, Death and Resurrection, Easter is a reminder to each of us that one can triumph over evil when one deliberately chooses good in spite of death. So in the midst of pain and suffering, turmoil and sin, darkness and death, what characterises the human spirit can be truly set free, where faith, hope and love will abound. Amen

*Isaiah 50:4-7*

The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens – wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

## *Philippians 2:6-11*

Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

## *Mark 14:1-15:47*

It was two days before the Passover and the festival of Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for a way to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; for they said, “Not during the festival, or there may be a riot among the people.”

While he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at the table, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.

But some were there who said to one another in anger, “Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor.” And they scolded her.

But Jesus said, “Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has performed a good service for me. For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for its burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.”

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. When they heard it, they were greatly pleased, and promised to give him money. So he began to look for an opportunity to betray him.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed, his disciples said to him, “Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

So he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

So the disciples set out and went to the city, and found everything as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, he came with the twelve.

And when they had taken their places and were eating, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me."

They began to be distressed and to say to him one after another, "Surely, not I?"

He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the bowl with me. For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born."

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

And Jesus said to them, "You will all become deserters; for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."

Peter said to him, "Even though all become deserters, I will not."

Jesus said to him, "Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times."

But he said vehemently, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And all of them said the same.

They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake." And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him.

He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want."

He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him.

He came a third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.”

Immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; and with him there was a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” So when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. Then they laid hands on him and arrested him.

But one of those who stood near drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me. But let the scriptures be fulfilled.”

All of them deserted him and fled.

A certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth and ran off naked.

They took Jesus to the high priest; and all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were assembled.

Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire.

Now the chief priests and the whole council were looking for testimony against Jesus to put him to death; but they found none. For many gave false testimony against him, and their testimony did not agree. Some stood up and gave false testimony against him, saying, “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands.’”

But even on this point their testimony did not agree.

Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer? What is it that they testify against you?” But he was silent and did not answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”

Jesus said, "I am; and 'you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power,' and 'coming with the clouds of heaven.'"

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? You have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?" All of them condemned him as deserving death.

Some began to spit on him, to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, "Prophecy!" The guards also took him over and beat him.

While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came by.

When she saw Peter warming himself, she stared at him and said, "You also were with Jesus, the man from Nazareth." But he denied it, saying, "I do not know or understand what you are talking about." And he went out into the forecourt. Then the cock crowed.

And the servant-girl, on seeing him, began again to say to the bystanders, "This man is one of them." But again he denied it. Then after a little while the bystanders again said to Peter, "Certainly you are one of them; for you are a Galilean." But he began to curse, and he swore an oath, "I do not know this man you are talking about."

At that moment the cock crowed for the second time. Then Peter remembered that Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." And he broke down and wept.

As soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. They bound Jesus, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" He answered him, "You say so."

Then the chief priests accused him of many things.

Pilate asked him again, "Have you no answer? See how many charges they bring against you." But Jesus made no further reply, so that Pilate was amazed.

Now at the festival he used to release a prisoner for them, anyone for whom they asked.

Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection. So the crowd came and began to ask Pilate to do for them according to his custom. Then he answered them, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" For he realized that it was out of jealousy that the chief priests had handed him over. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release Barabbas for them instead.

Pilate spoke to them again, "Then what do you wish me to do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" They shouted back, "Crucify him!"

Pilate asked them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him!" So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers led him into the courtyard of the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters); and they called together the whole cohort. And they clothed him in a purple cloak; and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on him. And they began saluting him, "Hail, King of the Jews!"

They struck his head with a reed, spat upon him, and knelt down in homage to him. After mocking him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

They compelled a passer-by, who was coming in from the country, to carry his cross; it was Simon of Cyrene, the father of Alexander and Rufus.

Then they brought Jesus to the place called Golgotha (which means the place of a skull). And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it. And they crucified him, and divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. The inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." And with him they crucified two bandits, one on his right and one on his left.

Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!"

In the same way the chief priests, along with the scribes, were also mocking him among themselves and saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself. et the Messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross now, so that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with him also taunted him.

When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah." And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down."

Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last.

And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was God's Son!"

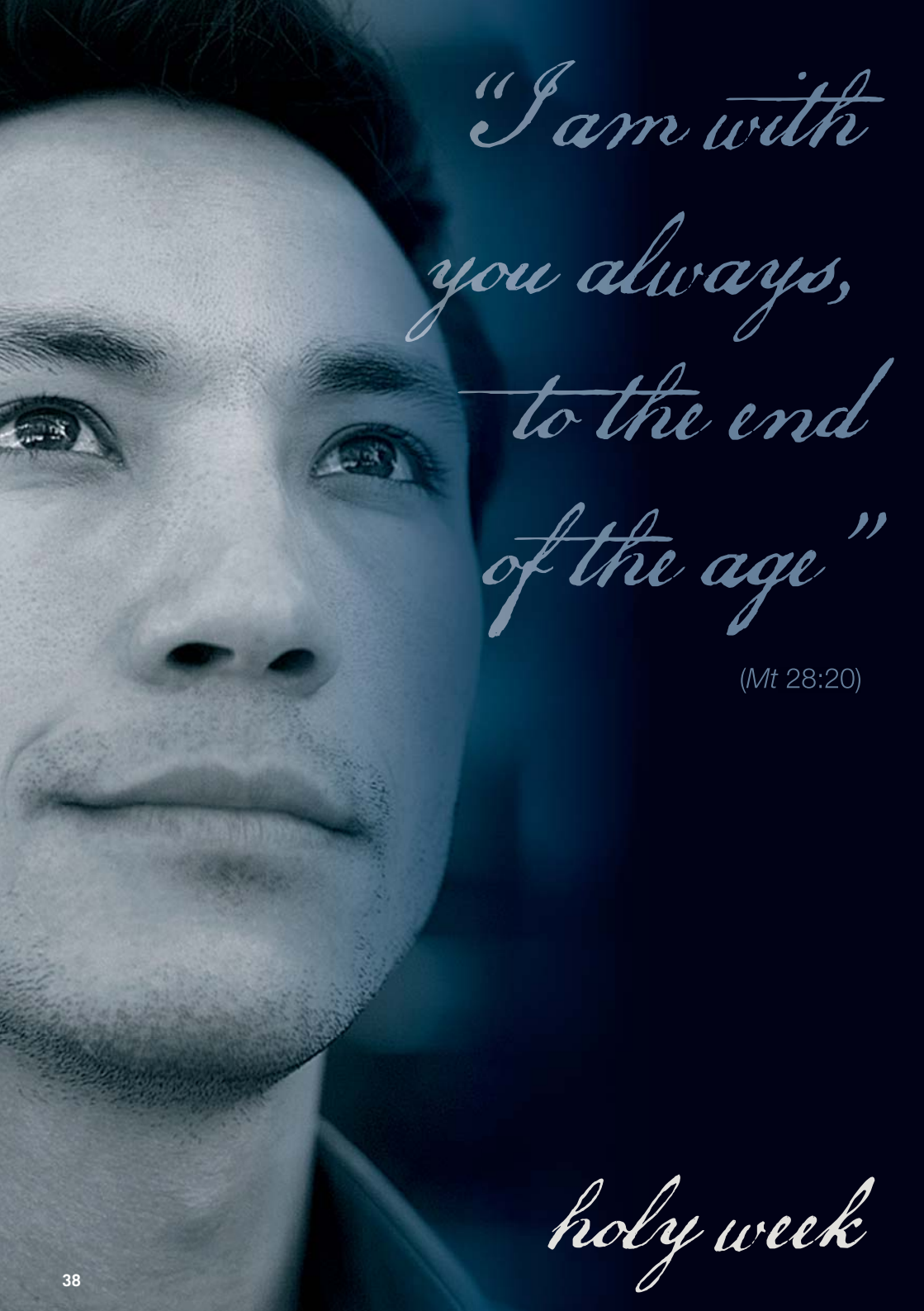
There were also women looking on from a distance; among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,

Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body was laid.



*"I am with  
you always,  
to the end  
of the age"*

(Mt 28:20)

*holy week*



In the ancient Church the entire lives of Christians revolved around the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Christians risked death, torture, and humiliation in order to worship Jesus and celebrate his life.

With Mark as our guide we are invited to remember and enter into key moments in the life of Jesus as he makes his journey to Calvary. Beyond crucifixion and death we recall Jesus' resurrection glory, the fulfilment of 'Abba's' promise to Jesus – 'I will be with you. I will raise you up.'

## Monday in Holy Week

*Isaiah 42:1-7*

*John 12:1-11*

Why should God give us anything we ourselves are not willing to work for? We pray, "Do it, God!", but also "We will do it, too!" God creates and invites us to co-create. What trust and infinite patience!

## Tuesday in Holy Week

*Isaiah 49:1-6*

*John 13:21-33, 36-38*

Salvation is now. We have a tendency to point ourselves backward or forward in time, but the Gospels say either we are letting Jesus save us now or we are not letting him save us at all.

## Wednesday in Holy Week

*Isaiah 50: 4-9*

*Matthew 26: 14-25*

Jesus praying to Abba, "Daddy," brings out the beautiful relationship in which Jesus grows with his Father, of being the loving, trusting son. In Gethsemane, and from the cross, he cries out, "Daddy!" Jesus seeks at all costs to be true to his Father.



*"Your face,  
O Lord,  
I seek"*

(Ps 27:8)

*the sacred  
paschal triduum*

# The Easter Proclamation: Our Christian Songline

✓ f ever there is a need for pre-liturgy *lectio* it is with the readings of the Easter Triduum. Even though they are so familiar, our bread and butter readings, we are wise to take time (a wonderful and productive Lenten activity!) to sit in quiet to study and pray these texts.

Because, by Holy Thursday, it will be too late! We will have missed an entry point into our once-a-year Experience. From the opening Exodus reading of the Passover at the Celebration of the Lord's Supper to the Gospel on Easter Sunday, another passover as the Lord goes ahead of the disciples to Galilee, we, in 2012, will live passover. Moving out of our everyday time, we will pass over from the rational and habitual, into a soul-searing experience of hearing, knowing, and integrating the story of our salvation into the deepest recesses of our hearts.

Listening to the readings during the Triduum is like no other listening: we are in heightened mode, eager, excited, slightly fearful as we are consumed by the events, their realities, their mysteries. This is not the time for working out the story line...that we have already done. This is not the time for searching for meanings... we know what it is all about. This is not the time even for life-changing resolutions...they will come.

But, this is the time when *proclamation* exhibits its truest meaning: what is announced becomes definitively true. So, these are not just readings, but sacramental events in which the words of scripture are passover, saving us from death and liberating us into life. Well prepared by Lenten *lectio*, the story fresh again in our minds, we let ourselves sink into images of text and notes, accented by the presence of our elemental symbols... ambo, altar, chair, oil, water and towel, bread and wine, cross and cloth, fire, candle, water, assembled people and priest celebrant. Let these words, let this music, let these sacred signs fill us to satiety, and in such fullness, the Spirit will amazingly produce an overflow of gifts, of conversion of life, of power for mission.

Even the environment of the gathering place is sacramental. The evening darkness of the Thursday, the simplicity and emptiness of the Friday space and the primeval fireplace of the Vigil are milieus of openness to God's power and action, indeed freeing us to be in that right relationship of created to Creator, saved to Saviour, loved to Lover.

The readings themselves are in movement, circling around one great Proclamation. From Thursday and Friday, we come to the Saturday Vigil, heading into Easter Sunday and, at what can be seen to be the pivotal moment of the Triduum, we stand in a darkness pierced only by a single lighted candle, as the deacon/cantor urges us to: "*Exult! Exult!*"

The Easter Proclamation (Exsultet) "tells by a great poetic text the whole Easter Mystery placed in the context of the economy of salvation". (*The Preparation and Celebration of*

*the Easter Feast, #84) What is proclaimed and done over the three days is encapsulated in this ancient song which is both gospel proclaimed and eucharistic prayer of thanksgiving.*

If there is one hymn that should be sweet on the lips and etched into the memories of all Christians, it should be the Exsultet. This is a hymn of passion, a leaping of unbridled delight, a chaotic stream of salvation imagery.

*Exult...the hosts of heaven! Exult...all corners of the earth! Exult...mother Church! This is the night...our feasts of Passover...when you led our forebears from slavery...that with a pillar of fire banished the darkness of sin...when Christians are led to grace...when Christ broke the prison-bars of death.*

*The night shall be as bright as day... the night which restores innocence to the fallen, joy to the mourners, fosters concord and brings down the mighty.*

*O truly necessary sin of Adam...O happy fault...O truly blessed night! When things of heaven are wed to those of earth.*

*And we ask that the gift of this candle, the work of mother bees, be an acceptable offering of praise.*

Finally, we pray that as Church, we will keep this light *undimmed*. *May this flame be found still burning by the Morning star, that never sets, Christ, who coming back from death's domain has shed his peaceful light on humanity.*

Only to this great hymn is given the honour of being sung from the Ambo, the table of the word, the breaking place of the scriptures. Let's do it well! And remember the generous work of mother bees – acknowledge them by having the biggest and best wax candle available! A large plain candle, decorated by a parish artist, can be the community's gift to itself. Now we can exult!

## Reflection on three readings selected from the Triduum.

Chosen from each day of the Triduum, these readings contain key images which if we allow them to take hold of our sense of mystery and desire for wisdom, will add greatly to our celebration of the Three Great Days, and beyond.

### Thursday of the Lord's Supper

*Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14*  
*1 Corinthians 11:23-26*  
*John 13:1-15*

From Exodus we have the image of *blood*: from the slaughtered lamb, the mark or recognition as it is smeared on the doorposts and the bloody striking down of

the Egyptian firstborns. Very uncomfortable and contradictory for us in our First world culture, with our particular understanding of God as life, compassion and love. However, blood as the liquid of life, given and poured out in so many ways in birth, in daily slog, in death, as promise and commitment, as inheritance and life meaning, brings us to touch reality, the basic essentials of life and faith.

### *Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14*

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household.

If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight.

They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD.

The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

### *1 Corinthians 11:23-26*

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

## John 13:1-15

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself.

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord – and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

## Friday of the Passion of the Lord

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9

John 18:1-19:42

In the letter to the Hebrews, the *reverent submission and obedience of Jesus* in the midst of his work and in his last passion, points to the nature of our discipleship. This is not a matter of God desiring painful suffering as a proof of faithfulness. No, for Jesus, it was his decision that every moment of his life was to be conformed to the will of the Creator for peace, justice and goodness. Naturally this put him at odds with the religious/political situation of his time. Being obedient meant to freely choose to follow the way of life and compassion which we speak of as the way of the Reign of God. You can get killed for doing this!

## *Isaiah 52:13-53:12*

See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.

Just as there were many who were astonished at him – so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals – so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.

Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper.

Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

## Hebrews 4:4-16, 5:7-9

Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin.

Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,

## John 18:1-19:42

After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered.

Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons.

Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" They answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus replied, "I am he." Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.

When Jesus said to them, "I am he," they stepped back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, "Whom are you looking for?" And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

Jesus answered, "I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go."

This was to fulfil the word that he had spoken, "I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me."

Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave's name was Malchus.

Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?" So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him.

First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.



Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in.

The woman said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching.

Jesus answered, "I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said."

When he had said this, one of the police standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, "Is that how you answer the high priest?" Jesus answered, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?"

Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, "You are not also one of his disciples, are you?" He denied it and said, "I am not."

One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, "Did I not see you in the garden with him?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate's headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this man?" They answered, "If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you."

Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law." The Jews replied, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death."

(This was to fulfil what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?" Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here."

Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

Pilate asked him, "What is truth?" After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, "I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?"

They shouted in reply, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" Now Barabbas was a bandit.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and striking him on the face.

Pilate went out again and said to them, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him."

So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God."

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever.

He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer.

Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?"

Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha.

Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor."

Then he handed him over to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek.

Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written."

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfil what the scripture says, "They divided my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots."

And that is what the soldiers did. Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished."  
Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed.

Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.

(He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.)

These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, "None of his bones shall be broken." And again another passage of scripture says, "They will look on the one whom they have pierced."

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body.

Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds.

They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.

Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

## Holy Saturday

*The women saw how His body was laid; and they prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. Luke 23:55,56*

**Holy Saturday** (in Latin, *Sabbatum Sanctum*), the ‘day of the entombed Christ’, is the Lord’s day of rest, for on that day Christ’s body lay in His tomb. We recall the Apostle’s Creed, which says “He descended into hell.” It is a day of suspense between two worlds, that of darkness, sin and death, and that of the Resurrection and the restoration of the Light of the World. For this reason no divine services are held until the Easter Vigil begins that night. This day between Good Friday and Easter Day makes present to us the end of one world and the complete newness of the era of salvation inaugurated by the Resurrection of Christ.

Ideally, Holy Saturday should be the quietest day of the year

## Sunday of the Resurrection

*Acts 10:34, 37-43*  
*1 Corinthians 5:6-8*  
*Mark 16:1-7*

What a powerful image in the conclusion of the Gospel of Mark. “They saw that the stone, which was very large, *had already been rolled back*”. Already, before we are even ready, aware, looking for, wanting, God has acted and the stone, the slab, the prison bar has been simply, neatly, definitively, rolled back. Nothing for us to do, but to accept the gracious gift! How can we ignore the continuous offer by God to make things simple for us, to anticipate our needs, to make sure that we are not stuck, burdened, and buried? All we need to do, is to head for the tomb, on the first day, as the sun rises!

## Acts 10:34, 37-43

Then Peter began to speak to them: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality.

That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead.

All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

## 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Your boasting is not a good thing. Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?

Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

## Mark 16:1-7

When the sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

They had been saying to one another, “Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?”

When they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled back. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed.

But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there

is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.”

On this greatest day of the year, all fasting and somber thoughts are banished.

As St. John Chrysostom announces in this famous Easter sermon, all are invited to the feast:

*“Let all then enter  
the joy of Our Lord!  
Both the first and the last, and those who come after, enjoy your reward!  
Rich and poor, dance with one another, sober and slothful, celebrate the day.  
Those who have kept the fast and those who have not,  
rejoice today, for the table is richly spread.  
Fare royally upon it—the calf is a fatted one.  
Let no one go away hungry.  
All of you, enjoy the banquet of faith!  
All enjoy the riches of His goodness.  
Let no one cry over his poverty, for the universal Kingdom has appeared!  
Let no one mourn that he has fallen again and again,  
for forgiveness has risen from the grave.  
Let none fear death, for the death of our Savior has set us free.  
He has destroyed it by enduring it.  
He spoiled the power of hell when he descended thereto.  
Isaiah foretold this when he cried, ‘Death has been frustrated in meeting him below!’  
It is frustrated, for it is destroyed.  
It is frustrated, for it is annihilated.  
It is frustrated, for now it is made captive.  
For it grabbed a body and discovered God.  
It took earth and behold! It encountered Heaven.  
It took what was visible, and was overcome by what was invisible.  
O Death, where is your sting?  
O Death, where is your victory?  
Christ is risen, and the demons are cast down.  
Christ is risen, and life is set free.  
Christ is risen, and the tomb is emptied of the dead.  
For Christ, having risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits for those who sleep.  
to Him be glory and power forever and ever!  
Amen. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!”*

# Lectio divina

A reading and reflection on the Scriptures which leads to prayer and transformation of life

## Reading – getting to know the text (senses)

- Take in all the elements of the text.
- Be aware of context, related texts, quotes.
- Who are key characters; what are key words.
- Apply all that you know about the text.
- Don't choose any one thing to work with at this stage.

## Meditation – engaging with the text, making it my own (reason)

What does the text tell me?

- about the God who speaks?
- about responding to that God?
- about my faith life?
- about what I need to do to transform my faith life?

## Prayer – let prayer emerge from your working with the text (will)

- Our prayer stems from our reading / meditation.
- Meditation humbles us, so we turn to God in our need.
- We seek the grace we need to do what we must to transform our life.
- We acknowledge that alone we can do nothing.
- I can do all things in him who strengthens me

## Action – throughout the day

- Now choose a word, phrase, sentence.
- Bring it to mind frequently during the day.
- Let it recapture the experience of your *lectio*.
- Use it especially in situations relating to your *lectio insight*.
- “Daily and hourly till the soil of the heart with the Gospel plough”.

# Lectio divina

## (Guigo II)

## Reading – getting to know the text (senses)

At this stage we come to know the text in its entirety. We look at it as a whole, embracing all the elements of it. What is the human author trying to tell in the text? This reading is the beginning of a process that leads to meditation, prayer and the transformation of life.

## Meditation – engaging with the text, making it my own (reason)

Here we begin to reflect on the text. We approach the text not from its literal meaning, but from a theological point of view. What does it say about the God who speaks to be and how I am to respond to that God. The text here acts like a mirror; it reveals to us our own faith journey and what we need to do to live it better.

## Prayer – let prayer emerge from your working with the text (will)

Our prayer here arises out of meditation. We are humbled and have become aware of our need for God to help us. We pray for the grace to put into practice our insight into what we need to do to live our faith life more fully

## Action – throughout the day

To help us throughout the day to focus on our particular insight we now choose a word, phrase or sentence. By repeating it during the day we are reminded of what we need to do, and remember that God gives to us the help that we need to do it. The goal of *lectio divina* is transformation of life, so this continuing repetition is like a leaven that brings about the transformation.

Shared *lectio* involves hearing the word together, sharing one's initial insights into the text, and then, after a private time for meditation, sharing something of those deeper reflections. After a time of prayer, the text chosen for daily reflection may also be shared.



*"I am with  
you always,  
to the end  
of the age"*

(Mt 28:20)



*“God created  
humankind  
in his image”*

(Genesis 1:27)

