

Taking Our Hearts to the Lord



Gospel Reflection Booklet Lent 2013

Diocese of Achonry
Diocese of Ardagh & Clonmacnois
Archdiocese of Armagh
Diocese of Clonfert
Diocese of Elphin
Diocese of Kerry
Diocese of Killala
Diocese of Kilmore
Diocese of Limerick
Diocese of Ossory
Archdiocese of Tuam
Diocese of Waterford & Lismore

**Inter-diocesan Scripture Sharing
Group Initiative**

Week 1



Reader 1

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (4:1-13)

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

Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, "I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose, worship me then, and it shall all be yours". But Jesus answered him, "Scripture says: *You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone*".

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. "If you are the Son of God", he said to him "throw yourself down from here, for Scripture says: *He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you, and again: They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone*". But Jesus answered him, "It has been said: *'You must not put the Lord your God to the test'*."

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

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Acknowledgements

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Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

Jesus enters the wilderness, that utterly barren strip 35 miles by 15 miles between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea. Before He mingles with the multitudes, He must meet His Father; before He seeks the faces of men and women He must seek the Face of God; before he preaches the Word He must reflect in the solitude. His encounter with Satan marks the beginning of a warfare that continues to the Hill of Calvary, a conflict between good and evil, slavery and freedom, light and darkness.

The temptations are as old as the human story, where, in every century, the reckless pursuit of material possessions, the callous abuse of power, and the insatiable thirst for the spectacular have left deep scars on the human landscape. The theatre of temptation becomes the theatre of triumph and Jesus emerges with undivided heart, and undimmed purpose, strengthened for the road ahead. Temptation is not meant to make us stumble, but to make us strong.

This season of lengthening days, new hope, and fresh beginnings provides us with a sacred space for purposeful reflection on our journey and ultimate destination; a moment to encounter God at the deepest level, to glimpse again His plan for us and to choose light over darkness in all the choices we make on our voyage back to Him.

Leader

I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

Group returns to page 18 of Lenten booklet

Week 2



Reader 1

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (9:28-36)

Now about eight days after this had been said, he took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightening.

Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men standing with him.

As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah". - He did not know what he was saying.

As he spoke a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, "This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him". And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone.

The disciples kept silence and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

In Luke's Transfiguration story, Jesus chooses a mountain as a place of prayer. In the Old Testament, mountains were places where God's deepest designs for his people were revealed, as was the case with Moses and Elijah. Not only are we brought outdoors, with Peter, John and James to this place of prayer, but we are given a glimpse of the power of the inner experience of Jesus' prayer. His prayer was like a dawning of the Father's design for him. The prayer had a bodily and physical dimension. The appearance of Moses and Elijah and the topic of their conversation with Jesus about "his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem" confirms for Jesus the direction that his life will take. Jesus was affirmed by the words spoken from the cloud "This is my Son, the Chosen One". The voice ends with the command "Listen to him". What has Jesus learned in prayer that the Father wants us to learn from him? He wants us to listen to Jesus who has opened himself to the self-revelation of the Father and a direction for his life.

Silence

Leader

I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

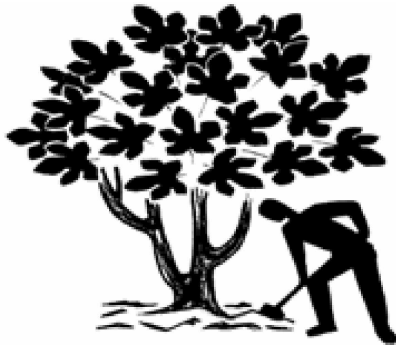
Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

Group returns to page 27 of Lenten booklet

Week 3



Reader 1

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (13:1-9)

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

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

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

Lent invites us to fix our gaze on Jesus. On the first Sunday we encountered the tempted Jesus drawing direction and strength from sacred scripture. Last Sunday we met the transfigured Jesus, chosen one of the Father. But how are we to describe Jesus in today's gospel?

Note how he invites those who are upset by the horrifying story about Pilate mingling the blood of Galileans with that of their sacrifices to reflect upon their own lives. These people have a bloodthirsty story to share. Are we like them? We can all be drawn by tragedies or tales of misfortune. We can also get entangled in remembering comparable stories, and measuring, comparing and eventually judging other people. We can keep the focus "out there", distancing ourselves from the painful work of reflecting on our own attitudes, behaviour and choices.

Today Jesus challenges us to focus on ourselves, and to repent. Repentance means turning our lives to focus only on what is meaningful, the relationship of ourselves to God and one another.

The consoling part, as presented at the end, is that God does not want to see us judged and destroyed. He wishes to "dig around" us, to fertilize us and give us every chance to bear fruit.

Let us grasp these chances with both hands!

Silence

Leader

I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

Group returns to page 35 of booklet

Week 4



Reader 1

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (15:1-3.11-32)

The tax collectors and the sinners, meanwhile, were all seeking his company to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained, 'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them'. So he spoke this parable to them:

'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, 'Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me'. So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said 'How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son: treat me as one of your paid servants'. So he left the place and went back to his father.

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son'. But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him, put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it: we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life: he was lost and is found'. And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. 'Your brother has come' replied the servant 'and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound'. He was very angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, 'Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property - he and his women - you kill the calf we had been fattening'.

The father said 'My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found'.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

With which of the characters in today's gospel do you identify?

Is it the younger son, who sees life as something to be lived now? Have you ever wished that you had his courage, his freedom, to go off and do 'your own thing' and not worry about the consequences? How amazing it is when another's love is more forgiving and welcoming, than I could ever have imagined

Or do you identify with the elder son, the good son, the one who never left home, and remained with his father? What does it feel like to have done the 'good' thing, the 'right' thing, the 'acceptable' thing, and not believe oneself loved? How challenging it is when we realise that we cannot control another's love!

Or are you drawn to the father, the one who responds to his younger son's need for freedom, and to his older son's need for affirmation? To the younger son, he gives freedom; freedom to go and see the world, and freedom to come home. To the older son, he offers him a chance to see what love really means – love for the one who stays with you, love for the one who treats your love flippantly, love for the one who is still trying to work out how to earn and achieve it.

How fearful we can feel when someone stretches our notions of love beyond our comfort zones!

Silence

Leader

I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

Group returns to page 43 of booklet

Week 5



Reader 1

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (8:1-11)

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

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?'

They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her'. Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you', said Jesus, 'go away, and don't sin anymore'.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

There is a lot of speculation about what Jesus wrote on the ground. What is more significant is Jesus' movement. Twice we are told 'he bent down'. What a striking moment! The Word bending down, coming down, lowering himself, making words in the dust, stirring the earth for meaning and finally looking up into the woman's face.

Being bent down he had to look up at the woman. There is intimacy and compassion in this scene of Jesus alone with the woman. Did it really matter that the others had gone away? He only had eyes for her, forgiving and compassionate eyes.

God created us from the dust of the earth and in Jesus took on our human nature, accepting our humanity in its essence, touching it, becoming it, redeeming it. In the past the woman had hid her face from God but now Jesus bends down that he might look up into her face, not to banish or condemn, but to redeem.

May we all be ready to bend down for the sake of another, to recognise the loving presence of the Word in the scribbles of our life and may we too allow Jesus to look up lovingly into our face.

Silence

Leader

I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

Group returns to page 52 of booklet

Holy Week



Reader 1

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (19:28-40)

Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. Now when he was near Bethpage and Bethany, close by the Mount of Olives as it is called, he sent two of the disciples, telling them, “Go off to the village opposite, and as you enter it you will find a tethered colt that no one has yet ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, “Why are you untying it?” you are to say this, “The Master needs it”.” The messengers went off and found everything just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owner said, “Why are you untying that colt?” and they answered, “The Master needs it.”

So they took the colt to Jesus, and throwing their garments over its back they helped Jesus on to it. As he moved off, people spread their cloaks in the road, and now, as he was approaching the downward slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole group of disciples joyfully began to praise God at the top of their voices for all the miracles they had seen. They cried out:

“Blessings on the King who comes, in the name of the Lord!

Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens!”

Some Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Master, check your disciples,” but he answered, “I tell you, if these keep silence the stones will cry out.”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Silence

Leader

Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together

Everyone

A Reading from the Holy Gospel

Silence

Leader

Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

Reader 2

Harold Wilson the former British Prime Minister once said “a week is a long time in politics”. He was of course referring to the fluctuating fortunes of his own chosen career and how even the best of politicians can go from hero to zero in just one week. In today’s gospel Jesus enters into Jerusalem and into the longest and most crucial week of his life. Even though he was greeted at the gates of the city as a messiah he knew the adulation was not going to last. The message he was bringing, and the change of heart he was advocating, was to be too difficult for the rich and the powerful to accept. In the course of a few days the crowds would disappear and he would make his lonely, painful, way to Calvary.

We are entrusted with the sometimes lonely and painful task of bringing his presence into an aggressively secular world. Will we have the courage to match our faith? Is the task of evangelisation someone else’s? Will we stay silent, keeping our head down while taking the easy route? The reality of who Jesus was will not be suppressed. If we stay silent “even the stones will cry out”.

Silence

Leader

I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

Sharing

Leader

Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

Group returns to page 60 of booklet.

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