

Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

Lenten Scripture Sharing Resource 2018

WEEK 1

Reader 1: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 1:12-15)

Jesus was tempted by Satan, and the angels looked after him.

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. "The time has come" he said "and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent and believe the Good News."

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: Reflection on the Gospel

The fact that Jesus, true God and true man, experienced temptation for forty days suggests that temptation, horrible as it is, can serve a good purpose. As we begin our Lenten journey let us be mindful of this and consider how best to imitate Jesus. Consider too where Jesus derived the strength to overcome the grave temptations that befell him. Clearly it wasn't just a matter of self-reliance ... for as the Gospel states "and the angels looked after him".

A key characteristic of Jesus' earthly life was his uniting of His will with the will of God the Father, e.g. Jn 6:39. We know, however, that Jesus went further by opting daily to abide in His love (Jn 15:10). This was the secret motor that always moved Jesus and which remains available to us too. This is holiness, seeking to know and obey God's will as testament to our abiding in His love.

This Lent may we draw close to God in prayer and find it in our hearts to give expression to our love of Him through simple and frequent acts of sacrifice. And should we find ourselves in some form of wilderness let us be open to the possibility that it too is of the Spirit's making and oriented toward our ultimate good.

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 Lenten booklet

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Lenten Scripture Sharing Resource 2018

WEEK 2

Reader 1: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 9:2-10)

This is my Son, the Beloved.

Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became dazzlingly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. "Rabbi", he said "it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah". He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and there came a voice from the cloud, "This is my son, the Beloved. Listen to him". Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them any more but only Jesus. As they came down the mountain he warned them to tell no one what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They observed the warning faithfully, though among themselves they discussed what "rising from the dead" could mean.

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: Reflection on the Gospel

The Gospel tells us what happened on Mount Tabor. Jesus took with him Peter, James and John and He led them apart to pray. Jesus allows them to contemplate his glorification. He permits them catch a glimpse of the happiness which lasts forever so that they may bare the scandal of the cross with more fortitude.

Your existence and mine is also a journey towards Heaven. At times it becomes harsh and we feel tempted to leave behind our convictions and moral standards and do whatever the world tells us. Along the way we have to struggle against many enemies both inside and outside of ourselves. Through this passage God wishes to strengthen us too with the hope of Heaven especially when we are found weak and lowly.

The flash of God's glory transported the disciples into a state of immense happiness and inspired Peter to exclaim; "Master it is wonderful for us to be here..." (Lk 9:33). How wonderful it is to be with Jesus! What really matters, is not to be in this place or that, but always to be with Jesus. Those who know how to come into His presence frequently exude a joy that the cares and worries of this life can never overcome.

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 Lenten booklet

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WEEK 3

Reader 1: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (Jn 2:13-25)

Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up.

Just before the Jewish Passover Jesus went up to Jerusalem, and in the Temple he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the money changers sitting at their counters there. Making a whip out of some cord, he drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well, scattered the money changers' coins, knocked their tables over and said to the pigeon-sellers, "Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market." Then his disciples remembered the words of scripture: Zeal for your house will devour me. The Jews intervened and said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus answered, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this sanctuary: are you going to raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said. During his stay in Jerusalem for the Passover many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he gave, but Jesus knew them all and did not trust himself to them: he never needed evidence about any man; he could tell what a man had in him. 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: Reflection on the Gospel

Perhaps we are surprised at Jesus' forceful zeal in driving out the traders who disfigured his Father's House. Jesus was tough when it was necessary.

Do we see any parallels between this scene and our manner of living today? How about the respect we show God when we visit our churches, where Jesus is really and truly present? How about our participation and the reverence we show at Mass, where heaven and earth meet, and the whole heavenly court becomes present; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Mary our Mother, the angels and saints, and so on? Are we haphazard in the way we approach Holy Communion, and the way we honour the Lord's Day?

It is good too to remember that our bodies are Temples of the Holy Spirit, and that it is helpful to others when our conduct reflects this immense privilege.

And we might reflect too on the phrase, "but Jesus knew them all and did not trust himself to them". Hopefully Jesus trusts himself to me but that too probably depends on how I conduct my life, and the extent to which I am committed to building a relationship with Jesus, such that I can truly call him my brother and best friend.

Silence

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Sharing

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Group returns to Lenten booklet

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WEEK 4

Reader 1: A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (Jn 3:14-21)

God sent his Son so that through him the world might be saved.

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "The Son of Man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him. Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life.

For God sent his Son into the world not to condemn the world, but so that through him the world might be saved.

No one who believes in him will be condemned; but whoever refuses to believe is condemned already, because he has refused to believe in the name of God's only Son. On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world men have shown that they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil.

And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does, is done in God."

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: Reflection on the Gospel

John 3:16. Looks familiar? Well, it is! It is displayed on a placard at sporting events.

It is the Gospel in a verse, a summary of Jesus' good news.

Whatever about sport, it is a message for life – a message of hope and love. And the person who has hope always has something to look forward to.

John 3: 16. 'Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life.'

John 3: 16. This verse was found in Matt Talbot's pocket after his death. It offered hope to a person lost to alcohol, who made his way back to God and found strength in prayer to stay sober.

John 3: 16. 'Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son'. And he keeps on giving. On the cross, we see how much he loved us in giving us his only Son in death. In the Eucharist we see how he continues to love us, giving us his only Son as food for life.

Silence

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Sharing

Leader: Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

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WEEK 5

Reader 1: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (Jn 12:20-30)

If a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it yields a rich harvest.

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. These approached Philip, who came from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put this request to him, "Sir, we should like to see Jesus". Philip went to tell Andrew, and Andrew and Philip together went to tell Jesus. Jesus replied to them:

Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

I tell you, most solemnly, unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for the eternal life. If a man serves me, he must follow me, wherever I am, my servant will be there too. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.

Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it was for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name!"

A voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

People standing by, who heard this, said it was a clasp of thunder; others said, "It was an angel speaking to him." Jesus answered, "It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours.

"Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be overthrown.

And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to myself."

By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

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: Reflection on the Gospel

"Unless a wheat grain falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest".

Surely a paradox? How can you have death and decay and speak of growth, of harvest, of fruitfulness? These have always been my thoughts as I heard this Gospel passage read.

But today, through the grace of faith, I can see the fulfilment all around me:

... my parents and all the seasons of their lives together over sixty- four years – the joys, the challenges, the "little unremembered acts of kindness and of love" that every day brought;

... young parents, who despite broken sleep or thought of future years of caring, remain attuned to every whimper of the child they love,.... delighted at the smallest sign of progress; and

... the lit faces of mothers when a prodigal son or daughter who has surprised, shocked and challenged everyone again and again, texts, calls or saunters in!

All around us, the wheat grains are dying. All around us, there is a harvest, right there before our eyes, as we witness the everyday miracles of faith, of hope, of love.

Silence

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Sharing

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PALM SUNDAY

Reader 1: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark (Mk 11:1-10)

Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord.

When they were approaching Jerusalem, in sight of Bethphage and Bethany, close by the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go off to the village facing you, and as soon as you enter it you will find a tethered colt that no one has yet ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone says to you, "What are you doing?" say, The Master needs it and will send it back here directly". They went off and found a colt tethered near a door in the open street. As they untied it, some men standing there said, "What are you doing, untying that colt?" They gave the answer Jesus had told them and the men let them go. Then they took the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on its back, and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, others greenery which they had cut in the fields. And those who went in front and those who followed were all shouting, "Hosanna! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord!" Blessings on the coming kingdom of our father David! Hosanna in the highest heavens!"
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: Reflection on the Gospel

Every year we celebrate Palm or Passion Sunday. It marks the opening of Holy Week when the ministry and life of Jesus reaches its climax. Opposition has mounted among the elite of Jerusalem and this will overflow and seemingly overcome Jesus and all He stood for. The crowds of ordinary people are open to Him. Indeed the week begins with their acclaiming Him as their king, however as always "Hosanna moments" pass and soon they too abandon Him to his fate.

I notice that Jesus refers to Himself as "The Master". The disciples often speak to him using this name or title. On Easter Sunday having achieved all His Father's hopes the Risen Jesus appears to Mary Magdalen and after her confusion simply calls out her name to which she immediately replies "Rabbuni or Master". As we pray our way through this week may our hearts be focussed on Jesus as our Master and learn from him that it is as washers of feet we too will share in his glory. Amen

Silence

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Sharing

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Group returns to Lenten booklet