

Lent 2023

Wednesday 22nd February 2023 – Ash Wednesday

**Call the people together, summon the community, assemble the elders,
gather the children, even the infants at the breast.**

(Joel 2:16)

As Lent begins, we start a journey where we are encouraged to reflect on our own shortcomings and our need for mercy; to repent and ask for the blessing of God's forgiveness. This can seem like a lonely task. Today, in this call to repentance from the prophet Joel, we are reminded that we do not travel this path alone, but with others, in community.

- Today I think about the oldest and the youngest people in my community: family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, parish. How do I connect with them?
- I pray for the grace to accompany and support others on their Lenten journey this year.

Thursday 23rd February 2023

**Such a one is like a tree that is planted beside flowing waters,
that yields its fruit in due season.**

(Psalm 1:3)

In today's Psalm, we hear what it is like to be someone who trusts in God and delights in the law of the Lord. If we do these things, we will grow and flourish like a well-watered tree, and be blessed with a crop of fruit when harvest time comes.

- Where are my roots planted? Is my faith nourished by fresh, flowing waters? If not, what could I do about that?
- What spiritual fruits am I cultivating on the tree of my life?
- I pray for the grace to recognise these fruits, and to know when and how to use them.

Friday 24th February 2023

Is that the sort of fast that pleases me? ...Is that what you call fasting?

(Isaiah 58:5)

In today's readings we are challenged to examine both our actions and our motives behind the traditional Lenten discipline of fasting. Isaiah tells us that making a show of depriving ourselves whilst continuing to quarrel, squabble, and oppress the workers "will never make your voice heard on high" (Isaiah 58:4). Instead, the kind of fasting that pleases God involves sharing our bread with the hungry, and sheltering the homeless. It is motivated, as we say in the response to today's psalm, by "a humbled, contrite heart".

- I imagine God asking me "Is that what you call fasting?" How do I reply?
- What can I do today to show care and compassion for others?

Saturday 25th February 2023

**And leaving everything he got up and followed Him.
(Luke 5:28)**

Levi the tax collector responds to Jesus' personal call by "leaving everything". What does this mean to me? What did he leave behind in order to follow Jesus? Tax collectors at the time of Jesus were renowned for their greed and corruption, and were despised for collaborating with the occupying Romans. Perhaps it's easy for us to identify corruption as a sin, but today we also hear from the prophet Isaiah about other behaviour we should abstain from, including doing business on the Sabbath, and gossip.

- What am I leaving behind in order to follow Jesus?
- I pray for the grace to recognise the attitudes and behaviours that restrict me from following Jesus freely and joyfully.

Lent 2023 Week 1

Sunday 26th February 2023 - 1st Sunday of Lent

For Scripture says: ‘You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.’ (Matthew 4: 10)

Our Sunday Lent readings this year begin, as they do every year, with an account of Jesus’ time being tested in the desert. In response to the tempter’s offers of material things, power and self-glorification, Jesus points away from these allurements to the creator God.

Unlike Jesus, we are sometimes ensnared by desires for material things, for power and for self-glorification, which then supplant our love for God.

- I ask God for light to see where I may have been entrapped.
- I turn to God and ask that I may focus only on God and God’s values.

1st Monday of Lent - 27th February 2023

‘You must love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Leviticus 19:18)

Today’s Old Testament reading contains the commandment, reiterated by Jesus in his ministry, to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’. It is a challenging instruction because, not only can it be sometimes difficult to love our neighbour, it can also be difficult to love ourselves.

- Today, I try to see myself in the light of God’s merciful love.
- Then I turn outwards and look at my neighbours and try to love them as God loves me.

1st Tuesday of Lent - 28th February 2023

‘Give us today our daily bread.’ (Matthew 6:11)

In today’s Gospel, Jesus gives us the Lord’s Prayer as a pattern for our own prayer. As part of the prayer, we are instructed to ask for what we need for the day, no more, no less.

- Today, I review my needs. Am I grateful for what I have received?
- Can I give out of my own abundance to those who have insufficient?

1st Wednesday of Lent - 1st March 2023

‘A pure heart create for me, put a steadfast spirit within me.’ (Psalm 50/51:10)

Today’s Psalm contains the double request for purity of heart and steadfastness. In today’s world, with its constant flow of information, some of which may lead one away from God, it can be difficult to remain centred on God’s values.

- How can I ensure that in my use of the media, I remain centred on God’s values and am not distracted by that which is counter to what I know to be true?

1st Thursday of Lent - 2nd March 2023

**‘For the one who asks always receives; the one who seeks always finds.’
(Matthew 7:8)**

Jesus promises that we will always receive what we ask for and find what we desire. However, it is implied that we need to ask for what God desires to give us. Even when we ask for what we truly need, we sometimes fail to see that the gifts God gives may come in surprising ways.

- Today I review my desires in the light of God’s values.
- How might I have missed answers to my prayers because they have come in surprising and unexpected ways? I express my gratitude for God’s gifts to me.

1st Friday of Lent - 3rd March

**‘If your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and pharisees,
you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.’
(Matthew 5:20)**

In today’s reading, Jesus asks us to examine our virtues and good deeds. Are they only skin deep, perhaps influenced by a desire to look holy? Or do they come from a heart centred on God’s love for me and, therefore, turned outwards in love of my neighbour?

- Today, I review the motivations for my actions and see what is influencing my good deeds.
- In the light of God’s love for me, I am grateful to God for enabling me to perform acts of love and service to others.

1st Saturday of Lent – 4th March

**‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.’
(Matthew 5:46)**

Jesus asks us to take love beyond what we do naturally and asks us to love our enemies. This doesn’t mean tolerating evil and bad behaviour, but it can mean trying to understand, forgive and love our enemies or those I find difficult.

- Today, I try to see my enemies and those I find difficult through God’s eyes. I pray both for them and for myself so that, through grace, I can become more at one in God’s love.

Lent 2023 Week 2

2nd Sunday of Lent - 5th March

‘This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.’ (Matthew 17: 5)

Today’s gospel reading is an account of the Transfiguration. In the story, God instructs Peter, James and John, who have accompanied Jesus up the mountain, to listen to Jesus. Sometimes we fail to hear when Jesus speaks to us through Scripture, the events in our world, nature, the love of friends and family.

- Where and how do I find it easy to listen to Jesus? What is he saying to me?
- I talk to Jesus as one friend to another about what he may be saying to me now.

2nd Monday of Lent - 6th March 2023

‘The amount you measure out is the amount you will be given back’. (Luke 6:38)

Jesus promises that our generosity will be rewarded in equal measure. How easy do I find it to be generous to others? We have a cost-of-living crisis and we hear sad stories daily of people having to choose between putting food on the table and heating their homes. There is uncertainty about the future. Does this uncertainty make it harder for me to be generous?

- Today I ask God to help me overcome any anxiety I may have so that I can find effective ways to serve those most in need around me using my time, talent and treasure.

2nd Tuesday of Lent - 7th March 2023

‘Everything they do is done to attract attention’ (Matthew 23:5)

Jesus is extremely critical of the Jewish leaders who promote themselves and feel superior to others. We are all called, and especially those in leadership positions, to show humility. C.S. Lewis says that ‘true humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less’.

Pope Francis asks:

- How am I doing with humility?
- Do I want to be recognised by others and be praised or do I think rather about serving?
- Do I know how to listen, to keep silence or do I only want to speak and receive attention?
- Do I know how to take a step back, defuse arguments or do I always want to excel?

2nd Wednesday of Lent - 8th March 2023

**‘But as for me, I trust in you Lord; I say you are my God; my life is in your hands.’
(Psalm 30:14-15)**

In today’s psalm we hear how the psalmist fights his fears and surrenders to God. This is not easy. Many of us want to be in control and work things out for ourselves. The truth is that most of the time we have no control over what is happening around us, so we just need to pause and listen to God.

- Today I will spend some time with God, reading Psalm 30 and listening to what God has to say to me.

2nd Thursday of Lent - 9th March 2023

‘Remember that during your life good things came your way, just as bad things came the way of Lazarus.’ (Luke 16:25)

In today’s Gospel, we read the story of the rich man who is being punished for his selfishness in ignoring the sufferings of a poor man named Lazarus. He had been lying every day at the rich man’s gate covered in sores and longing to eat the scraps of food from his table. What does God want us to learn from this? We too can sometimes be blind to the suffering of those around us. It may not be as obvious as seeing a desperate person lying in the street, but perhaps we know of someone in need of a friend.

- Today I will make a special effort to reach out to a friend or neighbour who might be lonely and in need of some support.

2nd Friday of Lent - 10th March 2023

**‘So, when Joseph reached his brothers, they pulled off his coat, the coat with long sleeves that he was wearing, and catching hold of him they threw him into the well.’
(Genesis 37:23-24)**

Today’s readings are all about betrayal. First, we hear how Joseph is betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery. Then we hear the story of the landlord who is betrayed by his tenants. Jesus then foretells his own betrayal. We all experience betrayal at some time in our life. It may be a broken promise or a secret between friends brought to light for all to see.

- Spend a few moments thinking of a time when you felt betrayed. How did you respond?
- I try now to pray for the person(s) concerned. I ask God to help free me of any resentment I might hold.

2nd Saturday of Lent - 11th March 2023

**‘My soul, give thanks to the Lord and never forget all his blessings.’
(Psalm 102:2)**

Today’s Gospel reading is the familiar story of the Prodigal Son who leaves his home, squanders his inheritance and ends up starving and desperate. He eventually comes to his senses, remembering that even his father’s servants have more than enough to eat and returns to his family in humility. They welcome him back and lovingly care for him. When everything is going well it’s easy to take life for granted, but it’s when we hit rock bottom that we really need to focus on all the blessings that we have and avoid sinking into despair. One day we will see how God blessed us in that darkness.

- What is the one thing I am most grateful for in my life at the moment?
- I give thanks for to God for helping me both identify it and be grateful for it.

Lent 2023 Week 3

3rd Sunday of Lent - 12th March 2023

‘The water that I shall give will turn into a spring inside him welling up to eternal life.’ (John 4:14)

In today’s gospel story of the Samaritan woman, we see Jesus, who is ‘tired by the journey’, telling the woman everything she had ever done. Jesus offers her ‘living water’, saying that whoever drinks this water will never be thirsty again. The woman is so inspired that she leaves her water jar and runs to tell everyone about Jesus.

- What is the ‘water jar’ that I need to leave behind in order to follow Jesus more fully?
- I ask God to help me understand the ‘living water’ Jesus is offering me. I try to do this in trust and in hope.

3rd Monday of Lent - 13th March 2023

‘When can I enter and see the face of God?’ (Psalm 41:2)

The psalmist today asks ‘when can I enter and see the face of God?’ Many artists have tried to depict God. What is my image of God today? When we say the blessing from the Book of Numbers, we ask that the Lord make his face shine upon us. We imagine God smiling down and it is like the dawning of a new day.

- Today I ask the Lord to bless me and to make his face shine upon me.
- I thank God for the dawning of each new day and for the warmth of the sun that brings forth new growth in this beautiful season of Spring.

3rd Tuesday of Lent - 14th March 2023

**‘How often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me?’
(Matthew 18:21)**

Jesus tells us that there is no limit to the number of times we must forgive each other. Forgiveness allows us to find peace. However, Jesus also calls for justice, so it is not a case of forgive and forget. A wrong-doer must also make amends for their actions; that is between them and God. Our call is to forgive.

- Do I need to forgive someone? If so, I ask God to help me let go of the hurt I have experienced and be at peace.

3rd Wednesday of Lent - 15th March 2023

**...take care what you do and be on your guard. Do not forget the things your eyes have
seen
nor let them slip from your heart all the days of your life... (Deut. 4:9)**

Archdiocese of Southwark Spirituality Commission – Daily reflections for Lent 2023

At first glance, today's First Reading looks like an order to obey an instruction manual...do this and you will achieve the goal. However, the text also reminds us that we have been given the ability to discern for ourselves, and God's hope is that we use this gift and share it with others.

- Today, I will try to give helpful advice where it is needed and be a good role model for the young members of my family who look to me for guidance.

3rd Thursday of Lent - 16th March 2023

Every kingdom divided against itself is heading for ruin (Luke 11:17)

Today's Gospel reading is a good example of the pressure placed on Jesus to prove his authenticity as Son of God, even to the extent of accusing him of being allied to the 'prince of devils'. Jesus challenges his sceptics by stating that division and discord destroys kingdoms. To what extent do our earthly kingdoms suffer from such destructive discord? When does honest opposition and challenge become toxic and counterproductive?

- Today I seek the Lord's guidance to be measured and compassionate in the judgements I am called upon to make at home, in the workplace and among my companions and friends.

3rd Friday of Lent - 17th March 2023

Do not be afraid of them for I am with you to protect you – it is the Lord who speaks. (Jeremiah 1:8)

On this, the feast day of St Patrick, the Patron Saint of Ireland, all the Mass readings give powerful accounts of those sent to bring the Good News to others...Jeremiah, the prophet sent to the ancient Hebrew people, Paul and Barnabas sent to minister to the Gentiles, and Luke's Gospel account of the seventy-two disciples sent as ambassadors of Jesus to the places he will shortly visit. They are cautioned not to see their success as a 'power trip' but an assurance that they are doing what is right.

- Today I prayerfully reflect on my mission as a follower of Jesus.
- I ask for the humility not to see my role as a boost for my ego, but rather as ministry on behalf of the One who loves me and gave himself for me.

3rd Saturday of Lent - 18th March 2023

What I want is love, not sacrifice; knowledge of God, not holocausts (Hosea 6:6)

Today's readings draw attention to the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law. The prophet Hosea speaks words of mourning on behalf of a God who does not want lip service, but true heart-felt love. This too is the theme of the gospel reading with the self-righteous Pharisee congratulating his own good works whilst the tax collector cannot even raise his eyes to heaven. We know which one was to be truly exalted.

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- Today, I look, not at the things I have achieved, but the things which are still undone. I pray for the strength and humility to undertake them with joy, knowing that the Lord is with me as I work.

Week 4

4th Sunday of Lent - 19th March 2023 - Laetare Sunday

**I have told you once and you wouldn't listen. Why do you want to hear it all again?
(John 9:27)**

The theme of unusual choices is woven into today's readings. Firstly, it is the youngest son of Jesse, David, the one who tends the sheep, who is chosen by the prophet Samuel instead of his more accomplished older brothers. In the Gospel reading, the Light of the World shines into the blind man's darkness and he then has clearer vision than the religious experts who see his affliction as a punishment. The intimidation of the blind man's parents shows a troubling abuse of authority by the religious leaders, a stark contrast to the mission of Jesus to help all those who are blind to see.

- Today on this Sunday of rejoicing, I pray that, on opening my heart to the Lord, the shadows in my life will be flooded with healing light.

4th Monday of Lent - 20th March 2023

Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. (Matthew 1:19)

Today's Gospel account must be one of the most dramatic understatements of the entire New Testament. Mary's dishonour, which could have brought about her death, can only be matched by the heartbreak of Joseph when he realises that his beloved future wife is expecting a child. Statues of Joseph tend to depict him as a sombre older man holding Baby Jesus in one hand and a lily in the other. We perhaps should not forget his heartbreak, courage and loyalty in honouring Mary and his foster son, Jesus. Not only did Mary give her generous assent to be the mother of God, Joseph committed his life to helping her to do so in safety, and embraced his destiny as the humble carpenter father of the one who would save the world.

- Today I try to model St Joseph, that I may be generous in seeking compassionate solutions for the difficulties I encounter in my life.

4th Tuesday of Lent – 21st March 2023

Wherever the river flows, all living creatures teeming in it will live. (Ezekiel 47:9)

Today's first reading is a sumptuous celebration of living water. The poetic prophesy of Ezekiel promises life for all creation bathed in the water flowing from the Temple. This contrasts strongly with the gospel reading, where the sick at the pool of Bethesda compete against one another to enter the water so that they will be healed. Even the man who is cured is ungenerous in his response to Jesus. He seeks to ingratiate himself with the religious authorities who are looking for yet another excuse to discredit Jesus because he has healed someone on the sabbath day.

- Today I reflect on my generosity of spirit and pray that when I bring my judgment to bear on the actions and motives of others, that I will be merciful and just.

4th Wednesday of Lent – 22nd March 2023

The Lord supports all who fall and raises all those who are bowed down (Psalm 144/145:14)

Today's Psalm links the theme of luxuriant restoration described by Isaiah in the first reading with the hope promised by Jesus in the Gospel account that the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and live. This beautiful and joyful aspiration however only serves to enrage the opposition further so that they are determined to kill him. The Psalm assures us that the Lord is close to all who call on him from their hearts.

- Today I take this opportunity to listen to what my heart is telling me about my faithfulness to the Lord. I try to stay in that gentle silence that does not need words. The Lord will hear the voice of my heart and will respond.

4th Thursday of Lent – 23rd March 2023

'How can you believe, since you look to one another for approval and are not concerned with the approval that comes from the one God?' (John 5:44)

In today's Gospel reading, the tension between Jesus and the religious leaders continues to escalate. The ones who have been mandated to honour and uphold the law of the Torah are themselves faced with the condemnation of the one who gave them the Law, Moses himself. Jesus suggests that the values of the religious establishment are, in effect, ego-centred rather than God-centred.

- Today, I consider the foundation on which my Church practice is built. Can I, like John, be a light for others without needing the spotlight to shine on me? I pray for the wisdom and strength to contribute humbly and respectfully to the work which I am called to do.

4th Friday of Lent - 24th March 2023

'Yes, you know me and you know where I came from. Yet I have not come of myself: no, there is one who sent me and I really come from him...' (John 7:28)

Today's Gospel account is full of contradictions and ambiguities. On the one hand, Jesus tells his relatives that he is not going up to the Temple to attend one of the most important events in the faith calendar - the Festival of Booths - and then he shows up. On his arrival, he is not being entirely discreet as he begins to teach within the Temple precincts and challenges the authority of the Jewish leaders. He draws hostile attention to himself, but ensures that his immediate family are not put at risk by being present during the altercation.

- Today I reflect on the issues which I want to challenge or defend, and pray for the wisdom to know when it is appropriate to speak out and when to remain silent.

4th Saturday of Lent - 25th March 2023

'I am the handmaid of the Lord', said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' (Luke 1:38)

Today's Gospel reading from Luke is one of the most beautiful and mysterious in the entire New Testament. It signals new beginnings – a new life promised to an old woman who was well past child-bearing age, a new life conceived by the young virgin betrothed to the carpenter Joseph, and a new life for those who will follow this special baby, the redeemer of the world. Although this joyful feast

occurs in the penitential season of Lent, it signals that it is not a season of endless sorrow and affliction, but one which offers hope and fulfilment.

- Today I prayerfully reflect on Mary's 'let it be' and ask that I might be like her in making good choices in my own life, and in giving support to others in their decision-making.

Lent 2023 Week 5

5th Sunday of Lent - 26th March 2023

Jesus said to them: 'Unbind him, let him go free.' (John 11:45)

The raising of Lazarus is so dramatic and powerful that perhaps we miss some of the finer details in the account. One of these is the name used by the disciples when addressing Jesus - 'Rabbi' meaning 'teacher' whereas both sisters of Lazarus address him as 'Lord'. They recognise him as the promised Saviour, and Martha openly acknowledges him as the Christ. Jesus not only promises eternal life, he restores earthly life to his friend and spares the sisters from their grief of loss. He does not suggest that Lazarus is now 'in a better place' but gives him a fresh opportunity to enjoy life on earth with those he loves.

- Today, I thank the Lord for the healing he has brought to my life, healing of mind, body and spirit, and I hold in prayer the needs of others who need the Lord's healing love at this time.

5th Monday of Lent - 27th March 2023

'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' (John 8:7)

We sometimes use the expression 'Being caught between a rock and a hard place' and a dramatic example of this is given in today's Gospel reading. The authorities deploy the dubious practice of voyeurism in order to trap the woman in adultery. Interestingly, her lover escapes without censure and the elders plan not only to punish the sinner, but also to get rid of the troublesome preacher. Jesus gives his judgement by writing in the dust, and in so doing, does not break the rules of the Sabbath. We do not know what he wrote, but it was powerful enough to send the elders away and to save the woman's life.

- Today, I call to mind women who are exploited in abusive relationships, those who are trafficked for sexual exploitation and those who are deprived of educational advancement simply because they are female. I pray that their rights will be recognised, and their dignity upheld.

5th Tuesday of Lent - 28th March 2023

'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing of myself' (John 8:28)

The pairing of this Gospel reading with the account of the bronze serpent in the Book of Numbers can be challenging. The disobedient Israelites have been plagued by poisonous snakes and Moses pleads for mercy for his stubborn people. The solution is to fashion a bronze snake for the people to look at and then they will not die. Although this may sound idolatrous, the snake itself is not being worshipped but is, in effect, the gathering point for the people to return to God. The same principle is being applied by Jesus in today's Gospel teaching. When he is lifted up from the earth, crucified and then resurrected, he will be acknowledged as Son of God.

- Today I consider the images or sounds which best turn my mind and heart to God. These may be traditional items of piety like medals and crucifixes, but they may be something entirely different –

flowers, music, artwork, poetry. I give thanks that I have the opportunity to respond to God in this way.

5th Wednesday of Lent - 29th March 2023

‘If you make my word your home you will indeed be my disciples, you will learn the truth and the truth will set you free.’(John 8:32)

In today’s gospel reading, Jesus speaks of himself as the source of true freedom. This is later echoed in St Paul’s letter to the Romans (8:21) where he speaks of the ‘freedom and glory of the children of God’. The invitation is to allow the Lord’s words to shape our lives; by doing this it is inevitable that we will show God’s love to one another. Whilst this might sound a simple task, it is counter-cultural. It means working with God to live an authentic life, whilst outside forces tell us that it is external things, wealth, houses, cars, holidays that will give life meaning. It means forming a friendship with Jesus and committing to follow him.

- Today I think about my friendship with Jesus. Do I need to invest more time in really knowing him? Spending time with Jesus will help me to want to accompany him through Holy Week. Am I ready to do that?

5th Thursday of Lent - 30th March 2023

**‘If I were to seek my own glory that would be no glory at all; my glory is conferred by the Father.’
(John 8:54)**

In today’s gospel we see Jesus becoming a threat to those in power and those who had difficulty believing in his authority. In the gospels we often see two groups, those who are for Jesus and those who are against. Some people had their hearts turned and tuned to Jesus and other were closed to Jesus and his message. Before the authorities, Jesus, like all of us, is vulnerable, yet he speaks the truth, ‘before Abraham ever was, I Am.’

- The invitation of Jesus is always to discover more about him. Today I ask for the grace to move towards Holy Week and be open to the fear and the pain. By doing this I trust that I will be open to the experience of being loved.

5th Friday of Lent – 31st March 2023

‘I have done many good works for you to see’ (John 10:31)

Jesus says these words as the Jews fetched stones to stone him. When questioned, Jesus was told that he was not being stoned for doing good work but for blasphemy, ‘you are only a man and you claim to be God.’ We are surrounded by words from friends, colleagues, politicians, advertising and the media and we all fall under their influence. We can find validation there or we can form counter-arguments. But actions are different; one cannot argue with good works.

- Today I pray with the words of the apostle, James. ‘Let me be a doer of the word, and not a forgetful hearer. If I am a doer that acts, I shall be blessed in my doing.’

5th Saturday of Lent – 1st April 2023

From that day they were determined to kill him. (John 11:53)

The leaders could see that Jesus threatens their security. They needed to do something; Jesus threatened their power, and their fear was that they would lose control. They feared both Jesus and the Romans. Jesus retreats to Ephraim, to the hills overlooking the desert. This sets the scene for tomorrow, Palm Sunday, and

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for the next week. I am presented with a choice: do I actively walk with Jesus this week? Or do I avoid the pain?

- I spend some time actively looking at the invitation that Holy Week offers. Jesus has walked with me in my darkest hours. Will I walk with Jesus?

2023 Holy Week

6th Sunday of Lent – 2nd April 2023 – Passion Sunday

**Christ entered in triumph into his own city, to complete his work as our Messiah:
to suffer, to die, and to rise again.
(the words of the presider after the Entrance Antiphon)**

Today we commemorate the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem. This is not just a moment in history, this is about what Jesus has done and is doing in us and for us. Today, and during Holy Week, the invitation is not just to be passive spectators. It is to walk with Jesus through this week, to be at his side on this journey. To fully share in the Resurrection, we must fully walk through the Passion, walking with Jesus and waiting with him as he hangs on the cross.

- Today, I try to enter fully into accompanying Jesus on his journey. I pray for the grace to be with him, and to be aware of my own sorrow as I do this. I pray that I may know Jesus better through this experience.

Monday of Holy Week – 3rd April 2023

Hope in him, hold firm and take heart. Hope in the Lord. (Psalm 26/27:14)

At the beginning of Lent, we reflected on being a community, journeying together towards Easter. Now, at the start of Holy Week, as we walk with Jesus and the disciples through the most painful scenes of betrayal, denial, violence and death, the Psalmist encourages us not to give up hope; to hold firm and take heart. In today's gospel we find Jesus in Bethany, at the home of his friends Martha, Mary and Lazarus. There are rumblings of disquiet and unrest, not only from the chief priests plotting to kill him, but also from his disciple, Judas Iscariot.

- Do I stick by Jesus, and hold firm?
- I reflect on Mary, who shows her love, commitment, and trust in Jesus by anointing his feet with precious perfume. Perhaps I can pause to enjoy a beautiful scent today.

Tuesday of Holy Week – 4th April 2023

**From my mother's womb you have been my help...
O God, you have taught me from my youth, and I proclaim your wonders still.
(Psalm 70/71:6, 17)**

In today's gospel scene, Jesus is at supper with his disciples, and is "troubled in spirit" (John 13:21). We sense the tension in the room as Jesus speaks first with Judas, and then Peter, predicting their betrayal and denial. At times of distress and upheaval, we can feel troubled and even abandoned by God. The Psalm reminds us that God's love is steadfast and eternal. God has accompanied us throughout our life, and continues to do so.

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- What are my earliest memories of God’s presence in my life?
- I pray for the grace to trust in God’s help when I am troubled in spirit.

Wednesday of Holy Week – 5th April 2023

Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple.

(Isaiah 50:4)

“To listen like a disciple” – what does that mean to me? Throughout the Gospels, we witness times when the disciples try to listen, but struggle to really hear and understand what Jesus is saying. As I hear the Gospel accounts of the Passion over the next few days, I put myself in the scene as one of Jesus’ friends, followers or disciples, and try to listen with my heart.

- What do I hear?
- I ask for the grace to notice God speaking to me through the words of Scripture.
- I spend some time in silent prayer today, with open ears and an open heart.

Holy Thursday – 6th April 2023

“I have given you an example so that you may copy what I have done to you.”

(John 13:15)

Today’s Gospel Acclamation says: “I give you a new commandment: love one another as I have loved you.” In the Gospel reading, Jesus puts this commandment into action, demonstrating by washing his disciples’ feet what it means to serve others in love and humility. When faced with a dilemma, many Christians ask “WWJD? – What Would Jesus Do?” Here we are given a clear answer: copy what I have done for you.

- Today I try to do a simple, hands-on, practical act of care – perhaps helping a child or an elderly person, a friend or a stranger, picking up litter, cleaning out the birdbath – something that connects me with Jesus’ example of loving service.

Good Friday – 7th April 2023

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother’s sister,

Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala.

(John 19:25)

We have followed Jesus and his community of friends and disciples to the cross. Some have fled. Many are distraught and bewildered. Now, as we look around us, we see this group of women standing near the foot of the cross. I picture myself in the scene.

- What do I see in these women’s faces? Anguish and tears, yes. Do I see strength, courage and hope too?
- Where am I standing? What are my emotions as I look at the crucified Jesus?

Holy Saturday – 8th April 2023

**At night there are tears, but joy comes with dawn.
(Psalm 29/30:5)**

These words come from one of the many beautiful psalms in the Liturgy of the Word at today's Easter Vigil.

Tonight, as I wait,

- I reflect on those times of darkness, tears and grief in my own life, when morning seemed far away.
- If I am able, I watch tomorrow's sunrise, or go outside in the early morning light, and look for a symbol of new life: a bud, a leaf, a creature, a break in the clouds, and give thanks to God.

Easter Sunday – 9th April 2023

**Mary of Magdala... saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb
and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple...
(John 20:1-2)**

Our Lenten journey started on Ash Wednesday with a call to summon the community, elders and children alike. Today, we hear that when Mary of Magdala discovers the empty tomb, her first instinct is to run to tell her friends, the community of followers of Jesus.

- I rejoice in the Risen Christ, and marvel at what God has done for all humanity.
- To whom do I run to share the Good News?

On this Easter Day, I take to heart these words from the Blessing:

**You have mourned for Christ's sufferings;
now you celebrate the joy of his resurrection.
May you come with joy to the feast which lasts forever.
Amen**