

PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD



40 DAYS OF LENT

Reflection Leaders:

Thomas Cardinal Collins
Bishop Gerrard Bergie
Fr. John Bertão
Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi

Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick
Fr. Michael Coutts
Sr. Ann Immaculée

We invite you to journey with us through the 40 days of Lent

Each day during Lent a reflection can be sent to your email
or you can join us on the DAILY TV MASS website or YouTube Channel.

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Introduction

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Tuesday Before Lent
Date: Tuesday February 21:
Introduction to our 40 Day Lenten Retreat
Deacon Mike Walsh

On Ash Wednesday the Catholic Community comes together to signify the beginning of our Lenten season.

Liturgically the colour of the vestments will change to purple, and we will remove many of the flowers and other decorative items from the altar.

In Matthew Chapter 4, before Jesus begins his public ministry, we hear that he “was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.”

When the number 40 is used in the bible it generally symbolizes a period of testing and trial. For example, the Jewish people spent forty years in the desert before being led by God into the promised land.

The Lenten season is a time of preparation for the liturgical celebration of the suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Christ.

Lent in the Catholic church begins on Ash Wednesday and ends with the Mass of the Lord’s supper on Holy Thursday. Sundays are traditionally not considered days of fasting.

So, to get to 40 days can be a little confusing. For our upcoming reflection series there are six full weeks including Good Friday and Holy Saturday but excluding Sundays and the four days from Ash Wednesday to the first Saturday in Lent.

For each of the 40 Days of the Lenten reflection series there will be a short video which we have taken from past National Catholic Missions.

Our guides through this journey will include:

Cardinal Thomas Collins, who will speak to us about the penitential psalms and the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Bishop Gerrard Bergie, reflects on Mary our Mother and the sacrament of Baptism.

Father John Bertao will help us pray the Luminous Mysteries of the Rosary and Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi will explore the Sorrowful Mysteries.

Then we will walk the Stations of Cross with Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick and Fr. Michael Coutts will explore our invitation to the Lord's supper.

While lent ends officially on Holy Thursday we will continue our 40 days of reflections on Good Friday with Cardinal Collins helping us to enter the Passion of our Lord according to the gospel of John and on Holy Saturday we will join Sr. Ann Immaculée to pray the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary.

We look forward to coming together as a community for these 40 Days of Lenten reflections and we begin with this prayer:

Almighty and ever living God, you invite us deeper into your world, your people, your Lent.

May this time be one of outward focus; seeking you in those we often ignore.

Help us live a Lent focused on freedom, generosity, and encounter.

Give us hearts hungry to serve you and those who need what we have to give.

Amen

1st Day of Lent

Date: Wednesday February 22: Ash Wednesday

The Penitential Psalms

Reflection by: Cardinal Collins

Source: 2019 Mission Part 1

Lent is the yearly penitential season and is always an occasion to stop and reflect upon our lives, and to repent of anything which turns us from God.

As Christians we always call to mind the first words of the ministry of both John the Baptist and Jesus: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near at hand.”

In the holy season of Lent our Lord especially challenges us to turn from evil and to choose the path of holiness.

As the great early Christian writing, the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, exclaims in its opening line: “There are two ways, the way to life and the way to death, and there is a great difference between them.”

Lent is a time for us to resolve to turn from the path that leads to death, and advance down the path that leads to life. We need to become purified, especially through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, so that we will be ready to enter into the Easter celebration of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

Pope Benedict XVI tells us that “the Book of Psalms can teach [us] how to pray and is the “prayer book ‘par excellence’... These inspired songs teach us how to speak to God, expressing ourselves and the whole range of our human experience with words that God himself has given us.”

The Penitential Psalms are:

Psalm 6: Prayer for Recovery from Grave Illness

Psalm 32: The Joy of Forgiveness

Psalm 38: A Penitent Sufferer's Plea for Healing

Psalm 51: Prayer for Cleansing and Pardon

Psalm 102: Prayer to the Eternal King for Help

Psalm 130: Waiting for Divine Redemption

Psalm 143: Prayer for Deliverance from Enemies

Since ancient times, these 7 psalms have been used by Christians as a way of appreciating more profoundly the need for repentance, and the joy of forgiveness.

The psalms help us to see ourselves without illusion: they break through our resistance to confronting reality and lead us to new life.

The psalms are effective in this because in them language is artfully used to illuminate life. They help us to see our frailties, our lies, and our self-deception. The psalms are like a window through which we see the sin which is in the world. We condemn it, because it is always easy to recognize and condemn sin which is outside of us - and then the window becomes a mirror in which we see that we ourselves are sinners.

Although these psalms help us to see ourselves as sinners, they do not make us turn inward in an unhealthy way, in scrupulosity, which is when a person becomes obsessed with sinfulness.

We invite you to reflect on Psalm 32 and consider why many refer to this psalm as the Joy of Forgiveness:

*Happy the man whose offence is forgiven, whose sin is remitted.
O happy the man to whom the Lord imputes no guilt, in whose spirit
there is no guile.*

*I kept it secret and my frame wasted. I groaned all the day long, for
night and day your hand was heavy upon me. Indeed my strength was
dried up as by the summer's heat.*

*But now I have acknowledged my sins; my guilt I did not hide. I said:
"I will confess my offence to the Lord." And you, Lord, have forgiven
the guilt of my sin.*

So let every good man pray to you in time of need.

The floods of water may reach high, but him they shall not reach.

You are my hiding place, O Lord; you save me from distress.

You surround me with cries of deliverance.

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;

I will give you counsel with my eye upon you.

*Be not like the horse and mule, unintelligent,
needing bridle and bit, else they will not approach you.*

*Many sorrows has the wicked,
but he who trusts in the Lord, loving mercy surrounds him.*

Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord, exult, you just!

O come, ring out your joy, all you upright of heart.

2nd Day of Lent

Date: Thursday February 23:

Psalm 32- The Joy of Forgiveness

Reflection by: Cardinal Collins

Source: 2019 Mission Part 1

The Penitential Psalms show us how to move from the way that leads to spiritual death to the way that leads to spiritual life.

1. We start bogged down in sinfulness, which is made worse by our proud and stubborn refusal to admit our need for forgiveness.
2. Psalm 32 reminds us of the very painful but life-giving acknowledgement of the fact of our sinfulness.
3. Then we need to confess our sins: get rid of the garbage in our hearts. Both Psalm 32 and Psalm 51 focus on that.
4. Once our sins are brought out into the light, and we experience the joy of divine forgiveness, we are given new life.
5. Then, forgiven, we need to go outward to share our experience of life with others.

Let us pray and reflect on Psalm 32.

*Happy the man whose offence is forgiven,
whose sin is remitted.*

*O happy the man to whom the Lord imputes no guilt,
in whose spirit there is no guile.*

The psalmist begins with joy: we will only experience true joy that comes from a clear conscience when we have honestly, without guile, admitted our offenses, sins, and guilt.

*I kept it secret and my frame wasted.
I groaned all the day long,
for night and day your hand was heavy upon me.
Indeed my strength was dried up as by the summer's heat.*

They say the only line in which people are happy to let someone else go ahead of them is the confessional line. We naturally resist the necessary but painful reality of acknowledging our sins. **We keep them secret** – but if we do that, we waste away. God helps us with the alarm bell of conscience, a proper sense of guilt at our sins. Just as pain allows us to see that we need physical healing, so a sense of shame and guilt at our sins leads us to seek spiritual healing. God's hand presses down on us to help us admit our need to change our ways.

*But now I have acknowledged my sins;
my guilt I did not hide.
I said: "I will confess my offence to the Lord."
And you, Lord, have forgiven the guilt of my sin.*

When we **acknowledge our sins** a great burden is lifted, for we can now experience the joy of forgiveness.

*So let every good man pray to you in time of need.
The floods of water may reach high, but him they shall not reach.
You are my hiding place, O Lord; you save me from distress.
You surround me with cries of deliverance.*

Being rescued from the bondage of our sins is like being rescued from a flash flood. The waters grow higher and higher, and we are terrified, but God our rescuer reaches down and lifts us out of danger and brings us to a safe hiding place from the danger that would have destroyed us. What relief after peril: now we are surrounded not by danger, but by cries of deliverance!

*I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will give you counsel with my eye upon you.*

*Be not like the horse and mule, unintelligent,
needing bridle and bit, else they will not approach you.*

The Psalmist gives us a sharp warning. Knowing how we resist the difficult but life-giving pathway to repentance and new life, he tells us not to be like the unintelligent horse and mule who need bridle and bit to make them do what they should do. This is tough love: don't be like an unintelligent mule. Repent!

*Many sorrows has the wicked,
but he who trusts in the Lord, loving mercy surrounds him.*

As often happens in the psalms, two contrasting paths are offered, and we are forced to make a decision concerning which one we will follow. We must not just drift along, floating with the current. **If we follow the path of the wicked, we will only find sorrow, but if we trust in the Lord, loving mercy will surround us.** So we must make the right choice, much as our ego induces us not to do so. But the way to the joy of loving mercy is to trust in the Lord, and not in our own selves, as we do when we become ensnared in the false happiness of sin.

*Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord, exult, you just!
O come, ring out your joy, all you upright of heart.*

Psalm 32, is brutally honest, comparing the proud sinner to an unintelligent mule, yet it **begins and ends with joy.**

Psalm 32 can be our model on how to make an examination of conscience at the end of the day. When we pause to do this examination we must be honest, or what is the point?

Following Psalm 32 we **begin** with thanksgiving for the true happiness that comes from God's grace, and the joy of a clear conscience.

Then we are brutally honest about our sins of the day, but only **briefly**: we must not become fixated on our sins, but learn from them, and learn above all that God loves us and forgives us.

In this honest review of our day we ask ourselves where have we given into pride, anger, envy, greed, laziness, lust, or gluttony? Remember if we hide in illusion we are unintelligent mules, so let's be honest.

Finally we spend a significant amount of time thanking God for his grace in our lives throughout this past day, and pray that we will live more virtuously in the coming day.

End your daily examination of conscience with joyful trust in the Lord, which is a far more substantial reality than our sins. In the words of the psalmist let us:

Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord, exult, you just!

O come, ring out your joy, all you upright of heart.

Take a moment now to reflect on Psalm 32 and the Joy of Forgiveness.

3rd Day of Lent:
Date: Friday February 24:
Psalm 51-Part 1
Reflection by: Cardinal Collins
Source: 2019 Mission Part 1

The greatest of the Seven Penitential Psalms is Psalm 51, the “Miserere”, or psalm of mercy, as it is called from the first word in Latin of its opening line: “Have mercy on me God in your kindness”.

The other Penitential Psalms focus on one or another aspect of the battle against sin, as we saw in the first talk in Psalm 32 where we experience a sharp blow against our tendency to live in illusion, not acknowledging our sins, and our need for God’s forgiveness.

Psalm 51 however, offers us a profound and comprehensive vision of the whole journey from sin, through the purification described in Psalm 32, to the experience of the creative grace of absolution, and on to the generous service of others.

We are best able to offer love to others, and assist them on their journey through life, and we are best able to challenge those who do evil in this world, if we ourselves have a clear conscience.

Let us pray and reflect on Psalm 51, the Miserere, and see how it is a guide towards a clear conscience and a foretelling of Jesus’ gift to us in the form of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

***Have mercy on me God in your kindness.
In your compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.***

In both the original Hebrew and in English translations, three different words are used for the wrong we do. In the Grail Psalms we hear of offence, guilt, and sin. There are distinct evil characteristics to the sins

which are the weeds in life's garden. But there are also more than sufficient divine ways of removing those weeds: blot my offence out of the book – delete it. Wash me from my guilt. We need a vigorous scrubbing to become purified. So true. And cleanse me from my sin with a ritual gesture, as when the priest at the Easter Mass sprinkles holy water upon the people as a sign of the cleansing that comes to all of us in Baptism, and also in that extension of Baptism which is the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

***My offences truly I know them;
my sin is always before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned;
what is evil in your sight I have done.***

First, we must know our offenses. Psalm 32 was all about that. We also need to recognize that every offense is an offense against God, even if the more obvious victim is another human, because God created us to love and not to do harm.

***That you may be justified when you give sentence
and be without reproach when you judge.
O see, in guilt I was born,
a sinner was I conceived.***

Many a naïve secularist, not realizing the dark power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which tempt us to sin, thinks that some government program or educational endeavor can solve the problems of the world. No. There is a great disorder in the human condition, called original sin. It is not a personal sin, but an underlying disorder, which makes us vulnerable. “O see, in guilt I was born, a sinner was I conceived.” Though the human author lived long before the Church began to reflect on the meaning of the doctrine of original sin, these words remind us of the humbling wisdom of that doctrine.

*Indeed you love truth in the heart;
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.
O purify me, then I shall be clean;
O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.*

First there must be truth, and then saving wisdom: **“Indeed you love truth in the heart; then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.”**

Conscious of our sins, we ask three things of God: **teach me wisdom, purify me, and wash me.** We should ask God for that every day, and especially as we prepare for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, in which by an act of divine power, first made manifest by Jesus in his public ministry, God cleanses us of our sins in the sacrament.

4th Day of Lent

Date: Saturday February 25:

Psalm 51-Part 2

Reflection by: Cardinal Collins

2019 Mission Part 1

*Make me hear rejoicing and gladness.
that the bones you have crushed may revive.
From my sins turn away your face
and blot out all my guilt.*

Like Psalm 32, which begins and ends with joy, Psalm 51 speaks of the rejoicing and gladness that come when God turns his face away from our sins and blots out our guilt through his act of forgiveness.

*A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.*

When we are forgiven by God, and most obviously in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, **it is an act of new creation**. The word for “create” used here in Psalm 51 is the same Hebrew word used for the act of creation in Genesis. This is not some minor correction of a mistake: **it is new life** – “A pure heart create for me, O God”. And we pray that God will put a steadfast spirit within us, though we are sadly and humbly aware that we are rarely steadfast, and no sooner do we receive the absolution which is a new creation, than we slip back into sin. But we can come back again and again to receive the new life offered in God’s act of forgiveness, which is why throughout life we should go to confession regularly.

***Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,
that I may teach transgressors your ways
and sinners may return to you.***

We experience the joy of God's help, and ask for a spirit of fervour, not just for our own sake, but so that we can help others. Remember that you and I may be the only bible our neighbour reads - especially if they can see within us and in the way we live, a sign that we are taking our Christian faith seriously and trying with God's help to live it with integrity. Lent is an especially appropriate time to ask ourselves if we are giving a good example to others.

***O rescue me, God, my helper,
and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.
O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth shall declare your praise.***

Jesus is our rescuer, and in Psalm 51 we ask to be rescued, just as in Psalm 32 the Psalmist rejoices that God rescues him as the flood waters rise higher and higher and brings him to a safe place. It is the tradition of the Church that every time one of the portions of the Liturgy of the Hours is prayed, it begins with these words: "O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise." These are fitting words to begin any period of prayer.

***For in sacrifice you take no delight,
burnt offering from me you would refuse;
my sacrifice a contrite spirit.
A humbled, contrite heart you will not spurn.***

In this final verse the Psalmist reminds us that the greatest gift we can offer is a humble and contrite heart. Later in the time when the Book of Psalms was being formed another verse about sacrifice was added, but this is a good verse with which to end the psalm.

In the busyness of life, we can get so caught up in things that really do not matter. Lent is a time set aside from this busyness. We need to be purified from those sinful bonds that weigh us down and tie us up. We

are made to be free, and in that freedom we find our true joy as children of God.

The Penitential Psalms, and especially Psalm 32 and Psalm 51, help us to become purified, which is why it is particularly appropriate to pray them during Lent. They help us prepare for a fruitful reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, that great sacrament of spiritual freedom.

During this Lent, may God through Scriptural Word and healing Sacrament so purify our hearts, that we will truly be able to hear and respond with all our heart and soul to the challenge of Jesus: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near at hand.”

First Sunday of Lent

Gospel according to Matthew (4.1-11)

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his Angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

Then the devil left him, and suddenly Angels came and waited on him.

5th Day of Lent
Monday February 27:
Introduction to the Luminous Mysteries
Reflection by: Deacon Mike Walsh
Source: 2021 Mission- Luminous Mysteries

The Rosary is a Scripture-based prayer. It begins with the Apostles' Creed, which summarizes the great mysteries of the Catholic faith.

The Mysteries of the Rosary center on the events of Christ's life. For many years there are three sets of Mysteries:

In the **Glorious Mysteries**, we not only see the beautiful glory of God, but we see the incredible dream that God has for each one of us.

The **Joyful Mysteries** celebrate when Joy entered the world, when God entered the mess of the world because of his incredible love for us.

The **Sorrowful Mysteries** of the Rosary meditate on key moments in the passion and death of Jesus.

Starting tomorrow we will begin to explore the newest set of mysteries.

In October of 2002, after much prayer and consultation St. John Paul II gave us five new mysteries and they were named the Luminous Mysteries or Mysteries of Light.

St. Pope John Paul II shared that these mysteries help us to “move from the infancy and the hidden life of our Lord in Nazareth to the public life of Jesus.

The Pope reminds us that Jesus is the “light of the world” and that this truth emerges in a special way during the years of Christ’s public life, when he proclaims the Gospel of the Kingdom.

These luminous mysteries capture five significant moments in the public life of Christ:

1st his Baptism in the River Jordan,

2nd his self-manifestation at the wedding of Cana,

3rd his proclamation of the Kingdom of God, with his call to conversion,

4th his Transfiguration, and finally,

The 5th Mystery his institution of the Eucharist, as the sacramental expression of the Paschal Mystery.

For the next 5 days of our 40 days of Lent, Fr. John Bertão will be our guide through these mysteries using St. Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, as a roadmap for our journey through the public life of Christ.

To prepare ourselves for this time of reflection let us join now in the prayers of the Rosary.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy. Amen.

6th Day of Lent

Date: February 28

1st Luminous Mystery - The Baptism of Jesus

Reflection Leader: Fr. John Bertão

Source: 2021 Mission- Luminous Mysteries

Scripture

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:9-11)

Reflection: Fr. Bertão

In the Navarre Bible Gospel Commentary we read: “The mystery of the Holy Trinity is revealed in the baptism of Jesus: the Son is baptized; the Holy Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove; and the voice of the Father gives testimony about his son.”

St. Pope John Paul II writes that “With the Rosary, the Christian people sits at the school of Mary and is led to contemplate the beauty on the face of Christ and to experience the depths of his love. Through the Rosary the faithful receive abundant grace, as though from the very hands of the Mother of the Redeemer.”

Imagine sitting with our grandmother listening to her loving wisdom talking about Mary and Jesus and how we too, like Jesus, were baptized and took on a new title ... the title of Christian after Christ.

Let us be thankful to our parents or guardians who initiated our baptism whereby we became Christians and members of the mystical body of Christ.

As we sit at the school of Mary who do we want to thank for bringing you to be baptized in the name of the father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Join us in the prayers of the Rosary

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy. Amen.

7th Day of Lent

Date: March 1

2nd Luminous Mystery- The Wedding of Cana

Reflection Leader: Fr. John Bertão

Source: 2021 Mission- Luminous Mysteries

Scripture:

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.”

And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, “Fill the jars with water.” And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, “Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.”

So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, “Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.”

Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (John 2:1-11)

Reflection: Fr. Bertão

In the second Mystery of Light, John Paul II, in love for and devotion to Mary, gives credit to her as “the first among believers” for her intervention “when Christ changes water into wine and opens the hearts of the disciples to faith.”

The Navarre Commentary states that Jesus blessed marriage between a man and a woman and raised it to the dignity of a sacrament. Also, and very meaningful to our lives, “Mary acts as Jesus’ true mother”, as she is at these two pivotal moments in Jesus’ life, both at Cana and at Calvary.

At Cana Mary says, “Do whatever he tells you”.

At Calvary, Jesus “said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son!’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your Mother!’”.

Some commentaries state that “All Christians... are children of Mary. By giving us his Mother to be our Mother, Christ demonstrates his love for his own to the end.” Through Mary, we are His own.

At our baptism, we became members of the mystical body of Christ. At Cana we celebrate with him in the institution of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. Let us pray for married couples to always be faithful to one another as Jesus is faithful to his Bride the Church.

Join us in the prayers of the Rosary

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy.
Amen.

8th Day of Lent

Date: March 2

3rd Luminous Mystery- The Proclamation of the Kingdom of God

Reflection Leader: Fr. John Bertão

Source: 2021 Mission- Luminous Mysteries

Scripture

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.” (Mark 1:14-15)

Reflection: Fr. John Bertão

In the third Mystery of Light we reflect on Christ teaching on the Proclamation of the Kingdom of God: a call to conversion.

We just heard in the Gospel reading from Mark Chapter 1 that Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God.

To successfully proclaim God’s word one must lead a humble, honest and sincere life, and be ready to always forgive as Jesus teaches us in the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew Chapter 6.

There are some among us that are mistakenly of the opinion that the Sacrament of Reconciliation is an imagination of the Church. In Luke Chapter 7, we learn of Jesus addressing the Sacrament of Forgiveness in relation to a sinful woman who had sinned much. Our Lord tells those who are eager to stand in judgement of this woman “...I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.’ Then he said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven’”.

This woman could represent anyone one of us who allow our sinfulness to accumulate without receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

No matter what popular opinion says about the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the *Navarre Bible Gospel Commentary* reminds us that “We need the sacrament of penance, in which God forgives us by virtue of the infinite merits of Jesus Christ;” in short, “Repentance is a sign that we love God. But it was God who first loved us.”

It can be a humbling experience to sit or kneel in the presence of a priest and confess our sins, or our most guarded secrets. We need the grace of our baptism, the embrace and comfort of Mary at Cana and Calvary.

Join us in the prayers of the Rosary

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy. Amen.

9th Day of Lent

Date: March 3

4th Luminous Mystery-^{The} Transfiguration

Reflection Leader: Fr. John Bertão

Source: 2021 Mission- Luminous Mysteries

Scripture

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. (Mark 9:2-8)

Reflection: Fr. John Bertão

“The mystery of light *par excellence* is the Transfiguration,” wrote St. John Paul II.

In witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus, the Apostles, are being prepared “to experience with him the agony of the Passion, so as to come with him to the joy of the Resurrection and a life transfigured by the Holy Spirit.”

In other words, the joy of the Resurrection far surpasses the temporal sufferings of this world.

Gospel scholars state that the Transfiguration was a sacred moment when heaven and earth met through the person of Jesus.

On meditating on this mystery, I suggest adapting one of St. Ignatius' methods of meditation ... to place yourself on the mountain top observing the events that the Apostles experienced, perhaps the look on their faces filled with awe and wonder as they gazed upon Jesus' face shining like the sun.

Like the Apostles, the voice of the Father tells all of us to "LISTEN TO HIM" and prepare ourselves for the challenges that life has to offer us. Count yourself among the chosen through the grace of your baptism. Consider yourself invited to the 'wedding banquet', be reconciled through the Sacrament of Reconciliation and transformed and ready to listen to him in the days ahead.

Join us in the prayers of the Rosary.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy.
Amen.

10th Day of Lent

Date: March 4

5th Luminous Mystery

The Institution of the Eucharist

Reflection Leader: Fr. John Bertão

Source: 2021 Mission- Luminous Mysteries

Scripture

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

*When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.
(Matthew 26:26-30)*

Reflection: Fr. John Bertão

We come to the final mystery of light, the Institution of the Eucharist. And I quote a beautiful phrase made by Blessed Carlo Acutis:

“The Eucharist is my highway to Heaven”.

This Italian teenager who died at the age of fifteen in 2006 was beatified in Assisi, Italy on October 10, 2020. He has been described as a young man who “brings holiness in the third millennium.”

In this fifth mystery of light, we reflect on the gift that Jesus left us as a living memory of him at the Last Supper. The gift of the Eucharist, that is at every core of our faith, has nourished humanity of all ages from the very young to those in their later years.

This expression of great love from Jesus continues to nourish Christians of every age and walk of life. The gift of the Eucharist, along with the Rosary, enriches our love for the Eternal God who has given us Mary and her beloved Son whom we love and venerate on our final journey to

I close with another quote from Blessed Carlo Acutis: “Mary is the only Woman in my life.”

How is YOUR relationship with Mary the Mother of Jesus?

Join us in the prayers of the Rosary

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy. Amen.

2nd Sunday of Lent

Gospel according to Matthew (17.1-9)

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.”

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”

When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and do not be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.” The Word of the Lord

11th Day of Lent

Date: March 6

Introduction to the Sorrowful Mysteries

Reflection Leader: Deacon Mike Walsh

Pope St. John Paul II shared that “The sorrowful mysteries help the believer ... to enter with Mary into the depths of God's love for [us] and to experience all its life-giving power.”

Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi, will be our guide over the next 5 days as we reflect and pray on the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. Fr. Obinna is a member of the Spiritan Province of TransCanada and led the National Catholic Mission on Good Friday in 2022.

As Pope John Paul II said we begin to enter into the depths of our Lord’s suffering during the “**The First Sorrowful Mystery – The Agony in the Garden**”, which shows us that suffering is a part of human existence, and in the prayer of Jesus- “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet, not My will but Yours be done” , we experience what it means to have complete trust in our God.

“In the **Second Sorrowful Mystery – The Scourging at the Pillar**” we see Jesus as the Lamb of God offering His suffering for the sins of mankind.

The Third Sorrowful Mystery – The Crowning With Thorns” is where Pilate asks Christ, “Are You a king?” Jesus answers: “I am a King, but My kingdom is not of this world.”

Jesus wearing a crown and dressed in purple is a sign of a king whose duty was to suffer to protect his people.

In the reflection on The Fourth Sorrowful Mystery – The Carrying of the Cross”, Fr. Obinna reminds us that “If we want to know how much someone loves us – we look to see how much they are prepared to suffer for and with us.”

And finally, “**The Fifth Sorrowful Mystery** is where we enter into the **Crucifixion and Death of Jesus**, and we realize that we are not alone as we experience the complete trust that Jesus has in God when our Lord spoke his final words- “Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.”

To prepare ourselves for this journey through the Sorrowful Mysteries let us join now in the prayers of the Rosary.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy. Amen.

12th Day of Lent

Date: March 7

1st Sorrowful Mystery

The Agony in the Garden

Reflection Leader: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi, CSSp.

Source: Spiritual Reflection Series-Sorrowful Mysteries

Scripture:

He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. And he 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,[a] Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.” Mark 14:33-36

St Louis de Montfort: Pray the Rosary slowly...

To imitate Jesus more perfectly in his agony you could say your rosary more slowly ... so that what was said of our Lord when he was in his agony of prayer may be said of you: he prayed all the longer.”

Reflection: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi

The meaning of words can change over time. One example is the word “agony”.

Today, agony means sufferings of all kinds, physical and mental.

Before the 17th century, it meant something quite different. Agony was used to describe “a place of contest – a place of battle”, which originates from the Greek word agōn.

In Latin, the word for agony is “agora” which refers to a market place or public square.

Therefore, the first sorrowful mystery, the “agony” of Jesus in the Garden ties together three ideas:

First, “Agony” as a place of contest.

Jesus’ struggle reminds us that life is a battleground between the forces of good and evil. Jesus’ love for humanity was repaid with betrayal, abandonment, rejection, and ingratitude. At the same time, Jesus’ conversation with the Father calls our attention to the stamina we need for life’s journey, which comes to us through PRAYER.

Second, “Agony” as a public square.

Observing Jesus in the garden is a reminder that the Christian life is a public witness to Christian values and virtues exemplified in the life of Jesus.

Sometimes, these values may be in total conflict with the morals of our society.

Third, “Agony” as suffering.

The pain and anguish of Jesus in the Garden reveal the salvific necessity of suffering. Here, suffering implies the “training” required for a competition or contest. The Mount of Olives is Jesus’ training ground before the contest ahead of him, which is his passion and death.

Suffering is a part of human existence, and we often have our share of suffering in our lives, big or small.

As we join Jesus in the Garden, we witness that it is ok to ask God to take our sufferings away, but in doing so, we must leave the window of God's will always open.

The first sorrowful mystery challenges us to ask these questions

- How prepared are we for the battle of life?
- How often do we accept the will of God even if it is contrary to our own desires?
- And, like the apostles, are we willing to accompany our friends on their journeys and do you fall asleep at the crucial moments of that journey?

Join us as we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy. Amen.

13th Day of Lent

Date: March 8

2nd Sorrowful Mystery

The Scourging at the Pillar

Reflection Leader: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi, CSSp.

Source: Spiritual Reflection Series-Sorrowful Mysteries

Scripture:

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. (Mark 15:12-15)

St. Louis de Montfort: Pray the Rosary well...

“When the Holy Rosary is said well, it gives Jesus and Mary more glory and is more meritorious than any other prayer.”

Reflection: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi

In our world, the idea of human dignity is precious. Pope St. John Paul II taught us that, *“There is no dignity when the human dimension is eliminated from the person”*.

Also, John Paul II reminds us that *“Our dignity is not rooted in our temporal existence, but in where we come from and where we are called to go.”*

In the Second Sorrowful Mystery, Jesus, the humble, innocent and voiceless son of God reminds us of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 13:13-16) who was also unjustly beaten and imprisoned in the Old Testament.

When Jesus is scourged at the Pillar, he experienced the elimination of his human dimension. Jesus was cruelly and dishonorably tied to a stake, beaten, spat upon, mocked and ridiculed. It was a barbaric act intended to humiliate him, but for the sake of our redemption, he did not defend himself or reach out in anger at his torturers. Instead, Jesus humbled himself to share in our suffering and to share in our humanity.

Catholic Social Teaching calls on each of us to protect the most vulnerable, to stand in solidarity with others, and to protect the rights and dignity of all people. We are also called to stand with those who suffer modern day versions of scourging in the forms of abuse, unjust punishment, humiliation, fear, and those who are voiceless.

Join us as we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy. Amen.

14th Day of Lent

Date: March 9

3rd Sorrowful Mystery

The Crowning with Thorns

Reflection Leader: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi, CSSp.

Source: Spiritual Reflection Series-Sorrowful Mysteries

Scripture:

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! (John 19:1-5)

St. Louis de Montfort: Pray the Rosary through the hands of Mary...

“By this devotion we give to Jesus all we can possibly give him, and in the most perfect manner, that is, through Mary's hands.”

Reflection: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi

Pilate's exclamation “Behold the man!” pointing to the flogged and beaten Jesus is the climax of John's presentation of Christ's humanness. Jesus is truly the Word made flesh.

The third sorrowful mystery speaks to Jesus' identity as he goes into battle.

Jesus went into the fight (that was his Passion) as a king, which is symbolized by the “Crowning with Thorns”. In ancient times, a leader joined his army in battle,

unlike today where they often sit miles away in their heavily guarded headquarters.

The crown worn on Jesus’ head symbolizes his victory in the battle, even though it was intended as mockery by his executioners. Jesus wearing a crown and dressed in purple is a sign of an earthly king whose duty was to suffer to protect his people.

Jesus standing next to Pilate, in full view of the assembly of people, speaks to how the moral ground is shifting beneath Pilate’s feet.

Jesus shows all of us that the one they call king, and who was crowned with thorns and dressed in purple is there to suffer for the people. Truly, Jesus is the King of the Jews and King of the world.

Pope Francis reminds us that a true leader is a “shepherd living with the smell of the sheep”. This is the challenge for each of us in our various roles of ‘leading’ and ‘shepherding’ others. So, whether at home, at work, in our parish, in the community

or as a politician, we must constantly ask ourselves how do we remain close to, and in defense of, those we shepherd?

Join us as we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy.
Amen.

15th Day of Lent

Date: March 10

4th Sorrowful Mystery

The Carrying of the Cross

Reflection Leader: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi, CSSp.

Source: Spiritual Reflection Series-Sorrowful Mysteries

Scripture:

After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross. (Matthew 27:31-32)

St. Louis de Montfort: Pray the Rosary to reach Jesus...

“[When we establish a] sound devotion to our Blessed Lady, it is only in order to establish devotion to our Lord more perfectly, by providing a smooth but certain way of reaching Jesus Christ.”

Reflection: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi

The “carrying of the cross” combines two realities of the Roman era: a procession to war and a procession to celebrate victory returning from a battlefield. If Jesus went into battle (agōn) as a King, his weapon was the wood of the cross.

The journey to Calvary, with Jesus carrying his cross, is the journey into the battle of virtue against vice – a battle to topple sin and death and a duel between life and death (mors et vita duello).

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus along the way and Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry his cross. The road to Calvary was not a lonely journey for Jesus, but it was painful.

The journey and the battles of life unfold in different shapes and dimensions for each of us. Our ‘crosses’ might come as persecution, abandonment by loved ones, unjust suffering accompanied by insults and humiliation.

In the midst of all these, there is also the consolation that often comes from unusual and mysterious places, represented in the life of Jesus by the woman, Veronica and the stranger, Simon.

It is often said that “If you want to know how much someone loves you – see how much they are prepared to suffer for and with you.”

We meet the face of Jesus on our journey every day. Let us not miss the opportunity to become the Veronicas or the Simons that lessen the burden of the crosses carried by those we meet along the way.

Join us as we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy. Amen.

16th Day of Lent

Date: March 11

5th Sorrowful Mystery-

The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

Reflection Leader: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi, CSSp.

Source: Spiritual Reflection Series-Sorrowful Mysteries

Scripture:

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” ...

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land[h] until three in the afternoon, while the sun’s light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Having said this, he breathed his last. (Luke 23:33-34,39-43)

St Louis de Montfort: Pray the Rosary to connect with our God.

The miraculous way in which the devotion to the holy Rosary was established is something of a parallel to the way in which God gave his law to the world on Mount Sinai, and it obviously proves its value and importance.

Reflection: Fr. Obinna Ifeanyi

The crucifixion of Jesus changed the meaning of death. “Crucifixion” was the death sentence handed out by the Romans to criminals and nobodies of the day.

The innocent sufferers of today and the prisoners of conscience have their hero in Jesus. On the cross, Jesus shows his solidarity with the nobodies through his death.

The crucifixion and death of Jesus is the final battleground, the victory of God over human power and authority. Even though Jesus died on that cross, evil and death do not have the last word because God will raise him on the third day.

As Christians who have been baptized into the death of Jesus, we are called to embrace the victory of life, which comes from the death of Jesus. His death is an act of total commitment. Jesus places his life into the hands of God.

There may be no other lower point for a human being than to die alone or to feel tortured or abandoned by his or her God.

When we enter into the Crucifixion and Death of Jesus, we realize we are not alone. One of my seminary professors often said that because of Jesus’ Calvary experience, “no one can accuse God of being an outsider, distant, far away from our life”.

Just as Jesus gave his life to redeem us, we must commit ourselves to making sure that our lives benefit others, and that evil, in whatever form it presents itself, does not have the last word.

The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus may be the final Sorrowful Mystery, but it is not the end of the story.

Just before he dies, Jesus looks at the Good Thief on the Cross and says “Today, you will be with me in Paradise”. The word “Paradise” is a Persian word used to describe a “garden” – a place of beauty, peace, and joy. Jesus, in his pain and anguish, shows the criminal and us that God is full of mercy. If this criminal is given the gift of paradise; then the gift of paradise is available to us as well.

Join us as we pray:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. Amen.

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now, and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Oh my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, and lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of Your Mercy. Amen.

3rd Sunday of Lent

Gospel according to John 4.5-15, 19-26, 39a, 40-42

Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his children and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but the one who drinks of the water that I will give will never be thirsty. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.

"I see that you are a Prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah is coming” (who is called the Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus.

So when they came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.” The Word of the Lord

17th Day of Lent

Date: March 13
Baptism: The Gateway to Our Salvation
Reflection Leader: Bishop Bergie

Source: 2020 Mission Part 1

One of the greatest sources of God’s love and compassion, where we are strengthened and reminded to never be afraid, is the sacramental life of the Church. The sacraments help us to grow in the spiritual life by offering us sanctifying grace which helps us to draw closer to Christ. We know that sacraments are outward signs, instituted by Christ, that offer us grace. They use what is natural to give us an experience of the supernatural.

In the Gospel of St. Mark, we are presented with the baptism of Jesus. Let us consider how this scripture passage can deepen our understanding of the Sacrament of Baptism.

“John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins” (Mark 1: 4-5).

It is important to note that the baptism that John the Baptist offered is not the same as the Sacrament of Baptism. As the passage states, it was a ritual of repentance and forgiveness of sin. After acknowledging sin, the person was symbolically washed clean in the river Jordan.

Why did Jesus participate in this ritual if he was sinless? He did so in order to show solidarity with us. Although he was sinless Jesus took upon himself our sins as the sacrificial lamb. As he descends into the water it foreshadows his own descent into death so that he could rise again. He shows us the way to salvation.

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1: 9-11).

The Trinity is revealed to us at the Baptism of Our Lord. The Father loves the Son, and the Son loves the Father, and the fruit of their love for each other is the Holy Spirit. This foreshadows what happens in the Sacrament of Baptism. It is Trinitarian as one is baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Baptism is the gateway to life in the Spirit.

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own” (1Cor.6:19)?

At baptism we receive the Holy Spirit. We are empowered with God’s Spirit so that we can be spiritually strong. We will be given the gifts necessary to be faithful followers of the Lord. We do not need to fear or doubt because God will help us to do incredible things. As God’s dwelling place, we treat our bodies and each person with reverence and respect.

Baptism sets us free from sin and we are reborn as sons and daughters of God.

18th Day of Lent

Date: March 14

The Sacrament of Reconciliation-Part 1

Reflection Leader: Thomas Cardinal Collins

Source: 2019 National Catholic Mission Part 2

Why go to confession since we can ask God's forgiveness at any time?

People have always asked God for forgiveness for their sins, and we need to do it all the time, in the silence of our hearts, and especially in our times of prayer.

We begin each Mass with “Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.” But in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Jesus gave us the opportunity to experience the act of God’s forgiveness personally, directly, and in a human way.

Think of the sinners in the Gospels who came to Jesus. They had already asked forgiveness in their hearts, but by personally coming to Jesus they could hear the words of forgiveness, and know that at this particular place, at this particular moment they were being forgiven by God - and could go in peace.

To the sinful women who anointed Jesus feet in Luke chapter 7 our Lord says, “*Your sins are forgiven. ……… Your faith has saved you; go in peace.*”

In the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we can have the same experience as that of those sinners we read about in the Gospels, because Jesus acts through the priest to personally forgive us - by His divine power, and yet in a human way as we read in John chapter 20.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and

said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” John 20:19-23

That is what sacraments are: God acting in a human way, through human signs. In a sense, Jesus himself is the ultimate sacrament: God coming to us, down to our level, in a human way as Paul explains in his letter to the Philippians in chapter 2.

[Jesus], though he was in the form of God, 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. Philippians 2:6-11

Why go to Confession to a priest?

All sins affect all of us; even the most secret sins affect the life of the body of Christ which is the Church. It is a source of disunity when any disciple of Jesus breaks from the will of the heavenly Father.

If the sin is serious we who are divided from Christ and his community should not receive the sacrament of unity, the Eucharist. We confess our sins to and receive absolution from the one who celebrates the Eucharist, the Sacrament of unity, either a bishop or a priest.

What are the benefits of confessing our sins?

Though the absolution is the heart of the sacrament because that is when God forgives us through the ministry of the priest, the usual preparation for it is confession, in which we tell our sins to the priest. When we say, “Bless me Father, for I have sinned”, we can see and acknowledge our moral responsibility, see how to live better, and have more compassion for others. It also helps the priest to offer us spiritual advice.

19th Day of Lent

Date: March 15

The Sacrament of Reconciliation-Part 2

Reflection Leader: Thomas Cardinal Collins

Source: 2019 National Catholic Mission Part 2

How Often Should I Receive the Sacrament?

Regularly. It is good to break up our life into small pieces. Don't worry if you think: "I'm always confessing the same sins." Each of us has particular personal patterns of temptation and weakness with which we struggle throughout life, and in the struggle again and again come for forgiveness to the Lord, and so grow in humility and compassion.

How do I do long range preparation for the sacrament?

In our earlier talks we discussed the importance of a daily practice of examining our conscience. We can briefly but honestly review the day and note any ways in which you have sinned against God or neighbour.

Throughout the day, it is good to regularly express awareness of God's mercy, perhaps through prayers such as the "Jesus Prayer":

"Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

It is also good to do this when facing temptation, or when aware of having sinned.

What is the immediate preparation for the Sacrament?

Come to the Church and spend a few minutes before receiving the Sacrament of Penance praying quietly before Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. This is also a good time to pray the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner."

Pray Psalm 32, or Psalm 51, which speak of honest repentance and God's loving forgiveness. Read the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke chapter 15.

How do I start my confession?

Begin with "Bless me Father for I have sinned", which certainly gets to the point.

Then say how long it has been since your last Confession. This helps the priest understand the context of your confession and can help him to give you better spiritual advice.

It is true for each of us to say that "I am a sinner", but we also need to be more particular because we live through particular actions. But if we consider only the actions, and not the deeper roots, we will not see how to grow closer to God.

So, for example, one might say "I'm struggling with pride, and that has led me to speak negatively about a co-worker I look down on because of my pride."

Confession is not a memory test: any sins forgotten are forgiven. It is to help us to prepare for the gift of the mercy of God. As a practical point, it is good to say at the end of the confession: "For these and any other sins I cannot remember, I am truly sorry." This includes all your sins and as a practical point tells the priest that you are finished.

What does it mean to receive a Penance from the priest?

The priest will give you a penance, usually a prayer of some kind, which is a way in which you can express your sorrow for your sins.

What is an Act of Contrition?

After the penance, the priest will ask you to "Make an Act of Contrition", or prayer of sorrow. There are many different acts of contrition. If the penitent is not familiar with one, I suggest this very

basic one: “O my God, I am sorry for my sins, and with your help I will try not to sin again.”

Here is a fuller one:

*My God, I am sorry for my sins with all my heart.
In choosing to do wrong and failing to do good,
I have sinned against you whom I should love above all things.
I firmly intend, with your help,
to do penance, to sin no more,
and to avoid whatever leads me to sin.
Our Saviour Jesus Christ suffered and died for us.
In His name, my God, have mercy. Amen.*

What is Absolution?

Consider the words by which, through the ministry of the priest, Jesus forgives us: “God the Father of Mercies, through the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ, has reconciled the world to Himself, and sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins. Through the ministry of the Church may God give you pardon and peace, and I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

What happens after the Sacrament?

When we complete our penance, we set out on the next portion of our journey of faith, at one with God, and blessed with a deeper understanding of our frailty and need for His grace.

The struggle continues, for we still face the many temptations of life, and will need again and again to return to receive the mercy of God. But through the sacramental experience of that divine mercy, we slowly become more humble, more compassionate, more supple instruments of God’s grace in our baptismal mission of discipleship.

The priest may conclude with this beautiful prayer which I offer for you now:

May the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints, whatever good you do and suffering you endure, heal your sins, help you to grow in holiness, and reward you with eternal life. Go in peace.

20th Day of Lent

Date: March 16

Introduction to Stations of the Cross

Reflection Leaders:

Deacon Mike Walsh

Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Introduction: Mike Walsh

Jesus' journey to the Cross and then to the tomb is a concrete illustration of God's love for humankind.

Out of love for every single person, Jesus left God the Father and emptied himself by coming to live among us.

Each of us is the beloved child of God and nowhere is that more evident than the painfully brutal journey that Jesus took to the cross.

We come face to face with Christ in those who suffer.

Starting tomorrow we will experience a Station of the Cross each day. Let us begin our journey now with our guide on the way to the cross
Spiritian Father, Pat Fitzpatrick

Reflection Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Jesus, God with us, was once a condemned criminal who stumbled, fell, got up again, and kept going to the bitter end. Jesus knew what it was to suffer.

“This is the cup the father has given me,” he had said.” Shall I not drink it?”

God suffered in Jesus. God continues to suffer in millions of people. We come face to face with Christ in those who suffer. Through these Stations of the Cross, we follow in Jesus' footsteps from Pilate's palace, to Calvary. We mark ourselves with the sign of the cross and walk the way to the cross

Lyrics: Stabat Mater Dolorosa ("The sorrowful mother was")

1 Jesus on the cross is dying Soon his body will be lying In the darkness of the tomb.

2 God's own mother, purest maiden, Sees the sinless One, sin-laden, Blessed fruit of blessed womb.

3 Mary's heart for him is aching As she sees her Son's heart breaking So that love may be revealed.

4 Now at last her heart is feeling Sorrow's sword, her Son revealing Thoughts in many hearts concealed.

5 How could pity not awaken For the Son of God, forsaken In the loneliness of death?

6 Who would not give consolation In this Mother's desolation As he breathes his dying breath?

7 Mary's heart for him is bleeding; In his blood, for sinners pleading, God's new law of love is sealed.

8 "It is done", she hears him crying At the moment of his dying: Death by death has now been healed.

9 Let me stand beside you, sharing Grief for Jesus, my sins bearing On the cross of Calvary.

10 By the cross your vigil keeping, Let me share your silent weeping, Pierce my heart with sorrow's sword.

11 Let me, though in humble fashion, Share with you the bitter passion Of the Son you brought to birth.

12 Let me bear the wounds of Jesus, Drink the precious blood that frees us, Glory only in his cross.

13 Let the cross be my salvation, Jesus' death my consolation, In that hour when I must die.

14 Queen of heaven, by the merit Of your Son let me inherit Joy with all the saints on high.

21st Day of Lent

Date: March 17

First Station

Jesus is sentenced to death

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to the crowd, here is the man. They cried out, away with him, away with him, crucify him. Then pilot handed him over to them to be crucified.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

The religious leader sought the death penalty for Jesus. He was more than they could take. But the death penalty was not theirs to carry out. So they brought him to Pilate.

I will have him flogged and let him go, said that crowd pleaser. You are no friend of Caesar if you let him go, they replied. Crucify him, crucify him, said the crowd. They had their way. Pilate released Barabbas and sentence Jesus to death. Mob justice, the guilty are let off, the innocent are convicted.

This is the cup the father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) God's own mother, purest maiden, cease the sinless ones in laden. Blessed fruit of blessed womb.

22nd Day of Lent

Date: March 18

Second Station

Jesus carries his cross

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

Carrying the cross by himself, Jesus went out to what is called the place of the skull.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

The soldier at the head of the procession. A box of Roman legionaries around the prisoner. A 2-meter cross beam, to which he would be nailed, was placed on his shoulder.

His final walk of about 600 meters had begun. Crosses come in different shapes and sizes. How well do I carry my cross? My health, my, moods my tensions, my handicaps, my job, my family, the way I am treated.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) Mary's heart for him is aching, as she sees her son's heart breaking, so that love may be revealed.

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Date: March 19

John 9.1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38 (shorter)

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. He spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent).

Then the man who was blind went and washed, and came back able to see. The neighbours and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a Prophet." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped him.

23rd Day of Lent

Date: March 20

Third station

Jesus falls the first time

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

The Prophet Isaiah tells us that “he has born our griefs and carried our sorrows... he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole....

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

The cross beam began to sway and Jesus staggered. In a moment, he pitched forward. The beam hit the ground, hung standing for a second, then dragged him down to the cobblestones.

Crosses never fit snugly onto shoulders, they get heavier with each succeeding step. We struggle to stay on our feet. We collapse under the weight of our particular cross. We fall flat on our face.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) Now, at last, her heart is dealing. Sorrow sought us, unrevealing. Far too many hearts concealed.

24th Day of Lent

Date: March 21

Fourth station

Jesus meets his mother, Mary

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

Simeon had said to his mother, Mary, a sword will pierce your soul, too.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Stations four, five, and six remind us that Jesus found encouragement and assistance along the way. Mary was there, as always. Wanting to do something, anything, forced to look on helplessly. He half hoped she wouldn't have to see him like this. Yet, her presence renewed his strength.

How many mothers suffer with their children and for their children? As they watched them struggle, see them fall, and have to let them go?

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) How could pity not awaken, for the song of God forsaken, in the loneliness of death?

25th Day of Lent

Date: March 22

Fifth station

Simon helps Jesus

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

The soldiers seized a man, Simon from Cyrene, who was coming in from the country. They made him shoulder the cross and carry it behind Jesus.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

All his friends had taken off, He carried his cross unaided. A stranger from North Africa was in Jerusalem that fateful Friday. The Roman soldiers ordered him to get in line behind the criminal. Step by step, Simon, the North African, matched his stride to Jesus's painful progress.

From here to Calvary, Jesus had a partner. Did Simon know whose cross he carried? We thank the Simons in our lives, those who walk with us and enable us to keep going. We are grateful for their helping hands, and listening ears, for shoulders to lean on.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) Who would not give consolation, in this mother's desolation, as He breathed his dying breath?

26th Day of Lent

Date: March 23

Sixth station

Veronica wipes the face of Jesus

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

Tradition holds that Veronica, one of the holy women who accompanied our Lord to Calvary, was moved by His suffering and offered Him a towel, to wipe the sweat and blood from His face. When Jesus handed the cloth back to her, the image of His face remained imprinted on it.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

A woman in the crowd saw him coming down the road. As he drew near, she noticed how weary, marred, and disfigured He was. Undaunted by what others thought, she removed her veil, approached him, and gently wiped his grimy face. The legend says, her veil retained the image of the face it touched.

Did his mind go back to Simon the Pharisee's house? And the woman who very publicly stood behind him, weeping. And bathed his feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, continued kissing his feet and anointing them. At critical moments, is it always women who show the most courage?

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) Mary's heart for him is bleeding, in his blood for sinners bleeding. Cause new love, love is healed.

27th Day of Lent

Date: March 24

Seventh station

Jesus falls the second time

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

Struggling Jesus stumbles again and we recall the prophet Isaiah telling us that the Lord will be...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. (Isaiah 53:3)

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Too heavy a load, too long a journey. With each succeeding step, the wooden beam got heavier and heavier. Legs and arms ached, once more, the beam began to sway. And once again, he pitched forward and downward. The Roman whips, the rough commands the heavy effort to get up.

So many people have difficulty putting one foot in front of the other. How far more, oh Lord? How far more? One step at a time. More than halfway there, now.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

*(Hymn) It is done, she hears him crying, at the moment of his dying.
Death by death has now been healed.*

28th Day of Lent

Date: March 25

Eighth station

Jesus meets the daughters of Jerusalem

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

Jesus turned to them and said, daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but for yourselves and for your children.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

The women had compassion for the condemned man. Their hearts went out to him, knowing what awaited him at the end of the road. Was he warning them not to be part of this Jerusalem way of doing things?

How many women stand outside lonely prison, walls in solidarity with the condemned? Denied a say in the public life of their country? Victims of injustice, sidelined by the system.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) Let me stand beside you, sharing grief for Jesus, my sins bearing, on the cross of Calvary.

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Date: March 26

John 11.3-7, 17, 20-27, 33b-45 (shorter)

The sisters of Lazarus sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” But when Jesus heard this, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

Jesus was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me."

When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him.

29th Day of Lent

Date: March 27

Ninth station

Jesus falls the third time

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

As Jesus lies on the ground for a third time we again remember the words of the prophet Isaiah who foretold that the one to come would be wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Another fall, tempted to remain down and out. Why not give up right here, right now? Another painful effort to get back up, has Simon lifted the cross beam for him. This reluctant recruit had become his silent partner uphill, the rest of the way to Calvary.

Jesus got up again and kept going. So can we, with his help. We marvel at his stubborn refusal to stay down. Down to earth, yes. But never down and out.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) By the cross, your vigil keeping, let me share your silent weeping. Pierce my heart with sorrow sword.

30th Day of Lent

Date: March 28

Tenth station

Jesus is stripped of his garments

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

They divided his clothes among them, casting lots to decide what each should take.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Calvary, at last. Outside the crowded self-absorbed city preparing for the Sabbath. Stripped naked, all dignity peeled off, a public spectacle. For many years, no place to lay his head. Now, no clothes to wear. Nothing left to call his own.

One of his own, an informer. Another, a denier. The rest, nowhere near.

We think about victims of war, victims of torture, victims of the system. Raped and violated, demeaned and publicly derided.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) Let me throw in humble fashion, share with you the bitter passion of the son you brought to birth.

31st Day of Lent

Date: March 29

Eleventh station

Jesus is nailed to the cross

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

When they came to the place that is called the skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals. One on his right, and one on his left.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Crucifixion, gruesome, gory, capital punishment. Nails driven through wrists and feet. Deaths through loss of blood and breath. Death through suffocation. No morphine to deaden the pain.

Elie Wiesel recalls the concentration camp, the day a child was hanged. His body did not weigh enough to tighten the noose around his neck. So he hung there swaying in the desolate air.

I heard a man behind me asking, where is God now? I heard a voice within me answering, where is He? Here He is, hanging here on this gallows.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) Let me bare the wounds of Jesus, drink the precious blood that frees us. Glory only in his cross.

32nd Day of Lent

Date: March 30

Twelfth station

Jesus dies on the cross

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

When Jesus knew that all was now finished, He said, I am thirsty. So they put a sponge of sour wine on a branch and held it to his mouth. When He had received the wine, He said, it is finished. Then He bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

PAUSE

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Sentenced Friday morning, executed Friday afternoon. Only Mary, along with the disciple He loved, and some brave women kept him company. Ridicule and searing pain, a victim of the system forgave his executioners.

The innocent are still put to death with bullets, bombs, and bulldozers under the name of collateral damage. He drank the cup to the bitter end because He loved us to the end. Can you and I drink our cup?

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) Let the cross be my salvation, Jesus' death my consolation, in the time when I must die.

33rd Day of Lent

Date: March 31

Thirteenth station

Jesus is taken off the cross

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple of Jesus, came and removed his body. He and Nicodemus who had at first come to Jesus by night, wrapped the body in linen cloths.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

After 30 years, Mary had him in her arms again. All she could offer now, was her presence, and her lap, and her embrace. She held him once at Christmas, she held him now at crucifixion. Silent, faithful, mother Mary.

A wake, a funeral home moment. Keeping vigil near a casket. Thoughts of times gone by, of how it use to be. Letting loved ones go to God.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

(Hymn) Queen of Heaven, by the marriage, of your Son let me inherit, joy with all the Saints on high.

34th Day of Lent

Date: April 1

Fourteenth station

Jesus is buried in the tomb

Reflection Leader: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick, CSSp.

Source: Reflections on the Way to the Cross

Scripture

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 yet been buried. So, they laid Jesus there.

Reflection: Fr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Born in another's barn, buried in another's tomb. An unexpected offer of the tomb from Joseph of Arimathea, a tomb hewn out of rock. A stone rolled in place, a hurried burial before Sabbath.

That Friday afternoon, the women took note of the tomb and how his body had been laid. They would return before dawn on Sunday.-- They buried him quickly but not for long. He would burst the bonds of burial. By Sunday, the first born from the dead, would leave behind an empty tomb.

Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, He is risen.

This is the cup The Father has given me, shall I not drink it?

Mary, you were there, as always. There when he was taking shape within in your womb. When you gave birth to him in distant Bethlehem. When he asserted teenage independence in the temple.

Through all the years at Nazareth, when he had gone from home and Joseph was no longer there. There along the final journey, standing there at the foot of the cross. There now as you cradle him once more.

Mary, survivor of Calvary, give us strength. Be there for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Lyrics: Stabat Mater Dolorosa (“The sorrowful mother was”)

1 Jesus on the cross is dying Soon his body will be lying In the darkness of the tomb.

2 God's own mother, purest maiden, Sees the sinless One, sin-laden, Blessed fruit of blessed womb.

3 Mary's heart for him is aching As she sees her Son's heart breaking So that love may be revealed.

4 Now at last her heart is feeling Sorrow's sword, her Son revealing Thoughts in many hearts concealed.

5 How could pity not awaken For the Son of God, forsaken In the loneliness of death?

6 Who would not give consolation In this Mother's desolation As he breathes his dying breath?

7 Mary's heart for him is bleeding; In his blood, for sinners pleading, God's new law of love is sealed.

8 "It is done", she hears him crying At the moment of his dying: Death by death has now been healed.

9 Let me stand beside you, sharing Grief for Jesus, my sins bearing On the cross of Calvary.

10 By the cross your vigil keeping, Let me share your silent weeping, Pierce my heart with sorrow's sword.

11 Let me, though in humble fashion, Share with you the bitter passion Of the Son you brought to birth.

12 Let me bear the wounds of Jesus, Drink the precious blood that frees us, Glory only in his cross.

13 Let the cross be my salvation, Jesus' death my consolation, In that hour when I must die.

14 Queen of heaven, by the merit Of your Son let me inherit Joy with all the saints on high.

Psalm Sunday

Date: April 2

Matthew 27.11-54

Now Jesus stood before the governor; and the governor asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus said, “You say so.” But when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he did not answer.

Then Pilate said to him, “Do you not hear how many accusations they make against you?” But he gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.

Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release a prisoner for the crowd, anyone they wanted. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So after they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called the Christ?” For he realized that it was out of jealousy that they had handed him over.

While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about him.”

Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus killed.

The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.”

Pilate said to them, “Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Christ?” All of them said, “Let him be crucified!”

Then he asked, “Why, what evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!”

So when Pilate saw that he could do nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took some water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” Then the people as a whole answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” So he released Barabbas for them; and after flogging Jesus, he handed him over to be crucified.

Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor’s headquarters, and they gathered the whole cohort around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head. After mocking him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his Cross. And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. And when they had crucified him, they divided his clothes among themselves by casting lots; then they sat down there and kept watch over him. Over his head they put the charge against him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” Then two bandits were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

Those who passed by derided him, shaking their heads and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself!

If you are the Son of God, come down from the Cross.” In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders were mocking him, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the Cross now, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he wants to; for he said, ‘I am God’s Son.’” The bandits who were crucified with him also taunted him in the same way.

From noon on, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. And about three o’clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, “This man is calling for Elijah.” 48 At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink. But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.”

Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs also were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. After his resurrection they came out of the tombs and entered the holy city and appeared to many.

Now when the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, “Truly this man was God’s Son!”

35th Day of Lent

Date: April 3

Be Not Afraid-Mary is our mother- Part 1

Reflection Leader: Bishop Gerard Bergie

Source: 2020 National Catholic Mission

Life is full of distractions, and they can keep us from focusing on God and the spiritual life. Lent can help us because, during these forty days, the Church encourages us to stop, to look, and to listen. We pause so that we can focus on our lives and listen to the Lord.

There are many distractions in the spiritual life; however, one of the greatest is fear. It can become a destructive force because it causes us to turn inward, rather than outward toward God and others. How should we respond to fear? We will find the answer to this question during our Mission.

“Be Not Afraid - Touching God’s love and compassion” is the theme of our Mission. If we believe that we are loved by God then we need not be afraid. God will watch over us and give us what we need because he is our Good Shepherd.

Let us listen to the account of Jesus feeding the five thousand in the Gospel of St. Mark:

“As he went ashore, [Jesus] saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things” (Mk. 6:33-34).

Jesus has compassion for us and wants to give us those things that will help us not to be afraid. In the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus reminds us of the following:

“Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29-31).

Our Lord reminds us that the reason that we do not need to be afraid is because God cares for us. Jesus reminds us that we are so precious to him that he will not let anything harm us. We need not be afraid.

36th Day of Lent

Date: April 4

Be Not Afraid-Mary is our mother-Part 2

Reflection Leader: Bishop Gerard Bergie

Source: 2020 National Catholic Mission

We begin our exploration of God's compassion by looking at the story of Our Blessed Mother and the account of the Annunciation.

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."

(Luke 1:26-30)

Angels are God's messengers. Gabriel's name in Hebrew means, "God is my strength". He is one of the archangels and first appeared in the Old Testament to the prophet Daniel. When Gabriel appeared to Mary, he told her not to be afraid because she had found favour with God. She does not need to worry. We see that her response to the angel is not based on fear; it is based on faith. She believes that God is with her so she does not need to be afraid.

And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Mary is Theotokos. It is a Greek word which means, “God bearer”. Mary is being asked to be the Mother of God and she is not afraid. At the birth of her Son, we see Mary’s response to the shepherds, she pondered what had been said to her in her heart. I am sure that she also pondered the words of Gabriel. Mary is not overwhelmed by the news that she has been chosen to be the mother of God because she ponders these things in her heart. We can take great comfort in the fact that through her Son Jesus, Mary is our mother too. She is mother of all the living so we need not be afraid.

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore, the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God. Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her” (Luke 1:34-38).

Mary now knows what God is asking; however, she is unsure of how this will be done. She asks the obvious question, “How can this be, since I am a virgin? She is told that she will conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit. Mary is the Immaculate Conception for she was conceived without sin. God prepared the perfect dwelling place for his Son, the pure, spotless womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The angel shares the news that, even though she was thought to be barren, Mary’s cousin Elizabeth is also pregnant, for “nothing is impossible with God”. Mary believed that all things are possible with God so she never doubted, she was not afraid.

Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

Mary considered herself to be a humble servant. She submitted herself to God’s will – “let it be done to me according to your word”. Mary’s clear acceptance – “let it be done” – is her yes to God. Her response makes her the ‘new Eve’. Unlike the first Eve, who said ‘no’ to God and brought death, Mary brings life to the world because she said ‘yes’. She brings life through her Son, Jesus Christ. Mary is the model Christian because of her faith and trust in the Lord. She shows us the way to Christ, so we need not be afraid.

37th Day of Lent

Date: April 7

Invitation to the Last Super-Part 1

Reflection Leader: Fr. Michael Coutts

Source: The Mass the Mystery at the Centre of Salvation- Mission 2028

During the season of Lent, our contemplation and prayers centre around the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus. This is the heart of the Eucharist that we celebrate at Mass. How did the Mass, this Eucharistic celebration, take its form? How did the early followers who believed that Christ was the Son of God – celebrate this mystery?

I invite you to walk with me to the Upper Room in the city of Jerusalem where it all began.

On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. Matthew 26:17-19

The disciples had asked Jesus where he was going to celebrate the Passover. Little did they know how important and how significant that Passover would be in their lives. Jesus had told them, as we read in the 26th chapter of Matthew, to go into the city to a friend’s house. They were to tell the friend: “The Teacher says, ‘My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” (Matthew 26:18)

You and I together, we glory in the name of Christian. We too are invited to the Passover. As we look at the table, there are so many things. But two things catch our eyes: one is a stack of unleavened bread; in Hebrew this bread is called *Matzah*. Then we notice that there

are four cups of wine. We, the disciples, will have just one cup, out of which we will drink of ‘the cup of the fruit of the vine’ four times.

Say therefore to the Israelites, ‘I am the LORD, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. Exodus 6:6-7

These four cups stand for the four promises made by God and which are recorded in the sixth chapter of Exodus which we just read. God promised:

- I will bring you out from under the burdens.
- I will deliver you from slavery.
- I will bring you salvation.
- I will take you as my people, and I will be your God.

These four cups are cups of Blessing or Mitzvah.

Each person sitting at the table will have a cup, which will be filled four times in remembrance of the four promises.

But let us now focus on the third and fourth glasses of wine.

Jesus would hold the third cup. Emotions were running high in the heart of Jesus. Our minds go back to the wedding feast of Cana. His mother had told him of the embarrassing situation of the wine running out. And Jesus made a puzzling statement: “*My Hour has not yet come!*” Now at the Last Supper we are given an insight into that hour. It was the hour in which Satan, the Prince of Darkness would hold sway. This hour was not just sixty minutes of our time. It was a period of time: three days to be precise.

Jesus started with the traditional blessing: *Baruch Atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech Ha-Olam.*

We may not know Hebrew but we would probably recognize the English: Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Ruler of all creation.

- It is the prayer that our priests say today over the bread and wine in the preparation of the gifts at Mass.
- It is a prayer we have taken directly from the prayers of our Jewish ancestors.

The third glass of wine is the Cup of Redemption. It is the third promise that God made and about which we read in Exodus 6. Jesus would take the cup and praise God for all His goodness and gifts, especially the gifts of

- lifting the burdens from our shoulders
- freeing us from slavery
- bringing us salvation
- making us a special people.

38th Day of Lent

Date: April 6- Holy Thursday

Invitation to the Last Super-Part 2

Reflection Leader: Fr. Michael Coutts

Source: The Mass the Mystery at the Centre of Salvation- Mission 2028

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Jesus broke the bread. Jesus shared the cup. The Apostles did not realise it, but Jesus transformed the traditional Jewish Passover to reflect his own passion and death. He shifted the focus

- from the "body" of the Passover lamb, which was offered in the Temple, and
- from the "blood" of the lamb, which was poured out by the priests on the Temple altar
- to this third Cup, **the Cup of Salvation**, which he gives to his disciples to drink. Jesus tells his disciples: "Do this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19)

The Gospel of Matthew notes that "When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." (Matthew 26:30) These were the Hallel Psalms, Psalms of praise, Psalms 113-118: "The snares of death encompass me. I call on the Lord's name. O Lord, I beg you save my life."

Jesus was on a mission. But did you notice? He did not drink the fourth Cup. *He did not drink the fourth Cup of wine.*

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.”...Then he said to them, “I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me.” And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.” Matthew 26: 36,38-39

We are now in the Garden of Gethsemane. The three Apostles: Peter, James and John are with Jesus. They are asleep. Jesus looks at them. James and John want to sit at his right and left in the Kingdom. They said they would drink the cup that Jesus would drink. But how little they know and now they are asleep!

Jesus prays: “Father let this cup pass me by - but not as I will.”
(Matthew 26:39) It is the fourth cup – the one that had not yet been drunk. The fourth Cup is the **Cup of Consummation**.

Today, when we finish a meal, many of us will ask for a cup of coffee. It is a sign that the meal is finished. The fourth Cup would bring the Passover meal to an end. It is a remembrance of the fourth promise. “I will take you as my people, and I will be your God.” It is accomplished. But, for Jesus the Passover was not yet completed. The lamb had to be slain. The blood had to be shed. It was the source of salvation for us.

.... Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill 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. John 19: 28-30

From Thursday night, we move to Friday noon. From Gethsemane, we move to Calvary. Jesus was nailed to the Cross. Blood and water flowed

from his side. The Lamb was slain. The blood of the Lamb was shed. **It is the source of our salvation.**

Jesus said, “I thirst.” A rod with some hyssop was dipped in sour wine. Jesus tasted it – his fourth Passover Cup. It is the Cup of Consummation. Jesus finally drank it. Jesus said, “It is consummated.” (John 19:30) and he died.

This is the core of our Eucharist.

Pope Francis’ words are worth repeating: “The Eucharistic Celebration is much more than a simple banquet: it is exactly the memorial of Jesus’ Pascal Sacrifice, the mystery at the centre of salvation... every time we celebrate this Sacrament we participate in the mystery of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ.”

Through the ages, the faithful under the guidance of their leaders inspired by the Holy Spirit, have put more flesh on this core. Besides the Liturgy of the Eucharist, we now have the Liturgy of the Word.

Please take a moment now to reflect on how the Mass is truly the mystery at the centre of our salvation.

39th Day of Lent

Date: April 7- Good Friday

Passion According to John

Reflection Leader: Thomas Cardinal Collins

Please visit us on Good Friday to journey through the Passion of Jesus with Cardinal Collins as our guide. The Passion will be read, and the Cardinal will offer a reflections on each portion of our story.

40th Day of Lent

Date: April 8- Holy Saturday

Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary

Reflection Leader: Sr. Ann Immaculée

Holy Saturday is a rime for quiet reflection on the events of Holy Thursday and Good Friday. We invite you to join us on Holy Saturday as we reflect on the life of Christ through the Joyful of the Mysteries of the Rosary with Sister of Life, Sr. Ann Immaculée SV. The Sisters of Life are a religious community of women founded in 1991 by John Cardinal O'Connor who take a fourth vow to protect and enhance the sacredness of human life.

The Joyful Mysteries

- The Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary.
- The Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth.
- The Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem of Judea.
- The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.
- The Finding of Jesus in the Temple.

Easter Sunday

Date: April 9

The Road to Emmaus – Life everlasting

Reflection Leader: Bishop Gerrard Bergie

Source: 2020 National Catholic Mission Part 2

“Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him” (Luke 24: 13-16).

On the morning of the Resurrection, two disciples are leaving Jerusalem utterly confused, rejected, and disillusioned. They are heading home not knowing what to expect.

Along the road they encounter Jesus; however, they do not recognize Him. He initiates the conversation by asking them what they were talking about. As Jesus accompanies these disciples on the road, they gradually open up to him and reveal their fear, discouragement and confusion. In a sense they unburdened their souls to this stranger.

Jesus is quite blunt in His response to these disciples, *“Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe”*. What Jesus does next is very interesting. Rather than reject them, he decides to enlighten them. Jesus opens up the scriptures by explaining Salvation History. Jesus reveals to them that all history points to His role as a suffering servant who had to die so that He could rise to new life.

“As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he

took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

In the previous talks of our Mission I spoke about how Mary and the Sacraments help us to encounter Christ. Our Blessed Mother helps us to know her Son. We are configured to Christ in Baptism and healed by him in the Anointing of the Sick. The Road to Emmaus shows us that we should also recognize Jesus in the “breaking of the bread.”

One of the earliest titles given to the Eucharist was “the breaking of the bread” This term is first used in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). Given this fact, then every time we celebrate the Eucharist, we should have an “Emmaus” experience.

In his book titled Confessions, St. Augustine speaks about how the Eucharist has the power to transform. He writes about a mystical experience where the Lord said to him, “I am the bread of the strong; eat me. But you will not change me into yourself; it is I who will change you into myself” (Confessions, vii, 10, 18).

All food becomes part of us and we draw strength from that food. In Holy Communion we become one with the food we eat and this makes us spiritually stronger. We are united to Christ and to one another. This then, offers another aspect of the Eucharist that is so important. It unites us with God and is a foretaste of heaven. At communion we are momentarily united with Christ and still bound by earthly realities. When we die and enter God’s Kingdom, we are joined with Christ most perfectly for all eternity.

They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!”

Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread (Luke 24: 28-39).

The two disciples that we see at the end of this Gospel are very different from the two at the beginning. They encountered the Risen Lord and they were transformed. With burning hearts, they now had to return to Jerusalem to share the good news with the other disciples.

In many ways, the Road to Emmaus mirrors our life journey. We can relate to disciples who feel disillusioned and are afraid of the future. During these times we need to turn to Jesus who walks with us. He is always there, even though we may not recognize him.

The Resurrection of Jesus reminds us of the promise of everlasting life that we received at baptism. We are buried with Him in death so that we can rise with Him to new life (Romans 6:4).

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, ***“Heaven is the ultimate end and fulfilment of the deepest human longings, the state of supreme, definitive happiness” (CCC 1024).*** Heaven should be our ultimate goal in life. We should want to be with Jesus forever in paradise. As a bishop, my most fundamental responsibility is to help all of us get to heaven.

How do we prepare for heaven? The most basic way that we can do this is given to us by St. Paul. He states, ***“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).***

We need to focus on our love for God. We do this throughout our lives by loving others, by keeping God’s commandments, by acting justly and mercifully and by walking humbly with our God (Micah 6:8).

In this life, we not only love God, we also love others. When someone we love dies, this can be very painful. Even Jesus wept when he was told

of the death of his dear friend Lazarus. To mourn is very natural; however, as Christians we do so with faith.

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died.” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14)

St. Paul reminds us that *as* Christians we grieve with hope because we believe in the Resurrection of the Body. We believe in what happened on the Road to Emmaus. Jesus is not dead, he is alive, and promises that same eternal life to each one of us!

“Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (1Cor 15:51).

The Resurrection of the body brings us great hope!

At the beginning of our Mission I stated that fear can be one of the greatest distractions in the spiritual life. During our time together, we have seen how we can overcome that fear by trusting in God’s compassion and love.

I wish to offer one final image that can help us to overcome our worries and fears.

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes

humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Matthew 18:1-5).

Jesus offers us the example of a child. He tells us that we need to be more childlike and not childish. The way we do this is to be more humble. The opposite of humility is pride. We think of Adam and Eve who were filled with pride because they believed that they could be God’s equal. They wanted to be independent, believing that they did not need God to care for them. Children are dependent and this helps them to be humble.

Children should not worry about life because they know that they will be cared for by someone who loves them. When something frightens them, it is a parent or grandparent who brings comfort by saying, “I am here. Do not be afraid. I love you and will not let anything hurt you.” When you love someone, you want to protect them from harm. It is the same with our God. All that we need to do is trust in God’s love and compassion.

In this chapel we have a shrine to St. Therese of Lisieux. Here you will find a beautiful reliquary of the saint who is called “The Little Flower”. St. Therese’s spirituality was based on a childlike trust in God. Her “little way” led her to God as a child relates to a parent, with open arms and great trust. To be little and humble is the way to God. She wrote in her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*, the following,

“The good God would not inspire unattainable desires; I can, then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to sanctity. For me to become greater is impossible; I must put up with myself just as I am with all my imperfections. But I wish to find the way to go to Heaven by a very straight, short, completely new little way. We are in a century of inventions; now one does not even have to take the trouble to climb the steps of a stairway; in the homes of the rich an elevator replaces them nicely. I, too, would like to find an elevator to lift me up to Jesus, for I am too little to climb the rough stairway of perfection.”

More

She found that ‘elevator’ in Jesus, who would carry her in his arms like a child. St. Therese of Lisieux was able to touch God’s compassion. She did not need worry or to be afraid. Allow Jesus to lift you up!

I wish to thank for taking the time during our Mission to reflect upon God’s great love and compassion for us. I pray that God will bless you and help you to trust in him. Be not afraid!