

Sunday Gospel Readings with *Lectio Divina*

Year B: Year of Mark

“The Roman Catholic Bishops of Scotland wish to encourage the use of this *lectio divina* resource. This ancient way of prayer, which has the word of God at its heart, is presented in an attractive and up to date way in this resource: bringing from the storeroom of the tradition of Christian prayer things both old and new.”

Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Scotland

“I am delighted to welcome this publication of *Sunday Gospel Readings with lectio divina*. It will be welcomed by many, especially those preparing for Sunday Mass.”

Most Reverend Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Birmingham



These *lectio divina* outlines are also available in Albanian, Dutch, French, Italian, Maltese, Portuguese, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Turkish and other languages.

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“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instructions for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17
Good News Bible



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INTRODUCTION

These weekly outlines combine the Liturgy's Sunday Gospel readings with the *lectio divina* approach to Holy Scripture.

Lectio divina is a dynamic, life-oriented approach to reading Holy Scriptures encouraged by both Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI. It provides a framework for a faithful and respectful reading of the Bible that is sincere and authentic.

Lectio divina is a blessing for the entire Church as it opens up the rich truths of Scripture for every Christian. Through it believers are invited to read, understand and deepen their appreciation of the Scriptures and to seek guidance for their lives in the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

Our real goal is to meet our Lord as we read his Word and allow him to transform our lives to be more like him through the work of the Holy Spirit.

All the information necessary for you to have a meaningful encounter with God's Word is included in this booklet. These outlines can be used individually or in groups.

The following pages introduce the four steps of *lectio divina* with some extra tips for using these outlines in groups.

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AN INTRODUCTION TO LECTIO DIVINA

History

Lectio divina dates back to the early Church Fathers around 300 AD. The four steps were first recorded by a monk, Guigo Cartujo, in 1173. These steps Lectio (Reading), Meditatio (Meditation), Oratio (Prayer) and Contemplatio (Contemplation) remain central today although methods differ.

Overview

In essence *lectio divina* is a simple way to meet with the Lord through reflection and prayer based on Holy Scripture. It is not a study method. Background knowledge can be helpful but is not essential.

Used in groups a structure is necessary but for individuals the steps need not be followed rigidly. Our aim is meeting God, not just completing the steps themselves. So when the Lord impresses something on us we need to stop and wait. We can always come back to the steps another time. We don't want to lose what God is saying to us.



LECTIO – READING

Reading the Scripture passage humbly and prayerfully is the foundation for everything else that follows and cannot be rushed. So begin with a prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to 'lead you into all the truth' (John 16:13).

Read the passage slowly and carefully. Avoid being tempted to look at the Lectio comments or any of the other steps at this stage.

Have a notebook and pencil ready. Underline, or make a note of, any words or phrases that stand out to you. Write down any questions that occur to you. Read the passage several times and read it aloud. Give yourself time to understand and appreciate what is being said.

Now read the Lectio comments and reflect on the ways they are similar or different to your first thoughts.



MEDITATIO – MEDITATION

Meditation deepens our appreciation of the passage and helps us to explore its riches. We read in 2 Timothy 3:16 that 'All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instructions for right living...' So approach Scripture in faith expecting God to speak to you. He may reveal something of himself to you. He might highlight an attitude or behaviour of yours that needs to change. He might show you a promise to encourage and strengthen you.

Here are some suggested approaches you may find helpful.

Use your imagination. Picture the passage; put yourself into the scene and become part of the story. See things through the eyes of the other characters, listen to what they say, watch their reactions, imagine how they feel. Keep coming back to Jesus. Get to know him; delight yourself and become fascinated by him, his words, his actions, the way he responds – everything about him.

Ask questions. Use your own questions and the questions given to think more deeply about the passage and what God wants to say to you. Ask Jesus why he did and said what he did. Try to understand his reasons and intentions. Allow time to be quiet, to listen and hear his answer.

Let the Word be a mirror for you. As we read the Bible it shows us more of what the Christian life looks like and where ours needs to change. We see how God's Word applies to our daily life, as an individual, and as part of our community and society. We will find promises and encouragement, challenges and demands. If we are willing God will nurture and free us to be more fully human and fully alive.



ORATIO – PRAYER

Prayer opens up a conversation between God and us. In the Psalms we see how the writers pour out their feelings to God, often mixing hopes and fears side by side. God values our honesty. We can't hide anything from him anyway. Using the words of the responsorial psalm can help us but we can also use our own words to have a heart-to-heart conversation with a very special friend.

Through prayer we make our response to the light God's Word has shed on how we are living our lives. Now we can bring what is happening in our own life and in our community before God. We speak and listen, listen and reflect – it is a conversation with God.



CONTEMPLATIO – CONTEMPLATION:

To help us interpret the Gospel reading the Liturgy provides two further Scripture readings. Reflecting on these can both enrich our understanding of the text and bring into focus a response we may need to make to the Lord.

Contemplation gives us the opportunity for an intimate time of communion with God. Be still before God and invite him in. Few words, if any, are necessary here. Enjoy time in his presence. Just be with him and let him love you. Let him refresh your soul.

Review

After you have finished your time of reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation you may want to jot down in a notebook any experiences or thoughts that particularly impressed you. You may find it helpful to look back at these later.



USING THESE OUTLINES IN GROUPS

When *lectio divina* is used in a group a little preparation is needed.



LECTIO:

Try one or more of the following ways of reading the passage. See what works best for your particular group.

Individual reading. To start with give everyone time to read through the passage silently.

Proclamation of the Word. One person reads (proclaims) the Word. This is the traditional manner of reading in the liturgical celebration.

Two readers. Two people read the text aloud alternately.

Each person reads a verse. This is a way of involving each participant, inviting each to read from his own Bible, so that the reading is attentive and dynamic.

Audio version. If you have access to a recorded version of the text you could also use that. You may notice different words are stressed.

With different characters. Approach the text somewhat like a drama, in which one person is the narrator/reader, another takes the part of Jesus, a third takes another character. This can be the most dynamic or engaging method and helps us to identify just what the different characters in the passage are saying.



MEDITATIO:

- In the group setting, it is important that everyone is given time to participate, to share what the Lord has been saying to them. While the Lord speaks through his Word, he also speaks to us through our brothers and sisters. So as we listen to others we need to open our hearts to hear the Lord's voice speaking through them.
- It is important that everyone in the group understands that this sharing is to build one another up and enrich our experience. It is not necessary that everyone agrees about what is shared. You need to be careful to avoid this time turning into a debate or argument. The Lord knows us each as individuals so will have different things to say to us personally at this specific point in our lives.
- You can start with a simple question like "What catches your attention in this passage?" and use the printed questions. The aim is to help everyone feel comfortable to speak and share how the text has inspired them. Gently keep the group focused on the text and what God is saying.



ORATIO:

We suggest you give people time for personal silent prayer before God. You can also give opportunity for people to pray out loud in their own words and use verses from the responsorial prayer. The aim should be to help each person make a personal response to the Lord during this time.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Contemplation by its very nature is an individual exercise and silence is necessary. If you have room it may be helpful to suggest people move so they have their own 'personal space'.

**The Scripture references for the Psalms follow the Hebrew numbering used in many recent Bibles including the Jerusalem Bible but some Bibles use different numbering. If Psalm 23 The Good Shepherd is numbered as Psalm 22 in your Bible, please refer to your church lectionary for all the correct Psalm references for your Bible.*

BEATING TEMPTATION

Mark 1:12-15

¹² At once the Spirit made him go into the desert, ¹³ where he stayed 40 days, being tempted by Satan. Wild animals were there also, but angels came and helped him.

¹⁴ After John had been put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee and preached the Good News from God. ¹⁵ “The right time has come,” he said, “and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!”

Other Readings: Genesis 9:8-15; Psalm 25:4-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22



LECTIO:

Temptation – we all experience it – so did Jesus. Mark sums up Jesus’ desert testing in just one sentence. Luke and Matthew tell us about the same event, but they give us the in-depth versions of the Devil, called Satan here, trying to tempt Jesus to sin. (Luke 4:1-13; Matthew 4:1-11)

Mark’s account only really gives us the headlines. Immediately after Jesus was baptised (Mark 1:9-11) the same Holy Spirit that came down on him as a dove now leads him out into the desert, apparently for Satan to tempt him.

From Genesis 2-3 we learn that being tempted by the Devil in whatever form, is part of being human. Jesus’ temptations were another way in which he shared the human experience.

In the New Testament we find ideas and characters we may already have discovered in the Old Testament. Jesus’ forty days in the desert is something like the forty years spent by the Israelites journeying in the desert after their escape from Egypt, or Exodus. The Israelites suffered temptations and dangers, but always had God’s help. The Book of Numbers describes some of the events.

In the Book of Job, Satan accuses Job in front of God. But God has a plan for Job, despite appearances to the contrary.

In both cases God promises and is faithful. Jesus too learns that God is faithful to his promises. Mark does not elaborate. But he seems to be saying that temptations are part of life for the Christian. The good news for us is that they can be overcome with God’s faithful and loving help.



MEDITATIO:

- Why do you think Jesus had to suffer these temptations? Does Hebrews 4:15 shed any light on this?
- How do you deal with temptations? Do you expect help from God?



ORATIO:

Jesus used Scripture to help him overcome the temptations he faced (Matthew 4:1-11). We can do the same. Speaking the words of the Bible aloud can strengthen the will and remind us of God’s help. Find a verse from today’s readings and make it your own prayer. You could write the words on a piece of paper and keep them beside your kettle. Pray them every time you make a drink.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Let us consider today’s other readings. In Genesis 9:8-15 God makes a covenant with Noah and all living creatures; he will never again send a flood to destroy the earth. When God set the flood in Noah’s day it rained for 40 days. We are reminded of this covenant every time we see a rainbow.

1 Peter 3:18-22 reminds us that Jesus was innocent and without sin. Not only did he withstand Satan’s temptations in the desert but also throughout the rest of his life on earth. Yet he died in our place so sinners like us could come to God.

LISTEN TO HIM

Mark 9:2-10

²Six days later Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain, where they were alone. As they looked on, a change came over Jesus, ³and his clothes became shining white – whiter than anyone in the world could wash them. ⁴Then the three disciples saw Elijah and Moses talking with Jesus.

⁵Peter spoke up and said to Jesus, “Teacher, how good it is that we are here! We will make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶He and the others were so frightened that he did not know what to say.

⁷Then a cloud appeared and covered them with its shadow, and a voice came from the cloud, “This is my own dear Son – listen to him!” ⁸They took a quick look round but did not see anyone else; only Jesus was with them.

⁹As they came down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has risen from death.”

¹⁰They obeyed his order, but among themselves they started discussing the matter, “What does this ‘rising from death’ mean?”

Other Readings: Genesis 22:1-18; Psalm 116:10, 15-19; Romans 8:31-34



LECTIO:

Jesus chooses just three of his disciples to share a very special event with him. It happens on top of a mountain – Jesus is transfigured, right there in front of them. There are four moments to look out for: a marked change in Jesus’ appearance; Moses and Elijah appearing with Jesus; the cloud that came down and the voice.

Mark says that Jesus and his clothes became brilliantly white and shone. He notes how the cloud covered the group and the mountain. Then there was the voice. It came from the cloud and declared Jesus, is ‘my own dear Son’ and added a command ‘listen to him’.

Christian tradition tells us the cloud is the Holy Spirit. The voice, speaking of ‘my Son’, is the Father. This episode is a revelation of the Triune God: one God in three persons.



MEDITATIO:

- What is Jesus’ purpose in allowing the disciples to share this incredible experience? Why does Mark tell us all about it?
- What do you think the disciples would have made of Jesus’ order not to discuss this event with anyone until after he had risen from the dead?
- In what ways can we ‘listen to him’ as God told the disciples to do?



ORATIO:

Today’s responsorial Psalm is a hymn of thanksgiving from a man saved by God from death. Join the Psalmist in giving thanks to God for saving you for eternal life.

Ask the Holy Spirit to overshadow you. To transform you so that people around you see something special in the way you live your life. Ask God to help you reflect more of Jesus to others.

Give thanks that we have the awesome privilege of saying ‘... I walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living’ Psalm 116:9. Ask God’s help so that this becomes a daily reality for you.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Two famous texts accompany today’s reading. In Genesis 22:1-18, God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham acts in complete faith and obedience. God intervenes at the very last moment to save Isaac and provides another sacrifice.

The second, Romans 8:31-34, reminds us that God’s love for us is so great that he did not spare his own Son, Jesus. Through Christ’s sacrificial death we can now be declared ‘not guilty’. This is ‘good news’ indeed! What a song of thanksgiving we can sing!

GOD'S WISDOM

John 2:13-25

¹³ It was almost time for the Passover Festival, so Jesus went to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ There in the Temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and pigeons, and also the moneychangers sitting at their tables. ¹⁵ So he made a whip from cords and drove all the animals out of the Temple, both the sheep and the cattle; he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins; ¹⁶ and he ordered those who sold the pigeons, "Take them out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market place!" ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that the scripture says, "My devotion to your house, O God, burns in me like a fire."

¹⁸ The Jewish authorities replied with a question, "What miracle can you perform to show us that you have the right to do this?"

¹⁹ Jesus answered, "Tear down this Temple, and in three days I will build it again."

²⁰ "Are you going to build it again in three days?" they asked him. "It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple!"

²¹ But the temple Jesus was speaking about was his body. ²² So when he was raised from death, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and what Jesus had said.

²³ While Jesus was in Jerusalem during the Passover Festival, many believed in him as they saw the miracles he performed. ²⁴ But Jesus did not trust himself to them, because he knew them all. ²⁵ There was no need for anyone to tell him about them, because he himself knew what was in their hearts.

Other Readings: Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19:7-10; 1 Corinthians 1:22-25



LECTIO:

The key question today is: 'Why should we believe in Jesus?' John the evangelist shows why a number of different people, including the disciples, believed or refused to believe in Jesus.

Jews from all over the world came to offer sacrifices in the Temple. They purchased animals for sacrifice in the Temple grounds. But Jesus saw past the convenience to the stall holder's money-grabbing attitude; they turned a holy place into a market place.

The disciples believed Jesus' actions in the Temple revealed a deep concern for God to be honoured. They interpreted Jesus' words in the light of Psalm 69:9 'For

zeal for your house consumes me' and they believed he came from God.

The Jewish authorities, however, saw Jesus' behaviour as a very serious offence. They demanded he show them a miracle to prove he came from God and with his authority. Jesus answered with a prophecy which no one understood at that time. The prophecy was that he would rise from the dead (verse 19).

This mysterious prophecy made a deep impression on his disciples. They remembered it and when Jesus' resurrection took place, they understood these words as the prophecy they were. The Jewish authorities on the other hand ridiculed his words, refusing to consider they had any other meaning than the obvious one.



MEDITATIO:

- What light does Mark's account (Mark 11:15-17) shed on our understanding of this event?
- The stallholders and the Temple authorities seem to have lost sight of, or certainly misunderstood, whom they were serving. How can we guard against this happening to us?
- Consider the attitude of the Jewish authorities compared to the disciples? What is their attitude to Jesus' words and actions? What can we learn from this?



ORATIO:

Jesus wanted to honour God in all things. Think about the week ahead and the TV programmes you watch or the jokes you tell. Do they honour God? Ask God to show you gently any area he might want to change over the coming weeks.



CONTEMPLATIO:

In the first reading, Exodus 20:1-17, God gives Moses the ten commandments, or Law, to the Israelites. Jesus' actions reflect his desire to honour God and respect the house of God. Our gospel reading shows that Jesus remained a mystery for many people and this is still true today.

In 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 Paul underlines this. The Jews want miracles, the Greeks want wisdom. The crucified Christ is offensive to the former and makes no sense to the latter. This reminds us that we must approach God with faith and a humble attitude for him to reveal himself to us.

GOD SENDS A SAVIOUR

John 3:14-21

¹⁴ As Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the desert, in the same way the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵ so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to be its judge, but to be its saviour.

¹⁸ Those who believe in the Son are not judged; but those who do not believe have already been judged, because they have not believed in God's only Son. ¹⁹ This is how the judgement works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. ²⁰ All those who do evil things hate the light and will not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God.

Other Readings: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Psalm 137:1-6; Ephesians 2:4-10



LECTIO:

Today's passage is set in the context of an encounter between Jesus and Nicodemus, a prominent religious leader.

John has a different style to Mark and often provides more detail. John tells us about encounters Jesus had with various individuals. Through these exchanges we have insights into Jesus' personality and his mission.

Here Jesus draws a parallel between the reason he came to earth and an event from the time of Moses. As an expert in the scriptures, Nicodemus would have understood the story. You can read the full account in Numbers 21:4-9. The Israelites sinned and God sent poisonous snakes among them. They repented and called out for help. God told Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole. When they looked at this snake they were healed.

In the same way Jesus was lifted up and put on a pole, the cross. For the Israelites that had been bitten, the sight of the bronze snake may still have been frightening. Certainly for the Jews the sight of a man on a cross was appalling.



MEDITATIO:

- We suggest you read our text within the wider context of John 3. Is there any link between Jesus and Nicodemus' discussion about the need to be born again and the love of God for people? Do you feel like Nicodemus and need more explanation? Or have you already received spiritual new life in Jesus?



ORATIO:

John 3:16 is one of the most quoted verses in the Bible. Read this verse over several times. Ask God to deepen your understanding of what this promise means for you and people you know. Listen in case God wants to speak to you in a special way.



CONTEMPLATIO:

What insights do today's two readings, 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23 and Ephesians 2:4-10 add to the Gospel reading when we apply them to Jesus? In Chronicles we see that then, as today, some people will make fun of God's servants and ignore his words. The writer to the Ephesians makes it clear that while our salvation is based solely on God's grace – not our efforts or deeds – God has created us for a lifetime of good deeds which he has prepared for us in advance.

DRAWN TO JESUS

John 12:20-33

²⁰ Some Greeks were among those who had gone to Jerusalem to worship during the festival. ²¹ They went to Philip (he was from Bethsaida in Galilee) and said, "Sir, we want to see Jesus."

²² Philip went and told Andrew, and the two of them went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, "The hour has now come for the Son of Man to receive great glory. ²⁴ I am telling you the truth: a grain of wheat remains no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, then it produces many grains. ²⁵ Those who love their own life will lose it; those who hate their own life in this world will keep it for life eternal. ²⁶ Whoever wants to serve me must follow me, so that my servant will be with me where I am. And my Father will honour anyone who serves me.

²⁷ "Now my heart is troubled – and what shall I say? Shall I say, 'Father, do not let this hour come upon me'? But that is why I came – so that I might go through this hour of suffering. ²⁸ Father, bring glory to your name!"

Then a voice spoke from heaven, "I have brought glory to it, and I will do so again."

²⁹ The crowd standing there heard the voice, and some of them said it was thunder, while others said, "An angel spoke to him!"

³⁰ But Jesus said to them, "It was not for my sake that this voice spoke, but for yours. ³¹ Now is the time for this world to be judged; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown. ³² When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me."

³³ (In saying this he indicated the kind of death he was going to suffer.)

Other Readings: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-2, 10-13; Hebrews 5:7-9



LECTIO:

Only John tells us this story about the Greek visitors. In John's Gospel, Jesus entered Jerusalem accompanied by a huge crowd who honoured him as he entered the city.

Among the crowds were some Greeks and they asked Philip if he could arrange for them to meet Jesus. This encounter with these 'foreigners' stirs Jesus' compassion. He recalls once again that his mission is for people of all nations.

On the face of it Jesus was the celebrity of the day. But Jesus knew this hour of seeming triumph would soon crumble into an hour of bitter humiliation and unbearable pain. Within days these very same crowds would be calling for his crucifixion and even his closest friends would desert him. You can read John's full description in John 17-19.

Jesus drops a hint to his disciples about his inner turmoil, which they remember after his death. While Jesus is speaking about his 'hour of suffering' God intervenes with an audible voice from heaven, verse 28. It appears some people hear the voice and others think it is thunder, but Jesus makes it clear (verse 30) that God's words are for the peoples' benefit rather than to reassure him.



MEDITATIO:

- How does Jesus hint at his death on the cross in this reading? Jesus also mentions the great principle that guided him in life. What is this principle?
- Who is Jesus referring to when he speaks about the ruler of this world being overthrown (verse 31)?
- In what ways do you serve and follow Jesus?



ORATIO:

Jesus promises he will draw all men to himself when he is lifted up on the cross, verse 32. Have you experienced Jesus drawing you closer to him? Sometimes this sort of loving closeness can be scary. Ask Jesus to help you love and trust him as he so obviously loved and trusted his Father.

Use the words from today's Psalm, especially verse 10, every day this week as your own prayer, 'Create a pure heart in me, O God, and put a new and loyal spirit in me.'



CONTEMPLATIO:

Today's other readings throw more light on Jesus' mission to save humankind. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 God speaks of a new covenant with the Jewish people and, through them, all peoples so, 'all will know him' (verse 34).

In Hebrews 5 we hear of Jesus' willingness to suffer the humiliation of the cross because it is God's plan for him. Jesus accepted his suffering before it started. At the root of it all is God's passionate love for frail humanity including you and me. How does God's great love change your relationship with him?

TRUE SACRIFICE

Mark 14:1-15:47

Mark 14

¹ It was now two days before the Festival of Passover and Unleavened Bread. The chief priests and the teachers of the Law were looking for a way to arrest Jesus secretly and put him to death. ² “We must not do it during the festival,” they said, “or the people might riot.”

³ Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon, a man who had suffered from a dreaded skin disease. While Jesus was eating, a woman came in with an alabaster jar full of a very expensive perfume made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus’ head. ⁴ Some of the people there became angry and said to one another, “What was the use of wasting the perfume? ⁵ It could have been sold for more than three hundred silver coins and the money given to the poor!” And they criticized her harshly.

⁶ But Jesus said, “Leave her alone! Why are you bothering her? She has done a fine and beautiful thing for me. ⁷ You will always have poor people with you, and any time you want to, you can help them. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She did what she could; she poured perfume on my body to prepare it ahead of time for burial. ⁹ Now, I assure you that wherever the gospel is preached all over the world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”

¹⁰ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went off to the chief priests in order to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹ They were pleased to hear what he had to say, and promised to give him money. So Judas started looking for a good chance to hand Jesus over to them.

¹² On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the day the lambs for the Passover meal were killed, Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go and get the Passover meal ready for you?”

¹³ Then Jesus sent two of them with these instructions: “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him ¹⁴ to the house he enters, and say to the owner of the house: ‘The Teacher says, Where is the room where my disciples and I will eat the Passover meal?’ ¹⁵ Then he will show you a large upstairs room, prepared and furnished, where you will get everything ready for us.”

¹⁶ The disciples left, went to the city, and found everything just as Jesus had told them; and they prepared the Passover meal.

¹⁷ When it was evening, Jesus came with the twelve disciples. ¹⁸ While they were at the table eating, Jesus said, “I tell you that one of you will betray me – one who is eating with me.”

¹⁹ The disciples were upset and began to ask him, one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, do you?”

²⁰ Jesus answered, “It will be one of you twelve, one who dips his bread in the

dish with me. ²¹ The Son of Man will die as the Scriptures say he will; but how terrible for that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would have been better for that man if he had never been born!”

²² While they were eating, Jesus took a piece of bread, gave a prayer of thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. “Take it,” he said, “this is my body.”

²³ Then he took a cup, gave thanks to God, and handed it to them; and they all drank from it. ²⁴ Jesus said, “This is my blood which is poured out for many, my blood which seals God’s covenant. ²⁵ I tell you, I will never again drink this wine until the day I drink the new wine in the Kingdom of God.”

²⁶ Then they sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives.

²⁷ Jesus said to them, “All of you will run away and leave me, for the scripture says, ‘God will kill the shepherd, and the sheep will all be scattered.’ ²⁸ But after I am raised to life, I will go to Galilee ahead of you.”

²⁹ Peter answered, “I will never leave you, even though all the rest do!”

³⁰ Jesus said to Peter, “I tell you that before the cock crows twice tonight, you will say three times that you do not know me.”

³¹ Peter answered even more strongly, “I will never say that, even if I have to die with you!” And all the other disciples said the same thing.

³² They came to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³ He took Peter, James, and John with him. Distress and anguish came over him, ³⁴ and he said to them, “The sorrow in my heart is so great that it almost crushes me. Stay here and keep watch.”

³⁵ He went a little farther on, threw himself on the ground, and prayed that, if possible, he might not have to go through that time of suffering. ³⁶ “Father,” he prayed, “my Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet not what I want, but what you want.”

³⁷ Then he returned and found the three disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Weren’t you able to stay awake even for one hour?” ³⁸ And he said to them, “Keep watch, and pray that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

³⁹ He went away once more and prayed, saying the same words. ⁴⁰ Then he came back to the disciples and found them asleep; they could not keep their eyes open. And they did not know what to say to him.

⁴¹ When he came back the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come! Look, the Son of Man is now being handed over to the power of sinners. ⁴² Get up, let us go. Look, here is the man who is betraying me!”

⁴³ Jesus was still speaking when Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, and sent by the chief priests, the teachers of the Law, and the elders. ⁴⁴ The traitor had given the crowd a signal: "The man I kiss is the one you want. Arrest him and take him away under guard."

⁴⁵ As soon as Judas arrived, he went up to Jesus and said, "Teacher!" and kissed him. ⁴⁶ So they arrested Jesus and held him tight. ⁴⁷ But one of those standing there drew his sword and struck at the High Priest's slave, cutting off his ear. ⁴⁸ Then Jesus spoke up and said to them, "Did you have to come with swords and clubs to capture me, as though I were an outlaw? ⁴⁹ Day after day I was with you teaching in the Temple, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must come true."

⁵⁰ Then all the disciples left him and ran away.

⁵¹ A certain young man, dressed only in a linen cloth, was following Jesus. They tried to arrest him, ⁵² but he ran away naked, leaving the cloth behind.

⁵³ Then Jesus was taken to the High Priest's house, where all the chief priests, the elders, and the teachers of the Law were gathering. ⁵⁴ Peter followed from a distance and went into the courtyard of the High Priest's house. There he sat down with the guards, keeping himself warm by the fire. ⁵⁵ The chief priests and the whole Council tried to find some evidence against Jesus in order to put him to death, but they could not find any. ⁵⁶ Many witnesses told lies against Jesus, but their stories did not agree.

⁵⁷ Then some men stood up and told this lie against Jesus: ⁵⁸ "We heard him say, 'I will tear down this Temple which men have made, and after three days I will build one that is not made by men.'" ⁵⁹ Not even they, however, could make their stories agree.

⁶⁰ The High Priest stood up in front of them all and questioned Jesus, "Have you no answer to the accusation they bring against you?"

⁶¹ But Jesus kept quiet and would not say a word. Again the High Priest questioned him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed God?"

⁶² "I am," answered Jesus, "and you will all see the Son of Man seated on the right of the Almighty and coming with the clouds of heaven!"

⁶³ The High Priest tore his robes and said, "We don't need any more witnesses!"

⁶⁴ You heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?"

They all voted against him: he was guilty and should be put to death.

⁶⁵ Some of them began to spit on Jesus, and they blindfolded him and hit him. "Guess who hit you!" they said. And the guards took him and slapped him.

⁶⁶ Peter was still down in the courtyard when one of the High Priest's servant women came by. ⁶⁷ When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked straight at

him and said, "You, too, were with Jesus of Nazareth."

⁶⁸ But he denied it. "I don't know...I don't understand what you are talking about," he answered, and went out into the passage. Just then a cock crowed.

⁶⁹ The servant woman saw him there and began to repeat to the bystanders, "He is one of them!" ⁷⁰ But Peter denied it again.

A little while later the bystanders accused Peter again, "You can't deny that you are one of them, because you, too, are from Galilee."

⁷¹ Then Peter said, "I swear that I am telling the truth! May God punish me if I am not! I do not know the man you are talking about!"

⁷² Just then a cock crowed a second time, and Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, "Before the cock crows twice, you will say three times that you do not know me." And he broke down and cried.

Mark 15

¹ Early in the morning the chief priests met hurriedly with the elders, the teachers of the Law, and the whole Council, and made their plans. They put Jesus in chains, led him away, and handed him over to Pilate. ² Pilate questioned him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus answered, "So you say."

³ The chief priests were accusing Jesus of many things, ⁴ so Pilate questioned him again, "Aren't you going to answer? Listen to all their accusations!"

⁵ Again Jesus refused to say a word, and Pilate was amazed.

⁶ At every Passover Festival Pilate was in the habit of setting free any one prisoner the people asked for. ⁷ At that time a man named Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder in the riot. ⁸ When the crowd gathered and began to ask Pilate for the usual favour, ⁹ he asked them, "Do you want me to set free for you the king of the Jews?" ¹⁰ He knew very well that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him because they were jealous.

¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to ask, instead, for Pilate to set Barabbas free for them. ¹² Pilate spoke again to the crowd, "What, then, do you want me to do with the one you call the king of the Jews?"

¹³ They shouted back, "Crucify him!"

¹⁴ "But what crime has he committed?" Pilate asked.

They shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

¹⁵ Pilate wanted to please the crowd, so he set Barabbas free for them. Then he had Jesus whipped and handed him over to be crucified.

¹⁶ The soldiers took Jesus inside to the courtyard of the governor's palace and called together the rest of the company. ¹⁷ They put a purple robe on Jesus, made a crown out of thorny branches, and put it on his head. ¹⁸ Then they began to salute him: "Long live the King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ They beat him over the head with a stick, spat on him, fell on their knees, and bowed down to him. ²⁰ When they had finished mocking him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes back on him. Then they led him out to crucify him.

²¹ On the way they met a man named Simon, who was coming into the city from the country, and the soldiers forced him to carry Jesus' cross. (Simon was from Cyrene and was the father of Alexander and Rufus.) ²² They took Jesus to a place called Golgotha, which means "The Place of the Skull". ²³ There they tried to give him wine mixed with a drug called myrrh, but Jesus would not drink it. ²⁴ Then they crucified him and divided his clothes among themselves, throwing dice to see who would get which piece of clothing. ²⁵ It was nine o'clock in the morning when they crucified him. ²⁶ The notice of the accusation against him said: "The King of the Jews". ²⁷ They also crucified two bandits with Jesus, one on his right and the other on his left.

²⁹ People passing by shook their heads and hurled insults at Jesus: "Aha! You were going to tear down the Temple and build it up again in three days! ³⁰ Now come down from the cross and save yourself!"

³¹ In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the Law jeered at Jesus, saying to each other, "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! ³² Let us see the Messiah, the king of Israel, come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him!"

And the two who were crucified with Jesus insulted him also.

³³ At noon the whole country was covered with darkness, which lasted for three hours. ³⁴ At three o'clock Jesus cried out with a loud shout, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why did you abandon me?"

³⁵ Some of the people there heard him and said, "Listen, he is calling for Elijah!"

³⁶ One of them ran up with a sponge, soaked it in cheap wine, and put it on the end of a stick. Then he held it up to Jesus' lips and said, "Wait! Let us see if Elijah is coming to bring him down from the cross!"

³⁷ With a loud cry Jesus died.

³⁸ The curtain hanging in the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. ³⁹ The army officer who was standing there in front of the cross saw how Jesus had died. "This man was really the Son of God!" he said.

⁴⁰ Some women were there, looking on from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and of Joseph, and Salome.

⁴¹ They had followed Jesus while he was in Galilee and had helped him. Many other women who had come to Jerusalem with him were there also.

⁴²⁻⁴³ It was towards evening when Joseph of Arimathea arrived. He was a respected member of the Council, who was waiting for the coming of the Kingdom of God. It was Preparation day (that is, the day before the Sabbath), so Joseph went boldly into the presence of Pilate and asked him for the body of Jesus. ⁴⁴ Pilate was surprised to hear that Jesus was already dead. He called the army officer and asked him if Jesus had been dead a long time. ⁴⁵ After hearing the officer's report, Pilate told Joseph he could have the body. ⁴⁶ Joseph bought a linen sheet, took the body down, wrapped it in the sheet, and placed it in a tomb which had been dug out of solid rock. Then he rolled a large stone across the entrance to the tomb. ⁴⁷ Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph were watching and saw where the body of Jesus was placed.

TRUE SACRIFICE

Mark 14:1-15:47

Other Readings: Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:7-8, 16-19, 22-23; Philippians 2:6-11



LECTIO:

In our preparation for Holy Week today we read Mark's account from Holy Thursday right through to Jesus' crucifixion. This was probably the first gospel account written down. For Mark, the passion was all about what happened between Jesus and God whom he calls 'my Father'.

It's all very real. In 14:35-36 Jesus asks his Father to save him from the ordeal. In 15:34, Jesus dying on the cross complains to God for having abandoned him, using the words of Psalm 22:1.

Most of the characters appear petty, cruel, and irreverent. But Peter's experience is well reported: he is presented as generous and loving, but weak when the time comes for him to testify to his love of Jesus (14:66-72).

Mark uses very negative terms to sum up Judas' actions. Judas is offhand in the opening episode where Mary, Martha's sister (John 12:3), pours very expensive perfume on Jesus. Jesus sees her action not only as a generous act but also as a prophecy of his death (14:3-9).

The Jewish leaders remain detached and heartless throughout the process and maintain their doctrinal position despite the naked, dying man in front of them (14:43-65).

The Roman soldiers carry out the physical punishment of Jesus. During the flagellation session they make jokes and appear indifferent to human suffering. But their chief, the centurion, was the first to confess that Jesus was the Son of God (15:16-20, 39).

Indifference seems to be a key word. So many people did nothing; they just gawped at a dying man.

Jesus' female disciples show their concern practically. They are present at the crucifixion despite the obvious heartache this must have caused them. They are also present to witness to Jesus' burial place (15:40, 41, 47).



MEDITATIO:

- Choose three words to describe Jesus as he is depicted in the passion.
- Reflect on what it must have been like for Jesus to have experienced separation from his Father.
- Consider the amazing words of Philippians 2:6-11.



ORATIO:

The lady who poured the bottle of perfume over Jesus took a chance. She risked looking foolish in front of others, perhaps even Jesus himself. But she loved him and this was how she showed it. Perhaps you could create a 'bottle of perfume' for yourself. Take a sheet of paper, write a love letter to Jesus and then offer it to him in prayer. Or offer him the words of a favourite Psalm or hymn that helps you express your worship.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Through the first reading, Isaiah portrays Jesus as the faithful servant who puts up no resistance to God's will for him (Isaiah 50:4-7). The second reading also comments on Jesus who emptied himself to become man and undergo the humiliation of death (Philippians 2:6-11). To do this Jesus had to learn to know and trust his Father. What steps can you take towards loving obedience? How can you create some daily quality time with God?

SERVANT AND LORD

John 13:1-15

¹It was now the day before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved those in the world who were his own, and he loved them to the very end.

²Jesus and his disciples were at supper. The Devil had already put into the heart of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, the thought of betraying Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had given him complete power; he knew that he had come from God and was going to God. ⁴So he rose from the table, took off his outer garment, and tied a towel round his waist. ⁵Then he poured some water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel round his waist. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Are you going to wash my feet, Lord?"

⁷Jesus answered him, "You do not understand now what I am doing, but you will understand later."

⁸Peter declared, "Never at any time will you wash my feet!"

"If I do not wash your feet," Jesus answered, "you will no longer be my disciple."

⁹Simon Peter answered, "Lord, do not wash only my feet, then! Wash my hands and head, too!"

¹⁰Jesus said, "Those who have had a bath are completely clean and do not have to wash themselves, except for their feet. All of you are clean – all except one."

¹¹(Jesus already knew who was going to betray him; that is why he said, "All of you, except one, are clean.")

¹²After Jesus had washed their feet, he put his outer garment back on and returned to his place at the table. "Do you understand what I have just done to you?" he asked. ¹³"You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because that is what I am. ¹⁴I, your Lord and Teacher, have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set an example for you, so that you will do just what I have done for you.

Other Readings: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116: 12-13, 15-18;

1 Corinthians 11:23-26



LECTIO:

The evangelist John is our guide to the first Eucharist meal and with him we have detail and stories we don't find in the other three Gospels at all.

John tells us how Jesus spent an intimate evening with his disciples before facing the testing events in the garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus opens his heart to his disciples. John is the only writer to lift the curtain on the private time they shared. He explains how Jesus washes the feet of his disciples and close friends.

To understand Jesus' thinking we need to consider two things. Washing someone's feet was a special courtesy given to a guest by the host. The shocking thing about Jesus' actions, however, was that this was usually done by house servants or slaves – not the master! This explains Peter's reaction when initially he refuses but Jesus insists Peter must allow him to perform this service.

Jesus needed to give his disciples a very important lesson – they must serve one another just as he serves them.



MEDITATIO:

- What did this gesture of washing the disciples' feet imply? Is Jesus' lesson about service still valid?
- Consider how can we apply this service of 'washing feet' in a practical way to the people around us today? Like Peter we also have to learn how to receive the gift of service.



ORATIO:

God has put us into communities with friends and neighbours. Ask him to show you someone you can offer a gift of service or act of kindness. It may even be for someone you don't know and may never see again. Listen to the Lord and let the Holy Spirit guide you. Ask God to show you some of the good deeds he has already prepared for you (Ephesians 2:10).



CONTEMPLATIO:

Exodus 12 is included today to help us understand the origin of the Passover evening. It takes us step-by-step through the directions the Israelites were to follow on that last night in Egypt if they wanted to leave their life of slavery for the Promised Land.

Jesus established what we call the Eucharist during his celebration of the Passover meal. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul includes the description from the other three Gospels about the same event. It seems Paul was repeating the text of some liturgies held in the Churches of his time.

A NEW WAY

John 18:1-19:42

John 18

¹ After Jesus had said this prayer, he left with his disciples and went across the brook called Kidron. There was a garden in that place, and Jesus and his disciples went in. ² Judas, the traitor, knew where it was, because many times Jesus had met there with his disciples. ³ So Judas went to the garden, taking with him a group of Roman soldiers, and some temple guards sent by the chief priests and the Pharisees; they were armed and carried lanterns and torches. ⁴ Jesus knew everything that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward and asked them, “Who is it you are looking for?”

⁵ “Jesus of Nazareth,” they answered.

“I am he,” he said.

Judas, the traitor, was standing there with them. ⁶ When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they moved back and fell to the ground. ⁷ Again Jesus asked them, “Who is it you are looking for?”

“Jesus of Nazareth,” they said.

⁸ “I have already told you that I am he,” Jesus said. “If, then, you are looking for me, let these others go.” ⁹ (He said this so that what he had said might come true: “Father, I have not lost even one of those you gave me.”)

¹⁰ Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the High Priest’s slave, cutting off his right ear. The name of the slave was Malchus. ¹¹ Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back in its place! Do you think that I will not drink the cup of suffering which my Father has given me?”

¹² Then the Roman soldiers with their commanding officer and the Jewish guards arrested Jesus, bound him, ¹³ and took him first to Annas. He was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was High Priest that year. ¹⁴ It was Caiaphas who had advised the Jewish authorities that it was better that one man should die for all the people.

¹⁵ Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. That other disciple was well known to the High Priest, so he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the High Priest’s house, ¹⁶ while Peter stayed outside by the gate. Then the other disciple went back out, spoke to the girl at the gate, and brought Peter inside. ¹⁷ The girl at the gate said to Peter, “Aren’t you also one of the disciples of that man?”

“No, I am not,” answered Peter.

¹⁸ It was cold, so the servants and guards had built a charcoal fire and were standing round it, warming themselves. So Peter went over and stood with them, warming himself.

¹⁹ The High Priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching.

²⁰ Jesus answered, “I have always spoken publicly to everyone; all my teaching was done in the synagogues and in the Temple, where all the people come together.

I have never said anything in secret. ²¹ Why, then, do you question me? Question the people who heard me. Ask them what I told them – they know what I said.”

²² When Jesus said this, one of the guards there slapped him and said, “How dare you talk like that to the High Priest!”

²³ Jesus answered him, “If I have said anything wrong, tell everyone here what it was. But if I am right in what I have said, why do you hit me?”

²⁴ Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the High Priest.

²⁵ Peter was still standing there keeping himself warm. So the others said to him, “Aren’t you also one of the disciples of that man?”

But Peter denied it. “No, I am not,” he said.

²⁶ One of the High Priest’s slaves, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, spoke up. “Didn’t I see you with him in the garden?” he asked.

²⁷ Again Peter said “No” – and at once a cock crowed.

²⁸ Early in the morning Jesus was taken from Caiaphas’ house to the governor’s palace. The Jewish authorities did not go inside the palace, for they wanted to keep themselves ritually clean, in order to be able to eat the Passover meal. ²⁹ So Pilate went outside to them and asked, “What do you accuse this man of?”

³⁰ Their answer was, “We would not have brought him to you if he had not committed a crime.”

³¹ Pilate said to them, “Then you yourselves take him and try him according to your own law.”

They replied, “We are not allowed to put anyone to death.” ³² (This happened in order to make the words of Jesus come true, the words he used when he indicated the kind of death he would die.)

³³ Pilate went back into the palace and called Jesus. “Are you the King of the Jews?” he asked him.

³⁴ Jesus answered, “Does this question come from you or have others told you about me?”

³⁵ Pilate replied, “Do you think I am a Jew? It was your own people and the chief priests who handed you over to me. What have you done?”

³⁶ Jesus said, “My kingdom does not belong to this world; if my kingdom belonged to this world, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish authorities. No, my kingdom does not belong here!”

³⁷ So Pilate asked him, “Are you a king, then?”

Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. I was born and came into the world for this one purpose, to speak about the truth. Whoever belongs to the truth listens to me.”

³⁸ “And what is truth?” Pilate asked.

Then Pilate went back outside to the people and said to them, “I cannot find any reason to condemn him. ³⁹ But according to the custom you have, I always set free a prisoner for you during the Passover. Do you want me to set free for you the King of the Jews?”

⁴⁰ They answered him with a shout, “No, not him! We want Barabbas!” (Barabbas was a bandit.)

John 19

¹ Then Pilate took Jesus and had him whipped. ² The soldiers made a crown out of thorny branches and put it on his head; then they put a purple robe on him ³ and came to him and said, “Long live the King of the Jews!” And they went up and slapped him.

⁴ Pilate went out once more and said to the crowd, “Look, I will bring him out here to you to let you see that I cannot find any reason to condemn him.” ⁵ So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Look! Here is the man!”

⁶ When the chief priests and the temple guards saw him, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

Pilate said to them, “You take him, then, and crucify him. I find no reason to condemn him.”

⁷ The crowd answered back, “We have a law that says he ought to die, because he claimed to be the Son of God.”

⁸ When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid. ⁹ He went back into the palace and asked Jesus, “Where do you come from?”

But Jesus did not answer. ¹⁰ Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Remember, I have the authority to set you free and also to have you crucified.”

¹¹ Jesus answered, “You have authority over me only because it was given to you by God. So the man who handed me over to you is guilty of a worse sin.”

¹² When Pilate heard this, he tried to find a way to set Jesus free. But the crowd shouted back, “If you set him free, that means that you are not the Emperor’s friend! Anyone who claims to be a king is a rebel against the Emperor!”

¹³ When Pilate heard these words, he took Jesus outside and sat down on the judge’s seat in the place called “The Stone Pavement”. (In Hebrew the name is “Gabbatha”.) ¹⁴ It was then almost noon of the day before the Passover. Pilate said to the people, “Here is your king!”

¹⁵ They shouted back, “Kill him! Kill him! Crucify him!”

Pilate asked them, “Do you want me to crucify your king?”

The chief priests answered, “The only king we have is the Emperor!”

¹⁶ Then Pilate handed Jesus over to them to be crucified.

So they took charge of Jesus. ¹⁷ He went out, carrying his cross, and came to “The Place of the Skull”, as it is called. (In Hebrew it is called “Golgotha”.) ¹⁸ There they crucified him; and they also crucified two other men, one on each side, with Jesus between them. ¹⁹ Pilate wrote a notice and had it put on the cross. “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews”, is what he wrote. ²⁰ Many people read it, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far from the city. The notice was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. ²¹ The chief priests said to Pilate, “Do not write ‘The

King of the Jews’, but rather, ‘This man said, I am the King of the Jews.’”

²² Pilate answered, “What I have written stays written.”

²³ After the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier. They also took the robe, which was made of one piece of woven cloth without any seams in it. ²⁴ The soldiers said to one another, “Let’s not tear it; let’s throw dice to see who will get it.” This happened in order to make the scripture come true:

“They divided my clothes among themselves and gambled for my robe.”

And this is what the soldiers did.

²⁵ Standing close to Jesus’ cross were his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ Jesus saw his mother and the disciple he loved standing there; so he said to his mother, “He is your son.”

²⁷ Then he said to the disciple, “She is your mother.” From that time the disciple took her to live in his home.

²⁸ Jesus knew that by now everything had been completed; and in order to make the scripture come true, he said, “I am thirsty.”

²⁹ A bowl was there, full of cheap wine; so a sponge was soaked in the wine, put on a stalk of hyssop, and lifted up to his lips. ³⁰ Jesus drank the wine and said, “It is finished!”

Then he bowed his head and died.

³¹ Then the Jewish authorities asked Pilate to allow them to break the legs of the men who had been crucified, and to take the bodies down from the crosses. They requested this because it was Friday, and they did not want the bodies to stay on the crosses on the Sabbath, since the coming Sabbath was especially holy. ³² So the soldiers went and broke the legs of the first man and then of the other man who had been crucified with Jesus. ³³ But when they came to Jesus, they saw that he was already dead, so they did not break his legs. ³⁴ One of the soldiers, however, plunged his spear into Jesus’ side, and at once blood and water poured out. ³⁵ (The one who saw this happen has spoken of it, so that you also may believe. What he said is true, and he knows that he speaks the truth.) ³⁶ This was done to make the scripture come true: “Not one of his bones will be broken.” ³⁷ And there is another scripture that says, “People will look at him whom they pierced.”

³⁸ After this, Joseph, who was from the town of Arimathea, asked Pilate if he could take Jesus’ body. (Joseph was a follower of Jesus, but in secret, because he was afraid of the Jewish authorities.) Pilate told him he could have the body, so Joseph went and took it away. ³⁹ Nicodemus, who at first had gone to see Jesus at night, went with Joseph, taking with him about 30 kilogrammes of spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes. ⁴⁰ The two men took Jesus’ body and wrapped it in linen with the spices according to the Jewish custom of preparing a body for burial.

⁴¹ There was a garden in the place where Jesus had been put to death, and in it there was a new tomb where no one had ever been buried. ⁴² Since it was the day before the Sabbath and because the tomb was close by, they placed Jesus’ body there.

A NEW WAY

John 18:1-19:42

*Other Readings: Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 31:1, 5, 11-12, 14-16, 24;
Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9*

LECTIO:

John tells us about the passion in his own way. He offers us a different perspective to the other gospel writers.

He shows Jesus suffering punishment from the soldiers and Jews (18:13, 22; 19:1-3). But somehow Jesus is in charge of the situation. He is almost the judge of his judges.

John includes two people not specifically mentioned in the other passion narratives. John mentions Mary, Jesus' mother, and 'the disciple he loved', usually identified as John himself.

John also writes about seeing the soldier pierce Jesus' body with his spear to ensure he is dead (19:35). But he puts this in the third person, 'his testimony is true', so it is not so obvious he is writing about himself.

Then we meet Joseph of Arimathea, who asks Pilate for Jesus' body, and Nicodemus (19:38-40). The two men bury Jesus in a new tomb close to where he died. They were both important Jewish council members and also secret disciples of Jesus.

God the Father is not mentioned directly in this passion narrative. Yet we know he guided this holy story towards its tragic but glorious end. Or is it a beginning?

MEDITATIO:

- What is the role of Pilate in the passion narrative (19:1-6)? Why was the disciple who stood next to Mary, beneath the cross, not mentioned by name?
- What did Jesus mean when he said 'it is finished'? What did he achieve for us on the cross?
- Jesus fulfils over 18 major prophecies in the passion narratives. Why not consider a few of them? What does this tell us about God?

ORATIO:

When Jesus died on the cross the veil in the temple tore in two (Luke 24:45) symbolising the opening of the way into the presence of God. Hebrews 4:16 tells us we can now come boldly into God's presence. Take advantage of this incredible privilege right now. Thank Jesus for all he achieved for us at the cross.

CONTEMPLATIO:

As we reflect on Jesus' sacrificial death let us consider the message from today's other readings.

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12 paints an amazing portrait of the 'suffering servant'. Consider the ways Jesus fulfils this role and these wonderful promises. Use some of these verses to give thanks and ignite your prayers.

Hebrews (4:14-16 and 5:7-9) offer us great encouragement as well as a challenge. Firstly we can be encouraged that Jesus understands the temptations we face. He overcame every one. His grace and mercy are available to us 'just when we need it' (Hebrews 4:16). Jesus also provides us with a challenging example of complete obedience and humility even through suffering. Unlike priests in the Old Testament who repeatedly offered animal sacrifices, Jesus offers himself as the sacrifice once and for all time as the punishment for our sin.

SEE AND BELIEVE

John 20:1-9

¹Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been taken away from the entrance. ²She went running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and told them, “They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!”

³Then Peter and the other disciple went to the tomb. ⁴The two of them were running, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵He bent over and saw the linen wrappings, but he did not go in. ⁶Behind him came Simon Peter, and he went straight into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there ⁷and the cloth which had been round Jesus’ head. It was not lying with the linen wrappings but was rolled up by itself. ⁸Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in; he saw and believed. ⁹(They still did not understand the scripture which said that he must rise from death.)

Other Readings: Acts 10:34, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Colossians 3:1-4



LECTIO:

This is a compelling narrative – Jesus’ body has disappeared. Mary Magdalene makes the discovery. You can read about her encounter with Jesus in the verses following today’s reading.

So this passage focuses mainly on the two disciples: Peter and another whom tradition identifies as the apostle John.

The narrator tells us that John believes as soon as he sees the abandoned linen and the cloth which covered Jesus’ head in the grave. What caused John to believe Jesus is alive? Some authors believe it was the folding of the grave clothes in a particular style – Jesus’ style, one that John recognised. Whoever had done this was not dead but alive. Surely this must be Jesus. This was John’s first encounter with the risen Christ.

Did John share his belief with Peter? We don’t know. All we are told is that the disciples still did not understand the Scriptures which said he must rise from the dead. But this would soon change.

Mary Magdalene, Peter, John and the other disciples meet the risen Christ face to face in the verses following today’s reading in John’s account.

The eye witness accounts of these disciples are fundamental to the faith of Christians. They knew Jesus died on the cross, they knew precisely where he was buried and they each met with the risen Christ. These encounters with the risen Jesus confirmed their faith in the truth of the Scriptures: because they knew what was said and prophesied was the true word of God.



MEDITATIO:

- Imagine what thoughts and emotions Mary Magdalene might have had when she discovered the empty tomb.
- Consider the full significance of Jesus being raised from the dead. Why is it essential to Christian faith?
- How would you explain the significance of the events of Easter to a friend?



ORATIO:

Over this next week pray these three verses from Psalm 118. Verse 24 ‘This is the day of the Lord’s victory; let us be happy, let us celebrate! Verse 22 ‘The stone which the builders rejected as worthless turned out to be the most important of all.’ Verse 1 ‘Give thanks to the Lord, because he is good, and his love is eternal.’ Listen for the Lord to say something more to you and take the opportunity to give him thanks in your own words.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Today’s first reading Acts 10: 34, 37-43 continues the theme of being witnesses. Peter now boldly proclaims that God raised Jesus from the dead. He preaches the gospel so that people can have their sins forgiven by believing in Jesus.

In Colossians 3:1-4 we read how in Christ we have experienced our own ‘resurrection’ into a new spiritual life. So we should live in the light of eternal values rather than temporary earthly concerns.

THE RISEN CHRIST

John 20:19-31

¹⁹ It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then Jesus came and stood among them. "Peace be with you," he said. ²⁰ After saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." ²² Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive people's sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

²⁴ One of the twelve disciples, Thomas (called the Twin), was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

Thomas said to them, "Unless I see the scars of the nails in his hands and put my finger on those scars and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later the disciples were together again indoors, and Thomas was with them. The doors were locked, but Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and look at my hands; then stretch out your hand and put it in my side. Stop your doubting, and believe!"

²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"

²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Do you believe because you see me? How happy are those who believe without seeing me!"

³⁰ In his disciples' presence Jesus performed many other miracles which are not written down in this book. ³¹ But these have been written in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through your faith in him you may have life.

Other Readings: Acts 4:32-35; Psalm 118:2-4, 15-18, 22-24; 1 John 5:1-6



LECTIO:

John provides us with a description about the appearance of the risen Christ to his disciples. Many such accounts circulated among the Christians living in Jerusalem in the first few days after his death, about 30 AD. The Gospel writers then used these same stories for teaching.

John takes us to a Sunday meeting with the disciples when all of a sudden Jesus appears among them. The disciples are overjoyed. Jesus sends them to spread the gospel and tells them to receive the Holy Spirit.

Sunday Gospel Readings with Lectio Divina Year B: Mark

Unfortunately, one of the 'twelve', Thomas, was not there to share the experience. When the others tell him they have seen the living Lord Jesus, he doesn't believe them. Rather brashly he declares he will only believe if he can touch the nail scars in Jesus' hands and the scar in his side.

The community meet again the next Sunday and Thomas is with them. The Lord appears and greets them. Shockingly, he invites Thomas to probe his wounds by putting his fingers in the torn hands and his entire hand in the hole in Jesus' side.

Did Thomas do it? We don't know. It appears that seeing Jesus was enough. So he too declares Jesus to be his Lord and his God.

Thomas made a confession of faith because he saw the risen Christ. Jesus recognises all those who come after and still believe without seeing him physically.



MEDITATIO:

- What is the difference between the new found church community described above and the one to which you belong?
- Is the risen Jesus present in your Christian community? Can he be seen and touched, apart from Jesus as the consecrated bread and wine?
- If Jesus is alive after his death on the cross does it make a difference to you? Can you join Thomas and say, 'my Lord and my God'?
- The first words John records Jesus saying to the disciples when he appears among them are 'Peace be with you'. Consider the significance of this. Maybe these are words you need to hear from Jesus too.



ORATIO:

Using Psalm 118, choose some verses as a thanksgiving to your Father in heaven for Jesus' resurrection and the eternal hope this gives us. Also give thanks for Jesus' presence within our communities.



CONTEMPLATIO:

The two New Testament texts take us deeper into our contemplation. Acts 4:32-35 explains how the apostles witness to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In 1 John 5:1-6 John, an old man now, reflects on the outcomes of accepting the resurrection of Jesus. It has to lead to loving our neighbour and being prepared to share with those in need.

A MESSAGE FOR ALL NATIONS

Luke 24:35-48

³⁵ The two then explained to them what had happened on the road, and how they had recognized the Lord when he broke the bread.

³⁶ While the two were telling them this, suddenly the Lord himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

³⁷ They were terrified, thinking that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ But he said to them, "Why are you alarmed? Why are these doubts coming up in your minds? ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet, and see that it is I myself. Feel me, and you will know, for a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones, as you can see I have."

⁴⁰ He said this and showed them his hands and his feet.

⁴¹ They still could not believe, they were so full of joy and wonder; so he asked them, "Have you anything here to eat?" ⁴² They gave him a piece of cooked fish,

⁴³ which he took and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are the very things I told you about while I was still with you: everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the Psalms had to come true."

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "This is what is written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later, ⁴⁷ and in his name the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.

Other Readings: Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; Psalm 4:1, 3, 6, 8; 1 John 2:1-5



LECTIO:

This reading takes up the story immediately after the two disciples who encountered Jesus on the road to Emmaus had returned to Jerusalem. As the story spills from the excited lips of these two disciples, Jesus appears right in front of them!

They are terrified and don't know what to think. Is this really Jesus or is it a ghost? Jesus is patient with them. Firstly he tells them to look at his hands and feet, presumably to see the scars. Then he invites them to touch him so they know he's real, not a ghost.

They are full of joy and wonder. It appears they want to believe but it seems just too good to be true. They still have their doubts. So Jesus eats a piece of fish in front of them.

Then Jesus does what we would all like him to do for us. He takes them through the Scriptures and helps them to recognise verse by verse where it speaks of him and his life.

For Jesus, his resurrection was just part of God's on-going relationship with his people. It was also a dividing line in human history. He proved to those who will believe that what he says about life and faith can be trusted, forever (Hebrews 7:25). Jesus' resurrection is the fabulous climax of this 'God-story of salvation'.



MEDITATIO:

- How does Jesus try to help his disciples accept that he really has risen from the dead? Jesus is very practical in the way he shows them he is real.
- What helps you trust Jesus? What builds your faith that he is alive and in our midst today? Ask your Christian friends what they think?
- Jesus describes the disciples as 'witnesses to these things' (verse 48). They were eye witnesses. In what way can we today also be considered witnesses?



ORATIO:

Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection so we can be forgiven and have eternal life is almost too good to be true. But it is true! Spend some time praising God for the wonder of God's salvation plan. Ask God to take away any doubts you may have.

Psalm 4 speaks of joy (verse 7), but joy slips away as the difficulties increase. Can you recall a time of spiritual joy or peace when life was tough? Pray for God to remind you and for others who may need this hope today.



CONTEMPLATIO:

In Acts 3:13-19 we hear how Peter explains to the Jews exactly what has happened and why Jesus died. He says repent and believe. John repeats this message in 1 John 2:1-5. It is only through Christ that we can have our sins forgiven. Jesus is shown as both our mediator and sin bearer. Isn't it wonderful to know that Jesus 'pleads with the Father on our behalf'!

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:11-18

¹¹“I am the good shepherd, who is willing to die for the sheep. ¹²When the hired man, who is not a shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees a wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and runs away; so the wolf snatches the sheep and scatters them. ¹³The hired man runs away because he is only a hired man and does not care about the sheep. ¹⁴⁻¹⁵I am the good shepherd. As the Father knows me and I know the Father, in the same way I know my sheep and they know me. And I am willing to die for them. ¹⁶There are other sheep which belong to me that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them, too; they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock with one shepherd.

¹⁷“The Father loves me because I am willing to give up my life, in order that I may receive it back again. ¹⁸No one takes my life away from me. I give it up of my own free will. I have the right to give it up, and I have the right to take it back. This is what my Father has commanded me to do.”

Other Readings: Acts 4:8-12; Psalm 118:1, 8-9, 21-23, 26, 28-29; 1 John 3:1-2



LECTIO:

The imagery of the shepherd was a familiar one in Jewish culture. Political as well as religious leaders were often called ‘shepherds’ (see Ezekiel 34) and the metaphor is applied to the Lord himself in the well-loved words of Psalm 23.

The importance of being a leader for the sheep tended to be emphasised in Old Testament texts. John, by contrast, focuses on the deep relationship between the shepherd and his sheep. Jesus therefore transforms a well-known metaphor to highlight that he is more than a leader of his disciples. His sheep recognise his voice and follow him. The shepherd’s knowledge of his sheep is as named individuals and he knows their needs.

One important difference between Psalm 23 and John 10 is that in John’s gospel Jesus speaks of himself as the shepherd. In Psalm 23 the poet King David applies the metaphor prophetically to the Lord, ‘The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need.’

Jesus and the psalmist agree about the nature of the shepherd Lord. Jesus adds that he will give his own life on behalf of his sheep. He will satisfy all the spiritual needs of his faithful ones. All they need to do is hear his voice and follow wherever he leads.

Jesus, the good shepherd, includes the sheep that are not yet part of his flock. They too are included in the promise he is making.

In verse 18 Jesus makes it very clear that he chooses to give his life up. The Roman and Jewish authorities thought they were in control but it was Jesus who was in absolute control – even on the cross.



MEDITATIO:

- How does Jesus distinguish himself from the shepherds who are not ‘good’? How does the good shepherd provide security for his sheep? Who is Jesus thinking of when he speaks of the wolves from whom he will defend his sheep (see also Matthew 15: 16)? How would Jesus ultimately defend his sheep?



ORATIO:

The clatter of thoughts in our heads can drown out the quiet voice of God. Ask Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit to help you recognise his voice when he speaks to you. Thank him for the opportunity to soak ourselves in his words in the Bible so we can recognise the way he speaks. Thank him too for being the cornerstone of the church and of our lives as Christians (Psalm 118: 22).



CONTEMPLATIO:

Today’s other readings confirm the gospel reading. In his speech before the Jewish religious leaders, Peter insists that salvation only comes through Jesus (Acts 4:8-12).

In 1 John 3:1-2 we learn that God’s love for us is so great that he made us his children.

We are moving towards the return of Jesus. Then we shall see the ‘good shepherd’ as he really is.

BEARING FRUIT

John 15:1-8

¹“I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will be clean and bear more fruit. ³You have been made clean already by the teaching I have given you. ⁴Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵“I am the vine, and you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me. ⁶Whoever does not remain in me is thrown out like a branch and dries up; such branches are gathered up and thrown into the fire, where they are burnt. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, then you will ask for anything you wish, and you shall have it. ⁸My Father’s glory is shown by your bearing much fruit; and in this way you become my disciples.

Other Readings: Acts 9:26-31; Psalm 22:25-27, 29-31; 1 John 3:18-24



LECTIO:

This powerful speech in John’s gospel paints a vivid picture of the relationship Jesus has with the Father and with his followers, people like you and me.

In last week’s reading Jesus described himself as the ‘Good Shepherd’ (John 10). In today’s passage Jesus speaks about himself as ‘the real vine’. Vineyards would have been a common sight in Jesus’ day, just as they are in some countries today.

Three ‘characters’ stand out: Jesus the vine, the Father or gardener, and the disciples or vine branches. The vine sustains the branches; one cannot bear fruit without the other.

The Father tends the vine. He prunes branches encouraging strong growth and a bumper crop of fruit. Branches that don’t bear fruit are cut off and thrown away.

So how do the ‘branches’ remain united to the ‘vine’? Jesus offers two ideas: ‘remain in me, and I in them’ (verse 5) and ‘my words remain in you’ (verse 7). We are to live like Jesus and accept the cleansing and ‘pruning’ the teaching of Jesus will accomplish in our lives (verse 3).



MEDITATIO:

- Spend some time thinking about what it means for you to remain in Jesus. Consider too how his words can remain in you.
- How do you feel under God’s correction or ‘pruning’? Remember how much God loves you. Does it help to remind yourself that pruning will produce more fruit?



ORATIO:

To pray today take a sheet of paper and a few coloured pens or pencils. Sketch a simple vine bearing fruit – lines and blobs will do. Draw in some roots too. By each root write the name of something that feeds your relationship with God. Imagine you are one of the branches. Forgetting modesty, as this is between you and God alone, try to name some of the fruit pictured on your branch. This is harder to do, but ask the Holy Spirit to help you. On some of the other branches write the names of people who strengthen your relationship with Jesus. Consider this prayerfully. It may take a little time, but when you’re ready offer it to God in thanksgiving and trust for future crops.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Acts 9:26-31 explains what being united to Jesus means: it means being united to his Church. Paul was transformed by his conversion. For him to bear the fruit God intended he needed to be reconciled with the Church in Jerusalem he’d previously persecuted.

1 John 3:18-24 is very practical: believe in Jesus and love your neighbour. Love for fellow believers should not be just words, rather ‘it must be true love, which shows itself in action’ (verse 18).

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

John 15:9-17

⁹I love you just as the Father loves me; remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

¹¹"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My commandment is this: love one another, just as I love you. ¹³The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them. ¹⁴And you are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because servants do not know what their master is doing. Instead, I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me; I chose you and appointed you to go and bear much fruit, the kind of fruit that endures. And so the Father will give you whatever you ask of him in my name. ¹⁷This, then, is what I command you: love one another.

Other Readings: Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48; Psalm 98:1-4; 1 John 4:7-10



LECTIO:

Jesus speaks these words to his disciples just a few hours before he is crucified and before his disciples abandon him in terror. They also form part of the longer teaching Jesus gives his disciples in John 13-17.

Jesus wants his disciples to share his joy. He is a deeply joyful person and here he tells them the way to share this joy for themselves: remaining in his love and loving one another.

The love between Jesus and God the Father is mutual. Jesus makes it clear that the way he remains in his Father's love is through obedience. It's just the same for us. This on-going relationship between us and Jesus transforms us from being servants into Jesus' friends (verses 14-15).

Jesus gives the disciples one commandment 'love one another, just as I love you' (verse 12). They are to follow his example of love. To love each other in the same way he loves them. Without this they cannot share his joy, nor can we.

This deep and practical love in a community makes Jesus' love and life a reality to the giver and the receiver. By living constantly in his presence, Jesus is in our midst and through his Word we receive confidence about life with the Father. In short, this is the mystery of Christian living.



MEDITATIO:

- Why does Jesus insist on love as the critical condition? How do we remain in his love?
- Consider what it means to love fellow Christians the way Jesus loves us. What does it mean in practice to lay down your life for your friends? What can we learn from 1 Corinthians 13 about love?



ORATIO:

We do not just choose the Christian life ourselves; we are in fact 'chosen and appointed' (John 15:16). It is an overwhelming idea to think God knew and chose us for his own loving purpose. We can join this great song of praise in Psalm 98. Read these verses through several times and offer them as your own prayer of praise to God.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Acts 10:25-48 tells of the events after Peter sees a vision (Acts 10:1-24) and goes to visit a man called Cornelius. Peter receives the revelation that the Good News of the gospel is not just for a chosen few but for all mankind. Peter tells Cornelius' household that 'God treats everyone on the same basis' (verse 34).

1 John 4:7-10 reinforces this point. God demonstrated his love for us by sending Jesus into the world so our sins can be forgiven.

FATHER'S PROTECTION

John 17:11-19

¹¹ And now I am coming to you; I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world. Holy Father! Keep them safe by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one just as you and I are one. ¹² While I was with them, I kept them safe by the power of your name, the name you gave me. I protected them, and not one of them was lost, except the man who was bound to be lost – so that the scripture might come true. ¹³ And now I am coming to you, and I say these things in the world so that they might have my joy in their hearts in all its fullness. ¹⁴ I gave them your message, and the world hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. ¹⁵ I do not ask you to take them out of the world, but I do ask you to keep them safe from the Evil One. ¹⁶ Just as I do not belong to the world, they do not belong to the world. ¹⁷ Dedicate them to yourself by means of the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ I sent them into the world, just as you sent me into the world. ¹⁹ And for their sake I dedicate myself to you, in order that they, too, may be truly dedicated to you.

Other Readings: Acts 1:15-17, 20-26; Psalm 103:1-2, 11-12, 19-20; 1 John 4:11-16



LECTIO:

Today's passage is part of Jesus' profound prayer for his disciples prior to his passion. This concludes his final teaching to them on Maundy Thursday (John 13-17). Jesus knows his days on earth are numbered; he is going to leave the 'world' and asks his Father's protection for his disciples.

Jesus asks that the disciples would be protected from a world where people do not believe or care about Jesus and don't live by his standards. He asks for his Father's protection so they can live the life he taught them to live and they can grow in their faith.

Jesus asks for the disciples to be united in the same way he and his Father are united, living and working together in love.

Jesus asks the Father to 'consecrate' the disciples to him (verses 17-18), that is to set them apart from other people who are divided and from the culture, enabling them to live in unity in the same way that the Father and the Son live.

The Father does this through his Word (Jesus) which is true, or rather the truth itself (verse 17). Jesus dedicates himself in complete surrender to his Father so his disciples can be truly dedicated to the Father too.



MEDITATIO:

- How does Jesus' prayer, which goes on to include us, strengthen your daily walk with God (John 17:20-21)? Which parts speak to you most directly? Which parts do you find difficult to understand?
- Jesus submitted his life completely to God. To what extent do our lives belong to God?
- Jesus prayed that his disciples might be one. What might this mean for you in the Christian community you are part of? Consider whether you have opportunities to build bridges with those of different Christian traditions.



ORATIO:

The real reason for our Easter joy is we are set free from sin. God flung our sins 'as far as the east is from the west' (Psalm 103:12) when Jesus died on the cross. He did it because his love is higher than Mount Everest (verse 11). Does this make you want to praise him? Use Psalm 103 in its entirety or a favourite hymn or song of praise to express your worship to our God of everlasting mercy and kindness.



CONTEMPLATIO:

In Acts 1:15-17, 20-26 we read about who was chosen to replace Judas, whom Jesus mentions in his prayer (John 17:12), so there is another 'witness to the resurrection'.

John continues his great theme of love in 1 John reminding us once again that we must love one another just as God loves us. He expresses the truth of Matthew 18:20 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there with them.' In other words God is present where people live in Christian love.

THE HELPER

John 15:26-27; 16:12-15

John 15

²⁶“The Helper will come – the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God and who comes from the Father. I will send him to you from the Father, and he will speak about me. ²⁷And you, too, will speak about me, because you have been with me from the very beginning.

John 16

¹²“I have much more to tell you, but now it would be too much for you to bear. ¹³When, however, the Spirit comes, who reveals the truth about God, he will lead you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own authority, but he will speak of what he hears, and will tell you of things to come. ¹⁴He will give me glory, because he will take what I say and tell it to you. ¹⁵All that my Father has is mine; that is why I said that the Spirit will take what I give him and tell it to you.

Other Readings: Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-31, 34; Galatians 5:16-25



LECTIO:

The two passages above are contained within Jesus' final words to his disciples on that last night in Jerusalem (John 13-17). Today the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, is in the spotlight (John 15, 16).

Jesus is preparing his disciples for his imminent departure, but first he wants to entrust them to the Holy Spirit. Why was this so important? Jesus knows that the Holy Spirit's main role is to reveal new aspects of God and his word (15:26). In doing this he will help the disciples understand Jesus better.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit exist together as the Trinity in perfect love and understanding. So there could be none better than the Holy Spirit to reveal and teach whatever the Father and Son choose to say (16:13).



MEDITATIO:

- The promise of help from the Holy Spirit comes with a purpose, to enable us to speak about Jesus and live in truth. In what ways have you experienced the Holy Spirit helping and teaching you?
- What does Jesus mean by the term 'truth'? Does he mean only words and ideas?



ORATIO:

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal more of the Father and Son to you. Ask for his help so that you can play your part in continuing Jesus' work on earth and demonstrate his fruit in your life (Galatians 5:22-23).

Prayerfully read Psalm 104 throughout the week. Let God direct you to a few verses at a time. Use these verses to praise the greatness of the God of creation.



CONTEMPLATIO:

Today we celebrate the Feast of Pentecost and the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 2:1-11 we read of the glorious outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the disciples. It wasn't the last and today people continue to invite the Holy Spirit to fill, guide, teach and encourage them.

Paul puts a practical face on the work of the Holy Spirit when he writes to the Galatians (5:16-25). The fruits of the spirit's work should be as evident in our lives today as in the lives of the first Christians.