

Through Lent with St Matthew

A Retreat for Lent based on
the Gospel of Matthew

Ignatian Spirituality Centre

Through Lent with St Matthew

A retreat for Lent 2026



Lent 2026 Retreat available online with music
www.onlineprayer.net/l26-m

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Introduction to the Retreat

We will journey through Lent this year with a special focus on the Gospel of St Matthew in keeping with the readings from the Lectionary.

According to the Gospel, Jesus called Matthew while he was working at his tax booth in Capernaum, simply saying, “Follow me.” Matthew immediately became one of Christ’s disciples.

One of the core graces of the Spiritual Exercises is to experience the personal love of Christ. The person praying the retreat spends intentional quality time with Jesus in order to see what he sees, to love as he loves, and to act out of this love.

We grow to know and love Jesus through the contemplations, particularly those that engage the imagination.

This retreat is about the invitation of Christ and choosing to follow him freely in his mission.

Choose what speaks to you

Consider what attracts you most, which speaks to you - the picture, the reflection, the scripture passage?

Concentrate on the one element that most strikes you.

Ways of Praying

Over the next few pages we have a few different ways of praying - take some time to use some or all of these methods of praying.

We hope that you have a fruitful retreat.



Review of the Day

We suggest this is done at the end of every day.

- Be still, remember God who loves you is present now.
- look back over the day. Ask God to shine a light into your heart so that looking back you may be able to see God at work.
- Pay attention to your emotions:
 - What brought you joy?
 - Is there anything you feel unhappy about?
- Talk to God about your day:
 - For what do you feel most thankful?
 - Give thanks.
- For what do you feel least thankful?
 - Hand this over to God.
- What have you learned from the day?
- Look forward to tomorrow.
 - How might you make the best of the day?

Awareness Exercises

The following awareness Exercises can be used at the beginning of each prayer period to help you quieten down.

Mantra

A mantra, a repeated short phrase, can help us to settle down. Sometimes we think about the words, but mostly we let go of thinking and trust that simply saying the words is sufficient. We can repeat the words in time with our walking or breathing or to the rhythm of music. There are many suitable phrases such as, *‘Come Lord Jesus’, ‘The Lord is compassion and love’* etc. One of the most famous mantras is *‘The Jesus Prayer’*: ***‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have mercy on me, a sinner’.***



Awareness of Sounds



Listen to the sounds you can hear around you.

If you are indoors, allow yourself to notice sounds inside and outside the room. Identify each sound as you are able. Don't stay with any one sound. Gently, slowly, without judging sounds as good or bad, focus your attention on each one then move on.

If a sudden sound or distraction occurs, acknowledge it and name it.

Don't try to ignore it.

When you are ready, become aware of the sound of your own breathing. Through the sounds, be attentive to the invitation of God, who dwells in creation.

Awareness of your body

Beginning at the top of your head and passing down through the body to the feet be attentive to each part of the body in turn.

Gently focus in turn on each part ... head ... face ... eyes ...neck ... shoulders etc.

For each part, allow a few moments to become aware of what is being felt, without making judgement upon it.

Feel temperature, clothing, moving air, tension, pain, tingling etc.

Move on in turn until you have given attention to your whole body.

Then consider your whole self you as a person made in God's likeness ... you in whom God chooses to dwell.

Walking

Walk slowly with awareness of whatever comes to you: the surroundings, thoughts, feelings, how your body is. It usually helps to walk more slowly than usual and to pay attention to what is around you.

Praying with Pictures



Each day during this retreat we provide a picture to ponder which in some way links to the person we feature. If you would like to use pictures to stimulate your prayer, then we suggest you:

- Settle down quietly into a comfortable yet attentive position. Wherever you are, you are in the presence of God, acknowledge this.
- Offer yourself, your time and your imagination to God.
- Ask God for what you need today, what you desire.

This could be for a greater love of Jesus, in words such as: Jesus, may I know you clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly.

- Ask God to inspire you and let the picture reveal what God wants you to see.
- What do you feel overall about the picture? Do you like it or dislike it? You may appreciate the colours, the mood, the composition.
- Pay careful attention to the picture. If there are people in it, see how they relate to each other. How do you imagine the people are feeling? Are there significant signs or symbols in the picture?
- Spend some time just contemplating the picture.
- What does the picture say to you?
 - Does it challenge you in any way?
 - Does it introduce you to a new way of seeing things?
 - Perhaps you don't like the way the artist or photographer sees things and you imagine things very differently.
- You may want to talk to God about the picture, or about something in your life that the picture has evoked. You may want an imaginary conversation with one or more of the characters in the picture.
- Finish with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Praying with Scripture

You may like to ponder in the 'Lectio Divina' style, or where there is a Gospel story you might like to imagine you are one of the characters in the scene - Imaginative Contemplation, also known as Ignatian Contemplation. If you are part of a prayer group then your group leader should give you some more guidance on both of these, but here are the basic outlines to get you started.

A Prayerful Pondering - *Lectio Divina*

This is suitable for use with psalms, wisdom literature and letters etc

- Read the passage slowly stopping wherever a word or phrase seems to say something. Let the words speak to you.
 - Let the passage touch your own life, your memories.
 - There is no one right meaning; the same passage will say very different things to different people.
- Meditate on the words. It often helps to say the words or phrases to yourself several times, ideally out loud. Ponder, ruminate!
- Speak to God in your own words.
 - Imagine God speaking back to you. Express your own deepest desires.
- Contemplate; be in silence with God. Be quiet and open before God. Rest. Let the mind be still. When your mind starts to wander then turn back to the passage and continue reading.

Allow this fourfold process to continue until the period of prayer is over.

Finish with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Journaling

After your prayer it is good to jot down in a journal the subject of your prayer and what happened during the prayer, your feelings, thoughts etc. This will help you remember; particularly useful if you are sharing your prayer with a group or spiritual guide. Journaling will also help you notice patterns in your prayer.

Imaginative Contemplation

This is suitable for use with the gospels and other stories

The most frequent way of praying that Saint Ignatius uses in his book, The Spiritual Exercises, is that of imagining ourselves in a Gospel scene. We imagine ourselves as a character in the story. We take part in the story, seeing Jesus and all the other people, being aware of what's going on and how we are feeling. The purpose of praying with the imagination is to allow Christ in the Scripture to speak to us.

To bring the Gospel stories alive for us. We are not trying to recreate history.

It doesn't matter if our imagination takes the story off in a different direction to the Scripture. It doesn't matter if the story takes place in 1st century Palestine or where we live now in the 21st century. What is important is what God wants to say to us through this passage.

Post prayer reflection is important to draw out the implications.

- **Choose a passage**, read and familiarise yourself with the story.
- **You are in the presence of God**, acknowledge this.
- Offer yourself, your time and your imagination to God so that whatever you imagine will be inspired by God.
- **Ask God** for what gift or grace you need, what are your deepest desires.
 - *This could be for a greater love of Jesus, in words such as: Jesus, may I know you clearly, love you more dearly and follow you more nearly.*
- Set the scene from your scripture passage.
 - Take your time, see all that is around, hear, feel, taste and smell. What is the setting of the story in your imagination? You may imagine it in the present day, or 2000 years ago. You may be involved with people you know.
 - Become a character in the story..... Who are you?
 - You may be a central character or someone on the side-lines.
 - Let the scene unfold naturally. The story might depart from the Gospel scene and take on a life of its own; that's fine, trust God; everything human is appropriate material for prayer.
- **Conversation (colloquy)**: When the story has finished talk in your own words to Jesus, God the Father, Mary or one of the characters in the story you have contemplated, imagine how they might reply.
- **End the prayer** with a formal prayer like the Lord's Prayer.

Day 1

Reflection

We begin our retreat as the Gospel of Matthew begins with the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph, who adopted him as his son. Jesus is thus linked in with the founding father of the people, Abraham, through the celebrated King David, to the humble carpenter, Joseph. All this fits neatly into 3 x 14 generations. Its all part of God's plan. You may like to ponder the text and see what it says to you.

You may like to go back as far as you can with your own family tree.

What have these men and women given you?

You can often understand people better when you see how they were brought up and the traumas they may have suffered.

Can you thank God for your ancestors?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: Today's Scripture is suitable for meditation in the style of Lectio Divina.

Matthew 1:1-3, 5-7, 10-12& 17 WEB

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham

Abraham became the father of Isaac.

Isaac became the father of Jacob.

Jacob became the father of Judah and his brothers.

Judah became the father of Perez and Zerah by Tamar.....

Boaz became the father of Obed by Ruth.

Obed became the father of Jesse.

Jesse became the father of King David.

David the king became the father of Solomon by her who had been Uriah's wife.

Solomon became the father of Rehoboam.

Rehoboam became the father of Abijah.

Abijah became the father of Asa...

After the exile to Babylon, Jechoniah became the father of Shealtiel.

Shealtiel became the father of Zerubbabel.

Jacob became the father of Joseph, the husband of Mary, from whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; from David to the exile to Babylon fourteen generations; and from the carrying away to Babylon to the Christ, fourteen generations.



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 2

Reflection

Very early in the story of Jesus we are faced with the forces of good and evil. The good, coming from the East, the wise men. They come to worship a king and give him gifts. They believe their divinely inspired star and can accept their king born to a simple carpenter's wife.

Herod is afraid that a new king will want his throne. He will do whatever evil is necessary to maintain his power.

We talk of Jesus as a heavenly King and Mary as Queen of Heaven, but let us not forget that they were very ordinary people in Palestine. How do you imagine the Holy Family?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene

Matthew 2:1-8 ESV

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who is born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east, and have come to worship him." When King Herod heard it, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Gathering together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he asked them where the Christ would be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is written through the prophet,

'You Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are in no way least among the princes of Judah;
for out of you shall come a governor
who shall shepherd my people, Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called the wise men, and learned from them exactly what time the star appeared.

He sent them to Bethlehem, and said, “Go and search diligently for the young child.

When you have found him, bring me word, so that I also may come and worship him.”



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 3

Reflection

The wise men came from the east: no mention of Kings, no mention of three. Its fascinating that they rejoiced with 'exceedingly great joy' in finding Mary, Joseph and the child in such poor circumstances. They trusted their star, they trusted that a king could be found in such a place, they offered their gifts. Truly, they were wise.

Have you ever been surprised to find wisdom in the most unlikely persons? Or found humility in the most high person or dignity in the most poor?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: You may like to imagine Jesus saying these words to those who Luke says loved money. We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation for this passage

Matthew 2:9-12 WEB

The wise men, having heard King Herod, went their way; and behold, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them until it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy: They came into the house and saw the young child with Mary, his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Opening their treasures, they offered to him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country another way.



The Adoration of the Three Kings: da Santacroce c.1530

They offered to him gifts

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 4

Reflection

The Holy Family knew what it was to live in exile. In a place where it is difficult to be well understood.

They returned to the country where Moses had led the people out of slavery. They lived in a country with a very different culture. But as Matthew tells us in the Gospel passage, these traumatic happenings were all part of God's plan.

If you have suffered trauma in your life, can you see this in any way as part of God's plan, or something that makes you wiser or more compassionate to others?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

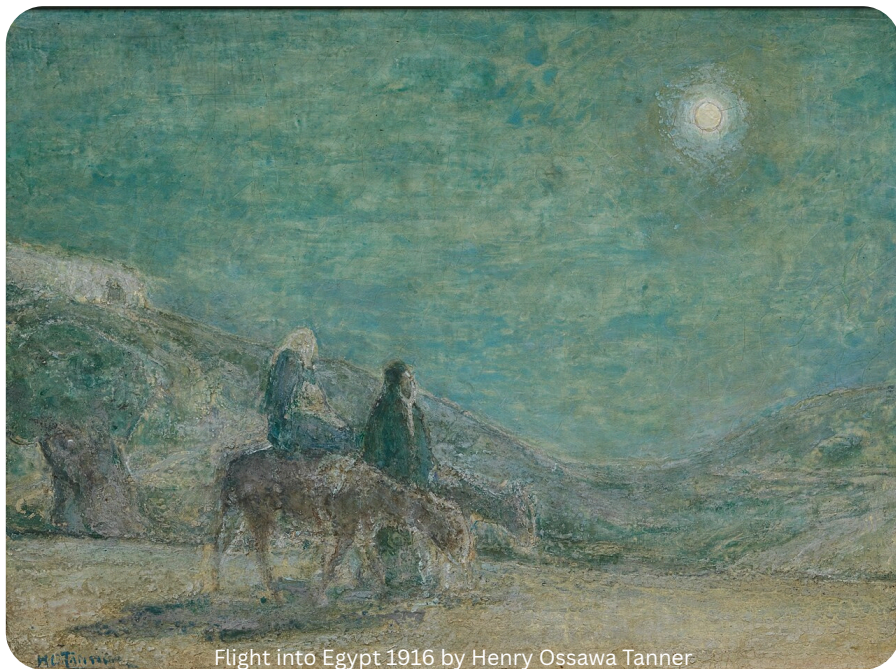
Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder – Lectio Divina or imagine you are part of the scene.

Matthew 2: 13-15 WEB

Now when the wise men had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and stay there until I tell you, for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him."

He arose and took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called my son."



Flight into Egypt 1916 by Henry Ossawa Tanner

Exiled to Egypt

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 5

Reflection

John the Baptist drew large crowds. People listened to what he had to say and came to him for baptism as a sign that they wanted to change the direction of their lives.

So why did Jesus insist on being baptised by John? Perhaps it was because he, too, was standing on the edge of a turning point - about to move from the quiet life of a carpenter in Nazareth into his true calling as the Christ, sent to reveal the Father.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: This passage may be pondered using Lectio Divina.

Matthew 3: 13-17 WEB

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptised by him.

But John would have hindered him, saying, "I need to be baptised by you, and you come to me?"

But Jesus, answering, said to him,

"Allow it now, for this is the fitting way for us to fulfil all righteousness."

Then John allowed him.

Jesus, when he was baptised, went up directly from the water: and behold, the heavens were opened to him. He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming on him.

Behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."



Baptism of Christ by Jacopo Tintoretto

Conversation: As the prayer time comes to an end, talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 6

Reflection

Yesterday we saw Jesus publicly affirmed as the Son of God at his baptism. Almost immediately, that identity is challenged in the wilderness, as the tempter begins with the words, “**If** you are the Son of God.”

What’s striking is that it is the Spirit who leads Jesus into this place of testing. And in the temptations he faces, we can recognise our own: the desire for comfort, the pull toward power, and the urge to put ourselves at the centre of things.

Does this sound familiar? What is our response in moments of temptation?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina.

Matthew 4: 1-11 WEB

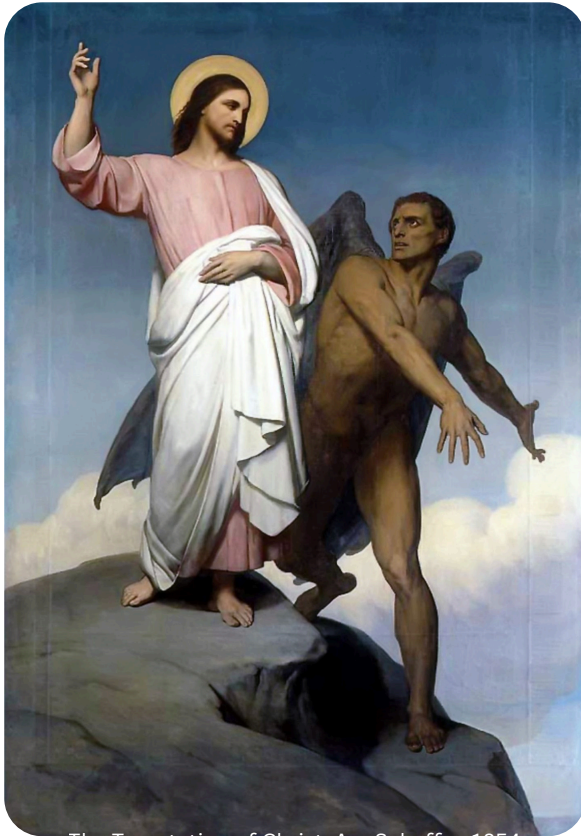
Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. When he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry afterward. The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.” But Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of God’s mouth.’” Then the devil took him into the holy city. He set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and, ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you don’t dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus said to him, “Again, it is written, ‘You shall not test the Lord, your God.’”

Again, the devil took him to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. He said to him, “I will give you all of these things, if you will fall down and worship me.”

Then Jesus said to him, “Get behind me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and you shall serve him only.’”

Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and served him.



Conversation: As the prayer time comes to an end, talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 7

Reflection

From that moment on, Jesus begins to preach with a simple but urgent message: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

This isn’t just a challenge - it’s an invitation. Jesus is calling people to change direction, to see their lives differently, because God is closer than they imagine. The Kingdom isn’t some distant future; it’s breaking into the present.

What might Jesus be asking us to turn away from today, so that we can recognise God already at work among us?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

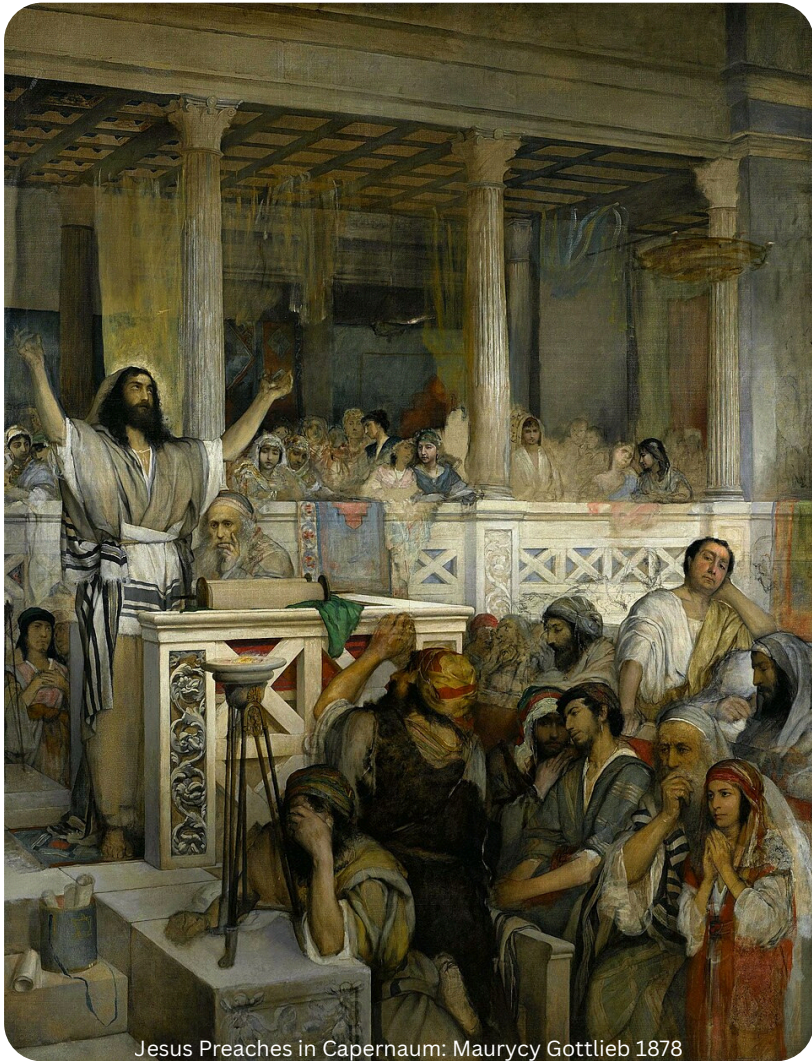
Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina.

**The Kingdom
is at hand ...**

Matthew 4:17 WEB

From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, “Repent! For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”



Jesus Preaches in Capernaum: Maurycy Gottlieb 1878

Conversation: As the prayer time comes to an end, talk to Jesus or Elijah in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 8

Reflection

Walking along the familiar shore, Jesus steps into the ordinary rhythm of work and calls it into something more. We are invited to place ourselves in the scene: the weight of the nets, the smell of the sea, the comfort of what is known. Jesus' call is simple, personal, and unsettling - "Come after me." The disciples' immediate response reveals a freedom of heart: they do not cling to what has defined them, even to what is good and necessary. Ignatius would call this 'indifference' - being ready to choose whatever leads us closer to God's greater glory. This passage asks us to notice where Jesus walks into our daily lives and what "nets" we are invited to release. Where is Christ calling us today, and what new life might follow if we trust him enough to step forward?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Imaginative Contemplation or Lectio Divina.

Matthew 4:18-22 WEB

Walking by the sea of Galilee, Jesus saw two brothers: Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers for men." They immediately left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them. They immediately left the boat and their father, and followed him.



The Call of Peter: James Tissot

Conversation: As the prayer time comes to an end, talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 9

Reflection

Jesus moves through towns and villages, teaching, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom, and healing those who are suffering. His words are matched by compassionate action - people don't just hear about God's love, they experience it.

Crowds begin to follow him, drawn by hope and by the sense that something new is happening. Wherever Jesus goes, lives are being touched and restored.

What draws us to Jesus today - his words, his actions, or the hope that he still brings healing and wholeness into our own lives?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: Scripture readings to ponder using Lectio Divina.

Matthew 4:23-25 WEB

Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people. The report about him went out into all Syria. They brought to him all who were sick, afflicted with various diseases and torments, possessed with demons, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them.

Great multitudes from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan followed him.



Drawn to Jesus

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 10

Reflection

The Beatitudes, today's Gospel reading, are the central teachings of Jesus. They don't follow worldly logic. They do challenge us to break the cycles of violence in the world.

Imagine how our world today would change if people lived by the values of the Beatitudes.

What changes would you like to see?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: Ask for the grace of discernment so that I may be clear what are God's desires for me.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina, or you can imagine yourself listening to them on the Mount with others

Matthew 5: 1-12 WEB

Seeing the multitudes, Jesus went up onto the mountain.

When he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

He opened his mouth and taught them, saying,

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are you when people reproach you, persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven.”



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 11

Reflection

One of the great Christian sayings: "You cannot serve God and Mammon" – which modern translations usually render as money or wealth. Money is a means to an end. Serving God and our fellow humans – the common good – is the end. How many people put money and possessions first?

Notice how Jesus says that getting our priorities right will bring peace and a lack of worrying.

Look at your own life: which comes first, God and your neighbour or money and possessions?

Ask God to help you ensure your priorities in life are right.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: Do I have anything in my life I should like healing?

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina.

Matthew 6: 24-34 WEB

"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You can't serve both God and Mammon. Therefore I tell you, don't be anxious for your life: what you will eat, or what you will drink; nor yet for your body, what you will wear. Isn't life more than food, and the body more than clothing? See the birds of the sky, that they don't sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. Your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you of much more value than they?"

“Which of you by being anxious, can add one moment to his lifespan? Why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They don’t toil, neither do they spin, yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not dressed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today exists and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, won’t he much more clothe you, you of little faith?

“Therefore don’t be anxious, saying, ‘What will we eat?’, ‘What will we drink?’ or, ‘With what will we be clothed?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first God’s Kingdom and his righteousness; and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore don’t be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 12

Reflection

So many of our stories of Jesus tell of cures. The leper is confident; if you want to you can make me clean. Jesus shows God's desire facing sickness, "I want to, be clean."

If you look back on sicknesses you might have suffered and recovered from, can you see anything positive that you have gained from these experiences?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: Cleanse me of all that needs cleaning in my life.

Setting: A Scripture reading for Imaginative Contemplation

Matthew 8: 1-4 WEB

When he came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. Behold, a leper came to him and worshiped him, saying,

"Lord, if you want to, you can make me clean."

Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I want to. Be made clean."

Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Jesus said to him, "See that you tell nobody; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend
Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 13

Reflection

How often do we worry about things unnecessarily?

We allow our imaginations to play out all sorts of negative scenarios.

“What if this happened?”

“What if that happened?”

Often there is nothing we can do.

The best we can do is to hand our worries over to God and say “Thy will be done.”

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To ask Jesus to help me pass my worries on to Him.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene.

Matthew 8:23-27 WEB

When Jesus got into a boat, his disciples followed him.

Behold, a violent storm came up on the sea,
so much that the boat was covered with the waves; but he was asleep.

The disciples came to him and woke him up, saying, “Save us, Lord! We are dying!”

He said to them, “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?”

Then he got up, rebuked the wind and the sea, and there was a great calm.

The men marvelled, saying,

“What kind of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?”



Christ in the Storm: Jan Brueghel 1596

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 14

Reflection

In Jesus' day sickness was seen as a punishment from God for sins. Jesus breaks this link. He forgives the sins, but initially leaves the man paralysed.

When the Pharisees complain about his authority to forgive sins, he performs the miracle we imagine he would have anyway and cures the paralysis.

The multitude, who see things as they are, marvel and glorify God.

What sort of cure may I need to ask for from Jesus?

Can I be sure that I see the world as 'The multitude' saw it, rather than the vision of the Pharisees?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine that you are in the scene

Matthew 9: 1-8 WEB

Jesus entered into a boat and crossed over, and came into his own city. Behold, they brought to him a man who was paralyzed, lying on a bed. Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the paralytic, "Son, cheer up! Your sins are forgiven you."

Behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man blasphemes." Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?

For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven;' or to say, 'Get up, and walk'?

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins—”

then he said to the paralytic, “Get up, and take up your mat, and go to your house.”

He arose and departed to his house.

But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 15

Reflection

Today's Gospel story, like many of the cures of Jesus, seems to have rested on the faith of those who needed the cure.

"According to your faith, be it done."

If we need changes in our lives, do we believe that God can make those changes?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To give me the grace to have confidence in you Jesus.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene

Matthew 9:27-31 WEB

As Jesus passed by from there, two blind men followed him, calling out and saying,

"Have mercy on us, son of David!"

When he had come into the house, the blind men came to him.

Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

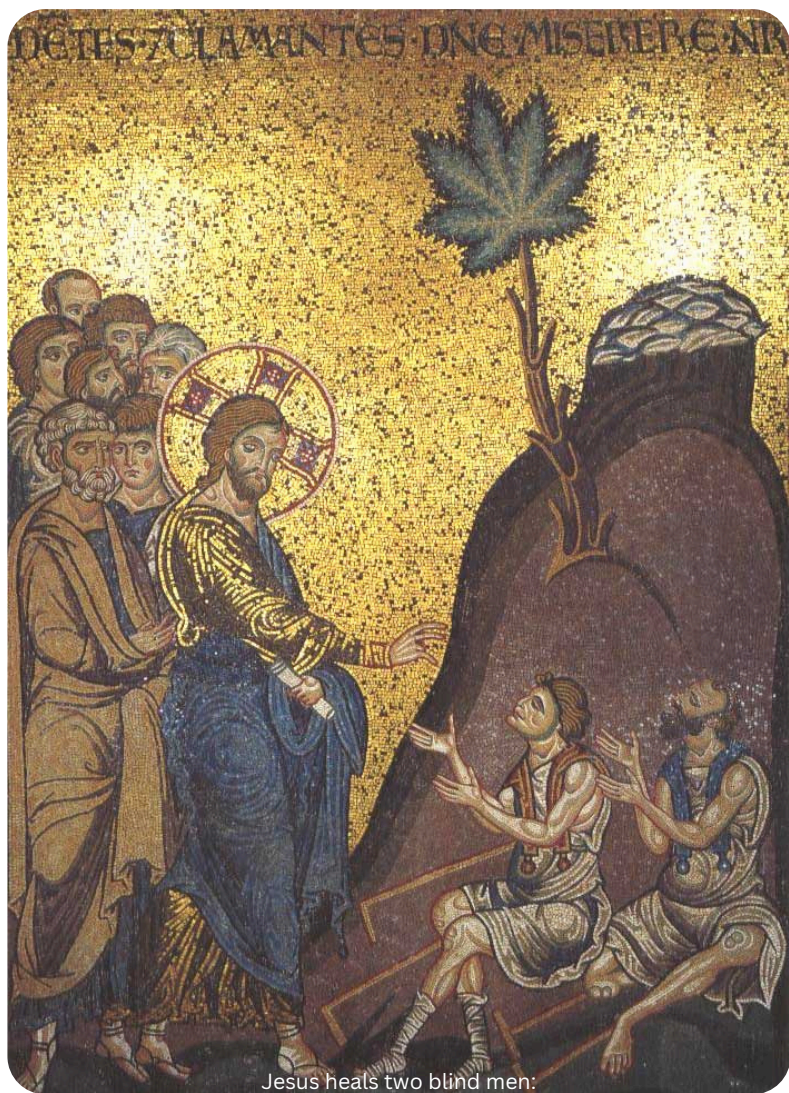
They told him, "Yes, Lord."

Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith be it done to you."

Then their eyes were opened.

Jesus strictly commanded them, saying, "See that no one knows about this."

But they went out and spread abroad his fame in all that land.



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 16

Reflection

Again we meet ‘the multitude’. The poor, the sick, the needy. Such people, maybe the majority of people in the world, that brings out compassion in Jesus. People that the Pharisees with their lists of rules and regulations needed to be good Jews seem unable to help.

Jesus needs a new kind of missionary. He forms them of fishermen, tax collectors and assorted sinners. People from within the multitude.

Who evokes your compassion?

Maybe there are people, condemned by the Church and state, who you, like Jesus, feel compassion towards?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder - Lectio Divina.

Matthew 9: 35-37 WEB

Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people.

But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them because they were harassed and scattered, like sheep without a shepherd.

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest indeed is plentiful, but the labourers are few.

Pray therefore that the Lord of the harvest will send out labourers into his harvest.”



The Harvest is Rich: Photo by James Ahlberg on Unsplash

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 17

Reflection

“Be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves”. A lovely phrase. Jesus does not insist on naivete for his disciples, no they should be people who understand the world, as wise as the crafty serpents. But they should be as peaceful as doves.

If Jesus were to send to you to the lost sheep of your country, what message of the Kingdom of Heaven would you have?

What Good News have you got to share?

If your Good News is a little thin, begin by counting and thanking God for the blessings in your life.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To have a greater trust that God is by my side and only wishes the best for me.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are part of the scene

Matthew 10: 1-16 WEB

Jesus called to himself his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every sickness.

Now the names of the twelve apostles are these. The first, Simon, who is called Peter; Andrew, his brother; James the son of Zebedee; John, his brother; Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus; Lebbaeus, who was also called Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Jesus sent these twelve out and commanded them, saying, “Don’t go among the Gentiles, and don’t enter into any city of the Samaritans. Rather, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

As you go, preach, saying, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!’

Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons.

Freely you received, so freely give.

Don’t take any gold, silver, or brass in your money belts.

Take no bag for your journey, neither two coats, nor sandals, nor staff: for the labourer is worthy of his food.

Into whatever city or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you go on.

As you enter into the household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come on it, but if it isn’t worthy, let your peace return to you.

Whoever doesn’t receive you or hear your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. Most certainly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

“Behold, I send you out as sheep among wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.



The Disciples sent out in twos: James Tissot, 1889

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 18

Reflection

A challenging Gospel today. But what does Jesus mean by preferring family before him?

If family call you to sin, to do evil, to go against your conscience, then they are challenging your allegiance to Christ. We are called to love our family as we love all our 'neighbours', but that doesn't include leaving the good and right path for them.

Has any friend or family member tried to get you to go against your conscience?

What was your reaction? Do you imagine Jesus would have reacted in the same way?

Pray that you can bring peace and joy to all you meet.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder - Lectio Divina

Matthew 10:34-39 WEB

"Don't think that I came to send peace on the earth. I didn't come to send peace, but a sword.

For I came to set a man at odds against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

A man's foes will be those of his own household.

He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me isn't worthy of me.

He who doesn't take his cross and follow after me isn't worthy of me.

He who seeks his life will lose it; and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.



Take up your Cross and Follow:
Photo by Daniel Joshua on
Unsplash

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 19

Reflection

Don't let rules and regulations stop you from doing good, is Jesus' message in today's Gospel.

Religion should encourage you to reach out to your neighbour with love and compassion, not give you reasons to avoid doing good.

Does your prayer and religious practice encourage you to reach out to others and live a good Christian life? Prayer and religious practice is not for God's benefit, it is for yours.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene.

Matthew 12:9-14 WEB

Jesus departed from there and went into their synagogue.

And behold, there was a man with a withered hand.

They asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" so that they might accuse him.

He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if this one falls into a pit on the Sabbath day, won't he grab on to it and lift it out?"

Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep!

Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day."

Then he told the man, "Stretch out your hand."

He stretched it out; and it was restored whole, just like the other.

But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how they might destroy him.



The Man with the Withered Hand: James Tissot, 1896

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 20

Reflection

In the parable of the sower, what are we?

I suggest that we are the land, or at least the farmer who tends the land and that the seed is the word of God. Our task is to remain fertile, to stay away from things which stop us from being fruitful.

Not to become hard, like the path. Not to be shallow and not give a foothold to the word. Not to spend our time with weeds which would choke things of God. It doesn't take too great an imagination to see what such things are in our world today.

How can I become more fruitful?

What do I need to avoid, or at least to do less of?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder - Lectio Divina.

Matthew 13: 1-9 WEB

On that day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the seaside.

Great multitudes gathered to him, so that he entered into a boat and sat;

and all the multitude stood on the beach.

He spoke to them many things in parables, saying,

“Behold, a farmer went out to sow.

As he sowed, some seeds fell by the roadside, and the birds came and devoured them.

Others fell on rocky ground, where they didn't have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of earth.

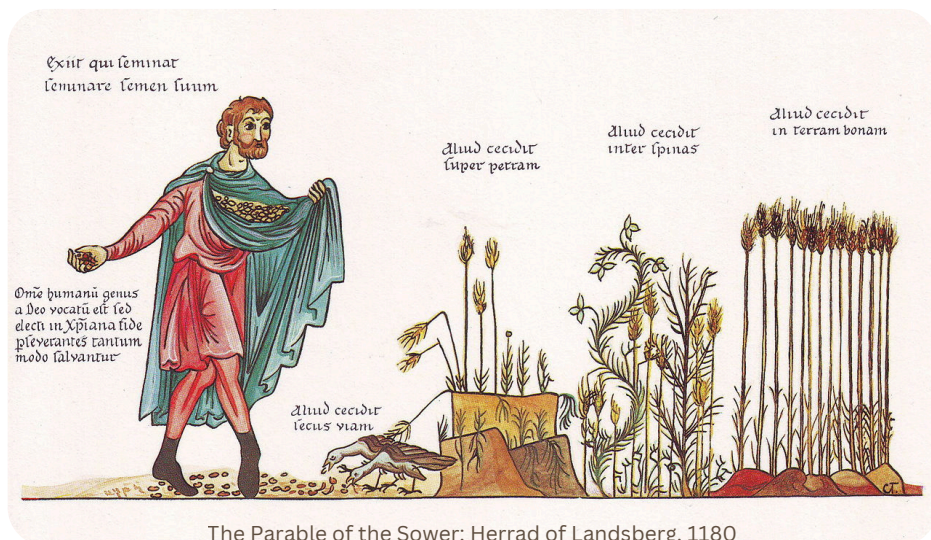
When the sun had risen, they were scorched. Because they had no root, they withered away.

Others fell among thorns. The thorns grew up and choked them.

Others fell on good soil and yielded fruit:

some one hundred times as much, some sixty, and some thirty.

He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”



The Parable of the Sower: Herrad of Landsberg, 1180

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 21

Reflection

Today's Gospel reading sounds like Jesus' explanation of why there is both good and bad to be found together in our world.

We must also have at the back of our mind the thought that even the worst of people may be challenged and convert. None of us are all good or all bad. Maybe we are all like that field.

Hopefully on judgement day the bad will be burned and forgotten and the good harvested.

Do I think of anyone as all bad? Then pray for their conversion!

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina or imaginative prayer

Matthew 13: 24-30 WEB

Jesus set another parable before them, saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while people slept, his enemy came and sowed darnel weeds also among the wheat, and went away.

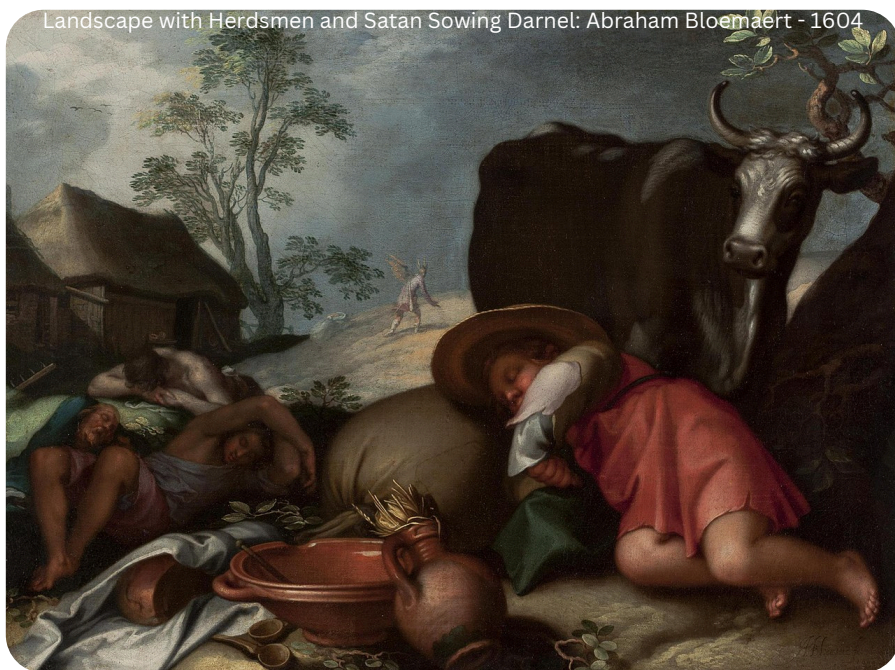
But when the blade sprang up and produced grain, then the darnel weeds appeared also.

The servants of the householder came and said to him, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field?

Where did these darnel weeds come from?'

"He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.'

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and gather them up?’
“But he said, ‘No, lest perhaps while you gather up the darnel weeds, you root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in the harvest time I will tell the reapers, “First, gather up the darnel weeds, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn.”””



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 22

Reflection

A supportive Gospel idea from Jesus. We don't have to do great headline-grabbing things to be fruitful when it comes to the Kingdom of God. Little things done well can bring the kingdom to others.

What little, but good things that I have done, have I been surprised that people appreciated?

What can I do for Christ, for others?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina..

Matthew 13:31-32 WEB

He set another parable before them, saying, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took, and sowed in his field, which indeed is smaller than all seeds.

But when it is grown, it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in its branches."

Birds of the Air: Photo by Razi Pouri on Unsplash



What can I do for Christ?

Conversation: Talk to Jesus or Peter in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 23

Reflection

The same theme as yesterday in the Gospel. A little good, goes a long way.

Why not ponder on the little ways you may be able to bring some joy to people in your life?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina..

Matthew 13:33 WEB

Jesus spoke another parable to them.

“The Kingdom of Heaven is like yeast which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until it was all leavened.”



Kneading the Dough: Photo by Skyler Ewing on Unsplash

What can I do for others?

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 24

Reflection

Today we reflect on the importance of the things of God in our lives. Without our creator, we would not be here. What does God desire of us? To enjoy the life we have been given, to help others enjoy their lives. Loving God and loving our neighbour are not in competition for our love. The more we love our neighbour the more God is loved.

Ask God to help me centre my life upon love and loving – that pearl of great price!

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know what is the pearl of great price in your life.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder - Lectio Divina

Matthew 13: 44-51 WEB

Jesus said: “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid. In his joy, he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who is a merchant seeking fine pearls, who having found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some fish of every kind, which, when it was filled, fishermen drew up on the beach.

They sat down and gathered the good into containers, but the bad they threw away.

So it will be in the end of the world.

The angels will come and separate the wicked from among the righteous, and will cast them into the furnace of fire.

There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you understood all these things?”

They answered him, “Yes, Lord.”



Pearl of Great Price: Photo by Marin Tulard on Unsplash

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 25

Reflection

Strange people those who lived in Nazareth. They were able to see that Jesus had a great message, was persuasive and could do marvellous works. But they couldn't take him seriously because he was just one of their own.

Our challenge: Who do you know who is a remarkable person?

Are there many among your acquaintances who are worthy of appreciation?

If you find this difficult, take more time till you can unearth the value in the people around you.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder. We suggest using *Lectio Divina*.

Matthew 13:53-58 WEB

When Jesus had finished these parables, he departed from there.

Coming into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said,

“Where did this man get this wisdom and these mighty works?

Isn't this the carpenter's son?

Isn't his mother called Mary, and his brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas?

Aren't all of his sisters with us?

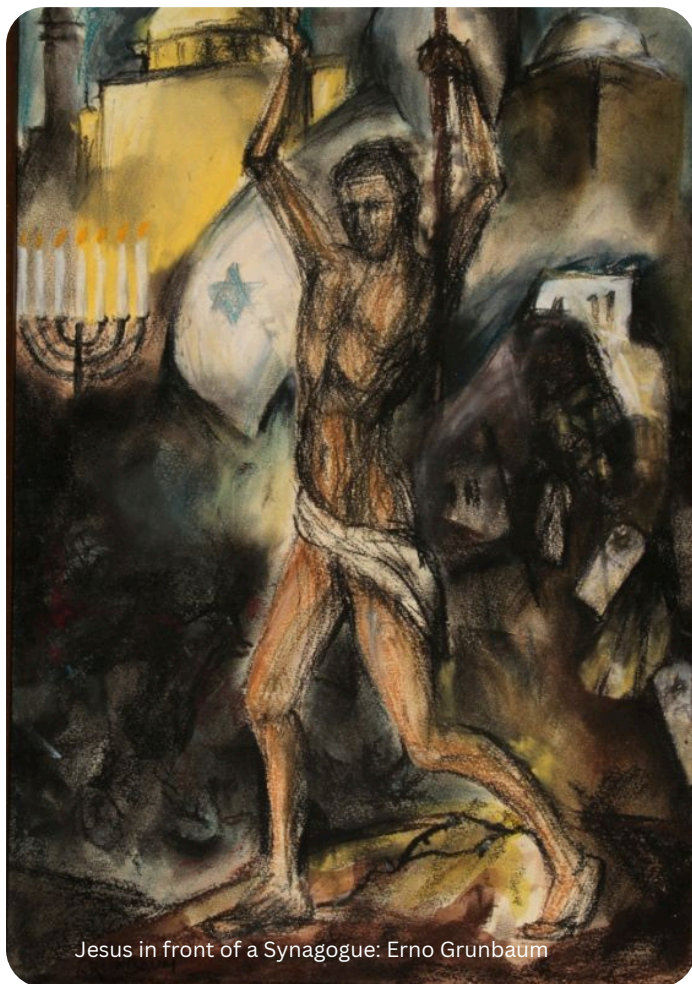
Where then did this man get all of these things?”

They were offended by him.

But Jesus said to them,

“A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country and in his own house.”

He didn't do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.



Jesus in front of a Synagogue: Erno Grunbaum

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 26

Reflection

Somehow the healing miracles are more understandable than this healing miracle. ‘*How on earth did Jesus do it?*’ we ask. But there is something about Jesus that enables him to meet the needs of people with great generosity. There was more left over than had originally existed.

Even if we feel we cannot do miracles, there are often times when we can see needs around us, that with some ingenuity and effective appeals can be happily met. Nothing will be done if we don’t try.

Have you ever been surprised by the effectiveness of your own or others help; maybe through crowd-funding or parish appeals or some other means?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: In today's Scripture you might imagine you are in the scene.

Matthew 14:13-21

Now when Jesus heard *of the death of John the Baptist*, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place apart. When the multitudes heard it, they followed him on foot from the cities. Jesus went out, and he saw a great multitude. He had compassion on them and healed their sick. When evening had come, his disciples came to him, saying, “This place is deserted, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves food.”

But Jesus said to them, “They don’t need to go away. You give them something to eat.”

They told him, “We only have here five loaves and two fish.”

He said, “Bring them here to me.”

He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass; and he took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.

They all ate and were filled.

They took up twelve baskets full of that which remained left over from the broken pieces.

Those who ate were about five thousand men, in addition to women and children.



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 27

Reflection

Another story, like the feeding of the 5,000, that doesn't resonate with our experience in life.

We can't imagine people walking on water. It's an experience of dreams. Or as the disciples imagined, something that only a ghost could do.

But there are times when we can, with God's help, do something that we never thought we had the ability to do.

Could you be called to surprise yourself by doing something remarkable, with God's help?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder. We suggest using Lectio Divina.

Matthew 14:22-33 WEB

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go ahead of him to the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.

After he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into the mountain by himself to pray.

When evening had come, he was there alone.

But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, distressed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came to them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying,

“It’s a ghost!” and they cried out for fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Cheer up! It is I! Don’t be afraid.”

Peter answered him and said, “Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the waters.”

He said, “Come!”

Peter stepped down from the boat and walked on the waters to come to Jesus.

But when he saw that the wind was strong, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, “Lord, save me!”

Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of him, and said to him,

“You of little faith, why did you doubt?”

When they got up into the boat, the wind ceased.

Those who were in the boat came and worshiped him, saying,

“You are truly the Son of God!”



Jesus walks on Water: Ivan Aivazovsky - 1890

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 28

Reflection

Only Peter, with God's help, had the imagination to realise the truth of who Jesus was. The others couldn't quite manage it. For them he was just a prophet, an important person, but not quite the Messiah. However, prophets are inspirational people who see the world as it is, and can be critical of institutions. Prophets are always worth listening to.

Who are the prophets of our day?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are part of the scene.

Matthew 16:13-20 WEB

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying,

“Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

They said, “Some say John the Baptist, some, Elijah, and others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

I also tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.

I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven; and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven.”

Then he commanded the disciples that they should tell no one that he was Jesus the Christ.



Christ gives the Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven to St. Peter. Norman Font, Kirkburn.

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 29

Reflection

Moses and Elijah represent the Law and the Prophets. Elijah being the prophet who was expected to return to earth and herald the Messiah. The three frightened disciples were dazzled by seeing Jesus, the Messiah in this way, full of light, with these important figures of the Jewish tradition.

In all religions both the Law and the Prophets are needed. The law to regulate behaviour, but also the prophet's ability to ensure that the spirit of the law is not lost in the meticulous following of rules.

Do you have a sense that this balance of law and the prophetic needs changing today?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine yourself in the scene.

Matthew 17:1-8 WEB

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves.

And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white.

Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

Then Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here;

if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.'

While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them,

and from the cloud a voice said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved;
with him I am well pleased; listen to him!'

When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were
overcome by fear.

But Jesus came and touched them, saying, 'Get up and do not be afraid.'

And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.



The Saviour's Transfiguration: Icon 1403

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our
Father.

Day 30

Reflection - The Feast of St Joseph

Joseph never says a word in the Gospels, but he is constantly in communication with God through dreams. For the safety of Mary and Jesus it seems to have been essential that Joseph was in touch with his dreams and happy to follow their bidding.

Do you ever get a sense that God is communicating to you; maybe through dreams, perhaps prayers or could be just a sense that a way of moving on just feels right to you?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using either Lectio Divina or Imaginative Contemplation

Matthew 2:19-23 WEB

But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel, for those who sought the young child's life are dead."

He arose and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.

But when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea in the place of his father, Herod, he was afraid to go there.

Being warned in a dream, he withdrew into the region of Galilee, and came and lived in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets that he will be called a Nazarene.



The Return from Egypt: Nicolas Poussin - 1630

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 31

Reflection

“Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?” Those who surrounded Jesus would probably have expected an answer such as ‘Abraham, Moses or Elijah’ one of the greats of the faith. Instead Jesus chooses a child, looked down upon in his day. In other words, a total reversal of expectations.

Who is the greatest in your life?
Do you treat all with equal dignity?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder – using Lectio Divina or Imaginative Contemplation

Matthew 18: 1-5 WEB

In that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying,
“Who then is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”
Jesus called a little child to himself, and set him in the middle of them and said,
“Most certainly I tell you, unless you turn and become as little children, you will in no way enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.
Whoever therefore humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.
Whoever receives one such little child in my name receives me.



Become like little children. Photo: Nathan Dumlao on Unsplash

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 32

Reflection

What a comforting thought: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

Sometimes it is in a small group of people that we feel God is most directly to be sensed.

Certainly too, of course, God is in our midst when a large group come together for worship.

Do you pray together with others?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder – using Lectio Divina

Matthew 18:19-20 WEB

Again, assuredly I tell you, that if two of you will agree on earth concerning anything that they will ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the middle of them.”

Photo by lo lindo on Unsplash

Where two or three are gathered in my name:

Jesus in our midst

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 33

Reflection

The rich, young man was the only person Jesus called to follow him, who did not follow the call.

The young man seems good in every way, so good, Jesus would like him as a disciple, but his possessions are the stumbling block to perfection in his life.

Is there anything that is stopping me from leading what Jesus might call the perfect life?

How can I best follow Jesus?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine. We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Matthew 19:16-22 WEB

Behold, a young man came to Jesus and said,

“Good teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?”

He said to him, “Why do you call me good?

No one is good but one, that is, God.

But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

He said to him, “Which ones?”

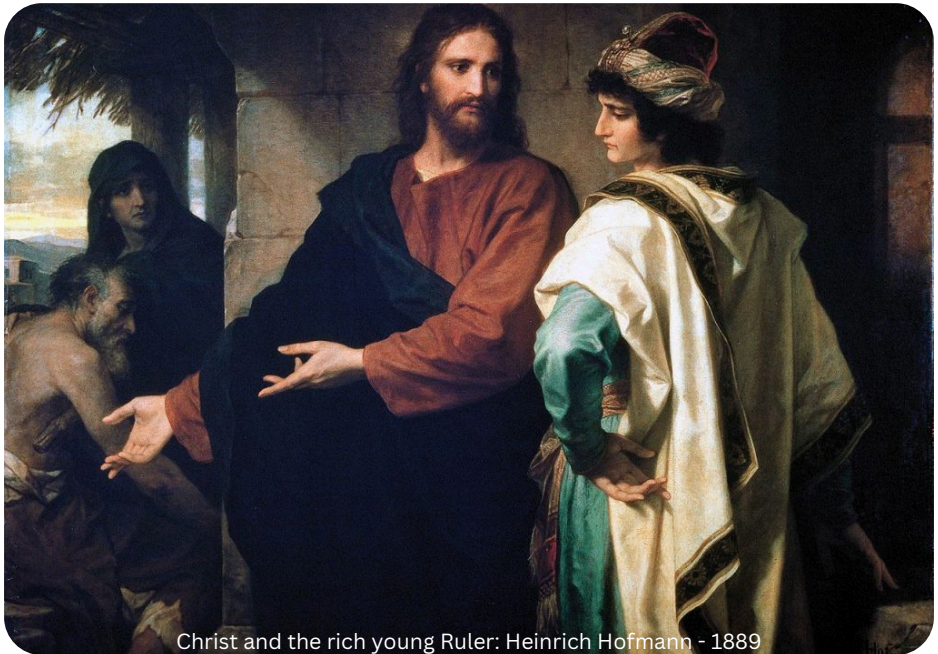
Jesus said,

“‘You shall not murder.’ ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ‘You shall not steal.’ ‘You shall not offer false testimony.’ ‘Honour your father and your mother.’ And, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’”

The young man said to him, “All these things I have observed from my youth. What do I still lack?”

Jesus said to him, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

But when the young man heard this, he went away sad, for he was one who had great possessions.



Christ and the rich young ruler: Heinrich Hofmann - 1889

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 34

Reflection

Whenever Jesus met sickness or disability and the person wanted a cure, he reached out to them.

This suggests that God wants us fit and well but he doesn't just cure, but always asks, "What do you want me to do for you?" It must be our desire as well.

Do you have any physical or mental problems that you are going to ask Jesus to cure? Have faith.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene.

Matthew 20:29-34 WEB

As they went out from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.

Behold, two blind men sitting by the road, when they heard that Jesus was passing by, cried out,

"Lord, have mercy on us, you son of David!"

The multitude rebuked them, telling them that they should be quiet, but they cried out even more, "Lord, have mercy on us, you son of David!"

Jesus stood still and called them, and asked,

"What do you want me to do for you?"

They told him, "Lord, that our eyes may be opened."

Jesus, being moved with compassion, touched their eyes;

and immediately their eyes received their sight,
and they followed him.



Jesus Heals two Blind Men: 6th Century

Have mercy on us!

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 35

Reflection

The cleansing of the Temple is another challenging Gospel story. Jesus, perhaps with the help of his disciples, drove the sellers out of the Temple. Certainly there is an element of violence in the story. This is no 'gentle Jesus, meek and mild'. This is a man fired with passion to retain the house of God as a house of prayer, not a bazaar.

When did I last feel the need to stand forcefully for what seemed right to me?

What is the difference between the challenges of Jesus and those of the Pharisees and Scribes who were constantly attacking him?

Are there any challenges that I should be taking up?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene.

Matthew 21:10-17 WEB

When he had come into Jerusalem, all the city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?"

The multitudes said, "This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

Jesus entered into the temple of God and drove out all of those who sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the money changers' tables and the seats of those who sold the doves.

He said to them,

"It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers!"

The lame and the blind came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children who were crying in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the son of David!” they were indignant, and said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” Jesus said to them, “Yes. Did you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of children and nursing babies, you have perfected praise’?” He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and camped there.



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 36

Reflection - Feast of the Annunciation

The feast of the Annunciation always takes the reading from the Gospel of Luke which tells of the Angel Gabriel announcing the birth of Jesus to Mary. However, the angel also paid a visit to Joseph in a dream to stop him rejecting Mary. Angels were busy bringing the Holy Family into existence. Both Mary and Joseph managed to say 'yes' to the angelic calls.

How far can I see the hand of God working in my life?

How much have things happened for the good – I can even be blessed by things which appeared unfortunate at the time – we learn from our mistakes and become wiser.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina or imagine that you are in the scene using Imaginative Contemplation

Matthew 1:18-25 NCB

The birth of Jesus Christ occurred in this way. When his mother Mary was engaged to Joseph, but before they came to live together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph was a just man and did not wish to expose her to the ordeal of public disgrace; therefore, he resolved to divorce her quietly.

After he had decided to follow this course of action, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to receive Mary into your home as your wife. For this child has been conceived in her womb through the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you shall name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

All this took place in order to fulfill what the Lord had announced through the prophet:

“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”

a name that means “God is with us.”

When Joseph rose from sleep, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him. He took Mary into his home as his wife, but he engaged in no marital relations with her until she gave birth to a son, whom he named Jesus.



Joseph's Dream: Daniele Crespi - 1625

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 37

Reflection

All the Law and Prophets can be said to be included in these two simple commandments: Love God and love your neighbour as you love yourself. So if, to your judgement and conscience, anything gets in the way of you truly loving God and loving your neighbour, then it should be ignored. However, if we end up going against lesser commandments, we do need to be careful that we are not just kidding ourselves.

Lord, teach me to love as you love.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina, or using Imaginative Contemplation.

Matthew 22:34-40 WEB

But the Pharisees, when they heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, gathered themselves together.

One of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him.

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law?”

Jesus said to him,

“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’

This is the first and great commandment.

A second likewise is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’

The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.”

Love your Neighbour: Photo by Cybèle and Bevan on Unsplash



Love

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 38

Reflection

We can show off our wealth, our good taste, our beautiful body, our holy, pious behaviour.

Whenever we show off, we put ourselves at the centre.

I ask God to help me put the needs of others first.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina or Imaginative Contemplation

Matthew 23:1-12 WEB

Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to his disciples, saying,

“The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat.

All things therefore whatever they tell you to observe, observe and do, but don’t do their works; for they say, and don’t do.

For they bind heavy burdens that are grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders;

but they themselves will not lift a finger to help them.

But they do all their works to be seen by men.

They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the fringes of their garments, and love the place of honour at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, the salutations in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi by men.

But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi’, for one is your teacher, the Christ, and all of you are brothers.

Call no man on the earth your father, for one is your Father, he who is in heaven.

Neither be called masters, for one is your master, the Christ.

But he who is greatest among you will be your servant.

Whoever exalts self will be humbled, and whoever humbles self will be exalted.



Serve one another

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 39

Reflection

A talent may be a very valuable unit of money, but it can equally be for us in English a gift that we have to use to the best of our ability.

How do I use my talents to the best of my ability? As the parable suggests, it doesn't matter how talented I am.

Let me be honest about my talents. Let me not pretend not to be talented, or be too shy to put myself forward. All I have to do is use my talents well.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene.

Matthew 25:14-30 WEB

Jesus said: "For it is like a man going into another country, who called his own servants and entrusted his goods to them.

To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his own ability.

Then he went on his journey.

Immediately he who received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents.

In the same way, he also who got the two gained another two.

But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the earth and hid his lord's money.

"Now after a long time the lord of those servants came, and settled accounts with them. He who received the five talents came and brought another five talents, saying,

'Lord, you delivered to me five talents. Behold, I have gained another five talents in addition to them.'

“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

“He also who got the two talents came and said, ‘Lord, you delivered to me two talents.

Behold, I have gained another two talents in addition to them.’

“His lord said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful over a few things. I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.’

“He also who had received the one talent came and said, ‘Lord, I knew you that you are a hard man, reaping where you didn’t sow, and gathering where you didn’t scatter.

I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the earth. Behold, you have what is yours.’

“But his lord answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant. You knew that I reap where I didn’t sow, and gather where I didn’t scatter.

You ought therefore to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back my own with interest. Take away therefore the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents.

For to everyone who has will be given, and he will have abundance, but from him who doesn’t have, even that which he has will be taken away.

Throw out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

Parable of the Talents: Jan
Freaks van der Bi - 1962



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 40

Reflection

We are back with the multitude who appreciate Jesus, who can see the good that he does. They welcome him to Jerusalem. Sometimes preachers call them fickle and say the same people called for Barabbas on Good Friday. But maybe it was a different crowd. Those who appreciate Jesus welcome him, those who follow the Chief Priests condemn him.

Can I see the good that Jesus does? Can I follow his difficult teachings, his demanding way?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: You may wish to imagine yourself walking with Jesus into Jerusalem. We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Matthew 21:1-11 WEB

When they came near to Jerusalem and came to Bethsphage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village that is opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me.

If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them,' and immediately he will send them."

All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying,

*"Tell the daughter of Zion,
behold, your King comes to you,
humble, and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey."*

The disciples went and did just as Jesus commanded them, and brought the donkey and the colt and laid their clothes on them; and he sat on them.

A very great multitude spread their clothes on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The multitudes who went in front of him, and those who followed, kept shouting, “Hosanna to the son of David!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

When he had come into Jerusalem, all the city was stirred up, saying, “Who is this?”

The multitudes said, “This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.”



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 41

Reflection

How do we show our love for Jesus, the Son of Man? Not by reciting long prayers or spending hours in meditation, but by loving the least of his brothers and sister on earth. The task: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, giving clothes to the naked and visiting those sick or in prison. It seems judgement is dependent upon whether we have the general desire to help the needy.

Let me not reach out to the needy just in order to gain eternal life myself, but because I have trained myself to see the needs of others and it has become second nature to help.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder. We suggest using Lectio Divina.

Matthew 25:31-46 WEB

But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. Before him all the nations will be gathered, and he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

Then the King will tell those on his right hand, 'Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me.'

"Then the righteous will answer him, saying,

'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink?

When did we see you as a stranger
and take you in, or naked and clothe
you?

When did we see you sick or in prison
and come to you?’

“The King will answer them,
‘Most certainly I tell you, because you
did it to one of the least of these my
brothers, you did it to me.’

Then he will say also to those on the
left hand, ‘Depart from me, you
cursed, into the eternal fire which is
prepared for the devil and his angels;
for I was hungry, and you didn’t give
me food to eat;

I was thirsty, and you gave me no
drink;

I was a stranger, and you didn’t take
me in;
naked, and you didn’t clothe me;
sick, and in prison, and you didn’t visit
me.’

“Then they will also answer, saying,
‘Lord, when did we see you hungry, or
thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick,
or in prison, and didn’t help you?’

“Then he will answer them, saying,
‘Most certainly I tell you, because you
didn’t do it to one of the least of
these, you didn’t do it to me.’

These will go away into eternal
punishment, but the righteous into
eternal life.”



Last Judgement: Michelangelo - 1536

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 42

Reflection

There are times when it is appropriate to show love by a grand gesture, as this woman does by pouring expensive oil over Jesus, at a time close to his death. There may have been other times when it might have been appropriate to sell the oil. But Jesus doesn't like others criticising a loving gesture like this.

Am I being called to show love by a simple or extravagant gesture?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly just as the woman who anointed Jesus' head did.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene.

Matthew 26:1-13 WEB

When Jesus had finished all these words, he said to his disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas. They took counsel together that they might take Jesus by deceit and kill him. But they said, "Not during the feast, lest a riot occur among the people."

Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him having an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table.

But when his disciples saw this, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?

For this ointment might have been sold for much and given to the poor."

However, knowing this, Jesus said to them,
“Why do you trouble the woman? She has done a good work for me.
For you always have the poor with you, but you don’t always have me.
For in pouring this ointment on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.
Most certainly I tell you, wherever this Good News is preached in the whole world,
what this woman has done will also be spoken of as a memorial of her.”



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 43

Reflection

Judas, knew very well he had agreed to give Jesus up to the High Priest's soldiers, yet he still presents an innocent face to Jesus at the Last Supper, "It isn't me is it Rabbi?"

Thirty pieces of silver – money is a great tempter.

Have I ever followed the wrong vocation, betrayed my values, betrayed another, for money.

If I haven't, thank God.

If I have, there is always time to repent and, as far as it is in my power, amend my ways.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene.

Matthew 26:20-25 WEB

Now when evening had come, he was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples.

As they were eating, he said, "Most certainly I tell you that one of you will betray me.

They were exceedingly sorrowful, and each began to ask him, "It isn't me, is it, Lord?"

He answered, "He who dipped his hand with me in the dish will betray me. The Son of Man goes even as it is written of him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had not been born."
Judas, who betrayed him, answered, "It isn't me, is it, Rabbi?"
Jesus said to him, "You said it."



Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

Day 44

Reflection - Maundy Thursday

The Body and Blood of Jesus Christ is offered to his disciples at his Last Supper. This same Eucharist is offered in churches worldwide today. We want to take the life of Christ within us so that we can be Christ for others. The Eucharist is a mystical union with Christ.

As I receive the Eucharist let it not be a routine gesture, but may I take to heart the message of Jesus in today's Gospel.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder. We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation or Lectio Divina

Matthew 26:26-30 WEB

As they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it, and broke it. He gave to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave to them, saying,

"All of you drink it, for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins.

But I tell you that I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on, until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's Kingdom."

When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.



Last Supper Eucharist: Llorenç Saragossa C.1375

“This is my
body...”

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 45

Reflection - Good Friday

Human cruelty knows few bounds. Fear of losing power will drive men to all sorts of unspeakable violence. Few acts of cruelty are worse than crucifixion. We notice that at the end it is not a Jew, but a pagan Roman Soldier who says, "Truly this was the Son of God".

I pray that I do not support violence and cruelty towards others and that I can recognise the good in what others do.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know Jesus more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder. We suggest using Lectio Divina.

Matthew 27:33-54 WEB

When they came to a place called "Golgotha", that is to say, "The place of a skull," they gave him sour wine to drink mixed with gall.

When he had tasted it, he would not drink.

When they had crucified him, they divided his clothing among them, casting lots, and they sat and watched him there.

They set up over his head the accusation against him written, "THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Then there were two robbers crucified with him, one on his right hand and one on the left. Those who passed by blasphemed him, wagging their heads and saying,

"You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself!

If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross!"

Likewise the chief priests also mocking with the scribes, the Pharisees, and the elders, said,

"He saved others, but he can't save himself.

If he is the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.

He trusts in God. Let God deliver him now, if he wants him; for he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

The robbers also who were crucified with him cast on him the same reproach.

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying,
“Eli, Eli, lima sabachthani?”

That is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Some of them who stood there, when they heard it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.”

Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled it with vinegar, put it on a reed, and gave him a drink.

The rest said, “Let him be. Let’s see whether Elijah comes to save him.”

Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit.

Behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom.

The earth quaked and the rocks were split.

The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection, they entered into the holy city and appeared to many.

Now the centurion and those who were with him watching Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were done, were terrified, saying, “Truly this was the Son of God!”



Crucifixion: Pedro Orrente c.1625

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 46

Reflection - Holy Saturday

The followers of Jesus, including his mother, must have been traumatised by such a death.

They allowed one of Jesus' rich disciples to take charge and look after the burial.

Pilate too, no doubt irritated by the insistence of the High Priest to kill Jesus, allowed his body a decent burial and then insists that the Jewish authorities do the guarding of the tomb.

What would it be like if his death on the cross had been the end of Jesus?

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To feel with Mary and the disciples the emptiness of life without Jesus.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine you are in the scene

Matthew 27:55-66 WEB

Many women were there watching from afar, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, serving him.

Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

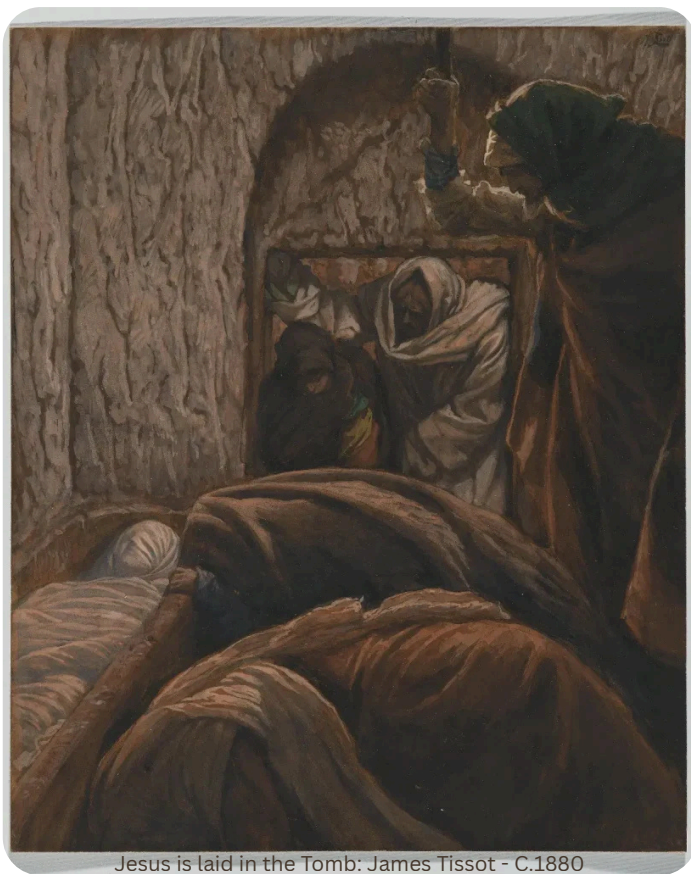
When evening had come, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph, who himself was also Jesus' disciple, came. This man went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given up. Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut out in the rock. Then he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.

Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb.

Now on the next day, which was the day after the Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together to Pilate, saying, “Sir, we remember what that deceiver said while he was still alive: ‘After three days I will rise again.’

Command therefore that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest perhaps his disciples come at night and steal him away, and tell the people, ‘He is risen from the dead;’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.”

Pilate said to them, “You have a guard. Go, make it as secure as you can.” So they went with the guard and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone.



Jesus is laid in the Tomb: James Tissot - C.1880

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord’s Prayer/Our Father.

Day 47

Reflection - Easter Sunday

We have seen many miracles over the last 47 days, but this is the greatest. Jesus is not dead but alive in a new way.

Enjoy the resurrection over the next few weeks.

Try to feel this marvellous event with Jesus' early followers.

Today's Prayer

Preparation: Begin by stilling; then dedicating the time of prayer to God and asking God that all you think, feel and imagine are for the glory of God.

Gift: Ask for what you desire. Suggestion: To know the joy of Jesus' resurrection with Mary Magdalene and the other disciples.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder - using Imaginative Contemplation or Lectio Divina

Matthew 28:1-10 WEB

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

Behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from the sky and came and rolled away the stone from the door and sat on it.

His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow.

For fear of him, the guards shook, and became like dead men.

The angel answered the women,

"Don't be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus, who has been crucified.

He is not here, for he has risen, just like he said.

Come, see the place where the Lord was lying.

Go quickly and tell his disciples,

'He has risen from the dead,

and behold, he goes before you into Galilee;
there you will see him.' Behold, I have told you."
They departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to
bring his disciples word.
As they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying,
"Rejoice!"
They came and took hold of his feet, and worshiped him.
Then Jesus said to them,
"Don't be afraid. Go tell my brothers that they should go into Galilee,
and there they will see me."



The women at the empty tomb over looked by the
resurrected Jesus: Fra Angelico - C.1440

Conversation: Talk to Jesus in your own words as a friend

Final Prayer: End with a formal prayer such as the Lord's Prayer/Our Father.

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<https://www.onlineprayer.net/l26-m/>

Thank you

We are very grateful for the efforts of our team for their help this year, and in particular to Fr David Birchall SJ for his substantive work on the text.

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If you would like to donate towards postage or towards our expenses of putting on this retreat and help provide for future retreats, your donation would be most welcome.

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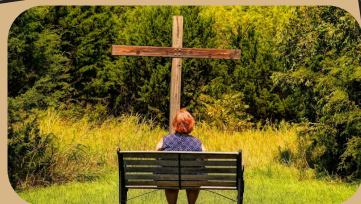
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