

Fruits of the Spirit

A Retreat for Lent based on
the Jubilee 2025 theme:
“Pilgrims of Hope”



Ignatian Spirituality Centre

Cornucopia: Front cover photo by Brad Switzer on unsplash.com

Fruits of the Spirit

A retreat for Lent 2025



*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
forbearance, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."
Galatians 5:22*

Lent 2025 Retreat available online with music
www.onlineprayer.net

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Pilgrims of Hope

We will journey through Lent 2025 in the Jubilee Year. Our Lenten journey this year therefore picks up on the Jubilee theme “Pilgrims of Hope”. The letter issued by Pope Francis on the Feast of the Ascension 2024 to help us begin this pilgrimage is *Spes non Confundit*, hope does not disappoint. Hope does not disappoint, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us” (Rom 5:1-2.5)

For this reason, through Lent 2025, our Lent Retreat theme is the “fruits of the Spirit”. We experience the fruits of the Spirit in consolation: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness and self-control. For Ignatius consolation was an increase in faith, hope and love. (SE 316). We are invited in the Exercises to revisit consolation often. For this reason, we have invited those involved in our Centres to contribute poems and artwork. We pray that in this Jubilee Year the fruits of the prayer of so many people will renew our hope.

We pray with Pope Francis that the Jubilee is a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the “door” (cf. Jn 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as “our hope” (1 Tim 1:1).

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



Photo by Anastasiya Badun on Unsplash

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

Trustfulness

Our first fruit of the Spirit is Trustfulness.

We begin this virtue by focusing on our trust in God.

We believe that we were made in the image of God and we trust that God wishes the best for 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: That this retreat might bring me closer to God and enable me to live a virtuous life.

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

Titus 3: 3-8 NIVUK

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good.

These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.



Fruits of the Spirit by Roseleen Cowie

Love – the Spirit lives!
Joy – the Spirit dances!
Peace – the Spirit rests!
Patience – the Spirit waits!
Kindness – the Spirit gives!
Goodness – the Spirit moves!
Gentleness – the Spirit acts!
Faithfulness – the Spirit dwells!
Self-Control – the Spirit smiles!

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

Trustfulness

The books of wisdom, such as Proverbs give us encouragement to live a good life, which can generally be guaranteed to bring a sense of peace and satisfaction. Although living a good life will not mean that we never have to suffer, after all, sickness and death are bound to touch us, but at least our consciences will be clear.

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 learn and follow the ways of God.

Setting: Today's Scripture from the book of Proverbs, promises God's favour on those who follow God's ways. We suggest that Lectio Divina is the best approach to this piece of Scripture.

Proverbs 3:5-6 & 29-35 NIVUK

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Do not plot harm against your neighbour, who lives trustfully near you.

Do not accuse anyone for no reason – when they have done you no harm.

Do not envy the violent or choose any of their ways.

For the Lord detests the perverse but takes the upright into his confidence.

The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous.

He mocks proud mockers but shows favour to the humble and oppressed.

The wise inherit honour, but fools get only shame.



The Last Judgment, Joos van Cleve, c.1520

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

Trustfulness

Today's Gospel passage from Luke follows the story of the unjust steward who upon hearing he is to be sacked, gets his master's debtors to reduce their debts and thus be grateful to him when he loses his job. Trustfulness works two ways. We need to trust in God, but also others need to be able to trust us.

Love of money is the root of all evil?

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

Luke 16: 10-15 NIVUK

Jesus said:

'Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?'

'No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.'

The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.

He said to them, 'You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God's sight.'



Parable of the Unjust Steward Marinus van Reymerswaele. 1530

The Shore by Madeleine Gorham

I long for you, beloved, as the ocean wave yearns to pour
itself out upon the shore.
I ache for my true homing, a wind battered sea bird wearying
for landfall.
For you are my land, my shore, my harbour.
And in the depths of my littleness, you are the star that
guides me home.

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

Trustfulness

Today's Scripture from Psalm 19 talks of both our hidden faults and willful sins. Our willful sins we are all to aware of and should try to avoid. We ask God to enlighten us and reveal to us our hidden faults, such as the times we hurt others without being aware of it, so that we can take steps to avoid these faults in the future.

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: That I may trust in the Lord and his precepts and understand more my own sinful tendencies so that I may avoid them in the future.

Setting: Psalms are written to be sung but it can prove profitable to ponder their meaning in the Lectio Divina style of prayer. Allow yourself to ponder on your own attitude to God and your own behaviour.

Psalm 19: 7-14 NIVUK

The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.
The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
The fear of the Lord is pure,
enduring forever.
The decrees of the Lord are firm,
and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold,
 than much pure gold;
they are sweeter than honey,
 than honey from the honeycomb.
By them your servant is warned;
 in keeping them there is great reward.
But who can discern their own errors?
 Forgive my hidden faults.
Keep your servant also from willful sins;
 may they not rule over me.
Then I will be blameless,
 innocent of great transgression.

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart
 be pleasing in your sight,
Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.



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

Peace

What robs us of our peace?

We can spend our time worrying about possible problems.

We can be fearful of something in our life that we are trying to hide from others.

We can live with a troubled conscience.

Much of what robs us of our peace is of our own making. We worry and fret about so many things. Trust that all will be well. Be open, be honest, be fearless.

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 in words or phrases - Lectio Divina. Or you might imagine you are being sent out by Jesus, either in our world today or even in Jesus' period. Your first words upon entering any house is 'shalom', peace. - Imaginative contemplation

Luke 10:1-7 NIVUK

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.

He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.

Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves.

Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

'When you enter a house, first say, "Peace to this house."

If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you.

Avonmore river flows peacefully through Glendalough. Photo: David Birchall SJ



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

Peace

The final and perhaps the most important title of the Messiah given by Isaiah in today's reading is 'Prince of Peace'.

Jesus gave us many ways to break the cycle of violence and make peace possible.

Love your enemy - that's his radical new teaching to bring peace.

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.

Isaiah 9: 6-7a NRSVCE

For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;
authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,
and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

Peaceful Sea - Photo by Madeleine Gorham



Be at peace and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings

St Francis de Sales

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

Peace

We all need times of peace to pray and reflect. God is to be found in the peace of nature, in the stillness of the night, the quiet waters, the beauty of Creation.

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.

1 Kings 19:11-13 NRSVACE

Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah, saying,
'Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.'

Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind;

and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake;

and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire;
and after the fire a sound of sheer silence.

When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

Mull from Iona. Photo: David Birchall SJ



“Deep peace of the son of
peace to you....”

A celtic blessing

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

Peace

Love God, Father, Son and Spirit, Love neighbour, and Love self - three loves. If we can appreciate God's gifts, of God's self, God's gifts of our neighbours, family and friends, and God's gift of our own self, then we can live at peace.

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 be given peace of heart and the grace to follow the teachings of Christ.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina.

John 14:23-27 NRSVACE

Jesus answered, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

'I have said these things to you while I am still with you.

But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

Dove in Flight - Sunguk Kim (Unsplash)



Peace

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

Peace

So often work for peace seems a fruitless task when men seem to prefer war and violence to solve differences. However, with great patience, peace-making often wins out when wars fail to bring the hoped for rapid results.

Let us pray today for peace in the world and that all those dedicated to negotiating for peace will, with patience, have success.

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 pray for peace in the world

Setting: Scripture readings to ponder using Lectio Divina.

James 3: 17-18 NIV

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

Matthew 5:9 NIV

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



Deep peace of the running wave to you,
Deep peace of the flowing air to you,
Deep peace of the quiet earth to you.
Amen.

Deep peace of the shining stars to you,
Deep peace of the gentle night to you,
Moon and stars pour their healing light on you.
Amen.

(A Gaelic Blessing from Carmina Gadelica)

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

Patience

Our Scripture reading today talks of endurance. Endurance, patience under suffering. James also makes it clear that temptations to do wrong don't come from God, but rather from our own evil desires. God's desire is that we do good.

We need to be aware of the actions of the Good Spirit and the bad spirit in our 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: 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.

James 1:12-18 NRSVACE

Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. No one, when tempted, should say, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death. Do not be deceived, my beloved.

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.



Heron: Photo: James Lee (Unsplash)

Patience

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

Patience

Though patience can be a great virtue, we have to be sure that we are waiting for the right thing. Today's Gospel reading shows us a man who has patiently waited for 38 years to be cured. He believed he could only be cured when the water was stirred up. Jesus comes and immediately cures him. No need to wait for the water to be stirred up.

Sometimes when we are waiting patiently and praying for something to happen, we should keep our eyes open, maybe God is offering us an answer that we are not expecting. For example the Catholic Church has been praying for more clergy to maintain the current system of parishes. God doesn't seem to be inspiring sufficient young men to follow this vocation. Could the answer to maintaining the Church lie in a totally different solution?

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.

James 1:12-18

NRSVACE

Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Bethzatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.

One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.

When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time,

he said to him, “Do you want to be made well?”

The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.”

Jesus said to him, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.”

At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.



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

Patience

The Scripture passage today tells of Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. 40 days alone in a barren place might seem a long time to spend in prayer and reflection; a long time to learn the ways of the good and bad spirit. But it takes time to reflect to allow ourselves to gain the wisdom of understanding how we are likely to be tempted to comfort, honour and pride. Jesus needs this space to recognise how he might be vulnerable to temptation.

If Jesus had the patience to spend time alone in prayer and reflection, how much more do we need that time and space?

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*.

Luke 4:1-13 NRSVACE

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone."'

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, 'To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.' Jesus answered him, 'It is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him."'”



Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, "He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you", and "On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."'”

Jesus answered him, 'It is said, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."'”

When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

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

Kindness

Today's Scripture story from Acts shows the follower of Jesus, Ananias, going against his better judgement to do an act of kindness for what seemed to him an enemy, Saul of Tarsus. He overcame his own reluctance through his trust in God. When Saint Patrick returned to Ireland after having spent so many years there as a slave in his youth, he must have had a certain level of worry, but the desire to spread the Gospel and do God's work overcame any natural foreboding.

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 be given the strength to do difficult things for God.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine using Imaginative Contemplation

Acts 9:10-19 NIVUK

In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, 'Ananias!'

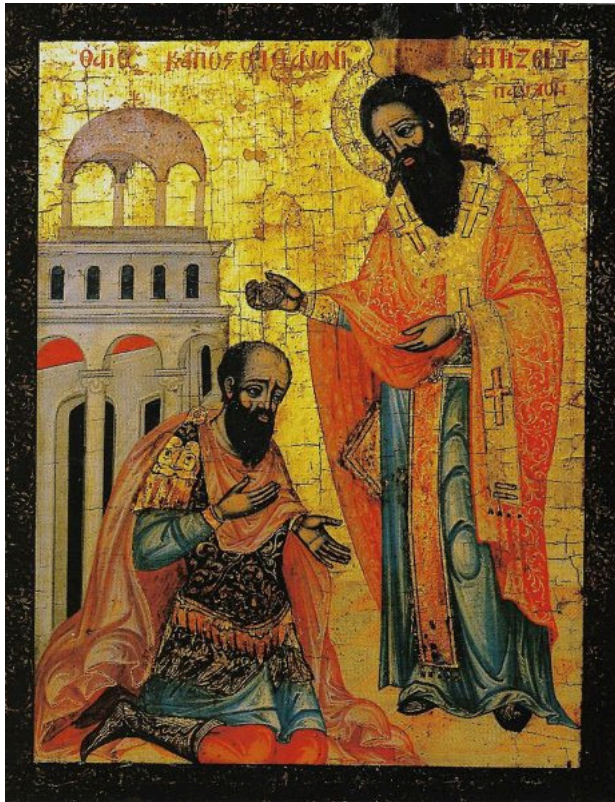
'Yes, Lord,' he answered.

The Lord told him, 'Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.'

'Lord,' Ananias answered, 'I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.'

But the Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.'

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord – Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here – has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptised, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.



Paul with Ananias: Icon Yuhanna

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

Kindness

One of the more frequent emotions of Jesus that we find in the Gospels is compassion. He looks with compassion on the widow of Nain, on lepers, on the sick and in today's passage on the crowd. This compassion always results in an act of kindness, today, the feeding of the 5,000. When did you last look at someone who evoked compassion in you? Did this result in an act of kindness?

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 with Jesus, the Apostles, the crowd on the side of Lake Galilee, who are you? We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation for this passage.

Mark 6:32-44 NIVUK

The Apostles and Jesus went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. But many who saw them leaving recognised them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things. By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. 'This is a remote place,' they said, 'and it's already very late. Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.'

But he answered, 'You give them something to eat.'

They said to him, 'That would take more than half a year's wages!

Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?'

They said to him, 'That would take more than half a year's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?' 'How many loaves do you have?' he asked. 'Go and see.' When they found out, they said, 'Five – and two fish.'

Then Jesus told them to make all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.



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

Kindness

Joseph shows kindness to Mary to begin with by not accusing her of unfaithfulness but quietly putting her aside. Then, after his dream, he takes her as his wife.

All that we hear of Joseph shows him to be a caring man who does his best for Mary and the 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 be given the wisdom to recognise the word of God in my life.

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder - Lectio Divina or imagine that you are Joseph or a friend that he is telling his story to - using Imaginative Contemplation.

Matthew 1:18-25 NIVUK

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: his mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.'

All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us').

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.



Photo by Enzo Natale Ferrari on Pexels.com

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

Kindness

Act justly, love tenderly and walk humbly with your God - it sounds so nice and easy. But as is clear, this is a lifetime's task, not a once and for all event. Whatever our role in life, whatever our vocation we are all called to reflect each day on whether we have acted justly, loved tenderly and walked humbly.

Hopefully, little by little, we can come closer to this ideal as we grow in wisdom and 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 - Lectio Divina.

Micah 6: 8 NRSVACE

The Lord, has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?



Walk humbly in love: Photo: Ryan Franco , (Unsplash)

Kindness

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

Goodness

"Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me all the days of my life."

This line from Psalm 23 reassures us that we are always under the care of the Good God. God wants good for each one of us.

Although we all have times of sorrow and pain in our lives, we have this promise that we shall dwell in the Lord's own house for ever. We cannot know what this might be like from our limited existence in time and space, but we trust and hope in God's Goodness.

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 ponder - Lectio Divina.

Psalm 23 NRSVACE

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.



Good Shepherd: Russian Icon

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

Goodness

The question raised by the Lawyer who was trying to trick Jesus, "Who is my neighbour?" really should not have been asked. Frequently in the Old Testament we see the people being encouraged to care for widows, orphans and the stranger. Everyone, but particularly those in need, is our neighbour.

Sometimes we can help a person and save their life, as in the story of the Good Samaritan. At other times we can just talk to a person living on the street as a normal human being.

Care and Compassion are two virtues that are shown by the Good person.

Have I seen someone in the last few days that towards whom I could have been more compassionate?

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 - Imaginative Contemplation

Luke 10:29-37 NRSVACE

But wanting to justify himself, the lawyer asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'

Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.'

Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

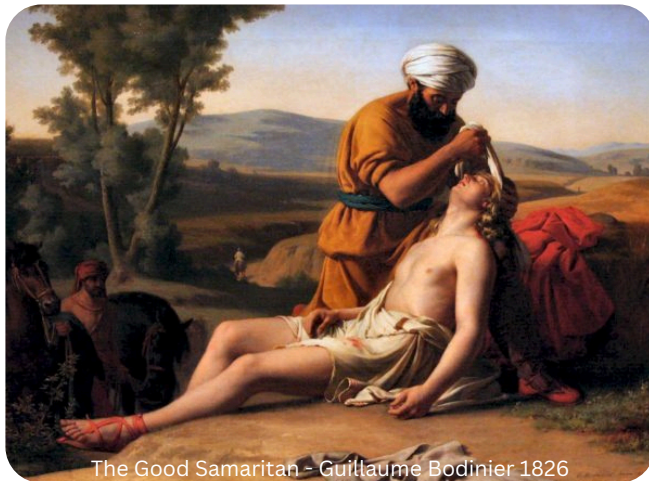
But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.

He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend."

Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'

The Lawyer said, 'The one who showed him mercy.'

Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'



The Good Samaritan - Guillaume Bodinier 1826

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

Goodness

In this story of Peter and John the lame beggar looks for a coin, something to help him through the day. But Peter at first seems to let him down, "Silver and Gold have I none", but then what Peter can give is so much more valuable. Healing, a gift that will last a lifetime. What gift can I give out of my goodness?

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 be happy to offer to others what has been given to me.

Setting: A lively Scripture reading to imagine. - Imaginative Contemplation

Acts 3:3-10 NRSVCE

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple.

When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms.

Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, 'Look at us.'

And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them.

But Peter said, 'I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.'

And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.

Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. All the people saw him walking and praising God, and they recognised him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.



Peter and John healing a cripple at the Beautiful Gate: Bolognese School

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

Goodness

Goodness and beauty come from God. Notice in our reading from the prophet Zechariah how God's good gifts are for everyone. How the young men and women are given grain for bread and wine for joy - God wants us to be well fed and enjoy the good things of life.

Which of God's good gifts do you particularly want to enjoy 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 ponder - Lectio Divina.

Zechariah 9:16-10:1 NRSVACE

On that day the Lord their God will save them,
for they are the flock of his people;
for like the jewels of a crown
they shall shine on his land.

For what goodness and beauty are his!
Grain shall make the young men flourish,
and new wine the young women.

Ask rain from the Lord
in the season of the spring rain,
from the Lord who makes the storm-clouds,
who gives showers of rain to you,
the vegetation in the field to everyone.



Lakeside by Catherine Kay Greenup (Unsplash)

Goodness

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

Goodness

No person could embody goodness better than Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Known in the Catholic tradition as the sinless one.

Her goodness didn't stop her from telling the 12 year old Jesus off when he stayed behind in the Temple in Jerusalem, or wanting him to come home for a good meal when he was overworking.

Her goodness centred on her willingness to trust God and say 'yes' to the will of God, however strange God's requests might have seemed to her. Our Scripture reading today is the Annunciation.

Gabriel, the messenger of God, comes to Mary to tell of God's will to have her bear his son.

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: Imagine you are watching, or being told about, or are Mary in this scene. Be aware of how she might have felt. How would you have felt? We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Luke 1:26-38 NIVUK

God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.'

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail.'

'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her.



The Annunciation: Seo, Manresa

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

Goodness

We are encouraged to reflect every day in the prayer we call the 'Examen' on how our day has gone. What has brought us joy? What has brought us down?

As St. Peter suggests in our Scripture today we are given everything we need to live a life of Goodness, but it doesn't come automatically, we need prayer and reflection to avoid the temptations that might befall 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 grow in the love of God.

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

2 Peter 1:3-11 NRSVACE

The divine power of Jesus Christ has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.

Thus he has given us, through these things, his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of lust, and may become participants in the divine nature.

For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love.

For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For anyone who lacks these things is short-sighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins.

Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you.



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

Self-Control

Self-Control is not a virtue that our modern generations take up with great delight. But nevertheless it is absolutely vital if we are to live a life of integrity. If we accept that we can be tempted to do things for short-term selfish delight which we know will hurt others, then we understand that we need be able to resist such temptations. Self-Control is necessary to avoid the vices which greed, lust and selfishness might put in our way. As the book of Wisdom tells us in today's passage; wisdom "teaches us self-control, prudence, justice and courage".

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 become wise and learn what brings true happiness and have the self-control to avoid what tempts us to loose our integrity.

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

Wisdom 8:2-7 NRSVACE

I loved her and sought her from my youth;
I desired to take her for my bride,
and became enamoured of her beauty.
She glorifies her noble birth by living with God,
and the Lord of all loves her.
For she is an initiate in the knowledge of God,
and an associate in his works.
If riches are a desirable possession in life,
what is richer than wisdom, the active cause of all things?
And if understanding is effective,
who more than she is fashioner of what exists?
And if anyone loves righteousness,
her labours are virtues;

for she teaches self-control and prudence,
justice and courage;
nothing in life is more profitable for mortals than these.



Prayer: Jack Sharp (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 24

Self-Control

We often sell ourselves short as human beings. We fail to live from our greater dreams and hopes. Ignatius believed that this comes from our disordered relationships and desires. Much of our attention in this digital age is taken up with things that are superficial. We want things because we see them. Yet we pray readily and frequently that God's Kingdom will come. If we take time to discern and prioritise the deepest desires that God has placed within us our lives will change. And the world will change. The Kingdom will come.

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. Lots of characters to choose from. Who do you most easily identify with? We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Matthew 26:47-56 NRSVACE

While Jesus was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, arrived; with him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; arrest him.'

At once he came up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed him.

Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you are here to do.'

Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and arrested him.

Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

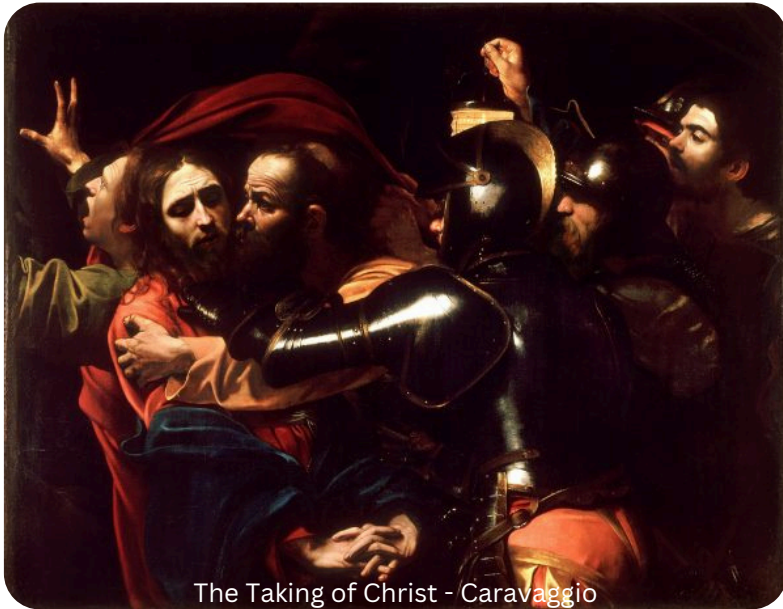
Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.'

Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father,
and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?
But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen
in this way?’

At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, ‘Have you come out with swords
and clubs to arrest me as though I were a bandit? Day after day I sat in
the temple teaching, and you did not arrest me.

But all this has taken place, so that the scriptures of the prophets may
be fulfilled.’

Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.



The Taking of Christ - Caravaggio

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

Self-Control

The early Church to which Titus is writing in today's Scripture passage was vulnerable to slanderous attacks. They were therefore very keen to ensure that they lived virtuous lives beyond reproach. An important virtue, repeated frequently in this passage is 'self-control'.

We might consider today how others would rate our way of life. Do we live an ordered and self-controlled way of 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 be given the grace to live with integrity in a loving way so all may see me as a follower of Christ.

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

Titus 2 NIVUK

You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine. Teach the older men to be temperate, worthy of respect, self-controlled, and sound in faith, in love and in endurance.

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can urge the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God.

Similarly, encourage the young men to be self-controlled. In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Men and Women, young and old - and children - Photo: Rajiv Perera (Unsplash)



Self Control

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

Joy

The joy which the Spirit grows in us – a pervasive sense of well-being - is not dependant on circumstances, but on God's presence and action in our own lives, or those of others. This action is often surprising. In our Scripture today Jesus is filled with joy because of the unexpected and surprising ways of God. God is a God of surprises.

What are some of the surprises of God you have experienced which have brought you joy?

You are invited to take some time today to recall these, perhaps writing them down, and to savour the joy which they bring, giving thanks to God for them, as Jesus did. Notice how you feel afterwards.

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: That you may be given the gift of joy.

Setting: In today's Scripture you might imagine Jesus welcoming his disciples back from their preaching exercise and rejoicing that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.

Luke 10:21 NIV

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said,
'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.



Simple Joy - Photo: Leo Rivas (Unsplash)

Joy - by Karen groves

I sit amongst the green, in the warmth of the sun,
mindful only of this moment.

The blackbird's golden-yellow beak opens and closes
in time with his fruity, melodious song.

Through the trees, shafts of sunlight reveal myriads of swirling insects
busy about their convoluted, yet ordered, networking.

A pair of butterflies together perform their 3D dance
up and down and around, over and over, as if to unheard music.

As time stops for a moment,
a flock of brightly coloured goldfinches, trilling on the wing,
lift the thin veil of the Kingdom in their flypast,
affording joyous harmony the briefest glimpse.

Colour, movement, order, song, harmony and joy.

Creation, busy at work, in all its glory.

I did not know the Holy Spirit spoke in goldfinch!

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

Joy

Jesus' desire may be a surprise to us. It is for us to have his joy in us and for our joy to be complete.

How do you feel about and respond to that?

Imagine what your life might look like with Jesus' joy in you. Jesus also tells us how this can be the case. By remaining, abiding, making ourselves at home in his love. The joy the Spirit produces is rooted in love. 'A joyful heart is the normal result of a heart burning with love' (Mother Teresa).

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 that Jesus might make you at home in his love and fill you with joy.

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

John 15: 8-11 NCB

Jesus said, "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Remain in my love.

If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete."



Image courtesy of Marianne Lucchesi

Joy

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

Joy

For the psalmist God's presence is a place of joy.
How, honestly, do you feel about being in God's presence?
How might God be inviting you to experience joy in His presence?

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 experience God's joyful presence.

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

Psalm 16:8-9 & 11 NRSVACE

I keep the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.



The Joy of Scripture Photo: Ben White (Unsplash)

Dancing Tulips – a poem by Jackie Tevlin

Fenland flat with skies unended
Peatish beds with bulbs for tending
Vermillion wings like stars uncurling
Golden hearts with seeds unfurling
Onto peatish beds with bulbs for tending
Tulip's dance a swift fandango
Effervescently together tango
Today is all of their tomorrow
There is no time for grief or sorrow
As they create the perfect ending
Peatish soil - a bed worth tending
Tulips - perfect in their praise.

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

Joy

The scripture for today invites us to recognise that joy, especially joy which God gives, is a source of strength for life. Therefore we can celebrate even in the midst of grief. Throughout Scripture God's people are encouraged to celebrate with joy.

How is God wanting to share God's joy with you 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 be able to enjoy the good things of life that I am given

Setting: Imagine the people listening to the words of Nehemiah. We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Nehemiah 8:8-10 NIV

They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people understood what was being read. Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the Lord your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law.

Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

The Gift – Madeleine Gorham

When I am feeling down, I wander
through the woods to find some
healing.

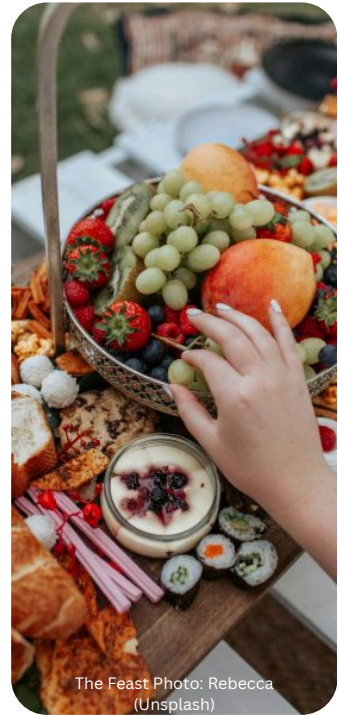
I leave my desk with its busy list
behind.

And as I walk, my troubled mind
calms, as I find silence.

I know a secret place where herons
fish,
and cygnets nestle by their parents.
And once, bubbles broke through the
surface there,
where trees were mirrored in the
water.

Then two otters rose.
They rolled and dived,
over and over,
an ecstasy of light and water,
whilst I gazed enchanted, watching
them at play.

And in that moment of pure gift
I came alive,
feeling one with all Creation.
I stood on hallowed ground
and bowed.
I would call it prayer.



The Feast Photo: Rebecca
(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 30

Gentleness

This first of the servant songs of Isaiah, quoted in Matthew 12:18-21, foreshadows the servant nature of Jesus, a central aspect of which is his gentleness, especially towards the vulnerable – the ‘bruised reeds’ and ‘smouldering wicks’. Yet there is a strength and dependability to this gentleness, committed to establishing justice.

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 and love him in his gentleness

Setting: Allow yourself to imagine Isaiah's suffering servant. Where in your life do you need the strong gentleness of Jesus just now? Who are the bruised reeds and flickering wicks for whom God may be inviting you to be channel of Christ's gentleness? We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Isaiah 42:1-4 NCB

Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom my soul delights.

I have put my Spirit upon him; he will establish justice among the nations.

He will not cry out or shout or make his voice heard in the street.

He will not break a bruised reed, nor will he snuff out a smouldering wick;

faithfully he will establish justice.

He will not falter or become discouraged until he has established justice upon the earth;

and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

Photo by Nathan Anderson on Unsplash



Who are the bruised
reeds and flickering
wicks for whom God
may be inviting you
to be channel of
Christ's gentleness?

Photo by Pok Rie on Pexels



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

Gentleness

The invitation in today's Scripture, words which may be very familiar, is to respond to Jesus' gentle invitation and come just as you are, with whatever burdens, or weariness you may be experiencing, to Jesus. You may like to ponder on how the gentleness of Jesus showed itself. After all, he could be quite confrontational and divisive when he felt it appropriate.

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: Perhaps, using your imagination, being there in the scene, picturing Jesus inviting, calling you personally. How do you experience Jesus' gentle, humble heart? We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Matthew 11:28-30 NIVUK

Jesus said, 'Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'



Father Photo: Kelly Sikkema, (Unsplash)

Gentleness

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

Gentleness

Although we usually portray Mary, the mother of Jesus as a gentle woman, this doesn't imply that all was happiness and joy in her life. There were many things that caused her to ponder, and even to worry. Today in our scripture we hear Simeon predicting that "A sword will pierce your own soul."

Can we imagine what she made of that?

How does Mary, as revealed in Scripture embody gentleness for 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 understand the true meaning of gentleness.

Setting: Today's Scripture is set in the Temple in Jerusalem. Imagine you are one of the characters in the story. What does the story say to you? We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Luke 2: 25-35 NIVUK

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

*"Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel."*

The child's father and mother marvelled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: "This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too."



The Black Madonna of Montserrat

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

Gentleness

In another expression of the surprising nature of God's kingdom, Jesus, unlike the kings of the world, who rode into conquered cities on horseback, a sign of their power, chooses to enter Jerusalem on a donkey, a sign of his gentleness.

As you seek to follow this gentle king, how is the Spirit wanting to grow gentleness in 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 imagine. See Jesus entering the city and the crowds praising him. We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Matthew 21: 1-11 NRSVACE

When they had come near Jerusalem and had reached Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives,

Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go into the village ahead of 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, just say this,

"The Lord needs them." And he will send them immediately.

This took place to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet, saying,

'Tell the daughter of Zion,

Look, your king is coming to you,

humble, and mounted on a donkey,

and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'

The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and that followed were shouting, *'Hosanna to the Son of David!*

*Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!'*

When he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil, asking, 'Who is this?'

The crowds were saying, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'



Entry of Christ into Jerusalem : Anthony van Dyck

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

Love

Probably everyone would echo the words of the song, 'I wanna know what love is. I want you to show me.' (Foreigner). Today's Scripture responds to that desire. God, who is love and the source of love, shows us what love is - not simply a feeling, but self-giving action for the good of the loved one, the beloved. Catherine of Siena goes so far as to say, "Eternal Trinity you are madly in love with your creatures". As God's beloved, God wants us to be loved and, as a response, to love others. How are you at being loved? How well do you 'let your God love 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.

1 John 4: 7-12 NCB

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. God's love was revealed to us in this way: God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we might have life through him.

This is what love is: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as expiation for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we should love one another.

No one has ever seen God, but if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is made complete in us.



Photo: Nick Fewings on Unsplash

YOU – by Irene Munro

You invited me, gently,
Stubborn, I walked on.
You invited me, kindly,
Fearfully, stubborn,
I walked on in the opposite direction.
You invited me, lovingly
Tearfully, I came to you.
I received your Love,
My life in You began.
In the darkness You are there.
In the darkness
I am no longer alone.
In the darkness YOU

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

Love

Today's hymn to love from Paul's letter shows us what the love is like, which the Spirit grows within us.

You are invited to spend time today sitting in the presence of God, who is love, with this hymn to love.

Which characteristics of love call to you?

Which do you long to see more of and have grown in your life and relationships?

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: That I may better live in love.

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

1 Corinthians 13: 4-8, 13 NCB

Love is patient; love is charitable.

Love is not envious; it does not have an inflated opinion of itself; it is not filled with its own importance.

Love is never rude; it does not seek its own advantage.

It is not prone to anger; neither does it brood over setbacks.

Love does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails.

Thus there are three things that endure: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love.

For This is Love - Jenny Ross

From noon each day he sits there on the pale green chair
Quietly holding her hand
Married for too many years to remember and
Now – she has wandered away almost out of reach
To the door of the sepulchre
Her hand encrusted with old age and gold rings
Her fingers clasp his close as wordless ties
She speaks soundlessly
And into the imperfections and failings of body and mind
Pours the richest of gifts
As his eyes speak to her soul and draw her close
Desiring only that she knows that he is here.
He smiles and heaven opens wide her heart
with sunbeams
Caressing her face
For this is Love in the afternoon
Sitting gently on the pale green chair.



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

Love

In the Spiritual Exercises St Ignatius says ‘Love ought to show itself more in deeds than in words’ [230]. Jesus demonstrates this in today’s scripture, expressing love by serving, doing the task normally left to the lowliest slave.

Who is Jesus wanting you to show love to and to serve?

What grace(s) do you need in order to serve them in 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 imagine. Imagine you are with Jesus in the Upper Room, what do you feel about this role reversal? We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation

John 13: 1, 3-5, 12- 15, 17 NIVUK

It was just before the Passover Festival. Jesus knew that the hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end....

Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him. ...

When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. ‘Do you understand what I have done for you?’ he asked them. ‘You call me “Teacher” and “Lord”, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ... Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

Photo: Danique Godwin (Unsplash)



Love Someone – Max Ehrmann

Love some one – in God's name
love some one – for this is
the bread of the inner life, without
which a part of you will
starve and die; and though you
feel you must be stern,
even hard, in your life of affairs,
make for yourself at least
a little corner, somewhere in the
great world, where you may
unbosom and be kind.

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

Love

The love which is God's and which the Spirit seeks to grow in us is the remarkable love which can respond in a completely counter-cultural way, embracing enemies as well as neighbours. Jesus demonstrates this love in praying for forgiveness for those who are putting him to death. (Luke 23:33-34)

Who are those you find it hard to seek the best for?

Who may the Spirit be bringing to mind inviting you to pray for forgiveness for?

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, you can imagine that you are listening to Jesus on the Mountain where he is preaching his sermon. Notice how you and the people around you responds to the idea of loving your enemies.

Matthew 5: 43-48 NIVUK

'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy."

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

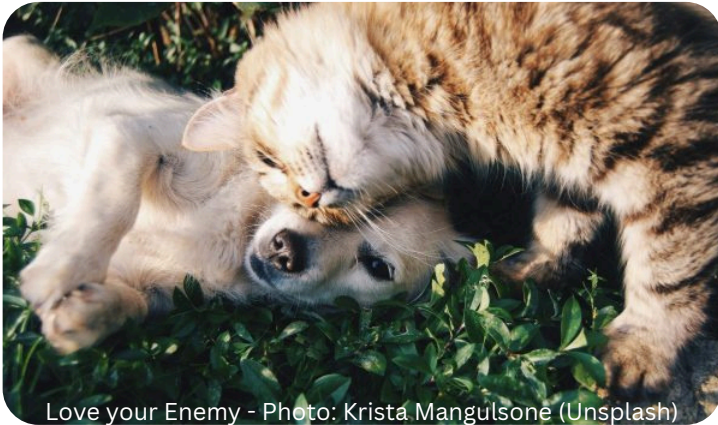
For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

Do not even the tax-collectors do the same?

And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?

Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.



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

Journeying in Hope

In this Year of Jubilee, Pope Francis reminds us that we need to recognize the immense goodness present in our world, lest we be tempted to think ourselves overwhelmed by evil and violence. The signs of the times, he says, which include the yearning of human hearts in need of God's saving presence, ought to become signs of hope. He reminds us that Pilgrimage is a fundamental element of every Jubilee event. Pilgrimage he says is a "setting out on a journey", "a quest for meaning in life" and "a great aid for rediscovering the value of silence, effort and simplicity of life".

Notice when you have experienced immense goodness? You might want to remember your own experience of pilgrimage.

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 recall again the grace of a time of "setting out".

Setting: A Scripture reading to ponder using Lectio Divina.

Psalm 122 NIV

I rejoiced with those who said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord.
Our feet are standing
in your gates, Jerusalem.
Jerusalem is built like a city
that is closely compacted together.
That is where the tribes go up—
the tribes of the Lord—
to praise the name of the Lord
according to the statute given to Israel

There stand the thrones for judgement,
the thrones of the house of David.
Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May those who love you be secure
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.”
For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, “Peace be within you.”
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your prosperity.

Hope Eternal by Jackie Tevlin

You led me to this place, a shingle path
Misty in the morning glow - the fig tree fruitful.
At ease, we walk together, down
To the sea-shore.
"Open your eyes!" you whisper.
And I saw, seeing without pretence
That beauty is infinity
And, God is good
And hope eternal.
So, if you should ever lose me,
you will find me,
Doing cartwheels in the sand.

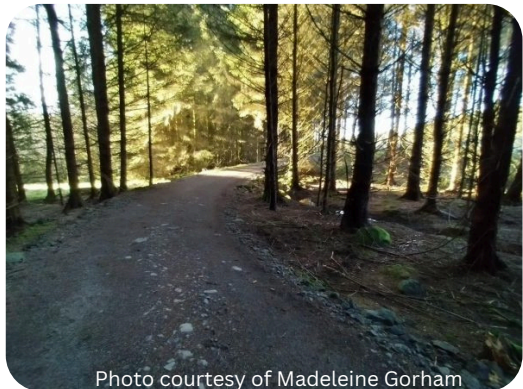


Photo courtesy of Madeleine Gorham

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

Journeying in Hope

Journeying in hope includes the call to wait, to wait patiently, for what we hope for to become reality. Perhaps using our God-given gift of imagination to visualise what that hoped for reality will be like may help us to hold onto hope.

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: We might like to ponder what might our full adoption as God's children, the redemption of our bodies look and feel like? We can ponder the passage from Romans using Lectio Divina.

Romans 8: 23-25 NCB

And not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for our adoption as children, the redemption of our bodies.

For in hope we were saved.

Now to see something does not involve hope.

For why should we hope for what we have already seen?

But if we hope for what we do not yet see, then we wait for it with patience.



Journey in Hope - Photo: Devon Divine (Unsplash)

Hope

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

Hope

On Palm Sunday, as we recall Jesus entering Jerusalem, aware that he was going to his death, yet persevering with his mission nonetheless, we take time to notice that it was the hope of what lay beyond the cross, “the joy that lay before him”, which kept him going. The crowd was joyful, maybe with a different hope.

What might some of the aspects of that hope have been?

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, asking him as you go, what the joy was he hoped for. We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

John 12: 12-18 NRSVACE

The next day the great crowd that had come to the festival heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, shouting,

‘Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord—
the King of Israel!’

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it; as it is written:

‘Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion.

Look, your king is coming,

sitting on a donkey’s colt!’

His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written of him and had been done to him.

So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify.

It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him.

Hope - Jenny Ross

I cast my net into the water
Let it drift awhile
And when, by morn, it feels so light
I try again and wait,
And when the net returns with tears
I mend it 'til it's right
And row far out
As clouds move quickly
Where the sun still shines a light
And when the net has sunk far down
Cast on the other side
I'm weighed down now
And wait for that all kind, returning tide
Then, almost done
No strength to cope,
I turn around and see
The setting sun send out a ray
And haul my net on hope.



Photo Courtesy of Karen Groves

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

Hope

Our hope is in God's power to bring about what God has promised. Our hope is "in the victory of justice", not by worldly power but by the breath of God and the accompaniment of the Spirit.

Where have you experienced God grasping you by the hand, forming you, sending you out?

What experiences sustain your hope in God?

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 pray for renewed hope.

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

Isaiah 42 : 5-7 NRSVACE

Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spreads out the earth with its crops,
Who gives breath to its people
and spirit to those who walk on it:
I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations,
To open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

A Blackbird Sings – Jenny Ross

Over by the myrtle bush
The blackbird sings
All whoops and whistles and joy
Flung far into the morning air
And when the song returns to her unheard
She sings again – lighting up the bluebird sky
And when the sky hands back her gift
She fills her lungs and cries hallelujah
The sound soaring effortlessly and alone to the
Black star-studded billows of night
A single flute piercing the velvet air
And someone down below is listening
And throws a moonbeam
As the young girl holding her mother's hand
Listens to the sound of hope
Piercing her own heart

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

Hope

It is not only we who hope. Creation too, which as we know only too well is groaning in pain, waits in hope for its redemption and freedom. Creation groans particularly when it is abused by human exploitation and lack of care for our Common Home.

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 deepen God's call to me to be the light to the nations that his salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.

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

Isaiah 49: 5-6 NRSVACE

For now the LORD has spoken
who formed me as his servant from the womb,
That Jacob may be brought back to him
and Israel gathered to him;
And I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD,
and my God is now my strength!
It is too little, he says, for you to be my servant,
to raise up the tribes of Jacob,
and restore the survivors of Israel;
I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.



After the Storm – Madeleine Gorham

After the storm, the river
as a gift of flowing light,
whose energy poured within
me, drenching all my thirst.
In joyous song, it bounded
over rocks and roaring
down the falls, lifted me
and made me smile.
The birds were singing too.
Grey January, and
all the world's sorrow,
forgotten for a moment
in a remembered Spring.
For life comes again.
The Earth speaks of it
and gives me hope.

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

Hope

Scripture is a source of hope, as it allows us to experience the stories of God's trustworthiness throughout history. The Feast of Passover remembers God's covenant with his people. We prepare today to partake in the paschal mystery: the new covenant. What does covenant mean 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 prepare our hearts and spirits for the renewed hope the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus brings.

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

Matthew 26: 17-19 NIV

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said,

"Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?"

He said,

"Go into the city to a certain man and tell him,

'The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near;

in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.'"

The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover.



Are you Listening? - Photo: Priscilla du Preez (Unsplash)

Uphill – Christian Rossetti

Does the road wind uphill all the way?

Yes, to the very end.

Will the day's journey take the whole long day?

From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?

A roof for when the slow, dark hours begin.

May not the darkness hide it from my face?

You cannot miss that inn

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?

Those who have gone before.

Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?

They will not keep you waiting at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?

Of labour you shall find the sum.

Will there be beds for me and all who seek?

Yes, beds for all who come.

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

Hope

During the Last Supper in Jerusalem, Jesus clearly predicts to his disciples his forthcoming suffering and death. Yet he leaves them with cause for hope in this new covenant, the taking of his body and blood in memory of him. Although he might be leaving this world in a straightforward bodily sense, he leaves his spirit and body for us all to take up his mission.

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 appreciate more deeply the Eucharist which Christ left for us.

Setting: A Scripture reading to imagine that you are in that upper room with the disciples. We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

Luke 22:14-20 NIVUK

When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.

And he said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the kingdom of God.'

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, 'Take this and divide it among you.

For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.'

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.'

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying,

'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'



Last Supper: From Psalter c.1220-40

“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

Hope

Its difficult to see hope in the crucifixion of Christ. However, our hope lies not in all that human evil can do to the good person but rather in the bright promise of the Resurrection and new life.

Spent some time, perhaps in front of a cross or crucifix, pondering Jesus' suffering and thanking him for all the fruit that comes to you and awaits you through it.

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 join with those at the foot of the cross. We suggest using Imaginative Contemplation.

John 19:25-30 NRSVACE

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.

When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, 'Woman, here is your son.'

Then he said to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.'

And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture),

'I am thirsty.'

A jar full of sour wine was standing there.

So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth.

When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.'

Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.



Jesus on The Cross with me - Gemma Lamarra

My Friend and My God
Your Life
Your Death
Your Resurrection
All jam packed full of the Fruits of Your Spirit.
All accompanying me.
Jesus on The Cross with me
Sharing tears and Hope
Love and Gentleness
Embraced by Divine Friendship
Always together
Never alone.
Jesus on The Cross with me
Sharing Faith and Trust in each other
Forever Patient
As I fail to share
Your Joy, Your Peace
And Cross with 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 46

Hope

What would the world be like if we who follow Jesus to the cross and empty tomb lived lives which overflowed with hope?

What would your life look like overflowing with hope?

As we draw towards the end of our retreat, might God be inviting you to make this short, powerful prayer your daily prayer for yourself and for the Church in your nation and around the world?

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.

Romans 15:13 NIVUK

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.



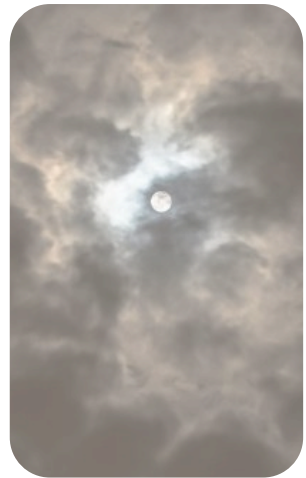
Photo by Jason Mavrommatis (Unsplash)

Waiting - Friar David Hirt

Sabbath silence rules this garden
tomb:

An earthen vessel, dark so intimate.
The stone is heavy;
life's restrained and
Lord you dream; awaiting
resurrection
when your vessel,
silent coffin,
will be broken,
pouring chris
over dusty hearts,
anointing nations,
calling us to rise again

From www.thecapuchins.org/spirituality/spiritual-content/holy-week-poems



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

Hope

The ground and reason for our hope is what we celebrate today – the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Hallelujah! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Hallelujah! Ours is a living hope, a hope which enables us to rejoice, no matter what the circumstances of our lives here and now. How is Jesus inviting you to celebrate that he is risen and alive? What helps you to celebrate? Make today a day of celebration of the resurrection.

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: May I be filled with the joy of the resurrection and the hope of new life.

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

John 20:1-9 NIV

On the first day of the week,
Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning,
while it was still dark,
and saw the stone removed from the tomb.
So she ran and went to Simon Peter
and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them,
“They have taken the Lord from the tomb,
and we don’t know where they put him.”
So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb.
They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter
and arrived at the tomb first;
he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in.
When Simon Peter arrived after him,

he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there,
and the cloth that had covered his head,
not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place.
Then the other disciple also went in,
the one who had arrived at the tomb first,
and he saw and believed.
For they did not yet understand the Scripture
that he had to rise from the dead.



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.

Acknowledgements

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We are very grateful for the efforts of our team of collaborators who helped with the material this year.

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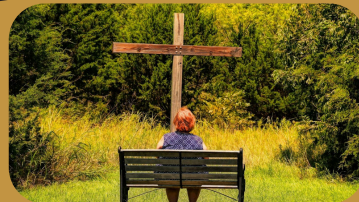
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