

## 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent C Luke 4:1-13

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, 'If

you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf'. But Jesus replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread



alone'. Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours.' But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says: You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone'

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said to him 'throw yourself down from here, for scripture says: 'He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you,' and again, 'They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'

But Jesus answered him, 'It has been said: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.' Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him, to return at the appointed time.

**Reflect:** In this time of Lent I am invited to get close to the Word of God with the following attitude: a tireless

and prayerful attention to the Word of God, reading it with a constant bond of union with the great traditions of the Church, and in dialogue with the problems of humanity today.

As we reflect upon the conversion to which the Church invites us during our Lenten journey, the Lord's example should be our inspiration. The temptations he faced encourage us to look beyond superficial problems in our lives and characters, and to face up to the root causes of these failings – the false gods that so easily seduce our divided human hearts. The Word of God is a power for good in the lives of those who know and love the Scriptures.

### Prayer:

Oh Lord, at the beginning of this Lenten time you invite me to meditate, once more, on the account of the temptations, so that I may discover the heart of the spiritual struggle and, above all, so that I may experience the victory over evil.



Holy Spirit, "visit our minds" because frequently, many thoughts spring up which make us feel that we are in the power of the uproar of many voices. The fire of love also purifies our senses and the heart so that they may

be calm and available to the voice of your Word. Enlighten us so that our senses, purified by you, may be ready to talk



## Taking stock

giving, praying, fasting

*A 40 day LENTEN journey  
Seeking and practicing faith in Jesus*

with you. If the fire of your love blazes up in our heart, over and above our dryness, it can flood the true life, which is fullness of joy.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent

Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became dazzling white. And behold, two men talked with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were



with him were heavy with sleep, and when they wakened they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah" - not knowing what he said. As he said this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silence and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

### Reflection

As soon as Jesus starts praying, his appearance changes and he appears *glorious*. His face changes and his clothes become white and shining. It is *the glory* that the disciples imagined for the Messiah. This

transformation told them clearly that Jesus was indeed the Messiah expected by all.

Together with Jesus and in the same glorious state there appear Moses and Elijah, representing the Law and the Prophets. They speak with Jesus about "the Exodus brought to fulfilment in Jerusalem". Thus, in front of the disciples, the Law and the Prophets confirm that Jesus is truly the *glorious* Messiah, promised in the Old Testament and awaited by the whole people. They further confirm that the way to *Glory* is through the painful way of the exodus. Jesus' exodus is his passion, death and resurrection. The experience of the Transfiguration confirmed that Jesus as Messiah Servant constituted an aid to free them from their wrong ideas concerning the Messiah and to discover the real meaning of the Kingdom of God.

The disciples were in deep sleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus in his glory and the two men with him. But Peter's reaction shows that they were not aware of the real meaning of the *glory* in which Jesus appeared to them. As often happens with us, they were only aware of what concerned them. The rest escapes their attention.

While Peter was speaking, a cloud descended from on high and covered them with its shadow. Luke says that



the disciples became afraid when the cloud enfolded them. The cloud is the symbol of the presence of God. A voice is heard from the cloud that says: "This is my Son, the Chosen, listen to him". With this same sentence the prophet Isaiah had

proclaimed the Messiah-Servant (Is 42:1). First Moses and Elijah, now God himself presents Jesus as the Messiah-Servant who will come to glory through the cross. The voice ends with a final admonition: "**Listen to him!**"

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent C

*Luke: 13:1-9*

Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'



He told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, "Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied "leave it one more year and give me time to dig round it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down."

#### **Reflection:**

The owner of the vineyard and of the fig tree is God. The fig tree represents the people. Jesus is the

vinedresser. The owner of the vineyard has grown tired of looking for fruit from the fig tree and finding none. He decides to uproot the tree. Thus there will be more room for another plant that may bear fruit. The chosen people were not producing the fruit that God expected. He wants to pass on the Good News to the pagans. Jesus is the vinedresser who asks that the fig tree be spared a little longer. He will redouble his efforts to obtain a change and a conversion. Later in the Gospel, Jesus recognizes that his redoubled efforts have borne no result. They will not be converted. Jesus mourns the lack of conversion and weeps over the city of Jerusalem. (Lk 19:41-44).

The parable has several lessons. Among them is the reality of God's infinite patience with us. God is just. But God is also merciful. His love for us is perfect and he gives us many chances to repent and change our lives — like the man caring for the vineyard who pleads for another chance for the fruitless fig tree. God never abandons us.

However, our chances are not endless because they cease when we die and, generally speaking, we do not know when death will happen. Our lives in this world are given to us by God so that, through them, we may prepare to be with him for eternity. Therefore, the Lenten message of repentance offers us an urgent 'Wake up!' call. Now is the time to examine our lives and begin to rid them of the various sinful attitudes and practices that prevent us from living in complete harmony with God.

Lent is effectively an annual retreat when we assess the quality of our relationships with God and with other people. As individuals, we learn from our mistakes in the past and we resolve not to repeat them again. As a Church, we learn from the lessons of history and we remind ourselves that the Church, too, is always in need of renewal and purification. We look forward in hope to a better life: the eternal life offered us by the risen Lord at Easter.

#### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, we thank for the word that has enabled us to understand better the will of the Father. May your Spirit enlighten our actions and grant us the strength to practice that which your Word has revealed to us. May we, like Mary, your mother, not only listen to but also practice the Word. You who live and reign with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

## 4<sup>th</sup>. Sunday of Lent Year C

Luke 15: 11 – 32.

The tax collectors and the sinners, meanwhile, were all seeking his company to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them. So he spoke this parable to them:

'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me". So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father.

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to

have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property - he and his women - you kill the calf we had been fattening."

The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found."



*Contemplation is knowing how to adhere with one's mind and heart to the Lord who by his Word transforms us into new beings who always do his will. "Knowing these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (Jn 13: 17)*



## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Lent Year C

*Jesus, light of the world, enlightens the life of people and applies the law better than the Pharisees.*

### John (8:1-11)

And Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him.

But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her'. Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you', said Jesus, 'go away, and don't sin anymore'.



### Reflection

There is a lot of speculation about what Jesus wrote on the ground. What is more significant is Jesus' movement. Twice we are told 'he bent down'. What a striking moment! The Word bending down, coming down, lowering himself, making words in the dust, stirring the earth for meaning and finally looking up into the woman's face.

Being bent down he had to look up at the woman.

There is intimacy and compassion in this scene of Jesus alone with the woman. Did it really matter that the others had gone away? He only had eyes for her, forgiving and compassionate eyes.

God created us from the dust of the earth and in Jesus took on our human nature, accepting our humanity in its essence, touching it, becoming it, redeeming it. In the past the woman had hid her face from God but now Jesus bends down that he might look up into her face, not to banish or condemn, but to redeem. May we all be ready to bend down for the sake of another, to recognise the loving presence of the Word in the scribbles of our life and may we too allow Jesus to look up lovingly into our face.



**LORD JESUS CHRIST, SON OF GOD HAVE MERCY  
ON ME A SINNER.**



## PALM SUNDAY

Luke 19:28-40

Jesus went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. Now when he was near Bethphage and Bethany, close by the Mount of Olives as it is called, he sent two of the disciples, telling them, 'Go off to the village opposite, and as you enter it you will find a tethered colt that no one has yet ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, "Why are you untying it?" you are to say this, "The Master needs it".' The messengers went off and found everything just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owner said, 'Why are you untying that colt?' and they

answered, 'The Master needs it'.

So they took the colt to Jesus, and throwing their garments over its

back they helped Jesus on to it. As he moved off, people spread their cloaks in the road, and now, as he was approaching the downward slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole group of disciples joyfully began to praise God at the top of their voices for all the miracles they had seen. They cried out:

'Blessings on the King who comes, in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens!'

Some Pharisees in the crowd said to him, 'Master, check your disciples', but he answered, 'I tell you, if these keep silence the stones will cry out'.



## Reflection:

Each of the gospels tells the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem in a distinctive way. In St Luke's account, which we read this year, there is first of all the very significant verse 28, which describes Jesus "going on ahead of his disciples."

The events described in verses 29 to 34 are found in all the synoptic accounts, a sign that the early Church found them highly symbolical. Some take the story as evidence of Jesus' supernatural powers, but it could merely be evidence of his self-confidence as he faces his great moment of truth, a mark of true leadership. In St Luke's account, it is the disciples themselves, entering alongside Jesus, who are moved to excitement at this moment.

A small detail, but clearly significant for St Luke: the disciples "helped Jesus on to the colt."

The people do not wave palm branches in St Luke's account, but their gesture of spreading their cloaks in the road before Jesus is both a sign of their wild excitement and their welcoming him as a king.

The cry of the people in verse 38 echoes the song of the angels at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:14).

The brief dialogue in verses 39-40 can be interpreted in different ways. The Pharisees in question may have been followers of Jesus who were afraid of confrontation and wanted to protect Jesus. Or they may have represented the first assault of the opposition to Jesus. In either case his answer expresses his inner freedom very dramatically.

## PRAYER:

*Lord, there comes a time in the lives of all of us when we, like Jesus, must enter into a radical confrontation:*

- those in authority have been abusing their power;
- we finally recognise that we need help to overcome an addiction;
- some members of our community have betrayed the cause and must be excluded;
- we need to give up our comfortable situation and move into something new.

*At these moments, give us - and especially those of us whom you have called to be leaders in our communities - a share in the inner freedom of Jesus, so that like him we can go on ahead of the rest, as we go up to our Jerusalem.*



## Easter- the Resurrection of the Lord (C)

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him."

Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. They both ran, but the other



disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.

Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself.

Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.

### Silent Reflection :

- slow re-reading the whole passage;
- I too am in the garden: the empty sepulchre is before my eyes;
- I allow Mary Magdalene's words to echo within me;

- I too run with her, Peter and the other disciple;
- I allow myself to be immersed in the joyful wonder of the faith in Jesus Christ, even though, like them, I do not see him with my bodily eyes.

The resurrection of Jesus which we celebrate on Holy Saturday night is the universal story of God's grace triumphing over evil. Meditating on the biblical texts ahead of the liturgical celebration will help us enter personally into the mystery.

### A few questions to direct our reflection and its practice

- a) What, in the concrete, does it mean for us "to believe in Jesus the Risen One"? What difficulties do we encounter? Does the resurrection solely concern Jesus or is it really the foundation of our faith?
- b) The relationship that we see between Peter, the other disciple and Mary Magdalene is clearly one of great communion in Jesus. In what persons, realities, institutions do we today find this same understanding of love and the same "common union" founded on Jesus? Where can we read the concrete signs of the great love for the Lord and "his own" that inspired all the disciples?
- c) When we look at our lives and the reality that surrounds them, both near and far, do we see as Peter saw (he saw reality, but holds on to them, that is, to the death and burial of Jesus) or do we see as the other disciple saw (he sees facts and discovers in them signs of new life)?

### Prayer

Lord, we like to feel that we have you within our grasp:

- that our prayers are always answered;
- that we are living in a way that is pleasing to you;
- that the times, gestures and words of our prayers are just right.

Teach us that we must be prepared to lose that security and experience being abandoned, until we live in trust only

and see all those things that we considered important like the cloths in the empty tomb of Jesus - fine linen cloths, but they were keeping him in the tomb.

Now we see them on the ground and also the cloth that had been over his head not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself.

