

A wooden cross is centered on a teal, textured background. The cross is made of two pieces of wood, one vertical and one horizontal, joined at the center. A brown cord is attached to the top of the vertical beam.

SLOW LENT

GIVING TIME TO JESUS

A contemplative daily Lenten journey for use in
Catholic schools and other ministries.

**Australian
CATHOLICS**



daily prayer



PARISH LIFE



CATHOLIC TEACHER

INTRODUCTION

In the Sunday Gospels throughout Lent, we find Jesus in a number of environments: deserts, mountaintops, temples and towns. Each place plays an important part in Jesus' journey. These reflections invite us to spend some contemplative time with Jesus in each of these places over an entire week.

The reflections can be done in the week following the Sunday Gospel, or the week leading up to the Sunday Gospel. They are designed to take us deeper into each Gospel story, to bring Jesus' experiences to life, and to help us reflect on what they might be saying to us today. The idea is to take Lent slowly and reflectively - to commit ourselves to spending time each day with Jesus.

Accompanying each reflection is a 'Slow TV' video clip. Each video takes you into a space that is similar to that which Jesus experienced in the Gospel story. They are long films, and depending on the time you have available you can choose to spend a few minutes, or longer, taking them in. The videos are a tool to help clear our minds from our daily tasks so we might contemplate the story more deeply. Reflective music might also be used to the same effect.



SUGGESTED PROCESS

Schools or ministries that conduct a Monday morning briefing for staff could use the following reflection process on the first day of the week. The Gospel reading, daily reflection points, and video links could be provided to staff via email on each other weekday. Or you can encourage staff to sign up for the daily email from pray.com.au, which will feature each day's reflections.

1. Read the Gospel story.
2. Read one of the reflection points.
3. Put on the video or some reflective music. Spend some time reflecting on the Gospel story and the reflection point. Hint: If you're using the video in a group setting you might want to cue it up beforehand so that an advertisement doesn't appear while you're watching it.
4. Read the meditation on the Gospel reading. Spend a few more moments reflecting on the words.
5. Finish with a prayer (e.g. Glory Be).

OTHER SUGGESTED USES

- The Gospel reading, video and reflection questions could also be used for students in senior classes as a weekly stillness/mindfulness exercise.
- The weekly Gospel reflections and video links could be published in school newsletters as a Lenten prayer resource for parents.

WEEK ONE: IN THE DESERT WITH JESUS

Gospel - Mark 1:12-15 (Sunday 18 February 2018)

And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.'

DAILY REFLECTION POINTS

MONDAY

This Gospel reading takes us into the desert with Jesus. What struck me in the reading?

TUESDAY

Jesus spends forty days alone away from all connections. Have I experienced a time in the wilderness? How was I tempted to abandon God in these times?

WEDNESDAY

The angels wait on Jesus in the desert. When have I felt that God was accompanying me?

THURSDAY

Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God is near. How does the Good News of Jesus change our way of living in the world?

FRIDAY

What have I discovered while spending time with Jesus in the desert this week?



VIDEO CLIP: AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK SANDSTORM

<http://bit.do/dwj>

(You might choose to add your own music, or just use the sounds of the desert winds).

MEDITATION

Jesus survives forty days living in the dry, uninhabitable and parched sands of the desert. Out of great hardship, hunger and thirst, Jesus comes to announce a time of abundance. He points to the dawn of a new age.

Jesus invites me to flourish in God's presence, in God's kingdom, in God's time. This invitation to come fully alive begins with a turning towards God. I ask Jesus to give me a fresh perspective:

- to enliven me with gladness;
- to lead me away from despair;
- to prepare me to glorify God.

When Jesus says the kingdom of God is at hand he is assuring me that a new age has dawned. I ask for the grace:

- to begin anew with the Lord;
- to discover again my dignity as a child of God;
- to realise the many ways I am capable of generosity, love and compassion;
- to find a new peace in an awareness of God's presence;
- to see how I am made new by the power of God's Holy Spirit.

I spend time with Jesus so that he may help me:

- to believe in the gospel;
- to live by his light;
- to love others in freedom;
- to bring his peace to the world.

WEEK TWO: ON THE MOUNTAIN WITH JESUS

Gospel – Mark 9:2-10 (Sunday 25 February 2018)

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what this rising from the dead could mean.

DAILY REFLECTION POINTS

MONDAY

These Gospel reading takes us to a mountain top with Jesus. What struck me in the reading?

TUESDAY

Jesus is revealed to the disciples on the mountain as the Son of God. Has Jesus ever revealed himself to me in my life? How did it feel?

WEDNESDAY

‘It is good to be here’, says Peter on the mountain, despite the fear he was experiencing. Have I ever welcomed something scary, knowing that it would be good for me?

THURSDAY

The disciples leave the mountain with new knowledge about Jesus. How has my knowledge of Jesus grown over time? What new experiences of Jesus might be left for me to have?

FRIDAY

What have I discovered while spending time with Jesus on the mountain this week?



VIDEO CLIP: GREEN HILLS, BLUE SKY AND CLOUDS

<http://bit.do/mwj>

(You might use your own music, or the nature sounds with the video).

MEDITATION

Jesus climbs a mountaintop with his friends Peter and James and John. At those heights they are away from the distractions of ordinary life.

I imagine being with Jesus on the mountain. What does the mountain look like? What are the sounds at its summit? Now I consider Jesus being transfigured. I imagine his clothes dazzling white. I hear a voice from heaven saying 'This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!' I take time to experience this spectacular moment on the mountaintop.

In life it can be a challenge to notice God's presence. I may want a similarly spectacular experience of God's presence. And yet God's holy presence is in the ordinary moments of my day. Jesus seeks to assure me that he is present at all times, on mountaintops and in valleys, in exaltation and in despair.

I spend a few minutes in the presence of God:

Lord, give me eyes to see your presence in all people.

Lord, open my ears to listen to you.

Lord, enliven me with hope so that I don't fall into despair.

Lord, send me peace so that I may be your instrument.

Lord, help me become aware of your love so that I may carry your compassion.

Lord, kindle my faith so that I may experience the fullness of joy in your presence.

Ultimately, Lord, make me come alive!

WEEK THREE: IN THE TEMPLE WITH JESUS

Gospel – John 2:13-25 (Sunday 4 March 2018)

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!' His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

When he was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in his name because they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part would not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to testify about anyone; for he himself knew what was in everyone.

DAILY REFLECTION POINTS

MONDAY

This Gospel reading takes us into the temple in Jerusalem with Jesus. What struck me in the reading?

TUESDAY

Jesus is angry with what is happening in his Father's house. How do I feel about what I see happening in the Catholic Church today? What things make me angry, and what brings me life?

WEDNESDAY

Jesus is describing his body as a temple of God. How do I feel when thinking about my own body as a temple of God? How might that change the way I live?

THURSDAY

Some places make me feel a greater ease with God. Where is my sacred space?

FRIDAY

What have I discovered while spending time with Jesus in the temple this week?



VIDEO CLIP: SNOW FALLING OUTSIDE A CHURCH

<http://bit.do/twj>

MEDITATION

Jesus wants every person to have an ease in relating with God. The temple is a help to this end, because the believers know they can meet the Creator there. When Jesus finds the temple at work as a market he erupts. Jesus has a deep desire that the people be able to pray in the temple.

Today, Jesus' Spirit dwells within me, making my body a temple. I can pray because God's Spirit already rests in my body. Yet I sometimes feel a block in my sense of relationship with God. When I act without love, when I use violent words, when I see faults in others that I choose not to notice in myself ... These decisions might lead me to think of myself as removed from God's favour and distant from God's presence. But Jesus wants me to return to relationship with him.

So now I ask Jesus for an ease in relating with God. I take time to consider the ways my body is a temple of God's Spirit. I ask God for a new sense of wonder and awe at all that I am.

Now I give thanks to God's Spirit for making a home in me. I become aware of the love that is being poured into my heart. I imagine this happening each and every moment. I ask for the grace to unite my every action with the love moving within me.

WEEK FOUR: WITH JESUS IN THE DARKNESS OF DOUBT

Gospel – John 3:14-21 (Sunday 11 March 2018)

‘And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.’

DAILY REFLECTION POINTS

MONDAY

This Gospel reading shows Jesus having a conversation with someone who doubts that he is the Son of God. What struck me in the reading?

TUESDAY

Jesus says that those who don't believe in him are condemned. Have there been times when my faith in Jesus has faltered? How might my faith be deepened?

WEDNESDAY

The reading presents us with a choice to live in darkness or the light. How do I feel about this choice? How might I live more in the light than the darkness?

THURSDAY

Our faith in Jesus can falter at times. How can I prepare myself for times when I might experience doubt and despair in the future?

FRIDAY

What have I discovered while spending time with Jesus in the darkness of doubt this week?



VIDEO CLIP: BURNING CANDLE

<http://bit.do/dodoubt>

(You might use your own music, or the silence of the video)

MEDITATION

The earth is beset by violence, corrupt uses of power, wars without end and the destruction of whole ecosystems. My own life can be stressed, troubled and full of upheaval.

I begin today's meditation by taking time to consider a proverb – 'it is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.' In the times I find myself in the midst of darkness lighting a candle can help me to remember the promise that light will overcome.

I call to mind the ways my contributions can begin important conversations, my love can open new possibilities and my actions can form a world where people will flourish.

I consider my choices:

to love courageously or to withdraw into my shell;
to act in hope or to wallow in desperation;
to give kindness to others or to turn away with bitterness;
to listen to others or to close off my heart;
to speak up for people or to stay quiet about injustice;
to take up the responsibilities of service or to retire to my comforts;
to care for our planet or to make peace with destroying it;
to pray for insight or to rely on myself;
to share the burden or to keep my own counsel;
to notice the light or to despair of the dark.

My life is full of decisions which can light another candle.

WEEK FIVE: WITH JESUS IN THE CROWD

Gospel – John 12:20-33 (Sunday 18 March 2018)

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’ Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, ‘The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.

‘Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say – “Father, save me from this hour”? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.’ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, ‘An angel has spoken to him.’ Jesus answered, ‘This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.’ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

DAILY REFLECTION POINTS

MONDAY

This Gospel reading shows us Jesus speaking to a crowd of people. What struck me in the reading?

TUESDAY

God glorifies Jesus in front of the crowd. Can I imagine God glorifying me in this way? How do I feel about this?

WEDNESDAY

God’s voice comes for the sake of all the people in the crowd. Can I imagine God glorifying all the people in the world? How does this make me feel about others?

THURSDAY

Jesus says God will honour those who serve him. How can I better serve God in this world, to prepare for the next one?

FRIDAY

What have I discovered while spending time with Jesus in the crowd this week?



VIDEO CLIP: WALKING IN LONDON

<http://bit.do/londoncrowd>

(You might use your own music, or the sounds of the street)

MEDITATION

I open myself to let God work through me:
I take a minute to imagine the way God looks on me with love.

I spend time with Jesus so that he may prepare the way:
for me to grow fully alive;
for me to experience a deeper hope;
for me to be filled with a new freedom;
for me to follow him.

I ask Jesus to help me grow:
open to others;
compassionate with myself;
faithful in service;
generous with my time.

I call on Jesus:
give me a new vision to know my dignity as a child of God;
open my eyes to discover each person as loved and graced, wounded and beautiful;
show me your presence in every person;
kindle the desire within me to serve with courage;
inspire me to respond to the invitation to love;
renew my relationships;
and make of me a faithful pilgrim.

PALM SUNDAY: WITH JESUS IN JERUSALEM

Gospel – Mark 11:1-10 (Sunday 25 March 2018)

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, ‘Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, “Why are you doing this?” just say this, “The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.”’ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, ‘What are you doing, untying the colt?’ They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting,

‘Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!’

DAILY REFLECTION POINTS

MONDAY

This reading finds Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem to a welcoming crowd. What struck me in the reading?

TUESDAY

The people of Jerusalem receive Jesus in different ways. Where am I when I imagine myself in the Gospel scene? Am I holding back or celebrating?

WEDNESDAY

The people of Jerusalem rejoice in Jesus’ presence. How do I see people responding to Jesus if he were to reveal himself today?

THURSDAY

Many of Jesus’ followers, including Peter, will later deny that they were with him. Have I ever denied Jesus? What kind of follower of Jesus do I want to be?

FRIDAY

What have I discovered while spending time with Jesus in Jerusalem this week?



VIDEO CLIP: JERUSALEM OLD CITY WALKING TOUR

<http://bit.do/jjj>

MEDITATION

Jesus arrives in Jerusalem riding a colt over leafy branches and cloaks brought by the people. After a ministry where he proclaimed a wide welcome to God's kingdom, now he himself is warmly welcomed into the public square.

It seems like the fulfilment of his mission when the people sing with joy 'Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom ...' Jesus is humble, open and ready for whatever is to meet him in Jerusalem. Now I imagine I am in the crowd which welcomes Jesus. What do I hear? Can I see Jesus from where I stand? How do I feel in the midst all the people? Do I wave palms joyfully? Am I holding back and simply observing? What do I call out? I take a while to let the scene unfold.

Now I think about the welcome Jesus receives in today's public square. How do I want to welcome Jesus?

SLOW LENT

GIVING TIME TO JESUS

Resource written by James O'Brien and Michael McVeigh.
Gospel readings taken from NRSV Bible.
Cover design Maggie Power

**Australian
CATHOLICS**



daily prayer



PARISH LIFE



CATHOLIC TEACHER