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# Taking Our Hearts to the Lord

Scripture Sharing Group Resource, Lent 2020

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## WEEK 1

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 4:1-11)

Jesus was led by the Spirit out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which he was very hungry, and the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' But he replied, 'Scripture says:

Man does not live on bread alone  
but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'.

The devil then took him to the holy city and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God' he said 'throw yourself down; for scripture says:

He will put you in his angels' charge,  
and they will support you on their hands  
in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'

Jesus said to him, 'Scripture also says:

You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Next, taking him to a very high mountain, the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. 'I will give you all these', he said, 'if you fall at my feet and worship me.'

Then Jesus replied, 'Be off, Satan ! For scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God,  
and serve him alone.'

Then the devil left him, and angels appeared and looked after him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

**Everyone:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel ....

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection on the Gospel

We enter Lent under the accompaniment of Jesus, the One who has gone before us into the darkness of temptation and reveals to us the way towards the light.

The Gospel highlights that it was the Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness - into the place of combat and the venue of ultimate transformation. In the design of God this may be His will for us too.

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Essentially, the forty days and nights of fasting left Jesus vulnerable to his human need for food, for affirmation and for power. We can so easily identify with this form of fragility. We can also appreciate that, like Jesus, when we are striving and making our best efforts we frequently experience forces which work against us.

Note how Jesus' responses are firmly rooted in Scripture. Even though, as we see here, we can be allured into false truth by the improper use of the Word of God, if we stand firm in our resolution to grow in the beauty and goodness of God - then no force or temptation can put us off.

Finally, I invite you to ponder the benediction that concludes this passage, how 'the angels came and ministered to him'. Be assured they will do the same for us.

## Silence

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

## Sharing

**Leader:** Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

*Group returns to page 18 of Lenten booklet*

*Week 1*

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## WEEK 2

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 17:1-9)

Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain where they could be alone. There in their presence he was transfigured; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. Suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him. Then Peter spoke to Jesus. 'Lord,' he said 'it is wonderful for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He was still speaking when suddenly a bright cloud covered them with shadow, and from the cloud there came a voice which said, 'This is my Son, the Beloved; he enjoys my favour. Listen to him.' When they heard this, the disciples fell on their faces, overcome with fear. But Jesus came up and touched them. 'Stand up,' he said 'do not be afraid.' And when they raised their eyes they saw no one but Jesus.

As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order. 'Tell no one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

**Everyone:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel ....

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection on the Gospel

The striking characteristic of the Christian call to love is that it is not conditioned by an expectation of return. True Christian love, instead, is patterned after the love of Him who "first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19) and the pattern of Christ's love is the Cross, the humiliation, the agony, the death that he suffered for our sake.

And for all that which of us cannot empathise with the early disciples' misgivings in accepting Jesus' prediction of his passion and his teaching that everyone who wishes to be his follower must renounce themselves, take up their cross and follow him (Mt 16:24)?

Here we have the Blessed Trinity's response to Peter, James and John's misgivings ... and perhaps to our own. They are filled with awe as they realize that Christ's glory is also theirs, a glory not only to be experienced in the future, but from time-to-time here on earth.

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Was there ever a time when you said “Lord, it is good for us to be here!” Perhaps you too have experienced a transfiguration moment, an intimation of God’s glory in your own earthly life, some brief encounter or other transitory moment that ultimately encouraged and strengthened you in embracing the crosses, humiliations and agonies that challenge your calling to Christian love?

## Silence

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

## Sharing

**Leader:** Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

*Group returns to page 27 of Lenten booklet*

*Week 2*

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## WEEK 3

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (Jn 4:5-42)

Jesus came to the Samaritan town called Sychar, near the land that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. Jacob's well is there and Jesus tired by the journey, sat straight down by the well. It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, 'give me a drink.' His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him, 'What? You are a Jew and you ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink?' - Jews, in fact, do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus replied:

'If you only knew what God is offering  
and who it is that is saying to you:  
Give me a drink,  
you would have been the one to ask,  
and he would have given you living water.'

'You have no bucket, sir,' she answered 'and the well is deep: how could you get this living water? Are you a greater man than our father Jacob who gave us this well and drank from it himself with his sons and his cattle?' Jesus replied:

'Whoever drinks this water  
will get thirsty again;  
but anyone who drinks the water that I shall give  
will never be thirsty again:  
the water that I shall give  
will turn into a spring inside him, welling up to eternal life.'

'Sir', said the woman, 'give me some of the water, so that I may never get thirsty and never have to come here again to draw water.'

Many Samaritans of the town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony when she said. 'He told me all I have ever done,' so, when the Samaritan came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. He stayed for two days, and when he spoke to them many more came to believe; and they said to the woman, 'Now we no longer believe because of what you told us; we have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the saviour of the world.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection on the Gospel

In 2009 my religious superior asked if I would work in Chicomba, Angola, six and a half hours by car from the nearest phone, post office or market place. Chicomba was one of the epicentres of a civil war that began in 1977 and continued until 2002. It left Chicomba, land and people, stripped of all its dignity.

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As missionaries we desired to instil lost confidence through solidarity, education & health care. On Monday mornings I would take students via jeep to the nearest well to get water. There we would queue and I would have opportunities to get to know and build relationships with local people.

Jesus uses the symbol of water to communicate at a deeper level with the Samaritan woman. He talks to her about a different type of thirst, another kind of water. He converses with her about a thirst for meaning, for love. He told her that ultimately she would only be satisfied by thirsting for the God who dwells in all of us.

Over my years as a priest I have learned that a genuine thirst for God is a great blessing. In time to come water may well be the most expensive commodity on earth, but the 'water' that Jesus gives will remain more valuable. This is the 'water' God desires to see well up in the lives of all baptised Christians.

## Silence

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

## Sharing

**Leader:** Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

*Group returns to page 35 of Lenten booklet*

*Week 3*

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## WEEK 4

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (Jn 9:1-42)

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. He spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam'. So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored.

His neighbours and people who earlier had seen him begging said, 'Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?' Some said, 'Yes, it is the same one.' Others said, 'No, he only looks like him.' The man himself said, 'I am the man.'

They brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. It had been the sabbath day when Jesus made the paste and opened the man's eyes, so when the Pharisees asked him how he had come to see, he said, 'He put a paste on my eyes, and I washed, and I can see.' Then some of the Pharisees said, 'This man cannot be from God: he does not keep the Sabbath.' Others said, 'how could a sinner produce signs like this?' And there was disagreement among them. So they spoke to the blind man again, 'What have you to say about him yourself, now that he has opened your eyes?' He is a prophet' replied the man. 'Are you trying to teach us,' they replied 'and you a sinner through and through, since you were born!' And they drove him away.

Jesus heard they had driven him away, and when he found him he said to him, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' 'Sir' the man replied 'tell me who he is so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said, 'You are looking at him; he is speaking to you'. The man said, 'Lord, I believe', and worshipped him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

### Silence

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection on the Gospel

The Gospel for this fourth Sunday of Lent is all about sight and seeing. At the heart of the story is a man who has been blind from birth who is given the gift of sight by a miraculous intervention by Jesus. The man represents humanity and is afflicted by physical blindness but also by spiritual blindness caused by sin. In the Scriptures, one of the consequences of original sin is a compromised vision where one does not see correctly. We see what we want to see and are blind to what we need to see.

In the Gospel, Jesus explains himself as 'the light of the world' who had come 'so that those without sight may see'. With faith in him we see that we are part of a vast and infinite universe where we inhabit a small planet along with 7 billion other people. We see that we are one human family of peoples where there is

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some unity but sadly many divisions. We see those who suffer from the lack of basic necessities in life like food, water and medicine. We see that they too are our brothers and sisters. As the blind man came not just to see Jesus but to believe in him, so we come to see God in all things and to see God in Jesus himself. Finally, we come to see ourselves as we truly are and not as we seem to be. As we hear in the first reading, 'God does not see as man sees. Man looks at appearances but the Lord looks at the heart'.

## Silence

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

## Sharing

**Leader:** Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

*Group returns to page 43 of Lenten booklet*

*Week 4*



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## WEEK 5

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (Jn 11:1-45)

There was a man named Lazarus who lived in the village of Bethany with two sisters, Mary and Martha, and he was ill. The sisters sent this message to Jesus, 'Lord, the man you love is ill.' On receiving the message, Jesus said, 'This sickness will end not in death but in God's glory, and through it the Son of God will be glorified.'

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, yet when he heard that Lazarus was ill he stayed where he was for two more days before saying to the disciples, 'Let us go to Judaea.'

On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. When Martha heard Jesus had come she went to meet him. Martha said to Jesus, 'If you had been here my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you.' 'Your brother' said Jesus to her 'will rise again.' Martha said, 'I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day.'

Jesus said:

'I am the resurrection and the life.

If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live,  
and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Do you believe this?'

'Yes, Lord', she said 'I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who was to come into this world.' When she had said this, she went and called her sister Mary, saying in a low voice, 'The Master is here and wants to see you.'

Mary went to Jesus, and as soon as she saw him she threw herself at his feet, saying, 'Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' At the sight of her tears, and those of the Jews who followed her, Jesus said in great distress, with a sigh that came straight from the heart, 'Where have you put him?' They said, 'Lord come and see.' Jesus wept; and the Jews said, 'See how much he loved him!' But there were some who remarked, 'He opened the eyes of the blind man, he could not have prevented this man's death?' Still sighing, Jesus reached the tomb: it was a cave with a stone to close the opening. Jesus said, 'Take the stone away.' Martha said to him 'Lord, by now he will smell; this is the fourth day.' Jesus replied 'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?' So they took away the stone. Then Jesus lifted up his eyes and said:

'Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer.

I knew indeed that you always hear me.

But I speak for the sake of all these who stand round me,  
so that they may believe it was you who sent me.'

When he had said this, he cried in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, here! Come out!'

The dead man came out, his feet and hands bound with bands of stuff and a cloth round his face.

Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, let him go free.'

Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

The Gospel of the Lord.

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## Silence

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection on the Gospel

*'Have I not told you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?'*

Each of the stories in John's Gospel contains a sign that Jesus invites us to wholeheartedly embrace. These signs are not unique to John. For example, today's sign also finds expression in *The Creed*, each time we pray *'I believe ... in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.'*

To pray *The Creed* from one's heart is to profess one's total belief and total trust in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to accept that one day each of us shall be raised up to everlasting life.

This belief, this hope, like Martha's and Mary's, is not in self-reliance or winning God's favour for ourselves or our loved ones. Rather God desires that we entrust ourselves to the Father's mercy and co-operate as best we can with the saving plan and power of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Through the recollection of this story Jesus presents us once again with the ultimate sign, Himself. Through believing in Him and entrusting our hearts to him, we too shall come to see the glory of God. He alone is *'the resurrection and the life'*. Death has no dominion over Him.

Hear too the echo of his word to Thomas, 'Doubt no longer, but believe'.

## Silence

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

## Sharing

**Leader:** Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

*Group returns to page 52 of Lenten booklet*

*Week 5*

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## WEEK 6

**Reader 1:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew (Mt 21:1-11)

When they were near Jerusalem and had come in sight of Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, 'Go to the village facing you, and you will immediately find a tethered donkey and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, you are to say, 'The Master needs them and will send them back directly.' This took place to fulfil the prophecy:

Say to the daughter of Zion:

Look, your king comes to you;

He is humble, he rides on a donkey

and on a colt, the foal of the beast of burden.

So the disciples went out and did as Jesus had told them. They brought the donkey and the colt, then they laid their cloaks on their backs and he sat on them. Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road, while others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in his path. The crowds who went in front of him and those who followed were all shouting:

'Hosanna to the Son of David!

Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord!

Hosanna in the highest heavens!'

And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was in turmoil. 'Who is this?' people asked, and the crowds answered, 'This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us read the Gospel passage aloud together.

**Everyone:** A Reading from the Holy Gospel ....

**Silence**

**Leader:** Let us listen to a short reflection on this Gospel passage.

**Reader 2:** Reflection on the Gospel

Throughout the Old Testament the donkey is presented as the appropriate mount of those who come on a mission of peace, e.g. Samuel, Haggai, Zechariah & Malachi. History also records a Jewish tradition of spreading clothing before a dignitary as a means of communicating one's submission and of waving palm branches a means of celebrating victory. Archaeologists have also discovered First Century Jewish coins

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with palm leaf engravings with the inscription “The Redemption of Zion”. They believe these coins gave expression to the long-held Jewish hope that Roman power would become a thing of the past.

Having this information and knowing all we do about Jesus helps us appreciate both the historical and spiritual contours of today’s Gospel passage. But what invitation does it hold for us and other Twenty-first century Christians

Once again we are being reminded that the Kingdom of God will not be advanced through military force, strategic power plays or bloody conquests. Christ’s actions suggest earthly glory and worldly greatness, then and now, have no place in this kingdom. Rather simplicity of life and a trusting in God’s providence is called for.

And what of us as we enter Holy Week? Will we joyfully or begrudgingly reaffirm our submission to Christ? Will we proclaim his victory to those around us or keep it to ourselves? How would we feel if, like the donkey owners, Christ asked us to place some resource at His disposal? In short, how shall we profess our faith in Christ this Holy week?

### Silence

**Leader:** I invite you to share any thought or consideration prompted by the Gospel passage and /or the reflection.

### Sharing

**Leader:** Let us return to our Lenten Prayer.

*Group returns to page 60 of Lenten booklet*