



Lent

JESUS' QUESTIONS IN SUFFERING



Introduction

What does suffering experience mean to you?

How would you describe it in a few words?

For Israel it was a journey from Egypt; a journey of slavery, hardship and pain on the way to the Promised Land. For the prophets and disciples, it was a journey of persecution, disappointments and temptation on the way to hope and a new way of life.

For Jesus it was a journey of suffering and death on the way to resurrection.

Suffering affects our psyche deeply.

Sociologists describe this as liminal space.

Psychologists describe it as a journey on the way to a place of orientation.

Some describe it as “crazy time”.

For us as believers, it is a journey to know Him and experience the power of His resurrection by sharing in His suffering, and thus becoming equal to Him in His death.

During this Lent journey, we will spend 40 days with the questions that Jesus asked in the last days of his life. You are invited to honestly grieve and explore His suffering experience with Jesus, in His fragility, His openness and His courage.



How to use this book

Each theme will guide you with:

1. **Poem** - at the beginning of each week there is a poem related to the content. Use it to focus your mind and prepare your heart for the words you will read that week and the experiences you will share with Jesus.
2. **Thought** - you are guided daily with a short meditation and scripture. Guiding questions in each meditation can help you get in touch with your inner world. What emotion, thought, image comes to mind when you think of the word of the day and the questions that were put to you? Respond to the invitations by sharing in the daily exercise provided.
3. **Prayer** - a short prayer is given daily. Use this prayer throughout the day to remind you of the day's words and experiences. Repeat the prayer a few times while you are busy with your daily routine.
4. **Reflection** - At the end of each week there is an accompaniment to reflect on the content and experience of the week that has passed. Use the prayer of reflection to deepen your Lent experience.



Preparation week



The Creaks and Cries of a heart



It doesn't happen in a day.
The heart slowly closes the door,
disenchanted with people, work, God,
refusing to let in more confusion,
slamming the door shut on sorrow,
pulling the shade down on challenge,
hiding out from the carnage of rejection.

The process of petrification
crawls slowly into the cells of love,
squeezing out the last remnants of joy,
hardening the arteries of tenderness,
compressing the atoms of enthusiasm.

Gradually all relationships taste flat,
work reeks of boredom and struggle.
God takes up residence in another house
and food and drugs, drink
dull the memory of the soul's singing.

But the soul of love is persistent.
She finds our address in the dumpster,
begins the hungry hunt for home
and lays siege to our barriered heart
with a constant "come out! come out!"

In spite of our deadness, we hear.
We fight, we hide, we tremble.
The covers come up over our heads.
We sneak behind busyness, illness,
refusing to yield to the loving voice,
the one demanding a return to life.

All day and night, especially at night
in wild dreams that toss us deeper,
the voice harangues, "come out!"
I know you're in there. Come out"

Finally, the heart limps to the front door,
tugs at the long-shut opening to the soul,
And listens.

- Florida Scott Maxwell

*** The poem speaks of the experience of human suffering and the journey to love where we find solace within pain. It invites us not to deny our darkest moments or lose hope when we feel overwhelmed with challenges, rejection, broken relationships and confusion, but to hear the voice that calls to us, demanding a return to life, and to allow our limping hearts to open again. To listen to this Voice of Love.*



Ash Wednesday

*“For you were made from dust, and to dust
you will return” Genesis 3:19 (NLT)*

For the next 40 days we will embark on a journey. On this journey we are invited to set aside time and to allow our imagination to be captured by Jesus’ suffering here on earth. We imagine ourselves being there, where He was, and we ask the Holy Spirit to touch our hearts anew. In this way we move closer to the suffering Jesus. We ask for grace to cry with Him as we journey to the cross.

Early in the history of the church, Christians used the 40 days before Easter Sunday to prepare them spiritually for the remembrance of the big events of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection. Traditionally it’s a time of sacrifice to guide us on a journey to feel something of Jesus’ suffering for ourselves. Many Christians give up something during this time of preparation. Some give up meat, sugar, caffeine or social media, as a symbol of sacrifice.

The first day of Lent is called Ash Wednesday. On this day – at the beginning of our 40 days of preparation for Easter – we think about our own mortality. It is tradition in many churches to receive a mark of ash on your forehead on Ash Wednesday. The ash is usually made from the palm branches of the previous year’s Palm Sunday. So, from “Hosanna!” (palm branches) to “Crucify Him!”

We usually don’t like to be reminded of our own mortality, yet we feel and see ourselves growing older. We recognise the effect that confusion, sorrow, challenges, rejection, busyness and illness have on us. We feel ourselves often buckling under the pressure of our brokenness and limitations. We are fragile and vulnerable. Yet despite every moment of our ‘deadness’, we hear the Voice of Love reminding us that we are not only dust but BELOVED dust.

Reflection:

Take a moment somewhere during your day to sit in your garden or take a walk in nature. Stop to feel the texture of the leaves on a tree you are next to or pass by. Allow your eyes to move from the leaf to where it is connected to the branch. Notice then how the branch is connected to the tree. Move your gaze down to the tree’s trunk, down to where it is planted in the ground. Notice the ground around the tree. Feel the ground. Imagine God picking up some of this dust, smiling lovingly and then creating life from it. Remind yourself that you are part of this earth, God’s creation. You have been given life by God’s breath. He breathed life into you because He wanted you to live with Him.

What do you feel as you consider your place in God’s creation? What do you notice as you recognize that as a human being, you are vulnerable and fragile?

What do you feel God is communicating to you as He reminds you: “you were made from dust, and to dust you will return”?

Prayer: Jesus, help me to accept that I am dust. Help me to know that I am beloved dust. Amen



Thursday



So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."

-Mark 14:13-15 (NLV)

Jesus knows that He is living the last days of His life on earth. Imagine for a moment what He may have been thinking and feeling. He understands what lies ahead for Him. He has chosen to accept this life. He prepares for this. He prepares His disciples (those who He loves and cares for) for this.

Often when we find ourselves in trying and difficult times, we slam the door shut and pull the shades down just as the author of the poem depicts. We hide and cover up- even from ourselves. Where are some of the places you go in times of suffering? Denial? Repression? Escapism? Jesus shows us another way. Knowing what is to come, He goes to a place of consolation in **community - community** with God and community with others. He makes arrangements for a place for the last supper where He would experience deep connection with His Father and His friends.

As we look to Jesus' life to live more like He does, we recognize that we don't need to go through suffering alone. Love is persistent. He always finds us.

Reflection:

You are invited to find a place where you can return to throughout this Lent journey.

Let this be a place that is removed from distractions, where you can connect with Jesus and with yourself.

You may want to take some time to prepare this place and include certain souvenirs from your own spiritual journey. These may include symbols, a candle, a picture or an object that has reminded you of an encounter with God.

Today, as you enter into this space, reflect on how you never arrive at this agreed upon time and place first. Jesus is always there waiting for **you – eager** to connect, ready to listen.

Prayer:

Jesus, I pray for the grace of a deep sense of your presence in my life.



Friday



They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray." He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

-Mark 14:32-33 (NLV)

Jesus went to another place - the garden. Here He could be alone, with His disciples nearby. He could come into contact with the turmoil within Him. Perhaps we can recognise that Gethsemane is not simply a physical place, but that in Jesus coming here, He enters also into a specific emotional space. He enters a space of openness and vulnerability where He can honestly share with both God and His disciples that He is scared and anxious. Here, He doesn't rationalise or minimalise. He sits with what He is feeling and brings it into earnest conversation with His Father.

Instead of following Jesus' example when we find ourselves in times of loss or challenges, we often fight, we hide, and we tremble... we resist rather than entering this emotional space where we courageously open up to God and to others and show them what we are really feeling. We pull the covers over the questions we don't dare to ask and hide the

Reflection:

Consider your relationship with Jesus. How is He inviting you to be more honest and open in terms of your experience of suffering?

Now think about the people you are closest to. How can you grow in your emotional capacity to be more vulnerable and open in these relationships?

Prayer: Jesus, I pray for the grace of a deep sense of your presence in my life.



Saturday



Choose one of the days of the week and reflect on your experience on that day. You can also think back on your entire week and dwell on the moments where you experienced things that stand out to you and stay with you. You may also want to go back and look at some of the entries in your journal. Talk to the Lord about it.

Prayer:

Jesus, I pray for the grace of a deep sense of your presence in my life.



Week 1

WHO IS GREATER?



7f



If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

By Rudyard Kipling

Sunday



Within minutes they were bickering over who of them would end up the greatest. But Jesus intervened: "Kings like to throw their weight around and people in authority like to give themselves fancy titles. It's not going to be that way with you. Let the senior among you become like the junior; let the leader act the part of the servant.

"Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You'd rather eat and be served, right? But I've taken my place among you as the one who serves. And you've stuck with me through thick and thin.

-Luke 22:24-28 (MSG)

The last words of a person's life are very important. And these are the words we find here with Jesus. These are the last few days of His life. He knows what lies ahead for Him, and this is perhaps also why John devotes so much of his gospel (the largest part) to this last teaching of Jesus. He teaches His disciples through what is happening to them and then gives them a different way of looking at what is happening. It seems as if the noose is now tightening around their necks - they are being persecuted, they wonder what will become of them. Jesus is about to be arrested; a trial is coming and very possibly, a death sentence. Everything is unjust. Jesus sees all of this in the light of the will of his Father. He does not only look at what is in front of him. He finds the Father's work and His presence in everything that happens to Him. It is still difficult, but His experience of what is happening is now completely different. He invites His disciples to look at what is happening in the same way as He does.

It changes everything in your life when you can see what is happening in the context of a larger plan of God's will, and realise that God is there. That is why He says, look at Me. And this is our journey this week, to just look at Him. He tells **the disciples** the way down is actually the way up. We get a very different message from the culture and the world we live in. For us, climbing the ladder of success is the way up. This leads to a lot of discord, like what is now emerging among the disciples. It is a life of tension. It is not easy. He invites them, "Come with Me, live as I do." It is a life of Freedom, peace and joy.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep insight and conviction that my obsession with self is robbing me of life.

Monday



“Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You’d rather eat and be served, right? But I’ve taken my place among you as the one who serves. And you’ve stuck with me through thick and thin

-Luke 22:27-28 (MSG)

We all look at someone. It shapes us. We can say that we are conditioned by that which we look at. What we think of ourselves, of life, of God, all of this depends on what we are exposed to and what we look at. And Christ makes his disciples aware that they are also looking at certain people. This is the culture and the time in which they live. There are people who want to enter positions of authority, for whom it is very important what other people think of them, because then they can exercise power and live with the admiration of other people. By living in this way, they can then think and feel that they are really important, too. And He tells the disciples, that is exactly what you are doing now. You are arguing among yourselves, you are comparing yourselves with one another (Paul says this is foolish 1 Cor 10:12b). There is this need and desire in all of us to think and feel that we are important and admired. Christ is not against the fact that we have this deep desire to be important within us, but rather about how we think and what we do to fulfil it. We can get it from the Father, like Jesus, and then it does not matter what position we hold or what work we do. Jesus knew who He was, so He could do the work of a slave. His work did not make Him important, but He made His work important. John says that because He knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, that He came from the Father and was returning to Him, He rose on this occasion and began to wash the feet of His disciples (John 13:3,4).

Reflection:

Who is the leader or great figure in your imagination that inspires you about life and how to get there? How do you think your imagination could be captured and the desire within you to choose the path downward, be grown?

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep insight and conviction that my obsession with self is robbing me of life.

Tuesday



“Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You’d rather eat and be served, right? But I’ve taken my place among you as the one who serves. And you’ve stuck with me through thick and thin

-Luke 22:27-28 (MSG)

Henry Nouwen says that he hears two voices. One says: “If it’s gonna be, it’s up to me.” I will have to do a lot to be independent, to make myself interesting so that other people admire me, so that I get to a place where I have the freedom to do what I want, when I want, how I want. On the other hand, he hears a voice that tells him that he must stay close to the Lord, follow Him, and that this is how he will find life.

These are also the two voices that the disciples hear. On the one hand, the voice of their culture that says that it depends on them. That they must do good to be respected by people, to get positions of power, which will then give them life. On the other hand, there is the voice of Jesus that says, look at Me, follow Me, trust Me. What you are looking for is something you already have. You have prestige, you have value, and you do not need to have those **important** positions. Jesus shows us how He took off His royal robes by letting go of His search and need for power and prestige. He emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant (Phil 2). By losing His life, He gained it back. The Father exalted Him and gave Him a name above every other name.

Reflection:

When do you hear the two voices most strongly? What do you tend to do with them?

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep insight and conviction that my obsession with self is robbing me of life.

Wednesday



“Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You’d rather eat and be served, right? But I’ve taken my place among you as the one who serves. And you’ve stuck with me through thick and thin

-Luke 22:27-28 (MSG)

Thomas **Keating**, a priest from the Catholic tradition, tells the story of a young man who was converted. He was known for being able to drink everyone under the table, and after his conversion he decided to become part of the strictest order and give his whole life to the Lord. Lent came and they decided to fast. One by one the old men of the order began to give up the forty-day fast, until he, the new convert, was the only one who could see through the forty days. And on that day, he realised with satisfaction that he had fasted everyone under the table, just as he could drink everyone under the table. Thomas **Keating** asks, what had changed in this person? He says, only his address, his hairstyle and his clothing, but inside there had been no major changes. Life was still about himself; he used to drink and now he uses religion to strengthen his humiliated ego and still come out on top and get the respect of all the people around him. The preoccupation with self and the pride are still very strong in him. This is the story of the disciples too. They are believers and they follow Jesus, but now they are arguing among themselves about who is the most important, who will hold which positions when Jesus is no longer there.

This brings us to ourselves - it is so difficult to see the obsession with self, the pride in ourselves. The only way we can become aware of it and see it in our own lives is when He shows it to us. When He convinces us, like the disciples, it is to free us from the worries and stress that pride brings into our lives. We can start living like Him.

Reflection:

Ask Him for the grace to reveal obsession with self within you and set you free from it. You can repeat the prayer as often as it comes to mind throughout the day.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep insight and conviction that my obsession with self is robbing me of life.

Thursday



“Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You’d rather eat and be served, right? But I’ve taken my place among you as the one who serves. And you’ve stuck with me through thick and thin

-Luke 22:27-28 (MSG)

Just like the disciples, we can also be proud and arrogant (they argue among themselves about who is the greatest) with very good motives (they want power to continue the work of Jesus).

One of Jesus’ parables was about two people who went to pray (Luke 18). One looked at other people and was grateful that he was not like others who stole, slept around, or lived only for money. If you hear this and immediately feel that you are not like him... you are just like him who feels he is not like others! Jesus says he is proud. This is not a small thing. This is the one thing that resists God (James 4:6). This is the one thing that made the devil, the devil. It is one thing to recognise arrogance and pride, but it is also important to recognise it as the great destructive force, our enemy.

Reflection:

I ask the Holy Spirit to show me where I’m using my spiritual journey as a motive to gain recognition from others.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep insight and conviction that my obsession with self is robbing me of life.

Friday



“Who would you rather be: the one who eats the dinner or the one who serves the dinner? You’d rather eat and be served, right? But I’ve taken my place among you as the one who serves. And you’ve stuck with me through thick and thin

-Luke 22:27-28 (MSG)

Macarius, the desert father, was on his way to his abode when the devil confronted him and asked him where his power lay. The devil said that he had no power over Macarius and that he did only what Macarius did. He fasted, watched, knew the Bible and there was nothing in which he was inferior. Macarius answered him and said: It is my humility. Another story is that of Isaac of Syria (17th century). He was convinced that a humble person gave off a scent that people and animals could detect. He said that this scent could be so powerful that dangerous, wild animals would be intoxicated by it and would do no harm to such a person. He believed that a humble person carried with him the smell, the atmosphere of the earth and paradise. No one and nothing felt condemned by such a person, and everyone was attracted to such a person.

In these two stories we get old ideas of what a life of humility looks like and what its effect is. Jesus tells His disciples that on this path of humility, they will live with Him in the Kingdom. Through humility we submit ourselves to God, we resist the devil, and he flees from us. (James 4:7). We experience peace and harmony restored in relationships, as with the disciples - they come together again and follow Him as a community of believers.

Reflection:

Live with these two stories and think about them. What is it about these stories that grabs you? What do you strongly identify with and what do you strongly yearn for? Is there someone you can share it with?

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep insight and conviction that my obsession with self is robbing me of life.



Saturday

Choose one of the days of the week and reflect on your experience on that day. You can also think back on your entire week and dwell on the moments where you experienced things that stand out to you and stay with you. You may also want to go back and look at some of the entries in your journal. Talk to the Lord about it.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep insight and conviction that my obsession with self is robbing me of life.



Week 2

ARE YOU BETRAYING THE
SON WITH A KISS?



The Ballad of Reading Gaol

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,
And at every drifting cloud that went
With sails of silver by.

I walked, with other souls in pain,
Within another ring,
And was wondering if the man had done
A great or little thing,
When a voice behind me whispered low,
"That fellow's got to swing."

Dear Christ! the very prison walls
Suddenly seemed to reel,
And the sky above my head became
Like a casque of scorching steel;
And, though I was a soul in pain,
My pain I could not feel.

I only knew what hunted thought
Quickened his step, and why
He looked upon the garish day
With such a wistful eye;
The man had killed the thing he loved,

And so he had to die.

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard,
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
Some with the hands of Gold:
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold.

Some love too little, some too long,
Some sell, and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears,
And some without a sigh:
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die.

- Oscar Wilde

The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is also called Passover, was approaching. The leading priests and teachers of religious law were plotting how to kill Jesus, but they were afraid of the people's reaction.

Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples,⁴ and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted, and they promised to give him money. So he agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so they could arrest him when the crowds weren't around.

Sunday



... But even as Jesus said this, a crowd approached, led by Judas, one of the twelve disciples. Judas walked over to Jesus to greet him with a kiss. But Jesus said, "Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?"

-Luke 22:1-6, 47-48 (NIV)

During Lent, the figure of Judas Iscariot emerges. His tragic betrayal of Jesus invites me to confront the complexity of human frailty, moral choices, and the profound tension between grace and sin. Judas' story serves as a sobering reminder of the consequences of my fallibility and the transforming power of God's redeeming love as I journey to the cross.

Right after Jesus articulates his surrender to his Father, the surprising event of betrayal follows: a kiss - the greeting of one member of a family to another, a symbol of love and trust and acceptance. With that kiss, Judas confirmed his lack of trust and acceptance of Jesus. This event shows the two opposite poles of our humanity. Beloved sinners. Jesus reveals the love, and Judas the depths of humanity's brokenness.

Judas is not just a villain, but a broken person with emotions, desires, and fears, like any of us. Human weakness and pride are forms of betrayal that steal our friendship with God. But, thank God, betrayal does not have the last word on the human condition. God's love and grace are the last word that speaks louder than every human infidelity and betrayal. And that is the good news of these moments that we share with Jesus in his suffering.

Reflection:

I am invited to examine my own life – my vulnerability, moral choices, and the dynamic interplay between grace and brokenness. Through Judas' story, I am invited to deepen my love for Jesus, renew my commitment to Him, and receive the boundless grace of the Lord's love.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to become aware of my shortcomings and receive Your forgiveness for them.

Monday



When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he declared, "for I have betrayed an innocent man."

-MATT. 27:3-4 (NIV)

People have long debated Judas' motive for betraying Jesus. My temptation during Lent is to condemn Judas as a villain and quickly move past this difficult part of the story – on the way to Resurrection and the promise of the empty tomb.

Not so fast.

We do not get to the Resurrection without getting through this most difficult part of the story: the tragedy of brokenness and the deep dependence on the Lord's grace in each of us.

We know that Jesus chose Judas, and that Judas left everything to follow Him. When Jesus spoke of the one who would betray Him, Judas was not an obvious suspect. He was in Jesus' inner circle. He was clearly loved by Jesus and the other disciples. It makes me realise that any devoted follower of Jesus was capable of betraying Him. It invites me to go into my own brokenness and my own heart. Judas' actions can play out in my actions too.

Writing Judas off as a villain prevents me from examining my own heart—the parts where I so desperately need His forgiveness and grace. Overwhelmed by guilt and grief, Judas ultimately failed to know the hope and light of the Resurrection. What he failed to realise is that no matter the extent of betrayal, sin, or brokenness, God's grace always triumphs.

Reflection:

What motives of my heart do I avoid bringing to the Lord?

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to become aware of my shortcomings and receive Your forgiveness for them.

Tuesday



So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.⁷ The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions.

-Gal 5:16-17 (NLT)

It is difficult to understand how Judas could make such a choice to betray Jesus. Judas witnessed and experienced Jesus' calling **first hand**. He was Jesus' financial manager. The Lord's eternal plan was unfolding before Judas and the other disciples. So, how could this happen?

In our humanity, there is a complex interplay between our flesh and the spirit. Paul also mentions this when he speaks of the fruit of the Spirit versus the fruit of our sinful nature. Our sinful nature becomes visible in our disordered attachments or tendencies. These are those things that we may rely on a little too quickly, or cling to too tightly.

Judas' actions can encourage us to reflect on the complex interplay of emotional, spiritual, rational, and logical influences in our own lives that can lead us down a destructive path. This self-awareness can help us make better decisions and stay true to our values and beliefs, even in difficult times.

Paul encourages us to experience the freedom the spirit brings more deeply by letting go of those attachments. My focus is not on perfection, but on perseverance in allowing God to change **me** and free me from my disordered attachments through the fruit of His spirit.

Reflection:

I examine within myself which attachments in my heart keep me from surrendering to the Lord's work in me and through me.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to become aware of my shortcomings and receive Your forgiveness for them.

Wednesday



The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: "You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss." So Judas came straight to Jesus. "Greetings, Rabbi!" he exclaimed and gave him the kiss.

Jesus said, "My friend, go ahead and do what you have come for."

Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested him.

-Matt 26:48-50 (NLT)

It is possible that Judas eventually became disillusioned with Jesus' plan because of his expectations of the Lord's way of establishing His Kingdom on earth. Judas, like many other Jews, may have expected a political leader who would free Israel from Roman oppression and restore the nation to its former glory. However, as Jesus continued to fulfil a spiritual, rather than political, calling, Judas may have become frustrated and disappointed. This disillusionment may have led him to betray Jesus, perhaps in an attempt to force Jesus to act more decisively in line with Judas' understanding of the prophecies.

Isn't it true that our expectations about "how" the Lord should do things are challenged in life? We try to understand why and what the Lord is doing and often come to a place of disillusionment when things don't work out the way we want them to. The greatest illusion of life is that we can control everything, and the invitation is to let go of control and surrender it to God. Many of us just hold on and think, "I know best. I know what's going to work for my life."

And often the Lord invites us and takes us places we don't want to go. In John 20:23 he says to Peter, Peter, you're going to be taken places you don't want to go. You're going to be betrayed, Peter, but it's taking you to new places and you can live. If you can learn to wait and trust in the Lord, you'll see that His plans are always bigger and better than anything we can make or plan for ourselves. We don't always see it that way in our immediate circumstances. I trust Him out of expectation that God has a plan and that God is working, and that He will surprise me in some way. Something good is going to come out of these events, be born out of this. I know this: goodness and favour will follow me all the days of my life. I can't get away from it. If you can just wait. On the third day there is a resurrection.

Reflection:

In what circumstances do I cling to my own ideas of what is best? How can I surrender them to the Lord today in trust and faith?

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to become aware of my shortcomings and receive Your forgiveness for them.

Thursday



And he said, "Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: 'There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.' You are witnesses of all these things

-Luke 24:46-48 (NLT)

The desire for financial stability is a struggle that many of us face, and it can sometimes lead us to choices that we later regret. Judas may have justified his actions by telling himself that his **betrayal** was for the greater good, or that it was necessary to achieve the goals he believed in.

While I do not condone Judas' actions, I think it is important to acknowledge the complex mix of emotions, desires, and fears that may have contributed to his eventual betrayal of Jesus. Judas had to grapple with his beliefs, desires, and challenging realities.

We may think that we would never betray the Lord in such a way; yet each of us finds ourselves in a place where we forget the Lord or ignore His calling on our lives. We are not spies, secretly trying to derail Jesus' mission. **However**, we sometimes become incognito followers when we face challenges. Today, there is an invitation to apologise for the small acts and ways in which we turn against the Lord. Repentance means to turn back to the Lord, and it is both a daily decision and a lifelong journey.

Repentance is one of the greatest words in the Bible. We read in the Old Testament that the prophets constantly called people to return to God and repent of the evil they had done. When Jesus brings his first message in the New Testament, repentance is one of His first words. He says that the kingdom of God is near - repent and believe the Good News.

The Greek word used for this is metanoia. It means to rethink our lives, the complete reversal of our thinking, our outlook on life, a new willingness to make God the focus of our lives. We turn away from the idea that we are in control of our own lives. And this is an ongoing process, because every day you and I are confronted by the fact that there are areas in our lives that are not turned to God, and then we start again. We surrender, we confess, we repent.

Reflection:

What is keeping me from returning to God? Are there areas that are easier for me to turn to God than others? Talk to God about it.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to become aware of my shortcomings and receive Your forgiveness for them.

Friday



Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night. Against you, and you alone, have I sinned; I have done what is evil in your sight. You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just. For I was born a sinner — yes, from the moment my mother conceived me. But you desire honesty from the womb, teaching me wisdom even there. Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Oh, give me back my joy again; you have broken me — now let me rejoice. Don't keep looking at my sins. Remove the stain of my guilt. Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me.

-Psalm 51 (NLT)

There is nothing more difficult in life than being betrayed, and the closer that person is to us, the harder the betrayal is to process. It was part of Jesus' journey to be betrayed by someone close to him.

Reflection:

What about us? We have all betrayed Jesus.

Think about a recent event where you made a big mistake. Maybe you did something that had a big impact on your life. Maybe it hurt others. Maybe you broke a promise. Maybe you said something intentionally to hurt someone. Maybe you were in a relationship and betrayed someone you made a promise to. Maybe you are in the middle of such a relationship now.

What was the effect of that experience on your life? On you physically? Emotionally? Socially?

God now offers you the gift of confession. We do not confess so God will love us, so that He will be merciful to us. He already is. Deep in the heart of God there is always a deep desire to forgive us. It is that love that Jesus brought to earth. It is that love that Jesus took to the cross. Deep within God's heart there is a desire to forgive and to heal and to restore us. This is the gift of confession. Confession opens the door of our lives so that God's forgiveness and love can come in, so His grace, freedom and healing can come in. I desire that door to open in your life today as well.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to become aware of my shortcomings and receive Your forgiveness for them.



Saturday

Choose one of the days of the week and reflect on your experience on that day. You can also think back on your entire week and dwell on the moments where you experienced things that stand out to you and stay with you. You may also want to go back and look at some of the entries in your journal. Talk to the Lord about it.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to become aware of my shortcomings and receive Your forgiveness for them.



Week 3

WHO ARE YOU LOOKING FOR?



"Step by Step"

The saints, they know this truth so well:
The soul's long journey cannot be
A race that rushes, clear to see,
But slow, like steps on stones we dwell.

Though vision may be bright and wide,
Each foot must tread its patient way.
Through rocky paths, we learn to stay,
Advancing slow, with His as guide.

Inspired by "Nie",
written by *Sheila Cussons*

Sunday



After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples. The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove. Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked. "Jesus the Nazarene," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) As Jesus said, "I am he," they all drew back and fell to the ground! Once more he asked them, "Who are you looking for?" And again, they replied, "Jesus the Nazarene." "I told you that I am he," Jesus said. "And since I am the one you want, let these others go." He did this to fulfil his own statement: "I did not lose a single one of those you have given me." Then Simon Peter drew a sword and slashed off the right ear of Malchus, the high priest's slave. But Jesus said to Peter, "Put your sword back into its sheath. Shall I not drink from the cup of suffering the Father has given me?" So, the soldiers, their commanding officer, and the Temple guards arrested Jesus and tied him up.

-John 18:1-12 (NLT)

NT Wright writes that the story of God and man begins in a garden: where God and man walk in the evening breeze, and the people live in harmony with each other and nature. And it is here that He comes to find them, where they have always been, where they spent time together. God searches for them, but there is no answer. Man hides, because something has happened. Friendship is shattered, there is evil in the air. Love, the most beautiful and fragile of all plants in the garden, has been trampled. It would take thousands of years to grow again.

And in this garden, we find that the roles have been reversed. People, filled with disappointment and violence in their hearts, come to a garden in the evening, looking for Someone. Like all of us, they are looking for God, but they do not know what He looks like.

Jesus does not hide. He is ready for the cup that His Father has given Him and He is ready to drink it. The new Adam steps forward to meet the old Adam. The Light of the world stands before them with their lamps and torches. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot extinguish it.

Jesus asks: Who are you looking for? They answer, Jesus of Nazareth. To them, He is an ordinary man, a threat to who they think God is and for whom God stands for. Their distorted image of who God is drives them to deceive, betray and ultimately crucify Him.



Sunday Continued...

Your image of what God is like, and of how God “should” act, can take you on a path of disappointment, disillusionment **and of** running away. Can we let go of our preconceived **ideas so** that we can get to know and experience **Him who is the “I Am”**, anew?

Jesus says that if you see Him, you have seen the Father. He is the bread of life, the light of the world, the resurrection, the way, the truth and the **life**.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to become aware of my shortcomings and receive Your forgiveness for them.

Monday



Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.

-Matt. 7:7 (NLV)

When Jesus asks, "Who are you looking for?" (John 18:4), he is not just speaking to the soldiers who come to arrest him. His question invites you to get in touch with your deepest search. U2 sings, "I still haven't found what I am looking for." We often think that our search is not for a Who, but rather for a Something: success, approval, happiness, love.

In John 4, Jesus says to the Samaritan woman, "Everyone who drinks this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks the water that I give them will never thirst" (John 4:13-14). Like the woman, we often turn to "water" to quench our thirst, only to find ourselves thirsty again.

Jesus invites us to come to him with our search. The invitation is to seek until we find him. Jesus offers flowing living water - himself.

Reflection:

Spend 10 minutes in silence today and honestly reflect on the question: What am I looking for?

Write down anything that comes to mind.

Talk to God about what you become aware of.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to seek You above all else and to follow You with trust and surrender.

Tuesday



After saying these things, Jesus crossed the Kidron Valley with his disciples and entered a grove of olive trees. Judas, the betrayer, knew this place, because Jesus had often gone there with his disciples.

-John 18:1-2 (NLT)

Judas betrays Jesus not only out of greed or malice. He expects Jesus to be a revolutionary leader who will overthrow Roman rule and restore Jewish rule over themselves. He expects Jesus to establish an earthly kingdom. But Jesus' life and teachings focus on love, humility and a kingdom that is not of this world (John 18:36). As Judas watched Jesus heal the sick and preach forgiveness, he likely became disillusioned. Where was the militant messiah who would restore Israel's power? In his disappointment, Judas walks away from Jesus and the other disciples and betrays Him.

Our unfulfilled expectations of Jesus can lead us away from Him. Perhaps we want a God who solves our problems quickly or who fulfills our desires. Is it possible that, like Judas, you have placed expectations on Him that He never promised to fulfill?

Reflection:

Write a letter to Jesus expressing any disappointments you have experienced in Him. Be honest about any unfulfilled expectations or desires. After you write, read it out loud as a prayer, and then spend a few moments in silence asking God to help you see His plan for your life with fresh eyes.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to seek You above all else and to follow You with trust and surrender.

Wednesday



The leading priests and Pharisees had given Judas a contingent of Roman soldiers and Temple guards to accompany him. Now with blazing torches, lanterns, and weapons, they arrived at the olive grove. Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked. "Jesus the Nazarene," they replied.

-John 18:3-5 (NLT)

When Jesus asks, "Whom do you seek?" the soldiers expect to find a rebel leader, who might resist or fight back. But Jesus steps forward and identifies Himself. He says, "I am He." This moment invites us to get in touch with our own expectations of Jesus. Do you expect Him to be a comforter, a miracle worker, or Someone who will solve all your problems? Or are you ready to accept Him as He is—a suffering servant, a crucified Saviour?

We often limit God by expecting Him to conform to our ideas and desires. But His ways are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). Are you open to encountering Jesus as He is, even if it challenges your expectations and makes you uncomfortable? What preconceived ideas about Him do you need to let go of? Can you open your heart to the Jesus who calls you to take up your cross and follow Him?

Reflection:

What expectations do you have of Jesus? How has He surprised you in the past? Ask the Lord to help you surrender your expectations and invite Him to reveal Himself to you in a new way.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to seek You above all else and to follow You with trust and surrender.

Thursday



Jesus fully realized all that was going to happen to him, so he stepped forward to meet them. "Who are you looking for?" he asked. "Jesus the Nazarene," they replied. "I am he," Jesus said. (Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.) As Jesus said "I am he," they all drew back and fell to the ground!

-John 18:4-6 (NLT)

Jesus steps forward and asks, "Who are you looking for?" even though He knows that suffering lies ahead of Him. Rather than hiding, He walks boldly and transparently to meet His accusers. He shows up in vulnerability.

Ronald Rolheiser notes that vulnerability is the key to spiritual growth, because it strips us of our pretence. We give God permission to meet us as we are. Lent is a time to step into our vulnerability, to take off the masks we wear, and allow Jesus to meet us in our brokenness.

In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." This invitation is for those who are willing to acknowledge their weakness, their need for Him.

Reflection:

Take a moment today to reflect on an area of your life where you feel weak or vulnerable. Offer it to Jesus in prayer and ask Him to meet you in that place and transform it with His presence.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to seek You above all else and to follow You with trust and surrender.

Friday



*O God, you are my God;
I earnestly search for you.
My soul thirsts for you;
my whole body longs for you
in this parched and weary land
where there is no water.*

-Psalm 63:1 (NLT)

In John 6:35, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never hunger." All the searching we experience in life - whether for love, acceptance, or belonging - finds its fulfilment in Christ. Our hearts are restless until they find rest in God (Augustine). Jesus is the One who satisfies the hunger in our souls, the thirst for something more. During Lent, as we strip away distractions and focus on Him, we begin to see that He is all we need. This season offers us the opportunity to re-centre our lives around Jesus, the only one who can meet our deepest needs.

Reflection:

Set an alarm to spend 10 minutes with Jesus today, without saying or hearing anything. Bring your soul to rest in Him (Psalm 131). Choose a prayer word that you can pray softly when you become aware that your mind is beginning to wander.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to seek You above all else and to follow You with trust and surrender.



Saturday

Choose one of the days of the week and reflect on your experience on that day. You can also think back on your entire week and dwell on the moments where you experienced things that stand out to you and stay with you. You may also want to go back and look at some of the entries in your journal. Talk to the Lord about it.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace to seek You above all else and to follow You with trust and surrender.



Week 4

WHY ARE YOU SLEEPING?



If only for once it were still.
If the not quite right and the why this
Could be muted, and the neighbor's laughter,
And the static my senses make –
If all of it didn't keep me from coming awake-
Then in one vast thousandfold thought
I could think you up to where thinking ends.
I could possess you,
Even for the brevity of a smile,
To offer you
To all that lives,
In gladness.

Rainer Marie Rilke

Sunday



Then, accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives. There he told them, "Pray that you will not give in to temptation." He walked away, about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.

At last he stood up again and returned to the disciples, only to find them asleep, exhausted from grief. "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation."

-Luke 22: 39-46 (NLT)

We are now with Jesus just before his arrest. He knows His time has come to die and He is experiencing intense emotions. This is the only place where it is said that He was in a great struggle, filled with agony. This is where He becomes very vulnerable and reaches out to His followers who are with Him and asks them to stay awake with Him, because He is suffering greatly. He tells them that He is sorrowful and anxious (Matt 25:37,38). They fall asleep and cannot be there for Him. He again asks them to stay awake and pray with Him. But... they fall asleep again... from sorrow. He wakes them again and asks them: "Why are you sleeping?" (Luke 22:46). Jesus invites them to be like Him:

- To learn and practice habits for spiritual purposes (e.g., moving, going to the garden, creating a space, making time for it, fighting sleep, praying, etc.)
- To become aware of everything that is and that is happening. This is a great moment in which they find themselves and they are unaware of it. The Father is busy with His plan of salvation.
- To give and cooperate to make the will of the Father happen.

You are invited to be with Jesus this week and learn with Him to wake up and just be.

Monday



“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation.”

-Luke 22:46 (NLT)

The reason Jesus wants them to wake up is not because He has anything against sleep. He wants something more than a physical awakening from them. He wants them to be aware together of what is really going on, and they will only achieve that by fighting physical sleep now, in these circumstances. When you sleep, you lose consciousness. That is why sleep is also linked to death. Death is referred to as falling asleep. Paul gives the command “Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead...” (Eph 5:14). We can be physically awake, like the Ephesians to whom Paul spoke, but spiritually fast asleep. We can be sleepwalkers. (Don’t sleepwalk through life (1 Thess 5 MSG)). Jesus invites us to wake up and stay with Him. He is wide awake, aware of what is really going on; of the Father’s work in these very challenging circumstances. Life is so different when you are aware of Him in seemingly dire circumstances. This is life... “Your life is a journey you must travel with a deep consciousness of God”. We can spend our lives in a psychotic fog – in a state of consciousness between sleep and wakefulness where we are not in touch with reality, and nothing is real or has meaning for us. Like a little baby we can be in the most beautiful natural scene and find ourselves in the most beautiful circumstances but be blissfully unaware of what is really going on around us and suck on our bottle with our eyes closed.

Reflection:

Begin the day by asking Him for the grace of a deep awareness of His presence in your life. Repeat the prayer as often as you think of it throughout the day.

End the day with a reflection on the day and notice where you experienced an awareness of His presence throughout the day.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep awareness of His presence in my life.

Tuesday



“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation.”

-Luke 22:46 (NLT)

An awakening and awareness of Him always brings an awakening and awareness of myself. And vice versa. Just as we can be unaware of Him (asleep), we can be unaware of our own essence and what is going on inside us. Unaware that we are created in His image, and of what we think, feel and want deeply. Unaware that we can decide... Jesus knows who He is (John 13:3) and what is going on inside Him. He wants something different than what is now coming his way. He makes a choice. Not His will, but the Father's will.

There are a few metaphors in the Bible that express the importance and nature of awareness of oneself. It is like being blind and then being able to see. Being dead and then living. Going from a lie to the truth. Being cut off and then becoming connected.

A big question to ask yourself is: to what extent am I aware of my deepest self, my thoughts, feelings and desires? Can I now express in words what I really feel and long for? Gurdjieff says the fundamental human problem is that we constantly fall asleep. We all experience moments of insight and awakening, but soon slip back into an unconscious state. All religious practices are aimed at helping us to wake up and live more consciously. Spiritual growth is a growing awareness of Him and of ourselves.

Reflection:

Take a few moments to become present. Take a few deep breaths and exhale slowly. Close your eyes and now pay attention to your inner world. What do you notice? Before you judge anything, can you name it? A thought, a feeling, a memory, imagination, worry...

Just notice it while letting it all go. Then talk to Him about it.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep awareness of His presence in my life.

Wednesday



“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation.”

-Luke 22:46 (NLT)

One of the biggest aspects that is lost when I fall asleep or pass away is the fact that there is no longer physical contact with others. There is no longer an encounter that **takes place** and I cannot live in contact with another person. The big sleep is to lose contact with Him. When I am aware of Him, I live with Him, and I am in contact with Him. This is life. Your life is a journey you must travel with a deep consciousness of God (1 Peter MSG). There is nothing I can do to prevent Him from being with me. He is with me. I can only awaken, wake up, become aware of Him who is with me. Waking up is also not something I can really do myself. It remains a gift, although I can say yes to it. Someone once said, I cannot make the sun rise, but I can get up early to see the sun rise. There are so many ways of life and religious practices that have been **practised** by believers throughout the ages in an attempt to see the sun rise.

When you wake up there is something *unique* in the way that you come to consciousness but we can all something to help us to be more aware of God in the morning.

Reflection:

One of the oldest habits of Christians from all traditions is to start the day by going to your inner room with your Bible. Talk to Him, read a few verses, think about them, and just be there with Him.

Try to do just that, as best you can, without judging it as good or bad.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep awareness of His presence in my life.

Thursday



“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation.”

-Luke 22:46 (NLT)

In creation there are different forms of existence. We have soil and water (molecules), a few types of plants, animals and humans. We could also speak of different levels of life. One level is not better than another, but it is different. There is more sensation, consciousness and more complexity as one moves upwards from soil to human existence. For example, animals have five senses and are more conscious than plants. So as humans we share so much with animals (stay together, take care of each other, play, etc.) but we are self-aware, which animals are not. We have a rational ability to reflect, imagine and speak. We do not only act instinctively but can decide between right and wrong. We can possess self-knowledge with a consciousness of the Eternal. We can also be asleep and go through life like zombies (e.g. Day of the living dead). We can then live more like animals and be motivated to do things out of our basic needs for food, sex and survival (dominance). A lower level of life is usually not life for a higher level of life. If someone has suffered brain damage, there are people who refer to such a person as a “vegetable”. Part of our awakening is to become aware of who we are. To discover something of the wonderful potential that is locked within us. Usually this is accompanied by a desire to become fully human. It is an awakening to an awareness of a life with Him and all that is.

An animal looks at a plant with the instinct to eat it or not. We look at the lily and are carried away by a greater awareness of the Creator.

Reflection:

Look out the window for a moment and observe the different forms of creation. Think about who you are... you can sense that you are part of everything... that you contain everything... but that everything (including yourself) is contained in something – someone greater. Just sit with the awareness, the feeling, without thinking about it. As the day goes on you can meditate – He is in everything – everything is in Him.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep awareness of His presence in my life.

Friday



“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation.”

-Luke 22:46 (NLT)

The disciples fall asleep because of their sorrow. They hear and see the end approaching. They are unaware of something greater that is happening as they are asleep. The work of salvation is taking place. Jesus invites them several times to watch and pray with Him so that they can become aware of the greater reality. The invisible. When you become aware, everything changes. The sadness and discouragement can be replaced with meaning and hope.

We all actually live with a large invisible dimension that we must become aware of and trust. In relationships, it is not just about the physical presence and contact with that person. It is about the other person's feelings, ideas and desires. If we cannot see this, we cannot establish or maintain a life-giving relationship. We must become aware of it, trust it and take it into account as part of reality, even if it is invisible.

So there is a deeper dimension to everything that exists and happens. For us as Christians, it is God. We can find Him in our prosperity, adversity, discouragement and hope. He is not only active in our lives, He is truly there. Augustine said that He is closer to us than we are to ourselves. Without an acceptance, a trust, an awareness of this dimension of reality, sadness overwhelms us, and our sleep becomes an escape. We often develop so many ways of escape that put us to sleep, numb us, take us away from the pain and sorrow of life. Jesus invites His disciples to wake up – to face reality – to look further, deeper at Him who is there. Active despite everything that goes wrong. Negative energy from sadness can be transformed into hope.

Reflection:

Turn your attention for a moment to the biggest challenge you are facing right now.

- Ask yourself if you are paying attention to what is physically observable. Also notice how it makes you feel.

Notice what is happening to you and how it makes you feel. Notice what you are thinking and how you interpret what is happening.

- Give what you are feeling and thinking to Him now and ask Him to enable you to notice something of His presence in these circumstances. (You can also express this in a letter that you write to Him).

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep awareness of His presence in my life.



Saturday

Choose one of the days of the week and reflect on your experience on that day. You can also think back on your entire week and dwell on the moments where you experienced things that stand out to you and stay with you. You may also want to go back and look at some of the entries in your journal. Talk to the Lord about it.

Prayer:

I ask for the grace of a deep awareness of His presence in my life.



Week 5

“IS THIS YOUR OWN
QUESTION, OR DID OTHERS
TELL YOU ABOUT ME?”



In the stillness, your voice calls out,
“Who do you say that I am?”— a gentle, loving
invitation.

In sacred moments, You weave through my life,
A light breaking through the fog, igniting my heart.
Each struggle and triumph, a tender embrace,
In whispers of pain, I sense your grace.
You guide me to carry my cross, to ascend,
In losing my life, I discover you, Jesus, my friend.
You reveal my worth deep within my soul,
In your presence, I find I am whole.
And here I linger, where truth intertwines,
You are Jesus, Son of God, my companion, forever
divine.

-J Heystek

Sunday



Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him. Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?" "Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?" Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world." Pilate said, "So you are a king?" Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

John 18:33-37 (NLT)

We often have false images of God, and these images shape our relationship with Him. These false ideas are created from various places, our upbringing, our culture or personal experiences and our suffering. Some people see the image of God as absent, uninvolved or a terrifying judge. And these misperceptions become an obstacle to our spiritual growth and formation because they do not align with the true nature of God revealed in Jesus.

During Lent we are invited to evaluate and replace these false images with more accurate and biblical versions of who God is. And Jesus is the perfect image of God. He himself said, If you see me, you see the Father. This week's invitation is to look deeply into the character of God and – through Jesus – see the true God. An involved, loving and caring Father, one who comes to us to be what we cannot be and do what we cannot do.

Reflection:

Are there false pictures or narratives of God that you carry with you? How do they affect your relationship with Him? How do you respond to Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?"

Prayer:

Lord, help me to be deeply aware of the true image of God.

Monday



"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

-Mark 8:29 (NIV)

Many of us struggle with the idea of God as a Father because of past experiences or because of our image of earthly fathers. Perhaps they were absent, harsh, or unloving. This distorted image can be carried over into our spiritual lives, causing us to see God in the same way. However, as Jesus reveals in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32), God is a Father who runs to us with open arms, eager to welcome us back when we stray. He is not distant or indifferent; rather, He is deeply involved in our lives and delights in showing us mercy and compassion.

Lent is a time to reflect on how we see God and to allow our hearts to embrace Him as a loving Father. In answering Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?", we are invited to affirm, "You are my loving Father, always ready to embrace me."

Reflection:

How does your relationship with your earthly father influence your image of God? Do you see God as loving and involved, or distant and harsh? How can you open yourself to the truth of God as a loving Father during Lent?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to be deeply aware of the true image of God.

Tuesday



"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

-Mark 8:29 (NIV)

Fear is a common response to God when we see Him through the lens of a harsh judge or taskmaster. Many of us are conditioned to think that God's love and approval are contingent on our behaviour, which leads us to live in fear of punishment or rejection. Jesus challenges this fear-based image, emphasising that God is love, and that His perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).

This week of Lent is about replacing fear with trust. Jesus asks us, "Who do you say that I am?" and our response should be based on trust, not fear. Do we see Jesus as someone who punishes us for every mistake, or as someone who loves us unconditionally and invites us into a relationship built on grace? Lent is an invitation to surrender our fears and embrace the truth of God's love, which frees us from the need to perform for His approval.

Reflection:

What fears do you have in your relationship with God? Is it based on a false view of Him as a harsh judge? How can you grow in trust in God's love, knowing that He does not relate to you through fear, but through grace?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to be deeply aware of the true image of God.

Wednesday



"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

-Mark 8:29 (NIV)

In a culture that emphasises achievement and success, it is easy to believe that we must earn God's love through good behaviour, religious practices, or moral perfection. This achievement-based image of God leaves us feeling exhausted, worn out, and distant from Him. Jesus reminds us that God's love and grace are freely given, not something we have to earn. Hence Jesus' words: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

We are encouraged to reflect on our image of God as it relates to achievement. Do we believe that God loves us only when we "make it," or do we trust that His grace is available even in our failures or suffering? As Jesus asks us, "Who do you say that I am?" we are called to respond by affirming, "You are the gracious God who loves me unconditionally." Lent offers the opportunity to leave behind the pressure of achievement and rest in the truth of God's grace. Our spiritual practices, such as fasting, prayer, and repentance, are not ways to earn God's favour - they are ways to draw closer to Him and experience His love more fully.

Reflection:

Do you see God's love as something you have to earn? How has this affected your relationship with Him? How can you experience God's grace more deeply during Lent, and what practices can help you embrace His unconditional love?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to be deeply aware of the true image of God.

Thursday



"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

-Mark 8:29 (NIV)

During Lent, we identify with Jesus' pain and suffering and are also deeply aware of our own suffering and the suffering and pain around us. Suffering can distort our image of God, making us feel as if He is distant, uninvolved, or absent from our pain. Jesus teaches that God is not a distant God, but is intimately involved in our lives, especially in our moments of suffering. Jesus himself experienced suffering and promised to walk with us through our pain. As Jesus asks the question, he also knows that the disciples' suffering is yet to come, but that their recognition of who he is can help them as they go through it.

In today's passage, we focus on the truth that God is with us in our suffering. When Jesus asks us, "Who do you say that I am?" he invites us to answer, "You are Emmanuel, God with us, even in the most difficult moments of life." You are the Christ, the One who saves and heals. Lent, a season that leads us to reflect on Christ's suffering, is a time to remember that God does not abandon us in our pain. He is present with us, offering comfort, strength, and hope.

Reflection:

How has suffering influenced your image of God? Do you see Him as distant or present with you in your pain? How can this Lent help you to experience God's presence in your suffering and to trust that He is with you?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to be deeply aware of the true image of God.

Friday



"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

-Mark 8:29 (NIV)

When you look at God, do you see Him as the generous God who provides despite our suffering? Today we focus on understanding and embracing God's generosity. Jesus' life and ministry consistently reveal a God who gives abundantly, whether it is healing the sick, feeding the hungry, or offering forgiveness to those who repent. Jesus wants us to understand that it is God's nature to bless, to give, and to provide. When Jesus asks us, "Who do you say that I am?" we are invited to answer, "You are the generous God who gives more than all we can ask or think."

Many of us have a distorted view of God's generosity. We may think that God withholds blessings, that we must strive to receive His goodness, or that He gives to some but not to others. However, as Jesus teaches us, God is a generous God who delights in giving good gifts to His children (Matt. 7:11).

Lent is a time to reflect on how we experience God's generosity. Do we trust in His provision and abundance, or do we live with a mindset of scarcity, believing that we must fend for ourselves?

Reflection:

How do you view God's generosity? Do you trust that He provides abundantly, or do you struggle with a mindset of scarcity? In what ways can you grow in gratitude for God's generosity during this season of Lent?

Prayer:

Lord, help me to be deeply aware of the true image of God.



Saturday

Choose one of the days of the week and reflect on your experience on that day. You can also think back on your entire week and dwell on the moments where you experienced things that stand out to you and stay with you. You may also want to go back and look at some of the entries in your journal. Talk to the Lord about it.

Prayer:

Lord, help me to be deeply aware of the true image of God.

TEL **011 268 4900**
PASTORAL CARE – EMERGENCY LINE **082 372 6818 (no sms')**
WHOLENESS – CENTRE **011 215 7200**
INFORMATION **info@mosaiek.com**

