

Retreating at Home



Lent + Holy Week + Easter + Pentecost

If you are currently needing to stay at home why not enjoy a time of Spiritual Retreat. Use this first page to prepare, and then choose one of the four following reflections to use during the day to enter into A: Lent, B: Holy Week, C: Easter or D: Pentecost.

Preparation

Set a period of time aside - such as a full day or half-day - in which to meet with God. Plan what you will do in this time. Engage with the material provided and then pray, read, enjoy a craft activity, and go for a stroll or exercise. You are encouraged to spend 20+ minutes in silent contemplative prayer. Don't forget to make yourself good meals!

Start by finding a quiet place to sit. Breathe deeply and still your mind. When you are calm and relaxed begin slowly praying these prayers:

Christ be with me, Christ within me,
Christ behind me, Christ before me,
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,
Christ to comfort and restore me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,
Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.
(from St Patrick's Breastplate)

May today there be peace within.
May I trust God that I am exactly where I am meant to be.
May I not forget the infinite possibilities born of faith.
May I use those gifts that I have received,
and pass on the love that has been given to me.
May I be confident knowing I am a child of God.
May God's presence settle into my bones,
and allow my soul the freedom
to rest, play, praise and love. Amen
(from St Teresa of Avila)

Matthew 4. 1-12

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

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

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Reflection

Jesus began his ministry with a time in the wilderness, fasting and preparing for God's mission. The devil tried to persuade Jesus to put God to the test – to force God's hand and not to wait and trust God's purposes. Jesus is to become true Lord of the whole world but not by grabbing it for his own ends as Satan tempts him to do. God's way is very different – calling for sacrifice, great generosity and selflessness.

- How are you feeling during this wilderness time of social distancing and/or social isolation?
- What things are you finding challenging?
- What anxieties do you have? Tell God about them now.

Matthew tells us that Jesus was led by the Spirit.

- Can you identify ways in which the Spirit is currently leading you?
- Where can you see the Spirit at work in your current situation?

We read in the passage that angels came and ministered to Jesus.

- What do you understand by the term 'angels'?
- Are there ways in which you can be an angel to someone else during this time?
- Ask the Spirit to help you faithfully worship during the weeks ahead.

Creativity

Express creatively your experience of this time by writing a letter, poem or song, drawing or painting a picture, or making a gift for someone.

Connection

Pray for the safety and well-being of family, friends, colleagues and church members. Be an angel: ministering to another in some way. Allow others to minister to you too.

Christ be within us to keep me, beside us to guard, before us to lead, behind us to protect, beneath us to support, above us to bless, this day and always. Amen.

Luke 23:44-49

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. When the centurion saw what had taken place, he praised God and said, "Certainly this man was innocent." And when all the crowds who had gathered there for this spectacle saw what had taken place, they returned home, beating their breasts. But all his acquaintances, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Reflection

Luke's account of the crucifixion is very dramatic. Creation mourns the death of Jesus, with the sun failing and the land turning dark. whilst the people look on, Jesus gives up his spirit to the Father with a final last cry.

Imagine yourself at the scene:

- What can you see, and hear?
- What does Jesus sound like as he cries out to God?
- What do you feel about what you are witnessing? Tell God now.

As Jesus hung on the cross there was darkness for three hours.

- What is it like to be in the darkness?
- Where are the dark places in your life, or in your community? In prayer lift them to the Lord now and ask for his light to bring healing and wholeness.

Imagine you are one of Jesus' friends who has remained after everyone else has returned home.

- What do you do next?
- What do you say to the others who have remained?
- What do they say to you?

Creativity

Write, draw or make something that reflects this experience of imagining yourself at the scene of the crucifixion. Sit with your creation and ponder the mystery of the cross. What might God be wanting to say to you through your creation?

Connection

Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind a person or group who is hurting, lonely or fearful. Pray for them and then contact them in some way – perhaps telephoning, emailing, sending a card, or finding out more about their situation.

***We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.***

Luke 24. 33-43

That same hour (*the two disciples*) got up and returned to Jerusalem (*from Emmaus*); and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate in their presence.

Reflection

In Luke's Gospel the disciples begin to experience the Risen Christ in different places and in a variety of ways. They experience confusion, disbelief and astonishment as the truth of the resurrection begins to dawn on them. In this passage Jesus reveals himself through the breaking of bread at Emmaus and then appears to the disciples in Jerusalem.

Imagine yourself amongst this group of disciples:

- What thoughts, feelings and emotions are you experiencing as you encounter the Risen Christ?
- What do you want to say to Jesus as you recognise him? Tell him now.

Jesus stands amongst his disciples and says: 'Peace be with you'.

- In which areas of your life do you need to know God's peace?
- Pray for a situation or place in the world where you long for God's peace to break through.

Jesus encourages his disciples not to doubt him.

- What causes you to doubt Jesus?
- What do you find challenging to believe? Share that with God now.

Creativity

Do something to help you enter into the amazing and vibrant joy of the resurrection: sing your favourite song, put on music and dance, give yourself a treat, go wild!

Connection

Make a list of all the ways that you can see resurrection and transformation at work in the world around you. Give thanks for each of these and share your list with a friend.

Alleluia! Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Acts 2.1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?'

Reflection

Luke's account of the Day of Pentecost in the book of Acts paints a very dramatic picture of the disciples being filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered to go out and communicate boldly to all the nations. Many, including the disciples themselves, were amazed by what was happening.

Imagine yourself amongst the disciples as they and you are filled with the Holy Spirit:

- What is happening?
- What can you see and hear?
- What does God's Spirit feel like around you and within you?
- What do you do next?

The disciples go out and communicate with those in Jerusalem from other nations.

- How do you communicate best?
- What types of communication might you use to tell others about Jesus?
- Offer your communication skills to the Holy Spirit – let God use them.

The Day of Pentecost was only the beginning – the Spirit led the disciples on many adventures, far beyond their imagining, as they served and witnessed to Jesus.

- Recall some of the adventures you have been on with God.
- What have you learned about God when you have followed the Spirit's call?
- Pledge to continue to be open to God's surprises.

Creativity

Go on a creative adventure with the Holy Spirit. Let the Spirit lead you as you write, draw, paint or create a gift to bless another person or community.

Connection

Learn to say 'God bless you', 'Jesus is Lord' or 'Come Holy Spirit' in another language. If you are proficient in languages learn the Lord's Prayer by heart in another tongue or way of communicating and pray it regularly.

***May the Spirit, who set the Church on fire upon the Day of Pentecost,
bring the world alive with the love of the risen Christ. Amen.***