

In the desert ... A well

“The water that I shall give will become a spring of water within,
welling up for eternal life.” John 4:14

LENT

2026

“What makes the desert so beautiful ... is that somewhere it hides a well.

Antoine De Saint-Exupery, *The Little Prince*, 73

You are invited into the Gospel stories of Lent (Year A) and the words of fellow travellers to reflect on Jesus and those who encountered him during desert experiences in their lives.

GOSPEL

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. *Matthew 4:1-11*



**WEEK
ONE**

FROM FELLOW TRAVELLERS

In the three temptations of Christ we see him learning to say an emphatic “no” to the temptation to create a false self. After forty days of intense fasting, Jesus was a hungry man. The tempter easily suggested that Jesus might establish himself by ‘doing’. It would be easy enough for the man who would later feed five thousand from five loaves to create a tempting meal for himself from a few stones. But Jesus had a better food. Then how about establishing himself by building esteem? Off to the high point of the temple they went. The courtyards were full of devout worshippers. Surely if he suddenly descended from on high and stood in their midst they would recognise him as the Messiah. But Jesus needed no such acclaim to know who he truly was. Then how about ‘having’? What a sense of power, to have all the kingdoms of the world! That would certainly make him something. But this man was poor in spirit. He knew himself in his relation with God. He would not find his identity in what he could do, in what others thought of him, in what he had. He was who he was before God and in God. Richard Rohr, *Contemplation in Action*, 89-90.

Jesus, the Blessed One, is poor. The poverty of Jesus is much more than an economic or social poverty. Jesus is poor because he freely chose powerlessness over power, vulnerability over defensiveness, dependency over self-sufficiency. ... Jesus calls us, who are blessed as he is, to live our lives with that same poverty. Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*, 164.

Jesus reaffirmed and took up into himself everything authentically human. Everything that is truly human is pointing towards God and moving towards him. Jesus takes it upon his back and carries it to the destiny it could not otherwise reach. ...What is unique to Christianity, and at its heart, is the recognition that it is God who sanctifies us; that we ourselves cannot add one cubit to our spiritual stature. Of ourselves, we can do nothing at all. ... Christianity demands a death; it brings it about. In some mysterious way man must die ... Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 4, ‘The Word of the Cross’

Of myself, I could do nothing, but when I told our dearest Lord in the Most Holy Sacrament of certain things required of me, I went about the task with confidence in Him to make me say or write when He saw most fitting. I was utterly powerless, but He always guided me.

Mary MacKillop quoted in Pauline Wicks, *God Will Take Care of Us All*, 47

All along God has been helping us forward and always his grace results not in our feeling full of light and understanding, not in high feelings of devotion, but in becoming aware how poor and shoddy we are; how everything we do is riddled with selfishness. This is not an easy situation to accept – it is the last thing we want. We can bear all sorts of hardships and difficulties provided we have a spiritual self-assurance, but when that is taken away the savour of life has gone....Can we begin to trust Jesus alone? ... Can we rely on his goodness? Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 5, 'The Narrow Gate'

'Do you not care that we suffer leprosy and cancer; do you not care that we suffer injustice and violence and hunger?' The background to the incarnation was that God heard these cries of the poor. The cries could be phrased as a challenge to God, for often they were so phrased: 'Will you drink the cup that we must drink? The cup of our suffering, our dying, our loneliness and our despair? When Jesus consented to do this he chose the most effective way of showing us that, indeed, God is a God who cares. He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, dying on a cross. God sent the only Son to drink the cup that we must drink, so that we might learn to believe in God's love. St Thomas Aquinas, ... in what is a free but accurate paraphrase, said: "Jesus drank the full cup of our human suffering ..." E. Cuskelly, *Walking the Way of Jesus*, 23



FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- What words or phrases stand out for you?
- In the desert Jesus was tempted to reject human frailty and limitations. What is the source of his ability to live through this experience?

REVIEW OF LIFE

A prayerful review of each day or week can help us to grow in closeness to God in Jesus, drawing from the life-giving spring of his life and love. Allow 10-15 minutes for prayer. You may like to light a candle. Become aware of God's loving presence. Ask for help and guidance:

- For what moment, event or person are you most grateful? For what are you least grateful? Talk with God in Jesus about what has come to mind.
- Ask for wisdom and guidance for tomorrow.



CONCLUDING PRAYER

Jesus, be with us, Friend, in our desert times and places:

Help us to ...

Feast on unity. Fast from differences.

Feast on compassion. Fast from judgement of others.

Feast on listening. Fast from idle chatter.

Feast on goodness. Fast from perfectionism.

Feast on trust. Fast from anxiety.

Feast on pardon. Fast from grudges.

Feast on affirmation. Fast from gossip

Feast on nature's beauty. Fast from pollution.

Feast on quiet moments. Fast from frenzied activity.

Feast on gratitude. Fast from discontent.

Feast on involvement. Fast from complacency.

Feast on the positive. Fast from negativity.

Feast on a good book. Fast from screens.

Feast on humility. Fast from boasting.

Feast on forgiveness. Fast from resentment.

Feast on hope. Fast from despair.

Feast on our gifts and talents. Fast from jealousy.

Feast on love. Fast from fear.

Feast on acceptance. Fast from complaining.

Feast on gentleness. Fast from harshness.

Feast on God's Providence. Fast from fear of the future.

Amen.

Adapted from a prayer by William Arthur Ward 1921-1994,
in Patrick O' Sullivan, *I Call You Friends: Friendship with Jesus in Daily Life*, 24-25

GOSPEL

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 only 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.'

Matthew 17:1-9

WEEK TWO



FROM FELLOW TRAVELLERS

... **Jesus prays a lot.** And the lesson isn't lost on his disciples. They sense that Jesus's real depth and power are drawn from his prayer. They know that what makes him so special, so unlike any other religious figure, is that he is linked at some deep place to a power outside of this world. And they want this for themselves. That's why they approach Jesus and ask him: "Lord, teach us to pray!" Ronald Rolheiser, *Prayer: Our Deepest Longing*, 22.

On more than one occasion Mary MacKillop wrote that she 'did not pray much'. She would then go on to add 'but feel calm and tranquil and near our dear good God', or 'God's presence seems to follow me everywhere and make everything I do, or wish to do, a prayer.' There has never been a saint who thought she prayed enough. But Mary's sisters had a quite different



version of the way she prayed: 'In prayer she would stay up for hours praying. I have known her to stay frequently for a couple of hours praying.' 'She was always praying when I was a Novice. She was a woman of prayer.' ... for many busy people who desire to serve God: 'The life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him.' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*) ... in the spiritual life we should try to develop this habit of being in the presence of God's watchful love. E. Cuskelly, *Walking the Way of Jesus*, 59 - 60.

There is something very important, dear friend, that we must be reminded of here. Jesus was very explicit about this when he said, 'Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father' (Mt 7:21). He is telling us that our prayer must extend over into our actions. It is not enough to acknowledge we are all children of the Father in heaven; we must act upon it. The joys and the successes, as well as the sorrows and needs, of all men and women, are our joys, our sorrows. They are the successes and the needs of our brothers and sisters. ...I cannot say "Our Father" without reaching out to all of them and trying to love them. I must do this if I am to pray as Jesus taught me. I also have to help them in some way. What is the will of the Father for me in this regard? But what can we do, you might ask? William Meninger, *The Loving Search for God*, 122-123.

Prayer can never be separated from life. Does this prayer involve their whole life? Are they struggling to overcome their bad tendencies, their selfishness, and are they trying to fulfil the law of God? Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 4, 'The Word of the Cross'

For discernment, then, we have to be in touch with our heart, and learn to be still. If our heart is busy, we won't pick up what's going on. Just as water has to be still to give a true reflection, so there will be no true reflection of reality if we are in turmoil. As well as the above, a number of other factors are important for discernment to be a reality for us.

Prayer. First, we need a regular prayer life. My times for prayer need to be long enough for me to feel I am taking the relationship seriously ... a living relationship with Jesus cannot depend on my moods. Self-discipline (mortification) [is required]. The purpose of our life is built into the very cells of our body. Hence, a certain self-discipline is needed so that the intangible world of faith is not drowned out by the immediate attractions of the tangible. Moreover, we must be prepared to go out of our comfort zone for the sake of others. Patrick O'Sullivan, *I Call You Friends*, 71.

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- What is standing out for you here? Any particular words or phrases?
- The disciples wanted to stay with Jesus in prayer, but he led them back down the mountain side. What place does prayer have in your life? What might help your prayer?

REVIEW OF LIFE

A prayerful review of each day or week can help us to grow in closeness to God in Jesus, drawing from the life-giving spring of his life and love. Allow 10-15 minutes for prayer. You may like to light a candle. Become aware of God's loving presence. Ask for help and guidance:

- For what moment, event or person are you most grateful? For what are you least grateful? Talk with God in Jesus about what has come to mind.
- Ask for wisdom and guidance for tomorrow.



CONCLUDING PRAYER

God of Love,

Make my heart like that of Your Son.

Make it as great and rich in love as His,

so that my brothers and sisters

– or at least one of them, sometime in my life –

can enter through this door

and there learn that You love them.

God of Our Lord Jesus Christ,

let me find You in His heart. Amen.

Adapted from a prayer by Karl Rahner SJ, Encounters With Silence, 17.

GOSPEL

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

'Go and call your husband,' said Jesus to her, 'and come back here.' The woman answered, 'I have no husband.' He said to her, 'You are right to say, "I have no husband"; for although you have had five, the one you have now is not your husband. You spoke the truth there.' 'I see you are a prophet, sir,' said the woman. 'Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, while you say that Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.' Jesus said: 'Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know: for salvation comes from the Jews ... God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth.' The woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah – that is, Christ – is coming; and when he comes he will tell us everything.' 'I who am speaking to you,' said Jesus, 'I am he.'



... The woman put down her water jar and hurried back to the town to tell the people. 'Come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did; I wonder if he is the Christ?' This brought people out of the town and they started walking towards him.

Many Samaritans of that 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 Samaritans came up to him, they begged him to stay with them. *From the Gospel for today:*

John 4:7-2

WEEK THREE

FROM FELLOW TRAVELLERS

In an act of discipleship parallel to that of the Galilean fishermen who left their boats and nets, “the woman left her water jar.”

Heading into town, she announced her discovery to the people. Many came to believe in Jesus “through the word of the woman bearing witness.” They persuaded him to stay two more days, and they came to see for themselves that “this is truly the saviour of the world” (John 4:4-42).

Elizabeth Johnson, *Abounding in Kindness*, Introduction.

Recently an elderly woman was telling me of her sorrow at the realisation of her unkindness to her parents long ago. They were dead and she had no means of showing them her sorrow and love. Sorrow was with her night and day and could easily have been nothing but fruitless remorse ... She was in a painful situation where people were unkind to her. She could have got out of it but not without hurting others. She realised that here was her chance to make reparation, reparation in the true sense – not mere submission to suffering as though God or anyone else benefitted by that, but by loving those people who were unkind to her. ‘I have failed in life and this is my chance to love.’ This is the sort of knowledge I mean. The Holy Spirit inspires these open, loving hearts with the sentiments of Jesus. Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 2 ‘Who is he, Lord?’

There are wells hidden in the hearts of all the thirsty strangers we meet along the way. Sometimes, our honest search for living water can lead us to these wells, and exchanges can be made that quench our thirst. After the woman at the well received her drink from Jesus she became a well for others to drink from (John 4:39). Macrina Wiedekher, *Seasons of Your Heart*, 168

O Infinite God ... He has spoken to us in human language ... If this human heart loves us, the heart of Your Son, the heart which – may You be praised forever! – is finite like my own poor heart, then my heart is at peace ... Jesus has really told me that He loves me, and His word has come from the depths of His human heart. And His heart is Your heart, O God of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Karl Rahner SJ, *Encounters With Silence*, 16-17.

“The desert is beautiful ... What makes the desert beautiful,” said the little prince, “is that somewhere it hides a well ...”

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *The Little Prince*, 73.



FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- Something is standing out for you here? What might it mean for your life?
- To the Samaritan woman, and to you and me, Jesus longs to give living water, 'welling up for eternal life'. How do you understand what Jesus is saying?

REVIEW OF LIFE

A prayerful review of each day or week can help us to grow in closeness to God in Jesus, drawing from the life-giving spring of his life and love. Allow 10-15 minutes for prayer. You may like to light a candle. Become aware of God's loving presence. Ask for help and guidance:

- For what moment, event or person are you most grateful?
For what are you least grateful?
Talk with God in Jesus about what has come to mind.
- Ask for wisdom and guidance for tomorrow.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Imagine Jesus speaking these words to you:

What makes this world so lovely is that somewhere it hides a well.

Something lovely there is about a well

So deep unpiped and real

Filled with buckets and buckets of that life-giving drink.

A faucet will do in a hurry,

but what makes the world so lovely

is that sometimes

people are like wells

deep and real

natural (unpiped)

life-giving

calm and cool

refreshing.

They bring out what is best in you.

They are fountains of pure joy

they make you want to sing, or maybe dance;

they encourage you to laugh even, when things get rough.

And maybe that's why things never stay rough once you've found a well.

Some experiences are like wells, too.

People create them;

they are life-giving happenings

they are redeeming experiences

they are wells,

wells of wonder

wells of hope.

When you find a well
and you will some day,
drink deeply of the gift within.
And then maybe soon you'll discover
that you've become what you've received,
and then you'll be a well for others to find.
So lift up your eyes and look all around you:
over the mountains, down in the valley
out in the ocean, over the runways
into the cities, into the country
sidewalks and highways
paths in the forest
into the hearts of a thirsty people.
Look!
And I beg you don't ever stop looking
because what makes this world so lovely
is that somewhere
it hides a well,
a well that hasn't been found yet.
And if you don't find it
maybe nobody will!
And if you don't be one,
maybe nobody will find you! Amen.

GOSPEL

As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?' 'Neither he nor his parents sinned,' Jesus answered. 'He was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as the day lasts I must carry out the work of the one who sent me; the night will soon be here when no one can work. As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.' Having said this, 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' (a name that means 'sent'). So the blind man went off and washed himself, and came away with his sight restored.

... 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 ... The man replied, 'Now here is an astonishing thing! He has opened my eyes, and you don't know where he comes from! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners, but God does listen to those who are devout and do his will. Ever since the world began it is unheard of for anyone to open the eyes of a person who was born blind; if this man were not from God, he couldn't do a thing.' '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. Jesus said: 'It is for judgement that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind.' Hearing this, some Pharisees who were present said to him, 'We are not blind, surely?' Jesus replied: 'Blind? If you were, you would not be guilty, but since you say, "We see," your guilt remains.'



**WEEK
FOUR**

FROM FELLOW TRAVELLERS

The man born blind has scarcely begun his journey of faith when he is recognised as a disciple of Jesus and must suffer the persecution of a series of long interrogations, followed by expulsion from the synagogue. We can hear John thus reassuring his people that the similar persecutions they are experiencing are bringing them, too, opportunities for growth in faith.

Francis Moloney, *We Have Seen His Glory*, 29.

... **Light is a most appropriate symbol for God** because we don't actually see light; rather it's because of the light that we can see everything else. So, it is not surprising that Jesus tells us that he is the light of the world. It is only when we are in the light that we become aware of shadows; there are no shadows in the dark. In other words, it is only when we have a relationship with Jesus that we become aware of the shadows in our heart ... we don't have a direct vision of Jesus; rather, because of our relationship with him, we can see and experience everything else as it truly is, that is, in its proper context. A person who walks in the light, on account of their relationship with Jesus, has some idea of where they are going, which becomes clearer the closer we get to Jesus. But life is a journey, and we can stumble and fall and bump into things, and maybe temporarily get lost in a shadow. But at least we know that the things we bump into are obstacles, and the shadows are real shadows that shut out the light. And as long as we keep our relationship with Jesus running, we never quite lose our sense of direction.

Patrick O'Sullivan, *I Call You Friends*, 79-80.

In practical terms, what exactly does it mean to have Jesus at the centre of our heart, so that our life is a real partnership with him? It means that, whatever I do, I talk to Jesus about it, on the level of the heart. I tell him, as a real friend, how it affects me – my fears, hopes, anxieties. When I do that, I create space for Jesus in the centre of my heart, so that when my heart, with all its frailties, is engaged in this or that venture or concern, there is space for Jesus right in the middle of it. A good time to practice this conversation would be at the end of the day, if we are in the habit of doing a daily Examen, reflecting on the day to see how our relationship has been going.

Patrick O'Sullivan, *I Call You Friends*, 83-84.

Because God says 'My power is at its best in weakness', then our knowing where we are vulnerable gives us a way to God. This is the process we've come to call 'healing'. Healing happens when we see ourselves – and our vulnerability – from a different perspective, from God's perspective.

Brian Gallagher, *Taking God to Heart*, 45.

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- What is connecting with you from this story?
- With Jesus the blind man gains sight – of the eyes and spirit.
In your life have you experienced a journey from 'blindness' to 'sight', from 'darkness' to 'light'?

REVIEW OF LIFE

A prayerful review of each day or week can help us to grow in closeness to God in Jesus, drawing from the life-giving spring of his life and love. Allow 10-15 minutes for prayer. You may like to light a candle. Become aware of God's loving presence. Ask for help and guidance:

- For what moment, event or person are you most grateful?
For what are you least grateful?
Talk with God in Jesus about what has come to mind.
- Ask for wisdom and guidance for tomorrow.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, open our eyes,
that we may see you in our brothers and sisters.
Lord open our ears,
that we may hear the cries of the hungry,
the cold, the frightened, the oppressed.
Lord, open our hearts,
that we may love each other as you love us.
Renew in us your spirit.
Lord, free us and make us one.

Prayer attributed to Mother Teresa, Maurice Ryan Ed., *Heartlines*, 137.

GOSPEL

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.' The disciples said, 'Rabbi, it is not long since the Jews wanted to stone you; are you going back again?'

... On arriving, Jesus found that Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days already. Bethany is only about two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to sympathise with them over their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus had come she went to meet him. Mary remained sitting in the house. 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.'

... 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, could he 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. John 11:1-45

WEEK FIVE



FROM FELLOW TRAVELLERS

To those with a romantic idea of “gentle Jesus, meek and mild,” the image of Jesus in the New Testament will come as something of a shock. Jesus is undoubtedly a disturbing figure ... a challenge to his disciples. Then, having been captivated by his boundary breaking, healing ministry, we may have the courage to put our hand to the plough, and to move forward in his footsteps, to encounter through love, to oppose discrimination, to do justice, and to proclaim the realm of God. If, in so doing, we also become a disturbing presence, we have reason to believe it will also be creative and life-giving. *Anthony Gittins, A Presence That Disturbs, 91-92.*

This Jesus of Nazareth is a distinct historical individual: the one who was totally centred on a gracious God upholding all creation, the one who interpreted God's law in a 'humanising' way, the one who ate scandalous meals with public sinners, who delighted and challenged his hearers with the artistry of his parables, who taught the impossible, like love of the enemy, the one who vigorously confronted those in authority, the one whose presence brought joy and happiness, the one who called his followers to a new family, the one who faced failure and death because of the positions he took, the one who has been raised up and vindicated by God. This very specific Jesus is the symbol and the reality of God's radical commitment to the cosmos. And this same Jesus is the symbol and the reality of the cosmos returning God's embrace with a definitive 'yes'.

Denis Edwards, Jesus and the Cosmos, 93.

Mercy comes from a compassionate heart; it comes from a desire to be an equal. Jesus didn't want to look down on us. He wanted to become one of us and feel deeply with us ... Let us look at Jesus when we want to know how to show mercy to our brothers and sisters. *Henri Nouwen, Bread for the Journey, 168.*

Jesus focuses attention on his continuing presence among those who are needy: his “I” is ever present among people in need. It is as if Jesus deliberately turns us away from an exclusive focus on himself, challenging us to look elsewhere to find him. In so doing he inspires us to face the pain and loss endured by others, not keep staring at him. He will be found where others suffer.

Denis McBride CSsR, “The Sixth Station – Veronica wipes the face of Jesus,” Stations of the Cross.

Many things that seemed unaccountable crosses have proved to be hidden blessings ... Let us study the lesson He taught us well and how by our increased fervour and fidelity that it has not been taught in vain. Let us prove ... that our delight and joy will be in trying to do His Will – His holy, adorable Will – and It alone. Desiring then His Holy Will and Its accomplishment in all things and fondly hoping that you all seriously do this, I tell you to have courage.

Mary Mackillop quoted in Pauline Wicks RSJ, God Will Take Care of Us All, 99.



FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- What is standing out for you here? Any particular words or phrases? What might this mean for your life?
- If you have grieved the loss of someone you love, take a few moments to remember and to imagine Jesus with you in that situation. Imagine him continuing to be with you today. See and hear what he says and does.

REVIEW OF LIFE

A prayerful review of each day or week can help us to grow in closeness to God in Jesus, drawing from the life-giving spring of his life and love. Allow 10-15 minutes for prayer. You may like to light a candle. Become aware of God's loving presence. Ask for help and guidance:

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- Ask for wisdom and guidance for tomorrow.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

We did not want it easy God,
but we did not contemplate
that it would be quite this hard,
this long, this lonely.
So, if we are to be turned inside out,
and upside down,
with even our pockets shaken
just to check what's rattling
and left behind,
we pray that you will keep faith with us,
and we with you,
holding our hands as we weep,
giving us strength to continue,
and showing us beacons
along the way
to become new. Amen.

Anne McKenzie in Sheila Cassidy, *Good Friday People*, 38.

GOSPEL



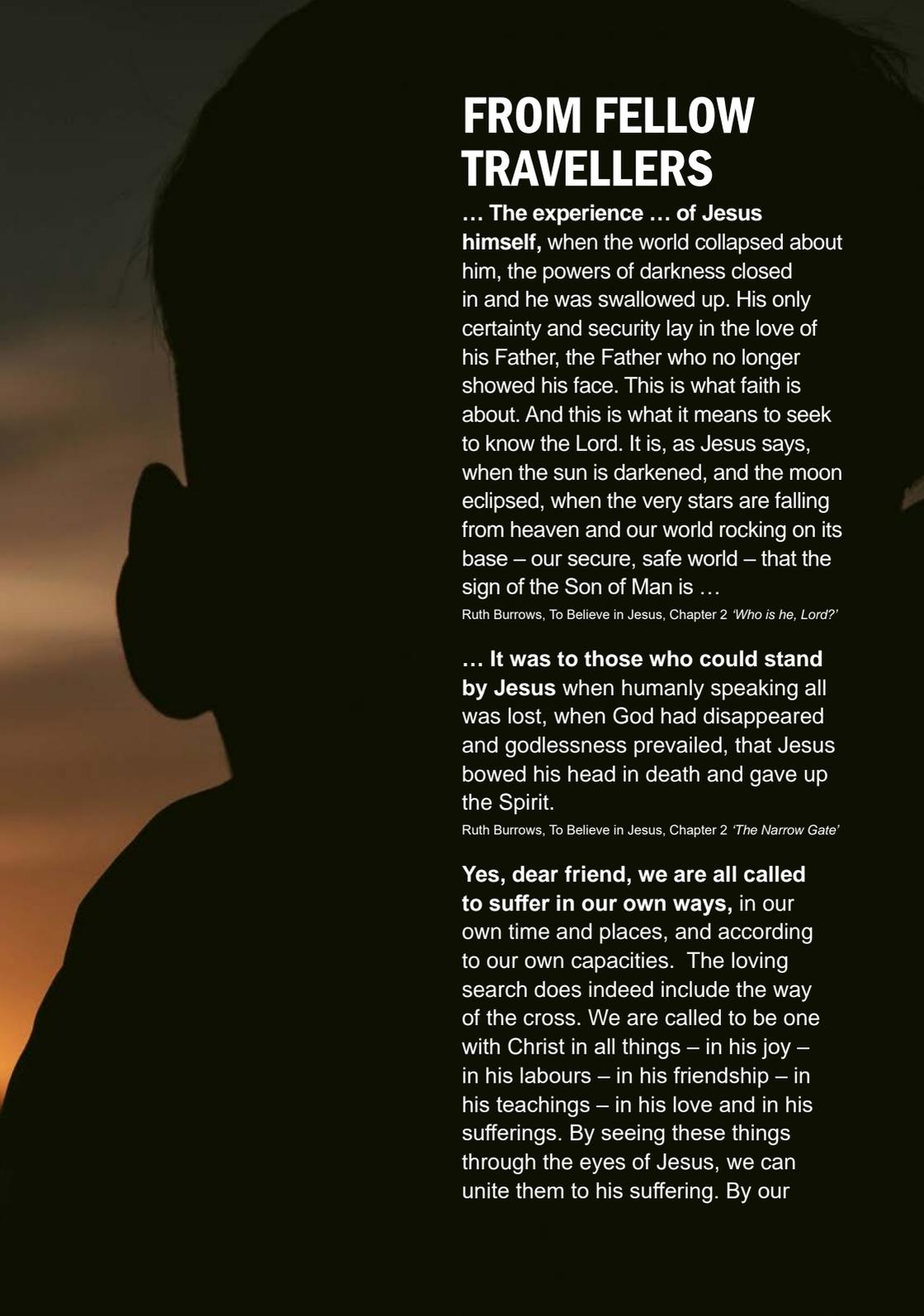
... All the disciples deserted him and ran away. The men who had arrested Jesus led him off to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.

... On their way out, they came across a man from Cyrene, Simon by name, and enlisted him to carry his cross. When they had reached a place called Golgotha, that is, the place of the skull, they gave him wine to drink mixed with gall, which he tasted but refused to drink. When they had finished crucifying him they shared out his clothing by casting lots, and then sat down and stayed there keeping guard over him. Above his head was placed the charge against him; it read: 'This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.'

PALM SUNDAY

... From the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?' That is, 'My God, my God, why have you deserted me?' When some of those who stood there heard this, they said, 'The man is calling on Elijah' and one of them quickly ran to get a sponge which he dipped in vinegar and, putting it on a reed, gave it him to drink. The rest of them said: 'Wait! See if Elijah will come to save him.' But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit. At that, the veil of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom; the earth quaked; the rocks were split; the tombs opened and the bodies of many holy men rose from the dead, and these, after his resurrection, came out of the tombs, entered the Holy City and appeared to a number of people. Meanwhile the centurion, together with the others guarding Jesus, had seen the earthquake and all that was taking place, and they were terrified and said, 'In truth this was a son of God.' And many women were there, watching from a distance, the same women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

When it was evening, there came a rich man of Arimathea, called Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate thereupon ordered it to be handed over. So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean shroud and put it in his own new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a large stone across the entrance of the tomb and went away. Now Mary of Magdala and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the sepulchre. *Matthew 26:57 - 27:61*



FROM FELLOW TRAVELLERS

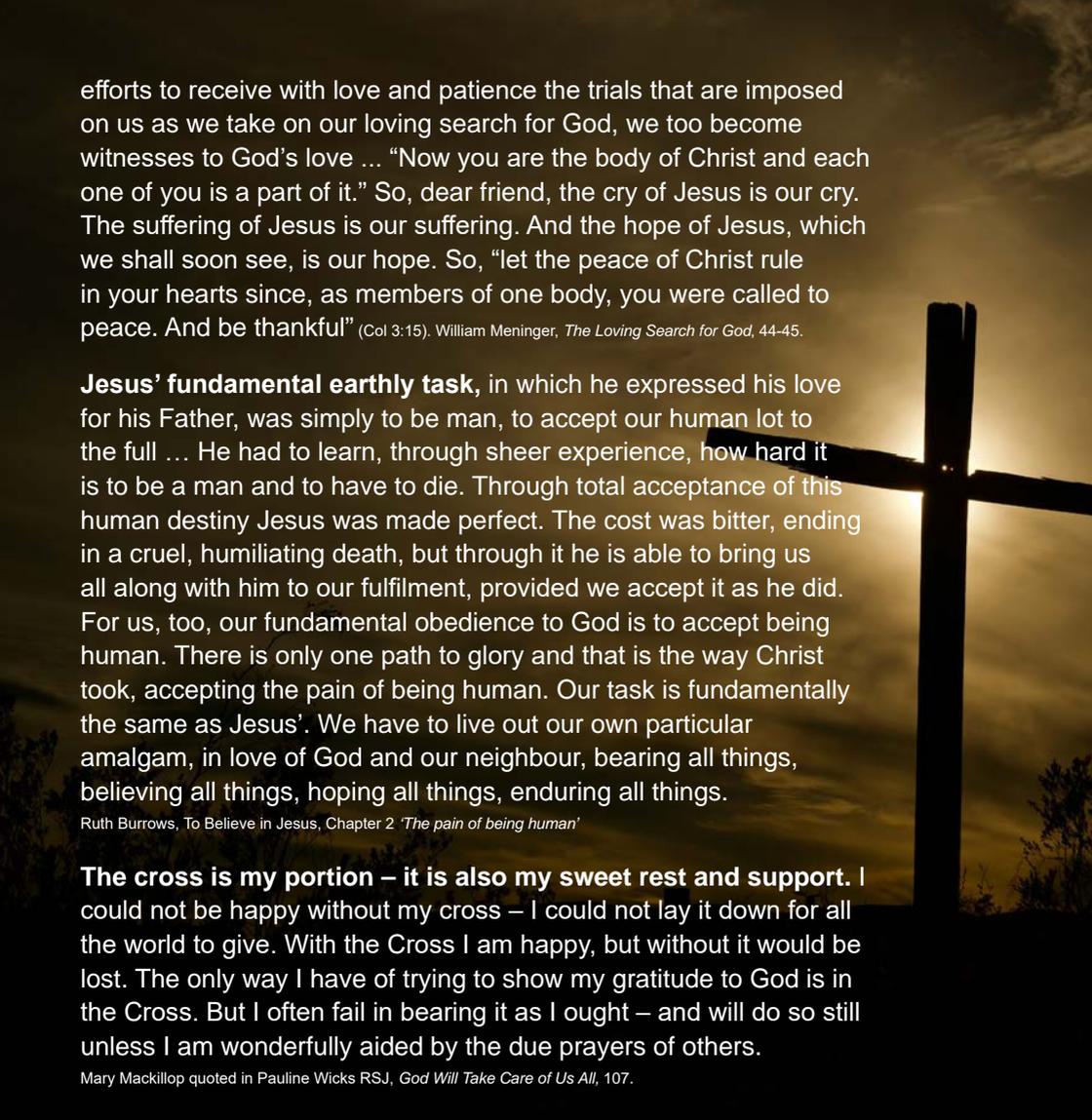
... The experience ... of Jesus himself, when the world collapsed about him, the powers of darkness closed in and he was swallowed up. His only certainty and security lay in the love of his Father, the Father who no longer showed his face. This is what faith is about. And this is what it means to seek to know the Lord. It is, as Jesus says, when the sun is darkened, and the moon eclipsed, when the very stars are falling from heaven and our world rocking on its base – our secure, safe world – that the sign of the Son of Man is ...

Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 2 'Who is he, Lord?'

... It was to those who could stand by Jesus when humanly speaking all was lost, when God had disappeared and godlessness prevailed, that Jesus bowed his head in death and gave up the Spirit.

Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 2 'The Narrow Gate'

Yes, dear friend, we are all called to suffer in our own ways, in our own time and places, and according to our own capacities. The loving search does indeed include the way of the cross. We are called to be one with Christ in all things – in his joy – in his labours – in his friendship – in his teachings – in his love and in his sufferings. By seeing these things through the eyes of Jesus, we can unite them to his suffering. By our



efforts to receive with love and patience the trials that are imposed on us as we take on our loving search for God, we too become witnesses to God's love ... "Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it." So, dear friend, the cry of Jesus is our cry. The suffering of Jesus is our suffering. And the hope of Jesus, which we shall soon see, is our hope. So, "let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since, as members of one body, you were called to peace. And be thankful" (Col 3:15). William Meninger, *The Loving Search for God*, 44-45.

Jesus' fundamental earthly task, in which he expressed his love for his Father, was simply to be man, to accept our human lot to the full ... He had to learn, through sheer experience, how hard it is to be a man and to have to die. Through total acceptance of this human destiny Jesus was made perfect. The cost was bitter, ending in a cruel, humiliating death, but through it he is able to bring us all along with him to our fulfilment, provided we accept it as he did. For us, too, our fundamental obedience to God is to accept being human. There is only one path to glory and that is the way Christ took, accepting the pain of being human. Our task is fundamentally the same as Jesus'. We have to live out our own particular amalgam, in love of God and our neighbour, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things.

Ruth Burrows, *To Believe in Jesus*, Chapter 2 'The pain of being human'

The cross is my portion – it is also my sweet rest and support. I could not be happy without my cross – I could not lay it down for all the world to give. With the Cross I am happy, but without it would be lost. The only way I have of trying to show my gratitude to God is in the Cross. But I often fail in bearing it as I ought – and will do so still unless I am wonderfully aided by the due prayers of others.

Mary Mackillop quoted in Pauline Wicks RSJ, *God Will Take Care of Us All*, 107.

REVIEW OF LIFE

A prayerful review of each day or week can help us to grow in closeness to God in Jesus, drawing from the life-giving spring of his life and love. Allow 10-15 minutes for prayer. You may like to light a candle. Become aware of God's loving presence. Ask for help and guidance:

- For what moment, event or person are you most grateful?
For what are you least grateful?
Talk with God in Jesus about what has come to mind.
- Ask for wisdom and guidance for tomorrow.

FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- What is calling to you from this Gospel passage and these reflections?
- Early in his ministry Jesus found himself in a desert, tempted to find quick easy ways out of the pain and loneliness of it. His Father's all-encompassing love was a spring that flowed beneath all that he experienced. His own uncompromising love led inevitably to the cross. For we human beings who want to be his disciples, the cross, in whatever form it comes to us, is our way too. Take some moments to consider the deserts and the crosses of your life. How do you draw upon the spring that Jesus promised will become a never-ending source of living water for you?

CONCLUDING PRAYER

O Lord, remember

not only the men and women of good will,
but also those of ill will.

But do not remember the suffering
they have inflicted on us.

Instead, remember the fruits we
have brought because of this suffering
– our comradeship, our loyalty to one another,
our humility, our courage, our generosity,
the greatness of heart which has grown out of all this.

And when they come to the judgement,
let all the fruits that we have borne
be their forgiveness. Amen.

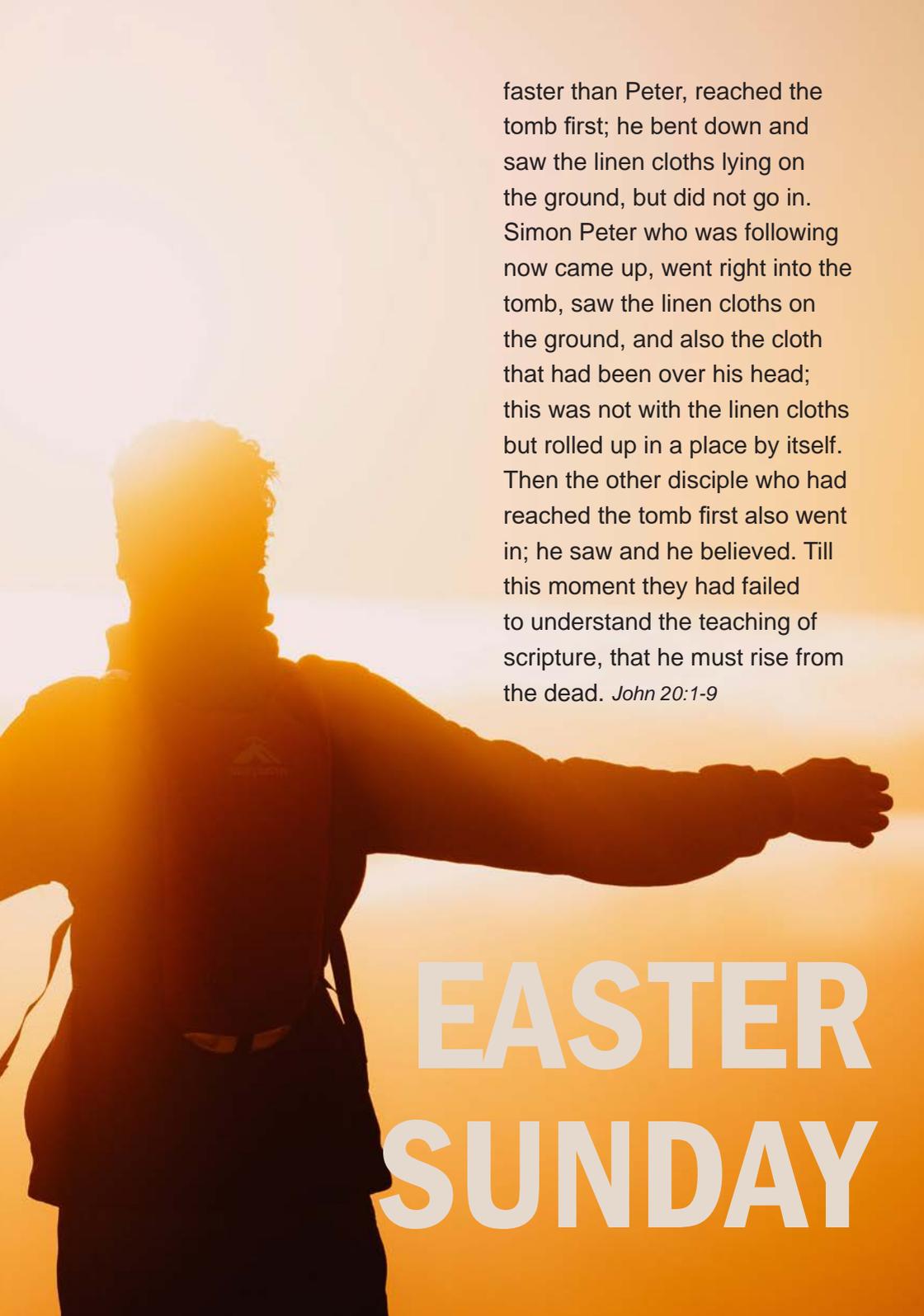
Prayer found on the body of a dead child at Ravensbrook concentration camp Germany,
in Patrick O'Sullivan, *I Call You Friends*, 17.

GOSPEL

After the sabbath, and towards dawn on the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala and the other Mary went to visit the sepulchre. And all at once there was a violent earthquake, for the angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled away the stone and sat on it. His face was like lightning, his robe white as snow. The guards were so shaken, so frightened of him, that they were like dead men. But the angel spoke; and he said to the women, 'There is no need for you to be afraid. I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said he would. Come and see the place where he lay, then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has risen from the dead and now he is going before you to Galilee; it is there you will see him." Now I have told you.' Filled with awe and great joy the women came quickly away from the tomb and ran to tell the disciples. And there, coming to meet them, was Jesus. 'Greetings' he said. And the women came up to him and, falling down before him, clasped his feet. Then Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers that they must leave for Galilee; they will see me there.' *Matthew 28:1-10*

It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb,' she said, 'and we don't know where they have put him.'

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running



faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed. Till this moment they had failed to understand the teaching of scripture, that he must rise from the dead. *John 20:1-9*

EASTER SUNDAY

FROM FELLOW TRAVELLERS

The resurrection of Jesus did not end the suffering of the world. Crosses keep on being set up throughout history, and agony perdures. But Christ crucified and risen discloses the truth that divine justice continuously leavens the world ... The victory is won not by the sword of a warrior god but by the power of compassionate love that brings the living God into solidarity with those who suffer in order to heal and set free. The resurrection, then, discloses in a profound way the character of divine mystery: compassionate, faithful, powerfully loving, close even in darkness and failure, bringing forth the new ... Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of the resurrection of all the dead. Indeed, we are dealing here with an event of the future that has arrived in advance of the last day.

Elizabeth Johnson, *Abounding in Kindness*, Chapter 13, 'Resurrection: Promise of the Future'

God's future for the world ... is already with us. The kingdom is God's future, but it is a future anticipated in the healing, liberating ministry of Jesus. Furthermore, it is a future already present in all the good that ordinary women and men do, in every act of genuine love and in every work of peace and justice. The image of the kingdom of God draws attention to all the ways in which God is already at work in our world, liberating human beings and renewing the whole of creation. It directs us to a transcendent, always greater God, who escapes our comprehension and our plans, yet who breaks it upon the world, overturning our expectation, calling us to conversion of heart, and to the transformation of structures of oppression. Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Cosmos*, 60.

The whole process of the world's self-transcendence into God reaches its climax in the 'yes' to God embodied in Jesus' person and life. This 'yes' finds expression in Jesus' prayer, in his preaching of a liberating and gracious God, in his acts of healing and liberation, in his critique of oppressive structures, in his partiality for the poor, the sick and the outcast, in his mediation of reconciliation, in his joyous meals, in his confrontation with those who kept others bound. In his relationships, in his formation of a new community and, above, all, in his struggle with, and acceptance of, his death as the consequence and outcome of his life.

Denis Edwards, *Jesus and the Cosmos*, 82.

Love demands action. Love reaches out to others despite negative feelings or no feelings at all. The lover perceives what the beloved can be and encourages his / her growth. Even in the face of obstacles and rejection, authentic love is not paralysed. All that matters is that others might become what they are meant to be.

Robert Morneau, *Pathways to God*, 64.

Do not waste time bothering whether you "love" your neighbour; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will probably come to love him.

C.S.Lewis in Robert Morneau, *Pathways to God*, 64.



FOR THINKING AND TALKING

- Is there a fresh insight into Jesus' resurrection that has emerged for you? What is it?
- What new hope will you take into tomorrow?

REVIEW OF LIFE

A prayerful review of each day or week can help us to grow in closeness to God in Jesus, drawing from the life-giving spring of his life and love. Allow 10-15 minutes for prayer. You may like to light a candle. Become aware of God's loving presence. Ask for help and guidance:

- For what moment, event or person are you most grateful?
For what are you least grateful?
Talk with God in Jesus about what has come to mind.
- Ask for wisdom and guidance for tomorrow.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

– FROM THE EASTER VIGIL

The celebrant takes five grains of incense which represent the five wounds of Christ and, in blessing them, recalls the atoning power of Christ's suffering and death. Without these wounds, without this death, we would not be here tonight. The grains of incense, the five wounds, are now inserted into the paschal candle which is to represent the risen Christ. The celebrant cuts a cross in the wax of the candle with a stylus, and traces the Greek letter 'alpha' above the cross and the letter 'omega' below it while saying:

Christ yesterday and today

the beginning and the end,

Alpha

and Omega,

all time belongs to him,

and all the ages,

to him be glory and power,

through every age and forever. Amen.

Description from the Easter Vigil in Sheila Cassidy, Good Friday People, 179.





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