

SACRED READING FOR LENT 2019

The Fourth Week of Lent



LENT

Christians throughout the world are re-discovering a powerful, ancient form of prayer known as 'sacred reading' (*lectio divina*). This Lent, what better way to deepen one's friendship with Jesus Christ, than by prayerfully encountering him in the daily Gospel?

We are invited to experience sacred reading for ourselves as we are guided by the Holy Spirit. There are four steps to *lectio divina*: **reading** (taking in the Bible passage slowly and carefully), **meditation** (pondering about the meaning of the passage), **prayer** (interceding for ourselves and for others, as we are led) and **contemplation** (listening to God in silence). Those who engage with the Gospels in this manner often find that the Lord speaks to them in intimate and surprising ways.

This booklet (and the ones that will follow it) will take us on a personal prayer journey with Jesus from Ash Wednesday through the end of Holy Week.

The Fourth Sunday of Lent

The Gospel: Luke 15. 1-3, 11b-32

¹Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³So he told them this parable: ^{11b}"There was a man who had two sons. ¹²The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me." So he divided his property between them. ¹³A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. ¹⁴When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need."

¹⁵So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. ¹⁶He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. ¹⁷But when he came to himself he said, "How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; ¹⁹I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'"

²⁰So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son." ²²But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; ²⁴for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!" And they began to celebrate.'

²⁵Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. ²⁷He replied, "Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound." ²⁸Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.'

²⁹But he answered his father, "Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. ³⁰But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!" ³¹Then the father said to him, "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. ³²But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

Prayer

Father, help me to come to my senses as the prodigal son did and to return home to you as often as I need to. Help others to receive your forgiveness, too.

Monday in the Fourth Week of Lent

The Gospel: John 4. 43-54

⁴³When the two days were over, he went from that place to Galilee ⁴⁴(for Jesus himself had testified that a prophet has no honour in the prophet's own country). ⁴⁵When he came to Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him, since they had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the festival; for they too had gone to the festival.

⁴⁶Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed the water into wine. Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum. ⁴⁷When he

heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to him, 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.' ⁴⁹The official said to him, 'Sir, come down before my little boy dies.' ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, 'Go; your son will live.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way. ⁵¹As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. ⁵²So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, 'Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him.' ⁵³The father realised that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he himself believed, along with his whole household. ⁵⁴Now this was the second sign that Jesus did after coming from Judea to Galilee.

Prayer

Lord, you have already given me many signs and proofs of your presence and power. Help me to have greater faith in you; faith that does not need signs.

Tuesday in the Fourth Week of Lent

The Gospel: John 5. 1-3, 5-16

¹After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

²Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. ³In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralysed.

⁵One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' ⁷The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.' ⁸Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.' ⁹At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

Now that day was a sabbath. ¹⁰So the Jews said to the man who had been cured, 'It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your mat.' ¹¹But he answered them, 'The man who made me well said to me, "Take up your mat and walk." ' ¹²They asked him, 'Who is the man who said to you, "Take it up and walk"?' ¹³Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had disappeared in the crowd that was there. ¹⁴Later Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, 'See, you have been made well! Do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.' ¹⁵The man went away and told the Jews that

it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶Therefore the Jews started persecuting Jesus, because he was doing such things on the sabbath.

Prayer

Jesus, I offer myself in your work of helping others. Let me work alongside you. May I not be discouraged by the world, but live and work in your hope.

Wednesday in the Fourth Week of Lent

The Gospel: John 5. 17-30

¹⁷But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is still working, and I also am working.' ¹⁸For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God.

¹⁹Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. ²⁰The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished. ²¹Indeed, just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whomsoever he wishes. ²²The Father judges no one but has given all judgement to the Son, ²³so that all may honour the Son just as they honour the Father. Anyone who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgement, but has passed from death to life.'

²⁵'Very truly, I tell you, the hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶For just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself; ²⁷and he has given him authority to execute judgement, because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸Do not be astonished at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹and will come out—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.'

Prayer

Lord, I am willing. I want to do your will as you accomplished the will of your Father. Help me to see it and to do it. Help me to reach out to others.

Thursday in the Fourth Week of Lent

The Gospel: John 5. 31-47

³¹'If I testify about myself, my testimony is not true. ³²There is another who testifies on my behalf, and I know that his testimony to me is true. ³³You sent messengers to John, and he testified to the truth. ³⁴Not that I accept such human testimony, but I say these things so that you may be saved. ³⁵He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. ³⁶But I have a testimony greater than John's. The works that the Father has given me to complete, the very works that I am doing, testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me. ³⁷And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, ³⁸and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent.'

³⁹'You search the scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that testify on my behalf. ⁴⁰Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. ⁴¹I do not accept glory from human beings. ⁴²But I know that you do not have the love of God in you. ⁴³I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me; if another comes in his own name, you will accept him. ⁴⁴How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God? ⁴⁵Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; your accuser is Moses, on whom you have set your hope. ⁴⁶If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. ⁴⁷But if you do not believe what he wrote, how will you believe what I say?'

Prayer

Jesus, I have enjoyed approval from others and have been resentful when I did not get credit that I thought I deserved. Let me seek only your approval.

Friday in the Fourth Week of Lent

The Gospel: John 7. 1-2, 10, 25-30

¹After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. ²Now the Jewish festival of Booths was near.

¹⁰ But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but as it were in secret.

²⁵Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, 'Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill?' ²⁶And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? ²⁷Yet we know where this man is from; but when the Messiah comes, no one will know where he is from.' ²⁸Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, 'You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. ²⁹I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.' ³⁰Then they tried to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him, because his hour had not yet come.

Prayer

Lord, I am not brave. I need to be a brave person, doing what is right every day, speaking your truth with all humility. Help me to touch hearts with love.

Saturday in the Fourth Week of Lent

The Gospel: John 7. 40-52

⁴⁰When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, 'This is really the prophet.' ⁴¹Others said, 'This is the Messiah.' But some asked, 'Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he?' ⁴²Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?' ⁴³So there was a division in the crowd because of him. ⁴⁴Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

⁴⁵Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, 'Why did you not arrest him?' ⁴⁶The police answered, 'Never has anyone spoken like this!' ⁴⁷Then the Pharisees replied, 'Surely you have not been deceived too, have you?' ⁴⁸Has any one of the authorities or of the Pharisees believed in him? ⁴⁹But this crowd, which does not know the law—they are accursed.' ⁵⁰Nicodemus, who had gone to Jesus before, and who was one of them, asked, ⁵¹'Our law does not judge people without first giving them a hearing to find out what they are doing, does it?' ⁵²They replied, 'Surely you are not also from Galilee, are you? Search and you will see that no prophet is to arise from Galilee.'

Prayer

Jesus, let me hear your voice, full of love, power and authority. Then help me to return your love and to obey you. Let me glorify you and trust in your ways.

To ponder as we begin the Fifth Week of Lent

'Consult not your fears, but your hopes and your dreams. Think not about your frustrations, but about your unfulfilled potential. Concern yourself not with what you tried and failed, but with what it is still possible for you to do.'

