SPRINGTIME

A Prayer Guide

for the Season of Lent in a Time of Pandemic

2021

What is Lent?

The word "Lent" is a shortened form of the Old English word *Lencten,* meaning "the Spring". Lent is one of the most significant seasons of the Liturgical Year. It originated from the period of preparation embarked upon by those preparing for the new life of baptism at Easter. Eventually, it became a time for the whole Christian community to seriously review and renew their lives in advance of the annual celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus at Easter. Consisting of forty days (Sundays excluded), the season of Lent is modelled on the forty days spent by Jesus fasting in the desert prior to beginning his public ministry. (Mt. 4)

"Dear brothers and sisters, every moment of our lives is a time for believing, hoping and loving. The call to experience Lent as a journey of conversion, prayer and sharing of our goods, helps us – as communities and as individuals – to revive the faith that comes from the living Christ, the hope inspired by the breath of the Holy Spirit and the love flowing from the merciful heart of the Father". *(Pope Francis, Message for Lent, 2021)*

Fasting, Prayer and Giving to the Poor

Traditionally, fasting, praying and giving to the poor are considered as important tools to help us on our Lenten Pilgrimage of renewal. Fasting is the reduction of one's intake of food or the giving up of something we would normally do. It reminds us that at times we must sacrifice ourselves in order to put God and others first in life. Linked to fasting is the idea of abstinence, which is the abstaining from meat. In Ireland, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are traditionally days of fast and abstinence. Nowadays, some people take on things for Lent. They spend more time in prayer, more time caring for others or giving to the poor. Prayer deepens our relationship with God while giving to the poor reminds us that to love and care for others, especially those most in need, is a central part of being a Christian.

Lenten Traditions

Over time, different traditions have developed as a means of making the most of the Lenten season. The Fridays of Lent are seen as special days for additional fasting and acts of penance. Prayer practices such as praying the Stations of the Cross, making a Holy Hour or joining a prayer or Bible study group are also important traditions. In Ireland, the Tróćaire Lenten Box has become a means of giving to those less well off. What Lenten traditions will you take on this year?

Finding New Ways of Praying at Home

The restrictions in place because of Covid-19 mean that as a Christian Community we cannot gather for our usual religious services. This situation challenges us to find new ways of reflecting on our faith and praying in our homes as the "Domestic Church". It is hoped that this guide will assist you in doing just that. When we gather again in Church, let us not forget to enrich our spiritual lives by continuing to pray at home.

Sacred Space

Catholicism has a long tradition of using images and symbols to help us to pray. One way of doing this is to set up a prayer space in a prominent place in your home. There, each day, you can place different symbols or things of meaning to you and your family. You might start by placing in the prayer space a Bible, which contains God's Word.

For Younger Family Members

At various points throughout this guide there are places for the younger members of a household to get involved. Art materials – paper, pens, and paints would be helpful at these times. So too would a guiding hand from an adult.

Broadcast Masses

While nothing can substitute for gathering in person, we are blessed to live in an age where the celebration of the Eucharist can be broadcast on radio or television or by means of the internet. This guide is also designed to help deepen your participation in those broadcasts and to assist you in getting the most out of them spiritually.

Call to Action

The followers of Jesus are called to be a people of action. During each of our days of prayer there will be a call to action. To do something different or significant that puts the message of that particular day into practice.

Safety

This guide is designed for use by a single household. All health and safety advice should be adhered to. When using candles, please do so safely.

Ash Wednesday

17th February 2021

We begin the sacred season of Lent by celebrating Ash Wednesday. Traditionally, the ashes we use are made by burning the palm that was blessed on Palm Sunday the previous year. They remind us of the frailty of our human condition and the call of Jesus to turn away from sin and to be faithful to the Gospel. Ash Wednesday is one of the few days of fast and abstinence in the Church year.

A Prayer Ritual at Home

At a suitable time on Ash Wednesday, pause either alone or with your household for this time of prayer. Put the blessed ashes from your local Church in a bowl and mix them with some water (Holy Water, if available). Place them in your sacred space. Have nearby a small bowl of soapy water and a cloth. Light a candle to symbolise that God is present.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Loving Father, we turn to you as we begin this sacred season. Send your Holy Spirit upon us to help us make the most of this opportunity to renew our lives. Help us to choose wisely what we will give up or what we will take on. Give us the strength to persevere in our Lenten practices so that, come

forty days, we may be renewed in our relationship with you and with each other. We make this our prayer through Christ Our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ... Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Jesus said to his disciples ... But when you give alms, your left hand must not know what your right is doing; your almsgiving must be in secret, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. [...] But when you pray, go to your private room and, when you have shut the door, pray to your Father who is in that secret place, and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you. [...] But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

Let us reflect ...

From Ash Wednesday until Easter we are invited to participate actively in the Lenten journey. It provides us with an opportunity to take stock of our lives and our behaviour. It is a time to stop and think! In some sports there is an official 'time out' when a team manager calls a halt to play in order to have a word with the team and correct their mistakes. It gives the team an opportunity to regroup. Lent is like that for us. Do not let it go by without making use of the opportunity it provides. So take 'time out' and use the season of Lent to evaluate your life, especially your spiritual life.

Take a look at your prayer, your relationships, and your behaviour. Look at how you care for the needs of others. Contributing to *Trócaire* gives us a means to provide for our brothers and sisters who are in need throughout the world. Our almsgiving to *Trócaire* is a real act of love and care for those less well off than we are. It might also be worth having a look at how well you respect the gift of life God has given you and the gift of the world in which you live. Care for Creation is very important. Having taken a good look at your life you might be surprised at how well you are doing, and you might see areas where you could be better. The season of Lent invites us to a change of heart. To help us achieve this, we are encouraged to use the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. *(Monsignor Cathal Geraghty)*

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Write or draw a picture of what you are going to "give up" or "take on" to become a better person during Lent. What about some pocket money for the Tróicaire Box each week? Get the children and all in the family to sing that joyful hymn of resurrection: the Alleluia! and then to say farewell to it – for it is not to be heard again until it is sung to welcome the Gospel of Jesus' Resurrection at the Easter Vigil.

Ritual Action

Over the bowl of ashes, pray:

O God, you ask us to turn back to you with all our hearts. We ask you now to hear our prayer as we begin this season of Lent. Pour out your blessing upon us as we use this symbol of blessed ashes, so that, out of our smallness and sinfulness, we may come to be what you have called us to be; that we may live faithfully, the vocation of our Baptism and come to celebrate with joy the Easter mystery. **Amen**

Members of the household put ashes on one another, in turn, saying:

Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel

The small bowl of soapy water and the cloth should be used to wash and dry one's thumb afterwards. The left over ashes and the soapy water should be disposed of reverently in soil.

If you do not have access to ashes – use the prayer and instead of using ashes simply make the sign of the cross on each other's forehead saying:

Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world this day.

We pray for the wisdom to discern those areas in our lives that stand in need of renewal. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray that we may choose well what we will give up and what we will take on this Lent so that we will enjoy genuine personal and spiritual renewal. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

May we celebrate Easter 2021 with a greater love for God and for each other, especially those who are less well off than ourselves. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Father, may today be the beginning of a new "me" and a new "us". Be with us as we begin our Lenten pilgrimage of spiritual and personal renewal. Strengthen us for the journey and walk with us on the way. Through Christ Our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Call to Action

Write down what I will "give up" or "take on" this Lent and why I am doing it? Set up a Trócaire Lenten Box in your home and read about their Lenten Appeal for South Sudan www.trocaire.org

Why not introduce a simple prayer before meals for Lent? What about a short morning and night prayer? For helpful daily prayer resources visit www.pray-as-you-go.org

Online Celebration of the Mass

Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Add some blessed ashes if available.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **purple vestments** as a symbol of penance.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- During the Mass, the priest will bless the ashes saying "Lord, bless the sinner who asks for your forgiveness and bless all those who receive these ashes. May they keep this Lenten season in preparation for the Joy of Easter".
- The **First Reading** from the prophet Joel is calling the people of Judah back to God with repentance in their hearts. He is calling us back as well. He is a God of tenderness and compassion who takes pity on his people. The **Psalm** is a call for mercy in response to our repentance, a prayer for the blotting out of our offences and restoring us to joy in the Lord. In the **Gospel**, Jesus warns his followers not to do things for appearance sake, but to be authentic in their actions. Prayer, fasting and almsgiving are things we should do without seeking notice. Our motives are important. Our actions should never be self-serving.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time make an Act of **Spiritual Communion.** Invite Jesus into your heart. Take some time to speak with him about your life – especially the areas that need attention – need renewal. Ask him to help you decide what might be the best thing to "take on" or "give up" to help you in that task this Lent.

Take away ...

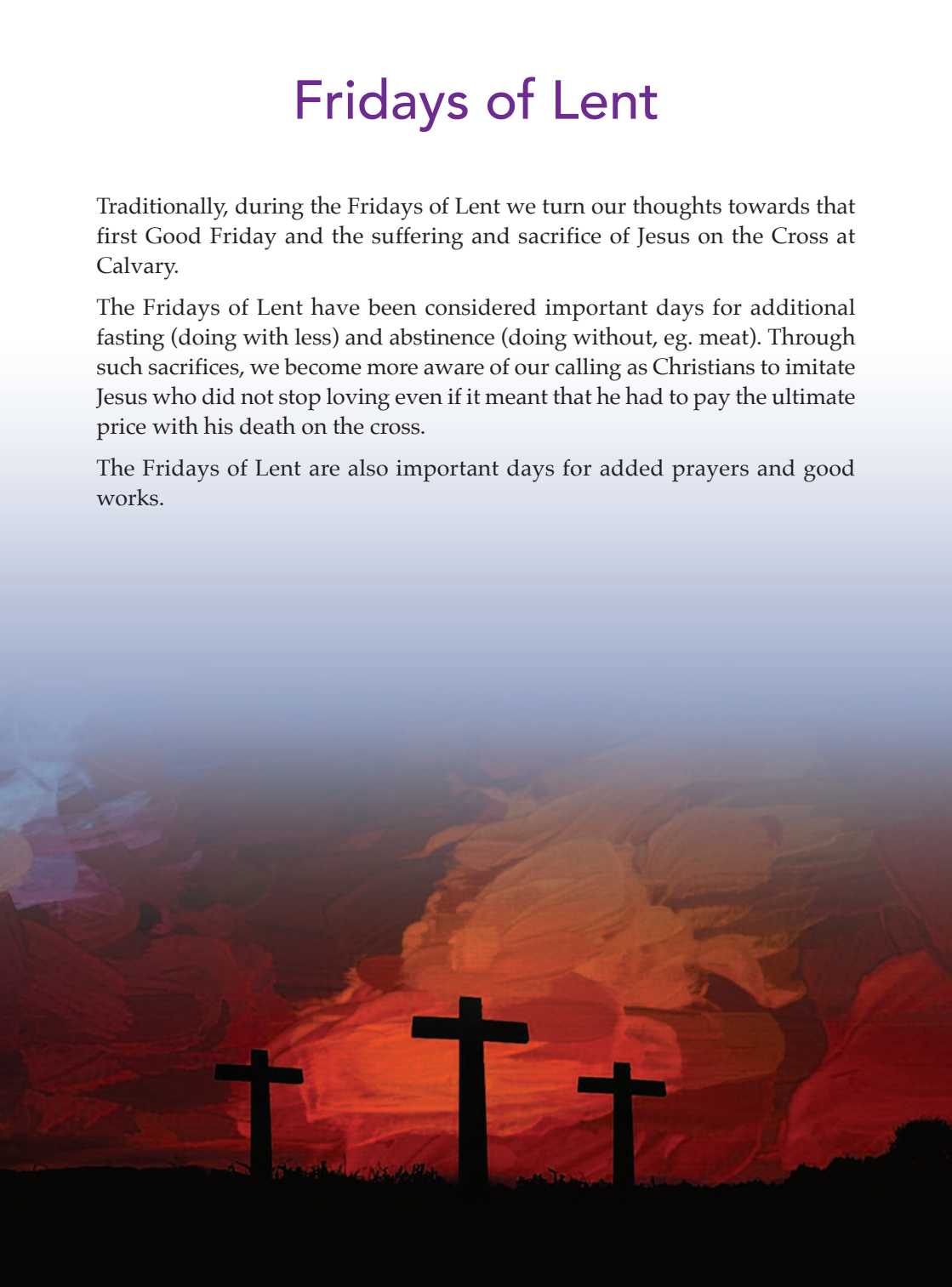
How might I engage in fasting, praying and giving to the poor this Lent?

Fridays of Lent

Traditionally, during the Fridays of Lent we turn our thoughts towards that first Good Friday and the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross at Calvary.

The Fridays of Lent have been considered important days for additional fasting (doing with less) and abstinence (doing without, eg. meat). Through such sacrifices, we become more aware of our calling as Christians to imitate Jesus who did not stop loving even if it meant that he had to pay the ultimate price with his death on the cross.

The Fridays of Lent are also important days for added prayers and good works.



First Sunday of Lent

21st February 2021

We come to the first Sunday of our Lenten Pilgrimage. The image of Jesus being driven by the Spirit into the wilderness or the desert takes centre stage. There we are told that Satan tempted him for forty days and forty nights. Immediately afterwards, he begins his ministry. "The time has come", he said "and the Kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News". (Mk 1:15)

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Tróicaire Lenten Box nearby. Have some sand or gravel to hand.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Father, our lives are often deserts – wastelands littered with bad decisions and bad actions. Help us in our struggle to live in love with you and with one another. This Sunday help us respond to the call to Repent – to turn our lives around. Help us to believe in the Gospel and to see in Christianity the good news of how to live life well. Walk with us on our Lenten pilgrimage of renewal. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ... Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness, and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

Let us reflect ...

Piri Thomas wrote a book called *Down These Mean Streets.* It describes his conversion from being a convict, a drug addict, and an attempted killer, to becoming an exemplary Christian. One night, Piri was lying on his bunk bed in prison. Suddenly it occurred to him what a mess he had made of his life. He felt an overwhelming desire to pray. But he was sharing his cell with another prisoner called 'the thin kid'. So he waited. After he thought 'the thin kid' was asleep, he climbed out of his bunk, knelt down on the cold concrete, and prayed. He said: "I told God what was in my heart... I talked to him plain... I talked to him of all my wants and lacks, of my hopes and disappointments... I felt like I could even cry...." After Piri finished his prayer, a small voice said "Amen". It was 'the thin kid'. The two young men talked for a long time. Then Piri climbed back into his bunk. "Good night, Chico," he said. "I'm thinking that God is always with us - it's just that we aren't with him".

Lent gives us an opportunity to see if we are falling behind in our spiritual growth. Take time each day for yourself. What attitudes or habits are obstacles to me living a more fulfilled and fruitful life? These are the "beasts". What resources for spiritual nurture am I neglecting? Making prayer, silent meditation, good reading and charitable acts part of my day will restore the balance. These are the "angels". 'Lord make me know your ways.' Psalm 24. *(Father John Garvey)*

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Draw a picture of Jesus asking people to "Repent and believe in the Good News" (Mk 1:15). Use thought bubbles to explain what he meant by "Repent" and what he meant by "Good News".

Ritual Action

Place the sand/gravel in your sacred space – pause in silence to try to name the places of wilderness or desert in your own life. Pray together:

O my God, I thank you for loving me, I am sorry for all my sins; for not loving others and not loving you. Help me to live like Jesus and not to sin again. Amen

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time.

We pray for the gift of recognising and acknowledging the areas of desert or wilderness in our lives. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for an increase in faith. Help us to believe that God has truly reached out to us in Jesus and that he walks with us in both the good and bad times of life. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for our families – those who are here with us, those who cannot be with us and those who have gone home to God. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (Pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Father, be with us in these first days of our Lenten pilgrimage of spiritual and personal renewal. Strengthen us for the journey and walk with us on the way. Through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Call to Action

How can I arrange my week so that I can spend a little extra time in prayer with God?

Online Celebration of the Eucharist

Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Add to it some sand or gravel.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **purple vestments** as a sign of the penitential aspect of the Lenten Season.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- On the First Sunday of Lent, those seeking baptism this Easter take part in the **Rite of Election.**
- In the **First Reading,** after the great flood, God's covenant with Noah and with all of us is renewed and the rainbow is its sign. The **Psalm** is a prayer praising God for his covenant. In the **Second Reading**, the waters of the flood and the covenant with Noah point towards the waters of baptism and the new covenant established by the death and resurrection of Christ. In the **Gospel,** every life has a touch of the desert about it. There are oasis moments of refreshment and tranquillity. There are long tracts of inhospitable sand with threats and fears, burning heat and icy cold. Christ entered the desert of life to be with us there.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time make an Act of **Spiritual Communion.** Invite Jesus into your heart. Take some time to truly welcome his presence. Bring to him the areas of desert or wilderness in your life. Ask him to help you name and tame your temptations or "inner demons".

Take away ...

What does it really mean for me to "Repent" and "Believe in the Good News"?

Second Sunday of Lent

28th February 2021

We continue our Lenten pilgrimage with the Second Sunday of Lent. Today the Gospel tells the story of what has come to be known as the Transfiguration. We are told that Jesus took with him Peter, James and John and led them up a high mountain (Mk. 9:2). What occurs there is an important moment in Jesus' life. He is affirmed as God's beloved son who is to be listened to. There, the divinity of Jesus shines through and his death and resurrection come into sight.

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Tróicaire Lenten Box nearby. Have some daffodils or spring flowers and a picture of Jesus to hand.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Loving Father, you have made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you. Guide us as we seek and search for you in life. Grant us the insight to see your presence in ordinary, everyday things. Reveal to us, as you did to Peter, James and John, Jesus' divinity. Continue to walk with us on our Lenten pilgrimage of renewal. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ... Mark 9:2-10

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his clothes became brilliantly white, whiter than any earthly bleacher could make them. Elijah appeared to them with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. Then Peter spoke to Jesus, 'Rabbi,' he said, 'it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three shelters, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' He did not know what to say; they were so frightened. And a cloud came, covering them in shadow; and from the cloud there came a voice, 'This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him.' Then suddenly, when they looked round, they saw no one with them anymore but only Jesus.

Let us reflect ...

This Sunday could be called Transfiguration Sunday as it always features the story of Jesus and three of his disciples ascending the mountain. Jesus is transfigured while meeting two ancient prophets long dead. The voice of the Father in the cloud exhorts us to "Listen to Him". What did the disciples make of this experience? Or indeed what can we ourselves make of it today? It could be said that the three disciples, that day, got a glimpse of heaven where the dead are alive and Jesus is resplendent in glory.

The disciples would soon have to leave the mountain, come back down to earth and head to Jerusalem where they would have to face the horror of Jesus' Passion and Death. On the mountain, Jesus was preparing them for this event by giving them a message of hope to hold onto no matter what was to come in the future. His Death would lead to Resurrection. This message of Jesus was endorsed by the Father with the words: "Listen to Him". This message is at the heart of our Christian faith. As we currently struggle with battling the Covid-19 pandemic, it could be said that our faith is being severely tested like Abraham's in the first reading, but the Gospel story of Transfiguration assures us there is always Christian hope. After every Cross comes Resurrection. *(Father Patrick Conroy)*

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Find in the Bible, the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus – Mark: 9:2-10. Read the story and draw a picture of it.

Ritual Action

Place the daffodils and the picture of Jesus in the prayer space. After you do so, take a little time to try to see in them something of God himself. Slowly, read aloud either of the following poems:

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware. - Elizabeth Barrett-Browning

The Lord will always walk with you
Along life's blessed beach,
His footprints there beside your own,
Always within reach.
Two sets of footprints, side by side,
From dawn to setting sun,
Yet there may come a day, my child,
When you'll see only one.
But do not think the Lord has left you -
Nothing could be more wrong.
It's just that he has picked you up
To carry you along. – Unknown

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time.

Lord, grant us a heart more open to the glimpses of your presence in the beauty of the world around us. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for a greater appreciation of Jesus, resurrected and present among us. Help us to recognise him as God's beloved son and listen to his word. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who suffer pain or want of any kind. May they experience God's presence in their suffering and hope in their hopelessness. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Father, be with us in these first days of our Lenten pilgrimage of spiritual and personal renewal. Strengthen us for the journey and walk with us on the way. Through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

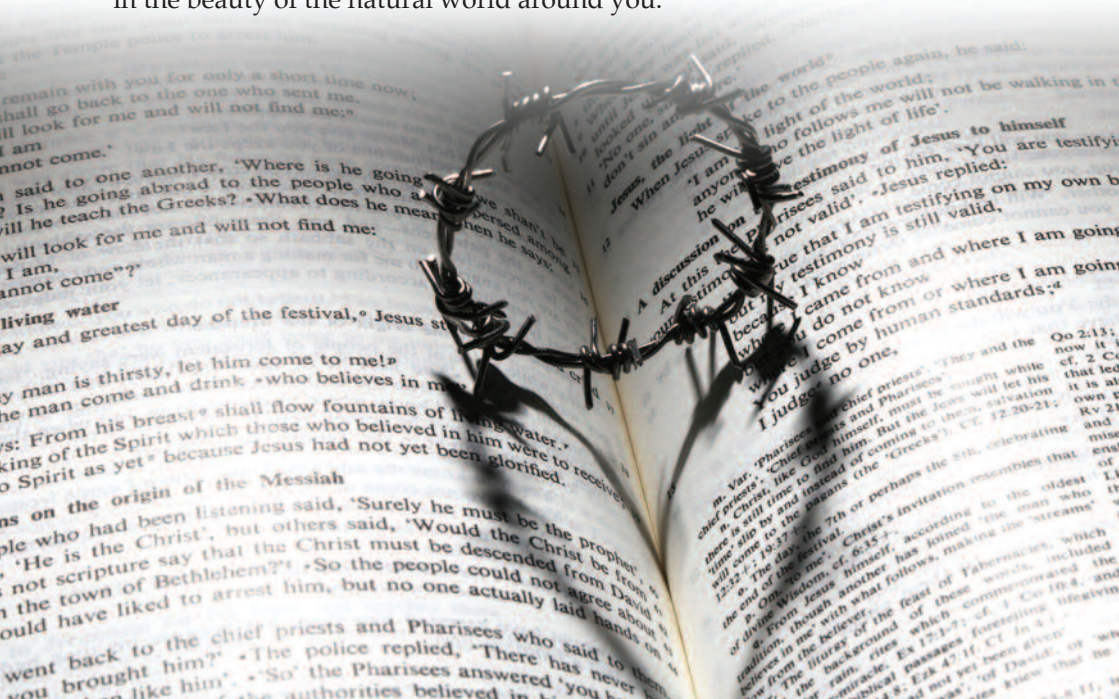
Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Call to Action

St Jerome said "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ" *(Commentariorum in Isaiam)* – why not begin to read the Bible more – start with a Gospel. This week you might also stop to look and see God's presence in the beauty of the natural world around you.



Online Celebration of the Eucharist

Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light the candle in your prayer space. Place a picture of Jesus and some flowers nearby.

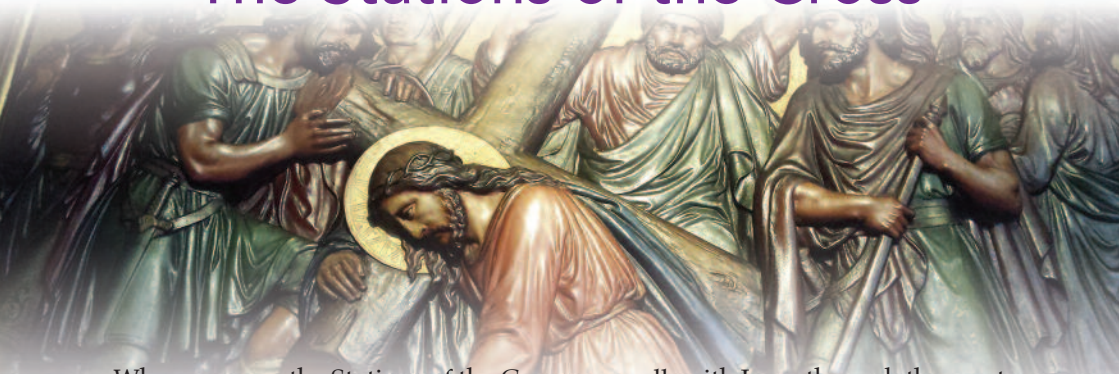
During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **purple vestments** today as a sign that we are celebrating a penitential season.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- The Readings for this Sunday focus on faith and obedience to God. In the **First Reading** Abraham has his faith severely tested. He is asked by God to sacrifice his only son. God rewards him for his courage and faith by sparing his son and making him the father of many nations. The **Psalm** speaks of trusting in God "even when I said: "I am sorely afflicted." In the **Second Reading** God does not spare His own Son but sacrifices Him for the salvation of the world. The Son willingly lays down His life in obedience. In the **Gospel** we hear the familiar story of the Transfiguration of Jesus on the mountain accompanied by three of his disciples.
- At communion time make an Act of **Spiritual Communion**. Invite Jesus to visit your heart, take some time to truly welcome his divine presence. Let him speak to you – what is he saying? – "listen to his word".

Take away ...

In the week to come – where might I seek and find God?

The Stations of the Cross



When we pray the Stations of the Cross, we walk with Jesus through the most significant moments of his passion. Traditionally there are fourteen stations. Although, the *Scriptural Stations of the Cross* introduced by Saint John Paul II in 1991 add a fifteenth station. The Stations are often represented in pictorial form along Church walls and are celebrated as a "walking prayer". At each Station we are invited to take time to meditate on what is taking place and to contemplate its significance for our lives.

The Scriptural Stations of the Cross are:

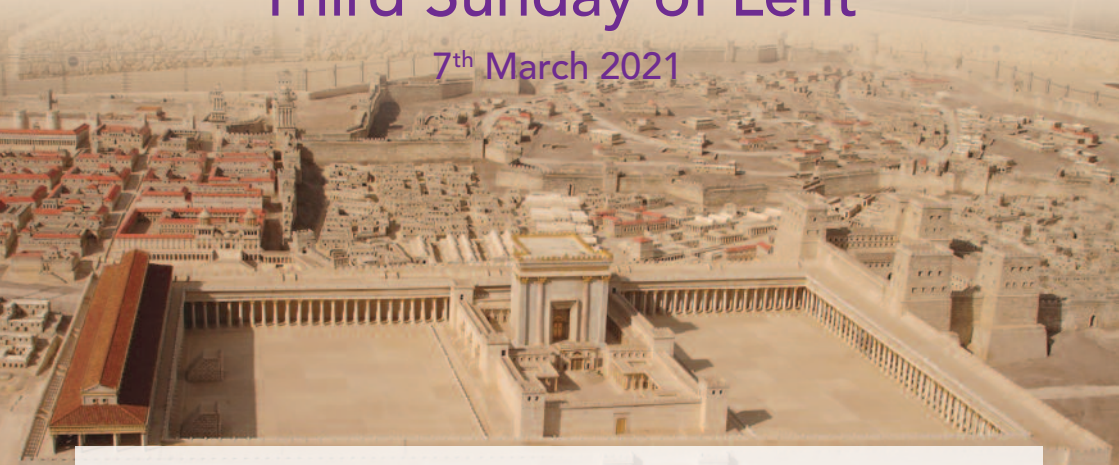
First station:	Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane
Second station:	Jesus is betrayed by Judas and arrested
Third station:	Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin
Fourth station:	Jesus is denied by Peter
Fifth station:	Jesus is judged by Pontius Pilate
Sixth station:	Jesus is scourged at the pillar and crowned with thorns
Seventh station:	Jesus bears the cross
Eighth station:	Jesus is helped by Simon the Cyrenian to carry the cross
Ninth station:	Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
Tenth station:	Jesus is crucified
Eleventh station:	Jesus promises his Kingdom to the repentant thief
Twelfth station:	Jesus speaks to his mother and the Beloved Disciple
Thirteenth station:	Jesus dies on the cross
Fourteenth station:	Jesus is placed in the tomb
Fifteenth station:	The Resurrection

At each Station pray ...

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

Third Sunday of Lent

7th March 2021



Today, the Third Sunday of Lent brings us to almost the half-way point in our Lenten Pilgrimage. In the Gospel, we get a rare glimpse of Jesus being angry. He is angry because due reverence was not given to the sacredness of the Temple in Jerusalem. "Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market". (Jn. 2:15) There follows a tense moment with the Jews. After which, Jesus begins to sense his impendng death and speaks of resurrection. This Sunday affords us an opportunity to reflect on what clutters and desecrates our hearts and our lives making them less free and less capable of loving God and others.

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Tróćaire Lenten Box nearby. Have at hand a small empty box.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Heavenly Father, author of every mercy and of all goodness, who in fasting, prayer and almsgiving have shown us a remedy for sin. Look graciously on this confession of our lowliness that we, who are bowed down by our conscience, may always be lifted up by your mercy. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ... John 2:13-25

Jesus went up to Jerusalem and in the Temple, he found people selling cattle and sheep and pigeons, and the moneychangers sitting at their counters there [...]. He drove them all out of the Temple, cattle and sheep as well [...] and said to the pigeon-sellers, "Take all this out of here and stop turning my Father's house into a market". The Jews said, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus answered, "Destroy this sanctuary, and in three days I will raise it up." [...] Jesus was speaking of the sanctuary that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the words he had said.

Let us reflect ...

In contrast to Jesus' Temple visit at the age of twelve, when his parents found him in discourse with the Elders, today's Gospel describes a different scene. Imagine Jesus' disgust on finding his "Father's House" used as a market where people sold sheep, cattle and pigeons while moneychangers sat at counters. We learn that Jesus was angry and ordered those irreverent people out. Jesus knew the Temple as home to the tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. They were kept there in the Ark – the Holy of Holies. It was inconceivable that any Jew would desecrate this special place, so Jesus ordered the traders out, warning them to stop turning his "Father's House" into a market.

The Jews asked, "What sign can you show us to justify what you have done?" Jesus' reply, "Destroy this sanctuary and in three days I will raise it up," must have stunned them as they did not understand it. We know that Jesus was foretelling his death and resurrection. What can we learn from today's Gospel? Are the temples of our hearts marketplaces where greed and worldly interests displace the love of God and neighbour? If so, let us turn again to the Lord's "message of eternal life". *(Sister Mary Corcoran RSM)*

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Research the Temple in Jerusalem – draw a picture of it – see if you can name some of the areas of the Temple.

Ritual Action

Place the empty box in or near your sacred space. Pause for a moment, to mentally place in that box, some of the things that are cluttering your heart right now. Pray together this prayer of St Ignatius of Loyola:

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding, my entire will,
all that I have and call my own.
You have given it all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours: do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace.
That is enough for me.
Your love and your grace are enough for me. Amen

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time.

We pray for the gift of reverence, wonder, and awe before the presence of God. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for the commitment to bring to a good end, the work of personal and spiritual renewal we began this Ash Wednesday. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for a kind heart, openness to all and a willingness to help those in need, especially the poor and the marginalised. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Father, walk with us on our Lenten pilgrimage of spiritual and personal renewal. Strengthen us for the journey and walk with us on the way. Through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

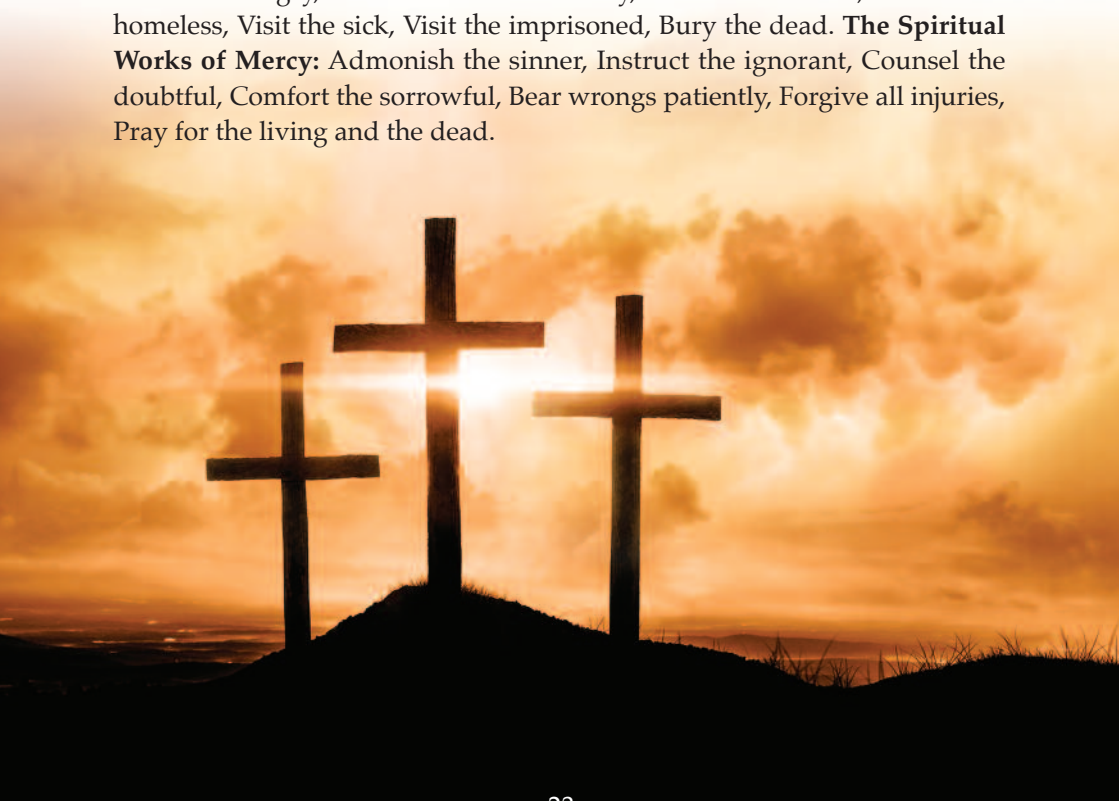
Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Call to Action

Meditate on how what we traditionally call the corporal and spiritual works of mercy might mean for you in your life: **The Corporal Works of Mercy:** Feed the hungry, Give drink to the thirsty, Clothe the naked, Shelter the homeless, Visit the sick, Visit the imprisoned, Bury the dead. **The Spiritual Works of Mercy:** Admonish the sinner, Instruct the ignorant, Counsel the doubtful, Comfort the sorrowful, Bear wrongs patiently, Forgive all injuries, Pray for the living and the dead.



Online Celebration of the Eucharist

Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Place there an empty box – what is cluttering your heart? What do you need to get rid of? How can you make more space for God and others in your life?

During the broadcast look out for the following:

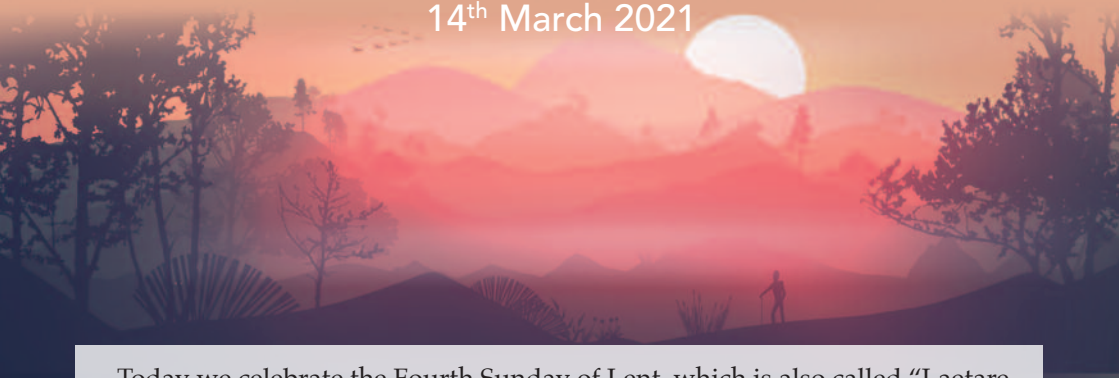
- The priest will wear **purple vestments** today a sign that we are still on our penitential Lenten journey.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- The central theme of the readings is God's relationship with us and our response to God. In the **First Reading** from the Book of Exodus we hear God proclaiming the right to be at the centre of our lives and naming the Ten Commandments which outlined the rules that God's people should follow. In the **Psalm**, we hear praise for God's laws. The **Second Reading** from St. Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, speaks of a Crucified Christ, which makes sense only to those who have been "called". The **Gospel** tells the story of Jesus anger at the irreverent activity taking place in the Temple in Jerusalem. In response to the anger of the Jews, he begins to speak of his own death resurrection.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time make an Act of **Spiritual Communion**. Take some time to consider how much space there is in your heart for Jesus today? Is there clutter there that you need his help to dispose of? Are there things there that are turning your heart into something less than it should be? Pause for a moment, to mentally place in the empty box, some of the things that are cluttering your heart right now.

Take away ...

How much spiritual spring-cleaning do I need to do during the week to come? How will I do it?

Fourth Sunday of Lent
Laetare Sunday

14th March 2021



Today we celebrate the Fourth Sunday of Lent, which is also called "Laetare Sunday". Laetare is the Latin for "to Rejoice". "Laetare Sunday" focuses on the idea that in the midst of our Lenten Pilgrimage there is real joy and hope because Easter is just around the corner. The liturgical colour changes to rose or pink – a mixture between the purple of penance and the joy that awaits us at Easter. This anticipated joy is evident in today's readings which focus on God's will that we might be saved from everything that diminishes us and that we might live life as God had intended it to be lived.

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Tróćaire Lenten Box nearby. Write a list of things that bring you joy in life and place them in a sealed envelope.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Loving Father, amid the changes and challenges of this world, you alone are unchanging and eternal. We give you thanks for the many gifts you have given us in life. Grant us a profound trust in your goodness and the true joy of knowing your presence. As Holy Week and Easter draw near, let us not weaken in our work of spiritual and personal renewal. Continue to walk with us on our Lenten pilgrimage. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ... John 3:14-21

And indeed, everybody who does wrong hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed; but the man who lives by the truth comes out into the light, so that it may be plainly seen that what he does is done in God.

Let us reflect ...

Thank God for the gift of springtime. With the harshness and darkness of winter behind us, we can begin to see the effects of spring all around. The days are getting ever longer, the buds are appearing on the trees and there are signs of growth everywhere. The farmer is preparing ground for planting as he admires the gift of new life all around him. One of the major reasons for all this growth is of course the ever-increasing light that comes with this time of year. Life needs light. Saint John uses the metaphor of light in his writings and we see that in today's Gospel. Jesus tells Nicodemus, who comes to him in the dark of night, that whoever lives the truth lives in light.

Through our Lenten observances, we try to dispel the darkness of sin from our lives, a darkness that brings coldness and decay, and we try to allow the light of Christ, the light of the Gospel of love to grow ever brighter within us. That light which grows ever stronger and brighter over the days of Lent brings life to our lives, true life and so come Easter we can rejoice in the true light and life brought by the resurrection of Jesus. *(Canon Tom Hever)*

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Write and decorate a prayer to God thanking him for everything in life that you are grateful for.

Ritual Action

Place the envelope with the list of things that bring you joy in life into the sacred space. Pause for a few moments reflection and pray:

God of all blessings,
source of all life,
giver of all that is good.
Thank you for the marvels of the world around us.
Thank you for life and living.

Thank you for family and friends.
Thank you for food and shelter.
Thank you for kind voices and smiling faces.
Thank you for caring hearts and helping hands.
Thank you for forgiving words and new beginnings.
Thank you for Jesus and his Good News.
Thank you for my fellow Christians.
Thank you for being there when I need you.
For all this and everything else, I am eternally grateful. Amen

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time.

For all those who are searching for meaning and purpose in their lives. May they find in Jesus the answer to their questions. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Lord, increase our faith and love of you and help us, with your wisdom, to become better people. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for our world in this time of Pandemic; we pray for those who are sick because of Covid-19, those who have died and their families. We entrust our worries and our fears to you, "the light that darkness cannot overpower". (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Lord, today on Mother's Day, we pray for all mothers – our own mothers, mothers-to-be, those who have been motherly figures in our lives – grant them peace and joy in life. We pray for the happy repose of the souls of all mothers who have died.

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Father, be with us in these days of our Lenten pilgrimage of spiritual and personal renewal. Strengthen us for the journey and walk with us on the way. Through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Call to Action

Before the sun sets today – find a way of bringing some joy to someone in your life. On this Mothering Sunday, tell your mother how much she means to you. If your mother has gone to her Eternal reward, take a moment to pray for her and perhaps visit her grave, if this is possible.

Online Celebration of the Eucharist

Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Place in the space an envelope containing a list of things/people that bring you joy in life.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **rose colour vestments** today.
- For the Season of Lent the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- In the scripture readings today, we hear of how much God loves each one of us. In the **First Reading,** we hear how God's promises are not negated because of his people's sins but rather his mercy wins out. The **Psalm** is a song of hope that the people of Israel exiled in Babylon will soon return to Jerusalem. The **Second Reading** from Paul to the Ephesians speaks of God's generous love for us shown in sending his Son, not because of anything we have done. In the **Gospel,** we read of how much God loves the world in the sending of his Son and he is the light by which we are invited to live our lives and so be saved.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time make an Act of **Spiritual Communion**. Invite Jesus to visit your heart, take some time to truly welcome his presence and to thank him for the things that bring you joy in life.

Take away ...

During the week to come try to smile more – what about a random act of kindness for someone?

Solemnity of St Patrick
Lá Fhéile Pádraig

17th March 2021

Today our Lenten Journey finds welcome relief as we celebrate Saint Patrick, apostle to Ireland. Born in 387 AD, tradition holds Patrick to have been from Britain. Taken prisoner at the age of sixteen by a group of Irish raiders, he was held as a farm hand before eventually escaping home. During this harsh period in his life, he turned to his Christian faith for solace. Once home, he began to feel a call to return to Ireland to share with the Irish his faith. This he did with great success. In the *Confessions* attributed to Patrick, he reflects on his life and his calling: "So I am first of all a simple country person, a refugee, and unlearned. I do not know how to provide for the future. But this I know for certain, that before I was brought low, I was like a stone lying deep in the mud. Then he who is powerful came and in his mercy pulled me out, and lifted me up and placed me on the very top of the wall. That is why I must shout aloud in return to the Lord for such great good deeds of his, here and now and forever, which the human mind cannot measure". (*Confessions*, 12) Patrick died sometime around 461 AD.

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Tróicaire Lenten Box nearby. Have ready some shamrock or a picture of shamrock.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

O God, who chose the Bishop Saint Patrick to preach your glory to the peoples of Ireland, grant, through his merits and intercession, that those who glory in the name of Christian may never cease to proclaim your wondrous deeds to all. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ... Mark 16:15-20

Lastly, he showed himself to the Eleven themselves while they were at table. He reproached them for their incredulity and obstinacy, because they had refused to believe those who had seen him after he had risen. And he said to them, 'Go out to the whole world; proclaim the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptised will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will be associated with believers: in my name they will cast out devils; they will have the gift of tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands and be unharmed should they drink deadly poison; they will lay their hands on the sick, who will recover'. And so the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven; there at the right hand of God he took his place, while they, going out, preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that accompanied it.

Let us reflect ...

We celebrate today, Saint Patrick, our National Patron. Usually when this day falls during the Season of Lent, we get a short reprieve from the penitential nature of this Season. It is good for us to celebrate the person of Patrick and what he stands for. He is a man of Faith, motivated and driven by a deep sense of the Blessed Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We look to this former slave as a man who heard and listened to the Word of God. He not only heard God's message, but he also dedicated his whole life to sharing it with others.

He brought the light of faith to these shores, from lighting the fire on Easter morning in 433 AD on the hill of Tara, to the Paschal fire and Easter Candle in every church in Ireland. During this Lenten time, we stoke the flame of faith in our own lives which may have been smouldering. As individuals, let us support one another on the journey and build up the Community of Faith. May we use this Lent to explore our relationship with God and one another. We remember too and pray for all those around the world today who have any connection with Saint Patrick and our Land. May we too listen to God as Patrick did and follow Jesus as he did. *(Father Ray Milton)*

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Read a children's version of the story of Saint Patrick. Using card or paper, make Saint Patrick's Day badges to wear. Draw a picture of Saint Patrick. Use a thought bubble to represent what you think he would say to you today.

Ritual Action

Tradition has it that Saint Patrick used the Shamrock to teach the Irish about the mystery of the Trinity – God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Sprinkle the Shamrock with some holy water and pray:

Loving Father, we give you thanks for the gift of Patrick
and for the Christian faith which he nurtured in Ireland.
Bless these shamrock leaves.
May they ever remind us of the infinite mystery of God:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Increase our faith.
Protect our land.
Give us the strength and the courage
to work for the coming of your Kingdom
here on earth as it is in heaven. **Amen**

If appropriate, pin the shamrock on your lapel. Pause for a moment of silent reflection and pray:

I arise today through a mighty strength,
The invocation of the Holy Trinity,
Through a belief in the Threeness,
Through a confession of the Oneness of the Creator of all creation.
(Lorica of Saint Patrick)

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time.

We pray that our faith may be strengthened and that it may bear abundant fruit in our lives. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for the land of Ireland. May all her people work to promote that which is good. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for those who like Patrick find themselves slaves to oppression of any kind, those who suffer from violence, warfare or human trafficking. We pray for the refugee and the emigrant. We remember those who are poor or suffer from pain or sickness in mind or body. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Críost liom, Críost romham,
Críost i mo dhiaidh, Críost istigh ionam,
Críost fúm, Críost os mo chionn,
Críost ar mo lámh dheis, Críost ar mo lámh chlé,
Críost i mo luí dom, Críost i mo sheasamh dom,
Críost i gcroí gach duine atá ag cuimhneamh orm,
Críost i mbéal gach duine a labhraíonn liom,
Críost i ngach suíl a fhéachann orm,
Críost i ngach cluas a éisteann liom.

Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ within me,
Christ below me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right hand, Christ on my left hand,
Christ in my sleeping, Christ in my waking,
Christ in the heart of all who think of me,
Christ in the mouth of all who speak to me,
Christ in every eye that looks at me,
Christ in every ear that listens to me.

Blessing

May the road rise up to meet us. May the wind be always at our back. May the sun shine warm upon our face; the rains fall soft upon our fields and may God hold us all in the palm of his hand. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Call to Action

Source a copy of the Confessions of Saint Patrick or the text of his Breastplate and become familiar with his own words. Listen to a recording of the "Deer's Cry". Make contact with relatives and friends outside of Ireland to wish them a blessed Saint Patrick's Day.

Online Celebration of the Eucharist

Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle and place some shamrock in your prayer space.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **white or gold vestments** today, a reminder that it is a feast day – a day of celebration.
- For the Season of Lent the **Alleluia** is omitted.
- **Shamrock** may be blessed during the Mass.
- The Word of God before us today is about our Mission and Mandate. The **First Reading** reminds us that we are chosen by God to play our part in spreading his Word. **The Psalm** proclaims, "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News". The **Second Reading** from St. Paul urges us to share our faith with others, so they too can live the Christian life. In the **Gospel,** Jesus commissions and mandates us to proclaim and share the Good News. As the baptised, we have a duty and responsibility to make Jesus known.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time make an Act of **Spiritual Communion.** Invite Jesus to visit your heart, take some time to truly welcome his presence. Thank him for the gift of your Christian Faith – ask him to help you in times of doubt. Ask him to bless your family and friends – to bless Ireland and her people.

Take away ...

During the week: ask yourself what does it mean for me to be a Christian in Ireland today?

Solemnity of St Joseph, Husband of Mary and Patron of the Universal Church

19th March in the Year of St Joseph, 2021

On the 8th of December 2020, Pope Francis declared that 2021 would be a special Year of Saint Joseph. Therefore, this year's celebration of his Feast Day takes on an extra significance. Although descended from the royal house of David, Joseph was an ordinary manual labourer. Scripture tells little of his story except that he was husband of Mary and "Foster-Father of Jesus". Nonetheless, his modest presence as part of the Holy Family is constant. Tradition holds that Joseph died sometime before Jesus began his public ministry. In 1870, Pope Pius IX declared him patron and protector of the universal family of the Church. Announcing the Year of Saint Joseph, Pope Francis said: "Each of us can discover in Joseph – the man who goes unnoticed, a daily, discreet and hidden presence – an intercessor, a support and a guide in times of trouble. Saint Joseph reminds us that those who appear hidden or in the shadows can play an incomparable role in the history of salvation. A word of recognition and of gratitude is due to them all". *(Patris Corde)*

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Tróicaire Lenten Box nearby. Have to hand a picture or statue of Saint Joseph.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Loving Father, today we celebrate Saint Joseph, that quiet man who with your help opened his heart to Mary and Jesus. We bring before you our families and in particular, all Fathers. We ask your help when times are difficult and give you thanks when times are good. We pray for our Christian Family, the Church, scattered throughout the world. Bless us all that we may respond more faithfully to our calling and be a light to the nations. We ask this through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ... Matthew 1:16. 18-21, 24

Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ. This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins'. When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do.

Let us reflect ...

Often in life, things happen whose meaning we do not understand. Our first reaction is frequently one of disappointment and rebellion. Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events and, mysterious as they seemed, to embrace them, take responsibility for them and make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow. [...]

Joseph is certainly not passively resigned, but courageously and firmly proactive. In our own lives, acceptance and welcome can be an expression of the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude. Only the Lord can give us the strength needed to accept life as it is, with all its contradictions, frustrations and disappointments [...]. Just as God told Joseph: "Son of David, do not be afraid!" (Mt 1:20), so he seems to tell us: "Do not be afraid!" We need to set aside all anger and disappointment, and to embrace the way things are, even when they do not turn out as we wish. Not with mere resignation but with hope and courage. In this way, we become open to a deeper meaning. Our lives can be miraculously reborn if we find the courage to live them in accordance with the Gospel. It does not matter if everything seems to have gone wrong or some things can no longer be fixed. God can make flowers spring up from stony ground. *(Pope Francis, Patris Corde)*

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Draw a picture of Saint Joseph with Mary and Jesus. Use thought bubbles to imagine what they might be saying to each other.

Ritual Action

Place the picture or statue of Saint Joseph in the prayer space. As you do so, think about the things in your own life that turned out differently from what you had expected but in the end became a blessing. After a brief period of silence, pray this short litany to St Joseph:

St. Joseph of the House of David	**Pray for us**
Open to God's will	**Pray for us**
Husband of Mary	**Pray for us**
Foster-Father of Jesus	**Pray for us**
Hope of the Sick	**Pray for us**
Patron of the Dying	**Pray for us**
Protector of the Church	**Pray for us**

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time.

We pray for our families. Name those you wish to pray for (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray for Fathers. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Through the intercession of Saint Joseph, we pray for the Church – the people of God scattered throughout the world. That our lives may be an example to all who do not believe. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer to St Joseph by Pope Francis

Hail, Guardian of the Redeemer,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
To you God entrusted his only Son;
in you Mary placed her trust;
with you Christ became man.

Blessed Joseph, to us too,
show yourself a father
and guide us in the path of life.
Obtain for us grace, mercy and courage,
and defend us from every evil. **Amen**

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Call to Action

Read more about Saint Joseph. What about downloading and reading Pope Francis' Letter – Patris Corde announcing that 2021 will be a year of Saint Joseph?

Online Celebration of the Eucharist

Before the broadcast begins:

- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Add to it a picture or statue of Saint Joseph or a picture of your family.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **white or gold vestments** as a symbol of celebration.
- A **picture or statue of Saint Joseph** may be decorated in the sanctuary.
- During the Season of Lent the **Alleluia** is omitted.
- In the **First Reading** from the book of Samuel we will hear of God's promise to David that his house and his throne will always stand secure. **The Psalm** takes up this idea and proclaims in reference to David: "His dynasty shall last for ever". The **Second Reading** from the Letter to the Romans centres on the idea of faith and hope in God. In the **Gospel,** the figure of Joseph, that descendant of David, has his life thrown into confusion by the news that his betrothed was with child through the Holy Spirit. With God's help he accepts the situation. He faithfully takes Mary as his wife and Jesus as his son and that great promise made of old for the house of David finds its fulfilment.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time, make an Act of **Spiritual Communion**. Invite Jesus to visit your heart, take some time to truly welcome his presence. Speak to him about those times in life where, like Saint Joseph, things happened that you did not expect or plan. Things that you have had to, and might still have to, struggle to see God's hand in.

Take away ...

During the week reflect on what it means to be a Mother or a Father or a member of a Family and ask yourself has the story of Saint Joseph any wisdom to add to your thoughts?

Fifth Sunday of Lent

21st March 2021

With the Fifth Sunday of Lent, we near the end of our Lenten Pilgrimage and begin to focus on the celebration of Holy Week. This is a Sunday to take stock of how we have progressed over the weeks with the task of personal and spiritual renewal. It is also a time to begin to think about how we will grasp the opportunity that this year's Holy Week brings to further that process by walking with Jesus through his passion, death and resurrection. The Scriptures today portray Jesus on the cusp of the most challenging but also the greatest moment of his life of love. They challenge us to ask ourselves what will be my legacy in life?

A Prayer Ritual at Home

Open a Bible in your prayer space and light a candle to symbolise that God is present. Place the Tróicaire Lenten Box nearby. Take a pen and paper and write down what you think is your purpose in life – what might God be calling you to. Place this in an envelope.

As we begin ...

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Let us pray (pause)

Loving Father, as we journey with Jesus towards the culmination of his earthly existence, help us to realise that we also have some definite purpose in life. Send your Holy Spirit upon us. Help us to discern your will for us and to guide us along your ways. Let not our faults and sins hold us back from answering our calling. Continue to walk with us on these last steps of our Lenten pilgrimage of renewal. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Let us listen to God's Word ... John 12:20-30

Now my soul is troubled. What shall I say: Father, save me from this hour? But it is for this very reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name! A voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will again glorify it". The crowd standing by, who heard this, said it was a clap of thunder; others said, "It was an angel speaking to him". Jesus answered, "It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours". "Now sentence is being passed on this world; now the prince of this world is to be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself". By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die.

Let us reflect ...

This final Sunday of Lent invites us to lift up our eyes to where our strength and our purpose comes from. Our Lenten journey has had us living and praying daily in the spirit of today's Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 50). The attitude of Jesus in the Gospel focuses our attention on one particular line of the psalm – "Give me again the joy of your help". Some foreigners come seeking Jesus; people from outside of the Jewish nation and it seems to trigger quite a reaction in Jesus. It is as though the bell for the final lap has sounded and the race, or better, his journey to the fulfilment of the Father's will has suddenly intensified. Jesus seems to be filled with joy that his hour has come, accompanied by a certain dread, even suggesting that flight has crossed his mind. He seems jubilant as he seizes his purpose and prays aloud 'Father, glorify your name!' and the Father affirms him. Many of us may be struggling for a sense of purpose at present. Let us pray for each other, that as people of faith we grow into our purpose in life now and seek to glorify the Father in what little and great ways we can, filled with the joy of God's help.
(Ms Colette Furlong)

Pause for a few moments of silent reflection

Children's Activity

Draw pictures of what you want to be when you grow up and write a prayer asking Jesus to help you on your journey of life.

Ritual Action

Place the envelope with the writings about what you feel called to be in life in the sacred space. Make sure to dispose of these confidentially afterwards. Pause for a moment of reflection. Then pray:

God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments. Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about. Amen *(Saint John Henry Newman)*

Intercessions

We take a moment to bring before God our needs and the needs of the world at this time.

We pray for people of every race and nation – that guided by the light of their conscience they may search and find their God-given purpose in life. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray that we may simply love and care for others more. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

We pray that we may share what we have with those who have less than us. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Add your own intercessions here. (pause)

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer.

Our Father ...

Prayer (pause)

Father, be with us as we come towards the end of our Lenten pilgrimage of spiritual and personal renewal. Strengthen us for the journey of Holy Week that lies ahead. May your transforming grace and our own humble Lenten penances increase our love for you and for each other so that we may celebrate with great joy the resurrection of your Son this Eastertide. Through Christ, Our Lord. **Amen**

Blessing

The Lord bless us and keep us; The Lord make his face shine upon us and be gracious to us; The Lord turn his face toward us and give us his peace both now and forever. **Amen**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Call to Action

Take some time to think about your calling or purpose in life. Begin to plan how you are going to spend and make the most at a spiritual level of Holy Week 2021.

Online Celebration of the Eucharist

Before the broadcast begins:

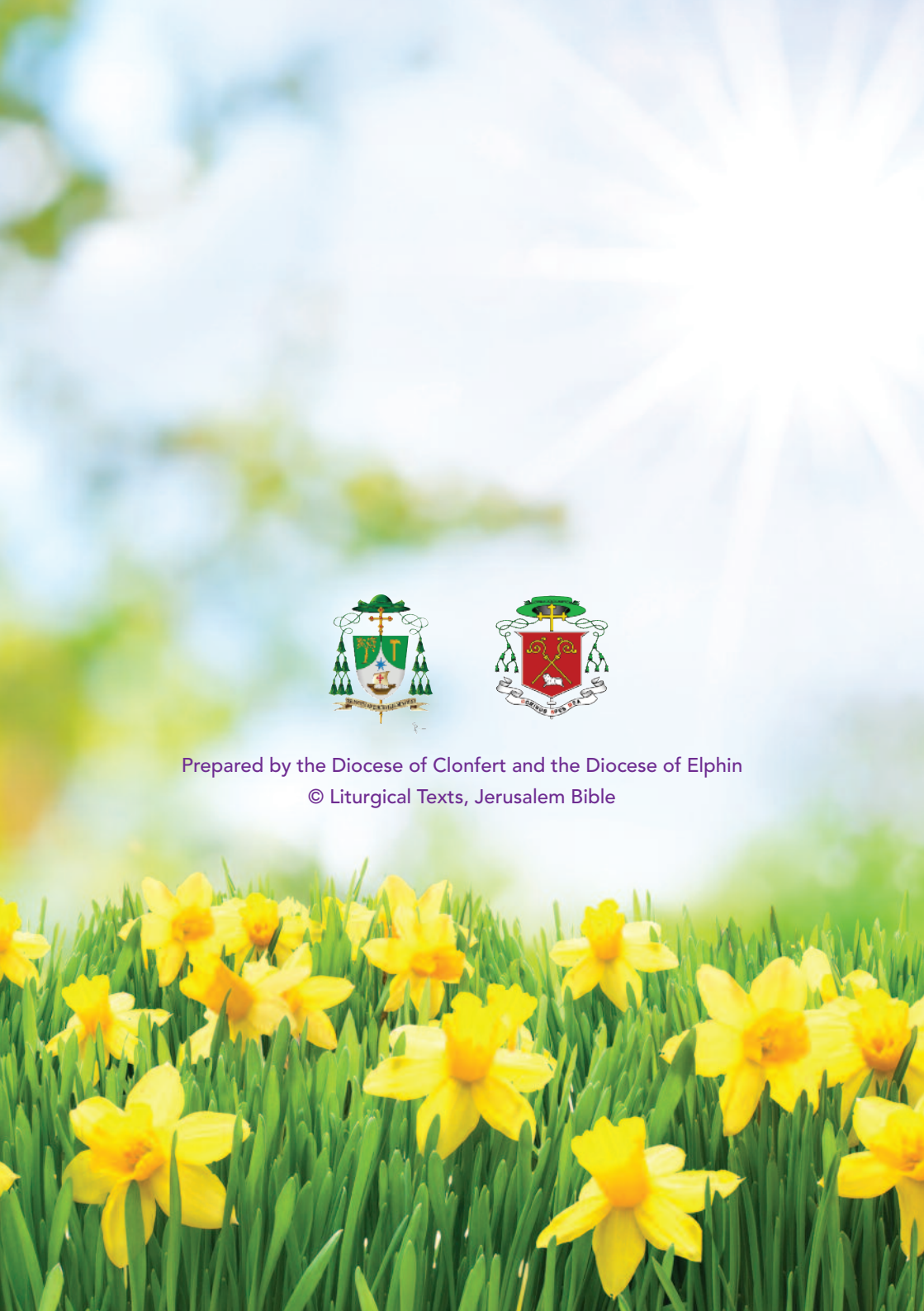
- Gather with other members of your household, if you can.
- Light a candle in your prayer space. Write down and seal in an envelope what you think is your purpose in life and add it to the sacred space.

During the broadcast look out for the following:

- The priest will wear **purple vestments** today as a symbol that we are still on our penitential journey.
- For the Season of Lent, the **Gloria** and **Alleluia** are omitted.
- Today's readings shed light on the human experience of coming to certainty about God's purpose for us, and the struggle to embrace it as Jesus does in today's Gospel. The **First Reading** speaks of a new Covenant or agreement between God and the people of Israel – one that will be written in their hearts. **The Psalm** pleads with God: "A pure heart create for me." The **Second Reading** reminds us of the personal cost to Jesus that we might enjoy such a close relationship with God. In the **Gospel**, the tension in Jerusalem rises. Jesus begins to sense that his end is near and soon he will have fulfilled his mission, his purpose in life which is to definitively bring about that new Covenant between God and all humanity.
- The Eucharist will be celebrated as normal. At communion time, make an Act of **Spiritual Communion.** Invite Jesus to visit your heart, take some time to truly welcome his presence. Speak to him about what you see as your purpose in life. Ask him what does he see as your purpose in life?

Take away ...

During the week, ask yourself – "What is my purpose in life?" Plan how you will make the most at a spiritual level of Holy Week 2021.



Prepared by the Diocese of Clonfert and the Diocese of Elphin

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