

Lent Take-Homes Week One

Monday February 15

Readings: Deuteronomy 30:15-20 Luke 9: 22-25

Scripture Verse: "Whoever wishes to be my follower must deny himself, take up his cross each day and follow in my steps." Luke 9:23

Reflection: On occasion we hear of someone leaving millions of dollars to some worthy cause. Often it turns out that the person has lived a very simple, frugal life and avoided spending money to accumulate the symbols of status in our culture.

Today in our readings, God invites us to choose the door of life. It is the doorway to eternal life in communion with God. Jesus gives us the key to that door. Whoever wishes to be his follower must allow Jesus' agenda to become their agenda. The Prayer of St. Francis describes this in another way: "Let me seek not so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love." To follow Jesus is to be other-centred. A "self-centered Christian" is an oxymoron. In a culture where so many acquire more and more possessions and are never satisfied-- Jesus trusts us to make his way of life our way of life. We bear the cross of responding to God's love by being grateful for what we have and sharing from what we've been given with those who need our help.

Tuesday February 16

Readings: Isaiah 58:1-9 Matthew 9: 14-15

Scripture Verse: "Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?" Isaiah 58:5

Reflection: Fasting has long been part of our spiritual tradition. And Jesus warns us in the Ash Wednesday gospel (Matthew 6:16). to not make fasting a display about ourselves.

The first reading emphasizes a point about fasting that we must not forget. God, through Isaiah, links fasting with caring for the poor and deeds of social justice. (Isaiah 58: 5-7). This link between faith and works is found often in Scripture. St. James spelt it out in his letter. (James 2:14-17). Jesus describes it in Matthew 25:34-36.

Traditionally Lenten practices emphasize prayer and reading Scripture. And this is appropriate because in these ways we can grow in our faith and prepare for Easter. But the fasting that is shown in "almsgiving" (giving money/food [etc.to](#) the poor) and is shown in the practise of working for justice is part of Lent as well.

The Jesus, whom we follow and call “Lord ” trusts his followers to give meeting the needs of the poor and working for justice and peace a primary place in our hearts and in our actions.

Wednesday February 17

Readings: Isaiah 58: 9-14 Luke 5: 27-32

Scripture Verse: “If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in the darkness” Isaiah 58:10

Reflection: In today’s gospel, Jesus calls Levi, a tax collector, to become one of his followers. Levi became St. Matthew who wrote his gospel for a predominately Jewish-Christian community.

Jesus’ call to follow him liberates us from the prejudices by which people are often classified in our culture. The religious leaders of Jesus’ time did not believe God’s forgiving love could be offered to tax collectors like Levi and/or foreigners and/or all others deemed “sinners”. They classified these people as outcasts and called them “unclean” Jesus, on the other hand, included “sinners and outcasts” who were open to him among his followers and taught that they had a place in Gods kingdom.

Jesus made a distinction between the self-righteous and sinners. Those who recognize themselves as sinners are open to receiving God’s forgiveness. The self-righteous, on the other hand, believe they have earned and deserve God’s love and see no need to receive God’s forgiving love that Jesus came to offer us.

Lent reminds us that we are sinners and invites us to accept Jesus’ invitation to turn from those things that seek to draw us from the love of God and, instead, to turn to God. As we receive and accept God’s forgiving, healing, renewing love, we are reconciled with God and freed to follow Jesus and work for God's Kingdom.

Thursday February 18

Readings: Leviticus 19: 1-2, 11-18; Matthew 25:31-46

Scripture Verse: You shall love your neighbour as yourself (Leviticus 19:18)

Reflection: When I worked in the Parish of Combermere in the early 1990’s, the church was left unlocked. Often I would go into the church and find a couple of people in there praying. One elderly lady, in particular, would be there almost every day. She was not a member of the church but over the years we began to chat occasionally. One day she told me that she really appreciated the church being unlocked because it allowed her the time and peace to pray for the people she knew in the village. As everyone knew

everything about everyone in Combermere, she had a lengthy list of people and prayer concerns. To have someone who will pray for you is truly a gift.

Today's readings give us an idea of how we are to come before God in church. Both suggest that we are to come before God having treated other people with kindness and love. A good Lenten practice is to pick someone in your life whom you will pray for each day. Place an image of that person in your mind and surround him or her with prayers of kindness and love. Remember the words of the psalmist "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart find favour before you" Psalm 19:15

Friday February 19

Readings: Isaiah 55: 10-11 Matthew 6:7-15

Scripture Verse: "This is how you are to pray..." Matthew 6: 9

Reflection: We know the prayer by heart and pray it often. It is precious to us because it comes to us from Jesus himself. This reflection is basically a meditation on the Lord's Prayer written by St. Cyprian (about 250 AD)

Our Father...: One of the greatest truths of our faith is that we are adopted sons and daughters of God (see John 1:11-12) and may call God "Father." We are not instructed by Jesus to pray "My" Father because we do not pray for ourselves alone. We pray as members of Jesus' church and we pray for the good of all.

Hallowed be thy name: We ask that God's name be holy in our hearts and our lives. We ask that Jesus' agenda become our agenda, that through Jesus' church, God's name be hallowed.

Thy Kingdom come: We pray that the God's Kingdom proclaimed and begun by the Jesus who lived, died and was raised from death for it will continue towards fulfilment. That its values will shape our lives and, one day, will reign in God's world.

Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven: We pray that our lives may be shaped by God's saving will for our lives and God's world. All that Jesus taught and did was "the will of God." We ask for the strength to do God's will as well.

Give us this day our daily bread: This request has a literal and a spiritual component. Spiritually Jesus is "our daily bread" (John 6)—our relationship with him nourishes us for our Christian journey. In addition, we believe that God knows our needs and we trust that, if we "strive first for the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33), what we need will be provided.

And forgive us our trespasses: We acknowledge that we are sinners who fall short of being completely faithful but we recognise God's great love, mercy and forgiveness and believe that God truly forgives us.

As we forgive those who trespass against us: There is a condition for our being forgiven. Jesus tells us that our sins are forgiven if we are prepared to forgive. Much of Jesus' teaching emphasises this reality. If we want God to forgive us, we must be ready to forgive others.

And lead us not into temptation: Here we pray that God will show us the way away from temptation and "not let (us) be tested beyond our strength" (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). Whether or not we use that strength to avoid walking down the way of temptation is, of course, up to us.

But deliver us from evil: We pray to be kept safe from the power of the Evil One, and all that he stands for. We pray that God's goodness will overcome evil in our lives.

Note: For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever.
This *doxology* is not part of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples. It was added by the church later on.