

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 angel’s 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 I looked after him.

The Gospel of the Lord

Pause for a few moments of prayerful reflection and allow the Words of the Gospel to speak to you.

A LENS ON THE GOSPEL

The Jewish people’s 40 years in the desert, the wilderness, represents the shaping and consolidation of identity – the identity of freed slaves, now become a people chosen by God and bound by Covenant, and the identity of Jesus as the new Moses and Son of God.

But the desert in scripture is also the place of the test, just as life is for each of us. Testing, temptation is not a sin. Because we are tempted, sorely



tried in many areas of our lives, doesn’t mean we are in sin. “Peirasmos”- the Greek word for temptation means every fibre of our being is tested – much as a woman at a sale tugs and stretches the cloth to test its quality.

Satan attacks when we are at our weakest to undermine our identity and our vocation. Satan insinuates his lie, to discourage, promise the world, or offer the allurements of pleasure, presumption, power, to divert us from our real identity – our deepest relationship with God, our vocation – what precisely we’re meant to do with our lives. Sin comes in when we give in, swallow the lie. Small compromises like Lilliputian threads lead us to be no longer faithful to what God wants us to be.

Jesus unmasks the lie, not by divine means but by the sword of God’s Word. Although he was Son, Paul states, he put off his divinity, did not grasp his divinity, but became obedient. Obedience here is being true, submitting to the Father’s design for each unique individual. To taste evil is against God’s design. Temptation, when used in scripture is not an inducement to evil, so much as the crucible, in which personal freedom is refined, purified, tested and gains its quality.

Questions for Group Sharing and Discussion

- ❖ **What temptations are we facing in our family, community and church life today?**
- ❖ **What can we do this Lent to stay closer to Jesus in the desert, and draw strength from him?**
- ❖ **We are God’s beloved, made in God’s image. Share experiences of being loved and how that shaped your sense of identity?**

VINCENT PALLOTTI

Vincent embodied in some way the challenge of faith in his place and time. In doing so he opened a path that others may follow. He fought against any adjustment or compromise in the Church which can only recover and gain credence with the general public when we Christians individually and together (syn-odos) live out our basic Christian vocation.

The theme of Lent this year: ‘Go further together,’ recalls Vincent’s lived experience, ‘the work of individuals is small or short-lived unless united together for a common goal.’ It’s synodal, being on the way together enables us to go further.

Vincent's intent was to awaken all to the fire and zeal of their Catholic faith and spread that fire through love to people in need: in hospitals, in prisons, homeless and hungry. In Vincent's words, to revive faith and rekindle love. It was synodality, walking together, priest, religious and lay people making decisions together in united vision, purpose and action. And it begins in the local, the parish. The parish is a community of communities in which small groups becoming leaven have the potential to raise the whole parish, as St Paul states: "A whole batch of bread is made holy if the first handful of dough is made holy" (Rom 11:16). It is a down-to-earth way of being church.

What does Vincent's life teach me about the goodness of God and about how to live my life better? Am I willing to be a handful of dough - a group of potential leaders to be the leaven of faith for others?

SENDING PRAYER

Lord, I give you my mouth, help me to speak your word. I give you my hands, help me to give, receive and build. I give you my ears. Help me to listen to cries of help. I give you my feet, help me to make the effort to get to people. I give you my heart help me to show love. I give you my fast to hunger for you who hungered so much to bring us salvation.

FAITH IN ACTION THIS WEEK

Be an 'angel of consolation' to someone struggling under the burden of life, or with their faith at this time. Visit, phone, write or just listen to them.

WALKING TOWARDS EASTER

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

GATHERING PRAYER

*Lord, our God
You formed your people from the clay of the earth
and breathed into them the spirit of life, But they turned
from your face and sinned.*

*In this time of repentance, we call out for your mercy.
bring us back to you and to the life your Son won for us
by his death on the cross,
for he lives and reigns for ever and ever*

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The first reading is quite contemporary. The problem is not with the apple on the tree, but with the pair on the ground. The temptation to eat the fruit of the tree of good and evil expresses in symbol that point when man and woman deny their creature-hood and grasp at being God – wanting to have the ultimate say over their lives – to taste good and evil and be unaffected. We are created good and meant for goodness, but at the very moment when we are grown up, able now to consciously obey God's Law and respond to God in love, we choose to assert ourselves – "No-one is going to tell me what to do or what the consequences will be! I've got to learn for myself." The writer of Genesis is expressing us and our sin. For what does sin do? Their eyes were opened as the deceiver suggested – but they were not like gods – instead they saw themselves to be naked, broken, cut-off. Addiction, whether to power, gambling, drugs or sex offers us the world (the fruit is pleasing to the eye, is alluring), but it doesn't deliver.

**What is the temptation that Adam and Eve experienced, and what is the sin they commit?
How do they react to their sin?**

A LENS ON THE GOSPEL

In today's Gospel we see Jesus facing death and finding hope for me and you, represented in the person of the three disciples, Peter, James and John. They climbed the mountain with Jesus. It was a privileged moment with the Master. Just six days earlier, Jesus had said he was going to suffer and die. It came as a shock then, and is carried still, as men and women do, in deep unspoken concern.

What are you carrying at this moment? Is it concern about your health, your marriage, your family, work, study? What are you carrying at this moment? It's good to pause and touch those concerns.

And then you climb again with Jesus, thinking, "What's going to happen in the future?" Like Abraham you walk by faith not sure where you are going. You watch Jesus as he quite naturally begins to pray. There's an intimacy in his prayer to God, and it is in this moment of prayer that the disciples are "awakened" to see Jesus as they had never seen him before.

Jesus begins to change. You thought you knew Jesus before, but now, as if a fire is blazing inside him, his face, his hands, even his clothes become brilliant, dazzling white. This wasn't light from outside as happened to Moses on the mountain with God, a light on his face which gradually faded. No, this was light from light. Jesus is facing a critical moment in his mission, praying before his Father as to the direction forward. His Father lets the divinity of Jesus shine out from within.

Jesus has to bring to completion what God has promised through the Law and the Prophets represented by Moses and Elijah.

Jesus revealed his glory to the disciples to strengthen them for the scandal of the cross. Surely the disciples must have held on to the memory of this mysterious event, a preview of Jesus' resurrected glory, when they didn't know what to make of their Master's crucifixion. Jesus and the disciples could now face the worst having seen the best.

And just as suddenly, a bright cloud descends. The Father's voice is heard. I glimpse who Jesus is, Beloved Son. Jesus is strengthened for what's ahead. And I am loved too. I am embraced as beloved by my Father God. All my concerns fade. It's great to be here! The goal of my Lenten journey is ultimately to be changed, to be transfigured, to be aglow with charity.

God wants to change me, change me beyond my concerns. Jesus wants to move me from anxiety to hope. Jesus comes close and touches me, and says, "Do not be afraid."

Finally, I look up and see only Jesus. The task before me is to find Jesus in the ordinary, not just in the peak moments of my life. As with Abraham God wants to bless each one of us so that we might be a blessing for others.

Questions for Group Sharing and Discussion

- ❖ **Share recent experiences of where you have glimpsed the glory of Jesus in this world.**
- ❖ **How can we help others to meet Christ, and 'go up the mountain' to be with God in wonder and love?**
- ❖ **What hardships are we facing as Christians today? Where can we find strength?**

VINCENT PALLOTTI

Vincent wanted the life of Christ to be his life; to be his model in how he thought and acted in the unique circumstances of his life, and to let Christ work through him. "A person grows in the love of God in the measure in which he takes that love into his inmost soul ... no longer aware of himself but wholly transformed by the love of God." Vincent believed that "holiness consists in doing with exactness the will of God."

Vincent discovered his way to holiness in the human nature he shared with Jesus. He saw him as his "Firstborn Brother," who enabled him to be conformed more to him and attain intimate union with God. We share in Christ's transfiguration through holiness, being conformed to God's own Son. Vatican II's **Document on the Church**, par 2, states: "The Father's plan when he created us was to dignify us with a participation in his own divine life. He 'foreknew and predestined us to be conformed to the image of the Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom 8:29);" see Rom 8:3-4 where God's Son took on our weak human nature, although he was without sin, to save us.

Vincent took seriously, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for holiness, they shall be satisfied." Trusting in God's Word, he strove to be holy, praying, "Expand, O Lord, at every infinitesimal moment my desire for you and the things that please you." Desire became his way to holiness.

Desire is a moment of awakening, to see reality in its totality, without compartmentalising it. It lasts a moment but leaves a longing for the longing that had just passed. After it, life is not the same. Vincent said, 'God-desires' are passions that energise us for good, but we need to **intend** what we glimpsed in that moment of awakening for mission. Intention points the way, but desire is the passion that drives us to do great things for God. Where there is a united desire there you have a powerful church, which needs to be expressed in and from the parish.

Share what you find inspiring or challenging in these words of Vincent

SENDING PRAYER

Lord, I give you my silence, help me to gaze in awe of you. I give you my hands, not to build booths but a heart opens to you. I give you my ears to listen to the Father's voice and will for me. I give you my feet, to go out to tell others about Jesus. I give you my heart help me to share his love for all. I give you my fast to hunger for you who hungered so much to show us the Father who sent you to bring us salvation.

FAITH IN ACTION THIS WEEK

Go up the mountain with Jesus. Take a few minutes to read the scripture for each day this week, and to the voice of God in your heart and life.

WALKING TOWARDS EASTER

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

GATHERING PRAYER

*Father of light,
in you is found no shadow of change but only the fullness of life
and limitless truth. Open our hearts to the voice of your Word
and free us from the original darkness that shadows our vision.
Restore our sight that we may look upon your Son who calls us to
repentance and a change of heart, for he lives and reigns with
you for ever and ever. Amen.*

PROCLAIMING AND HEARING THE GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew (17:1-9)

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, one for Elijah." He was still speaking when suddenly a cloud covered them with its 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 the mountain Jesus gave them this order. "Tell no-one about the vision until the Son of Man has risen from the dead."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Pause for a few moments of prayerful reflection and allow the Words of the Gospel to speak to you

A LENS ON THE GOSPEL

She avoided the early morning gossip of the women at the well, the looks and the snide remarks. So she came out into the blaze of the midday sun, a woman shamed, caught up in her past. And she encountered the thirst of Jesus. "Could you give me a drink" he asked. The disciples had all gone to get food. His thirst is relentless. It breaks through conventions such as a Jew speaking to a hated Samaritan and a woman at that. The disciples returning later make a similar remark. His thirst at this moment is the same on the cross, "I thirst", dying to set captives free.

The woman is outspoken, suspicious of this stranger. The barriers are up against his apostolic attractiveness that seeks not another sexual exploit but her soul, her conversion. He is equally direct, trying to find the way to bring her into the saving embrace of God.

The good News is that God quenches thirst. Jesus himself is the living water that springs up, wells up within us and satisfies our otherwise insatiable human need – the thirst for God. We have to ask for that living water, fresh, cool, clear, bubbling up instead of the stale stored water in our own well.

Jesus's question, "Go and call your husband," opens up her past, her fears, that have kept her locked in. A definition of fear is false expectations appearing real. Until her meeting with Jesus. Her life had appeared real with all its false expectations.

Once released, she leaves behind her water jug the symbol of her past and thirsts that others might come to know Jesus. She becomes a missionary for Jesus, "Come and see a man who has told me everything I ever did; I wonder if he is the Messiah."

Jesus, despite the insistence of his disciples, forgets his hunger. His thirst is to do the will of his Father. The harvest, the white-clothed Samaritans coming toward him reminds him of the harvest that he desires to win for God. It's not enough that we hear about Jesus from others, second hand. We need to encounter him ourselves. As the townspeople told the woman, "Now we no longer believe because of what you told us. We have heard him ourselves and we know that he really is the saviour of the world."

Look at the progression of the woman's faith in Jesus. Jesus is the one who can meet the deep yearnings in the human spirit, who can quench every thirst if we ask him.

Questions for Group Sharing and Discussion

- ❖ What can we do this Lent to become more aware of the 'well of living water' within us?

- ❖ Faith is a journey of discovery. Who what is helping you on this journey at the moment?
- ❖ The sacraments are precious moments of grace and Spirit. What can we do to make them more effective among us?

VINCENT PALLOTTI

Christ is the Saviour of the world, the fundamental sacrament. Through his incarnation, death and resurrection, Jesus sent by the Father became human to save us. In line with Jesus' incarnation, Vincent believed, even prior to Baptism, we are called to save others because created in the image of a loving God. He believed in the sacramental power of the Church in practise: Mass, confession, healing the sick, being with the dying during the cholera epidemic and with condemned criminals. Vincent wrote: "Look at the cross there you see love in human form."

The Church is a sacrament of salvation for the world. We enter into that mystery by being baptised into the purposes of Christ Jesus, which the water and Spirit of today's Gospel indicate. Baptised in the name of Father, Son and Spirit, the Trinity is at the heart of the Church's communion.

Ahead of his time, Vincent sought to implement I Peter 2:9 "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, God's own people" which Vatican II reclaimed: One People of God, and the co-responsibility of every member of the Church.

He **saw the structure of the Church** not as a *pyramid*, the hierarchy dispensing power on the laity from above, but as an *inverted pyramid*, the hierarchy equipping the laity for their mission to the world. Vincent called on all classes of people to use all possible means, talents, contacts, for the apostolate. Vatican II's **Document on the Church**, par 33, states: "Through Baptism and Confirmation the laity share in the saving mission of the Church and are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself ... Thus every lay person is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself." By Baptism we all share in the one priesthood of Jesus. We are co-responsible for the body-life of the parish: by finding our Spirit charism; creating cells through our listening, seeing and helping smaller groups to form that reach even beyond the parish to the peripheries.

The role of the hierarchy is equipping through word and sacrament, teaching, sanctifying, and ruling, that is, eliciting the charisms, encouraging

these and utilising them for the growth of the Church in its mission outwards.

Share what you find inspiring or challenging in these words of Vincent

SENDING PRAYER

Lord, give me a thirst, a desire to please you in all aspects of my life, relationships, work and leisure. Help me to contend with the great saints and people of our time for holiness; to see and learn from them in their concern for others and for our world. During this Lent help me to expand my desires for you and the things that please you.

FAITH IN ACTION THIS WEEK

This Lent curb your thirst for material things and ask Jesus to share his thirst and find practical ways to work together for the salvation of others.

WALKING TOWARDS EASTER

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

GATHERING PRAYER

God of all compassion, Father of all goodness, to heal the wounds our sins and selfishness bring upon us you bid us turn to fasting, prayer and sharing with our sisters and brothers. We acknowledge our sinfulness, our guilt is ever before us; when our weakness causes discouragement, let your compassion fill us with hope and lead us through a Lent of repentance to the beauty of Easter joy. Grant this through Christ Our Lord. Amen

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There are two kinds of thirst. Physical thirst that you might experience in the Outback when the car radiator boils over, the tyre is flat and you're miles from anywhere. This thirst can kill you. But there's another thirst that can eat away at you. In all of us there is a thirst for happiness, for meaning. The interior longing for God can be as relentless and painful as physical thirst. This thirst lies at the root of all human attempts to make sense of the world and find meaning in it. Sometimes we go searching in the wrong places to satisfy that thirst. The Samaritan woman was one example.



PROCLAIMING AND HEARING THE GOSPEL

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (4:4-42) (dramatized: commentator; Jesus; woman) (See the dramatise Gospel attached)

Pause for a few moments of prayerful reflection and allow the Words of the Gospel to speak to you.

A LENS ON THE GOSPEL

Cardinal Newman said: our first task is not to enter into dispute to try to prove, but to define clearly what we are arguing about. We need to judge, in the sense of today's Gospel, which means using all our faculties to bring our lives into the light, before Jesus.

In the controversy with the Pharisees, the man blind from birth came to see with greater depth and clarity. This deeper seeing for St. John is FAITH – seeing as God sees – beyond external appearances. Faith needs reason even as it goes beyond reason. Let's see how the blind man who, now sees, uses his mind to lead to a deeper faith in Jesus. Be aware how the Pharisees are becoming increasingly blind.

The blind man used his mind to arrive at the facts. His neighbours ask: "Is this man that used to sit and beg?" So they approach the man himself: "I am the man" the first fact. The second fact: "How do your eyes happen to be open?" The once-blind man tells how he sees and who made it happen

They brought him before the authorities – "Someone has broken the rules – mixing clay with spittle – was working on the Sabbath." "How do you see?", ask the Pharisees. And the man tells the story again. Notice what's going on in this man. As he uses his mind to answer objections, he clings to the truth that he himself has experienced and there is a growing conviction in him.

Alexis Carrell the famous French surgeon and physiologist was treating a woman with lupus in its last stages. He was an agnostic. He told her you are going to die soon. She said: "I am going to Lourdes." He couldn't talk her out of it, so he said, "I'm coming with you on the train in case you die on the way." She got to Lourdes and was cured. As a scientist he wrote up this case and sent it to the French Medical Academy – they brought Carrell before the Board, scoffed at him and said: "This can't be so." Carrell said: "I know what my eyes have seen." Through this battle he came to believe. Exactly what happened with the blind man.

The second use of reason is interpretation of the facts. Some Pharisees attack the cause of the blind man seeing. "This man, who cured you, can't be from God. He breaks the Sabbath." Jesus is already pre-judged. There's a growth in the man's understanding. But there's not the same growth in the Jews. Prejudice makes them blind. They deny the first facts: he wasn't born blind at all and they call in the parents, but FEAR prevents them from saying it was Jesus who made him see

The Pharisees can't deny the truth of the man's former blindness so they attack the one who made him see – "He is a sinner." The man's only defence is the truth: "I was blind, now I can see." He made me see.

Now he enters into the attack with irony: "Are you interested because you want to be this man's disciple?" To their rebuttal he adds a stronger one: "If Moses were

from God because of what he did – this man has done greater things and must therefore be from God, more so. He deserves to be followed more than Moses."

And the fundamental prejudice emerges: "Are you trying to teach us – you, ignorant and a sinner?" And they threw him out of the synagogue – from 80 AD on Christians were expelled from the synagogues.

Right up to this point, reason has been at work; holding on to truth, but it is not yet faith. Faith comes when Jesus seeks out the man and reveals the mystery of his person. "The One you are seeking, to believe in, you are looking at Him, He is speaking to you." He had seen Jesus before. His face was imprinted on his mind and memory, but this is a deeper seeing as he surrenders even the mind: "Yes, Lord, I believe" and he worships Jesus.

Questions for Group Sharing and Discussion

- ❖ **Where do you notice 'blindness' at work in our community, church and world?**
- ❖ **What helps to bring healing and insight into peoples' lives? What can we as Christians do to help people see more clearly?**
- ❖ **The sacrament of Penance helps to heal our blindness. How can we celebrate the sacrament more fruitfully?**

VINCENT PALLOTTI

Vincent was very aware, alive to the signs of the times. He wanted not only apostles at home but also missionaries abroad. From his work as a seminarian with youth and homeless men he was aware of anti-Christian forces, fuelled with propaganda from Mazzini, to create a third Rome apart from the Church and papacy. He knew the rumblings of revolution, and worked to renew the faith among Catholics, but also to meet widespread poverty by putting the Gospel into practice. He was asked to be chaplain to the military because a number of Prince Albert's army had been seduced to fight with revolutionaries; and with this he took on care of the wounded in the military hospital.

Responding to an appeal from the Catholic Chaldean Church in Iraq he raised money for printing religious texts in that language. The issue of transparency was the trigger to found the Union of Catholic Apostolate in 1835. He was chaplain to the international seminary, Propaganda Fidei in Rome. He took the devotion of the Epiphany celebrated among the students there to a wider audience and created the Epiphany Octave in 1836. For eight days in major churches in Rome he organised celebrations with priests of different Catholic rites and languages to awaken the Catholic people to the mission to all nations.

In the Union he engaged artists and craftsmen and women to paint, make chalices, vestments and religious articles for overseas missions. He gave a painting

to Bishop Salvado when he went to set up the mission at New Norcia in W.A. It proved to be miraculous, placed in the face of a bushfire racing towards the mission. Vincent tried unsuccessfully to set up centres for training missionary priests. It inspired other successful ventures, the Mill Hill Fathers and the Milan Mission Society.

He sent his first follower, Fr Raphael Melia to London to assist poor Italian migrants who were struggling and the target for proselytising by some Protestant churches.

One confrere described Vincent as in 'perpetual motion.' "He was so intent on his ministry and on prayer from morning to late, he would often forget to eat and sleep or to give a thought to the needs of his body." Vincent's activity was not activity for activity's sake; his constant engagement with people, his multiple activities and fields of pastoral work, were all born out of his spiritual experience of God and from the awareness that God was impelling him to cooperate with him in the work of salvation. Coupled with this was his growing love of God, his identification with the three persons of the Trinity, and the consequent love of others that flowed out from that love. That might have been why God gave him the gift of bi-location, being in two places at the same time.

Share what you find inspiring or challenging in these words of Vincent

SENDING PRAYER

Lord give me your heart that I may see needy people who are struggling for faith, for a Church to believe in. Jesus, teach us that your seeing with compassion carries with it a responsibility towards those in real poverty whom you send into our lives. No self-denial is real without the dimension of penance, doing without that others may live.

FAITH IN ACTION THIS WEEK

- Celebrate healing and forgiveness.**
- Apologies to someone you have hurt.**
- Forgive someone you hold harshly in your heart.**
- Pray for an enemy.**
- Celebrate the Sacrament of Penance.**

WALKING TOWARDS EASTER

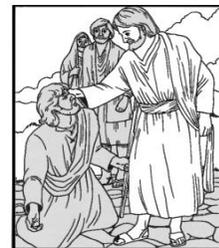
FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

GATHERING PRAYER

**God our Father,
your Word, Jesus Christ, spoke peace to a sinful world
and brought humankind the gift of reconciliation
by the suffering and death, he endured.
teach us, the people who bear his name,
to follow the example, he gave us:
may our faith, hope and charity turn hatred to love, conflict
to peace, death to eternal life.**

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen,

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Before reading the Gospel, look at the findings of Marius von Senden who, when safe cataract surgery was perfected, not many years ago, collected the accounts of new vision from people whose eyes were clouded from birth. They were excited about the beauty, light and colour of the world, about the uniqueness of each human faces. But what surprised him was that they couldn't see distance or shape couldn't see deeply and make out meaning. Sight is something as much learned as given. Seeing is really an interaction between the eye and the mind. Seeing affects our lives. To see, to perceive means to receive into oneself – to submit to the influence of things. The deeper our fear and distaste, the less we see.



PROCLAIMING AND HEARING THE GOSPEL

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (9:1-41) (dramatized) (parts: (1) Disciples, neighbours, and parents) (2) Narrator (3) Pharisees (4) Blind Man (5) Jesus) (See the Dramatise Gospel attached)

Pause for a few moments of prayerful reflection and allow the Words of the Gospel to speak to you.

that death leaves in our lives, comes the cry, “Lord. Hear the voice of our pleading.”

In the readings today, death is all around us. Lazarus is dead; Jesus’ life was in danger if he returned to Jerusalem. Thomas knows it, and with braggadocio says, “Let’s go and die with him.” Jesus does not answer these questions. Instead in the shortest verse of the entire Bible, he revealed one of the most profound characteristics we can ever learn about the heart of God: “Jesus wept.” When Jesus experienced the sisters Mary and Martha weeping for their dead brother Lazarus, and their distraught neighbours, John wrote that he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. Our God is a tender God who is deeply moved, even grieved, by anything and everything that threatens our human well-being. That’s why the scriptures encourage us to bring to God every anguish, confusion, anger, perplexity, and anxiety.

There’s something deeper here. The Greek word for Jesus ‘sighing deeply,’ ‘embrimasthai’ which occurs twice, indicates that Jesus was angry. Angry at the hold death has over us, and he was angry at the lack of faith in the bystanders. He calls Martha to faith in him as the Christ, the Son of God, the One who is to come. Jesus will contend with death on its own ground, especially through his death and resurrection, and break its hold over us. Lazarus being brought back to life was the sign of Jesus’ power over death, that he is the source of life. But Lazarus would die. Jesus, however, is our Resurrection and our Life. He is our hope, not only at the end of our lives, but already here. John presents Jesus as the Divine I Am, “I am the Resurrection and the Life.” He has already conquered death and is himself the source of life.

We wait in hope even while we cry out of the hole we are in, out of the depths, to God. The alternative is to lose hope which was the temptation for Ezechiel and the exiles, “Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off. Hopeless despair is not a Christian place to live.

We believe that God in Christ will conquer and transform the ultimate enemy death, and so we confidently “cast every anxiety upon him, because he cares for us.”

Questions for Group Sharing and Discussion

- ❖ **Share experiences of some of the small ‘resurrections’ in daily life that keep us aware of God at work in our lives.**
- ❖ **How can we as Christians help people rise from their tombs of fear, disappointment, shame and disillusionment?**
- ❖ **How does our culture deal with death? What do we as Christians have to offer?**

VINCENT PALLOTTI

Like Jesus in the Gospel, Vincent had friends, women of great faith, Elizabetta Sanna , Sister Luiza Maurizi, and Anna Maria Taigi, but naturally his first love was his mother, Maria di Rossi. She taught him devotion to Mary which soon became a living relationship. When his mother was dying of a terrible ulcerous disease, Vincent stayed by her bedside conducting most of his apostolic work from there. Each day he prayed the *Office of the Passion* attributed to St Francis, especially a prayer to Mary as Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son and Spouse of the Holy Spirit, which became deeply rooted in his spirit. His mother died July 19, 1827 and was buried in the white habit of the Third Order of St Clare. Mary now became his mother.

On 31 December 1832 Vincent received a particular grace, Spiritual Espousal to Mary. In the third person he writes, “... she deigned to enter into a Spiritual Espousal with her subject. She gives him as dowry, what she possesses, and grants him a deeper knowledge of her Son; as Spouse of the Spirit she will see to it that his whole interior life will be transformed by the Holy Spirit.”

Coming under opposition for calling lay people apostles, Vincent appealed to the Church’s devotion, the Litany of Loreto, where Mary is called Queen of Apostles. Vincent said, she could not preach, but she did more than the Apostles in bringing Christ to the world; she by the holiness of her life and her intent to cooperate in Jesus work of redemption, to the cross, resurrection and sending of the Spirit. When Vincent founded the Union of Catholic (universal) Apostolate, he put it under the patronage of Mary Queen of apostles.

Share what you find inspiring or challenging in these words of Vincent.

SENDING PRAYER

Lord as we move into Holy Week, may we join with you in your suffering to redeem the world. Help us to enter into your Easter rising to lift up those who are preparing to enter our communion. May we be true witnesses and example to them.

FAITH IN ACTION THIS WEEK

Make a significant sacrifice.

Go without some food, entertainment, shopping.

Give to Project Compassion so that we can 'go further together'.

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The Church invites you to follow Jesus during his entry through Palm Passion Sunday into the Holy Week ceremonies as a community:

Holy Thursday,

Good Friday,

And the Night of Night, the Easter Vigil,

to renew our Baptismal promises with the Joyful entry of new member into our parish.

WALKING TOWARDS EASTER

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

GATHERING PRAYER

Father in heaven,

The love of your Son led him to accept the suffering of the cross

That his brothers and sisters might glory in new life.

Change our selfishness into self-giving.

Help us to embrace the world you have given us,

That we may transform the darkness of its pain

Into the life and joy of Easter.

Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



PROCLAIMING AND HEARING THE GOSPEL

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John (11.1-44) (dramatized) (parts: (1) Narrator (2) Jesus (3) Martha (4) Mary (5) Person 1 and Person 2) (See the Dramatise Gospel attached)

Pause for a few moments of prayerful reflection and allow the Words of the Gospel to speak to you.

A LENS ON THE GOSPEL

The death of Lazarus left a hole in the life of his two sisters, Martha and Mary, just as the death of a loved one does to us. Their first impulse was to send a message to Jesus their friend to come and help. There was no reply; their pleas seemed to go unheeded. Over four days they watched helplessly by their brother's deathbed, and then their expressed regret, mentioned three times in this Gospel, Why didn't you come sooner, "Couldn't you have prevented this tragedy in the first place?" Their helpless and hopeless cry is echoed in that of the Jewish exiles in Babylon; "Our bones are dried up and our hope is gone; we are cut off completely." "Out of the depths, the hole