

CONTINUING OUR *journey*



Building the Kingdom of God Together in 2022

LENTEN REFLECTION



Contents

Pastoral Ministries 4
 Lenten Reflection 4
The Process of Mystagogical Reflection 6
 Invitation 6
 Mystagogical Reflection (Sunday Gospel) 7
Week 1 (March 6) 9
Week 2 (March 13) 11
Week 3 (March 20) 13
Week 4 (March 27) 15
Week 5 (April 3) 17



When our late Bishop Bill convoked the Maitland-Newcastle Diocesan Synod in 2019, the turbulent nature of the following two years could not have been predicted. While Session One could take place face-to-face, Session Two needed to be modified due to the pandemic, and Session Three has been postponed.

The first Assembly of the Fifth Plenary Council was also delayed; however, in October 2021 representatives were able to gather online in prayer and discernment.

The Pope convoked the Sixteenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (Synod on Synodality) in October 2021:

“For the first time in the history of the Church, this synod will invite all 1.37 billion Catholics to take part in the process of listening and discernment. The aim of this ‘journeying together’, the literal meaning of Synodality, is to bring Catholics closer to the mission of Jesus. In this ‘way of being church’ the whole People of God come closer together on the journey of bringing alive the Kingdom of God on Earth.”¹

Our Diocese and our nation have already begun the listening and discerning process at a grassroots level. While no major decisions can be made at a Diocesan level regarding the Synod until a new Bishop is appointed, we can still walk and journey together, listen and learn from one another.

As part of our continued synodal journey, we also encountered Christ within each other through the Advent mystagogical reflection process. Stories of faith and life experiences were heard in the ‘Churches without Walls’ series, highlighting how our local People of God are working towards building the Kingdom of God.

Continuing our synodal journey, you are invited to come together in parishes, schools and across the Diocese, both face-to-face and online, to remain connected during the season of Lent.

This resource provides the opportunity to encounter scripture and our synodal themes through the process of mystagogical reflection. As you encounter the mystery of God in the scripture, this may lead you to discover the mystery of God in one another through sharing of life and experience.

This Lent as we encounter the Paschal Mystery, you are invited to sit with the scripture and the themes revealed through our synodal process. We encourage you to watch the reflections of the scripture (*Resource 1*) and the ‘Church Without Walls’ series (*Resource 2*) and reflect on how we, as people of the resurrection, can put our faith into action.

Rose McAllister
Manager Formation and Education

¹ Jenny Sinclair, A synod for the world, The year ahead – synodality. *The Tablet*, December, 2021 www.thetablet.co.uk/features/2/21206/a-synod-for-the-world

Pastoral Ministries

Lenten Reflection

Lent, the period of forty days before the feast of Easter, is a time when we turn the focus from ourselves to God through prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

According to Pope Francis, “Lent is a privileged time for prayer”. In prayer, we draw closer in our relationship with God. In prayer, we communicate with him, read his words meditate on them, and contemplate the wonder, awe and beauty of our natural world. Prayer opens us up to love. We fast during this period to acknowledge the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the Cross. While fasting develops self-control, it also leads to spiritual and physical purification and helps us focus our attention more fully on the Cross of Christ. The Lenten call to almsgiving means making other people’s needs our own. The Cross that is carried can be a heavy burden and bring much suffering. We are called to lighten the load of those in need through acts of charity and service.

It is interesting to discover that in the first three centuries of Christian experience, preparation for the Easter feast usually covered a period of one or two days, perhaps a week at most. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (140- 202) even speaks of a forty-hour preparation for Easter.

The first reference to Lent as a period of forty days of preparation occurs in the teachings of the First Council of Nicaea in 325. By the end of the fourth century, a Lenten period of forty days was established and accepted as it still is today.

In the early Church, Lent was the time of preparation for the Easter baptism of converts to the faith. Catechumens, who were to receive the sacrament of ‘new birth’, were expected to fast and prepare during these weeks. Eventually, those who were already baptised considered it important to join these candidates preparing for baptism in their preparations for Easter. In our world today, Catechumens still prepare during this season for their initiation into the Church at the Easter Vigil.

The Lenten journey provides all of us with the opportunity for reflection, contemplation, and spiritual growth. This season, we consider the impact temptation has on our lives and how through reconciliation we can be transformed so we can live out our baptismal promise. During Lent we are invited into prayer to renew and refocus our relationship with God, with ourselves and others, so we can fully celebrate the Paschal Mystery (the life, death and resurrection) and live life to the full.

In Summary

Lent is a period of preparation in the Church's Liturgical Year that orients the community towards Holy Week and the season of Easter. It is a time of prayer, fasting and good works. It is also a special time of solidarity with those who are entering their final period of preparation for initiation into the Christian community at Easter. The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and concludes on Holy Thursday Evening (the Vigil of Good Friday). Ash Wednesday is designated as an obligatory day of fasting and abstinence.

Colour: Purple

Duration: 6 weeks

Start: Ash Wednesday

Finish: Holy Thursday
(prior to Mass of the Lord's Supper)

Themes: prayer, fasting,
repentance, almsgiving.

How to use this resource

During Session Two of our Synod, members had the opportunity to vote on several recommendations. The word clouds on the following pages contain the predominant themes associated with each of the Five Foundations. These themes can assist in your sharing as you engage in the mystagogical reflection process each week during Lent. To access the Foundation and Synod documents go to: www.domnsynod.com.au/formation-and-synod-papers/ (Resource 3)

Before you gather in groups of 5-8 for mystagogical reflection (allowing 90 minutes), take some time to reflect on the themes in the word clouds. As you listen to the Gospel and are guided in the reflective process, you may find that connections are made between the themes, your experiences, and the scripture.

For those that are new to mystagogical reflection, please refer to the *'Encountering the Mystery of God. Living from Christ. Mystagogical Reflection Guide'* document available on the Diocese website (Resource 4).

Resources

1. Reflections of the Scripture
2. Church without Walls
3. Synod Documents
4. Encountering the Mystery of God. Living from Christ. Mystagogical Reflection Guide.

You can access these resources by visiting the Lent 2022 page on the Diocese website: www.mn.catholic.org.au/lent2022

The Process of Mystagogical Reflection

Invitation

The person guiding the group invites people into the process based on the following invitation.

Listen to God say to you ... *Be still and know that I am God* (Ps 46:10)

Moved by the Holy Spirit in response we pray ...

Open my/our ears to the Word of God ...

Open my/our heart(s) to the love of God ...

Open my/our mind(s) to the wisdom of God ...

Let us listen for the words of everlasting life ...

Mystagogical Reflection (Sunday Gospel)

Each step finishes in silence before the guide invites the group into the next step ...

1. Encounter with Christ in the Word proclaimed ... listen ...

2. Recollection: What happened?

An invitation to recall what happened in the text. No interpretation, just what happened. The detail is important.

3. Reflection: What did you notice – what word or phrase captures your attention?

What did you experience/feel? How does this relate to your life experience?

What meaning is God revealing to you?

An invitation to be attentive to Christ present in the encounter.

Meaning is found in being attentive to what the Holy Spirit is revealing to you about the dying – rising mystery of God’s saving love. What links can we make between our experiences and the Synod’s recommendations?

4. Faith sharing: How is the meaning found in your encounter with Christ in the scripture connecting with the season of Lent? How are we being invited to know Christ more deeply and live more faithfully?

An invitation to connect your experience and the meaning you have found in it, with what Christ is revealing in the living tradition of our Catholic faith.

5. Connection: Why does what Christ has revealed to us matter now?

An invitation to consider what it means to live from Christ as we continue on our synodal journey.

How is this revelation/learning inviting us to participate in the Paschal Mystery?

6. Conversion: How will you live differently as a result of what you have experienced?

What is dying? What is being raised up? How can the synodal recommendations become part of our living Christian experience in our diocese?

Contemplate – rest in the presence of God.

Final Prayer

The prayer follows the period of contemplation at the conclusion of the mystagogical reflection process.

Let us pray.

Loving God, you gave us this Lenten journey as a time for prayer and renewal. As we journey together, we ask that this is a time when we listen to your voice and discover the sacredness in each other. You call us out of the wilderness and selfishness to reach out to those who do not know hope or love. Let us be messengers of your love, compassion and mercy.

We ask this through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Week 1 (March 6)

IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY



Luke 4:1-13

A reading from the Holy Gospel of Luke

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.' But Jesus replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone.'

Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours.' But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God, and serve him alone.'

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God', he said to him 'throw yourself down from here, for Scripture says:

He will put his angels in charge of you to guard you,

and again:

They will hold you up on their hands in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'

But Jesus answered him, 'It has been said: You must not put the Lord your God to the test.' Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him, to return at the appointed time.

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God person prayer Christ help
body need ministry continuity
mission world love one Christ concern
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Week 2 (March 13)

WORSHIP & PRAYER



Luke 9:28-36

A reading from the Holy Gospel of Luke

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up the mountain to pray. As he prayed, the aspect of his face was changed and his clothing became brilliant as lightning. Suddenly there were two men there talking to him; they were Moses and Elijah appearing in glory, and they were speaking of his passing which he was to accomplish in Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were heavy with sleep, but they kept awake and saw his glory and the two men

standing with him. As these were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, 'Master, it is wonderful for us to be here; so let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.' – He did not know what he was saying. As he spoke, a cloud came and covered them with shadow; and when they went into the cloud the disciples were afraid. And a voice came from the cloud saying, 'This is my Son, the Chosen One. Listen to him.' And after the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. The disciples kept silent and, at that time, told no one what they had seen.

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Week 3 (March 20)

FORMATION & EDUCATION



Luke 13:1-9

A reading from the Holy Gospel of Luke

Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this, he said to them, 'Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but

unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

He told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it but found none. He said to the man who looked after the vineyard, "Look here, for three years now I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and finding none. Cut it down: why should it be taking up the ground?" "Sir," the man replied "leave it one more year and give me time to dig around it and manure it: it may bear fruit next year; if not, then you can cut it down."

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Laudato si'

A person is seen from behind, walking away on a gravel path towards a sunset. They are carrying a black suitcase. The sky is filled with colorful clouds in shades of orange, yellow, and blue. The scene is framed by wooden pillars on either side.

Week 4 (March 27)

MISSION & OUTREACH

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

A reading from the Holy Gospel of Luke

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man', they said, 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So, he spoke this parable to them:

'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me." So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father.

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy,

clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening."

The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it is only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found."

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Week 5 (April 3)

LEADERSHIP & STRUCTURE



John 8:1-11

A reading from the Holy Gospel of John

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?' They asked him this as

a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus, 'go away and don't sin anymore.'

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Acknowledgements

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