

GROWING IN FRIENDSHIP WITH CHRIST



THROUGH LENT WITH
POPE FRANCIS, FR. HENRI NOUWEN
& ST. MOTHER TERESA

INTRODUCTION

Before the early Christians were known as Christians, they referred to themselves simply as followers of “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 18:25, 26; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22). The Christian way is the way to God through Christ in the Holy Spirit. So spirituality is all about the way we get from where we first start to where we end. It is a way of seeing the world (our worldview) and a way of being in the world (our actions). On this year’s Lenten journey of faith and conversion, we will be guided on the way by three experienced spiritual guides: Pope Francis, St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997) and priest-psychologist Fr. Henri J.M. Nouwen (1932-1996). Through their insightful daily reflections we will learn how to see the world the way Jesus does, to value it as Jesus does and to act in it as Jesus does, which will lead us inevitably to the cross as it does Jesus. But like Jesus, we must entrust ourselves to God and trust that through our cross will come the new life of resurrection.

—Steve Mueller
Editor

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Pope Francis

Reflections adapted from the encyclicals, apostolic exhortations, weekly papal audiences, addresses and homilies of Pope Francis.



Mother Teresa

Where There Is Love, There Is God: A Path to Closer Union with God and Greater Love for Others, edited by Brian Kolodiejchuk, MC (Doubleday, 2012).



Henri J.H. Nouwen

A Cry for Mercy (Doubleday, 1981); *Finding My Way Home* (Crossroad, 2001); *Letters to Marc about Jesus* (HarperCollins, 1998); *The Return of the Prodigal Son: The Story of Homecoming* (Doubleday, 1992); *The Selfless Way of Christ: Downward Mobility and the Spiritual Life* (Orbis, 2007).

Ash Wednesday

WELCOME JESUS AS A FRIEND

“Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing.”
(Joel 2:12)

Lent is a new beginning, a path leading to the certain goal of Easter, Christ’s victory over death. This season urgently calls us to conversion, to return to God “with all your heart,” to refuse to settle for mediocrity and to grow in friendship with the Lord, the faithful friend who never abandons us. And even when we sin, he shows us his readiness to forgive. Lent is also a favorable season for deepening our spiritual life through God’s word which we are invited to hear and ponder more deeply during Lent. Jesus no longer belongs to the past, but lives in the present and is projected towards the future. God’s newness appears to us as victory over sin, evil and death, over everything that crushes life and makes it seem less human. Let the risen Jesus enter your life, welcome him as a friend, with trust: he is life! If up till now you have kept him at a distance, step forward. He will receive you with open arms. If you have been indifferent, take a risk. You won’t be disappointed. If following him seems difficult, don’t be afraid, trust him, be confident that he is close to you. He is with you and will give you the peace you are looking for and the strength to live as he would have you do.

—Pope Francis

What practical steps will I take to draw closer to Jesus this Lent?

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

I BELONG TO JESUS

“You are called to belong to Jesus Christ.” (Romans 1:6)

God has chosen us, called us—each of us—by name. It is part of God’s plan, part of God’s infinite mercy that God has called us all together, each of us with our particular characters and faults. No matter who says what, nobody can change this for me. I belong to Jesus, who can do to me whatever he wants. The work we do is not our vocation. Our vocation is that we belong to him. Our profession is that we belong to him. Therefore, I am ready to do anything: wash, scrub, and so on. Like a mother who gives birth to a child, the child belongs to her. All her washing, staying up at night, and so on, is proving that the child belongs to her. She will not do

this for any other child, but she will do anything for her own child—even dirty washing. If I belong to Jesus, then I will do anything for Jesus. Today, just meditate on all this. What is my attitude to Jesus? Have I a living love for Christ?

—St. Mother Teresa

How might I show my love for Christ better in my actions today?

Friday after Ash Wednesday

BECOMING LIVING CHRISTS

“I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.”

(Galatians 2:20)

The spiritual life is a life guided by the same Spirit who guided Jesus Christ. The Spirit is the breath of Christ in us, the divine power of Christ active in us, the mysterious source of new vitality by which we are made aware that it is not we who live, but Christ who lives in us. Indeed, to live a spiritual life means to become living Christs. The Holy Scriptures, the Word of God, forms us into living Christs, and this formation into living Christs by our relationship with his Spirit goes far beyond information, instruction, edification or inspiration. This formation requires eating the Word, chewing on it, digesting it, and thus letting it become true nourishment. Thus the Word descends from our minds into our hearts and there finds a dwelling place. This is what meditation is all about. It is the discipline of inner attentiveness to the Word. Among the many texts the church presents to us each year, there might be one word, one story, one parable, one sentence that has the power to turn us around, to change our whole life, to give us a new heart and new mind, to conform us to Christ.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

How might I find more time today to meditate on God’s Word for me?

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

I CALL YOU FRIENDS

“I do not call you servants any longer, but I call you friends.” (John 15:15)

Friendship is so important that Jesus calls himself a friend. By the gift of his grace, we are elevated in such a way that we truly become his friends.

With the same love that Christ pours out on us, we can love him in turn and share his love with others, in the hope that they too will take their place in the community of friendship he established. And even as he enjoys the complete bliss of the life of the resurrection, we, for our part, can work generously to help him build his kingdom in this world, by bringing his message, his light, and above all his love, to others. The disciples heard Jesus calling them to be his friends. It was an invitation that did not pressure them, but gently appealed to their freedom. “Come and see,” Jesus told them; so “they came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day” (Jn 1:39). After that unexpected and moving encounter, they left everything and followed him.

—Pope Francis

What do I most want to understand about Jesus for my life now?

1st Sunday of Lent

SORRY, BUT I'M BUSY NOW

“Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”

(James 1:12)

The devil very often comes as an angel of light. He tried to bluff Jesus with beautiful scripture words—because the closer you try to come to Jesus, the more the devil is after you. You should spend more time in prayer. Jesus is not waiting for you in the tabernacle but in the slums, touching, loving the poor. The devil has very high ideas—very clever—even to Jesus he quoted from Holy Scripture. He did not say one bad word but the most beautiful words to deceive even Jesus. The devil uses the most beautiful things to deceive us, and will not bind us with a chain but with a silk cord. He is much too clever. None of us are so safe that we can play with fire. The devil will never try to tempt you with something big, but with a small thing. If the devil had to get a Nobel Prize, it should be for patience. Just as we do small things with great love so we also do small things with great hatred in our hearts. When I sense the devil coming to tempt me, I have learnt one very easy trick. I say “I am sorry, but I am very busy now.”

—St. Mother Teresa

What most helps me to overcome the temptations I am facing now?

Monday, Week 1

FOLLOWING CHRIST'S DOWNWARD WAY

“Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35)

The spiritual life is the life of the Spirit of Christ within and among us. The Holy Spirit leads us on the downward way, not to cause us to suffer or to subject us to pain and humiliation, but rather to help us to see God present in the midst of our struggles. We will become conscious of truly being sons and daughters of God by becoming participants in this downward way, the way of the cross. Jesus tells us that the Spirit by whom we participate in the divine life is the same Spirit who allows us to be in the world without being of it. The world, however, is the place where the Evil One roams, wanting to snatch us away from God and return us to the road of upward mobility. We must face and deal with this tempter as Jesus did. It may be that the true quality of the spiritual life can only be recognized in the face of our temptations. Three temptations by which we are confronted again and again are the temptation to be relevant, the temptation to be spectacular, and the temptation to be powerful. All three are temptations to return to the ways of the world of upward mobility and divert us from our mission to reveal Christ to the world.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

Which of these three temptations most lures me away from following Jesus' way?

Tuesday, Week 1

FACING OUR TEMPTATIONS

“One is tempted by one's own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.” (James 1:13)

Lent is a time for letting our eyes be opened to the frequent injustices which stand in direct opposition to the dream and the plan of God. It is a time to unmask three great temptations that wear down and fracture the image which God wanted to form in us and seek to destroy what we have been called to be.

First, wealth: seizing hold of goods destined for all, and using them only for “my own people.” That is, taking “bread” based on the toil of others,

or even at the expense of their very lives. That wealth which tastes of pain, bitterness and suffering. That is the bread that a corrupt family or society gives its own children.

Second, vanity: the pursuit of prestige based on continuous, relentless exclusion of those who “are not like me.” The futile chasing of those five minutes of fame which never forgive others for their “reputation.”

Third, pride, or rather, putting oneself on a higher level than one truly is on, feeling that one does not share the life of “mere mortals,” and yet being one who prays every day: “I thank you Lord that you have not made me like those others”(Lk 18:11).

The three temptations of Christ and which the Christian is also faced with daily seek to corrode, destroy and extinguish the joy and freshness of the Gospel and lock us into a cycle of destruction and sin.

—Pope Francis

Which of these temptations most lures me from Jesus example of how to live?

Wednesday, Week 1

THERE IS NO SIN TILL WE SAY “YES”

“Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.”

(1 Peter 5:8-9)

The devil tempts us not so much to do us harm as to destroy God in us. We are nothing for him. He can do evil to so many but he is very anxious that in my soul he will destroy God. To separate us because he knows Christ has died for us and he wants us to let that precious blood be wasted in us. He tries to make us share in his hatred for God by committing sin, by doing an evil action or having an evil desire. But there is no sin until we say “yes.” And that is the most beautiful part. Though he is a father of lies, though he feels that he has got much power, yet he cannot make us say “yes,” not even once in the smallest thing unless we want. This is the wonderful part of God, given to each soul, that even the devil and all of hell cannot break you if you don’t want. So sin comes only when we will it. The devil is like a roaring lion that goes round and round to see whom he can eat up. Sin is the evil that destroys the temple of God within us, that tries to separate the soul from God.

—St. Mother Teresa

How might I strengthen my freedom to say “no” to my temptations?

Thursday, Week 1

BECOMING OTHER CHRISTS

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, . . . who emptied himself . . . becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.” (Philippians 2:5, 7, 8)

Our vocation as Christians is to follow Jesus on his downward path and to become witnesses to God’s compassion in the concrete situation of our time and place. Our temptation is to let needs for success, visibility and influence dominate our thoughts, words and actions to such an extent that we are gripped in the destructive spiral of upward mobility and thus lose our vocation. This lifelong tension between vocation and temptation presents us with the necessity of spiritual formation. Precisely because the downward mobility of the way of the cross cannot rely on our spontaneous responses, we are faced with the question, “How do we conform our minds and hearts to the mind and heart of the self-emptying Christ?” To follow Christ requires the willingness and determination to let God’s Spirit pervade all the corners of our minds and hearts and there make us into other Christs. Formation is transformation, and transformation means a growing conformity to the mind of Christ, who did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

What do I most need to do to conform myself and my actions to those of Jesus?

Friday, Week 1

IN YOU, O GOD, I TRUST

“I trust in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.” (Psalm 31:14)

We have chosen Jesus, not the evil one. Jesus does not reply to the devil with any of his own words, but rather he the words of God, the words of scripture. We cannot dialogue with the devil because he will always win. Only the power of God’s word can overcome him. We have opted for Jesus and not for the devil. We want to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, even though we know that this is not easy. We know what it means to be seduced by money, fame and power. For this reason, the Church gives us the gift of this Lenten season, invites us to conversion, offering but one certainty: he is waiting for us and wants to heal our hearts of all that tears us down. He is the God who has a name: Mercy. His name is our wealth, his name is what makes us

famous, his name is our power and in his name we say once more with the Psalm: “You are my God and in you I trust.”

—Pope Francis

How might I express my trust in Jesus and ask him to help with my temptations?

Saturday, Week 1

FAITHFUL IN LITTLE THINGS

“The devil was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44)

If we allow ourselves to be unfaithful in little things and say “It doesn’t matter,” the day will come when we want to get rid of it, and we will be so blinded that we won’t know how to. Jesus tells us this in one word when he describes the devil as the father of lies. You may be saint or sinner. Both have temptations. We have to fight the temptation like our Lord, with confidence and humility. With him I conquer. With him I can do all things. God will help us. Alone we cannot do anything. Pride helps the devil. The devil does not come as he did to our Lord—with the temptation in the desert, showing mountains and all the treasures of the world. For us there are small things: To say prayers beautifully, to take holy water with reverence. The devil makes us think, “What is the use of always asking?” The devil uses a silk thread to catch us, not a rope. Ropes there are also. If you think you are on a pedestal, you are wrong.

—St. Mother Teresa

How has my giving in to small temptations led me to yield to even greater ones?

2nd Sunday of Lent

WE ARE GOD’S BELOVED CHILDREN

“And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’” (Mark 1:11)

The transfiguration vision is not just about Jesus. It is also about you and me. Jesus came to share his identity with you and to tell you that you are the beloved sons and daughters of God. Just for a moment try to enter this enormous mystery, that you, like Jesus, are the beloved daughter or the beloved son of God. This is the truth. Furthermore, your belovedness pre-

ceded your birth. You were the beloved before your father, mother, brother, sister, or church loved you or hurt you. You are the beloved because you belong to God from all eternity. God loved you before you were born, and God will love you after you die. In Scripture God says, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” This is a very fundamental truth of your identity. This is who you are whether you feel it or not. You belong to God from eternity to eternity. Life is just a little opportunity for you during a few years to say, “I love you, too!”

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

When have I most felt like I am God's beloved child?

Monday, Week 2

LISTEN TO MY BELOVED SON

“Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!’” (Mark 9:7)

When the Lord is transfigured before Peter, James and John, they hear God the Father say: “This is my beloved Son! Listen to him!” The first duty of every Christian is to listen to the Word of God, to listen to Jesus, because he speaks to us and makes our faith even stronger and more robust. We listen to so many things throughout the day, but do we take a little time each day to listen to Jesus, to listen to Jesus’ word by reading a passage from the Gospel? Or are we afraid of this, or unaccustomed to reading it? Jesus’ word is the most nourishing food for the soul and for our faith. Each day Jesus’ word enters our hearts and makes us stronger in faith. Carry the Gospels in your pocket or purse, and when you have a little time, take the Gospel and read a few words. When we listen to Jesus’ word and think about what he was like and how he did things, our minds, our hearts go forward on the journey of hope on which the Lord places us.

—Pope Francis

How might I spend more time today listening to Jesus' words from scripture?



Tuesday, Week 2

GOD SPEAKS IN THE SILENCE OF OUR HEART

“Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.” (1 Samuel 3:9)

To be able to pray for peace we must be able first of all to listen, for God speaks in the silence of the heart, and that is the beginning of prayer, that is the beginning of peace. God speaks, and we must have the courage to listen to the word of God. And then only, from the fullness of our hearts, we can speak, we can speak the prayer of peace. The fruit of prayer is deepening of love, deepening on faith. If we believe, we will be able to pray, and the fruit of faith is wrought of love, and the fruit of love is service. Therefore works of love are always works of peace, and to be able to put our hearts and our hands into loving service we must know that God is love, that God loves us and that has created us—each one of us—for greater things. God has created us to love and to be loved, and this is the beginning of prayer—to know that God loves me, that I have been created for greater things.

—St. Mother Teresa

How might I spend a little more time today listening to Jesus speak in the silence of my heart?

Wednesday, Week 2

SENT TO PROCLAIM GOD’S LOVE

“The love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all...so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.” (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)

If you dare to believe that you are beloved before you are born, you may suddenly realize that your life is very, very special. You become conscious that you were sent here just for a short time, for twenty, forty or eighty years, to discover and believe that you are a beloved child of God. The length of time doesn’t matter. You are sent into this world to believe in yourself as God’s chosen one and then to help your brothers and sisters know that they also are beloved sons and daughters of God who belong together. You’re sent into this world to be a people of reconciliation. You are sent to heal, to break down the walls between you and your neighbors, locally, nationally, and globally. Before all the distinctions, the separations,

and the walls built on foundations of fear, there was unity in the mind and heart of God. Out of that unity, you are sent into this world for a little while to claim that you and every other human being belongs to that same God of Love who lives from eternity to eternity.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

With whom might I find some way to share God's love today?

Thursday, Week 2

SHARE THE WORD OF GOD WITH OTHERS

“Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.”

(2 Timothy 4:2)

*W*hile, the disciples of Jesus, are called to be people who listen to his voice and take his words seriously. To listen to Jesus, we must be close to him, to follow him, like the crowd in the Gospel who chase him through the streets of Palestine. Jesus did not have a teaching post or a fixed pulpit, he was an itinerant teacher, who proposed his teachings, teachings given to him by the Father, along the streets, covering distances that were not always predictable or easy. We too follow Jesus in order to listen to him in his written Word, in the Gospels. When we hear the Word of Jesus, when we listen to the Word of Jesus and carry it in our heart, this Word grows. Do you know how it grows? By giving it to others! The Word of Christ grows in us when we proclaim it, when we give it to others! And this is what Christian life is. It is a mission for the whole Church, for all the baptized, for us all: listen to Jesus and offer him to others.

—Pope Francis

With whom might I find an opportunity to share God's Word about Jesus today?

Friday, Week 2

SEARCHING FOR GOD

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7)

*P*eople are asking for spiritual help, for consolation. They are so afraid, discouraged, in despair, so many commit suicide. That's why we must con-

concentrate on being God's love, God's presence—not by words, but by service, concrete love, listening. Seek wholeheartedly to love God and long to find God. In this way you satiate the thirst of God who thirsts for us to thirst for Jesus, God made human, who has come to reveal God to us. Listen prayerfully in deep faith to his teachings and strive to do what he says. To make sure we remember his great love, he made himself the Bread of Life to satisfy our hunger for his love—our hunger for God—because we have been created for that love. Jesus also made himself the hungry one, the thirsty one, the naked one, the lonely one to enable us to love him in return, for he says: “Whatever you do to the least of mine, you do it to me” (Mt 25:40). Jesus is hungry for our love, and this is the hunger of our poor people. This is the hunger that you and I must find. It may be in our own homes.

—St. Mother Teresa

What might I do today to respond to Jesus' hunger to love me and my hunger to love him?

Saturday, Week 2

FINDING THE GOD OF LOVE

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” (John 14:27)

God is Spirit and the Source of all love. Our spiritual journey calls us to seek and find this living God of Love in prayer, worship, spiritual reading, spiritual mentoring, compassionate service to the poor, and good friends. Let us claim the truth that we are loved and open our hearts to receive God's overflowing love poured out for us. And living fully each day let us share that love in all our wonderful and difficult relationships, responsibilities, and passages. The seeds of death are at work in us, but love is stronger than death. Your death and mine is our final passage, our exodus to the full realization of our identity as God's beloved children and to full communion with the God of love. Jesus walked the path ahead of us and invites us to choose the same path during our lifetime. He calls to us, “Follow me.” He assures us. “Do not be afraid.” This is our faith.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

What most causes me to be afraid in my attempts to follow Jesus' ways?

3rd Sunday of Lent

I WILL REBUILD MY TEMPLE

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16)

To understand today’s Gospel, we need to stress that God wants the temple to be “a house of prayer for all peoples” (Is 56:7). Hence Jesus’ decision to overturn the tables of the money changers and drive out the animals. This was necessary for Israel to rediscover its vocation: to be light for all people, a small nation chosen to serve for the salvation that God wants to give to everyone. You now are entrusted with the task of finding new ways to meet those who are far from the faith and the Church. There is no human heart in which Christ does not want to be and cannot be reborn. In our lives as sinners, we often turn away from the Lord and extinguish the Spirit and destroy the temple of God that is in each of us. Yet this is never a definitive situation. In a way that is often mysterious but real, the Lord opens new cracks in our hearts, the desire for truth, goodness and beauty, which make room for evangelization. We must hold on to the belief that it takes the Lord three days to rebuild his temple within us.

—Pope Francis

How has Jesus been rebuilding the temple of my heart this Lent to be his own dwelling?

Monday, Week 3

TRUSTING GOD’S LOVE

“I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)

Sin is the evil that destroys the temple of God within us, that tries to separate the soul from God. Change of place is not going to change my heart. What is going to change my heart? My love for Jesus. I want only to be really all for Jesus. Let us ask our Lady to help us during this day to really open your heart to Jesus. By yourself you don’t have the courage. Confess that. Take the root out. You will find Jesus, and when you find Jesus you will find peace, love, unity. Let us respond to the tremendous thirst of God by our loving trust in God’s love for us and total surrender to God’s will

with joy. Let us turn to God with deep faith and love, repenting for our sins and begging for God's mercy. Let us turn to each other also in love and trust, asking pardon for all the hurt we have caused others and forgiving all for the hurt we have received.

—St. Mother Teresa

What has most separated me from God and my call to follow Jesus and his ways?

Tuesday, Week 3

MY INSECURE HEART

"I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you." (Jeremiah 31:3)

The real sin is to deny God's first love for me, to ignore my original goodness. Because without claiming that first love and that original goodness for myself, I lose touch with my true self and embark on the destructive search among the wrong people and in the wrong places for what can only be found in the house of my Father. I do not think I am alone in this struggle to claim God's first love and my original goodness. Beneath much human assertiveness, competitiveness, and rivalry; beneath much self-confidence and even arrogance, there is often a very insecure heart, much less sure of itself than outward behavior would lead one to believe. I am beginning now to see how radically the character of my spiritual journey will change when I no longer think of God as hiding out and making it as difficult as possible for me to find him, but, instead, as the one who is looking for me while I am doing the hiding. When I look through God's eyes at my lost self and discover God's joy at my coming home, then my life may become less anguished and more trusting.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

How have I been hiding to avoid responding to God's search for me?

Wednesday, Week 3

BRINGING HOPE IN DARK TIMES

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Our mission as Jesus' followers is to bring the hope and salvation of God to the world: to be a sign of the love of God who calls everyone to friend-

ship with him; to be the leaven that makes the dough rise, the salt that gives flavor and preserves from corruption, to be a light that enlightens. As we look around us or open a newspaper, we see the presence of evil, the devil is acting. However, we believe that God is stronger! Do you believe this, that God is stronger? And do you know why God is stronger? Because God is Lord, the only Lord. And I would like to add that reality, at times dark and marked by evil, can change, if we first bring the light of the Gospel especially through our lives. If in a stadium on a dark night, if one person turns on a light, you can barely see it. But if the other 70,000 spectators turn on their own light, the whole stadium shines. Let our lives together be the one light of Christ and together we will carry the light of the Gospel to the whole of reality.

—Pope Francis

To whom might I bring the light of the Gospel today?

Thursday, Week 3

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

“You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

(Matthew 5:14, 16)

Some time ago, in Calcutta, many principals of different schools and colleges came to our house and they were saying, “Mother, we would like to give up the schools and colleges and come and share the work with you.” Then I said to them, “This is the most devilish temptation for you, most devilish, because if the devil can remove you, he will be able to destroy all the young people. You are the only ones who are Christ’s presence to them. You are the only ones who can give the light of Christ to them. You are the only ones who can live the joy of loving for them. You are the only ones who can teach them what is purity, what is obedience, what is life of love for each other. Therefore, stay where you are—but open your schools to our poor people, and the slums will not be slums anymore. Open your hospitals to our poor people, and no need for you to come and work with us. We’ll bring people to you.”

—St. Mother Teresa

With whom might I share the joy of God’s love today?

Friday, Week 3

BE WITH ME, JESUS

“Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20)

Lord Jesus Christ, I pray that this Lenten period may make me more aware of your forgiving presence in my life and less concerned about performing well in the eyes of my world. Let me recognize you in the depth of my heart where you dwell and heal me. Let me experience you in that center of my being from which you want to teach and guide me. Let me know you as my loving brother who holds nothing—not even my worst sins against me, but who wants to touch me in a gentle embrace. Take away the many fears, suspicions, and doubts by which I prevent you from being my Lord, and give me the courage and freedom to appear naked and vulnerable in the light of your presence, confident in your unfathomable mercy. I know how great my resistance is, how quickly I choose the darkness instead of the light. But I also know that you keep calling me into the light, where I can see not only my sins but your gracious face as well. Be with me every hour of my days. Praise and glory to you, now and forever.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

How have I been most aware of Jesus' presence in myself and my life this Lent?

Saturday, Week 3

THE LAW OF LOVE

“But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment.” (Matthew 5:22)

The law of the People of God is the law of love—love for God and love for neighbor which go together. This love is not sterile sentimentality or something vague, but the acknowledgment of God as the one Lord of life and, at the same time, the acceptance of the other as my true brother or sister, thus overcoming division, rivalry, misunderstanding, selfishness. Oh how much more of the journey do we have to make in order to actually live the new law—the law of the Holy Spirit who acts in us, the law of love! Looking in newspapers or on television we see so many wars—wars of envy, of jealousy, being waged in neighborhoods, in the workplace and in families! We must ask the Lord to make us correctly understand this law of love. How beautiful it is to love one another as true brothers and sisters. Many of us are perhaps a little angry with someone. Then let us pray: “Lord, I

am angry with this or that person and am praying to you for him or her.” To pray for those with whom we are angry is a beautiful step towards that law of love.

—Pope Francis

How might I take the first step to reconcile with those I am angry with?

4th Sunday of Lent

BECOMING LIKE A CHILD

“Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it.” (Mark 10:15)

Where can I learn to pray? Jesus taught us to pray, “Pray like this: Our Father...Thy will be done...Forgive us as we forgive.” It is so simple yet so beautiful. It comes throughout the day in every day of our lives. If we pray the “Our Father” and live it, we will be holy. Everything is there: God, myself, my neighbor. If I forgive, then I can be holy and I can pray. All this comes from a humble heart and if we have this we will know how to love God, to love self and my neighbor. You see in this a simple love for Jesus. There are no complications and yet we complicate our lives so much, by so many additions. Just one thing counts: to be humble, to pray. The more you pray the better you pray. How do you pray? You should go to God like a little child. A child has no difficulty in expressing his little mind in simple words, but they express so much. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “Become as a little child.” If we pray, the Gospel we will allow Christ to grow in us.

—St. Mother Teresa

In relation to God’s gifts, how might I become more open and accepting like a child?

Monday, Week 4

HEART SPEAKS TO HEART

“As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’” (Galatians 4:6)

The discipline of the heart helps us let God into our hearts so God can become known to us there, in the deepest recesses of our own being. This is not so easy to do. God’s love is a demanding, even a jealous love, and when we let that love speak within us, we are led into places where we would

often rather not go. And yet we know that everyone who has let God's love enter into his or her heart has not only become a better human being, but has also contributed significantly to making a better world. Make room in your heart for God and let God cherish you. There you can be alone with God. There heart speaks to heart and there in that holy seclusion the new person will be born in you. Jesus said to Nicodemus: "No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." It is this rebirth that is made possible when you dare to be alone with God. It takes place in the deepest secrecy, but where God's heart speaks to your heart, there everything is made new.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

How might I take more time today just to be alone with God?

Tuesday, Week 4

PRAYING TO GOD OUR FATHER

"When you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret." (Matthew 6:6)

In order to pray, there is no need to make noise or believe that that it is better to use more words. To pray there is no need to heap up empty phrases. Praying is not something magic. So how should we pray? Jesus has taught us. He says that the Father who is in heaven "knows what you need before you ask him" (Mt 6:8). Therefore, let our first word be "Father." This is the key to prayer. Without speaking, without feeling this word, praying is not possible. To whom do I pray? The almighty God? That God is too far away. I don't feel him; neither did Jesus feel him. To whom do I pray? The God of the cosmos? This is quite frequent nowadays, isn't it? Praying to the cosmic God. This polytheistic model comes with a superficial culture. Rather, we must pray to the Father, who begot us. But this is not all. We must pray "our" Father, that is, not the Father of a generic and too anonymous "all," but the one who gave you life, who gave life to you and me.

—Pope Francis

How do I feel when I think about and pray to God as a father?

Wednesday, Week 4

WHEN PRAYER IS HARD

“God chose to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; it is Christ in you, the hope for glory.” (Colossians 1:27)

When a time comes and we can't pray it is very simple: if Jesus is in my heart let him pray, let me allow him to pray in me, to talk to his Father in the silence of my heart. If I cannot speak, he will speak; if I cannot pray, he will pray. That's why often we should say, “Jesus in my heart, I believe in your faithful love for me.” And when we have nothing to give—let us give him that nothingness. When we cannot pray—let us give that inability to him. Let him pray in us to the Father. Let us ask him to pray in us, for no one knows the Father better than he. No one can pray better than Jesus. And if my heart is pure, if in my heart is Jesus, if my heart is a tabernacle of the living God to sanctify in grace: Jesus and I are one. He prays in me, he thinks in me, he works with me and through me, he uses my tongue to speak, he uses my brain to think, he uses my hand to touch him in the broken body.

—St. Mother Teresa

How have I dealt with the dry times of my prayer this Lent? With what results?

Thursday, Week 4

LISTEN TO YOUR HEART

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)

Praying is first and foremost listening to Jesus who dwells in the very depths of your heart. He doesn't shout. He doesn't thrust himself upon you. His voice is an unassuming voice, very nearly a whisper, the voice of a gentle love. Whatever you do with your life, go on listening to the voice of Jesus in your heart. This listening must be an active and very attentive listening, for in our restless and noisy world God's so loving voice is easily drowned out. You need to set aside some time every day for this active listening to God if only for ten minutes. Ten minutes each day for Jesus alone can bring about a radical change in your life. You'll find that it isn't easy to be still for ten minutes at a time. You'll discover straightaway that many other voices, voices that are very noisy and distracting, voices which do

not come from God, demand your attention. But if you stick to your daily prayer time, then slowly but surely you'll come to hear the gentle voice of love and will long more and more to listen to it.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

What have I experienced from Jesus' gentle promptings in my prayer this Lent?

Friday, Week 4

LISTEN, LEAVE IT, FOLLOW ME

"Whoever wishes to come after me must deny their self, take up their cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24)

Christian life means following the Lord always. However, if we are to follow him we must first listen to what he is telling us; and then we must leave what we have to leave at that moment and follow him. Jesus never says: "Follow me!" without then speaking of the mission for which he always says: "leave it, and follow me for such and such." It is a sequence that is also repeated when we go to pray. First of all, listening to the word of Jesus, a word through which he gives us peace and assures us of his closeness. Then the moment of our renunciation: we must be ready to leave something: "Lord, what do you want me to leave in order to be closer to you?" Lastly, the moment of mission: prayer always helps us to understand what we must do. This sums up our prayer: "Listening to the Lord, having the courage to rid ourselves of something that prevents us from making haste to follow him and, finally, from taking on the mission.

—Pope Francis

What might I most need to leave behind to do the work Jesus is calling me to do for him?



Saturday, Week 4

TOTAL SURRENDER OF MYSELF TO GOD

“Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.” (Psalm 143:10)

Total surrender consists in giving ourselves completely to God. Why? Because God has given himself to us. If God, who owes nothing to us, is ready to impart to us no less than himself, shall we answer with just a fraction of ourselves? To give ourselves fully to God is a means of receiving God. Me for God and God for me. I live for God and give up my own self, and in this way induce God to live for me. Therefore to possess God we must allow God to possess our soul. How poor we would be if God had not given us the power of giving ourselves to God. How rich we are now! And how easy it is to conquer God! We give ourselves to God; then God is ours and there can be nothing more ours than God. The money with which God repays our surrender is himself. We become worthy of possessing God when we abandon ourselves completely to God. To surrender means to offer Him my free will and my reason, i.e., my own light to be guided by God’s word, in pure faith. My soul may be in darkness, but I know that darkness, trial, and suffering are the surest test of my blind surrender.

—St. Mother Teresa

What do I most want to hold back in my surrender to God? Why?

5th Sunday of Lent

THE WEAKNESS OF GOD

“The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.” (1 Corinthians 1:25)

What was and is God’s response to the diabolic power that rules the world and destroys people and their lands? The answer is a deep and complete mystery because God chose powerlessness. God chose to enter into human history in complete weakness. That divine choice forms the center of the Christian faith. In Jesus of Nazareth, the powerless God appeared among us to unmask the illusion of power, to disarm the prince of darkness who rules the world, and to bring the divided human race to a new unity. Through total and unmitigated powerlessness God shows us divine mercy.

The radical, divine choice is the choice to reveal glory, beauty, truth, peace, joy and, most of all, love in and through the complete divestment of power. It is very hard—if not impossible—for us to grasp this divine mystery. We keep praying to the “almighty and powerful God.” But all might and power is absent from the one who reveals God to us saying: “When you see me you see the Father” (Jn 14:9). If we truly want to love God, we have to look at the man of Nazareth, whose life was wrapped in weakness. And his weakness opens for us the way to the heart of God.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

When have I most experienced the power of weakness in my relationship with God and others?

Monday, Week 5

JESUS LEARNED OBEDIENCE

“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.” (Hebrews 5:8-9)

What does “obeying God” mean? Does it mean that we must be like slaves, in bondage? No, the one who obeys God is free not a slave! The word “obey” comes from Latin, it means to listen, to hear others. Obeying God is listening to God, having an open heart to follow the path that God points out to us and it sets us free. In our lives we often are proposed things which do not come from Jesus, which do not come from God. It is clear that at times our weaknesses take us down the wrong road. Or even a more dangerous road. We make a pact, a little of God and a little of you. We make this pact and we go forward with a double life: a little bit of the life that Jesus tells us about and a little of the life that the world and many others tell us about. The Church invites us to take Jesus’ path and not listen to the world’s proposals, the so-so proposals, the half and half proposals. They are a way of living that is not right and they won’t make us happy.

—Pope Francis

What is most drawing me away from the way Jesus is inviting me to follow him?

Tuesday, Week 5

KEEP LISTENING FOR GOD'S CALL

"Be still before the LORD; wait for him. Do not be provoked by the prosperous, nor by malicious schemers." (Psalm 37:7)

Today God continues to call you and me, but do we listen? Have we heard his voice in the silence of our hearts? Do we make time to "be still and know that I am God" (Ps 46:11)? For God cannot be heard in the midst of noise and the clamors of the world. Do we make time for prayer in our day? Do we love God enough to want to listen to God's call to let go of everything and follow Him in the freedom of poverty, with undivided love, through total surrender in obedience? From the cross, Jesus cries out, "I thirst (Jn 19:28)." His thirst was for souls—even as he hung there—dying, alone, despised. Who will bring those souls to him to satiate that thirst of the infinite God dying of love? Can you and I continue to stand by, a mere spectator? Or pass by and do nothing? I shall keep the silence of the heart with greater care so that in the silence of my heart I hear his words of comfort and from the fullness of my heart I comfort Jesus in the distressing disguise of the poor.

—St. Mother Teresa

How might I listen more carefully today to the way that Jesus is inviting me to follow him?

Wednesday, Week 5

CONTINUE YOUR WORK IN ME

"It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." (Philippians 2: 12-13)

Lord, this holy season of Lent is passing quickly. I entered into it with fear, but also with great expectations. I hoped for a great breakthrough, a powerful conversion, a real change of heart. But I know that you do not come to your people with thunder and lightning. Even St. Paul and St. Francis journeyed through much darkness before they could see your light. Let me be thankful for your gentle way. I know you are at work. I know you will not leave me alone. I know you are quickening me for Easter but in a way fitting to my own history and my own temperament. I pray that these final days, in which you invite me to enter more fully into the mystery of your passion, will bring me a greater desire to follow you on the way that

you create for me and to accept the cross that you give to me. Let me die to the desire to choose my own way and select my own cross. You do not want to make me a hero but a servant who loves you. Be with me today and in the days to come, and let me experience your gentle presence.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

What changes reveal how God has been working in me during this Lenten season?

Thursday, Week 5

TESTING THE SPIRITS

“Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they belong to God” (1 John 4:1)

Our hearts always have desires, wants, thoughts: but are all of these from the Lord? It is then necessary to test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. Not only can the prophets be false, but also their prophecies and suggestions. That is why we always need to be watchful. Indeed a Christian is precisely a man or woman who knows how to watch his or her heart. A heart in which many things come and go is like a local market where you find everything. This is precisely the reason why the constant work of discernment is so needed, in order to understand what is truly of the Lord. But how do I know that something is of Christ? “Every spirit that acknowledges Jesus Christ come in the flesh belongs to God” (1 Jn 4:2). It is so simple: if what you desire, or what you think travels down the road of the Lord who comes in the flesh, it means that it is of God. However, if it does not travel by that road, then it does not come from God. Essentially, it is a matter of recognizing the road travelled by God, who emptied himself, who humbled himself unto death on the cross—this is the way of Jesus Christ.

—Pope Francis

How might I be more alert each day to discern the thoughts and desires of my heart?



Friday, Week 5

HUNGRY FOR LOVE

“Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?” (Matthew 25:44)

It is always the same Christ who says: I was hungry—not only for food but for peace that comes from a pure heart. I was thirsty—not for water but for peace that satiates the passionate thirst of passion for war. I was naked—not for clothes, but for that beautiful dignity of men and women for their bodies. I was homeless—not for a shelter made of bricks but for a heart that understands, that covers, that loves. There are many, many people—old people, crippled people, mental people, people who have no one, nobody to love them—they are hungry for love. And maybe that kind of hunger is in your own home, your own family. Maybe there is an old person in your family, maybe there is a sick person in your family. Have you ever thought that your love for God you can show by maybe giving a smile, maybe just giving a glass of water, maybe just sitting there and talking to them for a little while?

—St. Mother Teresa

Whose hunger for love might I seek to satisfy in some way today?

Saturday, Week 5

JESUS WAS HANDED OVER

“The Son of Man is to be handed over to men and they will kill him, and three days after his death he will rise.” (Mark 9:31)

The term “to be handed over” plays a central role in the life of Jesus. Indeed, this drama of being handed over divides the life of Jesus radically in two. The first part of Jesus’ life is filled with activity. Jesus takes all sorts of initiatives. He speaks; he preaches; he heals; he travels. But in Gethsemane, Jesus was “handed over.” Some translations say that Jesus was “betrayed,” but the Greek says, “to be handed over.” Judas handed Jesus over (Mk 14:10). But the remarkable thing is that the same word is used not only for Judas but also for God. God did not spare Jesus, but handed him over to benefit us all (Rom 8:32). Immediately after Jesus is handed over, he becomes the one to whom things are being done. He’s being arrested; he’s being led to the high priest; he’s being taken before Pilate; he’s being crowned with thorns; he’s being nailed on a cross. Things are being done to

him over which he has no control. That is the meaning of passion—being the recipient of other people’s actions.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

How have I most experienced “being handed over” and things being done to me during my life?

Passion/Palm Sunday of Lent

TRUSTING & ENTRUSTING ONESELF TO GOD

“Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.” (Psalm 26:1)

Jesus had unconditional trust in the Father. He maintained friendship with his disciples, and even in moments of crisis he remained faithful to them. He showed profound compassion for the weakest and had the courage to confront the religious and political authorities of his time. He knew what it was to feel misunderstood and rejected, to experience the fear of suffering and the frailty of the Passion. He turned his gaze to the future, entrusting himself into the Father’s safe hands in the strength of the Spirit. The same Christ who, by his cross, saved us from our sins, today continues to save and redeem us by the power of his total self-surrender. Look to his cross, cling to him, let him save you, for those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. And if you sin and stray far from him, keep your eyes fixed on the outstretched arms of Christ crucified and his boundless and unending love. Contemplate his blood poured out with such great love, and let yourself be cleansed by it. In this way, you can be reborn ever anew. With a tenderness that never disappoints but is always capable of restoring our joy, he makes it possible for us to lift up our heads and start anew.

—Pope Francis

How might I increase my trust in God today?



Monday of Holy Week

THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

“Peter said to him, ‘Even though all become deserters, I will not.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Truly I tell you, this day, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’” (Mark 14:29-30)

All the apostles said, “We will stand by you, never leave you,” yet when the time came, they ran away. Two days before Peter proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God, yet when the woman said, “You also are a follower,” for fear of this woman he denied knowing Jesus—as Jesus had predicted. When Peter looked and saw Jesus, what happened? Peter went out and cried bitterly because he had denied Jesus. What did Jesus do? Jesus’ eyes met Peter’s eyes. What a tremendous hurt Peter had given to Jesus—yet what tender love was in Jesus’ eyes. Peter saw that forgiveness in Jesus’ eyes and he went out and cried bitterly. After the Resurrection, when Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me?” Peter wept. This is love. When someone hurts you, look with kindness, never keep bitterness in your heart—make one resolution. Jesus could have said, “Peter, what are you saying?” or he could have looked with angry eyes. We receive forgiveness from Jesus so that we can also give that forgiveness to others.

—St. Mother Teresa

When has fear most caused me to abandon my commitment to follow Jesus?

Tuesday of Holy Week

EVERYONE MUST CHOOSE

“I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him.” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

Passion is a kind of waiting—waiting for what other people are going to do. Jesus went to Jerusalem to announce the good news to the people of that city. And Jesus knew that he was going to put a choice before them: Will you be my disciple, or will you be my executioner? There is no middle ground here. Jesus went to Jerusalem to put people in a situation where they had to say “Yes” or “No.” That is the great drama of Jesus’ passion: he had to wait for their response. What would they do? Betray him or follow him? In a way, his agony is not simply the agony of approaching death. It is also the agony of being out of control and of having to wait. It is the agony

of a God who depends on us to decide how to live out the divine presence among us. It is the agony of the God who, in a very mysterious way, allows us to decide how God will be God. Here we glimpse the mystery of God's incarnation. God became human not only to act among us but also to be the recipient of our responses.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

How might I renew my choice to follow Jesus and live even more according to his ways?

Wednesday of Holy Week

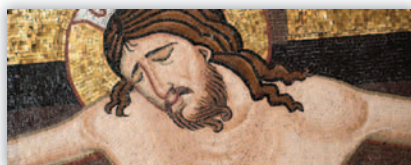
FAILURE & VICTORY

“Death is swallowed up in victory. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?”...But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:55, 57)

We must not be afraid to contemplate the cross as a moment of defeat, of failure. When Paul reflects on the mystery of Jesus Christ, he tells us that Jesus emptied himself, annihilated himself, was made sin to the end and took all our sins upon himself, a condemned man. Paul was not afraid to show this defeat and this can enlighten our moments of darkness and defeat. But the cross is also a sign of victory for us Christians. As the Fathers of the Church said, Satan saw Jesus in such a bad state, and like a hungry fish that goes after the bait attached to the hook, he swallowed him. But in that moment, he also swallowed his divinity because that was the bait attached to the hook. At that moment, Satan was destroyed forever. He has no strength. At that moment the cross became a sign of victory. Our victory is the cross of Jesus, victory over our enemy, the ancient serpent, the great accuser. We have been saved by the cross, by the fact that Jesus chose to sink to the very lowest point, but with the power of divinity.

—Pope Francis

In what ways have I also shared Jesus' mystery of failure and victory in my life?



Holy Thursday

HUNGRY FOR THE BREAD OF LIFE

“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35)

In the Eucharist, Jesus has made himself Bread of Life to satisfy my hunger for him. And then he has made himself the hungry one for the Word of God, that I may satisfy his love for me. So, he’s a hungry one also, just as we are hungry for him. And so this will fulfill the hunger of God for us and our hunger for God. That word [has] to become flesh in each other first; that word must be lived here, that word must become flesh amongst you in love, in unity, in peace, in joy, and then you will be able to go out. Jesus made himself Bread of Life that we may have life. He made himself so that you and I can receive him, can live with him, can keep him in our heart. That is why it is very important that during the day very often we say, “Jesus in my heart, I believe in your tender love for me, I love you, and I offer you my heart.”

—Mother Teresa

How might I satisfy my hunger for love by drawing closer to Jesus?

Good Friday

GOD’S LOVE REVEALED IN WEAKNESS

“Christ was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.” (2 Corinthians 13:4)

God became human, in no way different from other human beings, to break through the walls of power in total weakness. That is the story of Jesus. And how did that story end? It ended on a cross, where the same human person hangs naked with nails through his hands and feet. The powerlessness of the manger has become the powerlessness of the cross. People jeer at him, laugh at him, spit in his face, and shout: “He saved others; he cannot save himself! He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him” (Mt 27:42). He hangs there, his flesh torn apart by lead-filled whips, his heart broken by the rejection of his friends and abuse from his enemies, his mind tortured by anguish,

his spirit shrouded in the darkness of abandonment—total weakness, total powerlessness. That’s how God chose to reveal to us the divine love, bring us back into an embrace of love.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

When in my life has God’s love been most clearly and powerfully revealed to me?

Holy Saturday

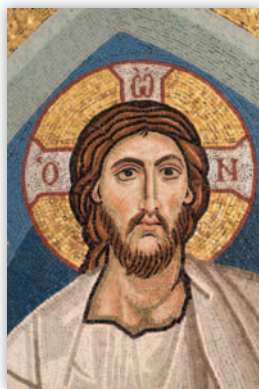
JESUS, I AM HERE, LOVE ME

“As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.” (John 15:9)

In the Gospel there are those few little words to describe his passion and death: he was crowned, scourged, spat upon—those few little words which by now we could have easily forgotten. The Gospels are very short in their explanation of the passion. They avoid great description. But Jesus has died on the cross because he loved. Jesus understood our human nature. He understood that far from the eyes is far from the heart also. Just imagine what our lives would be without him. Today let us not read much, or meditate much even, but just allow Jesus to love us. We always want to say, “Jesus, I love you,” but we don’t allow Jesus to love us. Today say often, “Jesus I am here, love me.” When we look at the cross we know how much he loved us; when we look at the tabernacle, we know how much he loves us now. “Loved,” past tense; “Loves,” present tense. Not only past tense, but he loves us now. He loves me tenderly.

—St. Mother Teresa

How might I take time today just to experience Jesus’ personal love for me?



Easter Sunday

JESUS IS RISEN!

“We know that Christ, raised from the dead, dies no more; death no longer has power over him. As to his death, he died to sin once and for all; as to his life, he lives for God. Consequently, you too must think of yourselves as being dead to sin and living for God in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 6:9-11)

Jesus is risen, and wants to make us sharers in the new life of the resurrection. This, therefore, is the Church’s proclamation from its first day: “Christ is risen!” And, in him, through baptism, we too are risen, and have passed from death to life, from the slavery of sin to the freedom of love. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we are called to take this Good News to others. To everyone let us not tire of saying: Christ is risen! Let us repeat it with words, but above all with the witness of our lives. The Good News of the resurrection should shine on our faces, in our feelings and attitudes, in the way we treat others. We proclaim Christ’s resurrection when his light illuminates the dark moments of our life and we can share that with others; when we know how to smile with those who smile and weep with those who weep; when we walk beside those who are sad and in danger of losing hope; when we recount our experience of faith with those who are searching for meaning and for happiness. With our attitude, our witness, and our life, we say to all: Jesus is risen!

—Pope Francis

How might the fact that Jesus is risen encourage me to seek his presence everywhere?

