

A Lenten Pilgrimage to the Heart



*May we be always
ready to give up what
we cannot keep
in order to gain what
we cannot lose*

SA Council of
Churches
Ecumenical
Lenten Resource
2018

Content

The SA Council of Churches Ecumenical Lenten Resource for 2018 is grounded in the Gospels that will be proclaimed in the Roman Catholic Church/Revised Common Lectionary and in the Coptic Orthodox Church for each Sunday during Lent/the Great Lent. Many will find that the Roman Catholic Gospel is the same one that is read in many other Churches in this time. For some others, it will be a different Gospel that is chosen. This range of Gospels is affirmed and prayerful reading and receiving of all is encouraged, as we rejoice in the opportunity to listen together to the Word of God, recognising that our diversity will add to the conversations as groups gather during Lent.

| Week | Pilgrim Themes | Roman Catholic/Revised Common Lectionary | Coptic Orthodox The Great Lent | Your Gospel |
|----------------|---------------------------------|--|--|-------------------|
| Week 1 | The Pilgrim's Journey | Mark 1:9-15 Jesus' Baptism and temptations John arrested | Matthew 6:19-33 Key verses, 19,33 Treasures Sunday | Mark 1: 9-15 |
| Week 2 | Taking and Leaving | Mark 9:2-15 Transfiguration | Matthew 4:1-11 Temptation Sunday | Mark 9: 2-10 |
| Week 3 | Becoming Fully Present | John 2:13-25 Driving the money lenders out of the temple | Luke 15: 11-32 The Prodigal Son | John 2: 13-25 |
| Week 4 | Living with Vulnerability | John 3: 14-21 Jesus with Nicodemus | John 4: 1-42 The Samaritan Woman | John 3: 14-21 |
| Week 5 | Seeing Clearly – New Horizons | John 12:20-33 Greeks visit Jesus who speaks of his death | John 5: 1-18 The Paralytic Man | John 12: 20-33 |
| Passion Sunday | Sacred Encounter: Return to God | Mark 14: 1-15:47 Passion according to Mark | John 9: 1-41 The Man Born Blind | Mark 14: 1-15: 47 |

Acknowledgements

'A Lenten Pilgrimage to the Heart' has been prepared by a team from the South Australian Council of Churches - Community for Ecumenical Learning:

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The cover image kindly provided by Richard Campbell (as is 'Crucifixion' on page 22). For more information about the life and work of Richard Campbell, see:

<http://www.aboriginal.svdnevcatholic.ore/indexiflp/reconciliation-church/artworks>

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Reflections on Pilgrimage

“At its heart, the journey of each life is a pilgrimage, through unforeseen places that enlarge and enrich the soul.” *John O’Donohue*



The Road to Emmaus. Image courtesy Mary Camilleri

Pilgrimage is an ancient religious practice. Throughout the history of the Church, Christians have chosen to make sacred journeys to holy places. Journeys are movements from one place to another. A pilgrimage is an intentional journey. Pilgrimages can also be an inner journey and experience. When we take inward and outward journeys, we can be pilgrims as long as we stay open to new experiences.

“Pilgrimage calls us to be attentive to the divine at work in our lives through deep listening, patience, opening ourselves to the gifts that arise in the midst of discomfort, and going out to our own inner wild edges to explore new frontiers.” *Christine Valters Paintner* (*The Soul of a Pilgrim*)

A pilgrimage is about rediscovering how the stories of our lives fit into a wider context. It is a time when we reconnect with the wider Christian story, a story that is embedded in our history and culture. It is a time when we recognize the invitation to journey again with our God.

Lent can be considered as such a pilgrimage, a time when we leave the normal pattern of our days and pay close attention to the meaning and purpose of our lives.

Stirred by the Holy Spirit, the early Christians spoke of themselves as people on the way to the Kingdom of God. They recalled Abraham and his faith in God, Moses who led them out of slavery in Egypt and Roman oppression. Particularly they remembered their days with Jesus in the region of Galilee. They remembered the way Jesus broke the bread and shared the wine as we do today. We, too, are on a pilgrimage in search of God's presence in our world today.

At the heart of Christian faith is the Trinity. The word Trinity names the fact that God is a community of giving and receiving love in God's self. Trinity is another way of saying God is love.

TRINITY



By Isaac Fanous. Used with permission.

Reflections on the Trinity

By Dr Heshmat Keroloss, Theologian, Coptic Orthodox Church

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

At the meeting of the 2018 Ecumenical Lenten Resource Team on 2nd March 2017, the Lord God inspired us to the idea of reading the Sunday Gospels of the Great Lent through the Trinitarian and Christological vision.

This we do in the conviction that Christ is the centre of the Gospel, and the Holy Trinity is the Ultimate Truth that is behind every text in the New Testament, without which we miss the point completely and we do not understand the true meaning of the Word of God and the message of salvation that it bears for us.

Here are just a few examples:

1. In the Gospel of the Samaritan woman our Lord spoke to her about the “Gift of God” which is, “The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life” (*John 4:14*). This is definitely a reference to the Holy Spirit — see *John 7:37-39*, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall follow rivers of living water.’ Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive”.

Also our Lord said to the woman, “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” [*John 4:22-24*]. Here “salvation is from the Jews” refers to Himself, our Lord Jesus, the only Saviour and source of salvation — “There is salvation in no one else”. [*Acts 4:12*]

And worshipping the Father “in Spirit and truth” is, according to St Cyril of Alexandria, worshipping God the Father in the Holy Spirit and through the mediation of our Lord Jesus, the Son of God, our Mediator to the Father, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” [*John 14:6*]

2. This Trinitarian vision is also necessary to fully understand the parable of the Prodigal Son, for only through Christ can the son go back to the Father, and it is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption or sonship, who motivates the son to go back to the Father, reminding him of the Fatherhood and Love of his Father, and helping him to admit his fault and to repent.

3. Also, in the story of the paralytic man, only our Lord Jesus was able to not only help him to go down to the pool, which no one was able to do in 38 years, but to heal him altogether. So the motif of our Lord Jesus being the only Saviour is very clear.

Also, the commandment of not sinning again, which our Lord Jesus gave to him [John 5:14] refers to the role of the grace of the Holy Spirit, because it is the Holy Spirit who supports us in our spiritual life, and in our struggle to preserve the redeeming work of Jesus in us and to abide in Jesus and not to return to sin again.

Thus, every text in the Holy Scriptures is in fact a Trinitarian and Christological one, and must be read in the light of Christ, the Son of God, who was sent by God the Father to save the perishing humans, and who sent the Holy Spirit, to perfect in us Christ's salvific work through our life in the Church.



Prayer to the Trinity

Glory be to the Father,

Who by His almighty power and love created me,
making me in the image and likeness of God.

Glory be to the Son,

Who by His precious blood, delivered me from hell,
and opened for me the gates of heaven.

Glory be to the Holy Spirit,

Who has sanctified me in the sacrament of Baptism,
and continues to sanctify me
by the graces I receive daily from His bounty.

Glory be to the Three adorable Persons of the Holy Trinity,
now and forever.

Amen.

Icons in the Orthodox Church

+IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON & THE HOLY SPIRIT ONE GOD AMEN

Icons in the Church are not just Religious Art, but have theological, spiritual, and educational significance. Theologically, icons are based on the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God, in Whom we have seen and touched God.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life — the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us — that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” [1Jn 1:1-4]

”No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” [Jn 1:18]

Every time we look at icons, touch, and kiss them, we commemorate the mystery of the Logos who became flesh and dwelt among us [Jn 1:14], God who appeared in flesh, “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh” [1Tim 3:16]

Spiritually, the icons of our Lord Jesus Christ, St Mary, the martyrs, and the saints represent the presence of our Lord and the saints in the church, especially during the Divine Liturgy. This fact was manifested to many righteous persons throughout time to whom Christ, angels and the saints have appeared during the Liturgy.

Educationally, icons portray the main figures and events of salvation which help the believer in their spiritual life, that they may be inspired by them.

From a resource prepared by St Mary and Anba Bishoy Coptic Orthodox Church, South Australia

Icons: Glimpses of Eternity

The icon was also seen as “theological language in colour” highlighting the sacredness of created matter. Now, as windows on eternity, icons are theological “symbols” not only pointing forward towards future or transcendent realities, but actually directly participating in these as well.

Mr Philip Kariatlis, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College

For more information please visit:

<http://www.greekorthodox.org.au/Genera//orthodoxchristianity/icons>

Visio Divina #1

Visio Divina means praying with images, or using an image as a focal point for prayer, in order that we might open ourselves further to receive the Word of God.

1. Sit with the picture. Explore it from the bottom up. Allow it to speak to your life at this moment.
2. You are invited to see all there is to see, exploring the entirety of the image. Look deeply, beyond first and second impressions, below initial ideas, judgments, or understandings. You are invited to be seen, addressed, surprised, and transformed by God who is never limited or tied to any image, but speaks through them. Explore the image slowly, taking your time to let feelings and thoughts come to you as you take in forms, figures, colours, lines, textures and shapes.
3. When you are ready
 - a) What does it look like, or remind you of?
 - b) What do you find yourself drawn to?
 - c) What do you like and not like?
 - d) What are your initial thoughts?
 - e) What feelings are evoked?
4. Return to the image with an open heart and open mind. Be aware of your response and ponder prayerfully what this response means for you and how it is directly connected to your life?
5. You might like to jot down in a journal or whatever way is most helpful for you the insights you want to remember, actions you are invited to take, wisdom you hope to embody, or any feelings or thoughts you wish to express.
6. Bring your prayer to a close by resting in God's grace and love.

Visio Divina #2

God speaks to us in many ways—through relationships, our experiences, sacred texts such as the Bible and many more. Visio divina, Latin for *divine seeing*, is praying with images to listen to God's words. Like lectio divina, Latin for *divine reading*, Visio divina has four steps:

1. Read the text (in this case art) slowly, taking a first glance noting the colours, people, places and things. Remain with the image for one to two minutes. If you would like, jot down a few words about the image.
2. Take a second, deeper, look. Where is there movement? What relationships do you see? Engage your imagination. Where are you in the artwork? What do you see from that perspective? What deeper meaning merges?
3. Respond to the image with prayer. Did the image remind you of an experience, person or issue for which you'd like to offer thanksgiving or intercession? Offer that prayer to God.
4. Find your quiet centre. Breathe deeply. Relax your shoulders, arms and legs. Rest in this quiet. Let God pray in you. God prays beyond words.