

## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT 2018

*"... the kingdom of God is close at hand"*



### FROM THE READINGS

**Genesis 9:8-15**

God said to Noah and to his sons, "See, I establish my Covenant with you ... Here is the sign of the Covenant I make, between myself and you and every living creature with you for all generations: I set my bow in the clouds and it shall be a sign of the Covenant between me and the earth."

**1 Peter 3:18-22**

Beloved: Christ suffered for sins once, the righteous for the sake of the unrighteous, that he might lead you to God.

## Mark 1:12 – 15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him.

After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God. "The time has come," he said, "and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the Good News."



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## REFLECTIONS

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Noah's story tells of God's covenant of love and care for the whole world, for all time. Jesus, God's Beloved One, brought God's Reign of Love, God's Kingdom, for all to live as God's beloved children. Yet sin continues. We need healing in all our relationships; with ourselves, others, the earth and with God. We need God's help.

The darkness of sin is familiar terrain. In regard to sin I sometimes think we suffer from two heresies. The old heresy is that everything is sin, and the new heresy is that nothing is sin. Perhaps we need to look carefully at the meaning for sin. It is part of the human condition, and no matter what name we give it, sin is an obstacle that prevents us from being our best selves. It hides the truth from us and causes us to forget that we are individuals created in the divine image...

We are loved sinners.

*Macrina Widederkehr, Seven Sacred Pauses, 159*

For who desires most from God will receive most.

Act as you are able, and beg God in his mercy to make up for your deficiencies.

*Walter Hilton, 'The Hounds' in David Walker, God is a Sea, 69*

*You speak to Jesus. Does he speak to you?*

Christ speaks to all of us. He is here.

*But do you hear him speaking?*

Whenever you listen to someone who is suffering, you hear Christ's voice.

And whenever you meet someone suffering, you meet him in person.

*Dom Helder Camara, Francis McDonagh, Dom Helder Camara: Essential Writings, 121*

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## FROM POPE FRANCIS

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If you are weak, if you fall, look up a little for there is Jesus' hand extended to you as he says: 'Rise up, come with me'. 'And what if I fall again?' Rise again. 'And what if I fall yet again?' Rise yet again. Peter once asked the Lord: 'Lord, how many times?' And the reply came: 'Seventy times seven'. The hand of Jesus is always extended, ready to lift us up when we fall ...'

*Pope Francis in Dear Young Friends, 14*

To say the word 'mercy' along with you is to speak of opportunity, future, commitment, trust, openness, hospitality, compassion and dreams. But are you able to dream? [The Young People reply: Yes!] When the heart is open and able to dream, there is room for mercy ....

*Pope Francis in Dear Young Friends, 12*

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## FOR THINKING AND TALKING

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**Imagine:** Being there when Jesus, a carpenter from Nazareth, comes back from days alone in the desert. He begins to teach everyone, including you, that God's kingdom is close to you. He asks you to look at your life's direction, be sorry for any kind of sin, let your heart be changed, healed, and believe the Good News: God forgives you and loves you as a beloved son or daughter.

### **Translate to life:**

Is there anything you would like to change in your life?

How might you hope to find and create 'new horizons for spreading joy', this week and through Lent and Easter 2018?

### **Express the heart:**

Find words or an image for

- Insights gained from these readings and reflections
- A hope or intention for the future.

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## ONE HOUR FOR A GROUP

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- **Begin with a short prayer**, asking God's presence and guidance.
- **Time with the Text:** Allow quiet time for reading and reflecting. ~15 mins
- **Discussion:**
  1. Each person shares a key insight from their reading and reflection. 10 mins
  2. General Discussion. 30 mins
- **Concluding Prayer Together**  
*eg. 'Prayer' from this leaflet, a traditional prayer, or your own words.*

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## PRAYER

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**God of new beginnings,**

**this Lent,**

**Create in me a clean heart,** open and receptive,  
so that I may embrace the many ways you choose to visit my life.

**Create in me a clean heart,** purified of the refuse of old battles  
with others and deadly opposition with myself.

**Create in me a clean heart,** bathed from harsh thoughts, shame,  
and perfectionist tendencies,  
warmly welcoming others with the embrace of non-judgement.

**Create a clean heart in me, God.**

**Dust off** the unmindful activity that constantly collects there.

**De-clutter** my heart from harsh judgements and negativity.

**Wash away** my resistance to working through difficult relationships.

**Rinse off** my un-loving  
so the beauty of my generous and kind heart can shine forth.

**Remove** whatever keeps me from following in your compassionate  
footsteps.

**Amen.**

*Adapted from Joyce Rupp, 'Create in Me a Clean Heart' in Out of the Ordinary, 99*



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