



Holy Week Meditations 2021

You are invited to make daily meditations as you move through the week. You are also invited to join a brief vigil together over ZOOM on Easter Saturday, April 3, 3 to 4 PM. We will pray together and recall scenes from Jesus's life, and you'll be invited to share the highlights of your Lenten journey as you choose, or to remain silent and participate through listening.

Holy Week is the final week of Lent, traditionally a time of repentance, fasting, and preparation for the celebration of resurrection on Easter Sunday. Lent lasts about forty days (not counting Sundays), corresponding to the time Jesus is said to have spent in the desert after his baptism, fasting and resisting temptations.

In recent times the old traditions have been lived out in many different ways. For example some Christians began their repentance on Ash Wednesday with a ritual marking on their forehead of a cross made of oil and ashes, with the blessing 'remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return'. Others prepared for the time of fasting by partying in Mardi Gras carnivals. And some prepared by getting smart new clothes to wear to church on Easter Sunday.

This year, pandemic restrictions mean that most of us will journey through Lent and Easter alone, or in the company of our little households. In our daily meditations, we can ask ourselves questions rooted in the ancient traditions but adapted to today's circumstances:

- What do I need to mourn and let go?
- What am I yearning for?
- What life-giving practice am I called to carry into the future?

Please use this guide in whatever way is useful to you. We hope you will consider spending between half an hour and an hour on each day's prayer time, sitting quietly and alone. We encourage you to make notes for yourself at the end of your meditation time, to deepen your awareness and allow you to review your progress day by day.

We also hope you will join us in the vigil together on Easter Saturday. To obtain the ZOOM link, contact pdjackson@rogers.com.

May this Holy Week be a time to mourn your losses, count your blessings and choose hope.

Yours in Christ,

Spiritual Life Committee
Lent, 2021

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An Overview of Holy Week

Holy Week is the story of the final week of Jesus' life. The week includes Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem, his mock procession into the city (celebrated on Palm Sunday), a confrontation with temple merchants, a Passover meal (commemorated on Maundy Thursday), an arrest, trial and execution by the powers-that-be (remembered on Good Friday), and his resurrection (celebrated on Easter Sunday). Holy Saturday is a time to relive waiting, lostness and uncertainty.

The events of Holy Week are rooted in conflict between the dominant culture of the Roman Empire based on status, power and wealth and Jesus' vision and practice of an alternative way of living based on compassion and justice. Jesus' vision is in full continuity with the Jubilee program and Sabbath economics that form the core of the Jewish Scripture ethics. These stories together now form the heart of the Christian "Good News."

The dominant culture may try to tell us that life has no meaning and that the universe is a pretty cruel place. But we believe that beyond the many "deaths" of our lives there is always some kind of "resurrection," and this life of ours is part of a much larger story which affirms an ultimate victory of love and fulfilment and wholeness for all.

It can be helpful to think about the resurrection story in terms of the "Cosmic Christ." The "Cosmic Christ" is seen as the eventual outcome of an evolutionary dynamic of the whole universe. Paul pointed to the possibility that Jesus as the Christ on earth – God's anointed – becomes through resurrection the Cosmic Christ, present in our lives today and pointing us toward the Omega Point toward which we are invited to work.

The old story gains fresh resonance when we try to see in our own lives echoes of Jesus' death and resurrection.

- On Good Friday we might recall the losses in our own lives - real deaths, metaphorical deaths, and other losses during the pandemic.
- Easter Saturday is a day to allow ourselves to feel all that accompanies the loss of someone we love: grief, guilt, regret and all the other negative feelings, alongside deep gratitude and appreciation for all we have lost.
- Easter Sunday reminds us that beyond death, metaphorical and real, we receive new life and beyond the pandemic may emerge a more gracious way of living.
- The Forty Days from Easter to Pentecost are a time for grieving the old and adjusting to the new: Jesus is gone and it is up to us to carry on his work, to identify changes in our lives, including those wrought by the pandemic, that we will build on in future.

Monday March 29, 2021

1. Seat yourself in a quiet place. Take a few deep breaths and with each inhale say to yourself “I am loved” and with each exhale “I am held.”

2. Pray your own prayer or this:

May I be open to the constant presence of Spirit. May I gain insight into what I need to let go, what I yearn for, and what life-giving practice I choose to carry into the future.

3. Read the following passage from John’s gospel (chapter 12:1-11)

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, “Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?” (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, “Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”

When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came not only because of Jesus but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Lazarus to death as well, since it was on account of him that many of the Jews were deserting and were believing in Jesus.

4. Pause a minute or two, and read the passage again; and again.

5. Imagine yourself in this scene. Which character do you most identify with? Let your imagination take you there. How do you feel? What do you smell, touch or hear? What are you thinking? Be there for ten minutes or so.

6. Bring yourself back to today. What occurred for you? What insight did you gain into this old story? Into yourself? Were there insights into what you need to let go, what you yearn for, or what life-giving practice you are called to carry into the future? Make some notes for yourself.

7. Close with prayer, your own or this:

I am grateful for Spirit’s constant presence, loving me, holding me. May I be open to Spirit always. May I have the courage to act on my insights and questions.

Tuesday March 30, 2021

1. Seat yourself in a quiet place. Take a few deep breaths and with each inhale say to yourself “I am loved” and with each exhale “I am held.”

2. Pray your own prayer or this:

May I be open to the constant presence of Spirit. May I gain insight into what I need to let go, what I yearn for, and what life-giving practice I choose to carry into the future.

3. Read the following passage from John’s gospel (chapter 12:20-36)

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die. The crowd answered him, “We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” Jesus said to them, “The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light.”

After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

4. Pause a minute or two, and read the passage again; and again. What word or phrase attracts you? Sit with it and savour it, chew on it, consider what significance it has for you.

5. Bring yourself back to today. What occurred for you? What insight did you gain into this old story? Into yourself? Were there insights into what you need to let go, what you yearn for, or what what life-giving practice e you are called to carry into the future? Make some notes for yourself.

6. Close with prayer, your own or this:

I am grateful for Spirit’s constant presence, loving me, holding me. May I be open to Spirit always. May I have the courage to act on my insights and questions.

Wednesday March 31, 2021

1. Seat yourself in a quiet place. Take a few deep breaths and with each inhale say to yourself “I am loved” and with each exhale “I am held.”

2. Pray your own prayer or this:

May I be open to the constant presence of Spirit. May I gain insight into what I need to let go, what I yearn for, and what life-giving practice I choose to carry into the future.

3. Read the following passage from John’s gospel (chapter 13:21-32)

After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. After he received the piece of bread, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “Do quickly what you are going to do.” Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, “Buy what we need for the festival”; or, that he should give something to the poor. So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.”

4. Pause a minute or two, and read the passage again; and again. Breathe in what you have read. Put yourself into the scene as best you can. What in your life remains unforgiven? Have you asked for forgiveness? What might it take for you to open yourself to God’s unconditional love?

5. Bring yourself back to today. What occurred for you? What insight did you gain into this old story? Into yourself? Were there insights into what you need to let go, what you yearn for, or what life-giving practice you are called to carry into the future? Make some notes for yourself.

6. Close with prayer, your own or this:

I am grateful for Spirit’s constant presence, loving me, holding me. May I be open to Spirit always. May I have the courage to act on my insights and questions.

Thursday April 1, 2021 (Maundy Thursday)

1. Seat yourself in a quiet place. Take a few deep breaths and with each inhale say to yourself “I am loved” and with each exhale “I am held.”

2. Pray your own prayer or this:

May I be open to the constant presence of Spirit. May I gain insight into what I need to let go, what I yearn for, and what life-giving practice I choose to carry into the future.

3. Read the following passage from John’s gospel (chapter 13:1-17, 31b-35)

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” Jesus answered, “You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” Peter said to him, “You will never wash my feet.” Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” Simon Peter said to him, “Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!” Jesus said to him, “One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you.” For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, “Not all of you are clean.”

4. Pause a minute or two, and read the passage again; and again.

5. Imagine yourself in this scene. Which character do you most identify with? Let your imagination take you there. How do you feel? What do you smell, touch or hear? What are you thinking? Be there for ten minutes or so. Perhaps make some notes for yourself.

6. Continue reading the rest of the passage.

After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will

glorify him at once. Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

7. Pause a minute or two, and read the passage again; and again. What word or phrase attracts you? Sit with it and savour it, chew on it, consider what significance it has for you.
8. Bring yourself back to today. What occurred for you? What insight did you gain into this old story? Into yourself? Were there insights into what you need to let go, what you yearn for, or what life-giving practice you are called to carry into the future? Make some notes for yourself.
9. Close with prayer, your own or this:

I am grateful for Spirit's constant presence, loving me, holding me. May I be open to Spirit always. May I have the courage to act on my insights and questions.

Friday April 2, 2021 (Good Friday)

1. Seat yourself in a quiet place. Take a few deep breaths and with each inhale say to yourself “I am loved” and with each exhale “I am held.”

2. Pray your own prayer or this:

May I be open to the constant presence of Spirit. May I gain insight into what I need to let go, what I yearn for, and what life-giving practice I choose to carry into the future.

3. Read the following passage from John’s gospel (chapter 18:1-19:42)

After Jesus had spoken these words, he went out with his disciples across the Kidron valley to a place where there was a garden, which he and his disciples entered. Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, because Jesus often met there with his disciples. So Judas brought a detachment of soldiers together with police from the chief priests and the Pharisees, and they came there with lanterns and torches and weapons. Then Jesus, knowing all that was to happen to him, came forward and asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” They answered, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus replied, “I am he.” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them. When Jesus said to them, “I am he,” they stepped back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, “Whom are you looking for?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. So if you are looking for me, let these men go.” This was to fulfill the word that he had spoken, “I did not lose a single one of those whom you gave me.” Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it, struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear. The slave’s name was Malchus. Jesus said to Peter, “Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?”

So the soldiers, their officer, and the Jewish police arrested Jesus and bound him. First they took him to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was better to have one person die for the people.

Simon Peter and another disciple followed Jesus. Since that disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest, but Peter was standing outside at the gate. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out, spoke to the woman who guarded the gate, and brought Peter in. The woman said to Peter, “You are not also one of this man’s disciples, are you?” He said, “I am not.” Now the slaves and the police had made a charcoal fire because it was cold, and they were standing around it and warming themselves. Peter also was standing with them and warming himself.

Then the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and about his teaching. Jesus answered, “I have spoken openly to the world; I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who heard what I said to them; they know what I said.” When he had said this, one of the police

standing nearby struck Jesus on the face, saying, “Is that how you answer the high priest?” Jesus answered, “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong. But if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?” Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They asked him, “You are not also one of his disciples, are you?” He denied it and said, “I am not.” One of the slaves of the high priest, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, asked, “Did I not see you in the garden with him?” Again Peter denied it, and at that moment the cock crowed.

Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate’s headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate went out to them and said, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” They answered, “If this man were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and judge him according to your law.” The Jews replied, “We are not permitted to put anyone to death.” (This was to fulfill what Jesus had said when he indicated the kind of death he was to die.)

Then Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” Jesus answered, “Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” Pilate replied, “I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate asked him, “What is truth?”

After he had said this, he went out to the Jews again and told them, “I find no case against him. But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover. Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?” They shouted in reply, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” Now Barabbas was a bandit.

19 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they dressed him in a purple robe. They kept coming up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and striking him on the face. Pilate went out again and said to them, “Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.” So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Here is the man!” When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.” The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.”

Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave him no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin." From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, "If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor."

When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew Gabbatha. Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" They cried out, "Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!" Pilate asked them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but the emperor." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Many of the Jews read this inscription, because the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. Then the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" Pilate answered, "What I have written I have written." When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his clothes and divided them into four parts, one for each soldier. They also took his tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from the top. So they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see who will get it." This was to fulfill what the scripture says,

"They divided my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots."
And that is what the soldiers did.

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfill the scripture), "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, "It is finished." Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the sabbath, especially because that sabbath was a day of great solemnity. So they asked Pilate to have the legs of the crucified men broken and the bodies removed. Then the soldiers came and

broke the legs of the first and of the other who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out. (He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth.) These things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, “None of his bones shall be broken.” And again another passage of scripture says, “They will look on the one whom they have pierced.”

After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus. Pilate gave him permission; so he came and removed his body. Nicodemus, who had at first come to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, weighing about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. Now there was a garden in the place where he was crucified, and in the garden there was a new tomb in which no one had ever been laid. And so, because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

4. Pause a minute or two, and reflect on this long passage. Notice what catches your attention. Sit with it and savour it, chew on it, consider what significance it has for you. Make notes to yourself.
5. Bring yourself back to today. What occurred for you? What insight did you gain into this old story? Into yourself? Were there insights into what you need to let go, what you yearn for, or what life-giving practice you are called to carry into the future? Make some notes for yourself.
6. Close with prayer, your own or this:

I am grateful for Spirit’s constant presence, loving me, holding me. May I be open to Spirit always. May I have the courage to act on my insights and questions.

April 3, 2021 (Easter Saturday)

1. Seat yourself in a quiet place. Take a few deep breaths and with each inhale say to yourself “I am loved” and with each exhale “I am held.”

2. Pray your own prayer or this:

May I be open to the constant presence of Spirit. May I gain insight into what I need to let go, what I yearn for, and what life-giving practice I choose to carry into the future.

3. John’s gospel is silent on the events of Easter Saturday. It is a day to allow the events of Good Friday to sink deep into our awareness, a day to allow ourselves to feel all that accompanies the loss of someone we love: grief, guilt, regret and all the other negative feelings, alongside deep gratitude and appreciation for all we have lost.

4. Reflect on the losses in your own life. In what ways has God been present with you during your times of desolation? What are you thankful for? Make notes to yourself.

5. Reflect now on all that has occurred for you during your times of prayer and meditation during Lent and this Holy Week Meditation. Were there insights into what you need to let go, what you yearn for, or what life-giving practice you are called to carry into the future? Make some notes for yourself.

What might be some first small steps for you to take? Make notes to yourself.

7. Close with prayer, your own or this:

I am grateful for Spirit’s constant presence, loving me, holding me. May I be open to Spirit always. May I have the courage to act on my insights and questions.

8. Continue in prayer for as long as you choose to keep vigil until the celebration of the Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

You are invited to join the vigil on ZOOM at 3 pm. To obtain the ZOOM link, contact pdjackson@rogers.com.

April 5th, 2021 (Easter Monday) What's next?

One life-giving practice that we suggest you adopt or continue is a discipline of daily prayer. Commit yourself to pray for 10 or 20 or 30 minutes every day for a month at a time. There will probably be times when God seems absent, and your prayer experience is dry and unfruitful. That's normal; persevere and you will regain the sense of God's presence.

There are many different methods of praying. 'All methods of prayer are simply human ways of disposing oneself to be open to the mystery of God's unique communication,' writes John Veltri, sj. Two principal methods of prayer were used in this guide: Gospel Contemplation and Lectio Divina. Both are forms of praying with scripture.

In Gospel Contemplation, we experience the scripture 'just as if I were there'. Select an action passage from one of the gospels, with movement and colourful detail. Read the passage several times - aloud if you can - pausing for a minute or so between each reading while the gospel soaks into you. Now put the bible aside and let the scene happen.

As you sink into the scene, you may lose a sense of yourself. Allow this to happen. For example, if you are reading about Jesus walking through a field of wheat, allow your imagination to let you hear the sounds of tramping feet as the disciples follow him, feel the wind on your cheek and the dust on your toes, and see the wheat waving in the breeze.

And then allow yourself to participate in the scene, as one of the characters or as an observer. Don't intellectualize the experience (how interesting that wheat fields also feature in the story of Ruth and in many other places in the bible, written for a predominantly agrarian society ...) or draw clever comparisons to people in your life (the disciples' complaints are just like my colleagues at work ...). Instead, lose yourself in the scene and simply notice what is happening.

Afterwards, reflect on what happened, what stands out, and make a few notes to yourself. Perhaps there will be something you need to return to later. And close by giving thanks to God to being present with you during this time.

Lectio Divina is Latin for Divine Reading. You read the passage of scripture slowly and with pauses as you allow words or phrases to sink in. Then pause a minute or two, and read the passage again; and again. Notice what word or phrase attracts you. Then sit with it, savour it, and chew on it. Lastly, consider what significance it has for you, and make some notes to yourself.

Lectio Divina can be used with passages other than scripture, such as spirit-filled prose or poetry. And the technique of slow and gentle 'drinking-in' can be used also with everyday experiences such as watching sunsets or appreciating flowers or landscape or memories of such things. All are expressions of the divine.

If you decide to pray with scripture, it can be helpful to use daily selections of bible readings. The Consultation on Common Texts is an ecumenical consultation from the United States and

Canada who curate a three-year lectionary in common use by Christian churches worldwide. An easy-to-use edition of their *Daily Readings* can be downloaded free of charge from <https://www.sneucc.org/lectionary>. If you do not have a Bible to hand, you can access one online at <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-NRSV-Bible/>.

One popular method of praying without scripture is the Examen of Consciousness. It is intended to increase your sensitivity to Spirit working in your life, so that you can co-operate and respond to this presence. Here is a summary of an end-of-day Examen from John Veltri's book *Orientations* (<http://orientations.jesuits.ca/bob/examen.htm>).

1. Look over the day and see what emerges. Give thanks to God for whatever it is.
2. Ask for enlightenment about what God wants you to see.
3. Again look over the events of the day, and ask where God has been present in your life, in you, in others or in public events. Where and when have were you being drawn by God? How have you been responding?
4. Respond to God about any area that you are being nudged to focus on, pray over or act upon. Express whatever needs to be expressed: praise, sorrow, joy, gratitude, desire for change etc.
5. Ask for help and guidance for what you need to do tomorrow.

May your prayer life deepen your awareness of Spirit's presence in all the days of your life.

Yours in Christ, the spiritual life committee.