

Pope Francis' Prayer to Mary, star of the new evangelization

*Mary, Virgin and Mother,
you who, moved by the Holy Spirit,
welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith:
as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One,
help us to say our own "yes" to the urgent call, as pressing as ever,
to proclaim the good news of Jesus.
Filled with Christ's presence, you brought joy to John the Baptist,
making him exult in the womb of his mother.
Brimming over with joy, you sang of the great things done by God.
Standing at the foot of the cross with unyielding faith,
you received the joyful comfort of the resurrection,
and joined the disciples in awaiting the Spirit
so that the evangelizing Church might be born.
Obtain for us now a new ardour born of the resurrection,
that we may bring to all the Gospel of life which triumphs over death.
Give us a holy courage to seek new paths,
that the gift of unfading beauty may reach every man and woman.
Virgin of listening and contemplation,
Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast,
pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are,
that she may never be closed in on herself
or lose her passion for establishing God's kingdom.
Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith, justice and love of the poor,
that the joy of the Gospel may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.
Mother of the living Gospel,
wellspring of happiness for God's little ones,
pray for us.
Amen. Alleluia! [288]*

*This series of leaflets was prepared by the Department for Evangelisation
in the Archdiocese of Liverpool*

The Joy of the Gospel

Walking through Lent with Pope Francis

Introduction

For Pope Francis, the way to recover a missionary spirit in the Church is to rediscover the joy of the Gospel, to experience a personal encounter with Jesus, through reflecting on his words and actions.

This resource aims to help groups to reflect on some of the major themes of 'The Joy of the Gospel' in relation to the Gospel stories we receive on the Sundays of Lent.

First Sunday: The Temptations of Jesus

As Jesus is tempted to give up or distort his mission, we reflect on the temptations Pope Francis has described that could stop us from carrying out our mission to share the joy of the Gospel.

Second Sunday: The Transfiguration

As Peter, James and John see Jesus in a new way, we reflect on what Pope Francis writes about our personal encounter with Jesus and the effect it can have in our lives.

Third Sunday: The Woman at the Well

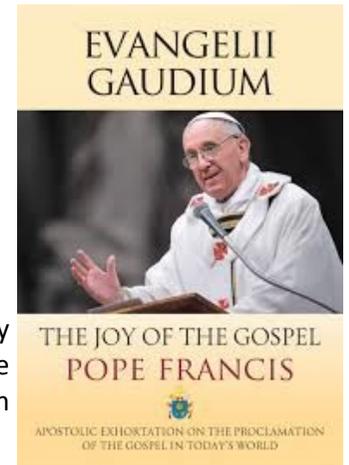
As we hear how Jesus welcomed the Samaritan woman at the well, we reflect on the Holy Father's words about how our parish communities are called to be welcoming and inclusive.

Fourth Sunday: The Man Born Blind

The story of the blind man cured by Jesus leads us to reflect on what Pope Francis says about our vocation as missionary disciples.

Fifth Sunday: The Raising of Lazarus

The raising of Lazarus prompts us to reflect on the Holy Father's challenge to fight against injustice, to set people free from everything that binds them.



How to use this resource

- The leaflets for each Sunday in Lent could be printed and distributed with the parish newsletter, so that people can take them home and use them for personal reflection and informal discussion with friends and family.
- Extracts from the leaflets could be included in parish newsletters.
- Themes and quotations from the leaflet may be helpful for preparing homilies.
- The leaflets are designed for use by groups: special Lent groups could be formed for the five weeks but the leaflets could also be used by groups that meet regularly, e.g. Scripture groups, Liturgy groups, UCM, Legion of Mary, parish pastoral councils, pastoral area working groups. Although the leaflets are linked to the Sunday Gospels in Lent, groups that meet less frequently could use them over a longer period.

Suggested process for groups

- On the front page of each leaflet, groups are invited to read the Gospel passage (for some weeks a shorter version is offered) and then pause to reflect on it in silence. It may help to read the passage a second time before moving on.
- The centre spread of each leaflet gives some extracts from 'The Joy of the Gospel' which can be read aloud, with a short pause for discussion after each one. Each extract has a thought to introduce it and questions to prompt the discussion after it.
- The back page provides starter questions for discussion, leading to practical suggestions for sharing the Good News. If discussion of one topic or aspect is going well, there is no need to rush to complete all the questions: they are intended to get people thinking and talking together about how we can become more effective in our mission to share the joy we have received with others.
- It will be helpful for groups to record any practical suggestions they produce, to form an agenda for enlivening the community's approach to spreading the Good News.
- Each leaflet concludes with a prayer, which can be read by one member or by all the members together.

The words of Pope Francis about reflecting on Scripture using the 'Lectio Divina' method may be helpful to this process:

There is one particular way of listening to what the Lord wishes to tell us in his word and of letting ourselves be transformed by the Spirit. It is what we call *lectio divina*. It consists of reading God's word in a moment of prayer and allowing it to enlighten and renew us. [152]



In the presence of God, during a recollected reading of the text, it is good to ask, for example: "Lord, what does this text say *to me*? What is it about my life that you want to change by this text? What troubles me about this text? Why am I not interested in this? Or perhaps: What do I find pleasant in this text? What is it about this word that moves me? What attracts me? Why does it attract me?"

When we make an effort to listen to the Lord, temptations usually arise. One of them is simply to feel troubled or burdened, and to turn away. Another common temptation is to think about what the text means for other people, and so avoid applying it to our own life. It can also happen that we look for excuses to water down the clear meaning of the text. Or we can wonder if God is demanding too much of us, asking for a decision which we are not yet prepared to make. This leads many people to stop taking pleasure in the encounter with God's word; but this would mean forgetting that no one is more patient than God our Father, that no one is more understanding and willing to wait. He always invites us to take a step forward, but does not demand a full response if we are not yet ready. He simply asks that we sincerely look at our life and present ourselves honestly before him, and that we be willing to continue to grow, asking from him what we ourselves cannot as yet achieve. [153]

*The full text of Pope Francis's letter, *Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of Gospel)*, is available at £4.95 from CTS or from Pauline Books and Media and can be viewed and downloaded on the Vatican website, <http://www.vatican.va>.*

The numbers in square brackets after each quotation refer to the paragraph numbers, which remain the same whatever edition is being used.