

Our Synod Prayer

Father, we thank you
for the love you have shown us
in the gift of Jesus, your Son.
We thank you for the gift of the Church,
through which you show us
that you are always with us
and are always at work in our lives.

As we journey together to Synod 2020
help us to become the Church that you are calling us to be.
May your Holy Spirit be powerfully
at work among us.
Strengthen each of us and guide Francis, our Pope
and Malcolm, our Archbishop.

Help us to respond
to the challenges of our times in new ways
to bring your love to all our sisters and brothers.
We make this prayer
through Jesus Christ Our Lord.
AMEN.

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Have your say by visiting our website and completing the Synod Survey.

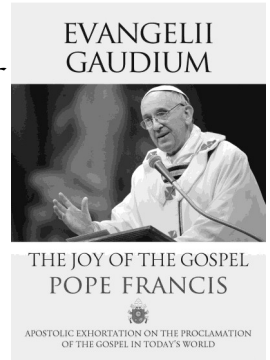
These Lenten Reflections can be downloaded from
www.synod2020.co.uk



Together on the Road

Lent 2019

Introduction



Fr Eamonn Mulcahy, at our initial meetings for Synod Members described *The Joy of the Gospel* as 'the road map, the sat nav, the GPS for your Synod journey'.

This resource aims to help groups to reflect on some of the major themes of *Evangelii Gaudium* 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 Parable of the Fig Tree

As the fig tree is spared and nurtured for another season, we reflect on Pope Francis' challenge to put people at the heart of our economy.

Fourth Sunday: The Prodigal Son

As the father welcomes the prodigal son, we reflect on Pope Francis' call to share our Father's unconditional love with everyone we meet.

Fifth Sunday: The Woman taken in Adultery

As Jesus refuses to condemn the woman taken in adultery, we reflect on Pope Francis' desire for our church to be open to all, whatever their experience has been.

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 feed into the Synod listening and discernment sessions taking place in each locality after Easter.
- 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, 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.