

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

Introduction to the Resource

Lent – Easter – Pentecost 2018

	Western	Orthodox
<i>Lent Begins</i>	<i>Ash Wednesday</i> 14 February 2018	<i>Beginning of Great Lent</i> 19 February 2018
<i>Easter Sunday</i>	1 April 2018	8 April 2018
<i>Pentecost</i>	20 May 2018	27 May 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.

Format (see also *Guidelines for Leaders and Participants pages 26-28*)

There are six sessions, focusing on different Gospels during the Lenten season, and including prayer, images, icons, time for sharing, and encouragement for action in the daily journey of life.

We suggest each session last around 1½ hours to enable slow meditative reading of the Gospels, and sharing through prayer, reflection and conversation.

To assist you in reflecting on the images and icons, see notes regarding *Icons in the Orthodox Church* [page 23], and *Visio Divina* [pages 24-25]. 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. Some notes regarding *Lectio Divina* [page 25] are also included for those who wish to use that form.

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SA Council of Churches hopes that groups will be diverse, especially given the closeness of dates for Western and Orthodox Churches in 2018, and will learn from the sharing in the gathering.

Especially, we encourage you to use the resource imaginatively and creatively, in ways that open up conversation and reflection, making space for sharing new insights about the individual and community Lenten Pilgrimage to the Heart.

In downloading the resource, please let SA Council of Churches know, whether you proceeded to use it or not. Email sacc@picknowl.com.au as will help shape future resources.

Overview of the Sunday Gospels during Lent/the Great Lent 2018

a) Roman Catholic Church/Revised Common Lectionary

Scripture readings are available in the Catholic Lectionary for Mass, where it is easy to obtain an overview of all the readings used in a particular liturgical season (Advent, Christmas, Lent, aster) and/or in a particular year of Ordinary Time (Sundays in Years A, B, C; Weekdays in Years I & II. For Sundays in 2018 we read Year B.

There is normally an intentional thematic connection between the Gospel & the Psalm.

The Gospel readings for Lent are arranged as follows:

- The **first and second Sundays** maintain the accounts of the Temptation and Transfiguration of the Lord, with readings, however, from all three Synoptics.
- On **the next three Sundays**, the Gospels about the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus have been restored in **Year A**. Because these Gospels are of major importance in regard to Christian initiation, they may also be read in Year B and Year C, especially in places where there are catechumens.
- Other texts, however, are provided for Year B and Year C: for **Year B**, a text from John about Christ's coming glorification through his Cross and Resurrection, and for Year C, a text from Luke about conversion.
- On **Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion** the texts for the procession are selections from the Synoptic Gospels concerning the Lord's solemn entry into Jerusalem. For the Mass the reading is the account of the Lord's Passion.

(Lectionary for Mass, "Introduction," chap. 5)

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b) Coptic Orthodox Church

The main concern of the Church during the Great Lent is repentance and return to God. This is done through human willingness and God’s grace. The interaction between human part and divine part, human willingness and effort, and God’s grace synergy is essential.

Two weeks before the Great Lent, the Church fasts for three days called “the fast of Nineveh”, in commemoration of the fast and repentance of the people of Nineveh (the book of Jonah).

There is then a preparatory week before the forty days of the Great Lent. The Gospel of this week is Matthew 6:1-18 on almsgiving, prayer and fasting because through these three practices one gets out of one’s self and recognises the other, which is an important part of repentance and return to God, which is the main concern of the Great Lent.

c) Your Sunday Gospel

Each week we encourage all to share whatever Gospel is to be read the following Sunday and consider also how is it selected...what themes are apparent... how it connects with other parts of the Sunday Worship.

Sunday Gospels and Themes

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	
Week 2	Taking and Leaving	Mark 9:2-15 Transfiguration	Matthew 4:1-11 Temptation Sunday	
Week 3	Becoming Fully Present	John 2:13-25 Driving the money lenders out of the temple	Luke 15: 11-32 The Prodigal Son	
Week 4	Living with Vulnerability	John 3: 14-21 Jesus with Nicodemus	John 4: 1-42 The Samaritan Woman	
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	
Passion Sunday	Sacred Encounter: Return to God	Mark 14: 1-15:47 Passion according to Mark	John 9: 1-41 The Man Born Blind	

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Acknowledgements

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

Mary Camilleri, Staff Spiritual and Religious Formation, Catholic Education SA

Heshmat Keroloss, Theologian, Coptic Orthodox Church

Ted Wright, Part Time Lecturer, Catherine Booth College, Salvation Army

Marie Loller, Coordinator, Ministry Formation Program, RC Archdiocese of Adelaide

with assistance from John Littleton, Anglican Diocese of Adelaide and Convenor of SACC Community for Ecumenical Learning, Martine Hawkes [layout], and Melanie Macrow and Geraldine Hawkes, SA Council of Churches.

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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.sydneycatholic.org/index.php/reconciliation-church/artworks>
- <http://acmlismore.org.au/about-the-artist-richard-campbell/>

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South Australian Council of Churches, 65 Flinders Street, Adelaide SA 5000
Ph: +618 8215 0300 | E: sacc@picknowl.com.au | www.sacc.asn.au

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

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.



The Road to Emmaus. Image courtesy Mary Camilleri

“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.

Reflections on the Trinity

By Dr Heshmat Keroloss, Theologian, Coptic Orthodox Church



'Trinity' by Isaac Fanous. Used with permission.

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

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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.

Week 1: The Pilgrim's Journey

This week we reflect on the treasures of the world tempting us. No matter how much we accumulate, it doesn't seem to be enough. We do not share fairly the bounty of God's love, revealed to us in creation, rather it polarizes us – dividing the rich from the poor,

allowing many to be undernourished, stressed out and under-employed. We frequently seek the upper hand in relationships, living in the fast lane and yet, deep down, we know we don't want to live that way. There is a better path, a more genuine journey.

In the desert, Jesus confronts the same temptations we do when we feel lonely, deprived or vulnerable. We are tempted to fill this spiritual hunger with possessions and other distractions, trying to live as if God does not exist, paying attention to the idols of the world. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus implores us not to store up earthly treasures, but to trust in the living Trinitarian God. During this Lenten season let us apply these words from Jesus' baptism to ourselves: "You are my beloved child; in you I am well pleased" Mark 1:11. We are never alone, and now we walking this Lenten journey together.

Gospels:

- Mark 1:9-15 - Jesus' Baptism and temptations, John arrested
- Matthew 6:19-33 Key verses, 19,33, Treasures Sunday
- Your Gospel

Discussion Starters:

1. As we set out on our journey through Lent, for what do we long?
2. Who or what is calling us to leave the daily pattern of our lives for a while, and spend this time together, to pay attention to the meaning and purpose of our journey?
3. In response, how shall I make time and space to journey into my heart with our travelling God?



'Pilgrim on Journey'. Image courtesy Mary Camilleri

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Extract from *Unwanted Tasks* by Joyce Rupp

Drifters we are, pilgrims,
too. And sometimes
exiles fearing we will
never get back to
the place inside that
cradles us like home.

We let ourselves be
imprisoned by what
we do not want, missing
the elegant life
sashaying among
the undesired duties

A Reflection for Pilgrims

Take some time to gather wisdom for the continuing journey:

What captured my attention ...

What surprised me ...

What moved me ...

What changed me ...

What is my hope for me ... and for my faith community

What will I take home ...

Week 2: Taking and Leaving

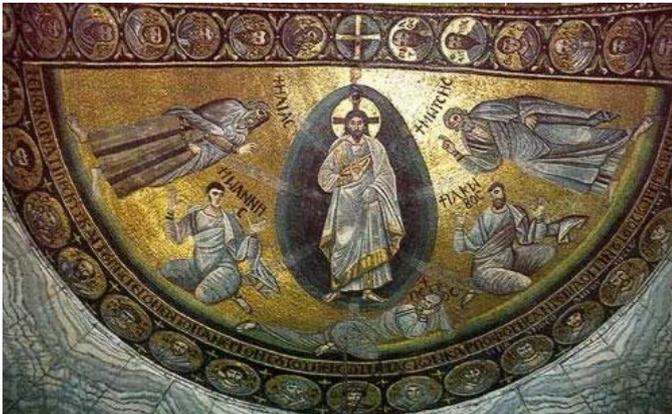
A pilgrim journey brings into sharp relief much that we gloss over or take for granted, bringing to attention those things we truly value.

Because of our decision to be on the move, we are somehow obliged to make choices about what is essential and what is peripheral. In many ways, this is a continuation from last week with a focus on choice. How do we choose what to keep, what we require for inner

vitality and balance, and what do we leave behind? Perhaps some things which may once have helped us, we now find burdensome and obstructive.

Gospels:

- Mark 9:2-15 Transfiguration
- Matthew 4:1-11 Temptation Sunday
- Your Gospel



From St Catherine's in Sinai – image courtesy Mary Camilleri

Life is a process of continual change and movement in which we look for patterns and significance. The transfiguration links Jesus to the Old Testament figures of Moses (representing Jewish law) and Elijah (representing Jewish prophecy). Mark ties this story to the beginning of Jesus ministry, and similarly Temptation Sunday is the precursor to Jesus ministry.

A Coptic teaching method is iconography. Many icons of the Transfiguration are Trinitarian, where we see a triple divine revelation of the Father, and the presence of Moses

and Elijah confirm that Jesus is not just a simple person, a miracle worker and wise teacher, but he is the Son and the Word of the Living God.

From this story, we see Jesus “take” strength from God for his courageous journey to the Cross, and at the same time, the disciples are being challenged to “take” strength in preparation for the tests they will face with Jesus is taken from them.

This week on our pilgrimage we have the opportunity to sift experience and to “take” again those things we require for inner vitality and balance. It is also becoming clearer that we have to “leave” other things, which may once have helped us but which now may be destructive on our journey – be they tasks, habits, ideas, beliefs or even relationships. Taking and leaving cannot be made lightly. If we are to be prophetic in a greedy world, which uses up and discards too quickly, our choices should reflect the generosity of God in the way we share with the poor and the marginalised.

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Discussion Starters:

1. As we cannot carry everything with us on our pilgrimage to the heart, how do we choose what to take and what to leave?
2. On this Lenten pilgrimage what are we finding in our daily lives that is providing balance in our lives in order to nourish our hearts?
3. What am I noticing that may once had helped me but now I am prepared to let go?

Extract from *In Blackwater Woods* by Mary Oliver

... to live in this world
you must be able
to do three things:
to love what is mortal:
to hold it
against your bones knowing
your own life depends on it;
and, when the time comes to let it
go,
to let it go.



'Light and forest at Isblandskärret, Djurgården' by Tommie Hansen ([CC BY 2.0](#))

A Reflection for Pilgrims

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What will I take home ...

Week 3: Becoming Fully Present

Pilgrims travel in hope of receiving Divine blessings and with an open invitation to become more attentive to their surroundings. By becoming truly available to the present moment on this Lenten journey, we too may gently leave behind, our daily life, and keep our hearts open to new experiences. Where are the signs of God's presence around you right now? Are you ready to receive new insights today?

Gospels

- John 2:13-25 Driving the money lenders out of the temple
- Luke 15: 11-32 The Prodigal Son
- Your Gospel



'Welcome' by Tony Hisgett ([CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/))

This week our readings reveal two different aspects of justice and mercy in action. We learn of Jesus entering the temple to find pilgrims shopping, having turned the temple from a house of prayer to a market place. The parable of the Prodigal Son who leaves home and returns greatly changed, reveals a pattern of rebellion, ruin, repentance, reconciliation and restoration.

When Jesus walks into the temple he is angry. Sometimes anger is appropriate as the lack of anger at a great injustice disengages us from reality. Jesus was not offended by pilgrims needing to purchase sacrificial animals to fulfil their pilgrimage, but rather that they had insulted God's love by turning the temple into a market place. Jesus reminded them of being in the presence of God in the temple. How could they receive the grace of God on their pilgrimage if at the same time, they were using His house for trading in goods?

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Paradoxically, this is a parable of love. It is a story about the human need for love, family and grace, the need to place the Trinity in the centre of our lives.

All three characters in the story of the Prodigal Son experience an inner pilgrimage. The young son has his fun at a great price, yet Jesus does not leave him to die as a result of his selfishness and greed. The older brother may never have had a grand party with his friends, yet he always had a roof over his head, lacked for nothing and had the love of his family at his side. The father concedes to the demands of the younger son and gives him his inheritance. When he returns, it is obvious his father has been waiting for him, and offers him forgiveness and gratitude. The elder son is outraged by this forgiveness. He cannot see that everyone's life will be better when they are treated with forgiveness and joy.

We may not be making a physical pilgrimage, however, on our inner pilgrimage we must make space by deepening the quality of our attentiveness in order to gain new insights in the here and the now. We may marvel at things we thought we already knew by seeing them anew.

Discussion Starters:

1. How can we become fully present to our surroundings during this Lenten journey?
2. What am I beginning to discover as I grow in my attentiveness to my experience of the everyday?
3. What new insights are emerging, to which I need to pay special attention as they signify for me the presence of God in my life?

Extract from *New Seeds of Contemplation* by Thomas Merton

At such times the awakening,
the turning inside out of all values,
the newness,
the emptiness and the purity of vision that makes themselves evident,
all these provide a glimpse of the cosmic dance.



'Solo Hike Central Pyrenees' by
Kitty Terwolbeck ([CC BY 2.0](#))

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What will I take home ...



Week 4: Living with Vulnerability

This week we meet the Samaritan woman, living in vulnerable circumstances, who journeys from her own brokenness to the source of living water. We also meet Nicodemus, a Jewish leader and member of the ruling Sanhedrin, who opens himself to become vulnerable in front of Jesus.

Gospels

- John 3: 14-21 Jesus with Nicodemus
- John 4: 1-42 The Samaritan Woman
- Your Gospel

In Jesus, God became vulnerable. To have a body is to be vulnerable. Vulnerability is the central theme of Jesus' ministry. He was vulnerable in the wilderness as the Devil tempted him. By rejecting the devil Jesus became vulnerable to rejection, loss, suffering and death – the very things that make us human.

Nicodemus made his pilgrimage to Jesus at night because he was afraid of rejection. In his conversation with Jesus, Nicodemus wants to be in charge, to assert his knowledge. In response Jesus tells him that he needs to become like a child again, to become vulnerable. He thinks he knows about God, but Jesus suggests that he does not *know* God. To *know* God requires a level of vulnerability, an openness, an imagination, that Nicodemus has spent a lifetime putting behind him.

The Samaritan woman has experienced deep loss, sadness and vulnerability. Jesus' response is non-judgmental, yet expresses an understanding of her pain: the rejection, loss, vulnerability, and impermanence she has had to endure. Despite society having deemed her unpopular, or disposable, or unclean, Jesus welcomes her and calls her worthy, good, and important.

As we journey through life, Jesus sees us and knows the depth of our being. He sees our wounds and brokenness. Yet he wraps us in bandages of love. Like the Samaritan woman we have the opportunity to open our hearts to an encounter with Jesus. As we pause on our pilgrimage, God is with us as we sit resting at the roadside of life. God embraces each of us as we are - with all our strengths and weaknesses, and all our potential, realised and yet to become. He recognises our vulnerability and our desperate cry for living water.

Our ultimate guide is the Holy Spirit whose presence we discern in the unfolding of the journey and companionship of those we might not otherwise meet. Cultural and social barriers are eroded, perspectives widened and trust grows as we become informed by the stories of others. We gradually begin to trust these companions and our horizons are widened as a consequence. In this time of Lent, we are invited to reflect on the experience of the many people on the move throughout the world today.

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Discussion Starters:

1. What is our experience of meeting others on the journey of life? How have we opened our arms to the vulnerable, willing to let “the other” to be themselves, as they come into our space?
2. Who are those with whom I am sharing my Lenten journey and what am I hearing from their stories that evokes a response in my heart?
3. What does it mean to be separate and yet ‘one’ in the world today?



Untitled image of refugees arriving in Europe by Fotomovimiento (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

We Refugees by Benjamin Zephaniah

I come from a musical place
Where they shoot me for my song
And my brother has been tortured
By my brother in my land.

I come from a beautiful place
Where they hate my shade of skin
They don't like the way I pray
And they ban free poetry.

I come from a beautiful place
Where girls cannot go to school
There you are told what to believe
And even young boys must grow beards.

I come from a great old forest
I think it is now a field
And the people I once knew
Are not there now.

We can all be refugees
Nobody is safe,
All it takes is a mad leader
Or no rain to bring forth food,
We can all be refugees
We can all be told to go,
We can be hated by someone
For being someone.

I come from a beautiful place
Where the valley floods each year
And each year the hurricane tells us
That we must keep moving on.

I come from an ancient place
All my family were born there
And I would like to go there
But I really want to live.

I come from a sunny, sandy place
Where tourists go to darken skin
And dealers like to sell guns there
I just can't tell you what's the price.

I am told I have no country now
I am told I am a lie
I am told that modern history books
May forget my name.

We can all be refugees
Sometimes it only takes a day,
Sometimes it only takes a handshake
Or a paper that is signed.
We all came from refugees
Nobody simply just appeared,
Nobody's here without a struggle,
And why should we live in fear
Of the weather or the troubles?
We all came here from somewhere.

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A Reflection for Pilgrims

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Week 5: Seeing Clearly: New Horizons

This week we witness the encounter between Jesus and the paralytic man, and Jesus and the Greeks who questioned him after his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

How is your pilgrimage going? Are you living with unanswered questions? Are you wondering where you will find hope? We travel in faith rather than certainty as we face the reality of the

human condition and our dependence on God and others. We need, as a pilgrim community, to accept that we do not have all the answers, that we will often be walking into darkness, and that we will continue to be puzzled and confused as to which direction we should take. We need to be at home in our faith if we are to progress. The Greeks in this story remained bewildered, but the paralytic man went off developing his spiritual resources. In both of today's stories we see divine work: the work of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

The Greeks in today's story did not expect to talk about death. Likewise, the paralytic man probably didn't expect to encounter Jesus on that day. I am not sure why the Greeks wanted to see Jesus, but it is highly possible that the paralytic man had dreamed of such a healing encounter. After all, they say seeing is believing.

Christianity means participating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is what Jesus sets before the Greeks who question him. If we want to see Jesus then we must look death in the face. Death is the gateway to new life. If we are to see clearly, there is a series of mini deaths to encounter.

When Jesus meets the paralytic man, he firstly forgives the man his sins and only then does he heal him of his paralysis. Jesus knew the paralytic man needed inner healing before physical healing. He had to be healed from the inside out. The man is healed and able to walk again, to continue his pilgrimage. Jesus later met the man in the temple and reminded him of the importance of "seeing clearly", by not to sinning again.

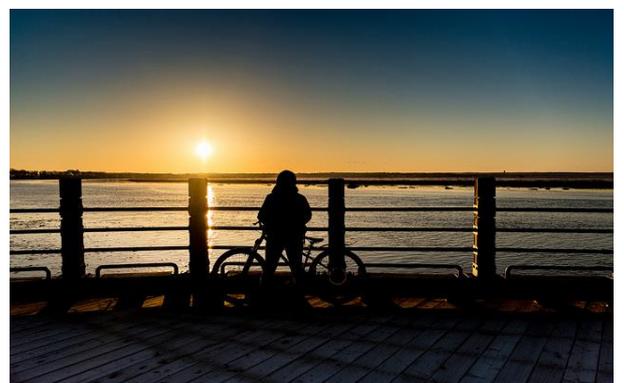
Regardless of who or what in our life has died, Jesus has already opened up new horizons for us. As we continue our pilgrimage it is time to let ourselves be lifted up; lifted up in Christ's crucifixion, lifted up in his resurrection, lifted up in hope. We are but grains of wheat: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies...."

Discussion Starters

1. What are the questions we have faced on our pilgrim journey?
2. When things become less clear for us and we struggle to find answers, how might we respond to these unanswered questions?
3. What are the painful passages for me as I make this journey? Where did/do I find hope and support during these trying times?

Gospels

- John 12:20-33 Greeks visit Jesus who speaks of his death
- John 5: 1-18 The Paralytic Man
- Your Gospel



'Silhouette at Sunrise' by James Mann ([CC BY 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/))

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***A thought went up my mind today* by Emily Dickinson**

A thought went up my mind today	Nor where it went, nor why it came	But somewhere in my soul,
That I have had before,	The second time to me,	I know I've met the thing before;
But did not finish,—some way back,	Nor definitely what it was,	It just reminded me—'twas all—
I could not fix the year,	Have I the art to say.	And came my way no more.



'Close Encounters' by Maurits Verbiest ([CC BY 2.0](#))

A Reflection for Pilgrims

Take some time to gather wisdom for the continuing journey:

What captured my attention ...

What surprised me ...

What moved me ...

What changed me ...

What is my hope for me ... and for my faith community

What will I take home ...

Week 6: The Sacred Encounter: Return to God

As we near the end of our Lenten pilgrimage, we are invited to contemplate the mystery of God at the heart of Christian experience. Each step on the journey brings forth more questions, for example: what is the nature of suffering. This week we explore the Passion of Jesus as told by Mark, and the story of the blind man from John's gospel.

Gospels

- Mark 14: 1-15:47 Passion according to Mark
- John 9: 1-41 The Man Born Blind
- Your Gospel

The man born blind has a sacred encounter with Jesus near the pool of Siloam. It relates a message of faith; a faith, which is seen to grow and deepen as life happens. Our own journey of faith is affected by our life experience. Jesus saw the blind man in a way that others could not. Likewise, Jesus' approaches each of us with knowledge of our whole life history because love seeks to understand better, the one who is loved.

As the blind man was on his way to wash in the pool of Siloam at Jesus' command I wonder if he stopped and thought to himself, 'what am I doing, no one has ever heard of a man born blind being healed of his blindness. Who am I kidding.' Maybe he stopped many times before reaching the pool, but because he felt inner stirrings stimulated by a man called Jesus, he could not help but his satisfy the curiosity.



Refugees in šid (Serbia) by Fotomovimiento (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Simon of Cyrene has a sacred encounter with Jesus on the road to Calvary. We don't know if Simon became a Christian. But we do know he was forced to walk the journey to Calvary beside a humiliated, battered and bruised Jesus, a man he has never seen before. Simon is unaware of the message of faith he is witnessing. He only sees a calculated, brutal and agonising death by someone unable to defend himself. But this is the story that demonstrated the wisdom of God, waiting to be recognised. Divine wisdom is not a manual of common sense and practical advice. Rather it is the message of

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

unconditional, radical self-emptying love, sacrificial living and dying of Jesus through which we learn a core message of our faith: God is greater than any suffering, God is redemptive love.

In these sacred encounters of a blind man cured, a man put to death, in bread broken and wine shared, the cross as our emblem, we recognise the start of a new freedom, a call for us to live, not by massing goods and achievement, but by graciousness and generosity which manifest the power of God.

We undertake the Lenten journey each year in order to grow in our faith. Each one of us is at a different place in our faith journey as we make this pilgrimage. Together we become the light of Christ in this world: a light, which helps to guide others to seek a sacred encounter, to know and love Jesus as he truly is. Somewhere in our faith tradition is the belief that suffering is something that may be learned from, strangely embraced and somehow turned to profound significance.

The ebb and flow of the pilgrim journey finally gives way to the proximity of our chosen destination. To this sacred place, we have come to seek some form of encounter with Divinity. In ways that demonstrate the love of God for everyone, we can be life-long pilgrims, constantly seeking renewal and transformation in the light of the resurrection of Jesus.

May we be always ready to give up what we cannot keep in order to gain what we cannot lose. Alleluia!

Discussion Starters:

1. As we enter Holy Week, what emerges for us as we contemplate its significance in our own pilgrimage to Calvary?
2. How is the saving pattern of death and resurrection of Jesus finding expression in our lives?
3. What questions am I bringing as I stand before the Cross this Easter, and what form of renewal is asked of me as result of my pilgrimage experience?
4. What people, networks, ideas, insights have I discovered that will continue to inspire me?

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Great Traveler by Joyce Rupp

Great Traveler,
you beguile two crest-fallen disciples
on the road to Emmaus;
you draw them in
with your arrowed questions,
urge them to turn the story over,
to recall each piece of it,
although you already know
the disturbing memory.
You speak your golden words,
softening the travelers' sadness,
revealing what their hearts
yearn to believe: life thrives beyond death.
Slowly their sagging spirits
rouse with recognition allured by the faint scent
of your prevailing presence.

“Stay! Stay! Stay with us!”

And you do.

You break bread with them,
and when the lamp of love
flames high, you rise quietly
and gently slip away.

Joy washes over past bewilderment,
propels the disciples outward.
They go, carrying a taste of love,
a voice of hope, a word of comfort

to those waiting in the wounded harbor of disbelief.

Now, after the closeness of prayer,
I, too, go out,
carrying the flaming heart of communion,
go to embrace you, the Great Traveler,
through the integrity of my life,
go to carry the lighted lamp of Love in me,
out and beyond, into the heart of a world
where the same Lamp shines vividly or all to see.



'Crucifixion' by Richard Campbell – used with permission

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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 Bishop 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/general/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.

or

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 colors, 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.

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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 emerges?
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.

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina [Latin] means sacred or divine reading and is a prayerful reading of Scripture.

The following is a suggested way of *Lectio Divina*.

One person from the group could slowly read the passage from the selected Gospel, and then another slowly repeat it.

Is there a word or phrase that jumps out at you or grabs your attention?

Write down that word or phrase.

Take five minutes to quietly savour this phrase.

You might find it helpful to repeat the phrase silently to yourself.

What you are seeking to do is to allow the phrase to rest quietly in your heart.

At the end of five minutes, take a further five minutes to consider what this phrase or word might mean for your life. You could write down something you will do in response to this reflection.

Or you may prepare a word or two of prayer for the grace to change your disposition or behaviour.

Group members might like to share with one another some thoughts arising from this time of prayer.

Guidelines for Leaders and Participants

Lent – Easter – Pentecost 2018

	Western	Orthodox
<i>Lent Begins</i>	<i>Ash Wednesday</i> 14 February 2018	<i>Beginning of Great Lent</i> 19 February 2018
<i>Easter Sunday</i>	1 April 2018	8 April 2018
<i>Pentecost</i>	20 May 2018	27 May 2018

Background and Hopes

Historically, Lent has been a time of preparation for the blessings of the Easter season. For more than forty five years, an Ecumenical Lenten Resource has been commissioned every two years through the churches in South Australia.

These resources have offered Christians, locally and beyond, the opportunity to gather for personal prayer and reflection, to share the experience of Lent and to journey together towards Easter. People have been invited to consider their shared faith in Christ and what it means in practice: not only to engage in education and conversation but to move beyond the discussion process to inner conversion and to action.

Since the first Ecumenical Lenten Study in 1972, thousands have come together in small groups and have come to know one another better. We give thanks for the sharing and growth in faith and action that has happened through these resources.

It is hoped that Christians from different traditions will continue to come together in 2018 around the resource *A Lenten Pilgrimage to the Heart* and to reflect on how Lent continues to be meaningful in the midst of today's complexities and challenges.

The following notes are designed to assist both group leaders and participants.

A Lenten Pilgrimage to the Heart

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Content

A Lenten Pilgrimage to the Heart offers suggestions for six group sessions in Lent. See page 1 – Content.

Groups

Are you willing to be a contact person for your local area and to assist groups to be formed that are as ecumenical as possible?

Around 5-8 people probably works best.

Try to include people from different churches...contact neighbouring churches and invite the people to form clusters of groups with you and with others.

Our hope is that with such diversity, ecumenical learning will be enhanced.

Suggestions for Group Leaders & for the information of all Participants

Beforehand

Venue

- Consider when and where you will gather. Meeting in the same place at the same time *may* assist with a sense of familiarity and leave people free to focus more comfortably on the resource. In any case, ensure everyone knows where and when!
- Ensure that the space chosen for the gathering is comfortable and inviting so that people who are shy or hesitant feel welcome and able to contribute.
- The person hosting the gathering need not be the person leading the weekly session(s).
- If refreshments are offered during or after the meeting, we suggest that they are kept simple. This also respects any who may be fasting during this time.

Copies of the Resource & the Gospels

- Check each person has made arrangements to print their own copy of the resource, or can access it from their electronic device.
- Is it necessary to arrange a couple of spares, or can people look on with one another?
- If printed copies of the Resource are required and not able to be arranged elsewhere, you may wish to contact Melanie Macrow, Office Administrator, SA Council of Churches – sacc@picknowl.com.au to arrange copies to be run off for you. There will be a charge of \$3 + postage and handling.
- We encourage people to be familiar with the Sunday Gospel that will be proclaimed in their Church [see page 4 of resource] and suggest people bring along their own bible to the gathering.

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- Encourage people to read through the Gospel and the resource prayerfully beforehand, as possible.

Prayer

- Consider the opening and closing prayer. The resource includes suggestions for prayer. If further or more formal prayer is preferred, who will take responsibility for arranging, setting up and leading?

During

Leading/facilitating the conversations – nurturing attentive listening and respectful conversation

- Set time limits have not been given for each session but it is usually wise to ensure that the group can conclude within ninety minutes.
- Take a few minutes for any introductions and brief conversation. At the start of the first session, you may wish to take a little longer over this so that you engender and build up a sense of companionship and trust.
- If not already done, the first session is an appropriate time to discuss how the group will be organised and facilitated, confirming the place and times, and any other practical arrangements.
- We encourage any leader/facilitator to be familiar with the material and the process before each session. Their knowledge of the resource and skills in leading small groups will help keep the group focussed on the point of discussion or reflection, ensuring all are involved and moving along within agreed timing.
- If the resource is being read out loud, share it among the group.
- Encourage all who are present to participate in the discussion. If possible, try to assist people who may find themselves dominating the session to make space for any quieter people to have their voices heard.
- At the same time, do not be afraid of silence. Some of the recommended readings and questions may trigger personal reflection that is not easily shared with others.
- Towards the end of your final gathering or soon after, you are encouraged to share any comments and insights with SA Council of Churches about what worked well and what could be done differently in relation to the Resource or the Gatherings or any other aspect that occurs to you.

Afterwards

If you have downloaded the resource, please let SA Council of Churches know, whether you proceeded to use it or not. Email sacc@picknowl.com.au

All insights and reflections in relation to *A Lenten Pilgrimage to the Heart* will be welcome, and will help shape future resources. Please gather them up and send to Ecumenical Lenten Resource 2018, c/- Geraldine Hawkes, SA Council of Churches – sacc1@picknowl.com.au or post to 65 Flinders Street, Adelaide SA 5000

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Council of
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Adelaide SA 5000

sacc@picknowl.com.au

www.sacc.asn.au