



LENTEN
PROGRAM
Year C

All I have is yours
FORTY DAYS TO FREEDOM



MICHAEL MCGIRR

GUIDELINES FOR GROUPS

1. Perhaps different people could take a turn leading each week. The week's leader will need to take a little time before the meeting to read through the section for that week. At the meeting, they will have a part in drawing people out and allowing everyone to speak.
2. The meeting is so much richer if members have had a little time to sit with the week's readings first and allow God to touch them through the scripture.
3. Have a generous ear. Don't judge what others say. We are all at the meeting because we have responded to God in our lives. Otherwise we'd be somewhere else.
4. Don't rush. St Ignatius says at the very start of his Spiritual Exercises 'it is not knowing much, but realising and relishing things interiorly, that contents and satisfies the soul.' In other words, you don't have to get through a program or agenda. Don't be afraid to linger in the company of the Lord wherever and whenever the Lord seems to be reaching into your lives.
5. Be open and enjoy yourselves. The Lord reaches us in different ways in every different year of our lives.

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WEEK ONE

Free to choose

In the wilderness, Jesus has to decide who he is and which relationships will be at the heart of his life. We face the same decisions and they are not always easy.

WEEK TWO

Free to follow

Jesus takes his friends to the top of the mountain where they discover that following begins with listening and listening can end in a very challenging place.

WEEK THREE

Free for surprise

Abraham wants to know God's name. But he must wait. A man wants to cut down a fig tree. But he must also wait. God isn't answerable to our expectations.

WEEK FOUR

Free to forgive

There is plenty of anger and resentment in the world and even in our lives. God shows us a better way.

WEEK FIVE

Free to love

So many relationships are about power and control. These attitudes build walls. God wants only what is best for us.

PALM SUNDAY

Free from fear

Crowds can be both fickle and terrifying. Their mood can change in a moment. God helps us to stand up to everything that makes us anxious.

THE EASTER TRIDUUM

Free for life



*We too pray for the kind of freedom
that allows God to
work in our lives and the world.*

Christians believe that we can't achieve true freedom by having, but only by giving. The forty days of Lent prepare us to celebrate again the death and resurrection of Jesus, the heart of our faith and the source of our freedom. Throughout that time we too pray for the kind of freedom that allows God to work in our lives and the world: freedom from fear, freedom to forgive and, above all, freedom to love.

Untying the knots – forty modest suggestions

Lent is a good time to disentangle ourselves from all the things that get us tied up in knots. It is a time when we are called to simplify life and to focus more on others as we prepare to celebrate Easter. It is the season to work on our inner freedom. Although it is autumn in Australia, it is time for a spiritual spring-cleaning. Here are forty modest suggestions for the forty days of Lent.

1. Slowly read Psalm 63
2. Take part in a community justice activity
3. Sit for a while in a park you often drive past without stopping
4. Take a photo of something beautiful that others might not notice
5. Wear odd socks as a reminder that life is never neat and tidy



6. Send that photo to someone who needs a lift
7. Find out the names of the ten poorest countries
8. Do the ironing outdoors
9. Read a novel or a poem that was written over fifty years ago

10. Practice highway happiness: the art of being nice to other drivers
11. Sit in a food court on your own for half an hour and pray for the hungry of the world
12. Find out who Dorothy Day or Mary Glowery or Eileen O'Connor were
13. Write a limerick about something that annoys you as a way of making light of it.
14. Follow the pope on twitter



15. Listen to a Beethoven string quartet
16. Find out what happens to your household rubbish after it is collected
17. Be the first to empty the dishwasher.
18. Enjoy the last stone fruits of the season
19. Go to Mass on a weekday
20. Send an old fashioned postcard to someone who needs a laugh



... for the forty days of Lent

21. Buy a dozen oysters for sheer pleasure. Take a moment to also admire the shells.
22. Write a poem or a song in gratitude for your home.
23. Spend a day where you don't eat unless you are sitting down.
24. Make tea in a teapot and wait for it to brew properly
25. Find out where your coffee was grown and who was likely to have picked it.



26. Sit for a while in the waiting section of a hospital and pray for all who suffer
27. Go for a walk with someone who can only move slowly
28. Vacuum someone else's car
29. Buy something offbeat from an op shop
30. Watch a fish swimming or a bird in flight
31. Eat a tomato fresh from the vine



32. Find out who we are supporting with Project Compassion in Lent.
33. Only use the Lord's name in prayer.
34. Take fifteen minutes to look at the stars and enjoy the cool evening air.
35. Think about Pontius Pilate and ask if honestly you would have done any better.
36. Same with St Peter who denied even knowing Jesus.



37. Turn your phone off at dinner time and leave it off till morning.
38. Go to bed early
39. Buy Easter eggs that use only fair trade chocolate
40. Look at the moon. Think that the next full moon means it will be Easter.

WEEK ONE:

Jesus is led through the wilderness

Choosing what we do in our lives is really about choosing the kind of people we want to be. God invites us to the kind of freedom that puts relationships first, especially with him.

Opening Prayer

Loving God,
You have guided us on many
journeys in your life.

We ask you to be close to us
in the journey of this Lent.

Fill our minds with wisdom
And our hearts with
tenderness

As we draw closer to the
mystery of your death
and resurrection

Which are the keys

Which unlock the door to
understanding who we are

And how much you love us.

Amen.

First reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10

Second reading: Romans 10:8-13

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

Filled with the Holy Spirit, Jesus left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit through the wilderness, being tempted there by the devil for forty days. During that time he ate nothing and at the end he was hungry. Then the devil said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to turn into a loaf.' But Jesus replied, 'Scripture says: Man does not live on bread alone.'

Then leading him to a height, the devil showed him in a moment of time all the kingdoms of the world and said to him, 'I will give you all this power and the glory of these kingdoms, for it has been committed to me and I give it to anyone I choose. Worship me, then, and it shall all be yours.' But Jesus answered him, 'Scripture says:

You must worship the Lord your God,
and serve him alone.'

Then he led him to Jerusalem and made him stand on the parapet of the Temple. 'If you are the Son of God,' he said to him 'throw yourself down from here, for scripture says:

He will put his angels in charge of you
to guard you,

and again:

They will hold you up on their hands
in case you hurt your foot against a stone.'

But Jesus answered him, 'It has been said:

You must not put the Lord your God to the test.'

Having exhausted all these ways of tempting him, the devil left him, to return at the appointed time.

Bread is for sharing

It is great that we get to spend so much time this year with Luke's Gospel. In fact, if you are looking for something special to enrich your experience of Lent, why not take time to quietly read the whole of Luke's Gospel. It has 24 chapters which means you can read four a week as you get ready for Easter. Let it gently seep into your bones.

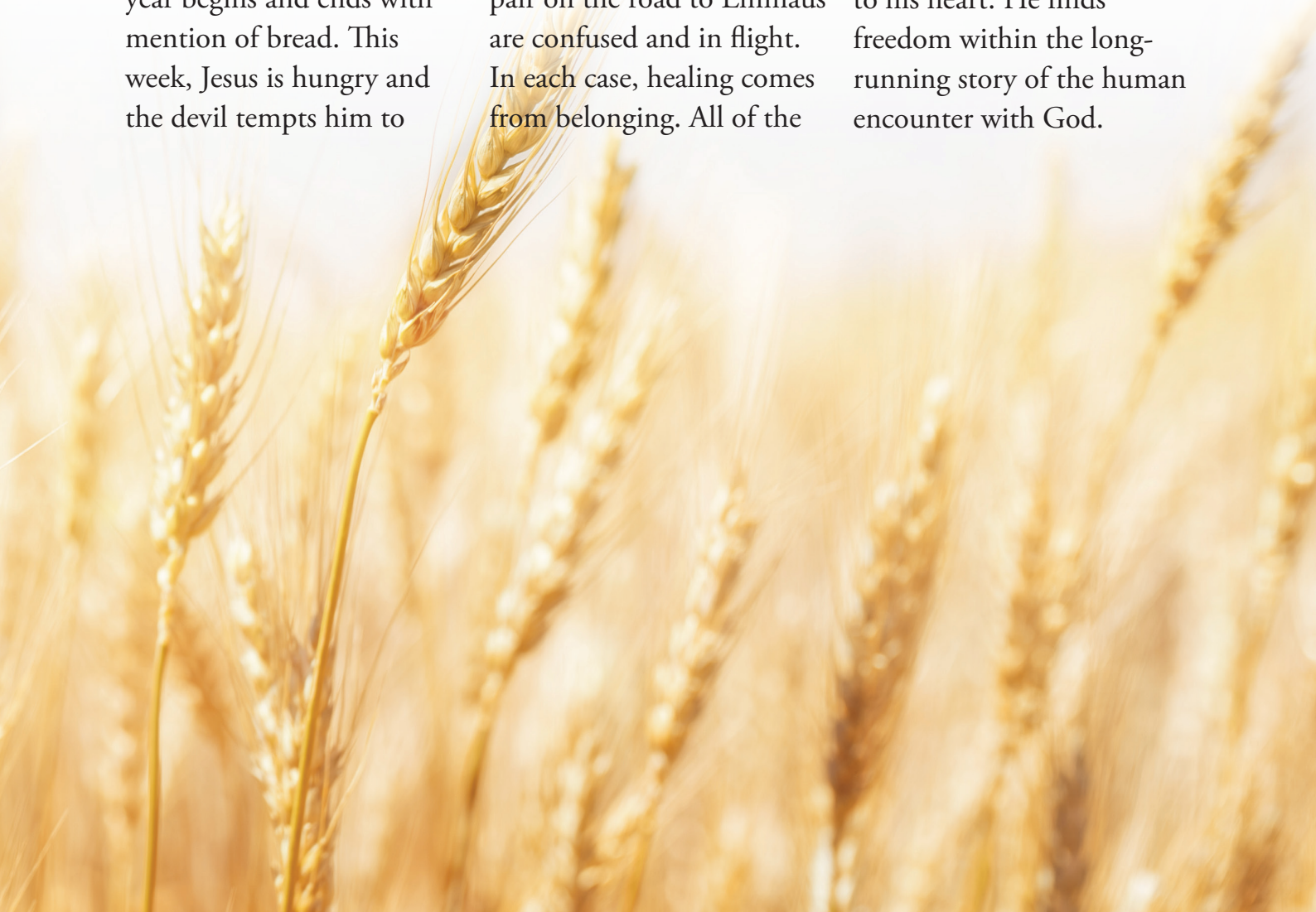
Anyone familiar with Luke's Gospel will not be surprised that Lent this year begins and ends with mention of bread. This week, Jesus is hungry and the devil tempts him to

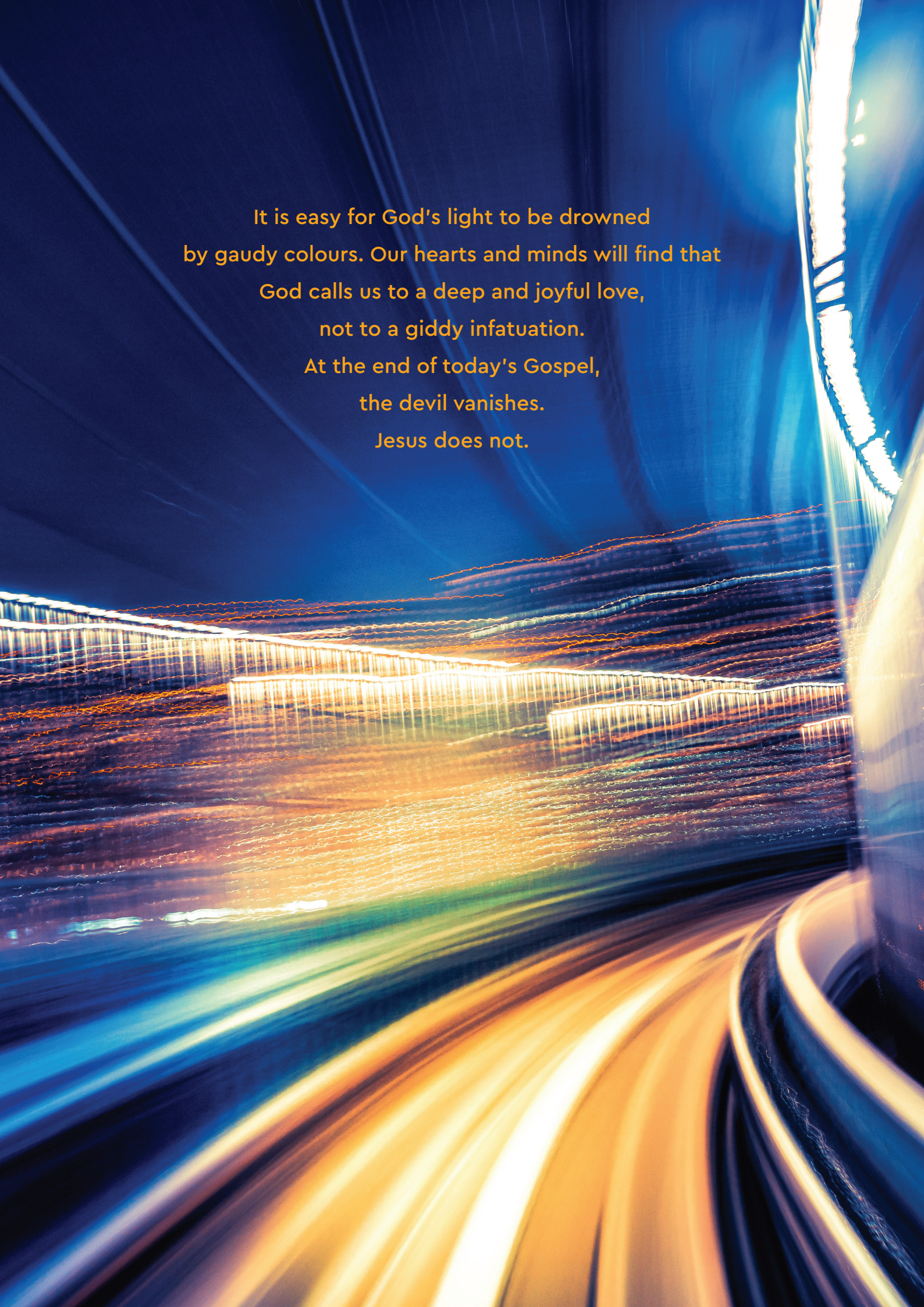
turn a stone into bread. On Holy Thursday, Jesus will ask his friends to share bread in memory of him. On the road to Emmaus, they will recognise the risen Lord in the breaking of bread.

What do these stories have in common? First of all, they remind us that bread is for sharing. The devil tempts Jesus to look after himself. As Jesus faces his death, the disciples seem to splinter and hide. The pair on the road to Emmaus are confused and in flight. In each case, healing comes from belonging. All of the

temptations Jesus faces in today's Gospel are about losing perspective and isolating himself with riches or status. Jesus repeatedly tells the devil that his life is about relationships and the most important of those is with his Father. It took forty lonely days for Jesus to full realise that he is not alone.

Secondly, Jesus quotes scripture to the devil. He has his feet firmly within a tradition that is close to his heart. He finds freedom within the long-running story of the human encounter with God.





It is easy for God's light to be drowned
by gaudy colours. Our hearts and minds will find that
God calls us to a deep and joyful love,
not to a giddy infatuation.
At the end of today's Gospel,
the devil vanishes.
Jesus does not.

The devil vanishes. Jesus does not.

A visitor to the zoo noticed that in the first enclosure there was a basket of baguettes. A bit further down, there was a cage full of wholemeal bread rolls with sesame seeds. Next to that, there was another cage full of sourdough loaves. Then came an enclosure with rolls without sesame seeds. Needless to say, this was not a gluten free zoo. Even so, the visitor was intrigued. He found one of the keepers to ask what was going on.

‘I don’t understand,’ he said. ‘What’s this all about?’

‘Oh,’ explained the attendant. ‘Everything in this zoo is bread in captivity.’

Captivity is one of the great themes of the human story. It comes at us, for example, when we read the ten Commandments from the Book of Exodus. It is one of those moments in scripture of lucid clarity. Moses has just been leading the people through the desert for forty years, which were far from easy, and now they are about to take possession of the promised land. Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness as a kind of symbolic recognition of the journey he shared with the chosen people.

A community needs a few rules to protect what it values,

to protect what makes it a community. So here they are in the ten commandments. But scripture is clear that they are meaningless without the preface; ‘I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.’ Many of the people with Moses had been bred in captivity. But the Lord set them free. That’s what they have to remember. The commandments are about ensuring that freedom grows and deepens. Sometimes the commandments are misunderstood as another form of captivity, a list of prohibitions. The opposite is true. They are an invitation to find freedom.

Likewise, Jesus’ encounter with the devil allows him to give voice to life-affirming wisdom. Pope Francis has spoken often about the need for us to be discerning people, to be able to follow the true light in a world that is full of bright signs and glaring screens. It is easy for God’s light to be drowned by gaudy colours. Our hearts and minds will find that God calls us to a deep and joyful love, not to a giddy infatuation. At the end of today’s Gospel, the devil vanishes. Jesus does not.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AND DISCUSS

1. Can you think about a time when you have been tempted to do something you knew was wrong? Perhaps it was a very personal matter. Don’t be afraid to go back to it in your mind. Remember, you only have to share with the group what you are comfortable with. What was happening in your heart at the time?
2. If a young person came to you for advice about what direction they should take in life, how would you respond?
3. Can you think of a time when a quote from scripture has come into your mind and has really helped you? What was it? What was the situation? Why did it help?
4. Have you ever felt truly alone? When? What was it like?
5. As you look ahead to the journey of Lent, where in your life would you like to find healing and renewal?
6. Jesus had the freedom to walk away from the devil’s offers. Where in your life would you like to find greater freedom?
7. Have you ever encountered God in a place that felt like a wilderness?



What we do is very little.
But it is like the little boy
with a few loaves and
fishes. Christ took that
little and increased it.
He will do the rest. What
we do is so little we may
seem to be constantly
failing. But so did He fail.
He met with apparent
failure on the Cross. But
unless the seed fall into
the earth and die, there is
no harvest. And why must
we see results?
Our work is to sow.'

Dorothy Day

REFLECTING ON MY LIFE

In his *Spiritual Exercises*, St Ignatius of Loyola has a lot of sound advice about making decisions. He says that the love that makes us choose a particular thing in preference to another (or a job or a house or a relationship) should 'descend from above, from the love of God.' In other words, everything we have or do should be a means of showing love not for that thing or action in itself but for God. We should want and choose only what leads to God deepening God's life in us. Of course, this is easier said than done!

Imagination was very important for St Ignatius. He suggests using our imagination when we are faced with a decision. In particular, he puts forward three scenes we can enter into in our minds.

1. **Imagine that we have met a complete stranger who is facing a decision similar to ours. What**

advice would we give when no self-interest is involved.

2. **Imagine that you are on the point of death. What decision would I like to look back on having made at this moment? This takes petty short term gains out of the equation.**
3. **Finally, imagine it is the end of the world. What decision would I like to have made if I were to look back on it from that vantage point? This reminds us of our responsibility to the whole of God's creation of which we are a small but cherished part.**

For the group:

Tell the story of a big decision in your life and how it either brought you closer to God or made you feel more distant from God.

Closing prayer:

Say the Our Father together slowly.

Then go back and say it again.

This second time, stop after each line.

Go around the group and take turns saying what

A particular line from the Our Father means to you.

Try to be brief.

Only take half a dozen words!

Then finally say the Our Father together for a third time.



All I Have is Yours

Forty Days to Freedom

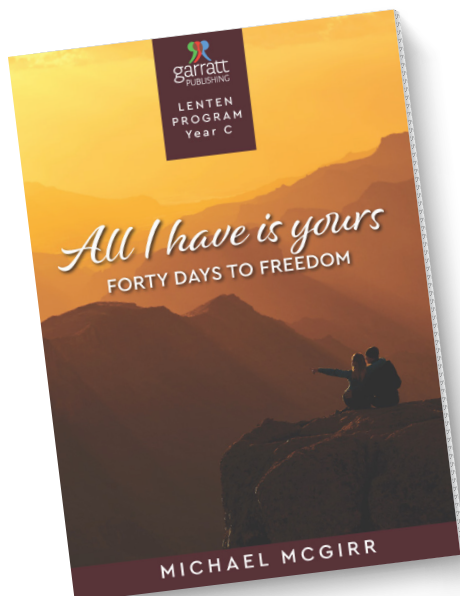
Lent is a time for repentance, spiritual growth and reflection. For the new Lenten season of 2019, Garratt Publishing is very proud to announce a new addition to our Lenten Program, *All I Have is Yours: Forty Days to Freedom* by **Michael McGirr**.

The forty days of Lent prepare us to celebrate again the death and resurrection of Jesus, the heart of our faith and the source of our freedom. Throughout that time we too pray for the kind of freedom that allows God to work in our lives and the world: freedom from fear, freedom to forgive and, above all, freedom to love.

Author, Michael McGirr, asks us to consider that choosing what we do in our lives is really about choosing the kind of people we want to be. His selection of readings, gospel, prayers and personal reflections are underpinned by commentary that questions and prompts the reader, offering a Lenten program that will nourish and encourage important conversation.

Inspiring photography and design enhance the reflections and highlight key teaching points and question prompts.

Michael McGirr is a well-known author, commentator and presenter. He was a Jesuit for twenty years and is currently the Head of Faith and Mission at St Kevin's College in Melbourne. He has previously been the publisher at *Eurkea Street*, was editor of *Australian Catholics* and fiction editor of *Meanjin*. Michael is a familiar voice on radio. His books include *Bypass: The Story of a Road*, *The Lost Art of Sleep*, and *Unhinged Saints*. As well as writing his own books, Michael is a reviewer for *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*.



All I Have is Yours
Forty Days to Freedom
Michael McGirr

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