



## Questions for Further Discussion

### Ash Wednesday

- For many of us, this season of Lent has come and gone so many times, we may arrive at Ash Wednesday a bit ho-hum about it all. Yet some who walked this road with us last year never imagined they wouldn't have the chance to do it again. If this were your last Lent, how would you make it your best? As we say from the start: "Remember you are dust."
- Turn and return! Joel urges us to turn away from a self-centred life, and return to the God who longs to bless us. Imagine yourself in the centre of things, with all of your goals around you. Now imagine God at the centre: What has to change? To begin, pray first for a change of heart.

*How important is it for me to be seen as "cool" or part of "the in-crowd" or known for my successful lifestyle?*

*I might not parade our "holiness" before others, but do I sin through modern forms of false pride which put others down and take away our focus on the God of hospitality and compassion?*

### 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent

- Good and evil struggle for supremacy in every human heart. My devil may look different than yours, but it's the Tempter all the same. Some of us are tempted to fear or insecurity. Others develop hard hearts or burn with greed. To beat temptation, we first have to admit that it exists.
- A humbling thought: Christ too, struggled with temptation. Because he became like us in all things, except sin, he helps us appreciate that there's no shame in being human. Pride, excessive self-sufficiency, worship of illusory pleasures of our culture—these are the temptations of today's desert. How might we renew our resolution to be whole and holy as we wrestle with the demons in our life?

*Why do I test God? Am I not confident that God is always present, especially in times of darkness and when I feel lost in the wilderness?*

*How often am I tricked or seduced by opportunities for power over others, getting a kick out of "being better- richer-smarter"?*

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent

- The Transfiguration was a unique event in salvation history, but smaller transfigurations happen all the time. Did you ever see a disabled child liberated while at play? Did you ever see joy on the faces of the dying? Look for the light. It's under the surface of everything.
- Everything's brilliantly clear on the mountaintop: at the retreat centre, during the parish mission or when hearing an excellent homily. Back at home, does Jesus shine as brightly? To be dazzled again, look in the faces of the least of our sisters and brothers.
- The Transfiguration was one of those mountaintop experiences the disciples would never forget. When Jesus appeared, speaking with Moses and Elijah, the disciples present got a glimpse of his stature. Jesus, they realised, ranked above the most honoured leaders of Israel. Have you ever had an experience when God suddenly became clearer or closer to you?

*Do I listen each day and listen carefully to the teachings of Christ as the best "directions for use" in my life?*

*Do I really believe that God has confidence in me being transformed day by day into reflections of Christ? That it can happen?*

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent

- What do a Samaritan woman, a cleansed temple and a fig tree have in common? These three Gospel stories illustrate Jesus' commitment to the outcast over the insider. People were shocked that Jesus spoke with the woman at the well: a foreign female sinner! But Jesus always had more time for the outsider than those who were sure they didn't need saving.

*What important work in my life is going to bear fruit and make a difference as baptised people of the kingdom?*

*How do I get the energy and skills for this work. (rate yourself)*

*through prayer?*

*the Scriptures?*

*sharing faith and talking to others?*

*participation fully in worship?*

## 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

- Why do we find it easier to care for others than to accept their concern for us? We fear the loss of control in being vulnerable. Yet we all need love, as today's parable clearly demonstrates. The father does. So do his sons. Surrender to love!
- Vision isn't just physical sight. Vision sees beyond today, beyond appearances, beyond the obvious. It gives a sense of direction and compels us forward. Without vision, the people perish. Jesus cured the blind, but his real concern was to impart God's vision. Jesus presents a Kingdom where compassion, justice and mercy reign, where life, not death, gets the last word. How do we see this vision illustrated in today's Gospel? What might this awareness invite us to in our daily life?

*Do I put restrictions on who, how much and when I will forgive?*

*Can I imagine the freedom to be felt when I let go a grudge, and release myself from resentment?*

*Is this how God works...fully forgiving and forgetting?*

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent

- Jesus refused to pass judgement on the woman presented as an adulteress, and on those gathered. He allowed each to judge himself or herself – which we all can do, quite effectively.
- The pain of a loved one's death never really diminishes, though it may take a back seat to our daily struggles. It may well be awkward to talk to someone who is grieving, but our reaching-out moves them toward healing. How might we help someone who is saddened by a death, recent or distant, by acknowledging their pain through our words or quiet presence?

*Have I ever been too willing to "throw the first stone" in disapproval or scorn?*

*What words might be written on the ground about me?*

## Passion Sunday

- They couldn't kill him for blasphemy, a religious crime Rome didn't recognise. But they could put him to death for a political crime, like treason. So Jesus died under the accusation, "King of the Jews." He had no throne, no army, and no power to threaten governments. But he threatened a lot of people with the power to change hearts.
- How have you spent these 40 days, especially in your practices of prayer, fasting and sharing? There's still time to be generous with all three. Jesus show exceptional generosity, even from the Cross.

- Few of us would identify with Judas the betrayer, Peter the denier or the bloodthirsty crowds calling for Jesus' crucifixion. But all of us, like the other disciples, have been overcome by drowsiness or lack of commitment, unable to muster up enough energy to watch with Jesus in the garden. During this holiest week of the year, how might we stay vigilant, even though we may be tempted to give in to seasonal distractions?

*What false and unkind attitudes to people are reflected in the Passion?*

*-trying to “test” people to see if they are “my type”,*

*- gossiping and laughing at others?*

*Or*

*- like the centurion, how often do I express my admiration and approval of people who speak for right and justice?*

***Selected material inspired by, and accessed from, Alice Camille, Karen Sue Smith, Catholic Update and Eileen Luthi***