

Christian Meditation

Virtue to Live By: Charity

I treat others as I would want them to treat me. I do simple acts of kindness to show my love.
I show my love for God by caring for others. I give my time to help others.
I share what I have with others.

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
This is the great and first commandment. And a second is: You shall love your neighbour as yourself."
(Matthew 22:37-39)*

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love." (Ephesians 4:2)

Setting the Scene/Focal point on floor or low table:

Purple cloth Lent, candles, dimmed lights, spiritual/reflective image on interactive whiteboard or as part of prayer focus, Bible, prayer stones, religious artefacts, plants, shells, objects to link to the theme. Meditative music/ peaceful/calming hymns quietly playing e.g.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pW8r1JzsuPk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoguomq8VvY>

Gathering together – children enter to calm meditative music and sit in a horseshoe around the focal point.

Stillness exercise

Close your eyes, sit comfortably, place your hands on your knees, allow the music to help you relax, take a deep breath in slowly and deeply through your nose, hold your breath for 3-4 seconds and breathe out through your mouth. Continue to take a few deep breaths, allowing the music to help you relax each part of your body from the tips of your toes to the top of your head.

Lift your shoulders and then relax, relax your arms, legs, stomach, face, concentrating on your breathing inhale...exhale...inhale...exhale...every part of your body.

Charity meditation

We share this time together in meditation with Jesus. As we are now in the season of Lent we are going to focus on the virtue of charity and how this is linked to love of God and each other. Christian charity truly extends to all, without distinction of race, religion, where we are from or what we have or have not got. For as God loved us with an unselfish love, so also the faithful should in their charity care for the human person himself, loving each other with the same affection with which God sought out man. Just as Christ, then, went about all the towns and villages, curing every kind of disease and infirmity as a sign that the kingdom of God had come. (cf. Matt. 9:35ff; Acts 10:38)

Lent is an opportunity to grow in charity. The limitation of charity does not happen with God. It happens within each one of us. We decide whether we will love God above all else and our neighbour as ourselves in each moment of the day.

It is through the Lenten season that we focus on three of the great spiritual gifts Christ gives to us on the path to holiness: prayer, penance, and almsgiving. Often, we know we need to pray and that all of us should be praying more. We know we should ask God for forgiveness during Lent particularly at reconciliation and try to give up something, to live simply and appreciate the simple things in life. We know we should do something extra to help others in more need than ourselves and give to the poor showing our love and care for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

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As we journey through Lent, let us focus on offering our prayers, penances, and alms with a genuine spirit of charity. Remembering, as St. Catherine of Siena said: "Nothing great is ever achieved without much enduring."

Let us must take a moment to breathe deeply, inhaling and exhaling, relaxing our body and focusing our mind. Spend a moment thinking about when you could pray more..., practice self-control...and think of how we can help others...

Does praying to God help you to be grateful for what you have and out others first? Maybe you can think of a time where you were tempted and were strong and used self-control. How good did that make you feel? Happy...proud...elated...in control of yourself...thankful...

We know there are things in the world that tempt us to make poor choices and at time Jesus was tempted to do things to prove he was the Son of God...but instead, Jesus chose to worship and love God...let us take a moment to reflect on this fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Today's we will learn that Jesus faced temptation but did not sin but used self-control. Our story gets us thinking about how God is faithful even when we wander away from Him.

Let us focus on this...take a deep breath...inhale and exhale... Take this time to feel safe and loved in the presence of the Lord. Take a deep breath and imagine you are with Jesus on this journey.

We know that Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. We learned that The Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove, and God spoke from heaven saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."

Immediately after all this happened, God sent Jesus into the wilderness where he fasted for 40 days going without food to spend time praying and thinking about God and returning ready to spread the message of God.

Before we listen to this story, imagine just for a moment that you are walking with Jesus, feel the heat of the desert sun on your face, on your arms, legs, everywhere. The hot sun is intense as you walk with Jesus. You walk for many hours, in the burning sun, no food and only stopping to pray. Watch Jesus as he concentrates on his mission, to know God better, to serve God and to be with God as one. Imagine this journey for 40 days and nights...the dedication, love and trust Jesus showed in God...

Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was very hungry. Can you imagine how hungry you would be?... imagine how Jesus must have felt.

The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written:" 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'"

Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

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Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"

Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Do you think Jesus was tempted during the time he spent in the wilderness? If you were in Jesus' place, what would you have done?

Instead of giving into the temptation to turn the stones into bread, Jesus remembered what God's Word says. Way back in the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy we can read about how the Israelites were wandering in the desert and they were really concerned about what they were going to eat. In fact, they cared more about food than their God who provided it! We need God more than we need anything else in the world because it's God Himself who sustains us. That's what Jesus remembered when Satan tempted Him, and knowing this truth allowed Jesus to resist temptation. Jesus faced temptation but did not sin.

Listening to this story about Jesus and learning from his experiences helps us to be practice discipline, keep our promises and be closer to God.

During Lent, we make our Lenten promises and being more charitable will enable us to achieve this and make us a stronger person. We can use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to help us show charity to others and grow closer to God.

Spend a moment thinking of a time when someone tried to help you when you were in need... how did it make you feel...has anyone tried to help you when you didn't need any help? how did that make you feel?...can you tell when someone genuinely wants to help you?..

Now let us pray: O Holy Spirit, please help us to use your gifts to help us be charitable to those around us. Help us to be conscious of you working through us and to draw closer to God. Help us to pray more and putting others needs first without being asked to do so.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When you are ready, bring your consciousness back into the room, thinking of the words charity and love. As you breathe in, concentrate on the word charity... and as you breathe out, concentrate on love...take a few breaths and relax. Begin to gently wiggle your toes and fingers and slowly sit up.

Following the example of Jesus, as a perfect role model, helps us to be a better person, making good choices to help others and ourselves. It can be challenging but we are all strong enough and determined to do show more charity to others, to pray, use self-control and be a better person.

Let us finish our time together with the Lord's prayer.

Our Father, who art in heaven...