



Easter⁺

Way of the Cross

A GUIDE TO ENCOUNTER CHRIST
THIS EASTER





AN INVITATION

We invite you on a journey of encounter this Easter.

The Way of the Cross is a series of 14 guided reflections and moments of prayer that explore Easter through the scriptures. The Christian life is a journey. Each encounter invites a personal opportunity for interior analysis, growth and a guided way forward with Jesus.

Individuals, families or groups can follow along with the free session outlines. This dynamic resource can be shaped to suit any context.

Session 1

An Encounter with
Peter, James & John

Session 2

An Encounter with
Judas

Session 3

An Encounter with
Peter

Session 4

An Encounter with
Pilate

Session 5

An Encounter with
Barabbas

Session 6

An Encounter with
the Cross

Session 7

An Encounter with
Mary

Session 8

An Encounter with
Simon of Cyrene

Session 9

An Encounter with
Veronica

Session 10

An Encounter with
the Women of Jerusalem

Session 11

An Encounter with
Nakedness

Session 12

An Encounter with
Death

Session 13

An Encounter with
Nicodemus & Joseph of Arimathea

Session 14

An Encounter with
You





A GUIDE OF ENCOUNTER

Beginning the Journey

Encounter: Way of the Cross is a spiritual guide to the cross of Jesus Christ. Our vision is that families, individuals and groups may use this guide as a journey of the soul that moves beyond head knowledge into an intimate encounter with Christ.

The cross for many scriptural figures becomes a point of choice, and so too for us. The Passion Narrative exemplifies the journey of Christian conversion. It reveals the heart. Together we can pray for the courage to look honestly at our interior life and encounter Christ in a new way. Allow yourself to be guided by these spiritual reflections. Like Christ, may we journey to the cross and see His glory.

Getting Started

You may partake on this journey in any setting, structure and time frame that suits your circumstance. Though there is a natural flow between sessions, each may be used independently. This means that in group settings, newcomers can join at any time. This also alleviates pressure to complete all fourteen sessions. We recommend two structures (not limited to) for *groups* or *individuals* to journey on the Way of the Cross:

Structure 1: Lent

Wednesdays & Fridays (traditional days of fasting)

Commencing: Ash Wednesday

Concluding: Good Friday



Groups may prefer to gather for one session per week and the other at home individually or online. This is up to the discretion of each group. We encourage commencing and concluding together.

Structure 2: Holy Week

Mornings and Evenings (7 consecutive days)

Commencing: Palm Sunday

Concluding: Easter Saturday



The frequency of a group gathering together is up to their discretion i.e. once daily, first and last session, and with any combination of modes. We encourage commencing and concluding together.



AN ENCOUNTER WITH PETER, JAMES & JOHN

SESSION

1

Scripture

Mark 14:32-38 (RSV)

And they went to a place which was called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I pray." And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch." And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt." And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Reflection

Following Jesus takes courage, strength and effort.

Jesus invites Peter, James and John to participate in His suffering. This echoes a frequent invitation of Jesus; "come follow me". For them, this is a daily invitation. We can imagine some days were harder than others. There would have been times when it would have felt easier for them to give up and go back to their old ways.

As we journey together this Lent, we are invited to take courage and apply ourselves to encounter Christ in a deeper way and participate in His suffering. We can persevere with Jesus or we can fall asleep. What comfort or way of life do you need to leave behind in order to courageously follow Jesus?

Amen

Contemplate

Pause a few minutes; pray, journal.

Ask God to guide you.

Q. What is God saying to you?

Share your insights with the group.

Share

Q. Did something stand out to you? Why?

Q. What is God saying to you right now?

Q. What part of your identity did you uncover?

Q. Do you feel compelled to make an action?

Prayer

Jesus, there are times I find it hard to respond to your call.

Help me to focus on the love of the Father in the same way You did.

When I am weak, make me strong.

Jesus, You are my strength:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, You are my hope:

Christ have Mercy

Jesus, You are my joy:

Lord have mercy





Scripture

Mark 14:40-46 (RSV)

And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time, and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand."

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I shall kiss is the man; seize him and lead him away under guard." And when he came, he went up to him at once, and said, "Master!" And he kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him.

Reflection

The kiss is a sign of intimacy, a sign of peace, a sign of love. It is now reduced into the sign of betrayal. Judas is determined. He will go to any length to get what he wants.

Reflect on your life, your relationships, friendships, loyalty and commitment. Are they about you and what you can get out of them? Or are they about the Lord?

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, there are times when I have used others.
Forgive me Lord, in Your mercy, for the times I have fallen short.
Give me the grace to see you in those around me.

*Jesus, You heard the call of the Father:
Lord have mercy*
*Jesus, You are loyal to the Father:
Christ have Mercy*
*Jesus, You reconciled me with the Father:
Lord have mercy*





Scripture

Matthew 26:69-75 (RSV)

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a maid came up to him, and said, "You also were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you mean." And when he went out to the porch, another maid saw him, and she said to the bystanders, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Certainly you are also one of them, for your accent betrays you." Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately the cock crowed. And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

Reflection

Peter walked, ate, cried and rejoiced in a friendship with Jesus. In the face of fear, trial and rejection, Peter denies Our Lord. He denies his friend, the very one that he loves, the one he himself proclaims as "...the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16)

Peter's story is our story. We experience pressure, trial and temptation. Do we too cast aside our own friendship with Jesus?

With God's help we can foster faithfulness. As a Church and in one's self we can pray for an unwavering love for Jesus.

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, I open my life to your love.
There are times where I fail to see You,
stand up for You and be your witness to the
world. For these times, I am sorry.
May Your grace be at work in my weakness.

Jesus, you forgive our rejection:
Lord have mercy
Jesus, welcome me back into your arms:
Christ have Mercy
Jesus, use my weakness to be your strength:
Lord have mercy





Scripture

John 19:6-11 (RSV)

When the chief priests and the officers saw him, they cried out, "Crucify him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Take him yourselves and crucify him, for I find no crime in him." The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God." When Pilate heard these words, he was the more afraid; he entered the praetorium again and said to Jesus, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. Pilate therefore said to him, "You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?" Jesus answered him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore he who delivered me to you has the greater sin."

Reflection

Pilate was under pressure. He tried to distance himself from his actions, washing his hands of them. Jesus, in His silence and innocence reveals the disposition of Pilate's heart. Pilate gives up Jesus for his own self-interest.

We each have varying degrees of influence and responsibility. Reflect on your life and relationships. Do you use your influence for peace and goodness and truth? Or do you give up Jesus for popularity and self-interest? When we face Jesus in the silence of our heart, what will he reveal about us?

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, we are troubled and in need of you.
Bring us peace;
Bring us strength in our weakness;
In our influence bring us compassion.
Give us your grace.

Jesus, show me how to love like you:
Lord have mercy
Jesus, teach me to follow you:
Christ have Mercy
Jesus, lead me to faith, hope and love:
Lord have mercy





Scripture

Matthew 27: 15-23 (RSV)

Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. And they had then a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas. So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you, Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much over him today in a dream." Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the people to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let him be crucified." And he said, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let him be crucified."

Reflection

The name Barabbas means 'son of the father' (bar/abba). It seems fitting that the crowd be confronted with a choice between the true 'Son of the Father' or the counterfeit 'son of the father'. The alternative to Christ is not good or beautiful or true. They had to 'persuade' each other. They had to believe the lie that Barabbas was the good and righteous choice.

Eventually we will all be confronted with difficult choices that we can no longer avoid. The time on the fence is fleeting. We can believe Jesus or we can believe the world.

You are worth everything to Jesus. You are made for a life of beauty, goodness and truth. What have you come to believe about your own worth? What parts of your life have you chosen the world over Jesus? Together let us pluck out the lies we have persuaded each other to believe.

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, I often choose what isn't good for me
and I continue with old habits.
Every time I sin, I reject you.
Help me to know the real you.
Help me to recognise you.
Lead me away from the persuasion of evil.

*Jesus, you are the true Son of the Father:
Lord have mercy
Jesus, you are goodness, beauty and truth:
Christ have Mercy
Jesus, you reveal my true worth:
Lord have mercy*





Scripture

John 19:15-18 (RSV)

They cried out, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!" Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Caesar." Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them.

Reflection

The symbol of death, destruction and humiliation becomes the symbol of life, love and salvation.

In the beginning, Adam and Eve reject God by the fruit of the tree. Jesus "bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness..." (1 Peter 2:24)

Ours is a baptismal call; to submerge in a death to sin and rise to life in Jesus Christ. This is a life of taking up our own crosses and offering them to Jesus. Our crosses become like splinters placed into the cross of Jesus. He unites us in His mission of the salvation of souls.

Are you ready for the mission?

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, you have healed me from my sin.
May I never forget the sacrifice you made for me on the cross.
Take me deeper into the mystery of Your cross; may I experience its power to transform my life.

*Jesus, You carried rejection and isolation:
Lord have mercy
Jesus, You never walked away from suffering:
Christ have Mercy
Jesus, help me to carry my cross:
Lord have mercy*



Scripture

Luke 2:29-35 (RSV)

"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation which thou hast prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to thy people Israel."

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him; and Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother,

"Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is spoken against (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed."

Reflection

Do you think Mary could have imagined what her life was to look like when she professed that she is "the hand maid of the Lord" and "let it be done to me according to thy word"?

We journey back to when Mary and Joseph presented the baby Jesus in the temple. Mary learns from the beginning that in following Jesus she would encounter suffering. She followed all the way to the cross.

Jesus embraces human suffering so that we may join our suffering to His. In this way Jesus makes suffering holy. When we follow Jesus we never suffer in vain. We will rise with Him into new life.

Reflect on your own journey. It might not look like what you had imagined. But everyday remains an opportunity to follow Jesus, wherever you might be.

Amen

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Prayer

Mary, Mother of Sorrows, you shared in the sufferings of your Son.

You walked this journey with Him, being the face of compassion and love.

Intercede for me to your Son for the grace to accept my sufferings and take up every opportunity to follow Him.

Jesus, You are humble and kind:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, You show me the love of the Father:

Christ have Mercy

Jesus, guide me to a life of love:

Lord have mercy





Scripture

Mark 15:21-22 (RSV)

They compelled a passer-by, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. And they brought him to the place called Golgotha, which means the place of skull.

Reflection

Simon of Cyrene was an ordinary man. He was an onlooker, seeing what was happening around him. Suddenly, he is forced to carry the cross of Christ. He is thrust into a closeness with Christ.

Imagine what he would have experienced, seeing into the eyes of Jesus, embracing the cross as if it was his own.

Are you open to an unexpected encounter with Christ? Are you ready to embrace the hopes and the challenges of life, knowing Jesus is there with you?

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, you command me to love.

I pray that I can be a source of love to those around me, in times of joy, in times of

sadness, I can know you are there with me.

Help me to see You in my brothers and

sisters, and to serve them as if I were

serving you.

Jesus, you suffered for my sake:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you carry my burdens with me:

Christ have Mercy

Jesus, you teach me to love others as You

have loved me

Lord have mercy





Scripture

Isaiah 53:2-3 (RSV)

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Reflection

It is Catholic Tradition that has handed down the story of Jesus' encounter with Veronica.

Veronica encounters Our Lord in His passion as He carries His cross. She could only offer her veil to wipe the brow of her Lord. By this, an imprint of the face of Jesus remained. In giving all she had, God unveiled His face to her. He saw her and He knows her.

Veronica looked beyond the danger, the guards and protestors, to kneel by her suffering Lord and offer all she had. Are you open to being vulnerable with Jesus. Can you uncover the veil of your heart for an intimate encounter with the face of God?

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, what can I offer you?

You gift me a love I can neither imagine nor understand.

I desire to encounter you, have a relationship with you, to follow you wherever that may lead me.

Imprint Your sacred image on my heart, that I may never forget the face of love.

Jesus, you were hurt, yet radiant with glory:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, you were beaten, yet gentle:

Christ have Mercy

Jesus, you were oppressed, yet gave yourself freely:

Lord have mercy





AN ENCOUNTER WITH THE WOMEN OF JERUSELUM

SESSION

10

Scripture

Luke 23:27-31 (RSV)

And there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold, the days are coming when they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts that never gave suck!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us'; and to the hills, 'Cover us.' For if they do this when the wood is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Reflection

The women of Jerusalem, moved by compassion, weep over their suffering Saviour. But Jesus asks them to weep over their own sins.

From the very beginning of His public ministry, Jesus preached repentance. His journey to calvary is also a journey of conversion. It cuts through our hearts, brings life out of death.

Reflect on how you have distanced yourself from God. Are you open to encounter the forgiveness, mercy and compassion of a resurrected Christ?

Amen

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Prayer

Lord Jesus, I see You on the cross,

I hear Your voice in the Gospels,

I meet You at the altar.

Give me the grace that I may not harden my heart, but lead me in the way to everlasting life.

Jesus You heal our contrite hearts:

Lord have mercy

Jesus You came to call the sinners:

Christ have Mercy

Jesus, You are seated in glory:

Lord have mercy



Scripture

John 19:23-24 (RSV)

When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; so they said to one another, "Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be." This was to fulfil the scripture,

"They parted my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.

Reflection

Jesus is stripped of all His clothes. He is left with nothing. It must have been agonizing, both physically and mentally, to be stripped. Though we see Jesus has nothing, He gives us everything. He endures for us and He embraces us in the humiliation, poverty and suffering on the cross.

Adam and Eve's pride and disobedience left them ashamed of their nakedness and fallen from grace. Here, on Golgotha, Jesus (the new Adam) is embracing once and for all the shame caused by our sins and restores the original vision of nakedness. This is a complete openness, transparency and relationship with the Father. Adam and Eve hid from God in their nakedness. Jesus bares His whole self to the Father in His nakedness. Jesus restores what Adam and Eve lost.

Reflect on Jesus, persevering till death, in order to clothe us with grace, the grace of God's unconditional love. Allow yourself to be stripped of your attachments. Is there something keeping you closed off from the Father?

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, You followed the will of the Father with obedience and sincerity.

There are times in my life where I clothe myself with what others want.

Jesus, strip me of all my pretences.

Help me to be a person of integrity, honesty and love. Teach me to be humble before you.

Jesus, You reconcile me with God:

Lord have mercy

Jesus, You heal the wounds of my sin:

Christ have Mercy

Jesus, You intercede for me with the Father:

Lord have mercy





Scripture

Mark 15:33-34, 37-39 (RSV)

And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice: "Eloi, eloi, lama sabachthani?" which means "My God my God why have you forsaken me?"

And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

Reflection

Jesus is the beloved Son of God. On the cross Jesus embraces the world. In His beloved Son's death, the Father too embraces the whole world. A Trinitarian love story culminates here. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

We are called to a death to self. Die to our old ways and embrace Jesus. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). In allowing Jesus to take pride of place in our hearts, we become more fully ourselves.

Reflect on how you can open yourself to the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, Your heart is broken and opened for me.
In your death, I see the depth of Your love.
You gave Your life so that I may have life in abundance.
You died in order to raise humanity from sin.

Jesus, You lived for me:
Lord have mercy
Jesus, You died for me:
Christ have Mercy
Jesus, You rose for me:
Lord have mercy



AN ENCOUNTER WITH NICODEMUS & JOSEPH

SESSION

13

Scripture

John 19:38-42 (RSV)

After this Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds' weight. They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

Reflection

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus share a common story. Both have the freedom to follow Jesus but are hesitant and afraid of rejection. They love Jesus, but their fear and anxiety is greater. They follow from a distance, they cling to comfort. Both Joseph and Nicodemus are confronted with the death of Jesus. They arrive at a point of choice. The comfort of following from a distance is no longer an option. They now can only reject Jesus or embrace him. When it mattered most, they chose Christ.

God does not love from a distance. The same must go for us. We cannot love God from a distance. The call to take up your cross and follow Jesus is uncomfortable.

"The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness."
(Pope Benedict XVI)

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, often I shy away from your presence.
I can let the comforts of life become distractions.
They distance me from you.
Help me to choose you now in simple ways
so that I don't fall when things get tough.

Jesus, you never love from a distance:
Lord have mercy
Jesus, you call me out of fear:
Christ have Mercy
Jesus, you are my courage:
Lord have mercy



Scripture

1 John 4:7-11 (RSV)

Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Reflection

These encounters on Jesus' Way of the Cross, are our encounters. Throughout all He experienced, He held you in His heart. In His pain, in all His rejection, in all His loneliness and in all His helplessness, He thought about you.

He did it for you. He died for you.

Reflect on the Way of the Cross. If you encountered Jesus today, what would be the one thing you would say to Him?

Amen

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Prayer

Jesus, I can see your pierced heart, from which the water and blood flow. I seek you today, asking for an embrace from your cross.

I ask for you to forgive me, I open my heart to an encounter with your love, and live in the hope of everlasting life with you.

Jesus You forgive me:

Lord have mercy

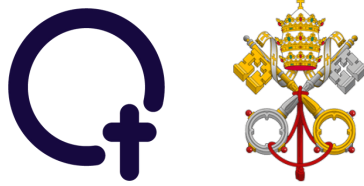
Jesus, You heal me:

Christ have Mercy

Jesus, You love me:

Lord have mercy





Belong has a simple vision, a missionary renewal through Circles that gather, pray and go. Belong seeks to support the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies and the broader Catholic Church.

belongcircles.com



The vision for youth and young adults in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn is that we would raise up a new generation in the life and mission of the Catholic Church. All are invited to *Belong* to the Church, *Believe* in Christ and *Become* a Disciple.

cgyouth.org.au

Nihil Obstat

Rev. Trenton Van Reesch
Archdiocesan Censor

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