

Renewing through

# Lent

2020



*Becoming more like Christ*

“Grant to us, O Lord, a heart renewed;  
recreate in us your own spirit, Lord”

*Living Catholic*

# About

## this Lenten Reflection Booklet

2020 is a very important year for the Church in Australia as Catholics from every state will gather in Adelaide in October for the first session of the Plenary Council. In our own archdiocese we have combined our reflections on what God is asking of the Australian Church with efforts to renew our local parishes by focusing on the eight Gospel pathways. Lent 2020, then, will be an opportunity for us to enter into this renewal more deeply as well as pray for the success of the Plenary Council.

In a General Audience in March 2014, Pope Francis noted:

*Lent is a powerful season, a turning point that can foster change and conversion in each of us. We all need to improve, to change for the better. Lent helps us and thus we leave behind old habits and the lazy addiction to evil that deceives and ensnares us.*

What is it about Lent that helps us to leave behind old habits and addictions? The answer lies in the way that Lent came about in the first place: as a final preparation for Easter baptism by those seeking to become Christians in the early days of the Church. People who had previously been pagans were inspired by the words and actions of Jesus to become his followers. This meant that they had to find out as much as possible about how Jesus had lived and try to do the same.





Jesus lived and preached compassion, love, gentleness, healing, peace and joy. When the leper approached and said, “You can cure me, if you want to,” Jesus’ answer was “Of course I want to.” When the woman caught in adultery was brought before him, he did not condemn her, but protected her from her accusers and encouraged her to go and sin no more. When the wedding reception at Cana was at risk of being derailed by a lack of wine, Jesus did not hesitate to remedy the situation.

Jesus did not go out of his way to find opportunities for love, compassion, gentleness, healing and peace. They were all around him. The same applies to us in our Lenten journey to Easter. Let us think of the Antiphon so often sung in our churches during Lent: Grant to us, O Lord, a heart renewed; recreate in us your own spirit, Lord.



*Lord Jesus,  
you showed the world the love and care  
that the Father has for each one of us.  
May we know a true change of heart this Lent  
and learn to minister to others  
in a spirit of service and self-emptying.  
Make us ready and eager to  
accept your invitation to grow  
more and more like you,  
our way, our truth and our life.*

# Ash Wednesday

26 February 2020 | Year A

The sight of someone with the sign of the Cross marked in ash on their forehead is a powerful reminder to all Christians that the season of Lent has begun. Each year, huge numbers of Catholics all around the world mark Ash Wednesday by attending Mass and being signed with ashes. We hear the words, “Repent, and believe in the Gospel” and we resolve to take up this call and root out from our lives the things that keep us from being the best person we can be.

## Scripture

*Come back to me with all your heart,  
fasting, weeping, mourning.  
... Turn to the Lord your God again,  
for he is all tenderness and compassion.*

*Joel 2:12*

## Reflection

The three things that the Church asks of us during Lent are to pray, to fast and to give to the poor.

We **pray** that our hearts might be opened to hear God’s word more clearly, and we ask God’s healing touch for the many places that are suffering from war, oppression, violence and hatred.

We **fast** so that we can experience something of what it means to be poor and dependent on others. It reminds us of our spiritual hunger for God and presents us with the opportunity to take a break from our phones and other devices.

We **give alms** as a reminder that everything we have is a gift from God and makes us more aware of how those of us who have been so richly blessed need to share with those who are lacking. As Pope Francis said, “When we give alms, we share in God’s providential care for each of his children.”



## *I*nvitation to prayer

What would happen in my life if I acted towards others with mercy and compassion, the way that God acts towards me?

What opportunities can I see in my life to be more attentive to the needs of others, both at home and in the wider world?

## *M*antra for the *W*eek

**A pure heart create for me, O God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me.**

# First Sunday of Lent

1 March 2020 | Year A

“What will happen when they find out I’m a fake? I don’t really belong here, they won’t want me around when they find out I’m not the person they think I am...”

Imposter syndrome, the sense that you aren’t good enough, worthy enough, qualified enough, or that you’re mistakenly in a position you shouldn’t be in, affects everyone. Even the most successful celebrities, experts, and saints fall victim to imposter syndrome. On a spiritual level, it’s probably the greatest temptation we face. “Who does God think I am? I’m not worthy of God’s love – if only God knew what I’ve done...” But the beauty of it all is that God does know who we are, each one of us, and God loves us and wants us to receive God’s deep and intimate love despite our human frailties and failures.

## Scripture

*“No one lives on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*

*Matthew 4:4*

## Reflection

When Jesus is tempted in the desert, it comes immediately after his baptism in the Jordan River where he receives confirmation of his identity and mission: “This is my Son, the beloved, with whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). The Tempter questions Jesus’ identity, “If you are truly the Son of God, turn these stones into bread.” Jesus responds with the words of Moses to the Israelites as they wandered the desert for forty years (Deut. 6-8). Jesus stands with his ancestors who were also challenged in the desert and being formed in their identity as God’s chosen and beloved people. Jesus’ example reminds us that we too can pass the tests of temptation, to take up our true identity as God’s chosen and beloved daughters and sons, and that no matter our failings, God’s grace and mercy are greater.



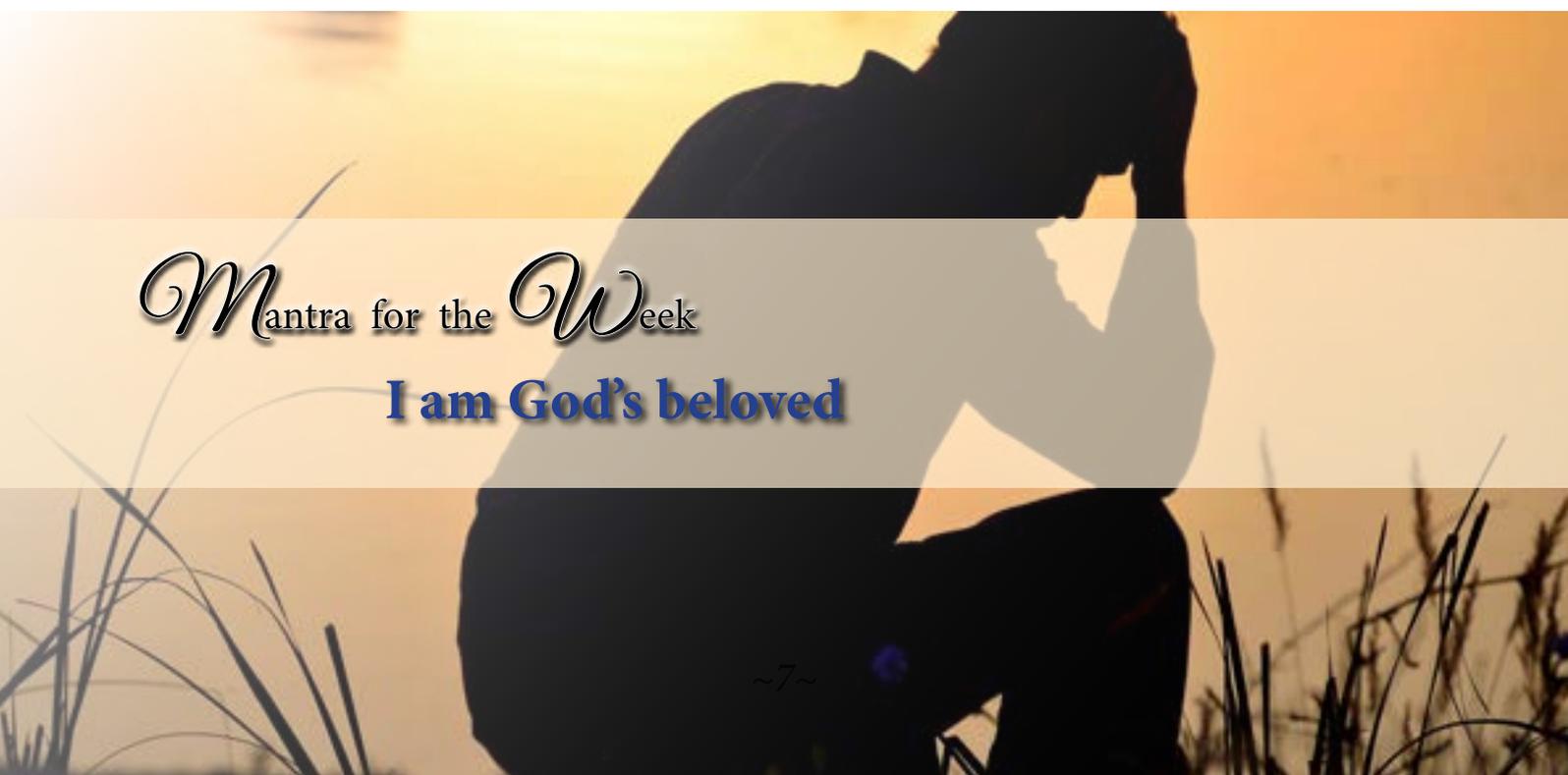
## *I*nvitation to prayer

When have I felt unworthy of God's love? What or who has helped me to accept my own identity as God's beloved?

How do I feel when I hear the words, "You are my beloved daughter/son"? What is my response to God?

*M*antra for the *W*eek

**I am God's beloved**



# Second Sunday of Lent

8 March 2020 | Year A

Our journey throughout the days of Lent is marked with deeper insights into our relationship with the God whose love and tenderness for us are constant. With God as a constant companion in our lives, there can be no need for fear.

Today's gospel story of the Transfiguration of Jesus speaks of light: dazzling, shining like the sun – a moment of great enlightenment for the disciples as they stood with Jesus and were led more deeply into relationship with him.

Hearing the words: **“This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!”** – they were overcome, and Jesus reached out to reassure them.

## Scripture

*Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good for us to be here: if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, “This is my Son, the Beloved: with him I am well pleased: listen to him!” When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Get up and don't be afraid.” And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.*

*Matthew 17:1-9*



## Reflection

Each of today's readings sheds further light on the God who loves us and desires to abide with us. God's promise to Abram was fulfilled. God's blessings followed Abram and his people; Abram's faith in God was rewarded.

Paul urges Timothy to continue to rely on God who calls us and sustains us on the journey. As followers of Jesus, we are graced with God's blessing and favour.

## Invitation to prayer

I think about a time when I have experienced an insight into God's love for me, and how I felt about being in God's presence. I savour the experience.

How do I manage to cope when I feel confused or overwhelmed as the disciples did?

What might it mean for me to deepen my faith in God who is always faithful to me?

## Mantra for the Week

**Lord, let your mercy be on us,  
as we place our trust in you.**

# Third Sunday of Lent

15 March 2020 | Year A

The readings for the 3rd Sunday of Lent focus on the transformative power of encounters on the dusty roads of life. In the first reading, the encounter of trust and honesty between God and Moses leads to refreshment of a weary people who were losing hope in the future. In the Gospel, a healing encounter takes place between a life-weary woman and a thirsty Jesus. The meeting confirms how God enters concrete history. In Jesus Christ, God desires to personally be with us in the midst of our lives, offering sustaining spiritual refreshment. Jesus' human need for thirst quenching water encounters and transforms an unnamed woman's spiritual need for meaningful human recognition and affirmation.

## Scripture

*“Many of the Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified”*

*John 4:39*

## Reflection

The name of the Samaritan woman whom Jesus met at Jacob's well long ago has been lost to history. However, the power of the encounter has not been lost. It has continued to lead many to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the anointed one of God who searches and knows the human heart. In the tradition of the story, both the woman and Jesus are thirsty for human care and recognition. The divides and hostilities of the world, based on gender, culture or religion, have all been put aside. Both Jesus and the woman recognize the humanity of the other in a way that liberates and transforms them.



Jesus asks the woman for a drink, but then has a conversation that changes the woman forever. It was a conversation about relationships that have disappointed, dreams that have died, longings left unfulfilled. Jesus is not judgmental or accusative. He recognises her intrinsic value as a human being and has compassion for the longings of her heart. At the height of the midday sun, when everything comes to light, Jesus offers the woman a chance to reflect on her life in the light of God's bigger story for her. He calls her to be courageous. In Jesus' presence, stagnant waters are unblocked and the waters of new life flow once again.

## *I*nvitation to prayer

Are there areas of my life that I yearn to “bring to God’s light” for healing?

Who might be asking me for a ‘drink’ of compassion and kindness at this time?

Rather than blame others for my disappointments, are there opportunities for me to more courageously care for others?



## *M*antra for the *W*eek

**The love of God has  
poured into my heart**

# Fourth Sunday of Lent

22 March 2020 | Year A

How often do we give the response, “I see” to indicate that we understand something we have been told? Today’s readings are both good examples of “seeing” without understanding: Samuel is sure that Jesse’s eldest son would be the one to be anointed king, but then he is reminded that “God does not see as humans see: we look at appearances, but God looks at the heart.” And so it was that David was anointed. In the Gospel, Jesus sees the blind man for who he really is - a person of faith who has confidence in Jesus’ ability to give him sight – whereas others saw him as a sinner whose blindness was some sort of punishment. Let us pray this week for true sight and true understanding.

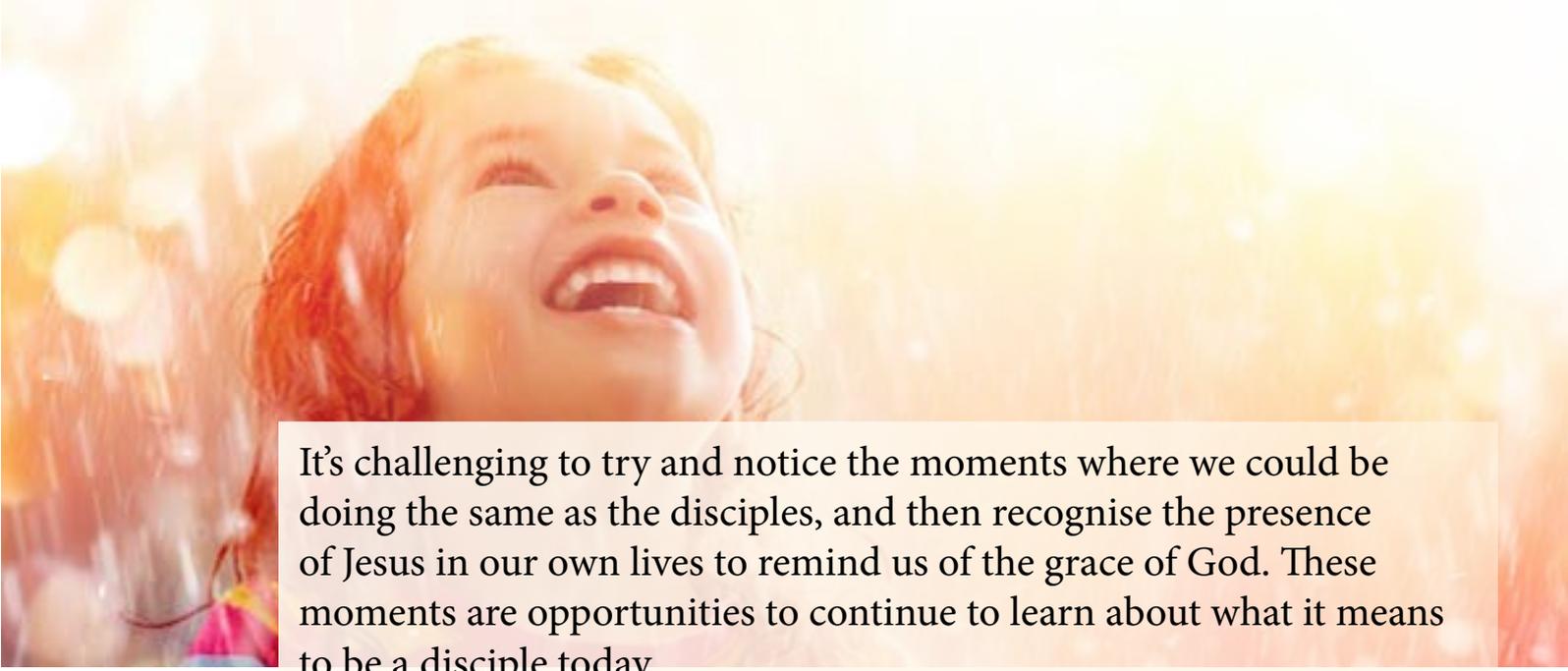
## Scripture

*As Jesus went along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, for him to have been born blind?” “Neither he nor his parents sinned,” Jesus answered, “he was born blind so that the works of God might be displayed in him.”*

*John 9:1-41*

## Reflection

How many times have you asked a question when you thought you already knew the answer? In the world we live in, it’s quite tempting to try and sound like we know what we’re talking about all the time. In this Gospel, the disciples ask Jesus a black and white question, expecting that one of the options must be right, only to find that there was another way altogether to look at the situation.



It's challenging to try and notice the moments where we could be doing the same as the disciples, and then recognise the presence of Jesus in our own lives to remind us of the grace of God. These moments are opportunities to continue to learn about what it means to be a disciple today.

Whilst we're mindful of the disciples' limits, we must also see ourselves in the blind man, who declared what he had experienced with confidence. We know that despite our mistakes and shortcomings, we know the love of God and can and should share the Good News with those around us through the example of our lives.

## *I*nvitation to prayer

Have there been times when my way of seeing things has been limiting?

How can I be more like the blind man?

How might I be more confident in sharing the Good News through the way I live my life?

## *M*antra for the *W*eek

**I was blind but now I see**



# Fifth Sunday of Lent

29 March 2020 | Year A

If there is one thing in this life that is certain it is that we will all one day die. For many, death is something to fear; for Christians, it is the gateway to eternal life. All three of today's readings reflect on the life that comes from God. The prophet Ezekiel announces to the Israelites how God will raise the dead from their graves, and put in them God's own spirit so that they will live and be God's people. Paul reminds the Romans that the same God who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to their own mortal bodies through the Spirit living in them. And John tells how Jesus brought his friend, Lazarus, back to life, restoring him to his family and friends.

## Scripture

*Martha said to Jesus, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died, but I know that, even now, whatever you ask of God, he will grant you."*

*"Your brother," said Jesus to her, "will rise again." Martha said, "I know he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this? She said, "Yes, Lord. I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into this world."*

*John 11:21-27*





## Reflection

When Martha says, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into this world,” she has no idea of the miracle that is about to take place, but she is quite certain of her faith and trust in Jesus. Lazarus is ‘resuscitated’ to his former life, but this new lease on life is a powerful sign of the eternal life that we are guaranteed through faith in Jesus.

The psalmist shows a similar faith and trust in God. Despite calling on God from the depths of pain and helplessness he acknowledges that life is to be found in God, because “with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.”

## Invitation to prayer

What opportunities do I have in my daily routine to choose life over death, to choose my way or God’s way?

How can I reflect the mercy and compassion of God in my own life?  
Who do I need to forgive?

I will sit quietly and thank God for the great gift of life that is mine  
– a life that endures beyond the grave to eternal joy.

## Mantra for the Week

**Lord, you are the resurrection and the life!**



When Catholics of Australia gather in Adelaide for the Plenary Council in October, this will be the first Plenary Council held since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965).

Already more than 200,000 people have taken part in the “Listening and Dialogue” phase of preparation, begun in 2018. Currently, there are six “Discernment and Writing” teams drafting the documents that will provide the content for consideration by the Council delegates in October.

As the Plenary Council website notes:

*The voices of the faithful help all of us to understand something of the historical experience and the current reality of the Catholic Church in Australia. This gathered data also reveals some deeper hopes and questions, the diverse yearnings, that we are now challenged to consider together.*

We pray that the wisdom of the Holy Spirit will move the hearts and minds of the Discernment and Writing teams to reflect accurately the voices of the Australian faithful so that the recommendations arising from the first Plenary Council session can lead to fruitful decisions at the second session in Sydney in 2021.

[plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au](http://plenarycouncil.catholic.org.au)



**1.**  
The parish is a prayerful community in which each member is called to a personal relationship with Jesus.

**2.**  
Eucharistic liturgies are prayerful and fully participative.

**3.**  
The Word of God is known, loved and proclaimed in good preaching and in faithful lives.

**4.**  
There is a warm sense of community outreach and welcome.



**5.**  
The parish community is visibly engaged with those who experience poverty and need, and with those at the margins of society and Church.



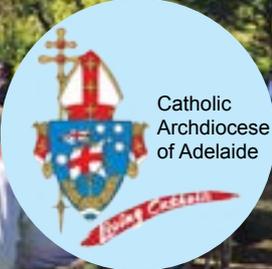
# In the footsteps of Jesus - eight Gospel pathways

Characteristics of healthy, vibrant, renewing parishes, schools and communities

**8.**  
Eucharistic communities that are viable will be enabled to continue.

**7.**  
The parish is a community of diverse gifts and charisms, each recognised and nurtured in the community, and coordinated by the parish priest and leadership team.

**6.**  
The parish witnesses to God's love for all the creatures of Earth.



# Prayerful Steps

## **From Gospel Pathway #1**

*'Each of the baptised is seen as having a gift of the Spirit given for the sake of all.'*

- When did I last prayerfully consider the gifts of the Spirit given to me to serve the church? What might I discover if I revisited this meditation?
- What can I do to affirm and encourage the gifts of the Spirit given to those around me?

## **From Gospel Pathway #2**

*'As parish communities we need to give priority to preparing well for each of our liturgical celebrations.'*

- What's the difference between simply 'showing up' for Mass and prayerfully preparing to enter into Christ's great prayer of thanksgiving?
- How can I assist others to prepare well for Mass? How can I make space for quiet reflection, support early preparation or express appreciation for respectful devotion?

## **From Gospel Pathway #3**

*'Our focus on the biblical text in our Sunday gatherings will need to spring from the way our parishes are places of the Word and of prayer during the week.'*

- What little steps can I take towards my daily life becoming a richer place for the Word and prayer?
- Who could I invite to connect with on a regular basis to openly discuss the Word and share in prayer?

## **From Gospel Pathway #4**

*'Our parishes need to witness to the mercy and generous love of God revealed in Jesus.'*

- If my thoughts, words and actions could be boiled down to their essence, where do I (and others) discover traces of the mercy and generous love of Jesus?
- When I notice the mercy and generous love of Jesus expressed through others, how do I share my appreciation with them?

# *along the Pathways*

## **From Gospel Pathway #5**

*'We need to take the risk of acting for justice.'*

- Within my parish and wider community, where am I being invited to risk acting for justice?
- When I hear that quiet inner voice nudging me towards justice for others, how often do I stop to thank Jesus for sharing his Spirit - and realise that I'm being graced to share in his tangible, public outreach?

## **From Gospel Pathway #6**

*'When the community gathers for Eucharist, we bring the whole creation with us.'*

- God's creation yearns to join in with our songs of praise as we gather for worship. How might I allow the myriad voices of creation to be heard and valued?
- As I journey towards the door of the church, what aspects of God's creation do I bring through the door with me?

## **From Gospel Pathway #7**

*'There will be a need to plan for the teams of the future, identifying, supporting and providing learning experiences for lay leaders.'*

- Who could I invite to consider serving the parish community with their God-given gifts and graces?
- How would lay leaders within my parish know that I deeply appreciate their contribution to the parish community?

## **From Gospel Pathway #8**

*'There is value in keeping local communities in place, and we need to respect the identity, language and culture of such communities.'*

- When was the last time I discovered something new about my regular Mass community? How could I share my appreciation with the community?
- Mass communities wouldn't exist without ongoing support: what's my role in offering such support?

# Lenten Prayer

*Gracious and loving God,  
I ask that this Lent might be a time of coming to a  
greater awareness  
of your active presence in my life,  
of coming to know your Son in a more intimate way,  
and striving to follow his example more completely.*

*May these forty days bring me the blessing of your forgiveness,  
the gift of your light.*

*May my ears be truly alert to hear your word more clearly,  
my eyes truly open to see you in those around me,  
my heart truly transformed that I might reach out  
in compassion and mercy to those in need.*

*Be my companion as I journey through these days;  
strengthen my resolve to become a better person;  
help me to be generous in praying, fasting and almsgiving  
and grateful, patient and faithful in all areas of my life.*

*May your Holy Spirit dwell in me and your Son guide me.  
In your name I pray,  
Amen.*



Office for Worship  
Adelaide Catholic Archdiocese

