

March 10th, 2019 – First Sunday of Lent

Gospel: Luke 4:1-13

A time of transition

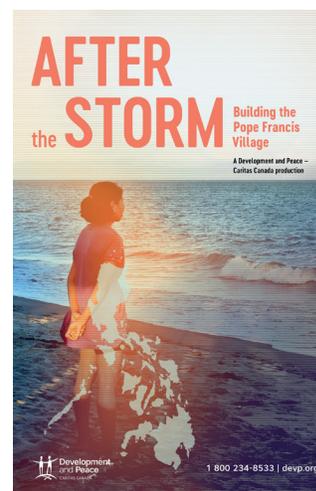
When Jesus went into the desert, he was tempted by Satan's lies and shallow offers. Yet he saw through them and trusted in his Father and in his Father's methods. When Satan offered him the chance to eat after fasting by turning a stone into bread, Jesus saw through the offer of satisfying an immediate hunger. He recognized that his ministry was meant for a greater service to the needs of humanity. When Satan offered Jesus his own kingdom of wealth and power, he knew that his Father's kingdom was greater and meant for all. He saw that his role was in the service of God alone. When Satan offered Jesus an act of glory, using scripture as a justification, Jesus rejected it. He knew that God's message of love for all of humanity is not to be used for personal gain, but for the salvation of all.

The temptations Jesus faced are temptations we all face: things that look good, feel good and bolster our sense of self. These challenges touch the core of our identity. Where Jesus heard: "If you are the Son of God...", we hear: "If you are a 'real man,' a 'good mother,' or a 'true Catholic.'" Jesus knew that as the Son of God he must use his power and position wisely, going beyond that which is easy, comfortable and simple. He knew he needed to embrace the complex and challenging work of building the Kingdom of God. Being in relationship with God was central to his identity. We must follow his example.

Scripture tells us Jesus was in the desert for 40 days. In rejecting Satan's temptations, Jesus refers to Moses' teachings to the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness. Both 40 days and 40 years are periods of transition: in one case from slavery to freedom, and in the other from private life to public ministry.

Let our own 40 days of Lent also be a period of transition: from habit to intention and from apathy to action. May we transition away from our own shallow understanding of others and their intentions, and move towards a **culture of encounter** where we really look at and listen to others, especially those beyond our regular circles. May we transition from self-serving practices (even if well-intentioned) to ways of relating to others that are based on unity and mutual reliance. May we transition from habitual religious practices to a real engagement and relationship with God and his Word. May we transition away

from how we want others to see us. May we give our time, talent and treasures to becoming a radical voice of love in today's society as Christ was in his. May we fully take on the challenge to, "Go in Peace," and may we glorify God in every aspect of our lives. May we put people first, living in true encounter with others. May we challenge social, economic and political structures that serve anything other than God and the common good, both in our homes and in our world.



Learn more about the **culture of encounter** in this 47-minute documentary on the development of the Pope Francis Village in the Philippines. Witness the amazing transition of a faith-filled community that responds to disaster by creating a sustainable, equitable and values-based community. The social teachings of our Church, including the preferential option for the poor and subsidiarity, are at the heart of this community. devp.org/en/philippines-documentary

Author: Kathleen Ladouceur, Catholic Schools Program Officer for Development and Peace in Alberta

Lenten Weekly Reflections

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March 17th, 2019 – Second Sunday of Lent

Gospel: Luke 9:28b-36

Imagine what we could accomplish...

Each year, our Lenten Gospel journey begins with talking about the forty days of preparation (see last week's Gospel). We then confirm Christ's divinity and anticipate what is to come in Jerusalem.

The transfiguration confirms that Christ will be the fulfillment of all scripture. Jesus meets with both Moses (the giver of the law) and Elijah (the great prophet who proclaimed the One true God) on the mountain. There is a foretaste of the Glory of God's Kingdom in Jesus' shining face and dazzling white garment. We hear a reaffirmation of Jesus' true identity when the voice from the cloud says, "This is my Son, Listen to him."

We can see ourselves in the actions of the disciples: as they go up the mountain (to a place of revelation); when they fall asleep at a key moment (at Gethsemane before Jesus is arrested); and when they fail to grasp the importance of what happened when they were on the mountain (Not knowing what he is saying, Peter suggests setting up three tents for Jesus, Elijah and Moses. According to Mark and Matthew, he then discusses Elijah on the way down the hill, despite having just witnessed God's glory in Jesus himself).

In Luke's account, we hear a detail not included in Mark or Matthew's versions: that Jesus, Moses and Elijah were in discussion about what Jesus was to 'accomplish' in Jerusalem. Not what would happen *to* him, nor what he would *endure*, but what he would *accomplish*. Jesus needed courage to come down from the mountain and face what was next: suspicion, persecution, torture and

finally death. He knew he had to do this to defeat death on our behalf.

Echoing his example, we are called to go forth from the safety of our Sunday celebrations and to live with courageous love in the world. We are called to face our daily tasks with great love, to see our sisters and brothers with great compassion, and to accomplish the work of building the community Christ envisioned.

To do this requires not just acts of charity (such as feeding the hungry and comforting the afflicted), but also works of justice (building a re-ordered society to serve the common good; placing the wellbeing of people above profit). It requires that we awaken to the impact of scripture and to the call of Christ's in our current environment. **It requires that we look not at what it will cost us, but at what we will accomplish in the service of God.**

If we reflect on the journey of forced migrants, we can see connections to our own lives. For instance, Development and Peace's partner **Social Action** is seeking reparation and justice for the Umuechem community. In 1990, the residents of Umuechem engaged in a peaceful march calling for fair compensation from an oil company that had been exploiting oil on their land for 30 years. The march was met with violence from police forces that led to more than 300 deaths and destroyed nearly 500 homes. ([Watch a testimonial video here.](#))

The human cost of resource extraction in this case calls us to question the cost of our own lifestyles on the Earth and the poor. To live justly requires that we reduce our footprint on the Earth; that we seek goods that are sourced in environmentally and socially responsible ways; that we acknowledge the face of those who have been hurt; and, that we ensure their wellbeing. It may cost us convenience and require that we live a simpler lifestyle. Yet we must do this to ensure our sisters and brothers are able to thrive as we build the Kingdom of God.

Author: Kathleen Ladouceur, Catholic Schools Program Officer for Development and Peace in Alberta



March 24th, 2019 – Third Sunday of Lent

Gospel: Exodus 3:1-15 and Luke 13:1-9

God's Holy intervention

The burning bush is a powerful image in the Christian imagination. In today's reading, Moses encounters God, who instructs him to take off his sandals because he is standing on Holy Ground. But how often do we reflect on the reason for God's holy intervention at this point in history? Yes, the image of the burning bush is an amazing one. But even more amazing is *why* God appears at this moment. "I have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry." God hears the cry of the poor and afflicted and responds by calling Moses to cooperate with Him in their deliverance. Indeed, as today's psalm says, "The Lord is kind and merciful."



In the Gospel, Jesus reminds us not to interpret simple calamities as divine punishment. He refers to two different calamities of his time and makes it clear that those who perished did not do so because they were greater sinners than those listening to him. He urges his audience, and us, to be conscious of the need to repent of our own failures. We are like the fig trees of his parable. Although we have not yet been cut down, we are not yet bearing fruit.

Today is also the feast day of Saint Oscar Romero, who was martyred on this day in 1980. He was, at first, like the fig tree which has not yet begun to bear fruit. When he was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador, no one thought the church had appointed a champion of the poor. And yet, he encountered God in his own burning bush and heard the call that is always made on holy ground. In this case, it was this holy intervention: I have heard the cry of the poor. He began to bear fruit. His body perished because he responded to God's call, yet his spirit lives on.

Development and Peace is proud to have been a part of the journey of this saint, supporting his work to end the oppression of his people. Inspired by his spirit, we continue today to respond to the cry of the poor throughout the world. For example, we respond today to the cry of the Rohingya people, victims of genocide in their own country, Burma. Over a million Rohingya have been forced to flee their homes for neighbouring Bangladesh. Like Moses and Romero we share the journey of the poor and oppressed towards liberation and freedom. We respond to their very real physical needs – food, shelter and security – while calling for their freedom and an end to their persecution.

Today is a chance to reflect on the ways in which God is calling you to hear the cry of the poor. Is it the cry of a marginalized person in your own family? Is it the look from the homeless panhandler who manages to lock eyes with you for a brief second on the street? Is it the story of the child migrant, separated from her family and far away from home? Let us pray that we not only hear that call, but that we recognize that the ground on which we hear it is holy.

If we recognize that the call is made on holy ground, we are more likely to freely respond. We are more likely to say, like Moses, "Here I am." We are all fig trees which must bear fruit. We are spared in our comfort from the oppressive conditions of our sisters and brothers in the darkest corners of the world. This does not mean that God has abandoned them and not us. In fact, our own salvation may be in peril more than theirs. No, Jesus tells us that this is the moment of our mutual salvation – when we respond to the cry of the poor and come together to *Share the Journey*.

Author: Luke Stocking, Regional Deputy Director of Development and Peace for Central Canada

March 31th, 2019 – Fourth Sunday of Lent

Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Peaceful dwelling places

Through the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus invites us to reflect on God's unfailing love for His children. Although the son squandered his inheritance and became destitute, he was greeted with profound compassion after freely deciding to return home. This powerful example of God's mercy is also a testament to the importance of family and *home*.

Though imperfect, our families and homes often provide a small glimpse of God's loving nature. The Church recognizes home as "...a community of grace and prayer [and] a school of human virtues and of Christian charity" (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1666). Pope Francis refers to home as a place where "love is shown by little things, by attention to small daily signs which make us feel *at home*." For many, home provides the necessary care, structure and support needed to lead a dignified, meaningful life.

There are currently 68.5 million people around the world who have been forced to flee their homes. Whether due to war, political unrest, persecution or environmental challenges, millions of families around the world have been uprooted or separated. It's hard for us to imagine being forced to leave behind everything – our families, communities, language and culture – knowing that we may never see them again.

The Lord promises that "My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest" (Isaiah 32:18). Scripture makes it clear that the family unit, and the homes we dwell in, are integral to a well functioning society. When you *Share the Journey* this Lenten season, you stand in solidarity with those around the world seeking peaceful dwelling, security and a place to rest.

Author: Jeremy Laurie, Development and Peace
Animator for British Columbia and Yukon



Watch the animated video on our website to reflect on forced displacement. devp.org/en/sharelent2019

April 7th, 2019 – Fifth Sunday of Lent

Solidarity Sunday

Gospel: John 8:1-11

A realm of justice and peace

In John's Gospel episode about the adulteress (John 8:1-11), Jesus' response to those who would have her stoned reveal God's mercy. Jesus does not seek to embarrass the accusers or to accuse the adulteress. Instead, he makes the accusers aware that they have often sung to the goodness of God, cried out for His mercy and experienced His forgiveness. Jesus does not judge the woman. He accepts her as she is. He recognizes her dignity, reintegrates her into society and lifts her up. He invites her to seek a fresh start and to look to the future with confidence. The outlook that Jesus reveals about the woman and her accusers is the same vision of mercy that God has for each and every one of us. We are invited to adopt this outlook with those whose behaviour we might be tempted to judge. Taste the joy of mercy, compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation. They are the Good News for one and all!



The teachings of Jesus invite us to be merciful to those sisters and brothers who have been forced to flee their homes due to circumstances beyond their control. We can show compassion, overcome our fear of foreigners and withhold judgement. We can discover the human face of migration by reaching out to meet migrants. We can learn their stories and share their journey. In reaching out, we create living connections. We can, together, write a story woven in solidarity. By doing so, we will nurture our commitment to transform our world into a realm of justice and peace. Through such encounters, we will discover the presence of Jesus Christ in our midst. Jesus, who is a migrant among migrants; a refugee among refugees; who is homeless among the homeless.

In Lebanon, **House of Peace**, an organization supported by Development and Peace – Caritas Canada, develops links between Syrian refugees and the communities that host them. This organization, in which women play a major role, works to build lasting peace between Lebanese and Syrians through workshops where they learn the skills needed to establish projects promoting reconciliation and peaceful coexistence between their communities. In this way, social tensions are eased. This is a wonderful example of living together made possible thanks to our donations made to Development and Peace as part of the Share Lent campaign.

Hamda, a Syrian refugee in Lebanon, participated in a House of Peace workshop.

To learn more, visit:

devp.org/en/sharelent2019/testimonials/hamda

Author: Pascal André Charlebois,
Development and Peace Animator for Eastern Quebec

April 14th, 2019 – Sixth Sunday of Lent

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Gospel: Luke 19: 28–40 and Luke 22:14–23:56

Being an Easter people to a Palm Sunday people

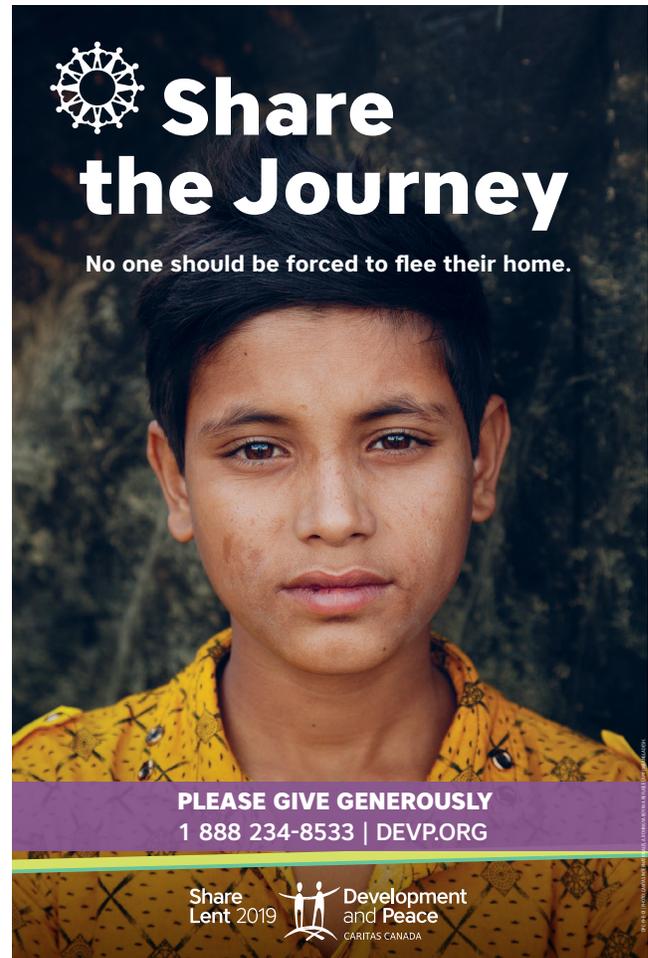
On Palm Sunday we journey to the Cross. Jesus enters Jerusalem to much celebration. We, the people, welcome him triumphantly, expecting that our king has come to claim his throne and establish his kingdom. Instead, he tells us not to fight for him as he is arrested, crucified and then dies. Our Gospel ends today with Jesus' death. This is as disturbing a place to be today as it was for his disciples then.

The disciples had expected Jesus to be king: instead, he is in the tomb. They went into hiding, denying they knew him. They questioned whether they ever really knew him. Yet they had believed in him, witnessed his miracles and shared his teachings. So how could he have been put to death? And what happens now? Imagine their uncertainty – would these disciples ever see their friend again? Would the promised safety and beauty of God's Kingdom be realized?

We know how this story ends. We know the Resurrection will arrive next week. Even the celebration of the Eucharist during Palm Sunday Mass is a celebration of the Resurrection. We look forward to the joy of Easter.

For those who have been forced from their homes due to war, discrimination, environmental disaster or the building of megaprojects, the ending is not quite as clear. They live with the uncertainty of not knowing what comes next, living each day in shadow. How will we respond to them? Can we become the community that carries the joy of the Resurrection into dark places, and also responds in a practical way to the very human needs of those who have fled?

This is why we invite you to *Share the Journey!* Share the journey of Lenten refocusing, of dispelling myths about persecuted communities, of solidarity with those who are living in uncertainty. Carry the hope of the Resurrection even in dark times. Build the culture of encounter. Be the Church. Be Christ to the world. Be an Easter People to those who continue to live in uncertainty. *Share the Journey.*



**Share
the Journey**

No one should be forced to flee their home.

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