

## 6. Prayers

*Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.*

## 7. Closing Prayer

Prayer of Hope

Lord, when a darkened sky  
surrounds us  
and sits upon our lives  
and the greying mist still lingers  
and haunts the coming night,  
let us find hope.

When the cry of hurts and sorrows  
still echoes in our hearts  
and we cannot face the evening  
and tomorrow is too far,  
let us find hope in the smallest, simplest  
ways:  
in the changing of the seasons  
in the birthing of the clay  
in the dew that cleanses morning  
in dusk that calms the day.

Let us find hope  
when children sleep contented  
far from fear and dread  
and peace is no illusion  
but spins a silver thread.

When you are waiting  
not far from heaven's edge  
Let us find hope -  
Faith, love and hope  
your gift  
to every human heart.

Liam Lawton

### Native Irish Tree Aspen

*Populus tremula*, commonly called aspen, common aspen, Eurasian aspen, European aspen, or quaking aspen, is a species of poplar native to cool temperate regions of Europe and Asia.

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## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

Healing energy of love  
We cry out to you  
Our trust has been broken,  
The embers of our fire wane.  
Come O fire of love, rake up  
the flickering embers  
Blow with your mighty breath and breathe  
new life into us again.  
O loving energy of God, embrace all.  
Renew us again; guide us through the  
wilderness.  
Tell us again , 'Don 't be afraid'.  
Restore our faith in your steadfast,  
healing love.  
May Brigid's cloak wrap itself around us  
radiating warmth and compassion.

## 2. Texts

Old Testament  
'When the rainbow is in the clouds, I  
will...remember the everlasting  
covenant between God and every living  
creature.'

Gen. 9:16

'Make me know your ways, O Lord, teach  
me your paths.'

Ps 25:4

## Gospel text: Mark 1:12-15

At once the Spirit sent him out into the  
wilderness, and he was in the wilderness  
forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was  
with the wild animals, and angels attended  
him.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went  
into Galilee, proclaiming the good news  
of God. "The time has come," he said,  
"The kingdom of God has come near.  
Repent and believe the good news!"

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the texts again and  
pick out a word or short phrase that strikes  
them and say it out loud. When  
everyone has had a chance to speak, people  
can silently listen to what God is saying to  
them in their hearts linking it with  
themselves, their community, society or the  
world. Then some sharing.*

**NB** This is not time for argument.

## 4. Background Notes for Mark 1:12-15

Jesus goes away from Nazareth when news of  
what John is doing by the Jordan filters  
through. As he enters into the baptism ritual  
like all the other people, a new identity is  
proclaimed for him- God's beloved Son. This  
strong affirmation sets him on a new quest.  
He is led to the wilderness, away from the  
centre of religion, the temple; led to the  
margins. Huge choices face him:

- to distance himself from the idols of wealth  
and power which keep the poor from ever  
believing they were worth anything
  - to be against everything that diminishes  
life: evil, suffering, oppression both religious  
and political; all the injustices of the present  
Jewish state and Roman occupation..
  - to open the door to friendship with God,  
peace, justice, abundant life.
- His kingdom will be a life and death  
challenge to the established Jewish kingdom.

Mark's account of the temptations is short,  
with no elaborate debate. The wilderness  
referred to is probably the Judean desert  
where there were wild animals such as  
wolves, leopards, bears, desert foxes,

poisonous snakes. The presence of angels  
signify God's protection.

John's violent imprisonment underlines what  
the political leaders are capable of. In that  
climate of violence and terror Jesus heads  
for Galilee, meeting with common labourers,  
and telling them the Good News of God's  
tremendous, freeing, tender love to people  
who had lost hope.

## 5. Reflection Questions for Mark 1:12-15

(use any of all of these questions as you wish)

1. We smile at the sight of the rainbow.  
What other signs have lifted your heart  
in these dark times?
2. Which of these would be likely to strengthen  
your trust in God:
  - seeing someone take a stand for justice  
against all odds?
  - seeing someone take a risk for another person?
  - reading a poem, a text from the Bible
  - hearing a song
  - making a pilgrimage
  - returning to a place where you had found  
peace?
  - listening to a friend?
  - other...





## 5. Reflection questions for Mark

9:2-10

*Some of these questions may be helpful*

1. 'There is grace beyond measure and charm beyond compare

We are served in every moment by someone else's care

Oh, give thanks for the life and the wisdom to say

We have power to discover the glory in the grey.'

Kathy Galloway, Talking to the Bones p.80

Comment

2. What's your sense of God in these difficult months? A rock; light; challenger; comforter; healer; counsellor; in solidarity; energizer,...other?

## 6. Prayers

*Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.*

## 7. Closing Prayer

We will walk to the highest peak for you, Oh Lord.

We will walk deep down in the valley.

We will walk into the joy and the pain for you, Oh Lord.

We will walk wherever you ask us to go.

Just please don't ever leave our side.

Stay with us, silently embracing us.

As we light candles and quiet our breath and the miracle of your flame

irradiates our hearts once again ,

May we walk everyday in the fire of your love

and spread your light in this troubled world.

### Native Irish Tree Birch

A birch is a thin-leaved deciduous hardwood tree of the genus *Betula* in the family Betulaceae, which also includes alders, hazels, and hornbeams. They are a typically rather short-lived pioneer species widespread in the Northern Hemisphere, particularly in northern areas of temperate climates and in boreal climates

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Catching Slivers of Light  
Second Sunday of Lent 2021

## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

God of our lives  
you are always calling us  
to follow you into the future,  
inviting us to new ventures, new  
challenges,  
new ways to care,  
new ways to touch the hearts of all.

When we are fearful of the unknown, give  
us courage,  
when we worry we are not up to the task,  
remind us that you would not call us  
if you did not believe in us.

When we get tired  
or feel disappointed with the way things  
are going,  
remind us that you can bring change and  
hope  
out of the most difficult situations.

The Pattern of our Days No. 47.

## 2. Texts

'The poor shall eat and be satisfied.'  
Ps. 22: 26

'Hoping against hope, he believed.'  
Ro. 4:18

### Gospel text: Mark 9:2-10

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and  
John with him and led them up a high  
mountain, where they were all alone.  
There he was transfigured before them. His  
clothes became dazzling white, whiter than  
anyone in the world could bleach them.  
And there appeared before them Elijah and  
Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us  
to be here. Let us put up three shelters -

one for you, one for Moses and one for  
Elijah." (He did not know what to say, they  
were so frightened.) Then a cloud appeared  
and covered them, and a voice came from  
the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love.  
Listen to him!" Suddenly they looked around,  
they no longer saw anyone with them  
except Jesus. As they were coming down the  
mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell  
anyone what they had seen until the Son of  
Man had risen from the dead. They kept the  
matter to themselves, discussing what "rising  
from the dead" meant.

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the texts again and  
pick out a word or short phrase that strikes  
them and say it out loud. When  
everyone has had a chance to speak, people  
can silently listen to what God is saying to  
them in their hearts linking it with  
themselves, their community, society or the  
world. Then some sharing.*

**NB** This is not time for argument.

## 4. Background Notes for Mark 9:2-10

Opposition is building up against Jesus from  
the religious leaders. The disciples still mis-  
understand he is about. The scene is  
darkening around him and finally Jesus has  
spoken for the first time about what he will  
endure in Jerusalem at the hands of the chief  
priests and leaders. Peter was appalled at  
the idea and protested violently. He could  
not imagine or entertain such an outcome.

Jesus leads them up the mountain (either  
Tabor or Hermon). Away from the familiar,

from relationships they were accustomed to,  
into a totally different space. The two great  
Jewish liberation leaders appear with him,  
encouraging him. The disciples misunder-  
stand. Peter, still operating from the  
framework of tradition and triumphalism,  
wants to institutionalise the moment and  
make it last. But he is over-ruled by the  
voice. Their limited perception is challenged.  
'Listen to him' is an invitation to leave behind  
their own narrow, restricted view of his  
mission.

As they leave the mountain and witness the  
fatal consequences of his commitment to  
love, the challenge will be not to be  
scandalised. But Jesus' passion and death will  
not be the end. New power and new life will  
be released. Evil will not have the last word.





## 5. Reflection questions for John 2:13-25

*Some of these questions may be helpful*

1. What/who are real threats to our environment?
2. Talk about one thing you have done to respect the earth.

## 6. Prayers

*Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.*

## 7. Closing Prayer

Spirit of God  
Give us the openness deep within us to  
recognise daily  
all people as made in your likeness.

Help us to learn from one another  
ways of being fully alive,  
at peace with ourselves and with those  
around us.

Give us the courage to transform  
those parts of ourselves and the world  
that separate and create enmity.

Help us to take steps  
to stop the cycle of violence  
in our homes, in our workplaces,  
in our neighbourhoods, in our country,  
in our world.

May we be open to our deepest yearning  
for a world alive with your justice and  
peace,  
to dream of a society  
where all are treated with respect,  
and with the power of your Spirit  
to take steps to bring it about.

Australian Social Justice Council

### Native Irish Tree Hazel

The hazel (*Corylus*) is a genus of deciduous trees and large shrubs native to the temperate Northern Hemisphere. The genus is usually placed in the birch family Betulaceae, though some botanists split the hazels into a separate family Corylaceae. The fruit of the hazel is the hazelnut.

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Catching Slivers of Light  
Third Sunday of Lent 2021

## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

We bring you the troubles of the world  
Calm us and help us rest in you.  
We bring to you the troubles in our households  
Calm us, and help us rest in you.

We bring to you the trouble in our church  
Calm us and help us rest in you.  
We bring to you the troubles in the community  
Calm us, and help us rest in you.

O Jesus, you had compassion on the crowds  
You drew people to yourself  
You repelled none who knew they were needy.  
Grant us hearts like yours;  
hearts that go out in genuine greeting  
and humble welcome  
Until in the circle of sharing,  
we are brought together in you.

Holy Island Prayerbook pp64 and 77

## 2. Texts

Old Testament

'For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that is in them, but rested on the seventh day.'

Exodus 20:11

'May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.'

Psalms 19:14

## Gospel text: John 2:13-25

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a

whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"

His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."

They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. He did not need any testimony about human kind, for he knew what was in each person.

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the texts again and pick out a word or short phrase that strikes them and say it out loud. When everyone has had a chance to speak, people can silently listen to what God is saying to them in their hearts linking it with themselves, their community, society or the world. Then some sharing.*

**NB** This is not time for argument.

## 4. Background Notes for John 2:13-25

The Jerusalem Temple built of huge imported stones, decorated with gold and silver and cedar wood was visible to pilgrims as they approached the city. Inside, especially at the time of the great feasts, the courts would be full of animals to be slaughtered, with money-changers and merchants haggling about prices, making as much profit as possible from the exchange system.

Solomon had built it on the backs of the poor. By the time of Jesus the priestly upper classes depended on it to finance their lifestyle and emphasis was on making as much profit as possible.

Years before, Isaiah and Jeremiah had condemned the building and the sacrifices, reminding people of what God really wanted - not animal sacrifice or complicated rituals but justice, care for the poor, the most vulnerable, widows and orphans.

Jesus alligns himself with their position. He comes, not to defend but to disrupt. He takes on the temple system, the clerical establishment. In driving out the animals, the money-changers and pigeon sellers, stopping business completely, he signals the end of the temple. It will not be rehabilitated, because it will not change..

He is immediately challenged and in Mark's account, his action in the Temple provides a plausible reason for the authorities to arrest him. The final verses are written from a post-resurrection perspective. Jesus, in his crucified and risen body, is the true temple or dwelling place of God. In and through him we dwell in God and God in us.



## 5. Reflection questions for

### John 3:14-21

*Some of these questions may be helpful*

1. The enslaved Jewish exiles returned home from Babylon, Covid has had us enslaved in a strange land. To what are you most looking forward when the danger passes?
2. In the second reading we are described as 'God's work of art'. Comment.

## 6. Prayers

*Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.*

## 7. Closing Prayer

Gracious God, when the struggles of life hem us in on every side,  
open to us the freedom of your presence  
that can help us see beyond every  
restriction,  
beyond every limit that binds.

Give us the wisdom to see the subtle ways  
people can be enslaved and give us the  
courage  
to speak for those who have no voice.

When we wake to yet another day of  
wonder  
and joy in the beauty of your creation,  
give us the heart to keep our needs simple,  
our desires soft, our wills adaptable,  
so that we never participate in the  
exploitation of the earth,  
which is the work of your hands.

Reflections for your journey: [explorefaith.org](http://explorefaith.org)

### Native Irish Tree Hawthorn

Crataegus, commonly called hawthorn, quickthorn, thornapple, May-tree, whitethorn, or hawberry, is a genus of several hundred species of shrubs and trees in the family Rosaceae, native to temperate regions of the Northern Hemisphere.



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Catching Slivers of Light  
Fourth Sunday of Lent 2021

## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

God in whom is peace,  
we praise you.  
We praise the unexpected gift of peace  
which steals softly into our frenzied  
activity  
and gives us still spaces of tranquillity.

We praise the hard-earned work of peace  
which struggles through our anger and  
bitterness  
to nudge us into forgiveness and new  
beginnings.

We praise the shining dream of peace  
which beckons and inspires us  
to confront violence and injustice  
with words of hope and acts of  
commitment.

We praise the mysterious peace  
which lies beyond our imagination  
our efforts and our dreams. -  
your gift of peace to a longing world.

Jan Berry

## 2. Texts

Old Testament

'O how could we sing the Lord's song in a  
strange land?

from Lyric based on Ps 137:4

'For we are God's work of art created to live  
the good life in Jesus Christ as he meant us  
to live it.

Eph 2:10

## Gospel text: John 3:14-21

Jesus said to Nicodemus:  
"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the  
wilderness, so the Son of Man must be

lifted up, that everyone who believes may  
have eternal life in him."

For God so loved the world that he gave his  
one and only Son, that whoever believes in  
him shall not perish but have eternal life.  
For God did not send his Son into the world  
to condemn the world, but to save the world  
through him. Whoever believes in him is not  
condemned, but whoever does not believe  
stands condemned already because they have  
not believed in the name of God's one and  
only Son.

This is the verdict: Light has come into the  
world, but people loved darkness instead of  
light because their deeds were evil. Everyone  
who does evil hates the light, and will not  
come into the light for fear that their deeds  
will be exposed. But whoever lives by the  
truth comes into the light. So that it may be  
seen plainly that what they have done has  
been done in the sight of God."

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the texts again and  
pick out a word or short phrase that strikes  
them and say it out loud. When  
everyone has had a chance to speak, people  
can silently listen to what God is saying to  
them in their hearts linking it with  
themselves, their community, society or the  
world. Then some sharing.*

**NB** This is not time for argument.

## 4. Background Notes for John 3:14-21

Today's first reading remembers a great  
unexpected about-turn of the Babylonian  
oppressor: liberating the enslaved exiles,  
sending them home. A recording of hope  
rising when all seemed lost.

In the Gospel the setting is night-time in Jer-  
salem when a noted Pharisee, Nicodemus,  
dares to seek out Jesus. He speaks to Jesus  
with respect, seeing him as a teacher on a  
par with himself. Just as in the past God  
sought to heal people as they travelled  
through the wilderness, God heals humanity  
through the Son who is lifted up.

In a strange way, despite the looming threat  
of prison and death, positive words of hope  
filter through the darkness of the text:  
'not perishing' but surviving, 'light coming  
into the world', 'not being condemned' but  
being saved; words of giving in love..  
The Son is sent, not to bully but to give us  
life in abundance.

Being 'lifted up' can also be a sign of  
exaltation: Mark is indicating that the  
passion, for all its injustice and brutality, is a  
mysterious revelation of God's love.

The verdict: people who try to choose  
justice, compassion and trust in God,  
understand what Jesus is about, and live the  
truth in the light.





## 6. Prayers

*Mentioning people and situations we want to pray for.*

## 7. Closing Prayer

Just like a waterfall, make us, O Lord,  
loud in our happiness and joy, when  
we experience the beauty of nature in this  
Easter season.

Just like water flowing down the river, we  
pray,  
O God, to become limpid and clear in our  
lives.

Let us become like water, Jesus,  
abundant for those who are sick and alone.

Just like the energy in water vapour,  
may we become able to acknowledge  
the mystery of life,

and,

just like the beauty of the rainbow made  
of droplets in the sky when the sun shines,  
may we become little rainbows for all those  
we meet.

From original by Josette Vassallo

May the faithfulness of God keep us safe.  
The friendship of Jesus bring laughter on  
our way.  
The fragrance of the Holy Spirit refresh us.  
May we know God's peace even in the midst  
of storm.

Iona

### Native Irish Tree Rowan

The rowans or mountain-ashes are shrubs or  
trees in the genus *Sorbus* of the rose family,  
*Rosaceae*. They are native throughout the  
cool temperate regions of the Northern  
Hemisphere.

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Catching Slivers of Light  
Fifth Sunday of Lent 2021

## 1. Welcome and opening prayer

Lord, may we feel your comforting touch  
May we hear the wisdom of your Word  
May we know your healing within us  
May we remember your gracious giving  
Transforming the seed  
into shoot and blossom,  
spreading its sweet perfume.  
May we trust that our lives,  
lived with you  
can fill our land with  
the gentle fragrance of your kingdom alive.  
Take away our resentment, fear, apathy,  
indifference, greed.  
Empty us that there may be a  
beautiful space in us for new things  
to happen.  
Shower us with your creating love.

## 2. Texts

Old Testament

'I will put my law within them and I will  
write it on their hearts.'

Jer 31:33

'Restore to me the joy of your salvation and  
sustain in me a willing spirit.'

Ps 51:12

## Gospel text: John 12:20-33

Now there were some Greeks among those  
who went up to worship at the festival.  
They came to Philip, who was from  
Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. "Sir,"  
they said, "we would like to see Jesus."  
Philip went to tell Andrew, Andrew and  
Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the  
Son of man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell  
you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the  
ground and dies, it remains only a single

seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.  
Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while  
anyone who hates their life in this world will  
keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me  
must follow me; and where I am my servant  
will also be. My Father will honour the one  
who serves me.

"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I  
say? 'Father, save me from this hour?' No, it  
was for this very reason I came to this hour.  
Father, glorify your name!"  
Then a voice came from heaven, "I have  
glorified it, and will glorify it again." The  
crowd that was there and heard it said it had  
thundered; others said an angel had spoken  
to him.

## 3. Quiet time...

*People can read over the texts again and  
pick out a word or short phrase that strikes  
them and say it out loud. When  
everyone has had a chance to speak, people  
can silently listen to what God is saying to  
them in their hearts linking it with  
themselves, their community, society or the  
world. Then some sharing.*

**NB** This is not time for argument.

## 4. Background Notes for John 12:20-33

Jerusalem is full of pilgrims arriving for the  
festival, among them many Greek-speaking  
Jews from all around the Roman empire.  
The text carries a sense of Jesus' life on  
earth reaching its end. The interlude of the  
Greeks seeking to meet him is not developed.  
Doubt and dread assail him. He is overcome  
by a dawning awareness: the life he has been  
living is coming to an end. The grain must fall  
down, break open and die.  
He shrinks away from what it will mean:

his own life taken away in terrible suffering  
and death.  
The 'seed' dying.

But he chooses to be faithful; to trust in God.  
And he will be vindicated.

In the kingdom of God, the elements of God's  
dream flourish. The community of followers  
are not alone but have a new, powerful unity  
with Jesus and the Father.  
We believe that no love is ever lost across  
the face of the earth. Living and acting with  
faith and courage we can help life blossom  
where before there was wasteland, misery  
and desert.  
Evil does not triumph.

## 5. Reflection questions for John 3:14-21

1. 'Hope with her gentle persuasion  
whispers a comforting word.'

Whispering Hope

When have you felt that?

2. 'Easter is why we don't give up.'

Dr David Jeremiah

Comment.

