**DAILY REFLECTIONS FOR LENT**

**Ash Wednesday 5 March 2014**

**Today's reading:**Joel 2:12–18

*“Come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning. Tear your hearts and not your clothes, and come back to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, rich in faithful love”*

**Reflection**: During Lent we are called to make time for God – to turn back to the one who is gracious and compassionate.

We are called to examine our own hearts, to dig deep inside ourselves, to acknowledge our faults and to commit to making a change for the better.

And as terrifying as it can be, approaching someone who we know we have wronged, we have nothing to fear because God is slow to anger.

**Action:**Make time and space to come before God in prayer and reflection this Lent. Set a reminder on your phone, write a note in your diary, create space and make the effort to take time out. Visit this calendar every day for reflections on the readings.

**Thursday 6 March**

**Today’s reading:**Deuteronomy 30:15-20

*“Look today I am offering you life and prosperity, death and disaster.… Choose life then, so that you and your descendants may live, in the love of the Lord your God…”*

**Reflection:**How many of us, faced with this straight choice between life and death wouldn’t choose life?

But as Pope Francis reminded us in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, “The joy of living frequently fades, lack of respect for others and violence are on the rise, and inequality is increasingly evident. It is a struggle to live and, often, to live with precious little dignity.” This is a real challenge.

Let us think about how we choose life then, how we can ensure that we are following God in all that we do, and so ensure that all people throughout the world are able to live life to the full, in dignity and peace.

**Action:**Spend five minutes today in quiet reflection, digging through the layers of distraction that surround you, to try and find a place of peace. Think about the choices and decisions that you have to make today and listen to God’s voice in your heart.

**Friday 7 March**

**Today’s reading:**Isaiah 58:1-9

*“Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break all yokes? Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, and sheltering the homeless poor; if you see someone lacking clothes, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own kin?”*

**Reflection:**In 1960, Jackie Stuyt helped found the first CAFOD Fast Day, alongside Elspeth Orchard, Evelyn White and Nora Warmington. The idea was simple: fast and give the money saved on food to help people who were struggling to get enough to eat. Four ordinary women made an extraordinary difference.

Around the world today, ordinary women are still making a difference to their own lives and the lives of their communities; they are sharing food, inviting people in, and doing what they can to break the unjust fetters of poverty.

**Action:**On this [Women’s World Day of Prayer](http://www.wwdp.org.uk/), join in [prayer](http://cafod.org/pray) with and for women across the world

**Saturday 8 March**

**Today’s reading:**Psalm 85:1-6 r. 11

*“Listen to me, Lord; answer me, for I am poor and needy.”*

**Reflection:**I can imagine this refrain echoing round the globe, as people place their needs before the Lord, crying out in poverty to be heard. Many of the world’s poorest people are women and children.

As Pope Francis has said, “Doubly poor are those women who endure situations of exclusion, mistreatment and violence, since they are frequently less able to defend their rights.” How can we help them to make their voices heard on earth as well as in heaven?

**Action:**Today is International Women's Day. Find out more about [CAFOD’s work with women](http://www.cafod.org.uk/News/International-News/IWD-Sabita) throughout the world.

**Sunday 9 March**

**Today’s reading:**Matthew 4:1-11

*“Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”*

**Reflection:**Jesus is not saying that food is unimportant. We all still need to eat to live and it is not right that anyone should go hungry. But what Jesus is saying is that we also need to focus on our spiritual needs, on our relationship with God and neighbor, if we are to have the life that God really wants for us all.

Let us take some time today to pray and to listen to what it is God is calling us to do, to focus less on our own desires and more on the needs of others, especially those who are hungry or lack the basic necessities of life.

**Action:**Pray

God of life,
Open our hearts to listen to your word.
Open our eyes to see the difference between what we want and what we need.
Open our ears to the needs of our brothers and sisters,
and work through us so that we may share your word with others through our actions.
Amen.

**Monday 10 March**

**Today’s reading:**Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

“*You will not exploit or rob your fellow. You will not keep the labourer’s wage back until morning…You will not be unjust in administering justice…but will love your neighbour as yourself.”*

**Reflection:**These instructions from Leviticus are pretty clear. And while it is probably unlikely that we would deliberately exploit or rob someone, how much do the systems that we are part of do just that? How many workers are getting a fair wage for what they are doing? Are we paying a fair price for what we buy?

One way of loving our neighbour as ourselves is by looking out into the wider world and seeing what we can do to support all our neighbours, no matter where in the world they might be.

**Action:**Take our [Hungry for Change campaign action](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Take-action-today/Hungry-for-change), if you haven’t done so already, and urge David Cameron to do what he can to put the power back into the hands of people who don’t have enough to eat around the world.

**Tuesday 11 March**

**Today’s reading:**Isaiah 55:10-11

*“For as the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth, fertilising it and making it germinate to provide seed for the sower and food to eat, so it is with the word that goes from my mouth.”*

**Reflection:**Rain is so important for growing food. In Sierra Leone six months of the year are known as the hungry season, as this is a time when nothing grows. But our local church partner is training families to farm land that was previously thought impossible to farm – the diamond mines.

These sites that were the source of so much brutality in the war are now being used to bring people much-needed food. The mines are in fact better for growing crops: the land is more fertile and the soil stays moist throughout the year so it can be used even during dry seasons.

It is an incredible plan that has transformed something that was the source of so much evil into a source of hope.

**Action:**[Watch our video to find out more](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-CAFOD/Lent-2014) about Mohammed and his family who are growing food on the diamond mines.

# Wednesday 12 March

**Today’s reading:**Psalm 50:3-4, 12-13, 18-19 r. 19

*“Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness… A pure heart create for me, O God, put a steadfast heart within me.”*

**Reflection:**Today we are called to reflect on the things we have done wrong and to ask God’s forgiveness.

We think about the times when we should have spoken out for what was right, but we felt afraid.

We think about the times we have ignored those in need or have closed our eyes to the injustice we see in our world.

We think about the times we have offered our hands to help, but have not followed through because it was just too difficult.

But we do not despair at our own failings.  The idea is not to beat ourselves up about how bad we have been, but to try to commit ourselves to do better. We remember God’s kindness and mercy and we seek God’s grace and a pure heart as we move forward in the future.

**Action:**Spend some time in prayer today reflecting on what you could make time for this Lent. You could use [this](http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/638/5910/file/Prayer_Lent_grace-of-40-days_reflection.ppt) reflection to guide you.

**Thursday 13 March**

**Today’s reading:**Matthew 7:7-12

*"Is there anyone among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread?"*

**Reflection:**Samai is five years old and lives in a village in Sierra Leone with his mum and grandfather. He is a bright child and his teachers expect great things of him. Samai says, “When I am older I want to be either a bank manager or a teacher.”

But Samai’s family, like many others in the world’s poorest countries, face a challenge: being able to feed themselves and pay for their children’s education. Food always has to come first.

Caritas Kenema, CAFOD’s partner, have trained Samai’s family to grow rice on swampland. This land, formerly used for diamond mining, has now been transformed into fertile farmland and the crops that they grow will help to feed the family as well as enabling them to keep sending Samai to school.

**Action:**Pray

Gracious God,
you listen and answer when we pray.
Strengthen those among us who struggle to get enough to eat.
Encourage us to reach out to one another in love
and work through us as we try to end the scandal of poverty in our world.
Amen.

**Friday 14 March: Lent Fast Day**

**Today’s reading:**Matthew 5:20-26

*"Go and be reconciled with your brother first and then present your offering."*

**Reflection:**Fourteen year old Mohammed was born during Sierra Leone’s civil war. His mother was forced to flee when he was only a baby and kept him alive by feeding him rice pap given to her by strangers.

But even when peace came, life was a still a struggle: “We had three problems. We had nothing to eat. Our farms had been destroyed. The second problem was we had nothing – we had no money to buy food or possessions. The third was we had nowhere to live. Our homes were burned out.”

The fighting in Sierra Leone has been over for many years now and the country is rebuilding. But the impact of the war is still strongly felt in people’s lives. And many people still struggle to get enough to eat.

Mohammed’s dream is to finish his education and not to live in poverty. “When I am older I don’t want to be in this hardship any more. I want to be out of it. I would like a good life and to provide for my family.”

**Action:**Today is Lent Fast Day. Share the meal you *would have had* with those in our global family who are hungry: put a donation in your Fast Day envelope or [make your gift online](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-CAFOD/Lent-2014).

**Saturday 15 March**

**Today’s reading:**Matthew 5:43-48

*"But I say this to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you; so that you may be children of your Father in heaven… For if you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Do not even the tax collectors do as much?"*

**Reflection:**Jesus makes it clear here, that in order to love our neighbour, it is not enough just to be nice to those who care for us, those from whom we can expect the same reaction in return.

We are called to care for all people: those who are marginalised or excluded in any way; those who are unpleasant or difficult; those we simply don’t like.

And why? Because we are all children of God.

**Action:**Reach out to those in need this Lent, no matter who or where they are. Try and extend a hand to those on the margins in your local community.

**Sunday 16 March**

**Today’s reading:**Matthew 17:1-9

*"There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light."*

**Reflection:**The disciples are overcome as they see the power of God’s love. Love which can transform, bringing light in the darkness, hope in the place of despair.

We are also called to make a change in our own lives – to think again about how we treat our brothers and sisters, especially those living in poverty. And to do all that we can to support each other to make a change, so that everyone throughout the world has enough food to flourish.

Let us pray today that we may be able to open ourselves up to God’s transforming love and say “yes” to all that God is calling us to do.

**Action:**Think about the changes you could make to your life in solidarity with people who are poor around the world. See[our simple tips to help change the world](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Lifestyle-tips).

**Monday 17 March**

**Today’s reading:**Luke 6:36-38

*"Give and there will be gifts for you: a full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap; because the standard you use will be the standard used for you."*

**Reflection:**From our own experience we probably recognise that the people we feel most inclined to be generous towards are those who are generous back to us.

But we also know we shouldn’t limit ourselves to only giving to those who can give us something in return.

Everything we have is a gift from God. And none of it was destined for us alone. Today let’s recognise the wondrous gifts that we’ve been given, thank God for all that we have, even if that is not very much, and do what we can to share these things with others.

**Action:**Give what you can to support those whose lives have been turned upside down by earthquake, conflict, flood or drought.[Join our emergency response team today](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-Emergencies) and help to provide a fast response next time disaster strikes and support people to rebuild their lives.

**Tuesday 18 March**

**Today’s reading:**Matthew 23:1-12

*"But do not be guided by what they do, since they do not practise what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on people’s shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they!"*

**Reflection:**Jesus is very clear in his criticism of the Pharisees for saying one thing and doing another, for not practising what they preach.

It’s a pretty easy trap to fall into. Living out our faith is not easy. But it is what we are called to try and do.

In today’s first reading the leaders of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah are told to “Learn to do good, search for justice”.

How can we make sure that we practise what we preach, that we are always striving to do good and searching for justice in our world?

**Action:**

Encourage your parish to become [a livesimply parish](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Campaigning-guide/Become-a-LiveSimply-parish) and come together as a community to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with people who are poor, putting your faith into action.

**Wednesday 19 March**

**Today's reading:**Matthew 20:17-28

*"Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant… just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve."*

**Reflection:**Jesus has set us the example that he wants us to follow, an example of service to one another. And it is service that greatness will be measured by, not wealth or power or celebrity, or any of the other measures that are so often used in our society.

It is not easy, but perhaps this Lent we can think about how we can put ourselves at the service of others.

Let us also take the time to recognise and thank those who put themselves at our service – nurses, teachers, carers, friends and family, or just the stranger in the street who helps us when we need it.

**Action:**Can you volunteer some of your time to help others in your local community or [with CAFOD](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Work-with-us/Volunteer)?

**Thursday 20 March**

**Today’s reading:**Psalm 1:1-4, 6 r. 39:5

*"Happy the man who has placed his trust in the Lord"*

**Reflection:**Today is the International Day of Happiness! But what is it in life that makes us truly happy?

Watching the television, seeing adverts in newspapers or magazines, listening to the hype that surrounds so many things, we are told constantly that what will make us happy is this thing, that thing, the newest thing, the latest thing. Possessions, we are told, will make us happy. And as soon as we have one, we must get another, we must upgrade. There is always something else to yearn for.

But perhaps this attempt to fill our lives with stuff is a distraction from what really matters, from the God-shaped hole in our lives.

And so let us try this Lent to stop, take a step back from the endless cycle of shopping and look for God instead.

**Action:**Take some time out and spend time with God in [prayer and reflection](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Pray)today.

**Friday 21 March**

**Today’s reading:**Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

*"I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."*

**Reflection:**In Sierra Leone, Caritas Kenema has been training families to grow food on swampland which was previously used for diamond mining. The land is not usually used in this way, but in fact it is ideal for growing rice, cashews and maize.

Edward Musa explains, “Swampland is more fertile for a variety of reasons. Whereas traditional farmland can be harvested and planted maybe once or twice, the swamp can be used all year round.”

Using the swampland also means that people no longer have to clear trees for farming and so it helps protect the environment for future generations.

**Action:**Plant some seeds in your garden or in a pot or window box and watch them grow over Lent. As you care for your plants, remember those people around the world who are struggling to grow enough food to eat. Check out our[Big Dig guide](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Fundraise/Fundraising-ideas/The-Big-Dig) for ways to get all or part of your parish or local community involved too.

**Saturday 22 March**

**Today’s reading:**Micah 7:14-15, 18-20

*"Once more have pity on us, tread down our faults; throw all our sins to the bottom of the sea."*

**Reflection:**God’s forgiveness washes away our sins, gives us a clean slate and enables us to start again. Through our Baptism we are given new life in Christ. In Baptism we use the gift of water, which God has made a rich symbol of the grace we receive in this sacrament.

But water is also a real necessity. Without it, we die.

The hungry season in Sierra Leone is six months when nothing grows. The land is too dry. Families with no savings and no way of growing food struggle to get enough to eat.

But the swampland stays damp throughout the year. Growing food on this land gives families the opportunity to feed themselves throughout the year.

**Action:**Today, on World Water Day, think about all the ways you use water and how much water is needed for the food that you eat. For instance did you know that on average producing one kilogram of beef requires 10,000 litres of water?

**Sunday 23 March**

**Today’s reading:**John 4:5-42

*"How is it that you ask me, a Samaritan, for something to drink?"*

**Reflection:**Jesus stops by a well and asks a Samaritan woman for water to drink. The woman was understandably surprised – Jews and Samaritans were subject to religious and social restrictions at the time. It was also unusual at the time for a man to talk to a woman he did not know.

None of this seems to have fazed Jesus though. Wherever he went he broke down barriers, spending time with those who were on the margins.

Jesus did not take people at face value, he looked deep within them. He took the time to recognise their common humanity rather than focusing on the differences.

The challenge for us is to try and do the same.

**Action:**As you go about your life today think about how you interact with the people you meet. Take the time to speak to someone you would not usually talk to.

**Monday 24 March**

**Today’s reading:**Luke 4:24-30

*"In truth I tell you, no prophet is ever accepted in his own country."*

**Reflection:**Those who come with challenging messages are not always easily accepted. People do not want their status quo upset. But, despite knowing all the dangers, Jesus carried on anyway.

Around the world many people continue to do the same, speaking out against injustice, even though they know that to do so is to risk their own lives.

34 years ago today, Archbishop Oscar Romero was killed while saying Mass, because his commitment to those living in poverty led him to speak out against injustice.

“Many would like the poor to keep on saying that it is God's will for them to live that way. But it is not God's will for some to have everything and others to have nothing. That cannot be of God. God's will is that all his children be happy." Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, 10 September 1978

**Action:**Spend some time [in prayer](http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/668/6030/file/Prayer_Romero_anniversary_prayer.pdf) today remembering Romero and all the people who risk their lives to stand up for what is right.

**Tuesday 25 March: The Annunciation of the Lord**

**Today’s reading:**Luke 1:26-38

*"Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord’s servant, let it happen to me as you have said.'"*

**Reflection:**Even though she must have been terrified, and even though she knew it would be difficult, Mary says “yes” to God. She agrees to bring the Son of God into the world.

Mothers around the world are still taking courageous decisions as they strive to do their best for their children, often in difficult circumstances.

Jatto Bockarie gave birth to her son Mohammed during Sierra Leone’s civil war. Her overriding memory of this time is fear – fear of being captured and killed, fear of losing her baby son because she couldn’t find enough to feed him.

Even after the war ended Mohammed and his mother faced the problem of starvation. They had no money, no food, no home. Through sheer force of will and resourcefulness Jatto kept her son alive.

Now 14 year old Mohammed has brothers and sisters and the family farms its own land. They grow rice, corn and potatoes, so there is food for the table. The family also has peace of mind because they know they won’t starve during the hungry season.

And the surplus crops are sold to pay for the children’s education, giving them the chance to build a better future for themselves.

**Action:**Think about buying a [World Gift](http://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk/) for family or friends and help mothers around the world to support their children. Our [Happy Queen Bee](http://worldgifts.cafod.org.uk/wg_productdetail?pid=01tC0000003p0sUIAQ) helps women to earn a living and build a sense of community.

**Wednesday 26 March**

**Today’s reading:**Matthew 5:17-19

*"Do not imagine I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets… the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven."*

**Reflection:**It is not an easy task to teach. Words alone are not enough. No one will listen if what we say and what we do are contradictory. This Lent, let us try to share something of what we believe with others, through all that we do, as well as what we say.

Jesus showed us how to live. He taught and people listened, because he was not afraid to get his hands dirty or to show that he cared.

Can we follow Jesus’ example of caring, listening, teaching, “not as a burdensome duty, but as the result of a personal decision which brings us joy and gives meaning to our lives.” ? (Evangelii Gaudium #258)

**Action:**As part of one global family what we buy, how we consume and how we live can have a powerful impact on our brothers and sisters across the globe. Think about [your lifestyle this Lent](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Lifestyle-tips) and how you can put your faith into action.

**Thursday 27 March**

**Today’s reading:**Luke 11:14-23

*"Any kingdom which is divided against itself is heading for ruin, and house collapses against house."*

**Reflection:**During Sierra Leone’s civil war children grew up knowing only conflict, teenagers became soldiers instead of students, wives became widows, parents lost children, homes, schools, clinics and farmland were burnt to the ground, families fled for temporary camps and healthy young men became amputees.

The fighting itself has been over for more than a decade now and the country is rebuilding. But the impact of the war is still felt strongly on people’s lives. The long-term damage it caused to the land, economy and education system still makes it difficult for people to find work and feed themselves.

**Action:**Bring your community together and share food to break down barriers. Download our [Emmaus Meal resource](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Pray/Emmaus) to help you to pray, reflect, taste and hear about our brothers and sisters around the world.

**Friday 28 March**

**Today’s reading:**Mark 12:28-34

*"You must love your neighbour as yourself."*

**Reflection:**Jesus today tells us the most important commandments: to love God and to love our neighbour.

We know that in reality it is not always so easy to reach out in love to each other, to break down the barriers that we put up between ourselves, or to work out how to love those who are far away and who we will never meet.

But this Lent, instead of looking at the differences between ourselves, we can try to recognise that each and every one of us is made in the image of God. If we truly love God, we cannot help but love our neighbour too.

**Action:**Show your love for your neighbour throughout the year.[Order a collection box](http://shop.cafod.org.uk/mall/productpage.cfm/CAFODShop/_CAF2523/479190/Pyramid-Collection-box) and drop in your spare change to make a difference to the lives of our neighbours across the globe.

**Saturday 29 March**

**Today’s reading:**Hosea 5:15-6:6

*"Let us strive to know the Lord; that he will come is as certain as the dawn. He will come to us like a shower, like the rain of springtime to the earth."*

**Reflection:**No matter what is happening in our lives, one thing is certain. God is there. Even when we feel lost, alone, abandoned and afraid, God is waiting for us to turn back to him.

And when we do, God’s presence is like a shower of rain in springtime: refreshing, nourishing, life-giving.

**Action:**Spend some time in prayer or reflection today, taking the time to try and know God in your life, through music, art, words, pictures or in the silence of your heart.

**Sunday 30 March: Mothering Sunday**

**Today’s reading:**Ephesians 5:8-14

*"You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; behave as children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and uprightness and truth."*

**Reflection:**St Paul’s letter reminds us that being followers of Christ, we have a responsibility to behave in a certain way. It is not enough just to believe in the light, but we have to share that light through our actions – actions which are good, just and truthful. Actions which show up the injustices in our world for what they are.

As St Catherine of Siena is said to have written, “If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world on fire.”

**Action:**Set the world on fire today, speak out for what is right, letting the light of Christ shine in the darkness. See [what can be achieved](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Campaigning-works) when we all get together

**Monday 31 March**

**Today’s reading:**Isaiah 65:17-21

*"For look, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth, and the past will not be remembered and will come no more to mind."*

**Reflection:**Sierra Leone has been through a brutal civil war and its effects are still felt on people’s lives. But people are rebuilding, tilling the soil and learning how to create fertile farmland out of unused swampland.

Fourteen year old Mohammed’s mother Jatto hopes that this farmland will help her to pay for him to go to school next year.

“We really want to send him to school next year, but the challenge is the fees themselves… We think we can do it from our farm and the firewood we collect… I have it in my heart that he will go.”

Mohammed says, “I would like a good life and to provide for my family. When I am older, I don’t want to be in this hardship any more.”

**Action:** [Dig deep](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Fundraise/Fundraising-ideas/Lent-for-parishes) to help Mohammed and his family to build a better future, where hardship and lack of food are a thing of the past.

**Tuesday 1 April**

**Today’s reading:**John 5:1-3, 5-16

*"It was because he did things like this on the Sabbath that the Jews began to harass Jesus."*

**Reflection:**Today we hear how Jesus heals the sick man, telling him to get up, pick up his sleeping mat and walk around..

Jesus saw that there was no point in following the rules, just for the rules’ sake. That actually sometimes the rules had to be broken, in order to do the right thing.

It seems that one thing we could take from this today, is that there is never a wrong time to do the right thing. The important part is doing what is right, through the help of God.

So this Lent, let us try to follow Jesus’s example and do what is right, standing up for what we believe in and helping others, no matter what other people think.

**Action:**Find out how you can [get involved in our campaigns](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/Campaigning-guide) and stand alongside our brothers and sisters around the world, to speak out against injustice.

**Wednesday 2 April**

**Today’s reading**: Isaiah 49:8-15

*"Can a woman forget her baby at the breast, feel no pity for the child she has borne? Even if these were to forget, I shall not forget you."*

**Reflection**: God is always with us. God never forgets us, even in the most difficult of times.

Mohammed’s mother spoke of the difficulties that she faced, trying to keep her baby alive during the war. “Bringing up my baby during the war was very hard. One time when the rebels caught up with us, we had to run. I had to run six miles with my baby just to survive… We had to go and beg for some rice. I persuaded her to give me a cupful. My husband, me and my baby Mohammed had to eat that for a day.”

It was a struggle, but they made it through the war.

**Action**: Pray from the heart, knowing that God listens and remembers us even when things are difficult. Hold all those who are poor, marginalised or struggling in any way [in your prayers](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Pray/On-your-own).

**Thursday 3 April**

**Today’s reading:** Exodus 32:7-14

*"They have cast themselves a metal calf, worshipped it and offered sacrifice to it, shouting, “Israel, here is your God who brought you here from Egypt!”"*

**Reflection:**The Israelites incur God’s wrath by setting up an idol and worshipping this instead of God.

Money, power, possessions, celebrity, all of these things are revered in our society. So often these are seen as the ultimate goal of existence, the be all and end all of life.

This Lent let us take stock, look at our own lives and what we build up as idols. Let us try to simplify, let go of the endless pursuit of things and instead make more time for God.

And by simplifying we can also make a difference to the lives of our brothers and sisters around the world.

**Action:** Last Lent, CAFOD campaigner Claudia Elliot spent a week[living on the food other people throw away](http://blog.cafod.org.uk/tag/leftovers/). Living only on leftovers might seem extreme, but being careful to use up what we have is a great way to cut waste and save money too. Check use-by and best before dates regularly; create a weekly meal plan, and try to shop with a list. Choose Fairtrade products when possible.

**Friday 4 April**

**Today’s reading:** John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

*"After this Jesus travelled round Galilee; he could not travel round Judaea, because the Jews were seeking to kill him."*

**Reflection:**Today we see that life starts to get increasingly difficult for Jesus. He can no longer move freely because his life is in danger. But this doesn’t stop him from speaking out.

Those who speak out often face danger and persecution, because they threaten the status quo. As it says in today’s first reading, “Let us lay traps for the upright man, since he annoys us and opposes our way of life” (Wisdom 2:12)

Colombian journalist Jineth Bedoya Lima spends her time investigating and reporting on armed conflict, drug trafficking, organised crime and issues around women and violence.

Because of her work, Jineth has experienced violence from different actors in Colombia’s armed conflict, including being kidnapped twice. Despite these experiences, and the continued danger she faces, she has continued her career as a journalist in Colombia.

“Life is a path of purpose, joy and failure. My purpose in this life is journalism.”

**Action:** Reflect on the times you have not spoken out because you were worried about the consequences. Or the times when you have judged others for speaking out even though you knew they were probably right. What will you do differently in the future?

**Saturday 5 April**

**Today’s reading:** John 7:40-52

*"Some of the crowd who had been listening said, 'He is indeed the prophet,' and some said, 'He is the Christ,' but others said, 'Would the Christ come from Galilee?'"*

**Reflection:**Some people in the crowd write Jesus off, just because of where he was from. But as it turned out the Christ could and did come from Galilee.

No matter where we come from we can make a difference. The stories that we hear from around the world bear this out: from communities standing up for their right to decent housing in Brazil and families in Sierra Leone transforming diamond mines into farmland, to parishioners in Poole who have organised weekly hunger lunches for over thirty years.

So this Lent, let us try not to confine ourselves to what others think we are capable of, but rather let us stand up and surprise people, and maybe even ourselves, as we try to make the world a fairer place for all to live in.

**Action:** Tweet [@CAFOD](https://twitter.com/CAFOD) your pictures and stories or share them with us on Facebook, so we can see all the amazing things that you have been doing to make the world a fairer place this Lent.

**Sunday 6 April**

**Today’s reading**: Romans 8:1-11

*"If the Spirit of him that raised Jesus from the dead has made his home in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you."*

**Reflection:**Today we hear how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. He prays to God and his prayer is answered – the normal boundaries of life and death no longer apply. Nothing is impossible.

And St Paul writes about how God gives life to us all through the Spirit. The Spirit moves within us, unlocking our potential, opening doors and helping us to see the possibilities before us.

Samai is five years old and is a very clever boy. He says, “When I am older I want to be either a bank manager or a teacher.”

Samai’s family know how important it is for him to get an education, to be able to fulfil his potential and live his life to the full. The crops that they grow on the transformed swampland mean that they have enough to eat and can afford to send Samai to school.

**Action:** Watch this [video of Samai](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Education/Primary-schools/Lent-and-food) and make a donation to our Lent appeal.

**Monday 7 April**

**Today’s reading:** John 8:1-11

*"Let the one among you who is guiltless be the first to throw a stone at her."*

**Reflection**: We are challenged by Jesus today to recognise our own faults before leaping to the judgement of others, to recognise that none of us are perfect.

And yet, it is so easy to leap to snap judgements about others without knowing the full story. It’s very easy to buy into stereotypes and start to believe media scare stories.

As we remember 20 years since the Rwandan genocide, we can see that taken to its extreme this kind of behaviour can be deadly. Today we remember all those who died, and we pray for peace.

And so this Lent, let us try to be more forgiving and mindful that no matter who someone is, where they come from, or what they have done, we are all loved by God.

**Action:**Pray

God of mercy,
help us to judge less and love more,
to criticise less and forgive more,
and to recognise your loving presence in all people we meet.
Amen.

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**Tuesday 8 April**

**Today’s reading:**  Psalm 101: 2-3, 16-21 r. 2

*"O Lord, listen to my prayer and let my cry for help reach you."*

**Reflection:**When we are struggling, it can feel like there is no one to turn to for help. It can seem as though nobody else could possibly understand what we are experiencing.

And yet, as the psalmist knew, God is always there, waiting ready to listen to us in our distress. God will “turn to the prayers of the helpless; he will not despise their prayers.”

The answers may not be the answers that we expect, and they might not come from the person or people that we expect them to.

In fact, it might even be that through our actions, we become the answer to someone else’s prayers.

**Action:** [Dig deep this Lent](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-CAFOD/Lent-2014) and do all that you can to help others to help themselves.

**Wednesday 9 April**

**Today’s readings:** Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95

*"If you refuse to worship it, you will be thrown forthwith into the burning fiery furnace; then which of the gods could save you from my power?"*

**Reflection:**Today we hear how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are sentenced to death for refusing to worship the gods of King Nebuchadnezzar. But they walk free from the flames, unharmed.

The gospel also tells us how the truth will set us free.

We are not all asked to face death in standing up for what we believe, but that does not mean it is always easy.

Standing out from the crowd, daring to be different because of what we believe, is a real challenge. But it is one that the truth compels us to take.

After all, if we believe that every human being is made in the image of God, is loved by God and is precious, how can we stand quietly by as so many of our brothers and sisters are denied the basic necessities of life?

**Action**: Make your voice heard. Find out what you can do to[help change the world](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Campaign/).

**Thursday 10 April**

**Today’s reading:** Genesis 17:3-9

*“And I shall maintain my covenant between myself and you, and your descendants after you, generation after generation, as a covenant in perpetuity…”*

**Reflection:**God promises to keep the covenant with Abraham forever. But Abraham is also charged to keep this covenant, as are his descendants after him.

So how do we keep this covenant with God? Do we recognise God in our lives? Do we praise God for the wonders that he has done for us? Do we try to live according to God’s will?

In today’s gospel, Jesus tries to tell the people that he is the Son of God. But they cannot accept it and pick up stones to throw at him.

Are there times when we so convinced that we know everything that there is to know, that we have all the right answers, that we cannot hear the truth when it is spoken to us?

**Action**: Pray

Eternal God,
we give you thanks for all that you have done for us.
Grant us the humility to learn from others and to recognise you in each other.
Amen.

**Friday 11 April**

**Today’s reading:** John 10:31-42

*"The Jews fetched stones to stone him, so Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?' … 'Even if you refuse to believe in me, at least believe in the work I do'"*

**Reflection:**Jesus often said things that made people uncomfortable. In a world riddled with rules and traditions, he ruffled a lot of feathers.

But saying the right thing and doing good works are two very separate issues. Being seen to fit in isn’t as important as actually making a real, positive difference.

Throughout his public life Jesus demonstrated his divinity by his works. Can we say that our actions show the world that we are children of God?

**Action:**Think about how you live out your faith in your actions today and what you can do make a real difference to others in your family, local community or around the world.

**Saturday 12 April**

**Today’s reading:** John 11:45-56

*"Jesus was to die for the nation – and not for the nation only, but also to gather together into one the scattered children of God."*

**Reflection:** God’s children are scattered. They are divided by war, poverty, and injustice. But through Christ’s love we are gathered in – each one of us brought safely to God.

Wherever we are, whatever our status in life, we are God’s children. Jesus came to save all of us and through his love, he has cut through the things which divide us.

Let’s give thanks for the fellowship Christ’s love has created for us, rejoice in what we have in common, and celebrate the amazing variety and vibrancy of the scattered children of God!

**Action:**Watch our [one day one world video](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Media/Files/Resources/Primary/resource-pages/One-day-one-world-videos) about a day in the life of children in Bangladesh and the UK.

**Sunday 13 April: Palm Sunday**

**Today’s reading:** Matthew 21:1-11

*"Jesus sent two disciples saying to them, 'Go to the village facing you, and you will at once find a tethered donkey and a colt with her. Untie them and bring them to me'… So the disciples went and did as Jesus had told them."*

**Reflection:** It’s a very strange request that Jesus makes of his disciples today. We can imagine them feeling at best rather mystified and at worst pretty stupid going on this particular treasure hunt.

The disciples show perfect trust in carrying out what Jesus asks of them. They have no idea what’s about to happen – they can’t see the outcome. But they know that Jesus can, and as such they act without question. And of course, they find everything exactly as Jesus described.

We may not always be able to see the outcome. But we know that God can. And that as we trust God to know the way ahead, so he has entrusted us, imperfect though our knowledge is, to be agents of his work.

**Action:**Pray

Jesus our guide,
give us the courage to put our unquestioning faith in you.
Lead us forward in justice and fellowship,
to bring your love to all through our actions.
Amen.

**Monday 14 April**

**Today’s reading:** John 12:1-11

*"Mary brought in a pound of very costly ointment, pure nard, and with it anointed the feet of Jesus, wiping them with her hair."*

**Reflection:** This story can sometimes cause problems for us. Whatever his motives, Judas Iscariot’s objection to spending money on costly oil rather than giving it to the poor is one which carries some weight.

But what a wonderful kindness Mary does here for Jesus. How good it must have felt, having spent so much time looking after and serving others, to be the recipient of such a selfless and generous act. Mary’s gesture demonstrates love, respect and dignity.

If we forget those things in our work with people living in poverty, how will we be able to serve them?

At CAFOD we believe that our poor brothers and sisters around the world have a fundamental right not just to life, but to a life of dignity and fulfilment. Yes, meeting basic physical needs is important. But it is also important is to see Jesus in the faces of our fellow human beings, and to treat each other with no less respect and love than we would treat him.

Let’s take this act of love and service as our guide then, to bring about a world in which each person is truly valued and appreciated.

**Action:**Hear directly from people in developing countries who are working hard to improve their lives. If your parish isn’t already part of [Connect 2](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Fundraise/Fundraising-ideas/Connect2), find out more and think about whether your parish could journey with another community across the globe.

**Tuesday 15 April**

**Today’s reading:** Isaiah 49:1-6

*"But I said, 'My toil has been futile, I have exhausted myself for nothing, to no purpose.' Yet all the while my cause was with the Lord and my reward with my God."*

**Reflection:**In our broken world, which of us doesn’t become discouraged at times? Which of us doesn’t feel as though we have put so much effort in and it’s all come to nothing?

But God always has it in hand. Even when we feel like we’re not achieving anything, God is working behind the scenes. God never stops working for the good of all.

And we can take heart too, because when we work for good, we never work alone, and our individual steps add up to big changes. You’ve achieved so much for the world’s poorest people. Thank you.

**Action:**Thank you for all your support so far this Lent. have a look at our news feeds and blogs to see some of the amazing contributions that you have made. If you haven't already, please [give to our Lent appeal](http://www.cafod.org.uk/Give/Donate-to-CAFOD/Lent-2014).

**Wednesday 16 April**

**Today’s reading:** Isaiah 50:4-9

*"The Lord has given me a disciple’s tongue, for me to know how to give a word of comfort to the weary. Morning by morning he makes my ear alert to listen like a disciple. The Lord has opened my ear and I have not resisted"*

**Reflection** God is constantly with us and wants to speak through us. We are God’s salve to the world, the kind word or deed which can change everything for a brother or sister.

Let’s not resist God’s voice today. In our busy lives, making time for peace and silence, creating a quiet space into which God may speak, may seem difficult. But the busier we are, the more vital it is to make that time.

How can we listen to God? Where is God for us, speaking through the humdrum of life? And how do we act upon that message?

**Action:**Make time to listen to God today. How is God calling you, personally, to bring peace, hope and justice to the world?

**Thursday 17 April**

**Today’s reading:** 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

*"The Lord Jesus took some bread, and after he had given thanks, he broke it, and he said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.'”*

**Reflection:**At the Eucharist we hear the words “Do this in memory of me”. One of the things we are asked to remember is how much Jesus reached out to others, how he encouraged his disciples to be servants of one another, how he loved even unto death. Through prayer, he was able to say “yes” to God, to give totally of himself. When we receive the body and blood of Christ, can we also say “yes” to God?

**Action:** Reflect on the meaning of the Eucharist and how you can say “yes” to God in your life. Read our [reflection on the Eucharist](http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/13807/106325/file/Prayer_Lent_dig-deep-Eucharist-reflection.pdf) and use the suggested questions to guide your thinking.

**Good Friday 18 April**

**Today’s reading:** John 18:1-19:42

*"After Jesus had taken the wine he said, 'It is fulfilled'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit."*

**Action:**Pray

Jesus, you know what it’s like
to feel abandoned,
lost and afraid.

Walk with us.

And show us how to walk with others,
who live in fear,
who face death
through hunger or war.

Show us how to pray
for those we do not know
and will not meet,
but who are always loved by you.

Amen.

**Holy Saturday 19 April**

**Today’s reading (taken from the Easter Vigil): Genesis 1:1-2:2**

*"God also said, 'Look, to you I give all the seed-bearing plants everywhere on the surface of the earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this will be your food. And to all the wild animals, all the birds of the heaven and all the living creatures that creep along the ground, I give all the foliage of the plants as their food.'"*

**Reflection:**Today we watch and wait. We reflect on Christ’s death on the cross for us. We prepare for tomorrow and look with hope to the gift of new life in the resurrection.

**Prayer:** God of life, we look with hope to the resurrection when all things will be renewed. May we renew the face of the earth. Amen.

**Easter Sunday 20 April**

**Today’s reading:** Acts 10:34, 37-43

*"They killed him by hanging him on a tree, yet on the third day God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen"*

**Reflection**: Let us go out with joy, for he is risen. Alleluia!

**Action**: [Join your prayers to ours this Easter](http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/617/5826/file/Prayer_Easter_popular-collection_prayers.pdf).

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/Pray/Lent-Calendar-2014>