

# Enlarging the Tent



*“Enlarge the place of your tent,  
and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out;  
Do not hold back;  
Lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.  
For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left,  
and your offspring will possess the nations  
and will people the desolate cities.” Is 54:2*

**Small Group Reflections**  
on the Lenten Scriptures and our Synod Process  
**St. Paul the Apostle Catholic Community**  
Los Angeles  
sp-apostle.org  
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## **About the Document for the Continental Stage**

The Synod is on. During the first, consultative phase, millions of people all over the world responded to the Popes' call to participate. Reports from different communities and groups were sent to their Dioceses. These submissions were then synthesized and transmitted to the Episcopal Conferences (the bishops of the country or region). Then the Episcopal Conferences drafted a report and sent it to the General Secretariat of the Synod in Rome.

These materials were distributed to a group of bishops, priests, consecrated men and women, lay men and lay women, from all continents and with very diverse disciplinary expertise. After reading the reports, they met with the writing group, composed of the General Relator, the Secretary General of the Synod, the Undersecretaries and various officials of the Synod Secretariat, plus members of the Coordinating Committee and members of the General Council. Together, in an atmosphere of prayer and discernment, they drafted a working document called the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS). Sections of the DCS are used in this booklet to help us reflect beyond our own borders. The full DCS can be found on the parish website. The following explanation of *Enlarging the Tent* has been taken from point 27 of the DCS. A timeline for the entire Synod process can be found on pages 28-29.

### **Enlarging the Tent**

27. The words of Isaiah invite us to imagine the Church as a tent, indeed as the tent of meeting, which accompanied the people on their journey through the desert: called to stretch out but also to move.

At its center stands the tabernacle that is the presence of the Lord. The tent's hold is ensured by the sturdiness of its pegs, that is the fundamentals of faith that do not change but can be moved and planted in ever new ground so that the tent can accompany the people as they walk through history.

Finally, in order not to sag, the structure of the tent must keep in balance the different forces and tensions to which it is subjected: a metaphor that expresses the need for discernment. This is how many reports from around the globe envision the Church: an expansive, but not homogeneous dwelling, capable of sheltering all, but open and moving toward embracing the Father and all of humanity. (DCS)

# Enlarging the Tent

## Lent 2023

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### **First Sunday of Lent**

February 26, 2023

*In the Desert*

*p.5*

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March 5, 2023

*A Glimpse of Glory*

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March 12, 2023

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### **Palm Sunday**

April 2, 2023

*What Would Jesus Do?*

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## Before Each Meeting

1. Please show up on time.
2. What is shared in the group stays in the group.
3. Everyone's input is valuable. At the same time, no one is required to speak.
4. Please only share on the level at which you are comfortable.
5. Please limit your sharing to a few minutes and wait until everyone has had the opportunity to share before you share again.
6. Only one person speaks at a time.
7. Please, no cross talking, which means no commenting on another person's share. "I" statements are better than "'you" statements.
8. Please, no side conversations. Value one another by listening.
9. Please silence your cell phone and put it away. If you need to make a call or text, please take it outside or mute your speaker.

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## Opening Prayer

*Lord, you have gathered all your People in Synod.  
We give you thanks for the joy  
experienced by those who decided  
to set out to listen to God  
and to their brothers and sisters during this the past year,  
with an attitude of welcome, humility, hospitality, and siblinghood.  
Help us to continue the journey this Lent.  
Help us to enter these pages as on "holy ground."  
Come Holy Spirit: may you be the guide of our journey together! Amen.*

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## Closing Prayer

*Thank you, Lord, for your presence with us this day.  
We ask your blessing upon us as we end this faith sharing time.  
Help us not to let the learnings and conversations of this gathering die,  
but, instead, may they continue to ruminate within us  
and bear fruit in our lives and ministries.  
We ask this in the name of Jesus,  
and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Amen*

## First Sunday of Lent

# In the Desert

The desert as we know, is the place where, stripped of all that normally nourishes and supports us, we are exposed to chaos, raw fear, and demons of every kind. In the desert we are exposed, body and soul, made vulnerable to be overwhelmed by chaos and temptations of every kind. But, precisely because we are so stripped of everything we normally rely on, this is also a privileged moment for grace. Why? Because all the defense mechanisms, support systems, and distractions that we normally surround ourselves with so as to keep chaos and fear at bay, work at the same time to keep much of God's grace at bay. That is why the desert is both the place of chaos and the place of God's closeness. Scripture assures us that it is there that God can send angels to minister to us. *Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI*

## **Jesus is Tempted in the Desert** Mt\_4:1-11

At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry.

The tempter approached and said to him,

"If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread."

He said in reply,

"It is written:

*One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God."*

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down.

For it is written:

*He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone."*

Jesus answered him,

"Again it is written,

*You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test."*

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain,

and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence,  
and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you,  
if you will prostrate yourself and worship me."

At this, Jesus said to him,

"Get away, Satan!

It is written:

*The Lord, your God, shall you worship  
and him alone shall you serve."*

Then the devil left him and, behold,  
angels came and ministered to him.

### **The Gospel of the Lord**

### **From the Parish Synod Report**

The Gospels tells us that one of the things that distinguished Jesus from the other religious preachers of his time was that he spoke with authority, while the others did not. Today there appear to be multiple "authorities" within the Church, claiming to know the will of God. What it means to be an American Catholic today is often defined by "which camp you are in." The Church is called to be leaven for society, not just a mirror of it.

### **From the Continental Stage Report** (see p.2)

51. Many local Churches express concern about the impact of a lack of trust and credibility resulting from the abuse crises. Others point to individualism and consumerism as critical cultural factors: "*Every day we can feel that even in our country the proclamation of the Gospel is challenged by growing secularization, individualism and indifference to the institutional forms of religion*" (Hungary). Many Churches feel they face all these cultural challenges simultaneously but wish to grow more and more confident in proclaiming the Gospel in "*a consumerist society that has failed to ensure sustainability, equity or life satisfaction*" (Ireland). Many reports express particular regret and concern for the pressures experienced by families and the resulting impact on intergenerational relationships and faith transmission. Many Asian reports ask for better accompaniment and formation for families, as they negotiate changing cultural conditions.

### **Faith Sharing Questions**

In recent years we have witnessed, both in the world and in the church, a deconstruction. All of our major institutions – family, church, marriage, nation, and even the classics within literature, art, and music – have been in some way questioned and discredited. Many of our cherished institutions and values have been shown to contain elements of racism, sexism, imperialism, cultural and historical bias. All of this criticism has left us struggling for security, stability, and chastity, unable to give our children much, or anything, to believe in and unable to give our own selves much, or any community. Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

1. Where do you look for and find ministering angels in the cultural and ecclesial desert in which we find ourselves today?
2. What it means to be an American Catholic today is often defined by “which camp you are in.” The Church is called to be leaven for society, not just a mirror of it. In what ways have you closed yourself off from the “other camp”?
3. Many local Churches express concern about the impact of a lack of trust and credibility resulting from the abuse crises. How has the scandal influenced your personal sense of Catholic identity?
4. The Pope wants the Synod to “inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be.” What is your dream for the Church? What pieces of that dream can we as a faith community begin to realize in our parish?

## Second Sunday of Lent

# A Glimpse of Glory

The Transfiguration gives us a brief and fleeting glimpse of Jesus in all his glory. It is a taste of what is to come. It is offered to encourage and challenge us in our daily lives. It reminds us that our lives are far more than what we see, hear, and experience every day. It is not just a matter getting through the day. Being a follower of Jesus is about living with meaning, purpose, and hope. The Transfiguration not only offers us a glimpse of Jesus in all his glory, but it also offers each of us a foretaste of what God promises each of us in the fullness of the Kingdom.

*Michael Moore OMI*

### **The Transfiguration** Mt 17:1-9

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother,  
and led them up a high mountain by themselves.  
And he was transfigured before them;  
his face shone like the sun  
and his clothes became white as light.  
And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them,  
conversing with him.  
Then Peter said to Jesus in reply,  
"Lord, it is good that we are here.  
If you wish, I will make three tents here,  
one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."  
While he was still speaking, behold,  
a bright cloud cast a shadow over them,  
then from the cloud came a voice that said,  
"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased;  
listen to him."  
When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate  
and were very much afraid.

But Jesus came and touched them, saying,  
"Rise, and do not be afraid."  
And when the disciples raised their eyes,  
they saw no one else but Jesus alone.



As they were coming down from the mountain,  
Jesus charged them,  
"Do not tell the vision to anyone  
until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

### **The Gospel of the Lord**

#### **From the Parish Synod Report**

The invitation of Pope Francis for us to be a more listening and expansive Church is a radically new way of being Church. As a local community and as a wider Church, we often fall short in our commitment to see each other as fellow pilgrims on the same journey of life – the same journey of faith. Our participation in the wider Church's synodal process is one step towards recommitting our local community, St. Paul the Apostle Community, to a style of mission where each member of our parish is seen as someone who has something valuable to share in building up our church. Cardinal Robert McElroy of the Diocese of San Diego puts it well: *The current synod process offers a glimpse of a Church yet to come. Hundreds of thousands of Catholics have engaged with the Church on their joys, their sorrows and their hopes for what the Church can be today and tomorrow.*

#### **From the Continental Synod Report** (see p.2)

59. Although frank in their diagnoses of the problems, the various reports are not hopeless. They express a deep and energetic desire for renewed forms of leadership – priestly, episcopal, religious and lay – that are relational and collaborative, and forms of authority capable of generating solidarity and co-responsibility: "*The tasks of the authorities include encouraging, involving, leading and facilitating participation in the life of the Church [...] and delegating part of the responsibilities*" (Slovakia). Lay people, religious and clerics desire to put their talents and abilities at the disposal of the Church, and to do so they call for an exercise of leadership that enables them to be free. The reports express gratitude for those leaders who already exercise their role in these ways.

#### **Faith Sharing Questions**

1. When the apostles beheld Jesus, Moses and Elijah, Peter remarked, "Lord it is good that we are here." Why is it good that you happen to be here, in this time in the history of Christianity? What particular gifts do you have that can advance of mission of Jesus today?

2. The invitation of Pope Francis for us to be a more listening, expansive Church, is a radically new way of being Church. What glimpses of that new way of being Church have you noticed at the parish or local level, or at the universal level?

3. Many non-religious and disaffiliated people are trying to live with meaning, purpose and hope on their own. What might a radical new way of being Church have to offer them?

4. Every mountaintop moment must end by walking back down into the realities of life. Do you experience glimpses of glory? If so, how do you hold onto them in your day-to-day life?

## Third Sunday of Lent

# Bridging What Divides

Father Ron Rolheiser recently wrote of a conversation he had with an old priest he encountered shortly after his own ordination. Fr. Ron asked him *“If you had your priesthood to live over again, would you do anything differently?”* The old priest’s reply surprised Fr. Ron for he had expected the priest to have no regrets, yet the priest replied that he did regret one thing, *“If I had my priesthood to do over again,”* he said, *“I would be easier on people the next time. I wouldn’t be so stingy with God’s mercy, with the sacraments, with forgiveness. You see what was drilled into me was the phrase: ‘The truth will set you free,’ and I believed that it was my responsibility to challenge people so as to protect something inside of them. That’s good. But I fear that I’ve been too hard on people. They have pain enough without me and the Church laying further burdens on them. I should have risked God’s mercy more!”*

*Deacons’ Corner, March 2015*

### **The Woman at the Well** [Jn 4:5-42](#)

Jesus came to a town of Samaria called Sychar,  
near the plot of land that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.  
Jacob’s well was there.

Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down there at the well.

It was about noon.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water.

Jesus said to her,

“Give me a drink.”

His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.

The Samaritan woman said to him,

“How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?”

—For Jews use nothing in common with Samaritans.—

Jesus answered and said to her,

“If you knew the gift of God

and who is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink, ‘

you would have asked him

and he would have given you living water.”

The woman said to him,

“Sir, you do not even have a bucket and the cistern is deep;

where then can you get this living water?”

Are you greater than our father Jacob,  
who gave us this cistern and drank from it himself  
with his children and his flocks?”  
Jesus answered and said to her,  
“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again;  
but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst;  
the water I shall give will become in him  
a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”  
The woman said to him,  
“Sir, give me this water, so that I may not be thirsty  
or have to keep coming here to draw water.”  
Jesus said to her,  
“Go call your husband and come back.”  
The woman answered and said to him,  
“I do not have a husband.”  
Jesus answered her,  
“You are right in saying, ‘I do not have a husband.’  
For you have had five husbands,  
and the one you have now is not your husband.  
What you have said is true.”  
The woman said to him,  
“Sir, I can see that you are a prophet.  
Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain;  
but you people say that the place to worship is in Jerusalem.”  
Jesus said to her,  
“Believe me, woman, the hour is coming  
when you will worship the Father  
neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.  
You people worship what you do not understand;  
we worship what we understand,  
because salvation is from the Jews.  
But the hour is coming, and is now here,  
when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth;  
and indeed the Father seeks such people to worship him.  
God is Spirit, and those who worship him  
must worship in Spirit and truth.”  
The woman said to him,  
“I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ;  
when he comes, he will tell us everything.”

Jesus said to her,  
“I am he, the one speaking with you.”  
At that moment his disciples returned,  
and were amazed that he was talking with a woman,  
but still no one said, “What are you looking for?”  
or “Why are you talking with her?”  
The woman left her water jar  
and went into the town and said to the people,  
“Come see a man who told me everything I have done.  
Could he possibly be the Christ?”

### **The Gospel of the Lord**

### **From the Parish Report**

In both our in-person listening sessions and online listening survey, we heard a solid majority of participants reflect on their challenges with particular Church teachings and attitudes. The seven main issues which garnered significant conversation were: 1) full inclusion of LGBTQ people; 2) the exclusion of women from Church leadership and ordination; 3) opportunities for lay leadership; 4) teachings on divorce; 5) contraception; 6) abortion; and 7) the lingering effects of the sex abuse scandal.

### **From the Continental Report** (see p.2)

85. As has already been stressed many times, a synodal Church first of all needs to deal with the many tensions that emerge from encountering diversity. Therefore, a synodal spirituality can only be one that welcomes differences and promotes harmony and draws from the tensions the energies to continue on the journey. To achieve this, it will have to move from accentuating the individual dimension to the collective dimension: a spirituality of “we,” which can enhance the contributions of each person.

### **Faith Sharing Questions**

1. The old priest in the introduction remarked that he wished he’d been “less stingy with God’s mercy.” He relied on the phrase: “The truth will set you free.” How does Jesus balance mercy and truth in the Gospel reading?
2. The parish report highlighted seven issues that divide us as a faith community:  
1) full inclusion of LGBTQ people, 2) the exclusion of women from Church leadership and ordination, 3) opportunities for lay leadership, 4) teachings on

divorce, 5) contraception, 6) abortion, and 7) the lingering effects of the sex abuse scandal. Each issue has both a moral and an organizational component. Which issue(s) do you personally find to be the most challenging? Which issue(s) do you believe that the Church is closest to addressing?

3. Bridging what divides us does not mean that we will all march to the same drummer. How can we enlarge the tent to enable differing voices to feel heard and supported?

4. Where do you need to “risk God’s mercy more” in your own life and relationships?

## Fourth Sunday of Lent

# The Best Vision is Insight

The man who was born blind was thrilled with the healing he experienced from his chance encounter with the man who cured him. He rejoiced in the gift but did not know the giver. Yet he did have the courage to stand up for the one who healed him as the religious authorities tried to debunk the miracle. He even tweaks them by asking whether they might want to meet him. Even his parents get brought into the interrogation by the authorities. In the end, Jesus seeks out the man and identifies himself as the one who healed him, so the man received more than physical sight, but insight into the person of Jesus. *Faith at Marquette, Marquette.edu*

### **The Man Born Blind** Jn 9:1-41

As Jesus passed by he saw a man blind from birth.  
His disciples asked him,  
"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents,  
that he was born blind?"  
Jesus answered,  
"Neither he nor his parents sinned;  
it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him.  
We have to do the works of the one who sent me while it is day.  
Night is coming when no one can work.  
While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."  
When he had said this, he spat on the ground  
and made clay with the saliva,  
and smeared the clay on his eyes,  
and said to him,  
"Go wash in the Pool of Siloam" —which means Sent—.  
So he went and washed, and came back able to see.

His neighbors and those who had seen him earlier as a beggar said,  
"Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?"  
Some said, "It is, "  
but others said, "No, he just looks like him."  
He said, "I am."  
So they said to him, "How were your eyes opened?"  
He replied,

"The man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes  
and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.'  
So I went there and washed and was able to see."  
And they said to him, "Where is he?"  
He said, "I don't know."

*They brought the one who was once blind to the Pharisees.  
Now Jesus had made clay and opened his eyes on a sabbath.  
So then the Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.  
He said to them,  
"He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and now I can see."  
So some of the Pharisees said,  
"This man is not from God,  
because he does not keep the sabbath."  
But others said,  
"How can a sinful man do such signs?"  
And there was a division among them.  
So they said to the blind man again,  
"What do you have to say about him,  
since he opened your eyes?"  
He said, "He is a prophet."*

Now the Jews did not believe  
that he had been blind and gained his sight  
until they summoned the parents of the one who had gained his sight.  
They asked them,  
"Is this your son, who you say was born blind?  
How does he now see?"  
His parents answered and said,  
"We know that this is our son and that he was born blind.  
We do not know how he sees now,  
nor do we know who opened his eyes.  
Ask him, he is of age;  
he can speak for himself."  
His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews,  
for the Jews had already agreed  
that if anyone acknowledged him as the Christ,  
he would be expelled from the synagogue.  
For this reason his parents said,  
"He is of age; question him."



So a second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give God the praise! We know that this man is a sinner."  
He replied,  
"If he is a sinner, I do not know.  
One thing I do know is that I was blind and now I see."  
So they said to him,  
"What did he do to you?  
How did he open your eyes?"  
He answered them,  
"I told you already and you did not listen.  
Why do you want to hear it again?  
Do you want to become his disciples, too?"  
They ridiculed him and said,  
"You are that man's disciple;  
we are disciples of Moses!  
We know that God spoke to Moses,  
but we do not know where this one is from."  
The man answered and said to them,  
"This is what is so amazing,  
that you do not know where he is from, yet he opened my eyes.  
We know that God does not listen to sinners,  
but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him.  
It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a person born blind.  
If this man were not from God,  
he would not be able to do anything."  
They answered and said to him,  
"You were born totally in sin,  
and are you trying to teach us?"  
Then they threw him out.

When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out,  
he found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"  
He answered and said,  
"Who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?"  
Jesus said to him,  
"You have seen him,  
the one speaking with you is he."  
He said,

"I do believe, Lord," and he worshiped him.  
Then Jesus said,  
"I came into this world for judgment,  
so that those who do not see might see,  
and those who do see might become blind."

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this  
and said to him, "Surely we are not also blind, are we?"  
Jesus said to them,  
"If you were blind, you would have no sin;  
but now you are saying, 'We see,' so your sin remains."  
**The Gospel of the Lord**

### **Insights from the Parish Synod Report**

1. Relating to God is easier than relating to Jesus Christ
2. Living the message of Jesus is more important than the rules
3. Our parish is homey and intimidating... a work-in-progress
4. Many traditional moral teachings must be reevaluated
5. Many of the disaffiliated are spiritually searching, but no longer open to the traditions and practices of the Church

### **From the Continental Synod Report** (see p.2)

30. The submissions are encouraging because they avoid two of the main spiritual temptations facing the Church in responding to diversity and the tensions it generates. The first is to remain trapped in conflict, such that our horizons shrink, and we lose our sense of the whole, and fracture into sub-identities. It is an experience of Babel and not Pentecost, well recognizable in many features of our world. The second is to become spiritually detached and disinterested in the tensions involved, continuing to go our own way without involving ourselves with those close to us on the journey. Instead, *"the call is to live better the tension of truth and mercy, as Jesus did [...]. The dream is of a Church that more fully lives a Christological paradox: boldly proclaiming its authentic teaching while at the same time offering a witness of radical inclusion and acceptance through its pastoral and discerning accompaniment"* ( England and Wales).

## **Faith Sharing Questions**

1. Insight is the capacity to gain an accurate and deeply intuitive understanding of a person or thing...to be a visionary. Who is a religious/spiritual visionary in your life? What are his or her visionary qualities?
2. The man who was born blind was thrilled with the healing he experienced from his chance encounter with the man who cured him. He rejoiced in the gift but did not know the giver. How does knowing that your gifts are God-given impact your life?
3. One of the main spiritual temptations mentioned in the Continental Report is becoming spiritually detached and disinterested due to the tensions involved in change - to go our own way without involving ourselves with those close to us on the journey. How important do you believe your continued interest in the development of the Church is to the Church itself? How important is it for your own spirituality?
4. What insights have you gleaned being part of this faith sharing group? Is there anything that you have taken away that might make you say, "now I see?"

## Fifth Sunday of Lent

# Agents of Liberation

Jesus's followers unbind Lazarus and in so doing they ignore the old law, for they touch what is ritually unclean. By acting on Jesus's command, they accept the new law of the new covenant. They act as the agents of Lazarus's liberation from death and the imprisonment and darkness of the tomb. We, too, as followers of the risen Christ, must be agents of liberation. From experience we know that we do not have to be dead physically to be in need of being raised. We can be dead in the midst of life, hoping for a word of life and a community that will help put us together again. Jesus's voice calls us away from making the tomb our natural home and challenges us to take responsibility for our brother or sister who, like Lazarus, is loved by Jesus. If we see someone buried alive, we are invited to do as Jesus and the community do: call them, help them go free. Our mission in these trying times is to unbind humanity from the captivity of death, to bring new life to those caught in the darkness of the tomb. To be a light that '... shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.'

Brian Purifeld, *Thinking Faith*, March 2020

### **The Raising of Lazarus** Jn 11:1-45

Now a man was ill, Lazarus from Bethany,  
the village of Mary and her sister Martha.  
Mary was the one who had anointed the Lord with perfumed oil  
and dried his feet with her hair;  
it was her brother Lazarus who was ill.  
So the sisters sent word to him saying,  
"Master, the one you love is ill."  
When Jesus heard this he said,  
"This illness is not to end in death,  
but is for the glory of God,  
that the Son of God may be glorified through it."  
Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.  
So when he heard that he was ill,  
he remained for two days in the place where he was.  
Then after this he said to his disciples,  
"Let us go back to Judea."

The disciples said to him,  
“Rabbi, the Jews were just trying to stone you,  
and you want to go back there?”  
Jesus answered,  
“Are there not twelve hours in a day?  
If one walks during the day, he does not stumble,  
because he sees the light of this world.  
But if one walks at night, he stumbles,  
because the light is not in him.”  
He said this, and then told them,  
“Our friend Lazarus is asleep,  
but I am going to awaken him.”  
So the disciples said to him,  
“Master, if he is asleep, he will be saved.”  
But Jesus was talking about his death,  
while they thought that he meant ordinary sleep.  
So, then Jesus said to them clearly,  
“Lazarus has died.  
And I am glad for you that I was not there,  
that you may believe.  
Let us go to him.”  
So Thomas, called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples,  
“Let us also go to die with him.”  
When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus  
had already been in the tomb for four days.  
Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, only about two miles away.  
And many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary  
to comfort them about their brother.  
When Martha heard that Jesus was coming,  
she went to meet him;  
but Mary sat at home.  
Martha said to Jesus,  
“Lord, if you had been here,  
my brother would not have died.  
But even now I know that whatever you ask of God,  
God will give you.”  
Jesus said to her,  
“Your brother will rise.”

Martha said to him,  
“I know he will rise,  
in the resurrection on the last day.”  
Jesus told her,  
“I am the resurrection and the life;  
whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live,  
and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.  
Do you believe this?”  
She said to him, “Yes, Lord.  
I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God,  
the one who is coming into the world.”  
When she had said this,  
she went and called her sister Mary secretly, saying,  
“The teacher is here and is asking for you.”  
As soon as she heard this,  
she rose quickly and went to him.  
For Jesus had not yet come into the village,  
but was still where Martha had met him.  
So when the Jews who were with her in the house comforting her  
saw Mary get up quickly and go out,  
they followed her,  
presuming that she was going to the tomb to weep there.  
When Mary came to where Jesus was and saw him,  
she fell at his feet and said to him,  
“Lord, if you had been here,  
my brother would not have died.”  
When Jesus saw her weeping and the Jews who had come with her weeping,  
he became perturbed and deeply troubled, and said,  
“Where have you laid him?”  
They said to him, “Sir, come and see.”  
And Jesus wept.  
So the Jews said, “See how he loved him.”  
But some of them said,  
“Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man  
have done something so that this man would not have died?”  
So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb.  
It was a cave, and a stone lay across it.  
Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”

Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him,  
"Lord, by now there will be a stench;  
he has been dead for four days."  
Jesus said to her,  
"Did I not tell you that if you believe  
you will see the glory of God?"  
So they took away the stone.  
And Jesus raised his eyes and said,  
"Father, I thank you for hearing me.  
I know that you always hear me;  
but because of the crowd here I have said this,  
that they may believe that you sent me."  
And when he had said this,  
He cried out in a loud voice,  
"Lazarus, come out!"  
The dead man came out,  
tied hand and foot with burial bands,  
and his face was wrapped in a cloth.  
So Jesus said to them,  
"Untie him and let him go."  
Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary  
and seen what he had done began to believe in him.  
**The Gospel of the Lord**

### **From the Parish Synod Report**

Christianity, at its core, is a communal endeavor. We believe in it when community works; we stop believing in it when community breaks down. Our primary task today is to live community. If we can do that, then the visible body of Christ, the Church, will have an incredible resurrection.

### **From the Continental Report** (see p.2)

57. The mission of the Church is realized through the lives of all the baptized. The reports express a deep desire to recognize and reaffirm this common dignity as the basis for the renewal of life and ministries in the Church. They affirm the value of all vocations in the Church, and above all, invite us to follow Jesus, returning to his style and way of exercising power and authority as a means of offering healing,

reconciliation and liberation. *“It is important to build a synodal institutional model as an ecclesial paradigm of deconstructing pyramidal power that privileges unipersonal managements. The only legitimate authority in the Church must be that of love and service, following the example of the Lord”* (Argentina).

### **Faith Sharing Questions**

1. In our first reflection, Jesus’s followers unbind Lazarus and in so doing they ignore the old law, for they touch what is ritually unclean. Are there aspects of Church tradition and governance today that you believe we must unbind ourselves from? If so, what are they? If not, what might happen if we did?
2. By acting on Jesus’s command to unbind Lazarus, Jesus’ followers accept the new law of the new covenant. What aspects of the new covenant – of the life and ministry of Jesus - most liberate you?
3. The parish synod reports suggests that our primary task today is to live community. If we can do that, then the visible body of Christ, the Church, will have an incredible resurrection. Do you believe that to be true? Why?
4. Jesus did not rush to Lazarus’ sick bed. He arrived after his death and burial. Much like Mary who, when encountering Jesus, said “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died," it is easy for some to believe that the Church is past saving, past resurrection. How do we liberate ourselves from despair?



## Palm Sunday

# What Would Jesus Do?

### Isaiah 50:4-7 with Commentary

*The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue,  
for me to know how to give a word of comfort to the weary.*

Jesus' ministry was one of teaching and healing, and his healings were usually audio-visual aids for his teachings. He comforted the weary, whereas the Church largely kept "saving the saved." Jesus seemed to be into "universal health care," and now we make it a privilege for a few instead of a basic human need and right.

*Each morning he wakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple.  
The Lord Yahweh has opened my ear.*

Jesus learned how to listen long and hard ("pray") before every major decision and before he even began to speak publicly, around the age of thirty.

*For my part, I made no resistance,  
Neither did I turn away.*

Jesus clearly taught and lived nonviolence his entire life, up to and including his death. We could not admit or see this once we were attached to using violence. Jesus moved *into* the pain of the world to reveal it, to identify with it, and thus to transform it; we largely inflicted pain on others to prove ourselves "right."

*I offered my back to those who struck me,  
My cheek to those who tore at my beard;  
I did not cover my face  
Against insult and spittle.*

Jesus' passion and death exemplified in dramatic theater this "third way," which is neither fight nor flight, but a little of both. It is fleeing enough to detach oneself from excessive ego and the emotions that attach to it and fighting just enough to stand up courageously against evil, paying the price for change yourself. Such a third way, I believe, is the unique pattern of the Gospel. It neither plays the victim nor creates victims of others. How rare this is, even today.

Fr. Richard Rohr, *The Suffering Servant*, Sunday, March 8, 2015

## **From the Parish Synod Report**

It will take time for us as a community to continue to process and reflect what we've learned about each other and about our Church through our first synodal process. The invitation, as we move forward as one community, is to discern how the Holy Spirit might be inviting us to be church in a new way. *How might we bring about new vigor to this? To the wider Church?*

## **From the Continental Report** (see p.2)

105. The Document of the Continental Stage, which gathers and restores to the local Churches what the People of God from around the world said in the first year of the Synod, is meant to guide us and enable us to deepen our discernment, keeping in mind the basic question that animates the entire process: *“How does this ‘journeying together,’ which takes place today on different levels (from the local level to the universal one), allow the Church to proclaim the Gospel in accordance with the mission entrusted to Her; and what steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow as a synodal Church?”* (Preparatory Document, no. 2).

## **Faith Sharing Questions**

Simply put, we are not a very happy generation. All of this criticism has left us with a certain hermeneutical purity, but it has also left us struggling for security, stability, and chastity, unable to give our children much, or anything, to believe in and unable to give our own selves much, or any community. It has also left us struggling to experience any delight and enchantment in our lives. We are a little like the adolescent who can now point out his parents' faults. He is less naive, and equally less happy, for knowing this. *Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI*

1. What aspect of Holy Week touches you the most? Why?
2. *The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, for me to know how to give a word of comfort to the weary.* The last reflection suggests that we are not a very happy generation. Do you believe you have the capacity to give comfort? In what ways are you best able to give comfort?
3. What first steps do you sense that the Spirit is inviting our parish to take in order to grow as a more synodal community? What would Jesus do?
4. How has taking part in this Lenten faith sharing prepared me for Easter?

**We are an Easter people  
and**

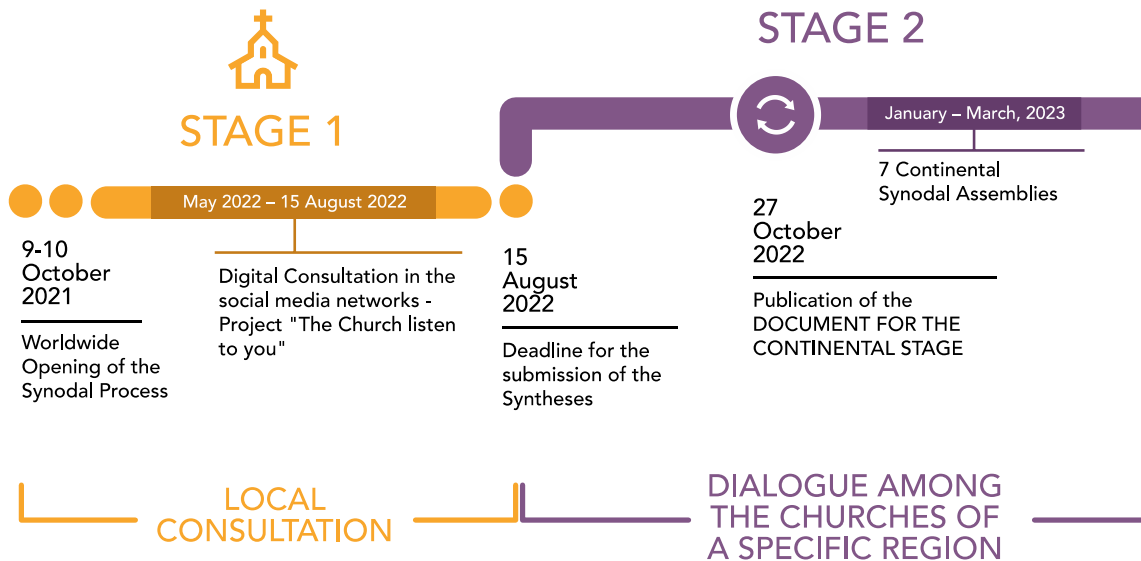
*Alleluia*

**is our Song**

**St. John Paul II**

# The Synodal Process

PROCESS OF LISTENING,  
ENCOUNTERING, DIALOGUING,  
DISCERNING



## ICON INDEX



# 2021 - 2024

