

Candles - Invited to recommit your life

Invite people to show a recommitment of their life for Christ by coming forward and lighting a candle (A symbol of their life) from the candles (A symbol of Christ's light) at the front of the church.

Candles -Prayer time

Led the congregation into a prayer time and explain that as we come together in prayer we join not only God but also other Christians and also the saints of the past with our prayer, as an act of worship and of prayer invite people to come forward and light a candle. *(We use the Tea Light Candles and have a board for them to be place on. Make sure you think about fire safety as you have the flame but also the holders get very hot)*

Coat and Hat rack

Greeting

Reading Genesis 18:1-15

Homily What kind of themes are suggested in the reading? Different kinds of hospitality - Our hospitality towards people, God's hospitality to us, our response towards him, our hospitality toward his word!

Invite people to come forward and hang their coats on the coat stand – taking coats - symbol of welcome - symbol of openness
shedding preconceived ideas then greet one another.

Play Music while this is happening 'Welcome Home' - Dave Dobbyn

Prayer afterwards

Almighty God, in the incarnation you bound yourself to our humanity, never to let us go and in your humanity you welcomed all who came to you. We praise you for your gracious hospitality – that even today you invite us to come to you and to join your family. Enable us, in the same way, to offer hospitality

- to those in the church,
- those outside
- and those who inhabit the margins.

Make us sensitive hosts, quick to discern and respond to the needs of those seeking the fullness of life. We pray this for the building up of the church and the praise of your glory. Amen.

Using Stones -Forgiveness

Issue everyone with a rock as they come into church (don't tell them why). When you come to the confession part of the service talk about how there are many things that weigh us down in life. Invite people to lay these things before God as an act of confession and repentance by bringing their rock to the front of the church and using the marker pens to write a word that symbolises their weights / confession the onto the rock and then place the rock at the foot of the cross. While this is happening play suitable music.

When they have finished lead a general prayer and assurance of forgiveness.

Make it clear that the rocks will be thrown away and not read by anyone.

Using Stones - Remembering the presence of God

Hand around a basket containing small either polished or river smoothed rocks. Ask people to choose one. And examine it and roll it around in their hands. Comment on how none of the stones are the same, they are unique. They have been formed by great pressure and some seem to have flaws but that is what makes them what they are. They have been formed by a process of nature that God ordained.

Read the end of Romans 8

31 ¶ So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose?

32 If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us?

33 And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen?

34 Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us.

35 Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

36 They kill us in cold blood because they hate you. We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

37 None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us.

38 I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow,

39 high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely nothing can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

We all know this scripture but at times we struggle holding on to the reality of it. Invite the people to use their rock as a reminder that no matter were they are Jesus can be with them. Put it in your pocket and when you need a reminder reach in and touch it and remember a fresh the promises of God.

Using Stones -Journeys : Cairns

In the high country where you are above the tree line there is a well used custom that helps you to find your way. Piles of stones are used to act as route markers to help the travel to go the right way. Over time these markers grow in size because of the custom of travellers adding a stone as they pass by, thus making it easier for the next traveller to see.

As a church we are a marker for the community, pointing to them and our selves the way to go so we can have a relationship with God. I invite you if you want to show your willingness and commitment to the church and God to come forward and chose a rock and add it to the small cairn that I have made to represent our church. (*Play suitable music as people come forward*).

After everyone has had the chance finish with a prayer that asks God to lead us in the paths that he wants us to go.

Meditative Walking Through the Scriptures -FEEDING OF THE 5000 Matt 14

We are going to spend some time in reflective prayer.

The method we will use is familiar to many Christians.

and used for many years. It is a prayer style where you take a passage and then seek to live the experience with your imagination.

Ignatius of Loyola wrote of the form of prayer encouraging prayers to apply all their senses to the task, smell, hearing, touch, taste, sight

As I lead you through the scripture I will ask questions that will help you to use these senses.

Please make yourself comfortable and pray and ask God to show you , our passage in another way.

After a short time in silence I will start to lead you through the text.

It has been some time since you first met Jesus. Heard his message and decided to follow him. Can you remember what you were doing at the time?

How old you were?

In some ways it was like the way that he called those first disciples.

To the fishermen he had said come follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

To the tax collector he had simply said come follow me.

Jesus gathered together 12 disciples around him. These apostles were to spread the good news of the kingdom of God.

I want you to imagine that you are there amongst this group

Jesus calls you together and gives you power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sends you out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

He told you to, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money--not even an extra tunic". This is rather radical for a start but the things that you see and the things that you experience really stretch your faith.

You have been away for a number of days and you have just returned to Bethsaida with the other Apostles to tell Jesus about your travels and adventures.

There is much excited conversation and it is well past midnight when you gather some blankets around yourself and fall asleep happy to be with Jesus again.

For some reason you awake early. Jesus is sleeping not far from you can you see him wrapped in the blankets.

What do you see?

He looks rather ordinary a bit like John but there is something very special about him. It is not just the words he speaks but it is also the way he lives, the things he does.

Lying there looking at the sleeping Jesus you wonder what will happen today - will we talk some more?

11 When the crowds found out about it, they followed him; and he welcomed them, and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed to be cured.

Just then you hear the distant noise of a crowd that is approaching, can you hear them? As they approach what are your thoughts?

Are you disappointed because you were looking forward to having Jesus to yourself - just for a day.

As you get up look at the type of people who are arriving.
Notice the colour of their clothes
Their ages

There are men , women and even children. They just keep coming there seems to be thousands of them.

The other disciples are getting up now and Jesus does not even seem to be phased by what you see is an intrusion. He simply leads the people out to a hill side by the lake and begins to talk about the kingdom of God. As if to emphasize what he is saying he places his hands on some sick people and prays for them and they are healed.

Look at the crowd what do you notice, how are they reacting to what they see and hear?

After a while you begin to notice the way that your stomach is grumbling (you remember that you had not even had time to have breakfast in the morning). The sun indicates it is now late in the afternoon. The heat has made you tired.

Can you feel how tired you are?
Can you feel how dry your tongue is and how hungry you are?

You get up and go to the disciples and find them at the tail end of a discussion about how late it is getting .

12 The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place."

The disciples get up and approach Jesus and urge him to "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to find shelter and food for it is now late afternoon.

13 But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish--unless we are to go and buy food for all these people."

Jesus replies telling them to give the crowd something to eat."

Can't he remember you have just returned from a journey on which he instructed you to take nothing. Where are you going to find food to feed 5000 people?

Just then a boy who has been sitting near, who has heard what was being said asks if his few fish and loaves of bread might be of help.

Note the eagerness on his face as he offers to help?

Can you smell the fish that has been sitting in his bag during what has been a hot day?

That's all there is, so in a desperate plea hoping that Jesus will understand this time you take the 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread to Jesus and tell him this is all there is and there is not any money to buy dinner for 5000 people.

As the disciples tell Jesus this look at his face. What expression is on it?

Jesus looks at the fish and the loaves of bread and tells the disciples to get the people to sit in groups of 50. Too tired to protest you follow as the disciples obediently begin to organize the crowd.

14 For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each."

15 They did so and made them all sit down.

As you go round the crowd telling them what to do you can't but wonder what's going to happen next. So many people, so great the need for food and only 2 fish and five loaves. In time the crowd is organized. And you watch waiting to see what happens in the late afternoon sun.

Can you feel the warmth of the late afternoon sun on your skin?

The slight cool breeze?

16 And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd.

The crowd grows quiet and looks at Jesus as he picks up the five loaves and the two fish, he looks up to heaven, and blesses them and breaks them.

Did you hear the authority in his voice?

He passes you what seems to be a small portion of the food in a basket and tells you to go and feed the waiting people. But how? You wonder - there are so many people and so little in the basket.

As you look at the contents in the basket what are you feeling?

How are you going to make this work?

Can you see the anticipation on the peoples faces?

As you pass the basket to those sitting on the ground What are you thinking?

To your astonishment people continue to pass it on as they take out what they need to eat. They just keep on passing it !

17 And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

When the last person finishes they hand you the basket back -- there is still food left! Struggling to understand what has just happened you take the basket back to Jesus.

As you approach notice his eyes, his face, his out stretched hands

As you pass him the basket your hand touches his

Your eyes meet his

and for a moment it seems as if you are alone with Jesus

What does he say to you?

Just when you are ready let go of the basket and return to the present time

There is no rush

Sit quietly and reflect on the scripture and the message Jesus has given you.

18 ¶ Once when Jesus was praying alone, with only the disciples near him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say that I am?"

19 They answered, "John the Baptist; but others, Elijah; and still others, that one of the ancient prophets has arisen."

20 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "The Messiah of God."

Meditative Walking Through The Scriptures - John 11:1-45

Without opening your bibles I want you to turn into groups and within your group I want you to retell and build up the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. As you retell the story I want you to ask what does this story mean? If John wrote his Gospel with the desire to show who Jesus was why did he record this miracle?

What does this story mean to you?

Now let us watch the scripture which is taken from the Good News Version of the bible. (Watch the DVD)

Having talked about the story and having watched it I want us now to spend some time in reflective prayer.

The method we will use is familiar to many Christians. And used for many years. It is a prayer style where you take a passage and then seek to live the experience with your imagination. Ignatius of Loyola wrote of the form of prayer encouraging prayers to apply all their senses to the task, smell, hearing, touch, taste, sight. As I lead you through the scripture I will ask questions that will help you to use these senses.

Please make yourself comfortable and pray and ask God to show you, our passage in another way.

After a short time in silence I will start to lead you through the text.

Imagine you are a disciple of Jesus and you hear a messenger who was sent by Mary and her sister Martha tell Jesus that their brother Lazarus who was sick.

Do you hear what Jesus, is saying "This sickness is not fatal. It will become an occasion to show God's glory by glorifying God's Son."

What does that mean?

Life quickly returns to normal after the excitement of the messenger. Oddly Jesus does not go to Lazarus even though it is clear that Lazarus is very sick.

Two days later when you were just beginning to forget all about the messenger Jesus suddenly announces "Let's go back to Judea."

How does this make you feel are you scare like the other disciples who immediately reply "Rabbi, you can't do that. The Jews are out to kill you, and you're going back?"

Are you willing to follow Jesus to dangerous places? Do you see the fear in the others faces.

9 Jesus replied, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Anyone who walks in daylight doesn't stumble because there's plenty of light from the sun.

10 Walking at night, he might very well stumble because he can't see where he's going."

What does he mean by that?

Jesus carries on saying

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up."

But if he is sleeping why should we wake him he will need his sleep. As you think this Jesus carries on to inform everyone

14 "Lazarus is dead,

15 and for your sake he is glad he was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

But what is the point did not Jesus say let the dead bury the dead?

So you journey to Bethney with Jesus. What do you see, what do you hear and what do you smell on the way?

When you get there it becomes evident that Lazarus has been dead for 4 days. How does this make you feel after walking for so long?

There are lots of people around many of them Jews. They have gathered to grieve with the family.

Suddenly you see Martha run out to Jesus. Crying out allowed

21 "Lord," if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Do you see the tears in her eyes?

How does this make you feel?

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies;

26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

He's asking Martha if she believes this but you can not help but think it is directed at you. Do you believe?

Martha replies 27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

Martha goes off and brings Mary back to where you and Jesus are waiting outside the village. Many people are following them. These must be friends and family that have come to mourn with them.

Have you noticed that Mary is angry? Look at her face.

She falls at the feet of Jesus and says, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

How do you feel witnessing this grief?

Do you notice how Jesus is moved by the grief?

Jesus is asking where they have laid Lazarus's body and he wants to go to it.

Will you follow him?

What are you thinking?

Do you notice all the other people? There are even some who are mumbling criticism like "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Hearing this what do you think?

What do you see in the crowds faces?

What's that Jesus is asking he wants them to roll the stone away from the grave? Martha is objecting being the practical one she is reminding Jesus that there will be a real stink. for he has been there four days."

Jesus replies, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

As they start to take the rock away what do you think?

What do you see?

Jesus says out aloud "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.

I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

Then even louder he says

"Lazarus, come out!"

With that a body wrapped in bandages appears from the cave.

What do you notice, first with the body and secondly at the reaction of those that around you. Look at their faces, listen to what they are saying.

Jesus instructs you to "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

As he tells you to do this listen to what else he tells you.

When you are ready leave Jesus and Lazarus and the crowd and return to the here and now.

45 ¶ Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him.

Meditative Walking Through The Scriptures - Mark 4:1-9

Read

Mark 4 NIV

1 ¶ He went back to teaching by the sea. A crowd built up to such a great size that he had to get into an offshore boat, using the boat as a pulpit as the people pushed to the water's edge.

2 He taught by using stories, many stories.

3 "Listen. What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed.

4 As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road and birds ate it.

5 Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots,

6 so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly.

7 Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled among the weeds and nothing came of it.

8 Some fell on good earth and came up with a flourish, producing a harvest exceeding his wildest dreams.

9 "Are you listening to this? Really listening?"

10 When they were off by themselves, those who were close to him, along with the Twelve, asked about the stories.

11 He told them, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom—you know how it works. But to those who can't see it yet, everything comes in stories, creating readiness, nudging them toward receptive insight.

12 These are people—Whose eyes are open but don't see a thing, Whose ears are open but don't understand a word, Who avoid making an about-face and getting forgiven."

13 He continued, "Do you see how this story works? All my stories work this way.

14 "The farmer plants the Word.

15 Some people are like the seed that falls on the hardened soil of the road. No sooner do they hear the Word than Satan snatches away what has been planted in them.

16 "And some are like the seed that lands in the gravel. When they first hear the Word, they respond with great enthusiasm.

17 But there is such shallow soil of character that when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.

18 "The seed cast in the weeds represents the ones who hear the kingdom news

19 but are overwhelmed with worries about all the things they have to do and all the things they want to get. The stress strangles what they heard, and nothing comes of it.

20 "But the seed planted in the good earth represents those who hear the Word, embrace it, and produce a harvest beyond their wildest dreams."

Issue everyone with paper, crayons or pencils and then instruct them to

Choose your favourite colour and Draw yourself as the sower

What's this sower like? - choose a descriptive colour and write some words

What's the function of the sower? - choose another colour and write some functional words

????(How does this sower feel about his role?

What does this sower need to know about the work that is being performed?

What is the sower saying to himself?)?

Choose another colour and Draw something that represents the vision of the sower.

What is the bigger picture about in relation to the role that he is playing?

Choose a colour and add this

How does this look and feel?

Choose a wise colour and add What is God saying to this sower?

What are you going to do about it? Add this to your drawing.

Pentecost - Idea 1 Visiting different stations

During a Pentecost service stop and invite people to walk around the church and experience God in different ways.

Begin the time with prayer asking God to speak into our lives.

People can wander around to each station and visit them in any order

Each station had a sheet explaining what to do and words to contemplate

Stations we used

- 1) A bed of sand – people were invited to take off their shoes and feel the sand on their feet. As they did remember the OT and the stories of how God guided his people through the desert. Think of the way God is guiding you in life today
- 2) Jugs of water – invite people to fill a glass and drink of the living water
- 3) A fan which is going – people stand in front of it and feel the wind and think of how the Holy Spirit is described as wind in the bible.
- 4) A large cross – people are invited to kneel and pray.

Pentecost - Idea 2 How Pentecost is celebrated in other countries

In France it was customary to blow trumpets during Divine service, to recall the sound of the mighty wind which accompanied the Descent of the Holy Ghost.

In England the gentry amused themselves with horse races.

On Pentecost the Russians carry flowers and green branches in their hands.

In Italy it was customary to scatter rose leaves from the ceiling of the churches to recall the miracle of the fiery tongues

With this we had the children throw hand fulls of rose petals out around and over the congregation. I then invited everyone to pick up one petal and to look at it, feel it and smell it and hold it during the sermon about the Holy Spirit

At the end of the sermon people were asked to smell the petal again and as they did receive the smell as a symbol of the Holy Spirit filling them afresh.

Pentecost - Idea 3 Smoke Bombs

At Guy Fawkes purchase some smoke bombs and put away till Pentecost. Ask some children to come to the front to do an experiment. Explain you are going to let off a smoke bomb and you want them to blow away the smoke. They will find this very difficult to do just as we would find trying to live the life as a Christian difficult without the help of the Holy Spirit. One of the images of the Holy Spirit in scripture is wind – this time when I set another smoke bomb off I want you to try to blow the smoke away again but we will use this fan as a representative of the wind of the Holy Spirit to help you. So much easier isn't it. *(Remember fire safety also think what kind of fire alarms have we in this space).*

Shoes - Walking along side people

Split the group into two. Ask each group of people to take one shoe off and place them in a pile at the front. (You end up with two piles). Explain how each person's life is unique and that no one can really know what it is like to walk in another's shoes. But we can give the gift of listening and walking alongside other people. Invite one group of people to pick up a shoe from the others pile and look for the owner of that shoe (they are still wearing the other shoe) without talking. Once they have found them then they fit the shoe back onto the foot. When this is completed they listen while the shoe owner tells them of the hardest time in their life and secondly the happiest time in their life. When one group is finished then repeat for the other group.