

INTRODUCTION

We are all again invited to contemplate on the theme of the Easter encounter, "I Thirst". We all know that Jesus is thirsty for our love, a love that is not a mere and empty word but a love that is real in self-giving. If we take a closer look in the eyes of our suffering neighbours, they speak about the theme, "I Thirst". They are thirsty of our attention to love, to care, to understand, to accept and to forgive them. These people are the images of the suffering Christ. These people are God's instruments to quench his thirst. We, the VD Family, must be willing to give water to Christ through our collaboration. Our collaboration is impossible if we don't turn ourselves to fasting and prayer – fasting from our human desires and comforts to let Jesus live in us who gives us the capacity to love.

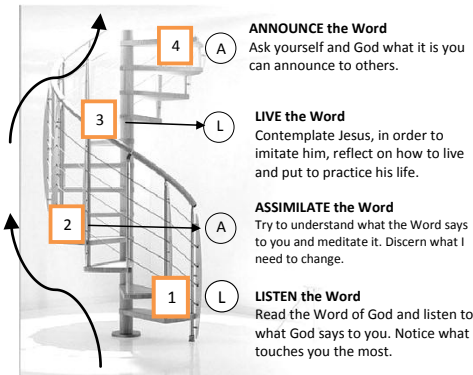
Are you ready to collaborate with Jesus on the Easter Encounter and the rest of the days?

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

- "For ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ." **St. Jerome**
- And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for "we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying." **St. Ambrose**
(*Dei Verbum* #25 Vatican II document)



DYNAMISM OF THE WORD



MONDAY

"The Self-Giving of Jesus"

²⁴ It makes me happy to be suffering for you now, and in my own body to make up all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church, (**Colossians 1:24**)

¹³ No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.
(**John 15:13**)

²³ Then, speaking to all, he said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me. ²⁴ Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, will save it. (**Luke 9:23-24**)

Self-giving is to forget ourselves, to eliminate our pride and to offer ourselves in the service of others with pure intentions. This practice is not easy without the grace of God. Let us intently ask the grace of perseverance to continue practicing the genuine love through self-giving.

Have I been practicing self-giving? To whom shall I give myself, to the lovable or to the unlovable?

TUESDAY

"Give Yourself to the Lord"

¹⁶ 'When you are fasting, do not put on a gloomy look as the hypocrites do: they go about looking unsightly to let people know they are fasting. In truth I tell you, they have had their reward. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put scent on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that no one will know you are fasting except your Father who sees all that is done in secret; and your Father who sees all that is done in secret will reward you.

(**Matthew 6:16-18**)

As individuals too, we are tempted by indifference. Flooded with news reports and troubling images of human suffering, we often feel our complete inability to help. What can we do to avoid being caught up in this spiral of distress and powerlessness? (**Pope Francis**)

Indifference is pride. It loses our sensitivity about the presence of God in our brothers and sisters. We forget that through our neighbors' situation, we are called to collaborate with Jesus as His active apostles. Our collaboration is a way of giving water to our thirsting Christ and it is concretized through our fasting from our human desires and comforts to commune with our God. Let us be more open to Him to discover His presence through our suffering brothers and sisters.

In what situation did I give water to Christ? What kind of water did I give to Him?

WEDNESDAY

"The Fasting that I want".

³ 'Why have we fasted, if you do not see, why mortify ourselves if you never notice?' Look, you seek your own pleasure on your fastdays and you exploit all your workmen; ⁴ look, the only purpose of your fasting is to quarrel and squabble and strike viciously with your fist. Fasting like yours today will never make your voice heard on high. ⁵ Is that the sort of fast that pleases me, a day when a person inflicts pain on himself? Hanging your head like a reed, spreading out sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call fasting, a day acceptable to Yahweh? ⁶ 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? ⁷ 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? ⁸ Then your light will blaze out like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Saving justice will go ahead of you and Yahweh's glory come behind you. ⁹ Then you will cry for help and Yahweh will answer; you will call and he will say, 'I am here.' If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist and malicious words,
(**Isaiah 58:3-9**)

Fasting is a measure of a genuine prayer; it brings us transformation. Likewise, prayer is not only said and obliged but this must also be lived out in order to penetrate the prayers in our hearts. We are all encouraged to fast not only from food and entertainment, but also from our

illusions of hatred, anger, jealousy, pride, greed, lust, and all other attachments that hinder us from our union with God, for real fasting is forgiving and serving.

Am I sincere in my fasting? What are the things that I want to fast? How often do I fast?



THURSDAY

“Like the Grain of Wheat”

²⁴ In all truth I tell you, unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies it yields a rich harvest. ²⁵ Anyone who loves his life loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me, must follow me, and my servant will be with me wherever I am. If anyone serves me, my Father will honour him.

(John 12:24-26)

³² And when I am lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all people to myself.'

³³ By these words he indicated the kind of death he would die. *(John 12:32-33)*

To follow Christ, we need to sacrifice by denying ourselves from pride and selfishness because it loses our way

in following Him. Let us learn to pray more and open our hearts to the word of God so that He will answer our prayer with the gift of Himself and be able to walk in the way of love which is nothing else but the giving of self.

What did I do to increase my desire to follow Christ? Who is Christ for me? Am I serious with my prayer?

FRIDAY

“Stay and Enter in My Self-Giving”

³⁶ Then Jesus came with them to a plot of land called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, 'Stay here while I go over there to pray.' ³⁷ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee with him. And he began to feel sadness and anguish. ³⁸ Then he said to them, 'My soul is sorrowful to the point of death. Wait here and stay awake with me.'

(Matthew 26:36-38)

A true friend is someone who is willing to give himself for his friends. It is hard to find a friend like this in this modern world, but Jesus. He is the only one who never lets us down. However, He is inviting us to stay closer to Him for He doesn't want us to be separated from Him because it is consequently painful for Him to be separated from us because He is not a God of hatred, but love.

Am I a true friend of Jesus? What can I do to make our friendship stronger?

SATURDAY

“Let Me Take You to Where I Am”

¹⁸ In all truth I tell you, when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you

grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go.' ¹⁹ In these words he indicated the kind of death by which Peter would give glory to God. After this he said, 'Follow me.' *(John 21:18-19)*

¹⁶ For this is how God loved the world: he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but so that through him the world might be saved. *(John 3:16-17)*

Much as Christ is thirsting for our love, our soul is also thirsty for Him. Our indifference and insecurities are manifestations of our thirst from God. To quench His thirst, we have to reciprocate His love by showing mercy and compassion for others. Through this, we are also able to quench our thirst for Him at the same time. Sometimes we fail to follow Him because we give in to our priorities that consequently lead us to feel insecure. Let us always remember that God loves us so much that He gave His only Son for our salvation; that God made many initiatives to bring us closer to Him because He wanted all of His children to be united with Him in heaven.

What are my priorities in life? Do my priorities strengthen the bond between me and my Saviour? Am I sensitive to the initiatives of Christ?

SUNDAY READINGS

4th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 137

2nd Reading: Ephesians 2:4-10

Gospel: John 3:14-21

Verbum Dei

GUIDELINES FOR PRAYER

“I’m thirsting of friends/apostles that is in communion with my self-giving.” (Fasting)

March 9-15, 2015

GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

To understand the necessity of being in communion with the **intentionality** of God's plan: Salvation of all humanity through the apostles that contemplate and listen to the “I thirst” of Jesus and transmit the same intention to others.



Objective of the week:

To pray on the theme of the Easter Encounter 'I thirst' and to live out the Lenten practice of fasting as apostles who are in communion with Christ's self-giving.