



Liturgy notes for the Sundays of Lent

First Sunday of Lent

22nd February 2015

Mark 1:9-15

'He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan'

Personal Story:

Mahlet is thirteen years old and comes from a village in northern Ethiopia. Last year, it only rained three times in this area. As a result, crops failed, people became hungry and animals were forced to eat dried twigs and cactus plants. This happened because of climate change. Each year in Mahlet's village becomes more difficult than the last because it is difficult to predict what the weather will be like. This area used to be green and swampy but now is a barren desert, a wasteland where nothing grows.



Mahlet, age 13, Tigray, northern Ethiopia.
Photo: Trócaire

As we follow Christ into the wilderness for the forty days of Lent, let us also remember young Mahlet and her family who remain in the barren desert throughout the year, whose penance and sacrifices continue with no alternative option and no end. With your solidarity this Lent, Mahlet will have a different future. In the coming months, Trócaire will be working with a local partner there towards installing a water irrigation project whereby farmers will have water for their crops and food for their families and animals. This year they had one harvest, but next year they hope to have three!

Mahlet's family do not have a car, they do not consume a large amount of fossil fuels and their lifestyle does not have a huge impact on the environment.....despite this, climate change is having an overwhelming impact upon their lives.

Prayer of the Faithful:

1 We pray for the community of Sebeya, with whom we shall journey in prayer and solidarity this Lenten season. May our Lenten observance and donations to the Trócaire box serve to alleviate the poverty and injustices faced by this community and similar ones across the world.

A Thiarna éist linn

2 For the earth, we pray, Heavenly Father, that the barren wilderness that the Lenten community are forced to farm will have its thirst quenched and soils re-fertilised. That a rich harvest may be reaped and hunger will be alleviated.

A Thiarna éist linn

Thinking outside the (Trócaire) Box

by Jane Mellett


'Urgent Wilderness'

The Gospel today sends us out into the 'wilderness'. It may be a daunting concept with the 'wild beasts' but we need not worry. This short passage from Mark is clear about who is in charge; it is the Spirit who sends. Very often we need some 'wilderness' to help us stop and reflect on our lives and where we are going. In this sense Lent can be a very special season for many people and the Gospel texts offer a particular richness that invite us to transformation and real change. Each Lent we are invited to choose life; to choose the things that are life-giving for us and to clear out the blocks that stand in our way.

This year we are asked to engage with the urgent issue of Climate Justice, as Trócaire's Lenten Campaign brings us to the 'cradle of humanity': Ethiopia. When we picture this amazing country we probably bring to mind images of famine or hunger. This biased image does not do justice to what is a vibrant country with a reputation for amazing landscapes, an ancient culture, a diversity of languages and food, unique Christian churches and saints. We are invited into this beautiful land this Lent, to listen to people's stories, to hear their struggles and to think deeply about the kind of world we want for generations to come. Climate change is disastrously impacting people all over the world, with Ireland, North and South amongst the highest polluters per capita in the EU. If we do anything this Lent, please let us think about how we can live more sustainable lives. There is a lot to reflect on as we enter the wilderness.

'I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think. Was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I'm not the same, the next question is 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle!' (Lewis Carrol)

Sacred Space/Liturgy Idea: Create a wilderness space in your church...(or an outdoor wilderness space if you want to be adventurous!) Place some rich moist soil in a large tray. Beside it, place a bowl of seeds (cress or other). Nearby, display images of parched or dry earth that is broken and stony. Perhaps you could even include a cactus and some dry twigs. Finally, print a prayer for the earth or the environment and place it in a frame beside the seeds. Invite people in the parish to spend time in the wilderness prayer space during Lent.

 **Hymn of the Week:** 'Forty Days and Forty Nights' (George H. Smyttan)

Did you know?

Ethiopia is famous as the country with '13 months of sunshine' because it follows the Julian Calendar which has thirteen months in it

Second Sunday of Lent

1st March, 2015

Mark 9:2-10

'Let us make three dwellings'



Children in El Salvador during floods.
Photo: Trócaire

Personal Story:

Every farmer knows that if you can't rely on the weather to behave predictably, you can't guarantee that your harvest will be a good one. And when you rely on crops as your only source of food and income at market, you're truly at the mercy of the weather. In El Salvador, a lush country where crops grow in abundance, families are desperately trying to cope with growing rainfall that is threatening the way of life of small farmers.

Juan Francisco, at sixteen, does the work of a grown man on his family's small holding. But it's becoming harder to protect their crops because of the dramatic effects of climate change. Juan and his family live beside a river that now floods regularly, leaving the family isolated and cut off from the nearest village. 'There is a large boulder in the middle of the river. If the water is over this boulder, I know it is too dangerous to cross,' said Juan. In recent years, El Salvador has been affected by both extreme flooding and severe drought. Juan has seen his crops destroyed from lack of water. But he has also seen them wiped out by intense rains. He doesn't know what to expect next from Mother Nature. Nobody does.

But there are ways in which small farmers can protect themselves and their livelihoods from the worst excesses of the weather. Trócaire programmes help vulnerable communities, like the one where Juan lives, identify areas most at risk from flooding and drought. We work with villages to develop emergency plans to reduce the risk to people's lives should flooding, drought or landslides occur. We are building houses that withstand floods, constructing water reservoirs to store water, building systems that provide clean water for drinking, and carrying out work to protect land from drought and floods. We can't predict what Mother Nature might throw at us, but we can be ready when it happens.

Prayer of the Faithful:

1 Heavenly Father, help us to be more aware of the needs of our brothers and sisters in the developing world. May we experience a conversion where we will rebuke profit, greed and consumerism and replace these luxury items instead with love, solidarity and care towards those in need.

Let us pray to the Lord

2 We pray for future generations, may they learn from our environmental irresponsibility, and be good stewards of the earth, choosing to live simply and in harmony with all of creation.

Let us pray to the Lord

Thinking outside the (Trócaire) Box

by Jane Mellett

‘Coming down the mountain’

We journey to the mountain top in the Gospel this Sunday as Jesus invites Peter, James and John to join him and be witnesses to his transfiguration; to seeing Jesus for who he really is. The people of Sebeya in Ethiopia once lived in a region where mountain tops were green and covered in vegetation. Today, the people of Sebeya are confused as to why their rains have stopped and why a land once full of vegetation is now dry. The people of Sebeya live a simple life and have played no part in causing their weather systems to change. They are experiencing the effects of climate change, the cause of which lies with the lifestyles of rich nations thousands of miles away. This is a great injustice.

When we read today’s Gospel, we can see Peter who is desperate to stay on the mountain in that blissful moment with Jesus, so much so that he offers to build tents. But Jesus’ way is different to what Peter may have had in mind at the time. The mountain is comfortable, whereas Jesus’ way involves coming down from the mountain and walking a very different path. We hear the call to act on climate justice everywhere but now we need to really listen and to take urgent action. Yes, it involves making changes to our lifestyles, yes, it involves campaigning our governments who are slow to act. The damage caused by countries in the global north will soon become irreversible. We start with ourselves, with small acts in the hope that the kings’ and presidents of the world will follow.

‘Creation is not a property, which we can rule over at will; or, even less, is the property of only a few Creation is a gift, it is a wonderful gift that God has given us, so that we care for it and we use it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude’, Pope Francis

Sacred Space/ Liturgy Idea: Invite Third Class (who would have received their First Communion last year) to this week’s eucharistic celebration. Ask them to share their memories of their First Holy Communion Day and when they received the Sacrament of Penance.

In the week prior to the Mass, share the ‘Children’s Sacred Space’ resource with them in class and invite them to complete it at home with their parents and to bring it to the Mass and to display it in a prominent place during Mass. (Also revise the Sacrament of Penance with them during this visit.)

At the Mass, invite the parents to renew their commitments they made at their children's baptism and at their enrolment for First Holy Communion, to pass on the faith to their children.

As a Lenten renewal, invite the children of Third Class and their families to join in the Sacrament of Penance after Mass.

 **Hymn of the Week:** 'All Are Welcome' (Marty Haugen)

Did you know?

On the World Day of Peace, 2010, Pope Benedict XVI spoke about our use of the earth's natural resources. 'Yet no less troubling are the threats arising from the neglect – if not downright misuse – of the earth and the natural goods that God has given us. For this reason, it is imperative that mankind renew and strengthen 'that covenant between human beings and the environment, which should mirror the creative love of God, from whom we come and towards whom we are journeying'.

Third Sunday of Lent

8th March, 2015

John 2:13-22

'Zeal for your house will consume me'



Enestina age 10, Malawi. Photo: Trócaire

Personal Story:

Do you remember Enestina from last year's Trócaire Lenten Appeal?

Enestina and her mother walked 5km every day to and from the Komboni river in central Malawi, where they collected water for their whole family. They would use this water to cook, drink, clean and water their crops. At that time, Enestina, who is ten years old now, was forced to carry fifteen litres of water on her head each time she visited the river. This meant that she was tired and had pains in her neck and back.

Since last Lent, Trócaire, along with our partners CADECOM (The Catholic Development Commission in Malawi) has been able to provide two boreholes (wells) to Enestina's village so that people now have access to safe drinking water. These boreholes are situated closer to the community beside Enestina's school, which means that she now spends less time collecting water and more time in school. She is now less tired from carrying a heavy load and can spend longer studying, reading and helping out on the small farm at home.

There is also less illness in the community as people can now drink from a well which has safer water and is protected from animals, waste and diseases such as bilharzia and cholera.

Finally, work has also begun on a community irrigation scheme in Enestina's village. This will help to capture the rain that only falls high in the surrounding mountains, and will help to channel this water down to the homes and land which are parched and in need of water to produce a harvest and food for families.

Prayer of the Faithful:

1 (Read by child) For Malahet, the girl on this year's Trócaire box: we pray that she will enjoy a life where she can go to school, have enough food to eat and live in a safe home.

Lord Hear us

2 (Read by child) Lord, teach us children and our parents how to care for the earth. We face a tough challenge ahead in fighting climate change for the sake of future generations.

Lord Hear us

3 (Read by parent) We give thanks for the strength and sacrifice shown by all parents and the worries and anxieties which they face. We pray especially for the parents of Malahet who regularly skip meals in order to provide enough food for their children to eat.

Lord Hear us

Did you know?

It is predicted that yields from rain-fed agriculture will drop by 50% by 2020 – deepening the food and water crises we already face in our world.

‘Do This in Memory’ for Lent 2015

By Maeve Mahon

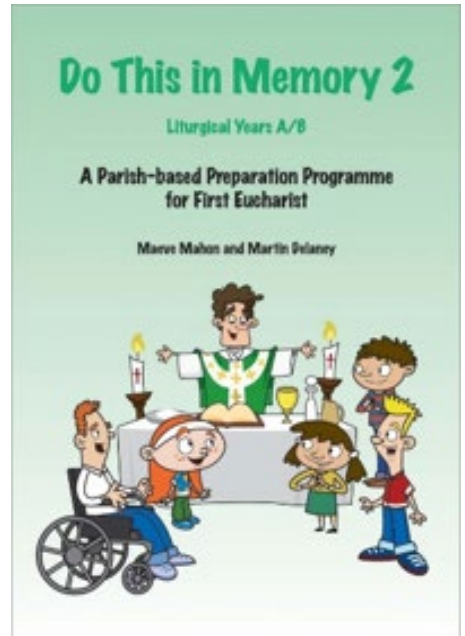
‘Look at the Fields, they are ripe for Harvest’ (Jn 4:35)

Alternative Gospel of Jn 4:1-40 ‘The Woman at the Well’ for ‘Do This in Memory’ programme)

A Word for the Presider

For Parishes using the Do This in Memory programme as part of their sacramental preparation for First Holy Communion, the Third Sunday in Lent coincides with the seventh Sunday of ‘Do this In Memory.’

You will notice that the gospel used this year is the alternative one for Year B, ‘The Woman at the Well.’ This is to help make the gospel more accessible to the children. While this Lenten Resource focuses on the gospel from John 2:13-22 it is probably best to stay with ‘The Woman at the Well’ as it is in the Grapevine and hopefully, the children will have read it with their parents in preparation for this Sunday’s Mass.



You can use the Introduction to this Lenten Resource to frame your homily in the context of the importance of water to people all over the world, particularly to those who have to travel to collect water like the woman in today’s gospel and Jesus, the living water, who promises us that if we follow him we will never be thirsty again. Jesus also shows us and tells us that we must be prepared to reach out to those who need help. He reached out to the woman at the well who needed his help. We can reach out and help by using our Trocaire Boxes this Lent. Ask the children if their Trocaire Box is in their Family Prayer Space. Encourage them to take one home from the KidZone if they have not already done so. Invite them to tell you about their Lenten Promise this year. Acknowledge that we are now half way through Lent and sometimes we forget about our Lenten Promises and start to get a bit lazy about them. Remind them that we can always start again and that this is what Jesus would want us to do. Encourage the children to be like Jesus, to be living water for the girl on this year’s Trocaire Box by filling the box and bringing it back to the church on Holy Thursday.

The Liturgical Environment/KidZone

The suggestion for the KidZone this month is to create a Wilderness Garden/Desert environment to reflect the Lenten Season. If this has not already been done why not put it in place for this Sunday. Use sand, stones and include some grasses. Consider inviting one of the children in the suggested Entrance Procession for this week to place some water in the display to highlight both the need for and the ongoing work of providing



water in the Lenten village this year. This space might also be used as a focus for the First Penance celebration which will probably take place in the coming weeks. Trocaire boxes could be added to the display during the suggested Entrance Procession this week. There may be Posters and other Resources in the Trocaire Lenten Pack that could be used with this display.

Alternative Introduction

Consider using these words instead of the Introduction in the Coordinator's (DTIM) Manual page 44.

Today is the Third Sunday of Lent and we are now half way through our Lenten journey. In Lent we are called to think about how we can change the way we are, the way we live, the way we treat others, the way we are with God. We are also asked to consider how we can help change the lives of others, the lives of those who are not as lucky as we are, those who are most affected by the many changes we are seeing in weather; floods, wind, drought . One of the ways that our community does this is by supporting the work of Trocaire. Today some of the children bring Trocaire Boxes and place them in the KidZone to remind us of the need for us to support this very important work. We also place some water into our Wilderness Garden to remind us of the importance of water to people all over the world particularly those who have to travel to collect water, those whose water supply is not safe to drink and those who need water for food crops.

Entrance Procession

Consider including some of the children in the Entrance Procession this Sunday. They might bring some Trocaire Boxes to place in the KidZone. A child might also carry a container of water and place it in the KidZone.

Good Green Deeds for Lent

THUMB has an activity for this month called Stepping Stones for Lent giving examples of Good Deeds that the children can do during the Lenten Season. Consider putting some Good Green Deeds into the Newsletter this week. These can highlight ways we can become more aware of climate justice as a community. Encourage everyone to participate by putting them into practice. You might like to use seven of these each week from now until Palm Sunday

1. Take some time to enjoy the beautiful world that God has given us and say a prayer of thanksgiving.
2. Take the quiz on <http://www.foe.ie/justoneearth/climatequiz/> and see how much you know about climate justice.
3. Refill your water bottle instead of using a new one
4. Walk or cycle instead of taking the car for one day a week for the rest of Lent
5. Switch off lights when you leave a room
6. Take responsibility for recycling in your house this week
7. Think about how you can reuse instead of throwing something away
8. Start a sharing book club with friends rather than buying new books all the time
9. Don't kill the spider. Spiders are important to keeping our world safe from pests
10. Don't waste food. There are so many people who don't have enough to eat
11. Save water. Make sure all taps are turned off fully. If you have a leaky tap help your parent to fix it
12. Use rechargeable batteries for toys if at all possible.
13. Always put your rubbish in the bin
14. Take time every day to be silent and listen to the sounds of nature
15. Check and see if all the bulbs in your house are energy saving
16. Plant a tree
17. Look for the Fairtrade symbol on coffee, tea, chocolate, bananas, sugar, cocoa
18. Go for a walk as a family
19. Use the website <http://www.foe.ie/justoneearth/carboncalculator/> to calculate your family's carbon footprint.
20. Turn off the computer, I pad, television and spend an hour outside every day
21. Tell your family and friends how important it is to take care of our world

Thinking outside the (Trócaire) Box

by Jane Mellett

'Zeal for your house will consume me'

You can understand why Jesus is angry with those selling goods in the market place. The goods sold in the Temple markets were used in sacrifices so that people could meet the requirements to be 'closer' to God. This model needed challenging. They have turned what should be a place of sacredness into a place where what is important is monetary value and exclusion. Jesus is 'overcome' with fierce love and passion because of the injustice he sees before him.

What temples have we turned into market places today? Our world is driven by consumerism and profit at the expense of our environment and at the expense of the resources of the world's poorest people. The Book of Creation is now speaking to us to stop making this house a market place. We don't have to look too far to see how climate change is having adverse affects on our weather systems here across the Island of Ireland and in the poorest regions of the world.

Let us pray this Sunday that 'zeal for your house will consume' us and that we will take the necessary steps to ensure a more sustainable world for all. World leaders are working towards a global treaty on climate change but they are not agreed on how to cut emissions to sufficient levels in order to reduce global temperatures. They need encouragement.

'May God bless us with anger at injustice, oppression, and exploitation of people, so that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace. May God bless us with tears to shed for those who suffer from pain, rejection, hunger, and war, so that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and turn their pain into joy. And may God bless us with enough foolishness to believe that we can make a difference in this world, so that we can do what others claim cannot be done, to bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor.'
(Franciscan Blessing)

Liturgical Action: Today's Gospel (Jn 2:13-22) spoke about the market place and greed. Why not arrange for an 'Eco-friendly Sunday Market' in your parish centre after mass this week? You could sell recyclable goods to promote sustainability, fairtrade goods like coffee from Ethiopia, seeds and plants for people's gardens, soy candles or even beauty and household products that are not harmful to the environment! Get people thinking green in your parish community!



Hymn of the Week: 'Centre of My Life' (Paul Innwood)

Fourth Sunday of Lent

15th March, 2015

John 3:14-21

'Those who do what is true come to the light'



Bosco, 15, northern Uganda.
Photo: Trócaire

Personal Story:

Bosco is fifteen years old and lives in northern Uganda. His family are one of over two hundred vulnerable households which received a solar lamp and a goat from Trócaire to help supplement their income. This project has an environmental objective also. It is a known fact that burning kerosene has had a negative effect on people's health and the environment in Uganda. This particular solar project will provide home lighting to people who are moving home after being displaced by the war there.

Children often find it difficult to do their homework once nightfall arrives and the cost of burning a paraffin lamp is quite expensive and needs re-filling every three to four days. For now, Bosco and his family can rest assured that they are living a healthier and more eco-friendly existence. Bosco simply places the lamp in the sunlight for four to six hours where it charges and then his family have light in the dark evenings and in case of an emergency during the night. What small changes can we make in our lives that will benefit the environment in a similar way? Where are we called to be a light in the world?

Prayer of the Faithful:

1 For our brothers and sisters around the world who have been, and will be, directly affected by the effects of climate change. We pray especially for farmers who cannot grow crops because of no rain, parents who struggle to feed their families, children who cannot go to school because they must collect water instead ...

A Thiarna éist linn

2 We pray for the waters of the world, that they may be restored to health and filled with bountiful life.

A Thiarna éist linn

Thinking outside the (Trócaire) Box by Jane Mellett


‘Those who do what is true come to the light’

Out of death comes new life. Have you ever seen someone come back to life? It may have been a friend who got over a really tough break-up or someone who after many months of grief or failure started to get their life back together again. Resurrection is all around us, all the time. It is easy for us to be cynical when we think of an issue like climate justice. As Christians we are called to be resurrection-focused. There are always ways to turn a situation around, to make things right, to strive for life again and again. This is the vision that Jesus gives each of us. There are contrasts in this passage of being lost compared to having eternal life, and each instance calls for the option to love and hope rather than despair.

We have been journeying this Lent with Mahlet and her family from Sebeya. Her name actually means ‘Life’ and Mahlet wants to be a doctor when she grows up. Mahlet helps out on the farm at home after school and her family depends solely on their crops for food. When the rains fail, Mahlet’s family become food insecure. Mahlet and her family have contributed nothing to the problem of climate change, yet they are the ones who will suffer the most. Her family will benefit from a new irrigation system being built with help from Trócaire this year. This will make a huge difference to their lives and help to ensure food security for Mahlet’s family and other’s in her village. We can make a real difference to people’s lives through the small choices we make: the donations, the promise to live more simply and more sustainably. It is up to us and we can choose to be part of the solution rather than the problem. Take the option for radical love, for hope, for climate justice.

‘I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.’ Mother Teresa.

Sacred Space/Liturgy Idea: At the beginning of mass, turn off all of the lights in the church and invite a member of the congregation to place a lantern or candle of light into the sacred space. As this is being done, another person could read Bosco's story to the congregation.

 **Hymn of the Week:** 'Christ Be Our Light' (Bernadette Farrell)

Did you Know Fact: If sea levels were to rise by 1 metre, a total of 24 million people would be displaced in Bangladesh, India and Indonesia alone.

Did you know?

If sea levels were to rise by 1 metre, a total of 24 million people would be displaced in Bangladesh, India and Indonesia alone.

Fifth Sunday of Lent

22nd March 22, 2015

John 12:20-33 or 5:5-10

*'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth,
will draw all people to myself'*



Men of Sebeya Village preparig to build a community irrigation system.
Photo: Trócaire

Personal Story:

Alem Gebrekidan says: 'The weather is touching extremes. It has a real impact on our lives. The extreme cold weather kills plants, heavy hailstorms cut the leaves into pieces, and a shortage of rain and high temperature makes growing crops and vegetables difficult to do. I cannot plan for the coming year – how much I should plant or how much I will harvest – because the bad weather may destroy the plants. It is so hard to predict.

'When I was a boy during rainy season, the weather was cold and wet, but now it is hot with little rainfall. To cope up with this, we are diversifying our vegetable types into crops like onions that are resistant to hailstorm and extreme cold weather.

'In Sebeya there were diesel mills which were releasing dark smoke and making a disturbing noise. Now we have electricity, which doesn't produce the black smoke that causes climate change. We cannot control climate change. In Sebeya, there are no

factories or many cars, so we can't blame ourselves for the climate change in we see here. We have to pray to God for the solution.'

Prayer of the Faithful:

1 We pray for the earth's soil, that its richness be protected to assure abundant harvests for all.

Lord in your Mercy

2 We pray for all creatures who share earth with us, that their beauty and diversity will be preserved.

Lord in your Mercy

3 We pray for all who suffer from any form of abuse: mental, physical, sexual, domestic. May we be like Christ to them. Comfort them, support them in their hour of need and help to shoulder the burden of their cross..

Lord in your Mercy

Did you know?

The community of Sebeya in northern Ethiopia only experienced three days of rainfall last year. This is due to climate change!

Thinking outside the (Trócaire) Box

by Jane Mellett

'Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified'

There is a very short parable in today's Gospel describing a seed which has fallen on the ground and eventually dies. It may remain a single seed or it may yield a rich harvest. This concept of losing what one has to give way to something new and life-giving is frightening for some. We get so attached and lifestyle changes are tough.

In this passage Jesus knows that his hour has come; this is his crisis moment. But Jesus' time of anguish moves from a cry of 'save me' to one of glorifying God 'let it be as You not I would have it'. We are at an 'hour' in terms of climate justice. This is the time where big decisions and commitments must be made and there is no other option but to opt for life, to listen to God's will, not ours. The priorities of wealthy nations must change, must turn outward and take risks if we are all to experience peace and security.

We remember the horrendous storms which battered Ireland last year and which will continue to do so as our climates changes. We are called to be stewards of the earth: 'Everything has been entrusted to our protection, and all of us are responsible for it' (Pope Francis). For us to be true stewards means campaigning for legislation at national level and different choices at a personal level.

***'I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: Let us be protectors of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.'* Pope Francis.**

Sacred Space/Liturgy Idea: In your sacred space, try and create a parallel farming scene. One side could have plenty of produce: seeds, fruit, vegetable, grass, water, a toy tractor and rain clouds hanging above it. Place a sign on this side reading 'Ireland 2015'. The other side of the farming scene could have dry earth, empty buckets, twigs, sand, a rake and reeds. A sign on this side could read something like 'Ethiopia now, or Ireland in the future? Climate change is happening right across the world. Everybody is affected!'



Hymn of the Week: For the Beauty of the Earth' (John Rutter)

Palm Sunday of the Lords Passion

29th March, 2015

**Mark 14:1-15:47 or
Mark 15:1-39 (40-47)**

'Crucify Him.'



Alem Hagos, his wife and daughter
Mebrehit, Tigray, northern Ethiopia.
Photo: Trócaire

Personal Story:

Alem Hagos (27) is one of hundreds of young people from Sebeya in north Ethiopia who have suffered in the desert as Jesus did, in search of a new beginning in the Middle East. Sebeya was heavily shelled during the Ethiopia–Eritrea war, and with his family struggling to survive, Alem left school. He felt that immigration to Saudi Arabia was his only option. 'I was a scared village boy, but poverty drove me to take the risk,' he says. Alem paid some traffickers to drive him to Somalia in a car crammed with immigrants. 'After we crossed the border into Somalia, it turned ugly,' he said. As they journeyed through the desert, 'there was no water and no food.' The traffickers beat and threatened to kill him, unless he gave them money.

More pain was to follow. A three-day voyage across the sea from Somalia to Yemen saw Alem travel in an open boat dangerously packed to double its capacity. The traffickers were merciless, threatening to throw anyone who complained overboard. 'We couldn't breathe and two people died of suffocation. By the time we reached the shore, we were only a little bit better than the dead bodies.' People bore wounds that looked like 'hyena bites'. He walked through the wilderness for fourteen days before reaching the border of Saudi Arabia, over a month after leaving Sebeya. For the next three years he wandered alone from mountain to mountain, village to village, searching for work, with the aim of sending money home to his parents and keeping some to build a future. 'Every day was a sad day. I told myself that once I had saved enough, I could go home.'

Alem was eventually deported back to Sebeya. 'I was ashamed because I was returning home empty-handed. But when I arrived my mother cried like a baby. She said that my younger brother had followed me and died in the sea. 'I got married and started my own family, naming my daughter Mebrehit, which means light, because she transformed my life from darkness to a light.' Today, young people ask Alem to take them to Saudi. 'I see how hard it is for them in Sebeya', he says. 'But here you have freedom. I pray that they will stay and struggle, rather than migrate.'

Prayer of the Faithful:

1 We pray for the young in our society who struggle to make the right choices. We pray especially for the support of our youth at home and those overseas seeking work and opportunity. May the road rise to meet them, may the wind be always at their back, may the sun shine warm upon their faces, may the rain fall softly on their fields until we meet again, and may God hold them in the palm of his hand.

Lord in your mercy

2 We pray for wisdom for decision makers in Ireland and around the world, that wealthy nations may make amendments for the harm they have done to the environment and find creative and just solutions to protect all of creation and ensure climate justice for all.

Lord in your mercy



A Prayer service for the new blessed palm in the home.


In advance, as a family, decide where the palm will be placed (e.g. above the door in each room, or behind the main crucifix in the house).

- Gather, as a family, at home. Ask an adult/teen reads the account of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (from the Gospel of Mark 11:1-10 or Matthew 21:1-11 or John 12:12-16 or Luke 19:28-40).
- Then another adult, with a lighted candle, leads a short procession through all the rooms of the house, while singing an appropriate hymn.
- Place the palm in its new home and invite each person to name one event, relationship or thing for which they are grateful to God.
- Finish with an 'Our Father'.

Abba Solomon hands out palms during mass on Palm Sunday in Sebeya Village.
Photo: Trócaire



Sacred Space/Liturgy Idea: Host a movie night after Mass or on an evening during Holy week about the life of Jesus Christ. Some movies might include: *The Passion of the Christ* (Gibson), *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Pasolini), or *The Life and Passion of Jesus Christ* (Pathé). After the event, share a moment's prayer and distribute small wooden crosses.

 **Hymn of the Week:** 'Behold the Wood' (Dan Schutte)

Did you know?

In Ethiopia there is a saying that 'A farmer without a donkey is a donkey himself.' Ethiopia has almost five million donkeys, the second highest amount of donkeys in the world after China. They are a valuable part of Ethiopian life, carrying water, food, people, hay, materials for building houses as well as many other items to and from markets and villages.