



**FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY**  
**7 February, 2021**

**The spiritual life is first of all a life.  
It is not merely something  
to be known and studied,  
it is to be lived.**

**—Thomas Merton**

**Sentences**

Psalm 102:25–27

In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,  
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

They will perish, but you remain;  
they will all wear out like a garment.

Like clothing you will change them  
and they will be discarded.

But you, O God, remain the same,  
and your years will never end.

**Opening Prayer**

Eternal and Everlasting Love:  
the earth spins and life changes,  
but you are with and for us always.

We give thanks for your Spirit  
pulsing through the soil and waters  
of this ancient land,  
renewing all that lives and breathes.  
We acknowledge the Kurna people  
the original custodians of the land on which we gather  
whose elders teach us that if we listen deeply,  
we will gain wisdom and hope  
now and into the future.

So hear us as we pray:  
Send your Spirit to us,  
illumine our hearts and minds,  
open us to your life-giving ways.  
Amen.

## **ENCOUNTERING THE LIVING WORD**

### **Introduction**

Over these three weeks, we are exploring the question: What is spirituality? In order to get a ball rolling, so to speak, which of these activities do you see as spiritual?

- ◇ Watching the sunset at the beach
- ◇ Listening to a friend who is going through a hard time
- ◇ Swimming or kayaking in the sea
- ◇ Praying and sharing your thanksgivings and concerns with God
- ◇ Serving as a volunteer, especially those who are in need
- ◇ Reading your Bible or another religious book/listening to a podcast
- ◇ Having an explosive argument with a loved one
- ◇ Crossing to the other side of the road to avoid someone
- ◇ Shedding tears of grief, anger or joy

How did you decide? What factors were at play?

Jesuit priest and scientist Pierre de Chardin famously said, “We are not human beings having a spiritual experience but spiritual beings having a human experience.” One of the implications of de Chardin’s thinking is that every experience, action and encounter as the potential to be spiritual. This necessitates learning to seek and find the sacred woven in and through all things.

### **Scripture Reading—Mark 1:29–39**

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to Jesus all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." Jesus answered, "Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do."

And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

May your Word live in us  
and bear much fruit to your glory.

### **Reflection on the Word**

## ***RESPONDING WITH OUR LIVES***

### **Guided Contemplation**

This guided contemplation can enable you to listen into your life. Rather than analysing or thinking critically, we are invited to enter a metaphorical space; to gaze at a parable in nature and let the Spirit speak through this element.

First, choose something from nature to be your focus—a potted plant, piece of bark, rock or feather. Anything that draws your attention will work.

You may wish to offer this prayer or sit silently to help you settle in:

Spirit of Christ in all and through all,  
open to me the wisdom and truth  
that flows through your creation.  
Enable me to sense in my listening  
your love and encouragement.

Get to know the element from nature before you.

- ◇ Look closely... turn it... look at it from different angles.
- ◇ What is its texture, shape, colours?
- ◇ Where do you see evidence of history and change?
- ◇ What story would it tell you if it could? Spend as much time here as you need to...

How does this element speak into and out of where you are on your journey at this time?

What wisdom or encouragement do you sense being offered to you?

Do you sense an invitation to make some kind of response? Might you like to draw a picture? write a prayer? offer a reflection in your journal? take some action?

## **Prayers of the People**

Light of the World whose love is trustworthy and true, our hearts reach out to you in hope. In the tenuousness of life at times, it is difficult to know how to be and on what we can depend. May your love be the rudder for our souls as we sail the sea of life and weather every storm. In your mercy, be quick to help us.

We pray for those who have lost properties or who are being impacted by the fires in Western Australia. Comfort and protect all people and creation. Give strength and compassion to those combatting the fires and serving in their communities.

In your mercy, be quick to help us.

We long for an end to meanness and hatred in sporting clubs, politics and board rooms. Begin in each of our hearts, O God. Dismantle the attitudes and behaviours that dehumanise and disempower. Bolster the courage of those who speak out, shining a light on injustice and oppression wherever it exists.

In your mercy, be quick to help us.

We pray for those troubled in mind or spirit, those suffering or in pain. We pray for our friends, loved ones and ourselves... Bring your comfort and healing. Show us how to be your loving presence.

In your mercy, be quick to help us.

## **The Disciple's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.

## **Blessing**

May the currents of love lift and uphold us.  
May we be determined and focused in our intention to be  
people of God's Kingdom, full of justice, peace and joy.  
May we give ourselves fully to the journey of becoming.

