

The St Peter Retreat

Schedule and Links

Outline

Before the Retreat

- Rescue Project 1: [Why stories are so important](#)
- Rescue Project 2: [Why is there something rather than nothing?](#)

DAY 1

Part 1 - Review Principle and Foundation

1. Known (Ps 139, Is 43, Samaritan woman)
2. Betrothed (Hosea, Mary Magdalene)
 - Rescue Project 3: [The enemy is the enemy](#)
3. Friendship Hearing about Jesus (John 1:40–42)
4. Catch of Fish - Luke 5:1-11 (Matthew 4:18–20; Mark 1:16–18)

DAY 2

Part 2 - Getting to know Jesus

5. The First Secret (Mark 5:21-43)
 - Rescue Project 4: [It gets worse](#)
6. Walking on Water (Matthew 14:22–33)
7. King - The Beatitudes (Matthew 5)

Preparation for the passion

8. Get Behind Me. The profession of faith - The rebuke + Jesus face like flint (Mt 16:13-28)

DAY 3

9. The Second Secret (Matthew 17:1-9 + Handouts on Exodus)
 - Rescue Project 5: [What has God done about it?](#)

Optional Meditations: The Lazarus Trilogy (See handouts)

- [Part 2](#)
- [Part 3](#)

10. Palm Sunday: The entrance into Jerusalem (Lk 19:28-40 Mt 21:1-11)

- The Chosen - [Entrance into Jerusalem](#)

11. Last Supper (Luke 22:14-23, John 13:3ff, Matt 26:31)

Meditations on Sin

12. The Third Secret - Agony. "I slept", the betrayal and arrest - "I ran away" (Mt 26:36 ff)

DAY 4

13. The denial - (Mt 26, 69-75)

- Peter now feels too separated from him to even be there. He watches Jesus' greatest acts of love **from a distance**. He excludes himself from the narrative

- Rescue Project 6: [What difference does it make?](#)

The Passion

14. The Trial before Pilate (Barabas - Crucify Him!) (Mt 27, 11 ff)

15. Calvary. The way of the Cross "I wasn't there" (Song)

- Watch: The Passion of the Christ

DAY 5

16. The Tomb

The Resurrection

17. Harrowing. Run to the tomb (starts in the upper room of fear)

18. On the beach. The miraculous catch - breakfast

- Rescue Project: [Words are not enough](#)

19. Fire: Pentecost

20. Acts

- Rescue Project 8: [What does God want from me?](#)

DAY 6

21. Quo Vadis

- Rescue Project 9: [Getting clarity on the mission](#)

Texts

Meditation 1

Oh, then, soul, most beautiful among all creatures, so anxious to know the dwelling place of your Beloved so you may go in search of him and be united with him, now we are telling you that you yourself are his dwelling and his secret inner room and hiding place. There is reason for you to be elated and joyful in seeing that all your good and hope is so close as to be within you, or better, that you cannot be without him. . . What more do you want, o soul! And what else do you search for outside, when within yourself you possess your riches, delights, satisfaction, fullness, and kingdom - your Beloved whom you desire and seek? Be joyful and gladdened in your interior recollection with him, for you have him so close to you.

Desire him there, adore him there. Do not go in pursuit of him outside yourself. You will only become distracted and wearied thereby, and you shall not find him, or enjoy him more securely, or sooner, or more intimately than by seeking him within you.

- St John of the Cross, Spiritual Canticle, 1.7, 8

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to Himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for:

The dignity of man rests above all on the fact that he is called to communion with God. This invitation to converse with God is addressed to man as soon as he comes into being. For if man exists it is because God has created him through love, and through love continues to hold him in existence. He cannot live fully according to truth unless he freely acknowledges that love and entrusts himself to his creator.

- CCC #27

"The entire life of a good Christian is an exercise in holy desire. You do not see what you long for, but the very act of desiring prepares you so that when God comes you may be utterly satisfied."

- St Augustine

Christianity is a religion of desire, the religion that redeems eros, and its saints are the ones who have the courage to feel the abyss of longing within them, and more importantly, to learn how to direct that longing toward the One who alone can fulfill it.

- Christopher West

"Christianity is not about suffocating the longing that dwells in the heart of man, but about freeing it so that it can reach its true height"

- Pope Benedict

Exodus Comparison - Meditation 9

Exodus of the Israelites (Moses)	Scripture	Exodus of Jesus (Christ)	Scripture
Enslavement in Egypt	Ex 1:8–14	Humanity enslaved to sin and death	Jn 8:34; Rom 5:12
Moses chosen as mediator and deliverer	Ex 3:7–10	Jesus is the divine Son and definitive Mediator	Heb 1:1–3; 1 Tim 2:5
Confrontation with Pharaoh	Ex 5–12	Confrontation with Satan and the powers of evil	Mt 4:1–11; Col 2:15
Passover lamb sacrificed	Ex 12:1–13	Jesus is the true Paschal Lamb	Jn 1:29; 1 Cor 5:7
Blood on doorposts saves from death	Ex 12:7, 22–23	Blood of Christ saves from eternal death	Mt 26:28; Heb 9:14
Departure from Egypt by night	Ex 12:29–42	Jesus enters his Passion in darkness (consider the walk to Gethsemane)	Lk 22:53; Jn 13:30
Crossing of the Red Sea	Ex 14:21–31	Passing through death into resurrection	Rom 6:3–4; Mk 16:6
Waters destroy the enemy	Ex 14:26–28	Death defeated by Christ in the waters of Baptism	Rm 6:4; Heb 2:14–15; 1 Cor 15:54–57
Freedom from physical slavery	Ex 13:3	Freedom from sin and spiritual slavery	Jn 8:36; Rom 6:18
Covenant sealed with animal blood	Ex 24:6–8	New Covenant sealed with Christ's blood	Lk 22:20; Heb 9:11–15
Wilderness journey toward the Promised Land	Ex 16–17; Num 14	Jesus' obedience-filled journey to Jerusalem	Lk 9:51; Phil 2:8
Murmuring and rejection of Moses	Ex 16:2–3; Num 14:2	Rejection of Jesus by his own people	Jn 1:11; Mk 15:12–14
Moses intercedes for sinful Israel	Ex 32:30–32	Jesus intercedes and offers himself	Lk 23:34; Heb 7:25
Law given on Mount Sinai	Ex 19–20	The New Commandment of Love. Grace and truth given through Christ	Jn 13: 34-35; Jn 1:17; Rom 8:3–4
Promised Land ahead but not yet entered	Deut 34:4	True Promised Land opened by Resurrection	Jn 14:2–3; Heb 4:8–10
Moses dies outside the Promised Land	Deut 34:5	Jesus dies and rises to lead many into glory	Heb 2:10; Mt 28:5–6
Exodus incomplete, awaiting fulfillment	Heb 11:39–40	Exodus accomplished once for all	Lk 9:31; Heb 9:26

Ex 3

Now Moses was taking care of the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the religious leader of Midian. He led the flock to the west side of the desert, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

2 There the Angel of the Lord showed Himself to Moses in a burning fire from inside a bush.

Moses looked and saw that the bush was burning with fire, but it was not being burned up.

And God called to him from inside the bush, saying, "Moses, Moses!" Moses answered, "Here I am."

5 God said, "Do not come near. Take your shoes off your feet. For the place where you are standing is holy ground."

6 He said also, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Then Moses hid his face. For he was afraid to look at God.

7 The Lord said, "I have seen the suffering of My people in Egypt. I have heard their cry because of the men who make them work. I know how they suffer. **8** So I have come down to save them from the power of the Egyptians. I will bring them out of that land to a good big land, to a land flowing with milk and honey

Ex 4 21 The Lord said to Moses, "When you return to Egypt, make sure you show Pharaoh all the works that I have placed in your power. But I will make his heart hard so that he will not let the people go.

Ex 5:1 After this, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says this: 'Let My people go, that they may have a special supper to honor Me in the desert.'" **2** But Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey Him and let Israel go? I do not know the Lord. And I will not let Israel go."

Ex 6:1 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh. For he will be made to let them go because of My strong hand. By My strong hand, he will make them go out of his land."

Ex 11: 4 Moses said, "The Lord says this: 'About midnight I will go through Egypt. **5** And all the first-born in the land of Egypt will die, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits on his throne to the first-born of the servant girl grinding the grain, and even the first-born of the cattle. **6** There will be loud crying in all the land of Egypt, more than has ever been heard before or will ever be heard again.

Ex 12:1 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,

3 Speak to the people of Israel when they are gathered together. Tell them that on the tenth day of this month, every man must take a lamb for those of his father's house, a lamb for each house.

5 Your lamb must be perfect, a male lamb one year old. You may take it from the sheep or the goats. **6** Keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then all the people of Israel are to kill it in the evening. **7** Then they must take some of the blood and put it on the wood pieces at the sides and top of the door of each house where they will eat it.

11 "Eat it with your shoes on your feet and your walking stick in your hand. And you must eat it in a hurry. It is the time the Lord will pass over. **12** For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night. And I will kill all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and animal. I will punish all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. **13** But the blood will mark for you the houses where you live. When I see the blood I will pass over you. And no trouble will come upon you to destroy you when I punish the land of Egypt.

29 At midnight the Lord killed all the first-born in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sat on the throne to the first-born of the one who was held in prison, and all the first-born of the cattle. **30** Pharaoh got up in the night, he and his servants and all the Egyptians. And there was a loud cry in Egypt. For there was no home where there was not someone dead. **31** Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron at night. He said, "Get up and go away from my people, both you and the people of Israel. Go and worship the Lord, as you have said. **32** Take your flocks and your cattle, as you have said, and go. And pray that good will come to me also." **35** The people of Israel had done what Moses had said. They had asked the Egyptians for things made of silver and gold and for clothes. **36** And the Lord had given the people favor in the eyes of the Egyptians. So the Egyptians let them have whatever they asked for. And they took the best things of Egypt.

Ex 14: 1 Then the Lord said to Moses, **2** "Tell the people of Israel to turn around and set up their tents in front of Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea. Set up your tents in front of Baal-zephon, beside the sea.

5 When the king of Egypt was told that the people had left, Pharaoh and his servants changed their minds about the people. They said, "What is this we have done? We have let Israel go from working for us."

9 The Egyptians followed them with all the horses and war-wagons of Pharaoh, his horsemen and his army. And they came to them at their tents by the sea, beside Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

10 When Pharaoh came near, the people of Israel looked and saw the Egyptians coming after them. And they were filled with fear and cried out to the Lord.

13 But Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid! Be strong, and see how the Lord will save you today. For the Egyptians you have seen today, you will never see again. **14** The Lord will fight for you. All you have to do is keep still."

15 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to keep going.

16 Lift up your special stick and put out your hand over the sea, and divide it. Then the people of Israel will go through the sea on dry land.

21 Then Moses put out his hand over the sea. And the Lord moved the sea all night by a strong east wind. So the waters were divided. **22** And the people of Israel went through the sea on dry land. The waters were like a wall to them on their right and on their left. **23** Then the Egyptians followed them. All Pharaoh's horses and war-wagons and horsemen went in the sea after them.

24 In the morning hours, the Lord looked down on the Egyptian army through the fire and cloud. And He made the Egyptian army afraid. **25** He made the wheels of their war-wagons come off, so it was hard for the wagons to be moved. So the Egyptians said, "Let us run away from Israel. For the Lord is fighting for them against the Egyptians."

26 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Put out your hand over the sea. And the waters will flow over the Egyptians, and over their war-wagons and their horsemen." **27** And when the morning came, the Egyptians ran into the wall of water as the sea returned to the way it was before. The Lord destroyed the Egyptians in the sea.

The Lazarus Trilogy

Optional Meditation

Part 1: Mary and Martha - Luke 10:38-42

- Get to know the sisters
- Learn to long to sit at Jesus' feet
- How am I tempted to choose other things over "the better part"?

Part 2: The Death and Raising of Lazarus - John 11 (the whole Chapter)

- Jesus showing real human emotion; his heart deeply moved
- The invitation to radical faith, Mary and Martha rise to the challenge
- The experience of Peter throughout: when they hear he is dead, when they meet Martha, at the tomb
- What was the experience of Lazarus like? The place of the dead
- How does Jesus view death, which he has come to deal with ?

Part 3: The Gratitude of Mary - John 12:1-11

- Imagine Mary trying to find a way to thank Jesus
- How she enters the dinner knowing she will create a scene
- The reaction of Judas, and Jesus' reaction to him
- Everyone expects Jesus to be master of life and death, and yet, **he speaks of his own burial**
- Mary is devastated by the idea of losing Jesus
- The paradox of the leaders wanting to kill Jesus and Lazarus, even though he can bring people back

The Rescue Project, Chapter 5

Wisdom 18:14-15

- 14** ¶ For when peaceful stillness encompassed everything
and the night in its swift course was half spent,
15 Your all-powerful word from heaven's royal throne
leapt into the doomed land,

St Ephrem

"Death trampled our Lord underfoot, but he in his turn treated Death as a highroad for his own feet. He submitted to it, enduring it willingly, because by this means he would be able to destroy Death in spite of itself.

Death had its own way when our Lord went out from Jerusalem carrying his cross; but when by a loud cry from that cross he summoned the dead from the underworld, Death was powerless to prevent it.

Death slew him by means of the body which he had assumed, but that same body proved to be the weapon with which he conquered Death. Concealed beneath the cloak of his manhood, his godhead engaged Death in combat; but in slaying our Lord, Death itself was slain. It was able to kill natural human life but it was itself killed by the life that was above the nature of man.

...

"Death could not devour our Lord unless he possessed a body, neither could hell swallow him up unless he bore our flesh; and so he came in search of a chariot in which to ride to the underworld. This chariot was the body which he received from the Virgin; in it he invaded Death's fortress, broke open its strong-room and scattered all its treasure."

...

Isaiah 49:24-26

"Can the prey be taken from the mighty, or the captives of a tyrant be rescued? Surely, thus says the Lord: even the captives of the mighty shall be taken, and the prey of the tyrant shall be rescued; for I will contend with those who contend with you... Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer the Mighty One of Jacob.

Quo Vadis

The *Quo Vadis* story is an ancient legend concerning Peter's martyrdom: His friends had entreated the Apostle to save his life by leaving the city. Peter at last consented, but on condition that he should go away alone. But when he wished to pass the gate of the city, he saw Christ meeting him. Falling down in adoration he says to Him 'Lord, whither goest Thou?' [Latin, *quo vadis?*] And Christ replied to him 'I am coming to Rome to be again crucified.' And Peter says to Him 'Lord, wilt Thou again be crucified?' And the Lord said to him 'Even so, I will again be crucified.' Peter said to Him 'Lord, I will return and will follow Thee.' And with these words the Lord ascended into Heaven . . . And Peter, afterwards coming to himself, understood that it was of his own passion that it had been spoken, because in it the Lord would suffer. The Apostle then returned with joy to meet the death which the Lord had signified that he should die.

Quotes from the Novel "Quo Vadis" by HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

The way the early Church looked at Peter. The crowd swayed before him. Voices near Vinicius whispered, " Peter! Peter!" Some knelt, others extended their hands toward him. 'There followed a silence so deep that one heard every charred particle that dropped from the torches, the distant rattle of wheels on the Via Nomentana, and the sound of wind through the few pines which grew close to the cemetery. Chilo bent toward Vinicius and whispered, — "This is he! The foremost disciple of Christ — a fisherman!" The old man raised his hand, and with the sign of the cross blessed those present, who fell on their knees simultaneously. (164)

Teaching the Christians at gatherings in secret. And Vinicius, who had been a sceptic, who did not wish to yield to the charm of the old man, yielded, however, to a certain feverish curiosity to know what would flow from the lips of that companion of the mysterious " Christus," and what that teaching was of which Lygia and Pomponia trecina were followers.

Meanwhile Peter began to speak, and he spoke from the beginning like a father instructing his children and teaching them how to live. He enjoined on them to renounce excess and luxury, to love poverty, purity of life, and truth, to endure wrongs and persecutions patiently, ... (165)

Venerated by Christians of all kinds. Vinicius made no answer, for he approached the gate, at which a wonderful sight struck his eyes. Two soldiers knelt when the Apostle was passing; Peter placed his hand on their iron helmets for a moment, and then made the sign of the cross on them. It had never occurred to the patrician before that there could be on in the army; (177)

Reminding people of Christ's teaching, especially mercy. [In the midst of a scene where a traitor is about to be beaten.] The Apostle Peter rose at the table; for a moment his white head shook, drooping toward his breast, and his eyes were closed; but he opened them then, and said amid silence, — "The Saviour said this to us: 'If thy brother has sinned against thee, chastise him; but if he is repentant, forgive him. (201)

Telling the story of the Passion and his part in it. Here the Apostle stopped, stretched his hands toward the fire and continued : — “The night was cold, like this one, but the heart in me was seething; so, drawing a sword to defend Him, I cut an ear from the servant of the high-priest. I would have defended Him more than my own life had He not said to me, ‘Put thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?’ Then they seized and bound Him.” (207)

Meeting with and talking to Paul. Through the withered vines and the ivy, which was green alike in summer and winter, he saw two men, one of whom was Peter the Apostle. ...Peter’s companion had an emaciated face; his head, which was growing bald, was covered at the sides with curly hair; he had reddened eyelids and a crooked nose; in the face, ugly and at the same time inspired, Crispus recognized the features of Paul of Tarsus. (227)

Humbly admitting his faults (along with Paul) The penitent Crispus began humbly to explain himself; “I have sinned against mercy,” said he; “but I thought that by admitting to her heart an earthly love she had denied Christ.”

“I denied Him thrice,” answered Peter, “ and still He forgave me, and commanded me to feed His sheep.” ... Then Paul of Tarsus, who had been silent so far, placed his finger on his breast, pointing to himself, and said, — “I am he who persecuted and hurried servants of Christ to their death; (228)

Opinions of Romans about him Magician, supernatural. **Lies people told about the Christians**

Making converts. Vinicius, who had spoken with enthusiasm already, sprang toward Peter on hearing this blessing, ... seized the hand of the old Galilean, and pressed it in gratitude to his lips. Peter was pleased; for he understood that his sowing had fallen on an additional field, that his fishing-net had gathered in a new soul. (271)

Others believe at his testimony. How was I not to believe that Christ came into the world, since he, who was His disciple, says so, and Paul, to whom He appeared? How was I not to believe that He was God, since He rose from the dead? Others saw Him in the city and on the lake and on the mountain; people saw Him whose lips have not known a lie. I began to believe this the first time I heard Peter in Ostianum, for I said to myself even then: In the whole world any other man might lie rather than this one who says, ‘I saw.’ (301)

Instilling peace and trust. [At the fire in Rome, a zealous preacher is preaching woe and fear to the people Peter comes and corrects him] “Why are ye troubled in heart? Who of you can tell what will happen before the hour cometh? The Lord has punished Babylon with fire; but His mercy will be on those whom baptism has purified, and ye whose sins are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb will die with His name on your lips. Peace be with you! ” After the terrible and merciless words of Crispus, those of Peter fell like a balm on all present. (350)

Refusing to abandon the flock. But Vinicius, who had come to love the Apostle with all the power of his impetuous soul, exclaimed: “ I swear, my teacher, that I will not leave thee here to destruction.” “The Lord bless thee for thy wish,” answered Peter; “*but hast thou not heard that Christ repeated thrice on the lake to me, ‘ Feed my lambs’? ” (365)

Prayed with Christians during the persecutions: Meanwhile Peter rose, and, turning to the assembly, said, — “ Children, raise your hearts to the Redeemer and offer Him your tears.” After that he was silent. All at once was heard the voice of a woman, full of sorrowful complaint and pain, — “I am a widow; I had one son who supported me. Give him back, O Lord!” With that a second voice began to complain, — “Executioners insulted my daughter, and Christ permitted them!” ... Meanwhile Peter began to speak in a voice so low at first that it was barely possible to hear him, — “ My children, on Golgotha I saw them nail God to the cross. ... “Why do ye complain? God gave Himself to torture and death, and ye wish Him to shield you from the same. People of little faith, have ye received His teaching? Has He promised you nothing but life? He comes to you and says, ‘ Follow in my path.’” (402)

Blessed those dying in the amphitheatre. From the highest row in the amphitheatre the Apostle Peter looked at them. No one saw him, for all heads were turned to the arena; so he rose and as formerly in the vine- yard of Cornelius he had blessed for death and eternity those who were intended for imprisonment, so now he blessed with ‘he cross those who were perishing under the teeth of wild beasts. (434)

The authorities decide to capture Peter. They found Peter surrounded by a handful of the faithful... At news of the approaching danger, Nazarius led all by a hidden passage to the garden gate, and then to deserted stone quarries...

“Hide thyself, sacred leader!”

“My children,” answered Peter, ““ who knows the time when the Lord will mark the end of his life?”

Quo Vadis, Domine?

About dawn of the following day two dark figures were moving along the Appian Way toward the Campania. One of them was Nazarius; the other the Apostle Peter, who was leaving Rome and his martyred co-religionists.

Peter stopped, and asked,— “Seest thou that brightness approaching us?” “I see nothing,” replied Nazarius.

He looked with wonder at the Apostle.

“ Rabbi! what ails thee? ” cried he, with alarm.

The pilgrim's staff fell from Peter's hands to the earth; his eyes were looking forward, motionless; his mouth was open; on his face were depicted astonishment, delight, rapture.

Then he threw himself on his knees, his arms stretched forward; and this cry left his lips, —

“O Christ! O Christ! ” ;

He fell with his face to the earth, as if kissing some one's feet.

The silence continued long; then were heard the words of the aged man, broken by sobs, —

“ Quo vadis, Domine?”

““If thou desert my people, I am going to Rome to be crucified a second time.”

The Apostle lay on the ground, his face in the dust, without motion or speech. It seemed to Nazarius that he had fainted or was dead; but he rose at last, seized the staff with trembling hands, and turned without a word toward the seven hills of the city.

The boy, seeing this, repeated as an echo, —

“Quo vadis, Domine?”

“To Rome,” said the Apostle, in a low voice.

And he returned.

(515)

Peter's Martyrdom

The Apostle, with his head in the sun-rays and golden light, turned for the last time toward the city. At a distance lower down was seen the gleaming Tiber; beyond was the Campus Martius; higher up, the Mausoleum of Augustus; below that, the gigantic baths just begun by Nero; still lower, Pompey's theatre; and beyond them were visible in places, and in places hidden by other buildings, the Septa Julia, a multitude of porticos, temples, columns, great edifices; and, finally, far in the distance, hills covered with houses, a gigantic resort of people, the borders of which vanished in the blue haze, — an abode of crime, but of power; of madness, but of order, — which had become the head of the world, its oppressor, but its law and its peace, almighty, invincible, eternal.

But Peter, surrounded by soldiers, looked at the city as a ruler and king looks at his inheritance. And he said to it, ‘Thou art redeemed and mine!’ And no one, not merely among the soldiers digging the hole in which to, plant the cross, but even among believers, could divine that standing there among them was the true ruler of that moving life; that Caesars would pass away, waves of barbarians go by, and ages vanish, but that old man would be lord there unbrokenly.

The soldiers approached Peter to strip him. But he, standing on the height, with his extended right hand made the sign of the cross, blessing in the hour of death, — *Urbi et orbi!* (the city and the world).