



TILLING THE SOIL

BIBLICAL FORMATION RESOURCE

Welcome to the second edition of our biblical formation resource. You may notice that we have a new title for the resource - *Tilling the Soil*. We were delighted to have a good number of entries in our competition to name the resource and congratulate Bernadette Corboys on her insightful and creative title: *Tilling the Soil*. Bernadette has kindly written a short reflection on the inspiration for the name this is included on the final page.



St Matthew

mosaic on dome of Greek Orthodox catholicon,
Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem.

Our **feature article** in this edition is a timely exploration of Matthew's Gospel written by the scripture scholar Fr Michael Trainor. As we prepare the second edition in July of 2020, the world is still gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic – both the catastrophe it is proving for this moment and the implications that will reverberate across the globe for many years to come. In the 'now' we know continually increasing numbers of death and serious illness; the fear and anguish caused by dislocation, isolation and loneliness; the burden of lost jobs and lost dreams. We are told that the long term impact on economies and households will make things very precarious and difficult for years to come.

The opening paragraphs of Michael's article describes the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem as a 'cataclysmic event (which) created deep anguish and uncertainty.' Matthew's Gospel is written a generation later, but still that community is grappling with finding 'a renewed expression of faith suitable for new circumstances, that draws on the reservoir of a rich tradition that can nurture an unknown future.' Reading Matthew in Ordinary time this year has a particular relevance.

The Sion connection to Mary is evident, so in honour of the Feast of the Assumption of Mary celebrated on 15 August I have taken the opportunity to offer you a way of praying with icons – you'll find the link for this in the **Prayer / Reflection Resource** section.

The apostolic life of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion is a three-fold commitment to the Church, to the Jewish people and to a world of justice, peace and love. As our shared connection is through our experience in Jerusalem, you may be interested in furthering your reading on the work being done in the area of Jewish –Christian relations. *Gesher* is the journal of The Council of Christians and Jews (Victoria). On Sunday 5th July they launched a new online format for the journal which I am please to share with you, please see the **Jewish-Christian relations section** for the links.

As this most unusual of years continues, I hope that you remain safe and well as our deepened experience of faith, prayer and life, nurtured and awakened in Jerusalem sustains us.

- Carmel Crawford

FEATURE ARTICLE:

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW FOR TODAY – MICHAEL TRAINOR

The feature article in this edition is *The Gospel of Matthew for Today* written by Fr Michael Trainor. In the article Michael explores the parallels between the experience of the early Matthean community and our current global situation. Michael offers insight into how the Gospel of Matthew has the 'ability to speak across the centuries into different social and cultural contexts of our world to affirm the eternal validity of the Word of God revealed through the Gospel to nurture and reassure.'

Click [here](#) to access the full article.

He is Emmanuel – *God is with us.*
Mt. 1:23

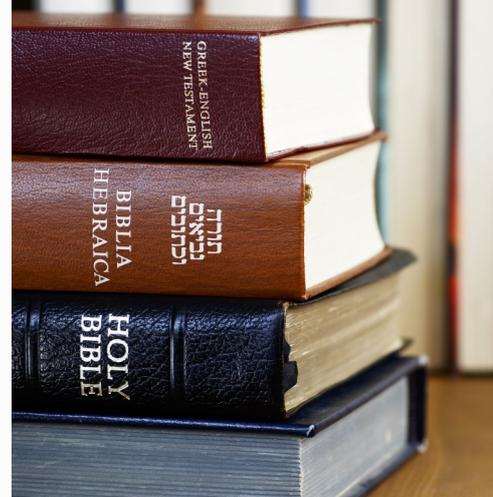


**And remember, I am with you
always, to the end of time. Mt. 28:20**

DEEPENING YOUR KNOWLEDGE
AND APPRECIATION FOR THE WORD OF GOD:

Fr Michael Trainor is building up a “Bible Repository” located at the Lockley parish website. This is a work in progress with a good number of audio, video and written commentaries by notable Biblical scholars currently available on the Gospel of Matthew and the Acts of the Apostles. Resources for the Gospel of Mark will be available shortly in preparation for the coming liturgical year.

Click [here](#) to access the resource.



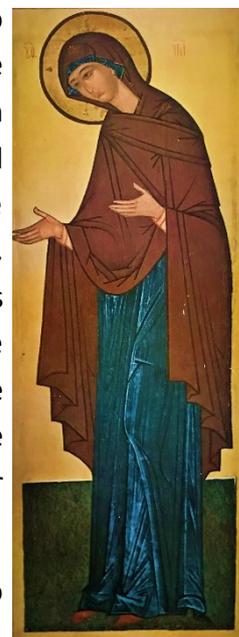
PRAYER / REFLECTION RESOURCE:

PRAYING WITH ICONS – FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY

For those connected to the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion it is obvious that devotion to Mary Mother of God and Daughter of Sion, is an essential characteristic of the spirituality. Whilst in Jerusalem studying, I was determined to deepen my own devotion and understanding of Mary and felt drawn to do so through reading and praying with icons, quietly pondering what insight, characteristic or challenge the icon writer might be offering me. In his commentary in *Life of Jesus in Icons*, scripture scholar Fr Francis Moloney sdb, notes the ‘intimate link that exists between the Bible and the icon, between the written word of the Bible and the imaged word of the icon.’ Later in his commentary he notes that icons are for those immersed in a Biblical tradition: ‘the world of the icon explodes into life when there is a profound knowledge of the Bible’...leading the believer into a closer encounter with God.

As we celebrate the Feast of the Assumption of Mary on 15 August, I invite you to find a way to deepen your connection to Mary, perhaps icons will assist you as well.

Click [here](#) for the resource PRAYING WITH ICONS OF MARY.



Mary

Notre Dame de Sion
Convent, Ein Kerem



JEWISH – CHRISTIAN RELATIONS

The theme of the journal *Gesher* 2020 is *Religion and Ecology*. Over the three planned issues, it will look at the bushfires, climate change, COVID-19 and related topics from the point of view of faith and ethics, economics and society. As in this first issue, it will continue to explore these topics through essays, art, poetry and scripture.

Click [here](#) for the current edition.

OTHER LINKS:

Council for Christians and Jews (Victoria): click [here](#)

A video of the Launch of *Gesher* 2020: click [here](#)

Please subscribe to the Council for Christians and Jews (Vic) YouTube Channel: click [here](#)

TILLING THE SOIL

- A REFLECTION BY BERNADETTE CORBOY SGS

The image of *Tilling the Soil* was evoked within me as I received and pondered with relish the “Sion Biblical Formation resource” and listened to Carmel’s presentation. Knowing that the Sisters of Sion’s spirituality is rooted deeply in Scripture, the resource is, I believe, a prayerful invitation of the Spirit to draw us closer to our God. It is about a way of tending to the soil in which the Word of God grows and its content nurtures the minds and hearts of its seekers.

The rich article by Mary Reaburn on the Psalms and her power point on Lectio Divina are about building up the soil of our hearts to make it ready for cultivation....creating a space for an ‘encounter’... awaiting a receptive response to the seeds of God’s Word she scattered. We all want to have a heart likened to the tilled fertile soil, where the seed of God’s Word is nurtured and the roots go deep so that we grow and produce good fruit.

By providing so generously this Biblical resource, the Sion Sisters gently till the soil of our fallow hearts and minds.

Thank you, Bernadette



FEAST DAYS AND EVENTS

	30 July	Hajj: Muslim day of prayer for forgiveness and mercy.
	31 July – 3 August	Eid-al-Adha: four day festival commemorates Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) willingness to
	9 August	International Day of the World’s Indigenous People.
	15 August	Feast of the Assumption of Mary.
	20 August	Hijra: Islamic New Year commemorates Prophet Muhammad’s migration from Mecca to Medina and the establishment of the first community.
	19 -20 September	Rosh Hashanah: Jewish New Year marked by the sounding of the Shofar (ram’s horn), prayer and ten days of repentance.
	28 September	Yom Kippur: Day of Atonement the holiest day of the Jewish calendar consists of a 25 hour fast while praying for atonement and repentance.



CONTACT INFORMATION

Please feel free to share this resource or parts of it with interested colleagues, parishioners or friends. When using the resource, we ask that you acknowledge sources for text and links.

This resource is produced by the Mission Coordinator, Sisters of Our Lady of Sion, Australia Region
Contact details: Carmel Crawford, sionmissionaustralia@gmail.com