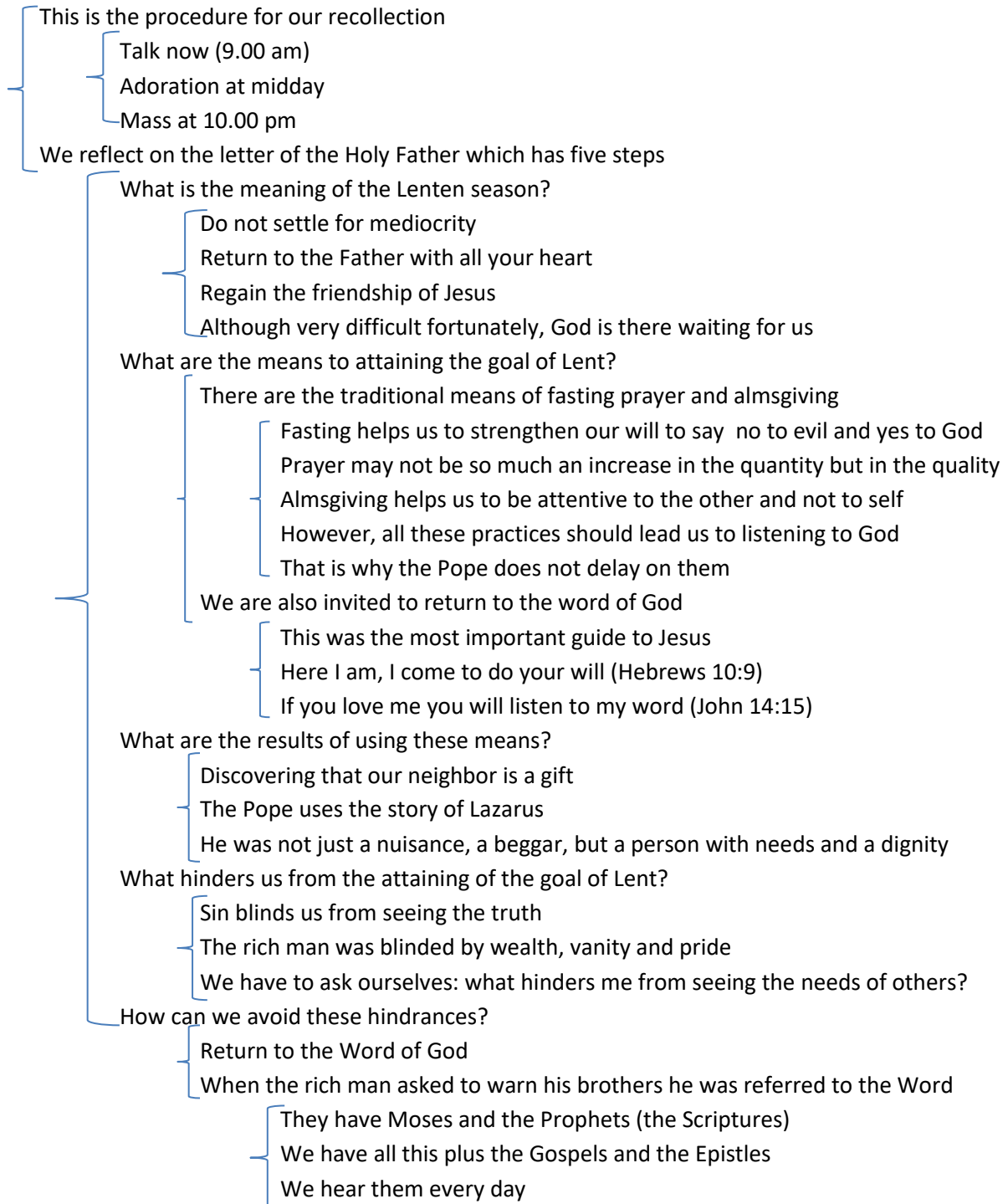


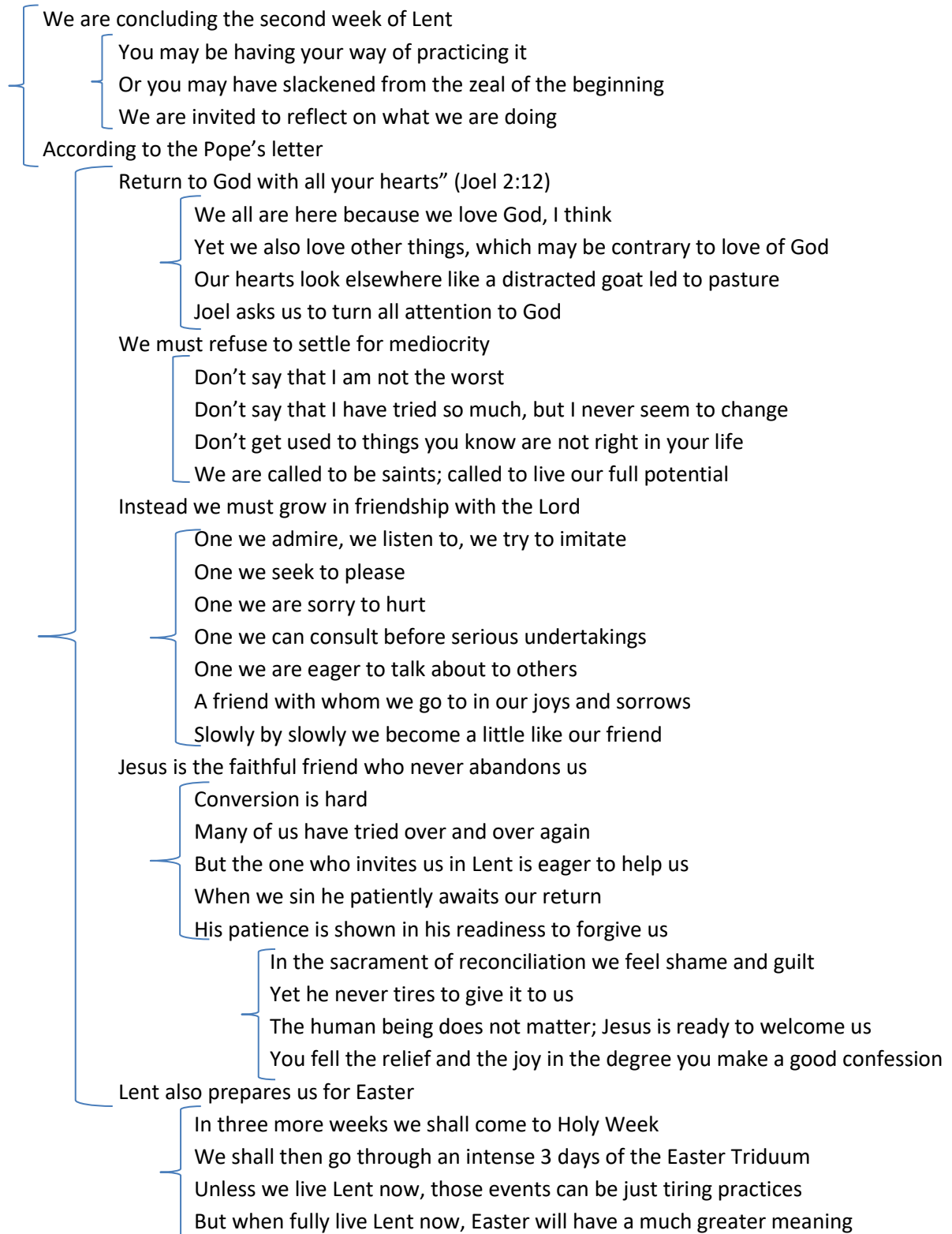
# “The Word is a gift; other persons are a gift...”

*Recollection to Sisters of St. Peter Claver, based on Pope Francis’s message for Lent 2017 – 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017*

## Introduction: Outline



## Meaning of Lent: Conversion, return to God, experience Christ's friendship



## Means of attaining the goal of Lent: Prayer, Almsgiving, Fasting, Word

There are the traditional means of fasting prayer and almsgiving

Fasting helps us to strengthen our will to say no to evil and yes to God

Recently someone told me about someone who fasted to convert a person

He succeeded where nothing else would have worked

She in turn converted her brother to Matrimony through fasting

Fasting especially for something pleasing to God is very powerful prayer

However

Do not exaggerate; don't put God to the test

Especially be careful if you have health issues

You can abstain instead from something you like

Prayer may not be so much an increase in the quantity but in the quality

You have many communal prayers everyday

And I think each of you prayers on her own

If you know you are neglecting some prayers, then this is a call to return

But this may be a call to improve the quality of your prayer

Do I sleep during my prayers

Or am I so distracted?

Do I just go through routine without thinking about the prayers

Share about experience of celebrating the liturgy of hours like a Muslim

Almsgiving helps us to be attentive to the other and not to self

The parable which the Pope uses leads us to this

So, we need not say much about it now

However, all these practices should lead us to listening to God

That is why the Pope does not delay on them

We are also invited to return to the word of God

This is at the basis of the Lenten observances

At the beginning of Lent we are invited to hear and ponder more deeply

Other practices are meaningless unless I learn to listen to what God says

I think the Pope has in mind Isaiah 58:1-8

Explaining the kind of fasting that is wasted

And the kind of fast that pleases God

Also read Matthew 9: 13 "I desire mercy not sacrifice..."

Hebrews 10: 8-9 "...instead here I am..."

If you love me you will listen to my word (John 14:15)

Then the Holy Father uses the story of the rich man and Lazarus as an example

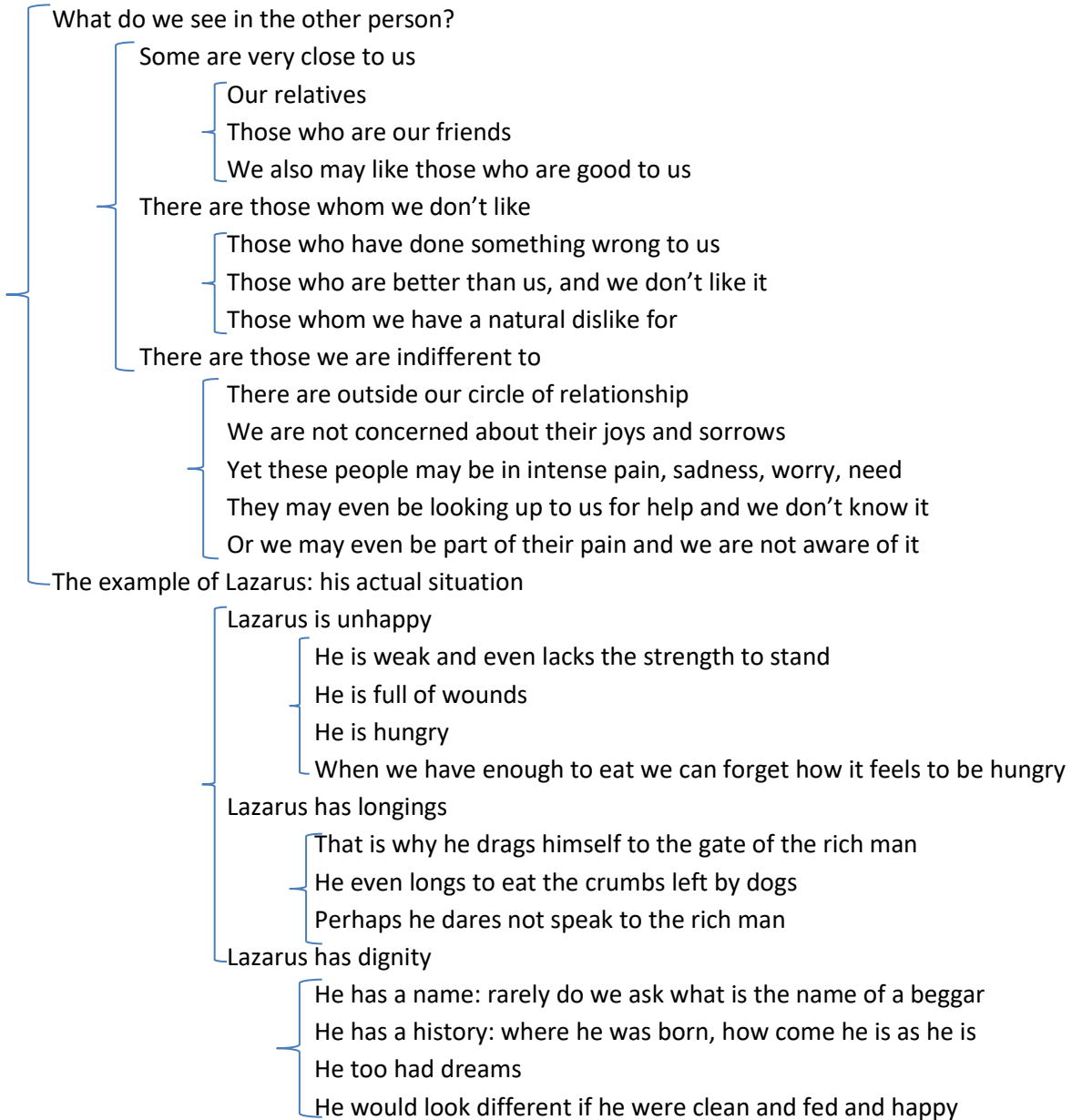
"...for it provides a key to understanding what we need to do."

I think as a Jesuit he uses the Ignatian form of meditation on the story

Putting yourself in the situation using your imagination

It is a method we too can apply in our reflections

## Results of Lenten exercises: Rediscovery that my neighbor is a gift



## Sin hinders us to see our neighbor as they really are

He is blinded by wealth

- We know that people pursue wealth regardless of other people's needs
- We hear it in the news everyday
- People kill for wealth
- This helps us the wisdom of evangelical poverty

The love of wealth makes him vain

- He likes to show off in his robes
- We see it all the time where people spend in order to show off
- Even in our avowed poverty we can be vain in small ways

Vanity makes him proud

- He forgets that he will die and leave all this wealth
- Pride makes him blind to the needs of the poor: in Lazarus he only sees a beggar
- Lazarus is just a nuisance: dirty, smelling, an embarrassment
- He would perhaps have preferred that the guests don't see such a sight
- He does not see him as he really are: unhappy, longing, with dignity, a brother

In the after-life the truth finally dawns on him

- All wealth is of no use to him
- Instead he is in torment
- Then he notices Abraham in the other world
- And to his surprise Lazarus is happy with him
- Now he remembers that he was a son of Abraham, a child of God
- How he sees the true dignity of Lazarus
- But this discovery comes too late for him
- The teaching that it should not come too late to us, and it is now we must act

What are the sins that blind me to the needs of my neighbor?

- It may not be wealth since you have chosen a life of poverty
- Yet each has that which makes them blind to the needs of others

## How can we avoid these hindrances?

Return to the Word of God

When the rich man asked to warn his brothers he was referred to the Word

- They have Moses and the Prophets (the Scriptures)
- These constituted the scriptures at the time
- We have all this plus the gospels and the epistles
  - We have all this plus the Gospels and the Epistles
  - We hear them every day

The challenge is how can the Word of God become a guide for my actions?

This is also the work of the Holy Spirit to whom we must pray

May the Holy Spirit lead us on a true journey of conversion, so that we can rediscover the gift of God's word, be purified of the sin that blinds us, and serve Christ present in our brothers and sisters in need.

## **Homily**