



And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" Mark 14.27

Dear Friends,

Forte Torre - being disciplined in the Word. To kick off the 500th year of the Reformation, our apologetics in this most Roman of Roman Catholic countries, were honed and honeyed by a **short series of doctrinal sermons on the five 'Solos'**. As JP illustrated in his sermon on Solus Christus, our world is full of bureaucratic intermediaries; especially here where it's taken me eight visits to obtain access to the health service.

More serious, however, are the religious intermediaries set up by Rome: and none more so than 'the Madonna'. Mary implicitly, as she's prayed to, becomes rather like God the mother. Here's the main square of neighbouring Sasso Marconi, dominated by 'The Sanctuary of the Madonna'. Here also is where relatives of **R** have a bar. Her niece, **D**, is as much a part of church-life as is possible but Sundays under the Word are followed by six days where she willingly admits that she struggles to live faithfully for her Shepherd amidst family strife, extreme working hours and oppressive debts. **Pray** that she can live freely in Christ, making wise decisions about her future and influencing her father to make godly decisions. **Thankful** always for her church family, 'I wouldn't know what to do without your constant guidance and prayers.'



Forte Torre – learning lessons in humility under fresh revitalizing sermons from **Mark's Gospel**. In following Jesus in the week leading up to his Passion (Suffering), **pray** we would heed his warnings about any individual weaknesses and all flock fragility we are prone to so that we don't flee when things get tough. **Thankful** we are averaging forty-five on Sundays but attendance at midweeks remains puzzlingly inconsistent. **Thankful** for the 23 men, including **G** and **V**, two Italian students: **praying** our men would assume greater responsibility and not be those who are swayed in the slightest by the voices of hedonism, egoism and materialism. **Thankful** that three; **L**, **I** and **M** (pictured here with **C**), are being baptized on Easter Day. After **three recent goodbyes**; **G** to Amsterdam; **C** to Berlin; and **A** (Agape) with his young family to the US (having to return unexpectedly to raise funds): **pray** that the Lord would mature 'our men' abroad and bring them all back to Bologna ready to continue their work of sewing amongst students and in **G's** case, adolescents.

Why Jesus? attracted **L**, a lecturer, who also came to church one Sunday. Whilst for now, he's attracted to Jesus' Word on an intellectual basis, he cannot deny how attractive we, his followers are, as a result of our God-given faith. 'There is definitely something different about you guys.'



Teaching work – prayerfully persevering in those obscuring obstacles of religious intermediaries. Thankful to God for the access I've had for over four years to five families in particular. I see every precious gospel conversation as a revelatory gift: 'Honestly we have no memory of being taught the Bible in our catechism classes,' say **G** and **B**. Going to church for them remains a ritual **but** they're coming to **Exch@nge camp**. 'We've never studied it,' says **J** in defence of his ignorance of the Reformation.

Despite her enthusiasm for biblical teaching she's received at **FT**, our friend, **S** remains stuck in seeing her priest as the only one in whom she has the assurance of forgiveness, 'In that moment, I believe that he becomes divine.'

In teaching **G+G**, I overlap regularly with their mother **C**, a lawyer friend full of compassion and good works yet who once famously dismissed the gospel by saying that JP was 'misguided' in teaching that the legal verdict of justification appears in the Bible. Through **C**, I've met another (RC) contact, **J**, who's pioneered a **Legal Advice Centre** where 'the great and the good' of Bologna give their time freely to fight corruption and injustice as presented to them by those with no resources to fight for themselves. **Pray** I'd know the Spirit's discernment, as I pray for all my 'clients' and for wisdom in future contact and collaboration with **C and J**.

Building – pray that the Lord would graciously grant those living in the block patient forbearance; that we use all delays he's ordained as a powerful witness to his grace; that **all** those working on the project would be prepared to interact with the truth of the gospel; that the flock watch and pray in preparation, seeing all future initiatives possible in the space; that **everyone involved** would stick to their word in timings. How we long to see the **Forte Torre** sign outside.



Forte Torre – working in twos. Recently, **St, S's** widower and his daughter **C**, came to lunch at **R's** where we passed much time together. As **S** asked **R** why **she** as an Italian, is an evangelical, he was perhaps unprepared for what followed! **R** witnessed wonderfully to her early years under persecution from RC authorities, friends and neighbours; how her father stood up and out, as one who would not be scattered, so aware was he of his own debt to His Shepherd as a sinner saved. As we all opened the Bible together, **C** was moved to tears, saying, 'I would've liked someone like you to explain the Bible to me as a child, my teachers at Catechism gave us to understand nothing!' Reading the Bible more regularly with **C** will be a thrilling moment! **Pray** they come to church soon and come to know Christ as their Saviour.

'But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.' Mark 14.28

Praying with love for you all to have a joyous Easter, Penny.

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PRAYER POINTS

- That JP's letter calling us to a greater participation at midweeks would result in us uniting behind our pastor, more willing to dedicate time to the Kingdom's advancement.
- For the Lord to bless us with strategic conversions amongst Bolognese accountants, builders, civil servants, engineers, entrepreneurs, financiers, lawyers, medics, teachers,
- For families to join us in praise of the King who was struck to save them, giving them courage to leave false 'Christian' contexts and securities – that **Easter Egg Hunts, Clubs and Camps** combine to present a strong, consistent witness to Christ's true Church.
- For male Italian role models in the **Children's work** both **Afterschool and Sundays**.
- Pray for **S, D's** father to become a part of the flock and that he and many others to whom we witness will know the joy of finding rich pasture with us over time.

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