

*Open the Doors to
Mercy*



*Online Prayer Book
Lent and Easter 2016*

Thanks

The Online Prayer book is a gift from the Holy Family Community and friends who contribute reflections, art, music, technical assistance, and proofreading skills.

Original Music for this Prayer Book is from our own Holy Family Parishioner and Music Director, Andrew Reed

If you would like to participate in this wonderful book, please contact Dawn Ponnet at dponnet@holyfamily.org



February 10, 2016

ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:12-18

Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17

2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

SUMMARY

In the first reading, the prophet, Joel, exhorts the people of Judah to change their conduct. They are suffering from a plague of locusts that has caused great agricultural losses. The plague struck just prior to harvest time, a time of revelry and heavy wine drinking. Joel calls on the people to return to the Lord with their whole heart. In other words, not simply some cultic change, but their whole conduct must change. He reminds them that their God is gracious and merciful. He is confident that Judah's conversion would be matched by God's pity. Joel hopes for renewed agricultural prosperity and with it the means to a revival of sacrifice by everyone – even “the elders and the infants at the breast.” The conclusion of the reading confirms that “the Lord was stirred to concern for his land and took pity on his people.”

The themes of acknowledging our sinfulness and seeking God's reconciliation continue through the psalm, the reading from Second Corinthians and Matthew's Gospel. Paul reminds the people of Corinth that they are “ambassadors for Christ”. He implores them to be reconciled to God. The gospel harkens back to Joel's appeal for more than some external or cultic change. Jesus challenges his disciples “not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them”, but a complete change of heart. “Your Father who sees what is hidden (in your heart) will repay you.”

REFLECTION

As we mark our foreheads with ashes on this first day of Lent, the readings for today remind us that in the midst of the incredible technological and geo-political change we've experienced – just in our lifetime – human nature remains very much the same. The people of Judah thought that through wine induced ecstasies and cultic lamentation they could revive the god of vegetation, Baal, to spare them from the devastation caused by the plague of locusts. Joel, however, reminded them that this plague is not the result of the imagined death of nonexistent Baal. It was sent by the Lord their God and only conversion to him would bring relief. Human existence as the people of Judah knew it was being threatened. Joel exhorted Judah that now is the acceptable time to return to the Lord with their whole heart.

In a lecture a few weeks ago, the physicist, Stephen Hawking warned that humanity is inching closer to demise and humans are to blame. He cautioned that disasters engineered by humans, including climate change, nuclear war and genetically engineered viruses, could be the downfall of life as we know it on earth. We must change our ways.

Last June in his encyclical, “Laudato Si”, Pope Francis exhorted us to change our ways concerning the gift of life we have been given. “Human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbor and with the earth itself. According to the Bible, these three vital relationships have been broken,

both outwardly and within us. This rupture is sin.” The lives of our brothers and sisters – especially those living in poverty – as well as the planet itself are threatened. We must change our ways.



“Be merciful, O Lord, for we have sinned”, we pray in today’s psalm. We are confident our God will bestow mercy because Jesus, the Word of God, became flesh so we could learn from one like us how we might become reconciled to our God. We must, however, change our ways. The practices of the Lenten season both encourage and enable us to do just that. Through prayer, fasting and almsgiving we can repair the vital relationships with God, our neighbor and the earth ruptured by sin. As Paul expressed so clearly in today’s reading from Corinthians: “For our sake he made him to be sin who did not know sin, so that we might become the righteous of God in him.”

Hopefully, the liturgy on this Ash Wednesday in the Jubilee Year of Mercy will inspire us to remember our past, to change our ways and to return to the Lord with our whole heart.

PRAYER

May our prayer be that of Pope Francis at the conclusion of “Laudato Si”:

Throughout these days of Lent:

“Awaken our praise and thankfulness
for every being that you have made.

Give us the grace to feel profoundly joined to everything that is.

God of love, show us our place in this world
as channels of your love for all the creatures of this earth,
for not one of them is forgotten in your sight.

Enlighten those who possess power and money
that they may avoid the sin of indifference,
that they may love the common good, advance the weak,
and care for this world in which we live.

The poor and the earth are crying out.

O Lord, seize us with your power and light, help us to protect all life,
to prepare for a better future,
for the coming of your Kingdom
of justice, peace, love and beauty.

Praise be to you!
Amen”

Bill Metzdorf,
Parishioner

February 11, 2016

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 & 6

Luke 9:22-25

SUMMARY

In Deuteronomy, Moses sets before us the Lord's commandments as a choice between life and death. "Choose life" and blessing, he demands. The psalmist declares, "blessed the man who delights in the Law of the Lord". In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus predicts his Passion and states a new formulation of the Law: "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself...but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it".

REFLECTION

Joan Chittister, in a reflection on the Rule of Saint Benedict, as well as the "rules of the road" we use when driving, provide useful insights here.

The visitor asks the disciple: "Why do we need teachers?" The disciple responds: "If water must be heated, it needs a vessel between the fire and itself". Just so with us. We are exposed to the "fire" of daily living and it is the "container" of the community and its rules that keeps us both safe, live-giving, and saved from chaos and death.

When I reflect on those norms we follow in driving (or any other social activity, for that matter), these norms bring safety and courtesy into our lives with each other. We surely understand this when we witness them being breached.

It is true in all of our community life; at home, at work, at play, and at prayer.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, give us the grace we need to be
together in peace and harmony,.
Lord, give us the grace to listen to you, our
Word.
And may we, by your gift, follow in your Way.

Amen.

David Lyman,
Parishioner



February 12, 2016

[Friday after Ash Wednesday](#)

Isaiah 58:1-9A

Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6AB, 18-19

Matthew 9:14-15

SUMMARY

“Why do we and the Pharisees fast much, but Your disciples do not fast?”

REFLECTION

Many times throughout Jesus' teachings He is asked many questions, just like the one posed in this Gospel. Many questions are based on not understanding what Jesus is saying in His parables and His followers are seeking understanding.

All parents can relate to these inquiries as when talking to our children, we will often say something in the form of a story and they don't quite get it. So we explain.

This is the case in this Gospel and Jesus replies with a story: “Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?” Huh?

“The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast,” Aah, OK, I think I get it!

But do we get it? Here is the story Jesus recites to explain the circumstance of his disciples not fasting, but is that all there is in his reply? Often we will dwell on the words and come to a conclusion and maybe not see the bigger picture, just like our children, we can become quite literal.

I think there is a larger meaning here in the parable that is connected to Pope Francis' call for a Year of Mercy. How do I get here? Let me express the following thought based on having read, Pope Francis' book: *The Name of God is Mercy*.

In our daily routine we go about living our lives in the context of our perspective of how things relate to us. We tend to judge incidents and people based on comparisons to us. In essence we are judging others to us.

Hey Jesus, I am fasting, the Pharisees are fasting, how come Your people are not fasting?

Are we asking to know or are we saying that this doesn't seem fair. Judgment!



We do this more often than we think. We compare other's actions to ourselves and make judgments on whom they are. In many cases this is just the process of living our lives, but in some cases it is just a case of us not accepting certain things as they are or worst we compare ourselves to those and we make a case that it is good we are not like them, as in the Pharisee and the Tax Collector at prayer.

There is spirituality in our imperfection, there is a grace in knowing we are sinners and that we have the everlasting forgiveness of Jesus, this is the greatest example of mercy. This message is repeated throughout the Gospels and Pope Francis is calling on all of us to reflect on this and to express it through the spiritual works of mercy and the corporal works of mercy.

As we are beginning this Lenten season each of us has an opportunity to act with mercy towards everyone we meet. All we need to do is to be aware of who we are and accept those for who they are and not make comparisons.

PRAYER

Prayer: Dear Lord, during this time of Lent help me to express Your mercy with all those I encounter. Give me the insight to see and not to compare. Help me to take up Your charge of being servant and to fulfill Your example of mercy.

Amen

Henry Provencio
Eucharistic Minister



February 13, 2016

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:9 B-14

Psalm 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Luke 5:27-32

SUMMARY

The first reading describes how we will be blessed if we act as God wishes us to: to deal justly with other people, to give food to the hungry, and to honor the Sabbath. In the Gospel reading, Jesus is criticized for interacting with tax collectors and responds that “I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.”

REFLECTION



The first reading exhorts us to live up to high standards and promises blessings should we do so. That is a challenging and daunting call to action. Who can measure up?

After hearing this, the Gospel reading is “good news” indeed. Jesus tells us that no matter how much we fail, we are still “in”: we are still beloved children of God. After all, even the despised tax collectors – who earn their living by taking more than people owe – are not “out.” What



God wants of us is that we try, to repent, to make a serious attempt to turn towards Him. But God does not expect us to do it all on our own. As we know from elsewhere in the Bible, it is the Spirit working through us that permits transformation, not just our own efforts.



PRAYER

Help us to never despair of your love in spite of our faults, to turn towards you.

Break the chains that bind us so that we may enter into your light.

Jim Noyes,
Parishioner

February 14, 2016

First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 9: 8-15

Psalm 25: 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 Peter 3: 18-22

Mark 1: 12-15

SUMMARY

In Deuteronomy we read about God rescuing His people from Egypt and their giving harvest offerings in praise. Psalms reminds us of all God will do for those who acknowledge Him as Lord. Romans' says it is by our faith that we are put right with God and lastly, Luke takes us to the desert where the devil tempts Jesus.

REFLECTION

I was drawn to this particular reading because of a recent visit to an art gallery. I took a photo of a painting depicting the most stunning image of Jesus and the devil conversing high on a mountain, overlooking a valley.



Jesus is seated on a boulder while the devil stands, leaning in with the rock he wants Jesus to turn into bread. I imagine Jesus is physically tired and weak from being in the desert. The devil surely believes he has the upper hand.

The desert is lonely, quiet and without resources. It's a place where one is dependent and vulnerable, but ironically, it's also a place that allows one to find inner strength and courage. In the Old Testament, it's a place of testing. Luke's gospel reading tells of the Holy Spirit leading Jesus into the desert



where he remains for forty days and is tempted by the devil. The beauty and wisdom comes in Jesus' response each time he refuses to be lead astray. "*It is written*", followed by scripture befitting of the situation, emerges from Jesus with each offering or test the devil presents and eventually causes the devil to back off, for the time being. The appeal to physical needs and desires of the mind, in attempt to disrupt our walk with God, are indeed the work of the devil. He preys on those who are *in the desert* hoping to catch them before courage is found and faith restored. This gospel reading teaches us that our relationship and duty to God are more important than anything! Physical satisfaction, power and wealth, nor testing God's love brings us closer to His kingdom.



Plain and simple, the devil's work is to turn us away from our walk with God. It's more easily accomplished if we are weak in our faith and driven by our physical needs and desires of the mind, our ego. Only the devil makes promises that satisfy our ego. Jesus was not distracted in the desert by the devil's temptations because He placed God the Father above all things. By quoting scripture, to which the devil had no response, Jesus was able to ward off the devil and steer clear of his temptations. If we are strong in our faith and clear in our response to renounce the devil, then his attacks will be futile. As we journey through Lent, let us be mindful of our Lord's example. Remember all of the devils promises are deceitful and if we resist him, he too will flee from us.

PRAYER

Dear gracious God
During this Lenten season,
let our practices of fasting, almsgiving and prayer
help us be mindful of the fact that You alone
are what we need above all else.
Help strip us of desire for feeding
our ego and watch over us as we journey through
our own deserts.
In Your name we pray.
Amen

Karla Stephen

Parishoner, Education Formation Commission

February 15, 2016

Lenten Weekday

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15

Matthew 25:31-46

SUMMARY

The reading from Leviticus lays out various rules of conduct: no stealing, no robbery, no slander, no hatred, no swearing, hold no grudge, no dishonesty. Rather we are called upon to judge fairly, to be honest and to love our neighbors.



The reading from the Gospel of Matthew expands upon this conduct: whatever you have done to (or for) others, that is what you have done for Jesus. If you have given food to those who are hungry, drink to those who thirst, clothing to those in need, caring for those who are ill, you have given to God. In the alternative, if you have stolen from someone, then you have stolen from God; if you have shown hatred toward someone, you have shown hatred for God. It is in this manner that God will separate those who are blessed from those who are not. "For whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

REFLECTION

Pope Francis said, "God is in every person's life. God is in everyone's life. Even if the life of a person has been a disaster, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs or anything else - God is in this person's life. You can - you must - try to seek God in every human life."

Every day as I drive to work, I pass by a row of tents and tarps set up by LA's homeless on the sidewalk of Beaudry & 5th. One or two of them have dogs, some have bicycles, all are exposed to



the elements – cold, hungry, many are mentally ill.

I park my late-model car in the underground parking garage, take an elevator up to the 16th floor, and become a cog in the wheel of big deals, helping others make big money. As I look out the window from that office, I can still see the tents and I wonder if anything I do could truly make a difference. When I serve at a Midnight Mission or a St Francis center, does it touch someone's life? If I volunteer at one of the many area food banks, do I make a difference? Sometimes I can't see it. It seems that the ocean of need is so very great and I am only a tiny boat.



However, when reading these passages, it occurred to me that “I” don’t have to make a difference. It is not a requirement nor a box to be checked nor an item to be crossed off a list. What matters is that when I do for others, I am doing for God. It matters that I am trying to seek God in every person’s life, to love the unlovely. And I can’t do that on my own. In order to seek God in others, I must seek Him first in myself and ask for help and guidance in order to seek Him in others.

PRAYER

Dear Lord – Please help me to see You in **every** life that crosses my path. Let me seek your light and love in every person’s life and to love the unlovely.

~ Amen

Sherie Carroll, Parishioner

February 16, 2016

TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Reading 1: Isaiah 55: 10-11

Responsorial Psalm: Psalms 34: 4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19

Gospel: Matthew 6: 7-15

SUMMARY

The readings for today, remind me that our prayers do not go unanswered. Our Lord is always available to hear our prayers and these readings illustrate that our prayers do not “return to us void.” Admittedly, our prayers may be answered in many different ways.

REFLECTION

The first reading draws on metaphors as the prophet Isaiah invites us to return under the figure of a banquet. The invitation to seek the Lord is motivated by the mercy of a God whose “ways” are completely mysterious. Which is why it can be difficult to discern if our prayers have been answered. I would suggest reading the entire chapter from where this reading is selected. It is written with a rich poetic verse and is not long. It is poetry for your soul.

The Gospel reading is basically The Lord’s Prayer, which is said to be the one common denominator of all Christian churches. Many 12 Step programs end with the Lord’s Prayer even within mixed belief groups.

There are whole books written by those wiser than me, which have dissected the Lord’s Prayer. These dissertations, take the Lord’s Prayer, phrase by phrase and disclose how this is the “perfect” prayer. I can see great benefits to the ideas put forth in these scholarly definitions.

Until I dissect it line by line, the prayer is so familiar to our ear’s, we become complacent in its meaning. Both the reading and the gospel speak of Bread. “Giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats,” and “Give us this day our daily bread.” Jesus is our Bread of Life, our source for all in all. Our “daily” bread is a metaphor for our daily needs. We can trust God to supply our daily needs and our daily bread. And just as bread becomes stale, we have no need to “store up” God’s supply as this would show little faith in His infinite supply for the next day, week, month and years.



For a season of my life, I made a deliberate move to a small mountain town in Colorado. When I moved, I had no car, no phone, no television, no radio and no job. This little town had a “mountain bakery” specializing in breads and muffins. I remember going into that shop nearly every day and buying a “day-old” muffin for

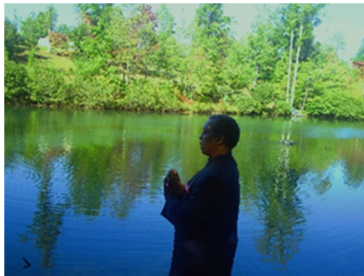
75 cents, half price. These were not your ordinary muffins, they were all homemade and huge. They were baked with all kinds of ingredients, stuffed full of raisins, nuts, grains and oats. I came to this bakery for my “daily bread.” I would take that muffin back to my little cabin along the creek. Ceremoniously, I placed that muffin on a plate from my cupboard. I then proceeded to eat it slowly and carefully with a knife and fork.



This was my dinner and it was the only dinner I had.

I frequently remember those days with fond nostalgia. Truly witnessing His daily providence. Yes, I eventually found a job and eventually ate proper meals.....still I recall those simple meals of bread alone. My entire existence for that season was built on simplicity and regard for His supply.

I firmly believe and KNOW that He will supply our Daily Bread.



Following along with the power of prayer and needs being met, these readings include additional connected material. “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him,” and “...shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.” We need not fear of praying wrongly, or asking for the inappropriate wants or needs. God brings us into His fellowship and He knows us. He knows what is best for us, even when we vainly pray for things unnecessary to our spiritual growth. And

sometimes we are granted the things WE ask for, only to find out that we really didn’t need them.

Working in tandem with our God, we do His will for our lives that will then achieve His goals, not our goals.

PRAYER

Supply me my Daily Bread, O, Lord.

Nancy Bevins

Executive to the PLD
Video Ministry

Shrine of St. Joseph Altar of Answered Prayers



February 17, 2016

Lenten Weekday

Jonah 3:1-10

Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19

Luke 11:29-32

SUMMARY

In the first reading we find Moses is speaking to his people in the promise land. He advises them to remember that God heard their cry and brought them to a better place; therefore they must be grateful and worship him.

The second reading, Paul encourages the people of Rome, to express their faith to God not only with their words but also with their heart. To trust in the Lord, for whoever calls on the Lord will be saved.

The Gospel recounts Jesus' temptation in the desert. Satan confronts Jesus by asking him that if he truly believes to be the Son of God then he must demand that God provides him for what he "needs", that he must give him all the power on earth he deserves, and finally that he is protected from any harm. Jesus however, consciously of his identity as the Son of God refutes all temptation by professing his faith to his father and advises Satan not to put God under the test.

REFLECTION



Everyday day our society demands that we strive for things that will bring about power, wealth and security into our life.

The more you own, the more you are valued. However,

in the Gospel Jesus teaches us that all these are not important in God's eyes.

Growing up with my great grandmother (a native Mexican), I learned that happiness in life is not about things but relationships



and gratitude. Every morning she will take me for walks up in the hills and tell me that as far as my eye could see, was mine because God had given it to me. She will also teach me that I must be compassionate and loving to all creatures and people because God had created everything to be loved and care for. “All this is yours and you don’t have to do anything to earn it because God created everything for you.”



She lived in a mud house in the outskirts of town. Sewed her own clothes; her diet consisted on herbs, flowers and corn tortillas. She hated the city or fancy clothes. She had only two daughters which were married and could provide a better living for her but she never wanted to move out of her house. People consider my great grandma to be among s the poorest people in town but I had never met a happier person in my life.

I might not have all the riches in the world, but what I have I know in my heart is enough and I’m grateful.

PRAYER

Lord, grant us the gift to be grateful for what we have; to strive for the riches in heaven not on earth. To recognize that you are our God and to you alone we belong. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us in times of struggle and doubt. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen

Gabriella Gordillo

Youth Ministry

February 18, 2016

Lenten Weekday

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25

Psalm 138:1-2AB, 2CDE-3, 7C-8

Matthew 7:7-12

SUMMARY

Today's 1st reading describes Esther's tremendous faith as she prays for her people, the Israelites. Matthew's Gospel demonstrates the power of prayer. The theme of all the readings is expressed in Psalm 138, "Lord on the day I called for help, you answered me; Your kindness endures forever".

REFLECTION

It's not easy being a woman, especially in the Persian Empire in 4th c. B.C.! The Book of Esther tells the story of the plot of Haman, the jealous and powerful assistant of King Xerxes to destroy, in a single day, all the Jews in the empire. Exquisite, Jewish Esther was chosen by King Xerxes - divine providence surely - to be his queen. Esther's courage to petition Xerxes illustrates her strong faith in the one, true God. Her prayer is answered when Xerxes issues a decree of extermination against all enemies of the Jews. What a compelling example, especially for the persecuted Christians in Syria and Iraq! Jews still commemorate her story today with the Feast of Purim. Esther is almost a type of Virgin Mary who saved her people from death by petitioning King Xerxes, the most powerful man in the world. Mary also saved mankind from death by making an appeal to the King of Kings, her divine Son. Mary has constant access to the King and brings comfort and aid to the oppressed and suffering!

In Matthew, Jesus begins with "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you". Prayer is how we communicate our needs and desires to God. Of course, God, being omniscient, knows what we need whether we ask or not, but prayer is the means God has chosen. The Catechism (2609) says that "Once committed to a conversion of the heart, the heart yearns to pray in *faith*. Faith is a filial adherence to God beyond what we feel and understand. It is possible because the beloved Son gives us access to the Father. He can ask us to seek and to knock since he himself is the door and the way". Matthew 7:12 Jesus gives us the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you: this sums up the



Law and the Prophets". Indeed, our daily life must be closely intertwined with God in prayer!



One of the verses in Psalm 138 sums up the faith of Esther and the teaching of Matthew: *"I will give thanks to you, O LORD, with all my heart, for you have heard the words of my mouth; in the presence of the angels I will sing your praise; I will worship at your holy temple and give thanks to your name."*

Prayer

Dear Lord, Here I am; I am all Yours. You promised: *"If you, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him."* Matt 7:9. I trust you Lord and believe in You. Thank you for your promises. Amen

Debbie Eggleston, Eucharistic Minister and Special Needs Ministry

Things to do today

- Ask
- Seek
- Knock

-Matthew 7:7

February 19, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Ez 18:21-28

Psalm 130:1-2, 4-5, 7-8 OR

Matthew 5:20-26

Summary

In today's gospel, Jesus tells his followers that unless they are righteous they will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus said that while their ancestors were told not to kill, and those who do kill are liable to judgment, actually - even those who are *angry* with their brother will be liable to judgment, and those who use the terms "raqa" or "fool" might be sent to "fiery Gehenna". And, Jesus says, if one wishes to make a gift at the altar but recalls that their "brother" has something against them – they are first to make amends with that person and *then* offer the gift. In the same way, if an opponent wishes to sue us – we should settle with them before we get to court.

Reflection



A couple of years ago, a man in his late 70's shared with me that he had been carrying a pain so deep and shameful that he rarely told anyone about it. Twenty years before he had essentially been

forced to quit his job and take early retirement because his boss was such a bully. This boss demeaned him to the point that he never fully recovered. He was still emotional in the recounting of this story. Though this boss had never threatened physical harm, the cruelty he showed this man "broke him" emotionally (his own words). He said that he continues to work on forgiveness for this person but that he was never the same after the experience.



I don't know why this man's boss treated him so cruelly, he may have been angry or mentally unwell or felt jealous of him, but I do know that in many ways – he “killed” him through his words and actions. For some reason, this man's story immediately came to mind when I read this gospel again. Our unkindness to others can cripple them. I know that sometimes, even if I only *sense* that someone doesn't like me, I find myself changing my behavior around them.



I believe that God created us to be intimately connected with others (“the body of Christ”) as a gift to us. The idea that Eve was taken from Adam's actual body to be his friend and companion, shows the intimacy of our relationship to each other. When we are in conflict with another, through our own doing, I don't think that we are capable of fully loving God nor perhaps of fully feeling God's love for us. Love God – love her creatures. How can we bring a “gift” to God's altar when we have rejected the ultimate gift itself – Love- as shown by His incarnation. It causes good parents grievous pain if two of their children are in conflict. If one of those children asks their parents, “what can I do for you?” Those parents will likely say – “make- up with your sibling.”

How much more must it “hurt” our Creator? How much would this man's life have been changed (and might be still) if his boss apologized for his maltreatment of him?

Prayer

Tender Jesus, so meek, so mild, teach us to be like You in all our ways. Teach us kindness, gentleness, generosity, and to be giving, forgiving, loving and caring. Teach us to follow in Your humble footsteps. Guide us to the place You want us to be, take control. Mold and shape us into the brilliant beings we were always destined to become. *Amen*

From Christianstt.com

Mary Schimmoller

Holy Family Volunteer Coordinator

February 20, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

DT 26: 16-19

Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8

Matthew 5:43-48

SUMMARY

Moses directed the people to observe God's commandments and listen to His voice, and if they did, they would be raised high above all nations and sacred to God. This message is similarly echoed in today's responsorial psalm, 'Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord.' In Matthew's gospel reading, Jesus speaks to the disciples but could just as easily be speaking to each of us in directing them to not love only their neighbors and hate their enemies, but rather to love their enemies as well and to pray for those who persecute them.

REFLECTION

It's much easier in our daily lives to just listen to our own commandments rather than the Lord's, and to love only 'our neighbors' and not 'our enemies', and to think ill of those who persecute or slight us in whatever manner. That's why it is important to have readings like today's, so we can be more cognizant of God's commandments and His voice on a daily basis, reminding us as Moses did that this is how we should be trying to lead our lives each day. We should be paying more attention to doing things in our daily lives, and in the way we behave towards others (family members, people at the store or on the road, clients or business relationships, fellow parents) in ways that will be pleasing to God, not necessarily gratifying ourselves. Easier said than done, that's for sure, at least for me. Deep down we are all 'good people', or so we convince ourselves of that, but are we living our lives by God's commandments and giving a little more 'love' and a little less 'hate' to those that are not our 'friends', or people who are strangers that aren't as fortunate as each of us that maybe NEED a little more love?

It's hard to fathom or completely grasp the concept of all people being 'God's children', but that truly is what our world is comprised of. When Jesus references in the gospel, 'He makes the sun rise on the bad and the good, and to rain on the just and unjust', to me that is what is being



referenced. The sun comes up a little less 'hate' to those that are not our 'friends', or people who are strangers that aren't as fortunate as each of us that maybe NEED a little more love?



It's hard to fathom or completely grasp the concept of all people being 'God's children', but that truly is what our world is comprised of. When Jesus references in the gospel, 'He makes the sun rise on the bad and the good, and to rain on the just and unjust', to me that is what is being referenced. The sun comes up everyday for the entire world, good and bad, not just our individual circle of 'friends and family', and when it rains it does so upon everyone equally. I know I can try to do a better job of being kind to someone else in some fashion (it might even be just being a better spouse or parent or professional colleague today). Remembering God's commandments, and loving your enemy as well as your friend, is not always easy in my daily life, but I know I have to try a little harder. I'll never make it to the perfection of Jesus, but I'll be a better person and be more pleasing to God by making the effort to be more aware of it in my daily life.

Prayer

Dear Lord, give me your Strength to be more compassionate, your Wisdom to be more caring and thoughtful, and your Spirit to be more loving. I ask this in the name of God, Creator of all that is good and Provider of all the gifts I am so thankful for each day.

Michael James

Administration Commission Chair

Communications and Technology Committee member

Husband to Julie, Dad to Ryan and Owen

February 21, 2016

Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18

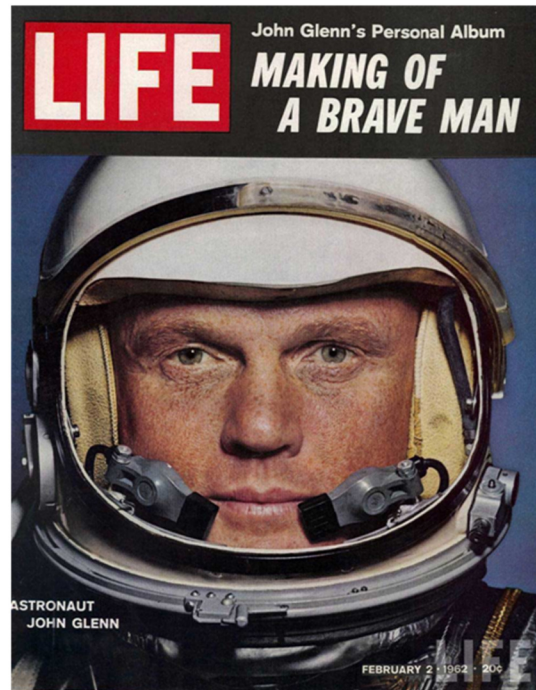
Psalms 27:1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14

Philippians 3:17-4:1 or 3:20-4:1

Luke 9:28B-36

SUMMARY

In today's second reading, Paul explains to the Philippians that the "enemies" of the cross of Christ treat their stomachs as God, they glory in their shame, and their minds are occupied with earthly things. By contrast, Christians' citizenship is in heaven, and we can look forward to Jesus transforming our lowly bodies to conform with his glorified body. Christ's power glorifies all of us.



REFLECTION

The word "glorify" means to "reveal or make clearer the glory of God by one's actions." In other words, our lives are glorified when we outwardly demonstrate goodness, mercy, love, forgiveness, and the other Fruits of the Spirit. Jesus set this example for us by his earthly ministry. He showed love and compassion for everyone, from cripples to tax collectors to thieves. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul warns the church that many of its members are conducting themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their God is their stomachs, their glory is their shame, and their minds are occupied by earthly things. Today, things aren't much different. People still take glory in acting shamefully. Television shows and movies create heroes out of characters who behave badly. Audiences enjoy these stories because the characters engage in socially unacceptable conduct and get away with it. Who doesn't secretly want to sometimes punch their boss in the face, get drunk at work, or carouse irresponsibly with the opposite sex? Shameful behavior is not on-



ly showcased in the media, it is celebrated. Not too long ago, heroes in the media were astronauts, cowboys and policemen. They were square, certainly, but admirable. You could argue that these characters exhibited actions that glorified God. Things generally worked out well for them in the end. Paul argues in this passage that there is merit to imitating others who are good role models. While it is a leap in logic to say that television viewers automatically consider shameful characters role models, we aren't always shown the connection between bad behavior and unhappiness. We see all the fun times and excitement, but not all of the disappointing consequences. None of us lives in a vacuum. Our actions have consequences for ourselves and for others. By emulating admirable people who have gone before, we reduce our risk of pain and disappointment and increase our chances of happiness and fulfillment. Jesus is the ultimate role model. His example of humility, selflessness and service provides the perfect road map for a healthy, contented lifestyle.



PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, help us to choose role models who glorify Christ, not earthly pleasures. Help us to remember that the most fulfilling things in life center around family, friends, and charity, not lustful desires. Help us to be good role models for the people who look up to us. Amen.

Damon Feldmeth, Parishioner

February 22, 2016

[Feast of the Chair of St. Peter the Apostle](#)

1 Peter 5:1-4

Psalm 23:1-3A, 4, 5, 6

Matthew 16:13-19

SUMMARY

Today's readings remind us that every one in the Church — from the humblest to the most exalted — is called to lovingly shepherd God's People.

REFLECTION

Of the twelve men listed in the gospels as Jesus' closest companions, I have to say that Peter is my favorite. I find him so *relatable*. A courageous coward. A humble blowhard. A container of contradictions . . . just like me.

Peter has enough faith to begin walking on the water toward Jesus, but not enough faith to continue once the storm challenges him (Mt. 14:22-33). One minute, Peter proclaims Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God (Mt. 16:13-20) and the next he's telling Jesus to sidestep God's will (Mt. 16:21-23). This apostle who holds the keys to the Kingdom is the one who swears he will die before he denies his Lord (Mt. 26:35), yet denies him three times before the cock crows (Mt. 27:69-75). Oh yes, I can look in the mirror and see the very inconsistent Simon Peter staring back at me.

Here's what gives me hope: Although Peter denied the Lord three times, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, allows Peter to reaffirm his faith in him three times as well. After the Resurrection, Jesus asks Peter if he loves him, not once, not twice, but three times. Each time, Peter responds, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." (John 21:15-17) and he is restored to the loving relationship he had with Jesus previous to the denials. Not only that, but Jesus gives Peter a task, "Feed my sheep." In other words, equip the rest of "the flock" to mend their broken relationships with Jesus and with one another.

PRAYER

Excerpts from *The Litany of St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles*

Saint Peter, pray for us. □



St. Peter, whose heart was pierced with one look from Jesus, pray for us. □
St. Peter, who cried out, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," pray for us.
St. Peter, that we may have a constant and mutual charity among ourselves, pray for us. □
That we may taste and see more and more how sweet is the Lord, pray for us.



TIM O'BRIEN
Bible Study



February 23, 2016

Lenten Weekday

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20;

Psalm 50: 8-9, 16bc-17, 23;

Matthew 23: 1-12

SUMMARY

Through Isaiah, the Lord exhorts the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to give up their sinful ways and promises them forgiveness and prosperity if they repent. In the Psalm we are further chastised for giving only lip service to God's laws. For those who truly praise God and walk in His ways, salvation is the reward. Jesus gives further warning in the Gospel not to live our lives for the praise and glory of man on this earth. Humility and service are the keys to a life pleasing to the Lord. "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

REFLECTION



I recently heard a radio commentator speak on the effects of criticism and the difference between men and women on the way criticism is given and received. He said that while men often intend to state a fact, ie. "There is laundry on the floor." Or "This casserole is really salty.", the woman hears that she has failed in her efforts to keep up the house or prepare a tasty meal. When women criticize their mates the effects can be devastating to his ego and therefore to his relationship with her.

My point is that we often criticize others to make ourselves appear better, smarter, more important than the person we are criticizing. It is a way of "exalting ourselves" over others. This is not what Jesus taught. It is so easy to find fault with others, especially to others closest to us. And while we might bite our tongues rather than say what annoys us about friends or acquaintances, we are often quick to tell our loved ones how they are not meeting our expect-



tations. If we really think about it, we often criticize others for behavior we don't like in ourselves.



PRAYER

Dear Merciful Lord,
Thank you for this opportunity to reflect on my relationship with others I want to see You in everyone I meet. Please forgive me for being judgmental. You are all-loving, without exception, without reservation. Please help me to repent and believe Your good news.

Lydia Banales,

Parishioner



Feb 24th, 2016

Lenten Weekday

Jeremiah 18:18-20

Psalms 31:5-6, 14, 15-16

Matthew 20:17-28

Summary

Both readings tell of plots against God's chosen messengers. Although the first only hints at what may follow, the Gospel lays out God's plan for Jesus suffering, death and resurrection, albeit in two "takes."

Reflection

The plot against Jesus, which He describes in more detail, is interrupted by a subplot about heavenly rewards. Why does this aberration appear and distract us at such an important moment? The reason Jesus became man and came to live among us: Jesus is describing his oncoming Passion, and nobody gets it. Even Mom, who must have heard what He is focused on, had her own agenda (she does the talking, notice, and not the boys) that, as a more mature person, she should be able to see the importance of his message.

How like our own focus on our individual agendas. God may be speaking to us anytime, not just at Eucharist or prayer moments during the day. Are we listening, even expecting to hear from him? Have we set aside time just to listen? Are we able to turn off the voices that rattle around in our heads every waking moment to allow His voice into our consciousness?

This may be the time, during Lent, to practice this contemplation. It's usually very hard to team to quiet our minds, for extended periods of 5 to 15 minutes at a time, and just practice listening, even if nothing seems to be there. Wait in humble silence. Don't try to push it. Just "rest in the Lord" and let him do all the work.



Prayer
(practice contemplation)

Mary Miasnik
Parishioner



February 25, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Jeremiah 17:5-10

Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 & 6

Luke 16:19-31

Summary

There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day and a poor man named Lazarus, who lay hungry at his gate. The poor man died, and was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and went to hell. He cried out, "Have mercy on me!" Abraham said, "Remember that during your lifetime you received good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; now is comforted here, and you are in agony."

Reflection

This man is so far out of God's love and experience. He does not even see the change of the seasons in God's creation. The next person enjoys God's love as a tree always green, well watered, without distress. God knows all of our hearts and will reward us according to His ways.

Blessed are they whose hope is in the Lord. We are not followers of new fads or fashions or who is who; but doers of God's will. To think of the good God has for us. For at the end, wickedness never lasts it just vanishes away. It's so true. Blessed are we whose hope is in the Lord.

What we see in real time is not what God sees. We see only the Bling Bling, all the lights, glitter or the "purple garments"



of today. In Luke's gospel 16: 19 – 31, the rich man's time ended and with it so did his party life. All Lazarus got was life's scraps. But God's love was with Lazarus. The rich man ended up in a place without God. God's love continued with Lazarus even after his death. The rich man asked for something beyond his control: help for his family. But they will have to seek God for themselves.



Prayer

Jesus Christ my God and Savior, in this time of Lent keep me humble to hear, to see and to learn about the scriptures. Deepen my faith journey.

Joey Bermudez

Welcome Center Ministry



February 26, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13A, 17B-28A

Psalm 105:16-17, 18-19, 20-21

Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

The first reading is a telling of the story of Joseph and his relationship to his brothers, his father and his destiny, seen through the mysterious ways that God works through those we least expect to show us we are worth saving and forgiving. Responsorial Psalm continues this theme by letting us know that we should “Remember the marvels that the Lord has done” for us and constantly does for us. In the Gospel Matthew tells the story of how Jesus questioned the production of good works of Jacob’s descendents and foretells of the rejection of the redemption that Christ offered, only to become the cornerstone of a new people that God has called to live with him for eternity.

Reflection

For many of us, this whimsical telling of the story about the boy Joseph with the amazing multi-colored coat catches our imagination. A young boy, who is an assistant to Jacob’s wives, has many dreams and visions. His dreams portend the future, a future that was rejected by those who Joseph chose to share his dreams with: his brother, his family. In ancient Hebrew tradition, the favored or honored person in the tribe wore the most decorated or revered garment. The intent was to capture the symbolism of the prophet, the savior, the voice in the desert (someone considered special or different who could help all the people, a Shaman).

As with all prophets, even those who are familiar to us and who we know, we become scared and we reject these people or ideas outright because we don’t understand. Joseph’s brothers were scared of his dreams which appeared on the surface to say that Joseph would rule over his father and brothers. Because of their normal human fear, they became incensed with Joseph, to the point of plotting to kill him. It is only with divine intervention that Joseph is rescued by being sold for 20 pieces of silver. These 20 pieces of silver will come up again in the New Testament as Judas betrays Jesus. Judas, as are the brothers of Joseph, is too scared to realize that redemption is at hand. He is too wrapped up in the struggles of his everyday life and goes for the quick fix (20 pieces of *silver*) to

solve the momentary problem, as do Joseph’s brothers. It is only after acquiring that for which they wished; that they realize their mistakes and the emptiness and futility of what they have done. They soon learn that what they have rejected; the “*cornerstone*” will indeed rise up and become the foundation of eternal life and redemption.

Joseph’s brothers try to take his coat and succeed in wresting it away from him.

We too try to use our egos to make ourselves bigger than God, not realizing that Joseph is still Joseph, with or without his coat and God is still God whether we acknowledge it or not.



Joseph's brothers take the coat and dip it in goat's blood, after they have taken him out of the city and placed him into a dry well; then they sell him into slavery. The images here immediately strike up our memories as we remember the Lamb of God whose blood was shed for us, outside the city of Jerusalem and for whom the soldiers cast lots for his torn garment robe (symbolizing the torn body of Jesus that ultimately could not be desecrated as his soul lived on through his people).

Joseph keeps faith and maintains his steadfast belief in his own connection to God, through his dreams and visions which foretell of his rebirth and ascension to greatness. He realizes this when he becomes the Pharaoh's right hand man and chooses to have pity and forgive his brothers. Jesus does the same thing as he sheds his blood for us as the lamb that is sacrificed only to rise to ascension to the right hand of the Father where he sits forgiving our sins and allowing our humanity to show his greatness.

Prayer

Joseph you have showed us how to listen to God's "word" in all the ways that God can speak to us, if we but pay attention and listen to our waking and sleeping thoughts. God, your love knows no bounds and even though we reject you, you still want us in your house at your table. Please help me be worthy of the honor that you have bestowed upon me and to not reject your calling, I pray in your son's name. Amen.

Bill Mahoney
HF Parishioner



February 27, 2016

Lenten Weekday

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20

Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

SUMMARY

The Gospel is the story of the Prodigal Son. The younger of two sons asked his father for his inheritance now. His father gives him his half which the son takes and squanders. The son realizes his error and returns home to ask forgiveness and to work as a hired hand. The father sees him off in the distance and runs to welcome and forgive him. He has him dressed as his son and throws him a party. His older brother is not pleased that his brother, who squandered his money has now returned and was forgiven by their father.



This reading is important because it is the year of mercy based on this passage as well as it was what Bishop David recently spoke about at Holy Family Church.

REFLECTION

The one point that the Bishop made that we were unaware of was what the actions of the father really meant. The request made by the younger son for his portion of the inheritance was the same as saying to the father, "I wish you were dead." The younger son thought he would enjoy his life more if he could make his way in the world, walking away from the security of his father's home, the life of a son of a man of position and possessions, the support of a family that gave him all he needed to thrive.

In the Jewish culture, this type of act meant that the father should have killed his son. If he did not, then that task fell to the community, because of the lack of respect and tradition. Neither the father nor the community took the life of the younger son. Upon the younger son's return, the older brother could have also taken his



younger brother's life for what he had done. This was not done and the younger son life was spared. He lived through the mercy and forgiveness of his father. The same mercy and forgiveness that was explained to the older brother by the father, the father had lost someone so precious, so great was the loss that when the younger brother returned, not as a second son but as a servant, willing to do anything to insure he would not starve to death, embraced and protected by the father, given back his rightful place in the family, celebrated and loved. The mercy that the father showed is the same mercy that Jesus shows each one of us each day. The richness and wealth of our lives, not in material things, but in the love and adoration that is shown to us by our families, our friends, our community, each reaches out to embrace us on our journey, our formation to do the will and work of Jesus.



PRAYER

Father, please allow us to see your mercy always and give it in return to others. Allow us not to judge based on the actions we have seen or the hurt and pain when someone walks away from our lives. Let us be merciful when others are hurt and sad, let us be merciful when there is injustice and want in our world. Allow us to be merciful as you are merciful. Allow us to do your will and spread mercy through our simple acts of kindness and compassion. We ask this in the name of your Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Candy & Jay Krueger, 4th year Diaconate Formation

February 28, 2016

Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus 3:1-8A, 13-15

Psalm 103: 1 -2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11

I Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12

Luke 13: 1-9

Summary

Today's readings begin with anointing of David by Samuel: "Then, Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed David, in the presence of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the LORD rushed upon David." The psalm is the familiar Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd...." Paul reminds us to be "children of the light," and John's gospel tells the story of the man born blind who tells Jesus, "I do believe, Lord."

Reflection

As I was beginning to reflect on these readings, we received word from London that our dear friend, Gladys, age 97, is dying. As I write this reflection, waiting for further word that Gladys is in the arms of our God, I meditate on these readings with the realization that the spirit of the Lord surely rushed upon Gladys, and she lived as a child of the light with a deep faith in the Lord who was her Shepherd.

The story of Gladys is both ordinary and extraordinary. Today, upon learning about Gladys, our son wrote to our family, "What a wonderful and marvelous woman -- a true model for living life to its fullest."

Gladys' husband and my father were business associates who met in Geneva over 50 years ago. I first met Gladys as a young teenager and began hearing her story – her marriage before the onset of World War II, the experiences of living in war-torn London, her miscarriage during the Blitz leaving her unable to conceive again, the adoption of their daughter, a neglected baby who flourished in a home filled with love and laughter. A great storyteller, Gladys brought the hardships and pain of war to life – but always with humor and a zest for living. Years later, she lost her beloved husband, Ted, on the day he received his first pension check, and while I know she never fully recovered from this loss, her love for life and the people who filled it continued. Hospitality





was her special gift. I was the recipient of her love and her generosity of spirit for most of my life, and we visited many times – on both sides of “the Pond.” In my mind’s eye, I see the steeple of All Souls Anglican Church in Twickenham designed by Sir Christopher Wren, the beautiful little garden where her ashes will soon be interred, and the chalice in the church that will bear her name for all to remember this ordinary and extraordinary woman who filled our lives with such joy and was a constant reminder of God’s goodness and God’s healing presence in our lives.



Prayer

God of all goodness and graciousness, remind us that we are to be “children of the light,” that you fill our days with wonder and joy even in times of darkness. Give us grateful hearts to remember those who have witnessed for us your presence in their lives and whose faith in you has strengthened our own faith and given us a deeper understanding of your mercy and tenderness.

Jane Argento

RCIA Team

February 29, 2016

Lenten Weekday

2Kings 5:1-15AB

Psalm 42:2, 3; 45:3, 4

Luke 4:24-30

SUMMARY

People are not apt to accept a new prophet, even when one is in their own midst. Such a prophet, who is closely aligned with God's ways, is often dismissed as too ordinary or even worse, wanted by an angry mob intent on hurling him down a hill. Ironically, the human soul cries out for God's presence, but so often we cannot see it, even when it is right there in front of us.

Reflection

Humans are riddled with contradictions. These readings graphically illustrate this. We are stubborn and foolish, but we are also needy and continually aching because we are so disconnected from God. We are constantly stumbling, trying to find grace. We want, but we are afraid. We seek, but we cannot see. Our rational mind weighs down our spirit—it cannot quite believe what it sees or, if so, not for very long. We have brief glimmers of insight, and then quickly, the modern mind brushes it away, blurring the crystal vision, silencing the ancient call.

Some of us try many things before we get to a more nuanced relationship with God. Like the Commander Naaman in the first reading in 2 Kings, many of us believe that nothing too basic can help us. We must see something extraordinary as proof—we must feel a big jolt! But truly, God is within us right now, and all around us, too, in the very ordinary moments of our lives.

God, the spirit, is the insistent voice, the whispering one, which is singing to us—trying to embrace us. Can we do better than those in the temple who wanted to throw Jesus down the hill because he said true, but uncomfortable, things that they did not like?

The stretching out for God can be hard and even painful. Maybe it's because we don't use our interior "muscles" enough. It can be challenging being accepting, loving, non-judgmental and even contemplative regularly. However, it can be done. We know, and have heard many say, that we should seek God in all we see. The act of doing this will not only bring us greater internal peace and add to the good of the world, but it also will help turn our faces toward God.

If that great longing and emptiness, so gorgeously evoked for us in today's psalm, is to be filled only by finding the face of God, then we have many chances each hour in our everyday journey to make tiny movements toward



that divine reality. We need not continue to be afraid of the spiritual discomfort or the prophet's words. God's loving acceptance of us—and desire for us—will help us find the way.

Prayer

Glorious God, may we begin this day as if it were our first; may we register deep within our hearts the beauty that is around us. May another amethyst and gold sunset not go down without us seeing your work, "your face," in front of us. May we come one step closer to a never-ending embrace with you. Amen.

Judith Hamilton-Márquez,
RCIA Dismissal Ministry



March 1, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Daniel 3:25, 34-43

Psalm 25:4-5AB, 6 & 7BC, 8-9

Matthew 18:21-35

SUMMARY

In this passage Jesus teaches us about forgiveness. He tells the story of an unforgiving servant to make his point. A servant who was forgiven of a huge debt by a king refuses to show the same grace to another servant who owes him a significantly smaller amount. The king subsequently sends the first servant to prison to be tortured until his debt is paid in full. Jesus warns that God will treat us similarly if we do not forgive.

REFLECTION

I do not believe Jesus means forgiveness to be a quantifiable event despite his use of numbers to describe it. I believe he uses numbers to emphasize the importance and magnitude of forgiveness in Christian living. Forgiveness is to treat others the way God treats us. The essence of Christ is to forgive. Forgiveness is a way loving, a way of relating, a way of being. If we are to follow Christ, we must forgive.

It is not easy to forgive the Sandy Hook killer, Osama bin Laden and his followers, the clergy who sexually abused minors and the Church hierarchy who did not act responsibly. It is even more difficult when it is personal, not a national tragedy, a foreign policy or institution in the news. All of us have been hurt by harsh words, broken promises, betrayals, physical and emotional wounds. It is hard not to seek revenge or withdraw from relationships. When we forgive we release



ourselves from these negative thoughts and acts. When we forgive we look to the future without recrimination. This does not mean we condone or approve of what was done. It means we “let go” and align ourselves with God. When we forgive, we reflect the forgiveness God has shown to us. Forgiveness is an act of hope. It heals our souls. It is the essence of being a follower of Christ.



PRAYER

Lord I cannot do better than the words you gave to us in Your prayer...

“forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”

However Lord, help me to be sincere when I say these words. Help me to commit to forgiving those whom I feel have hurt me. Help me understand that these words are a call to action not just an empty phrase. When I forgive as you forgive I will be closer to you.

JESSICA KORZENECKI

Parishioner



March 2, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9

Psalms 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20

Matthew 5:17-19

SUMMARY

In Deuteronomy, Moses exhorts his people to hear and follow the law as wisdom of the Lord, so that they may live and experience the good and just life the Lord is leading them to. The Psalmist invites Jerusalem to praise the Lord for the security and prosperity the Lord has given to the nation -- the People of God whose law and prophetic word were for a time declared only to them. Jesus explains he has not come to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill them; he tells us one may be great within the Kingdom by obeying and teaching the commandments of the law.

REFLECTION

Jesus embraces the letter of each Jewish law to fulfill the spirit of all: right relationship with God and neighbor.

The Lenten spirit of reconciliation to that right relationship calls us to examine our consciences, confess and repent of our sins, and do more fully what Jesus would do. We thus pray to the Father, "thy kingdom come, thy will be done."

The divine will is this: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets." (Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) ¶ 2055, citing Matthew 22: 36-40.) The Ten Commandments "must be interpreted in light of this twofold yet single commandment of love...." (CCC ¶ 2055.)

The Fifth Commandment first comes to my mind. "You shall not kill." It applies to abortion (CCC ¶¶ 2270-2275) and respect for health (CCC ¶¶ 2288-2291), to name just two issues.

On abortion, the Church teaches: "From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a per-



son - among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life." (CCC ¶ 2270.) Before voting in 2012, I asked myself: Which candidate's policies would most likely



reduce the number of abortions? I ask myself today: What can I do to help poor pregnant girls and women have a real choice unfettered by economic duress? I think of St. Anne's ministry to them in Los Angeles.



grow and reach maturity: food and clothing, housing, health care, basic education, employment, and social assistance"? (CCC ¶ 2288) This complex goal somehow prompts in me a simple question: Do I tip waitresses and waiters enough to help make their incomes equivalent to "a just wage" to attain those living conditions? "A just wage is the legitimate fruit of work. To refuse or withhold it can be a grave injustice." (CCC ¶¶ 2434.)

PRAYER

I pray for the gift of submitting my will to the Father's will for me this Lent. I pray to more fully examine my conscience through Church teachings on the Ten Commandments in light of the twofold yet single commandment of love. I pray that I may confess the sins so revealed, repent, and by word and deed grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

PHIL ARGENTO

March 3, 2016

Third Week of Lent – March 7, 2013

Jeremiah 7: 23-28

Psalms 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Luke 11:14-23

SUMMARY

In Jeremiah, God commands his people to listen. If they listen, they will hear his voice, walk in his ways and prosper. But they did not listen or pay heed – they are to be told that they are a nation who does not listen and from which faithfulness has disappeared.

In Luke's Gospel, we are told the story of Jesus driving a demon from a mute. When the demon left and the man spoke, the crowds were amazed, thinking that it was the power of demons that had driven the demon away. They did not listen or understand that a demon being driven out by a demon was a house divided against itself.

REFLECTION

This world is filled with sounds of all sorts – a myriad of voices, laughter, music, snatches of conversations, honking horns, rumbling machinery, elevator chimes, sirens, blowing air vents, slamming doors, wind chimes, the clinking of silver against dishware, hummingbird wings, the television, the television, the television... the list is seemingly endless. These are things we *hear* every day and mostly tune out. The real question is to what do we actually spend time *actively listening*? To the boss or co-workers (maybe), to our family (hopefully), to clients (probably). A musician actively

listens to music. A good doctor truly listens to a patient. Steven Covey (*7 Habits of Highly Effective People*) said, "Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

SHEPHERD'S VOICE

A Joyful 'toon by Mike Waters



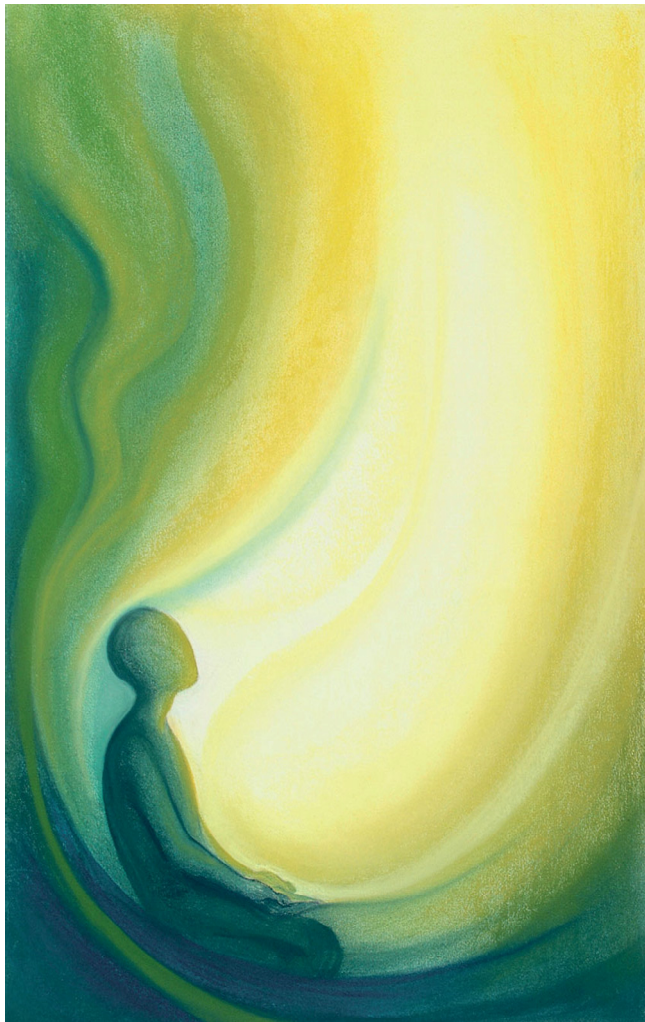
My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.
- JOHN 10:27 NIV



This may be true when talking to God also. For example: When I pray, I thank God for what He's done for me in my life, then I turn right around and ask Him for things – blessings for family & friends, safety in travel, wisdom in decision-making, etc. This is my "reply" to God.



But how much time do I spend each day listening to God? Reading His word and listening for His voice through meditation or scripture study or listening to and/or reading the words of scholars, trying truly to hear His voice? Not nearly enough, in fact very little. Here in the midst of Lent, I recall the wise words of an RCIA director, who said that Lent was not necessarily about "giving something up" but about making more room in our lives to listen to (and for) the voice of God.



PRAYER

Dear God – help me to be still; to truly listen for your voice with my ears open, my eyes open, my heart open and my mouth shut. Amen.

SHERIE CARROLL

Parishioner

March 4, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Hosea 14:2-10

Psalm 81:6C-8A, 8BC-9, 10-11AB, 14 & 17

Mark 12:28-34

SUMMARY

After Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, he is questioned by various leaders and groups of leaders from ancient Judaism (including the Pharisees, Sadducees, and others). In the midst of this hostile setting, one individual scribe approaches Jesus and asks him, "Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus, quoting scripture replies, "The first is this: *Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.* The second is this: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself.* There is no other commandment greater than these." The scribe agrees with Jesus and Jesus, seeing that the scribe understood, tells him, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God."



REFLECTION

I love the Church. I love the aesthetics of the church, from the style of worship here at Holy Family, to the beautiful building we are blessed to worship in. I love the rituals of the Church, both local and universal. I respect the theology and teachings of the Church. I am blessed to share the traditions of our Church, both local and universal, with my family, friends, and community. Jesus was firmly planted in the tradition of His people, too. Yet through his answer to the scribe's question, he also challenges us to interpret traditions in a new way; to frame the meaning and purpose of each tradition according to His words.

In choosing these commandments, Jesus doesn't intend for us to throw out all of our rituals, traditions, ceremonies, theology, or ecclesiology. His commandment "to love the Lord your God" and "love your neighbor" is a call to infuse all of our religious practices with new meaning. Coming to Mass or participating in any of the other rituals, ceremonies, or traditions of the community isn't what God asks of us. What He asks of us is to love. Our rituals, ceremonies, and tradition shouldn't define us. Our defining characteristic is love. We are endowed by our creator with His most precious gift. We are called to find and use that gift. It may manifest itself in many ways within each of us individually and all of us collectively, but it is our purpose. We are



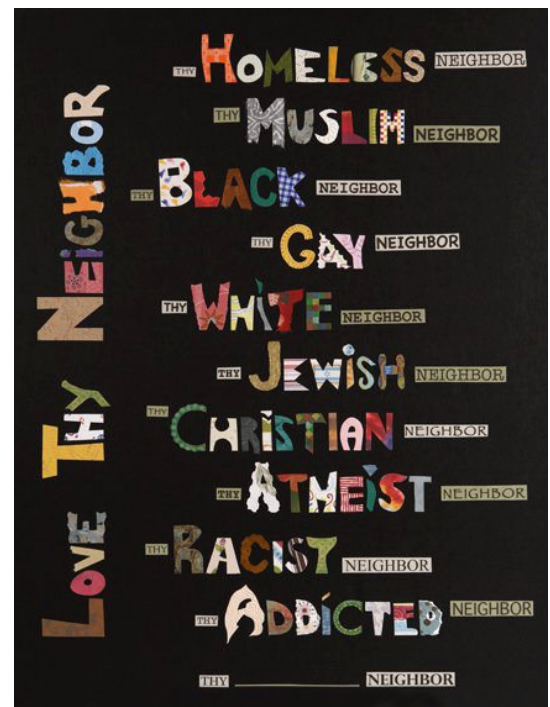
called to put aside petty differences, called to rise above wrongs within and outside of our Church. We are called to help our brothers and sisters. We are fulfilled by Him when we bring His gift to the world. We are called to define ourselves, our families, our children, and our communities by the love we have received from Him and called to give to others. The ritual of our lives can either enhance or inhibit this commandment. I know mine does both.



PRAYER

Lord, though I know that I am not far from the Kingdom of God, help me to grow closer by filling my life with Your love and allowing me to share that love with all I encounter.

DOUG DECAUWER AND JENNIFER ROCKENBACK
Parishioners



March 5, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Hosea 6:1-6

Psalm 51:3-4, 18-19, 20-21AB

Luke 18:9-14

SUMMARY

The Gospel reading is one of the parables, and addresses how to follow and pray. The parable recounts the story of the holy man, a Pharisee, and a tax collector going to the temple. The Pharisee prays openly, defining his good works publically and comparing himself to the failings of the tax collector. The tax collector prayed privately and acknowledged his own failings. These differences are apparent to all and correct. However Jesus points out that the tax collector was justified and not the Pharisee, and that people who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who are humble in the face of God will be exalted.

REFLECTION

The parable has many messages, for people about how to live; the danger of pride and the implicit danger that pride brings with comparison to others. Just as the Pharisee outlines his good works and then thinks of all the people that do not measure up in either thought or action, we all can see the similarity with hierarchy and effort that we put into the church. The hardworking Priest, the diligent observant parishioner, or the writers of online pray books. Here we are reminded that God honors those who realize their actions, ministry, and observance do not commend them to God or make them superior; as we are all objects of God's grace and mercy.

Another lesson from this parable is on how to pray. The Pharisee states his superiority and compares himself to the tax collector. Then lists his observance and his committed nature of his faith. The tax collector knows he is a sinner (the Latin for tax collector could be translated as Publican or tax collector, and the Publican has connotations of a bar, or pub, owner) and a collaborator with



the Romans (the invading force). He also asks for mercy. He desires to improve and knows the only is through God's mercy.



PRAYER

Lord, I am a sinner, be merciful.
Amen

PAUL AND KRISTA BRENNAN

Parishioners



Photo: Mormon Rocks, Cajon Pass, California
Photo Credit: Paul Brennan

March 6, 2016

[Fourth Sunday of Lent](#)

Joshua 5:9A, 10-12

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 67-

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

SUMMARY

One day you will ask me which is more important? My life or yours? I will say mine and you will walk away not knowing that you are my life. Khalil Gibran.

REFLECTION

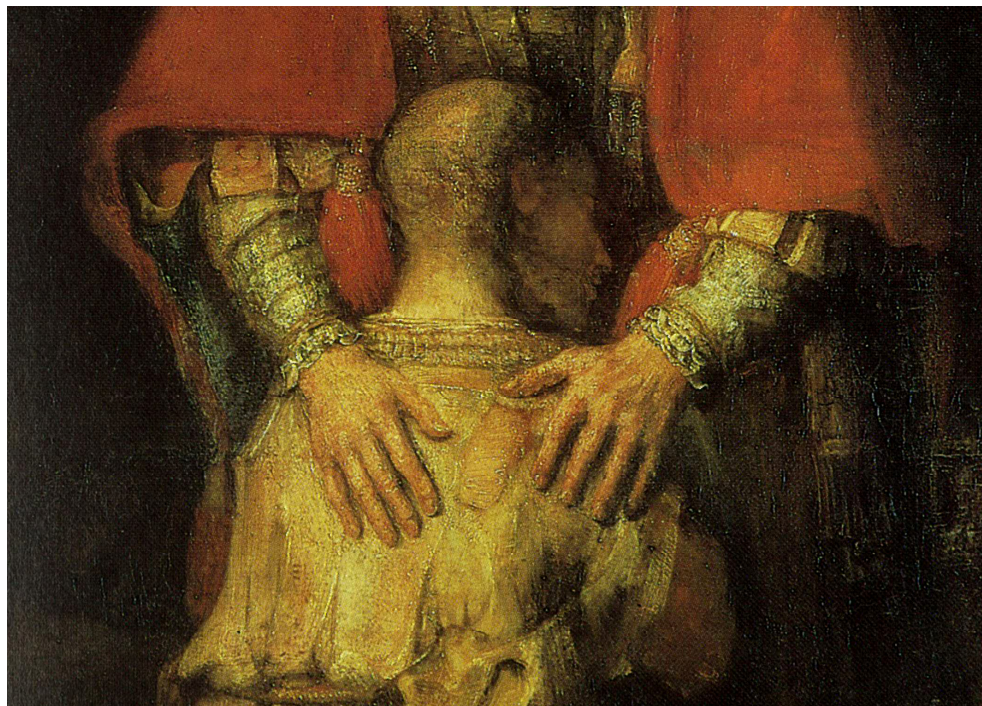
When considering Luke's Gospel of the prodigal son, four prominent figures come to my mind: a beloved pope, a baroque artist, and two Catholic priests – one, a theologian; the other, a retired pastor – both mystics.

At the onset of his papacy in 2013, Pope Francis set an extraordinary example of mercy. By emulating the prodigal son's humility, he declared himself a sinner and accepted his papal position in the "spirit of penance." To further emphasize his message, Pope Francis introduced his **Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy** at the second anniversary of his election. *"This is the first holy year on a specific theme...and by his personal witness to the Gospel of mercy, the pope is – making clear to everyone that to follow Jesus means to be merciful always."* (America magazine, Jan: 18-25, 2016).

Baroque artist Rembrandt van Rijn produced his magnificent masterpiece, **The Return of the Prodigal Son**, toward the end of his life when he had lost everything. Of singular beauty, the painting symbolizes God's mercy as illustrated in Luke's gospel, reminding us of our struggle for salvation. Henri Nouwen discovered Rembrandt's painting during the darkest period of his life. He was struck by the detail of the father's hands resting on the son's shoulders: the left hand, masculine, thick, strong, affirming "you are my son;" the right hand, smaller, feminine, gentle, representing tenderness and love. Its powerful effect is authoritative, yet merciful. Deeply moved by this image, Nouwen began to heal, gradually accepting God's mercy.

At the 50th anniversary of his priesthood, Monsignor Clement Connolly, retired pastor of Holy Family Church, indicated that **The**





Return of the Prodigal Son was his favorite painting. This would be consistent with the way he has lived his vocation, with a welcoming heart, mercy and compassion for human-

ity. Once, he asked his congregation, “To whom do [each of] you belong?” Nouwen would have undoubtedly responded, “We are all His beloved sons and daughters.”

PRAYER

Lord, give me faith in your endless mercy, your boundless forgiveness, your unfathomable goodness.
Let me not be tempted to think that my sins are too great to be forgiven...
Let me never run away from you, but return to you again and again, asking you to be
my Lord, my Shepherd.

from A Holy Week Prayer For Trusting God's Mercy, by Henri Nouwen

Diane Collison,

Eucharistic Minister

March 7, 2016

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

First Reading: Jos 5:9A, 10-12

Responsorial Psalm Ps. 34:2-3. 4-5, 6-7

Second Reading: 2 Cor 5:17-21

Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

SUMMARY

Today's Gospel features the well-known story of the Prodigal Son which illustrates God's unconditional love and forgiveness. Lesser known is the deeper message of the parable.

REFLECTION

The Gospel parable of the Prodigal Son illustrates God's unconditional acceptance and forgiveness. God is a God of endless second chances. No human being can escape making mistakes. If we are wise, we learn from them. I have been a very slow learner. The deeper message of the parable of the Prodigal Son is that God allows us to make our own way through life, even when the path we choose is a dead end. God gives us the freedom to make mistakes, to make bad choices. But God is always there, always ready to warmly embrace us when we turn around and head in the right direction. God gives us the freedom to be co-creators of the gift of life God gave us. Whether we choose to walk with God or without God, God's love remains constant. No matter what we do in life, no matter how bad our screw-ups, God is there to help us pick ourselves up and start over. The journey through life is a twisting path, filled with ups and downs, possibilities and potholes, consolations and desolations. The journey is hard. We must climb mountains of problems and traverse deserts of doubt. But God is there walking with us, pointing the way, and so there is no need to fear or falter.

Life, the Gospel proclaims over and over again, prevails over death. The story of Jesus does not end on the cross but in the resurrection. God is not finished with me...or you. God is always laboring to bring about a new creation in each of us...especially when others seem intent on judging and destroying us. Jesus



wants us to know joy and fulfillment, even in the midst of our suffering. Jesus calls each of us out of the tomb of our mistakes. Like he did with Lazarus, Jesus wants to unbind us so we can be fully alive.



Take a moment and breathe in God's love...and then be still and see where you are on your journey to God.

PRAYER

O Lord, help me to renew my innermost being. I stumble and fall often. My many failures disappoint me. But You never treat me as I deserve. You close your eyes to my faults. I trust in your endless mercy and compassion.

O Lord, I need your help to truly purify my deepest being, to create there a more suitable chamber for Your spirit to reside. I appeal to Your gentleness, O God of mercy. I seek Your divine help, O God of compassion. I cling to Your faithfulness, O God of endless love. Amen.

GERARD THOMAS STRAUB

Parishioner

President of Pax et Bonum Communications



March 8, 2016

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12

Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9

John 5:1-16

SUMMARY

How to keep the Lord's Day holy.

REFLECTION

In the Gospel, Jesus is in Jerusalem at a pool called Bethesda in Hebrew. There lay a number of the ill and lame. Jesus found a man who had been waiting thirty-eight years to be cured after the water in the pool had been stirred. The issue was that there was no one to help the man enter the pool.

After the man told Jesus that he wanted to be well, Jesus told the man to rise up, take his mat and walk. This was on the Sabbath when the man was cured and was carrying his mat. The carrying of your mat was something that was not to be done on the Sabbath and the cured man was confronted about this. Later those who confronted the man found out that Jesus had cured him and instructed him to carry his mat. So after all of this, again Jesus was



looked poorly upon for curing on the Sabbath, not keeping the commandment of keeping the Lord's Day of rest holy.

When we think of keeping the Lord's Day holy, we usually associate it with going to Mass. But there are additional ways that this can be done.

As many come to Mass, they bring items for the Giving Bank. These include food items, coupons, toiletries, and some clothing items such as socks for the homeless.

Midmorning on Sundays, without any fanfare, a group of dedicated individuals show up at St. Joseph Center and prepare the grocery bags that will be



distributed on the next day.

These are just a few ways to help keep the Lord's Day holy. Whatever activity that you choose to help another and no matter what day you do it on, you are helping in keeping the Lord's Day holy.



PRAYER

Creator God, help us to remember that each day belongs to you. As we go through the day, help us to see you in all others and serve them in whatever manner that we can. Help us to see the needs of others and be willing to respond. With a smile, a hello, or a sandwich, we help keep your day holy.

We ask this in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

CANDY AND JAY KRUEGER

Deacon Couple Aspirants

March 9, 2016

[Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent](#)

Isaiah 49:8-15

Psalms 145:8-9, 13-14, 17-18

John 5:17-30

SUMMARY

In Isaiah, the Lord says to the prisoners: "Come out!" To those in darkness: "Show yourselves!". And to all: "I will never forget you." In this beautiful psalm, the Lord is lavishly described as "gracious and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness. The Lord is good to all". "The Lord lifts up all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.....The Lord is near to all who call upon him." In the Gospel, Jesus declares his intimate relationship to the Father, and states the urgency of his proclamation: "the hour is coming and is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live".

REFLECTION

There are times that I don't "hear" and grasp what is being said to me, to my heart. My kids let me know this right up front. I can pride myself on what a good listener I am only to be humbled later on with a realization that I really didn't get "the message" after all. My kids are often God's most direct way of delivering this message.

And with God's insistent messages of love and care? Those especially I can't, and even sometimes won't, hear. God says to me,



the prisoner (do I really "get" that I am a prisoner of my sinfulness and confusion, and can't release myself?): Come out! God calls to me in my darkness and lostness: Show yourself!



Come out! Show yourself!

It's like I'm a little kid and I'm being encouraged by my Trusted One: 'you can do it, you have nothing to fear, I'm hear to pick you up when you fall'.



PRAYER

Father, give me the grace to believe your promises
and to hear your call of loving encouragement.

You are "near to all who call on You".

Give me the grace now, and every moment,
to call on you, to depend on you, to trust you.

For you alone give me life, and give it to me
over and over again.

Amen.

DAVID LYMAN

Parishioner

March 10, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Exodus 32:7-14

Psalm 106:19-20, 21-22, 23

John 5:31-47

SUMMARY

Today's readings are strong indeed. The LORD is speaking to Moses in the first reading. The LORD is seemingly angry and about to smite the Hebrew people. Yet Moses speaks up the Lord and asks for mercy. In some ways he does some fast salesmanship and encourages the Lord to give them another chance so he doesn't look bad to the Egyptians. In today's Gospel Jesus is speaking to the Jews. When John says "the Jews", you know he's not pleased with the leadership. Just before this pericope Jesus had healed an ill man on the Sabbath. The leadership questioned the man because he was carrying his mat of the Sabbath. The cured man told the leadership that the man who healed him told him to carry his mat and so he did. In today's gospel passage, Jesus is telling the Jews just who he is. Jesus outlines the work of John the Baptist, he shares that he is the one written about in scriptures. Then Jesus accuses them of not wanting what he has to offer. Jesus continues, "If you do not believe [Moses'] writing how will you believe my words?"

REFLECTION

Today's readings are a theology lesson on the law. Not long ago I was in a religion class at school and my text, *The Invention of World Religions* by Tomoko Masuzawa, was all about how religious thought comes into being. This author and scholar liked to make her readers sit with a dictionary close at hand. My professor's favorite word from the book was "rhizomatic." In other classes this might have been a throw away word, but not so in my class. The root of the word is found in many dictionaries: "**rhizome**, a horizontal, usually underground stem that often sends out roots and shoots from its nodes". As you might have surmised this was a tough book, and this concept of religions being organic was (if you excuse the pun) at the root of the thesis.

What is the root of today's readings? I suggest that the law is the root. In the first reading Moses, while getting the law on the tablets, has a new task. Instead of saving his people from Pharaoh, now he must plead with the Lord to allow the Lord's words to find their way into the Hebrew's hearts. Although the law was written on hard stones, seemingly unchangeable—they are changed as they are lived. The book of Leviticus is testimony to that. When Jesus is met with the opposition, he shares his thesis, that he himself is the law. The law is living, it is organic, and to quote Masuzawa, "rhizomatic". This theology lesson is only fruitful if it means something to me and to my reader. This passage suggests that I have to look at each law that I read and each law that I make with the heart of Jesus. I do make laws for our Confir-



mation families and for other faith formation and sacramental preparation practices here at Holy Family. I must temper these laws with the example of Jesus, they must be organic. Jesus cured a man on the Sabbath and asked him to do something illegal, to carry his mat on the Sabbath. Do I have the heart of Jesus when teens come to me with their very busy lives and ask of alternatives? Do I offer the love of Jesus before I tell people the way the church teaches various things? Do I listen with the heart of Jesus to my children as they question every part of the faith I hold so dear? Sometimes yes and sometimes I fail.



PRAYER

I am the great sun, but you do not see me.
I am your husband, but you turn away.
I am the captive, but you do not free me.
I am the captain you will not obey.

I am the truth, but you will not believe me.
I am the city, where you will not stay.
I am your wife, your child, but you will leave me.
I am the God to whom you will not pray.

I am your counsel, but you will not hear me.
I am the lover whom you would betray.
I am the victor, but you do not cheer me.
I am the holy dove whom you will slay

I am the life, but you will not name me.
Seal up your soul with tears and never blame me.

(Charles Causley....From a Normandy crucifix of 1632)

DAWN PONNET

Director of Faith Formation



March 11, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Wisdom 2:1A, 12-22

Psalm 34:17-18, 19-20 21 & 23

John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

SUMMARY

First Jesus says he won't go up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles because he knows the Jews are trying to kill him. Then he changes his mind and goes anyway – but in secret. Then he openly teaches in the temple area. Then he “cries out” in rebuke and/or frustration and informs them that he does not come on his own and that he, not them, knows who has sent him because he (Jesus) is from him. Instead of arresting Jesus no one could lay a hand on him “because his hour had not yet come.”

REFLECTION

Is this puzzling and contradictory? Yes, it is to us because we are human and most of us expect others to act logically. Wouldn't it have been smarter if Jesus had gone with his “brothers” and then he would have had their help and protection? If he had advance PR he would have drawn vast crowds there for the Feast like Billy Graham did when he preached at Madison Square Garden. What a missed opportunity!

But it is futile to speculate about what Jesus could have done because he had the best navigational system ever: a divine GPS guiding him to the right places and people to share the good news of salvation and, finally, to his final hour.

What made Jesus cry out, interrupting his teaching? He overheard some inhabitants of Jerusalem wondering if he was the one the authorities wanted to kill; then they reasoned it could not be this lowly Nazarene because when the kingly Christ comes no one will know where he is from.

Jesus was upset by this thinking and zip code snobbery. His words to them almost sound like a riddle:



You know me.
You know where I am from (Nazareth).
I am not alone,
The one who sent me is true.
I know him because I am from him.
YOU do not know him.
Who is He?



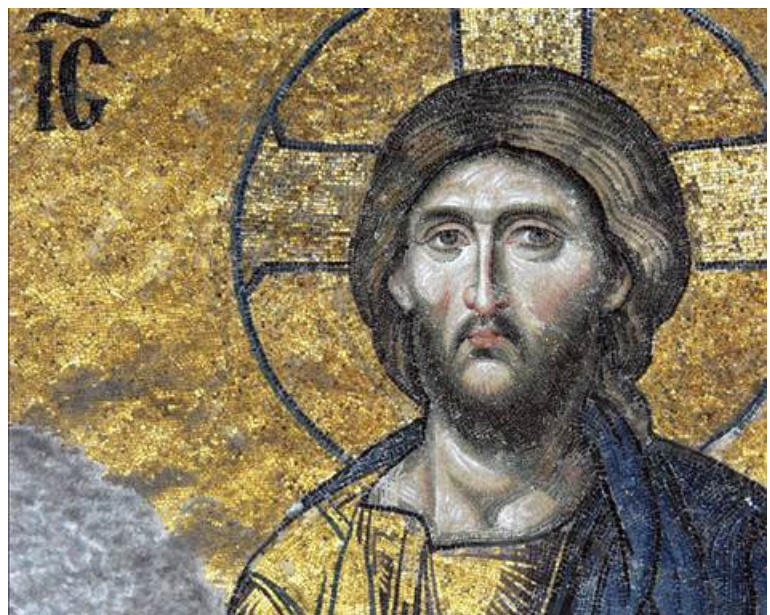
Jesus will proceed to make God's invitation clearer, opening minds and hearts for some but for many his words will fall on deaf ears.

PRAYER

Lord, I wonder if I had lived then would I have embraced the words of Jesus. May your Holy Spirit guide me in a humble examination of my conscience. Help me to see what more I can do for the less fortunate not just during Lent but all year through.

NANCY LAWRENCE

Parishioner, Catechist, Faith Group Leader



March 12, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Wisdom 2:1A, 12-22

Psalm 34:17-18, 19-20 21 & 23

John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

SUMMARY

Our first reading proclaims, for to you I have entrusted my cause! The psalmist sings, " O Lord, my God, in you I take refuge." The gospel proclaims, so there was a division among the people because of Him.

REFLECTION

I can't help but focus on the words in the first reading and psalm 7. The fact that we can't journey alone and that God is with us, comforts me and keeps me strong. As Christians we are told that we are not alone as we live our lives : in times of happiness and especially in challenging times. We have each other to pray for and God's promise to never abandon us.

The past couple of months my family has had some trying times and I know that because I "entrusted my cause" to God and took refuge in Him that we got through it. Because I "let go and let God" I felt calm and safe knowing that He was taking care of me and my family. Through prayers and the support from family and friends we are living peacefully in God's love!

In the gospel, the people were questioning the true identity of Jesus; several said that He is the Prophet. Some said He was the Messiah. How about us? Do we really KNOW Jesus? Can we say we know the true identity of



Jesus- His divinity and humanity? How do we know Jesus in our lives? during lent? After lent?



PRAYER

O Lord, my God, in you I take refuge. Help me to know you more closely and to trust that you will never abandon me. Amen.

RITA AND TONY FORTNER

Eucharistic Minister

Living Your Gifts Coach



March 13, 2016

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:12-14;

Responsorial Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8;

Romans 8:8-11;

John 11:1-45

Summary

Ezekiel proclaims the Lord's promise to "open" our "graves" and to have us rise from them. Ezekiel foreshadows Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, returning him to this earthly life. The Psalmist out of his depths cries to the Lord in song trusting in His mercy and the fullness of redemption despite our iniquities. That fullness, teaches Paul, is this: "the one who raised Christ from the dead will give life to [our] mortal bodies also, through his Spirit dwelling in [us]. John's seventh sign is Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead to show the glory of God.

Reflection

Jesus Christ loves you, me, our community as he has loved Lazarus -- fully, unconditionally, despite our iniquities of which He knows full well. At Lazarus' death, Jesus wept. He weeps now for what is dead in me, dead in you, dead in us, and he wants to show the glory of God by bringing all to this life in him -- to "plenteous redemption" in the Psalmist's words.

Lazarus could not raise himself from the dead. Only the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, in Jesus could do that. Yet, hearing Jesus' command, "Take away the stone," ordinary people did their part: "they took away the stone." They risked the stench of death: four days of rotting flesh. They risked failure and humiliation. To take away the stone was heavy lifting physically and spiritually. It required faith



like Martha's -- believing that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world." The stone was a mountain; their faith moved it. Then Jesus "cried out in a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!'" The dead man came out to new life. Then Jesus said to untie him and let him go.



Lazarus did not know he was dead; only his new life revealed his death. What is so dead in me that I cannot even know it until I am made more alive by the power of Jesus Christ? Yet, to become more alive, I need the faithful to carry out the work Jesus asks them to do, and I need to be faithful to take away a stone or to untie the bound.

Prayer

I pray to help take away the stones that entomb others. I pray that others pray for me in order to take away the stone that entombs me, my deadness of which I am unaware. Let us all pray for faith like Martha's. More alive through faith in the power of Jesus Christ, let us all go forth with unbound hands and feet and the boundless heart of Jesus.

Phil Argento,
Eucharistic Minister



March 14, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

[Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41C-62](#)

[Psalm 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6](#)

[John 8:12-20](#)

SUMMARY

In today's Gospel, the Pharisees challenge Jesus' teachings in a legalistic manner. They say he cannot prove that he is the light of the world, because he testifies on his own behalf. No one else of authority can support him. But Jesus says that God the Father also testifies for him, and therefore he is not alone.

REFLECTION

The Pharisees seemed to make a living out of judging people and things. In the Gospels we hear the Pharisees opine often about what is acceptable and what is not – be it types of food, certain individuals, or even when to perform miracles such as healings. As we read about Jesus' interactions with them, we start to see these highly educated Jewish lay leaders as Jesus saw them – as hypocrites. They judged others in order to elevate themselves.

In this passage, Jesus tells the Pharisees that he is "the light of the world." But the Pharisees invalidate Jesus' testimony because he can produce no other person, acceptable to them, to testify on his behalf. Now Jesus refuses to play their game. He could have easily produced any of the apostles, or grateful people he had healed, or any of the massive crowds that followed him through the countryside to listen to him preach. Any of these would have been happy to testify for Jesus. But instead, Jesus simply states that his testimony can be verified, because he knows where he came from and where he is going.

This wonderful affirmation of self-worth resonates for us today as clearly as it did back in the streets of Jerusalem 2,000 years ago. Jesus knew who he was. He came from humble origins – the son of a carpenter, born in a manger, a nobody. But he also knew he was God's son. And with that came his Father's love, the knowledge that he was created in his Father's image, for a purpose, and that no matter what he did or how anyone judged him, that love would not waver.

Jesus also knew where he was going. He had a destiny to fulfill. He would become the savior of the world.

God has created each of us in his likeness, infused with his love, blessed with his favor. But so much of the time, we feel minimized by the judgment



heaped upon us by the world. There are many "Pharisees" out there, at work, in our families, on the freeways. People who don't even know us judge us constantly. We are asked to testify on our own behalf every day. And it's easy to feel ganged up on and overwhelmed by the Pharisees in our midst. In this Gospel, Jesus said "I am not alone, but it is I and the Father who sent me." The same is true for us, today. We are not alone, helpless and friendless. Like Jesus, each of us knows who we are and where we are going. We are created by God the Father and we are going to join him in Heaven one day. That's it. Let the Pharisees judge. We have the light of life in us.



PRAYER

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for creating us in your image. Thank you for loving us unconditionally, no matter what we do, and for always forgiving our sins. Help us to remember that this love allows us to fully love ourselves, and give us confidence to overcome the judgment of others. Amen.

DAMON FELDMETH

Parishioner

This Gospel about God's love reminds me of a favorite hymn, O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go. The writer of the hymn, a blind Scottish minister named George Matheson, was said to have written it in a state of deep despair. He was engaged to be married, but when his fiancée found out he was going blind, she called off the engagement. The hymn became the fruit of his suffering, and according to his own account he wrote it in five minutes. I find the first and fourth verses the most meaningful:

O Love that wilt not let me go, I rest my weary soul on Thee; I give Thee back the life I owe, that in Thine ocean depths its flow may richer, fuller be.

O Cross that liftest up my head, I dare not ask to fly to Thee, I lay in dust life's glory dead, and from the ground there blossoms red life that shall endless be.

March 15, 2016

[Lenten Weekday](#)

Numbers 21:4-9

Psalm 102:2-3, 16-18, 19-21

John 8:21-30

Summary

These readings underscore how the lust for power and control over others, ultimately, will be seen for the sinfulness that they are. Virtue triumphs, with God's help, over vice and harsh judgment. No disciple is perfect; we are all guilty of sin. However, we can be beloved disciples by continuing to trust in God's mercy and forgiveness.

Reflection

"Judge not lest you be judged." (Matthew 7:1.) Why is it so much easier to judge the actions and motives of others than to consider our own? In Hebrew, the name Daniel means "my judge is God." In today's reading, Daniel, by divine inspiration, is sure of the wicked elders' guilt and catches them in their lie. They had accused Susanna, the pious wife of a rich man, guilty of a sin she didn't commit, and they end up being judged themselves. Susanna trusts in the power of God's justice and mercy, and is vindicated.

In the Gospel, the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman caught in an adulterous relationship before Jesus to test him. Will he follow the letter of the law and condemn her, and lose his reputation for showing understanding, kindness, gentleness and mercy, or will he encourage adulterous behavior? The leaders think that they have set the perfect trap for Jesus, but he would not be lured into it. He simply bends down and begins writing in the sand. The scribes and Pharisees insist that Jesus answer, but he simply says, *"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her."* They all drift away.

In his classic book, *That Man is You*, Louis Evely, the Belgium spiritual writer, summarizes the scribes and Pharisees' departure



thusly: "One look, one encounter, one word from Jesus, and they all beheld their sinfulness. They understood, they saw in an instant, that Jesus knew everything about them and that, if He chose, He could reveal how and when, with whom and how often, they had sinned. A few minutes before, they had made a grand entry, puffed up with arrogance and hypocritical indignation, but oh, how shamefacedly they left!"



Our desire to point out the faults and failings of others, and to judge them for their human imperfection, is really an attempt to gain power and control over them. It is an attempt to fill our own emptiness and quench our own thirst. God alone is our judge. All we have to do is trust that we—through Jesus' own suffering and death—have been reconciled to our God, who is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and rich in mercy. The beloved disciple seeks to emulate Jesus in **empowering**, not overpowering, others.

Prayer

Good and gracious God, give me the strength to hold my tongue when I want to reveal the faults of others. Help me to trust in your kindness and mercy. Enable me to recognize and change my own deceitful and lustful behavior, to speak the truth always and to trust in the reconciling love of your son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Bill Metzdorf,
Parishioner

March 16, 2016

Lenten Weekday

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95

Daniel 3:52-56

John 8:31-42



SUMMARY

The reading is about faith and trust. King Nebuchadnezzar sends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to the white-hot furnace because they refuse to worship his golden statue. In the end, they remained unharmed and King Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges God for protecting them. In the gospel reading Jesus is trying to explain to those who are trying to kill Him that He was sent by God, their Father, and that if they

believe, then they would have truth. And this truth would set them free; free from slavery to sin.

REFLECTION

I really like the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. This is their response to King Nebuchadnezzar: “There is no need for us to defend ourselves before you in the matter. If our God, whom we serve, can save us from the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O king, may He save us! BUT EVEN IF HE WILL NOT, know, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue that you set up!”

BUT EVEN IF HE WILL NOT..... wow, very powerful. Such faith in our God; such trust in our God.

My faith and trust is nowhere near that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. There have been times when I threw up my arms in resignation and give it all to God. The capable loving hands of my God have carried me through to the other side, the other side of white-hot furnaces in my life. And not only does He carry me through it, but on the other side is something SO much more beautiful and SO much better than I could even have imagined.



Again, my faith and trust is nowhere near that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Even with everything I've experienced and everything God has shown me, why does my faith and trust in Him still falter? Why do I slip into my bad habits, behaviors I know do not reflect who God created me to be? I don't know. What I do know is that my God loves me and is all merciful. I know that He will continue to help me grow in faith and trust.



Prayer

Oh Lord, God of mercy and love, teach me to grow in faith and trust in you. Do not let go of my hand as You lead me along the path that leads to You. Teach me to be more like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Amen.

Natalie Duran

Embracing the Beginning of Life Ministry

Eucharistic Minister

Parishioner



March 17, 2016

[Lenten Weekday Feast of St. Patrick](#)

GN 17: 3-9

PS 105:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

JN 8: 51-59

SUMMARY



What a joyous day this is, and not just for the Irish. Today, in the readings, God reveals His everlasting relationship with us, His Covenant. He promises Abraham to be our God... FOREVER! And then, to top it all off, Jesus proclaims that he is "I AM: God Incarnate. He tells us in no uncertain terms that he is the Divine Son of God, "Before Abraham came to be, I AM." The Jews were outraged and thought He was uttering blasphemy, but we are encouraged and uplifted.

REFLECTION

A joyful day! Our Lord and God Jesus has confirmed our hopes and longings. But sometimes it is really hard to believe that Salvation has come. In our day-to-day lives, we get caught up in so many activities and distractions that our salvation is far from our minds. Lent offers us an opportunity to stop and ponder the wonder of salvation. Recently Bishop O'Connell visited Holy Family. In his homily he offered us a way to bring Jesus into our daily lives through meditation. It was so easy. Take a five minute break from whatever you are doing and close your eyes. Then as you breathe in, say the name of Jesus. Then breathe out slowly. As you repeat this, invite Jesus into your life. And listen. Just relax and listen for a few minutes. Not on-



ly will you feel relaxed, but you will experience a closer connection to Jesus.



Prayer

Dear Merciful Lord,

Thank you for loving us so much that you promised never to desert us, any of us. Please help us to appreciate Your love for us. Please help us to connect with Your love by sharing it with others. We praise you, we bless you, we thank you.

Lydia Banales
Parishioner



March 18, 2016

Lenten Weekday

Jeremiah 20:10-13

Ps 18:2-3A, 3BC-4, 5-6, 7

John 10:31-42

Summary

Each of the readings for today introduces a central figure under attack by his enemies. Jeremiah demands that the Lord take vengeance upon his oppressors; the psalmist cries out for rescue; but Jesus, at risk of being stoned to death, shows neither fear nor vengefulness. He does not call out to the divine; instead, he identifies himself with the divine: “. . . the Father is in me and I am in the Father.”

Reflection

Both Jeremiah and the psalmist adopt the structure of the so-called complaint psalm, which has been described as a mini-drama featuring the psalmist or narrator, the enemy, and God. Jeremiah cries out to God for revenge and pleads for deliverance. The psalmist likewise calls down divine scrutiny, confident that the Lord will take his side and deliver him from his enemies. Divine rescue is invited and expected both by Jeremiah and the psalmist, and by the reader. This is a mini-drama that has been played and replayed in biblical literature for hundreds of years.

Jesus' encounter with the Jews who attack him, by contrast, begins on a note of irony that is distinctly modern. “I have shown you many good works from my Father. For which of these are you trying to stone me?” (Or as we observe today: “No good deed goes unpunished.”) But the Jews are serious and their reasoning appears impeccable: Leviticus teaches that blasphemers must be stoned. Jesus, a man, is making himself out to be God, and that is blasphemy. Thus, Jesus must be stoned.

This isn't a mini-drama—it's more like a game of chess, played for stakes of life and death. Jesus answers the Jews in kind—not by crying out for God's deliverance, but by pointing out the flaw in their logic: their assumption that he is a man. Yes, it's blasphemy to call oneself the son of God—unless one really is the son of God, in which case one



is only speaking the truth. Checkmate.

--Underlying this entire reading from John is an implied and ironic commentary on the deceptive nature of our "seeing" which is recurrent throughout the Gospels. The Jews see Jesus, but what their eyes tell them is deceptive. He appears mortal, but is divine. In their seeing Jesus as a mere man, the Jews deliberately close their eyes to the larger truth, which they refuse to believe. One recalls the words of St. Thomas Aquinas: "I can see, thanks to the light of the sun; but if I close my eyes, I cannot see. This is no fault of the sun, it is my own fault, because by closing my eyes, I prevent the sunlight from reaching me."



Prayer

Almighty and Everlasting God, who through your mercy sent your Son to redeem us from our blind obsession with the trivialities of this world, open our eyes to the sunlight—to the mystery of your love for us as we journey toward Easter. As we witness again Christ's agony on the cross, help us to understand the profound love that called forth such a sacrifice. We pray, in all humility, that we may be worthy of such love. Amen.

Penny Cobey

March 19, 2016

[Solemnity of St. Joseph, spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary](#)

2 Samuel 7:4-5A, 12-14A, 16

Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 & 29

Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22

Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24A or Luke 2:41-51A

SUMMARY

The LORD spoke to Nathan and said:

"Go, tell my servant David, 'When your time comes and you rest with your ancestors,

I will raise up your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm.

It is he who shall build a house for my name. And I will make his royal throne firm forever.

I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever before me; your throne shall stand firm forever.'"

REFLECTION

This Gospel from Matthew is the story of Joseph, who is the husband of Mary, and the "adopted" father of Jesus. Although we don't know much about Joseph and he appears to have a small part in the Bible, Joseph is a very important part of God's plan. First, his father was Jacob. Then, when he and Mary were "engaged" she became pregnant (although Mary and Joseph had not been intimate). Joseph, being the righteous man that he was, but not wanting to expose Mary's shame, had intended to divorce Mary quietly. (According to the provisions of the Law of Moses, engagement took place about one year before marriage and enjoyed almost the same legal validity. The marriage proper consisted, among other ceremonies, in the bride being brought solemnly and joyously to her husband's house. From the moment of engagement onwards, a certificate of divorce was needed in the event of a break in the relationship between the couple). But before he could, the angel of the Lord came to him in a dream and told him to take Mary into his home since it is through the Holy



Spirit that this child was conceived. God gives His light to those who act in an upright way and who trust in His power and wisdom when faced with situations which exceed human understanding. Joseph did what the Lord commanded and took Mary into his home and would eventually raise Jesus as his son and teach him a trade. **What great faith Joseph had!**

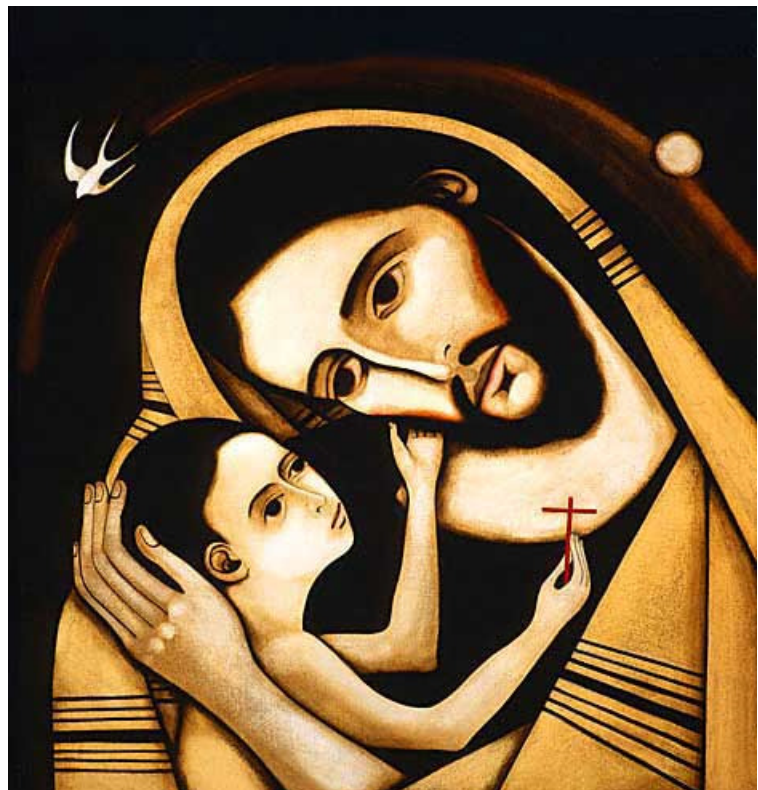


PRAYER

Almighty God and Father, I thank you for using Joseph to be the earthly father of your Son, Jesus. I thank you for entrusting Mary to such a man as Joseph who would be faithful in all things. Lord, I pray that I can be like Mary and Joseph when commanded to do your Will and do it with humility, grace and love. In Jesus' Name, I pray.

DORYCE BOHANA

Parishioner



March 20, 2016

Palm Sunday

Luke 19:28-40

Isaiah 50:4-7

Psalms 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Philippians 2:6-11

Luke 22:14-25:1-49

SUMMARY

The obvious theme of the Gospel reading this week is the Passion of Jesus Christ. The supplemental readings (Isaiah and Philippians), however, call our attention to the flesh and blood Jesus, the Incarnate One, who underwent the Passion on our behalf.

REFLECTION

The Western tradition of Christianity has been greatly influenced by the writings of the Apostle Paul and the Creedal formulations of the Church. As a result, our tradition has focused primarily on the post-resurrection Christ figure to the detriment of the God who became flesh on our behalf. The first and second readings offered in both Isaiah and Philippians beckon us to consider the human Jesus, the tangible one who experienced human existence in first-century Palestine. Our theological lens thus shifts from the Resurrected One to the Incarnate One. This shift, in my estimation, is a healthy and necessary shift in our consideration of Jesus. What does it mean to our faith communities that God took on humanity, lived a life of approximately thirty years, and suffered and died on our behalf? What lessons can we learn from that life? Who did Jesus show compassion to, dine with, heal, teach, and count among his very own? Who did Jesus contest with? Before we let ourselves off the hook by indicting Jewish and Roman authorities, I would argue that Jesus contested with a certain type of religio-political arrogance rather than any particular ethnic group.

The shifting of our theological gaze from the Resurrected One to the Incarnate One this Lenten season challenges us to consider the totality of the act of God becoming flesh on our behalf rather than simply fo-



cusing on the benefits we partake of based on His triumphant resurrection. This shift also challenges us to fully embrace the human agony that Jesus took on in the Passion. It challenges us to take all of the Stations of the Cross seriously as a moment in the life and death of the Human One. The Passion is a process and not simply a moment.



So as we prepare for this Holy Week I guide your attention to Jesus the man. It is in His humanity and suffering that we can learn the most from Jesus. How did God act when God was in our midst? As we proceed toward Good Friday, carry your crosses with Jesus toward Calvary. Let your pain be His and His be yours. For this He

took on flesh. And let us on Easter morning, embrace the benefits of his ultimate triumph over the human condition.

PRAYER

Gracious Lord, we thank you for your sacrifice. We thank you for making yourself manifest in the world taking on the human condition, our condition. It is your act of solidarity that will serve as our focus this Passion week. Amen

DAVID A. SÁNCHEZ

Professor of Early Christianity
Loyola Marymount University

March 21, 2016

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-7

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 27:1, 2, 3, 13-14

Gospel: John 12:1-11

SUMMARY

The readings for our first weekday of Holy Week prepare us for the sacrifice on Good Friday and the Resurrection on Easter by focusing on three subjects: the primacy of the greatest commandment, the need to recognize when God is among us, and the spirit of the second great commandment.

Reflection

The first paragraph of the first reading and the responsorial psalm make clear what the reading from the Gospel of John proclaims: Jesus is the Chosen One of God, our Light and Salvation. His very name in Hebrew means the Lord is salvation. The Gospel reading describes the dinner at Bethany after Jesus has performed His greatest sign: the raising of Lazarus. Lazarus is even at table with Jesus. The scene in one sense, however, is unremarkable. In the immediately preceding chapter of John, Martha had proclaimed her belief that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God **BEFORE** Jesus raised Lazarus. Martha's faith had allowed her to see clearly before Jesus worked his greatest sign what the Pharisees, blinded by their worldly concerns, cannot see after.

John's Gospel continues in its description of the devotion of Martha's sister, Mary, to Jesus through her anointment of Him. Judas' response to the anointment, and Jesus' rebuke of Judas, is instructive in multiple manners. In one sense, it is not important if Judas does not care about the poor. Like the parable of the two sons in Matthew 21:28-31, an unsympathetic Judas would still obey the second great commandment and be a light unto the nations by giving the contributions from the money bag to the poor. Instead Judas steals the money.



Another lesson from Jesus' rebuke of Judas may be difficult for us to accept. The poor will always be with us no matter our efforts to observe the second great commandment. Nevertheless, if we observe the first great commandment, God will give us the grace to overcome our human limitations in observing the second. We must, however, be open to His presence in our lives. Otherwise we become like Judas and the Pharisees seeking to remove Him from our lives.



PRAYER

"Dear Lord, help me to place You first in my heart, my soul and my mind, and give me the strength and willingness to serve you and my brother and sister, in Your Name. Amen."

ROLAND SIMPSON

Parishioner



March 22, 2016

[Tuesday of Holy Week](#)

Isaiah 49:1-6

Psalms 71:1-2, 3-4A, 5AB-6AB, 15 & 17

John 13:21-33, 36-38

SUMMARY

In the first reading it is said that our reward is with the Lord and we are the light of all the nations. In Psalms we sing of His salvation and in the Gospel according to John, the Passion is set in motion.

REFLECTION

One deeply troubled Jesus, two horribly unforgivable acts of betrayal. It's true, Judas and Simon Peter committed unforgivable acts by selling Jesus out. One repents, one does not. The word "unforgivable", it's definitely a word in our vocabulary, but is it in God's? I read somewhere that the only unforgivable sin is denying that we can be forgiven. This makes sense because it's only when we turn our back on God that we become incapable of forgiving, especially ourselves.

Judas was a friend of Jesus, an intimate friend, chosen by Jesus to be one of his Apostles. He witnessed miracles and heard Jesus' teachings over the three year period they were together. Seems to me he should have been immune to or unavailable to Satan's evil, but he wasn't. Simon Peter, another chosen Apostle, says he will lay down his life for Jesus and then denies him not once but three times. He loved Jesus, but was not strong enough to reveal himself as a follower. Having strength to do what is right closely trails knowing what is right. Both of these Apostles knew what they should have done, but Judas gave in to the will of Satan while Simon Peter could not face the consequences of being a disciple of Christ. We have all been there to one degree or another, making a self-serving choice and/or one that does not put us in an uncomfortable situation. We live in a time where doing what "feels good", is "easy", and "popular" seems to trump doing what is right. When we focus on our own desires over God's, we too are betraying Him. Yet, we are forgiven. The larger than life message, for me, in this reading is one of forgiveness. Jesus forgave and so can we. God's promise of His love remains, even for those who deny and betray Him.

Our God is an awesome God!

PRAYER

During these last few days of the Holy Week, please give us the strength to do what is right and just as we carry out your work. Help us to be good disciples in all we do. Let our actions reflect your teachings and may we be blessed with your boundless love. In this we pray. Amen



KARLA STEPHEN

Holy Family Parishioner, Erica and Sean's mom



March 23, 2016

[Wednesday of Holy Week](#)

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 69:8-10,21-22, 31, 33-34

Matthew 26:14-25

Summary

The Lord God is my help. Lord, in your great love, answer me. At the Passover meal Judas begins his betrayal.

Reflection

Today's readings lie at the heart of what it means to be Catholic. Almost on a daily basis, we are confronted with challenges and obstacles that make us ask, "Why does this have to happen to me?" Even more confusing are the times when the cause for this self-reflection and doubt are those who are closest to us whether in our families, at work or in our communities. These events can be particularly disheartening since these are the people who we turn to for support, encouragement and love. For these people to seemingly add to (rather than relieve) our burden or distress runs counter to what most of us believe should be the natural order of things. It is at times like these that today's readings provide a special level of support and comfort. Knowing that God's love and grace is with us always to provide the spiritual support and guiding hand to navigate whatever circumstance in which we find ourselves provides an enormous sense of security. In this regard, the story of



© Remembrance of Me, by Walter Rane, courtesy Church History Museum



Judas Iscariot, is particularly poignant. Jesus himself found that one of those closest to him would be the one to betray him. Rather than become emotional or angry, Jesus simply accepted Judas' actions as part of his Father's master plan. It is in times like these that we too must remind that no matter how difficult it might be for us to understand why certain inexplicable things may be occurring in our lives, that it is unquestionably divine. This is not a fatalistic approach but rather one that is inspired by our believing that God has a plan for each of us and that after we have done everything that is humanly possible for us to do, we must Let Go and Let God. As one of my favorite songs always reminds me: "If God is standing by my side, then why should I be afraid of the pestilence that crawleth by night"



Prayer

O Lord, God
Do not put me to the test.

Kevin McFarlane

Parishioner

March 24, 2016

[Thursday of Holy Week](#)

[Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14](#)

[Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16BC, 17-18](#)

[1Corinthians 11:23-26](#)

[John 13:1-15](#)

SUMMARY

In today's readings, the scripture links the Passover to Jesus' final meal with his disciples. As with many accounts in the bible, the New Testament illuminates God's promise to his people. In the first reading from Exodus, the Lord prescribes the way in which the faithful will partake of the lamb; he tells them to mark their houses with the blood of the lamb, so that the Lord's spirit will pass over them on that fateful night. In the Gospel, Jesus is aware of what is to become of him as he sits for a meal with his disciples for the last time. After breaking bread with his disciples, Jesus does something he has presumably never done before: he begins to wash their feet. When he is finished, he tells them, "I have given you a model to follow, so that I have done for you, you should also do."

REFLECTION

As an attendee at this year's Religious Education Congress, I was moved by the words (and works) of Fr. Greg Boyle, who founded Homeboy Industries, which exists to help incarcerated and troubled youth find jobs and ultimately acceptance. His message was that God was too busy loving us to have time for anything else; he juxtaposed a distant God to a God who walks with us and loves us the whole time. His clear and simple vision for helping "homies" has translated into the largest reintegration program of its type in the country. It is a model that has been followed by others.

Recently at Holy Family School, our student body president initiated a program to encourage good works among the student body. He asked for students to record acts of kindness—either those they had performed, or those that they received. He proudly announced to the school community that our goal was to reach 1,000 acts of kindness within the school. As you might imagine, I thought this was perhaps a "cute" idea, certainly not something that would transform the school; but in many ways it has. Students have taken to performing these acts of kindness throughout the school, and its impact has been felt. Because of our student body president's vision, something good was started, and like



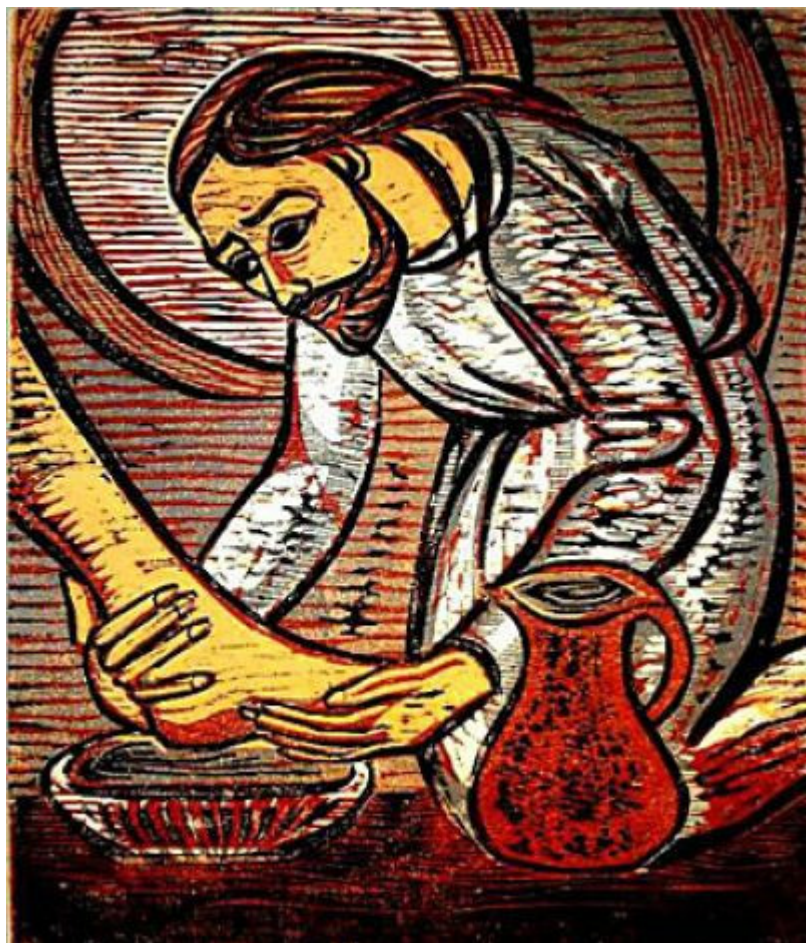
Homeboy Industries, who knows how far it will go?

Jesus' challenge is ours to accept or reject. Will we do as he did and "wash the feet" of others? Clearly, as the examples above illustrate, many have chosen to accept. For them, it's not fame or fortune, but rather the value of the act itself. It is those acts of love and kindness that make the ultimate difference in transforming others' lives.



PRAYER

O' loving Jesus, You washed the feet of your disciples, shared the intimate meal of the first Eucharist and called them friends though you knew they were going to be your traitors or who would abandon and reject you. Knowing them you know us; how weak are we in our human weaknesses and brokenness. Strengthen us with the power of the Eucharist and your Cross and the Grace you won by your death and Resurrection, to love everyone as you love us and to have a share in your eternal life. Amen



FRANK MONTEJANO

Principal, Holy Family School

March 25, 2016

Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

Psalms 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25

Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9

John 18:1-19:42

SUMMARY

FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMEND MY SPIRIT.

REFLECTION



Though he had done no wrong nor spoken any falsehood. He was spurned and avoided by people.

Like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth.

In thinking of My Lords crucifixion, I always think why did Jesus not defend himself? Why did he not deny wrong doing? Is it not human nature to deny wrong doing to avoid punishment? After all, Peter denied Jesus three times, not just once to avoid punishment?

Shall I not drink the

cup that the Father gave me?

Have I also judged others, when I did not know the whole story? Perhaps I went along with others who speak ill of someone who was innocent of wrong doing?



What is the desire in me to want to be accepted and liked
by everyone?
Have I denied my faith so people will accept me?

Or, have I compromised my beliefs, to achieve a goal?

What is it today I am being asked to do, that I am denying
or not willing to accept?

Perhaps this is the road I must travel to reach my destination. To believe in my-
self. To speak my truth.

The cornerstone the builders rejected became the cornerstone to build on.

Today I accept my struggle as my cornerstone, I learn from my mistakes and trust
God has my back, all will be okay. After all, he loved me enough to die for me.

PRAYER

Behold, behold the word of the Cross, on which is held our salvation, O, come let
us adore.

Heidi Seber
Parishioner
Pilgrim 2015



March 26, 2016

Holy Saturday/Easter Vigil

Genesis 1:1-2:2, Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 25

Genesis 22:1-18, Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

Exodus 14:15-15, Isaiah 54:5-14, Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13, Isaiah 55:1-11

Luke 24:1-12



SUMMARY

These readings tell our story. They begin with the creation of the world, the tempting of Abraham, to the great story of the Exodus through the Red Sea. Some of the prophetic pieces include Isaiah's famous piece to Come to the Water, another from the prophet Isaiah calls to be taught by the Lord, and God will keep his covenant of peace. Baruch informs us that there is no other than our God. Ezekiel calling us to change our stony heart to living hearts filled with gentleness and compassion. Turning to the New Testament, Paul tells us that we must be die and be born again with Christ. Finally we hear Luke's telling of the empty tomb and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION

These are the stories we have longed to hear. These stories tell our story where death has no power over us, for the patriarchs of old and the prophets told us of one who would come and liberate us from evil, Where we are no longer captive to sin, to death, to injustice. Rather our prince is one of peace, who loves justice and rules with mercy and compassion. Our messiah took on the role of a slave because of his great love. He makes love to his people not only through the person of Jesus the Christ, but also through the Spirit of God who is with us throughout time.

PRAYER

Dear Lord,

On the vigil of Easter your people pray that on this magnificent feast, your



people will rejoice in sharing your glory. Especially when we gather at Eucharist and offer ourselves , through

him, with him and in Him to thee all honor and glory. We hope and can be assured that when we do this every Sunday that we will surely pray the same words when we see God. I believe that when someone dies they do not go into the grave only but rather stay united with the people they love — that is why we pray for them and remember them always. May we vigil with them and Easter with them as we rejoice in your victory of resurrection which we share every day of our lives. We are an Easter people in which Christ lives uniting us together. For the glory of God and the salvation of all. May we rejoice in fulfilling our command to love one another as you love us. We cannot do this without you and so we pledge to unite our lives with yours today and forever.

FR. NIALL O'LEARY

Director of Spirituality

March 27, 2016

EASTER SUNDAY

Acts of the Apostles 10:34A, 37-43

Psalms 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23

Colossians 3:1-4 or Corinthians 5:6B-8

John 20:1-9



SUMMARY

Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb where Jesus was laid only to find it empty. She summons Peter and the Beloved Disciple, who find only a pile of cloths. They do not yet realize that Jesus has been resurrected from the dead.

REFLECTION

All that the disciples saw was the empty tomb and a pile of cloths. They were puzzled and confused. They ran around trying to find out what had happened. They couldn't fathom that Jesus had fulfilled the scriptures and been resurrected. Despite spending months and years with him, listening to his teachings, watching his miracles of healing, experiencing the love that he emanated, they could not grasp that Jesus' death was not a ghastly failure. They couldn't yet understand that Jesus' death was not a death, but a transformational event that defied everything that came before, that turned the whole world upside down for all eternity. Death, darkness, evil had been overcome! Love, forgiveness, justice, peace and compassion rule triumphed over their sinful counterparts of hatred, pride, injustice, war, and envy.

We have the benefit of 2000 years of the development of Christian doctrine and faith to make sense of what is essentially unintelligible, but are we able to embrace the truth of the Resurrection anymore than the disciples in those first moments? Does the Resurrection really make a difference in how we live our lives? Do we invest as much in the joy and celebration of Easter as we do in the penitence and repentance of Lent? Catholics typically take the 40 days of Lent quite seriously, but for many of us the Easter celebration is all about Easter Sunday! In fact, the Easter season is 50 days in length!!!

I am going to suggest that each of us makes a conscious effort to express our joy and gratitude to God for the next fifty days to Pentecost—an Easter ob-

servance, if you will, that brings to fruition our Lenten insights. This Easter season allow yourself to be saturated with the love and joy of the Resurrection. Let pride take a back seat to be replaced by love and forgiveness. Craft your words so that they are loving and affirming, rather than negative and critical. Look for the gold in those around you. Assume the best intentions in others. Speak only if your words are true, necessary and kind.



This Easter, may we strive to live the Resurrection, not merely talk about it, and not skate over it, once we get past Easter Sunday, as though nothing really significant and life changing took place. May we make the Resurrection truly a part of our life.

PRAYER

Lord, the resurrection of Your Son has given us new life and renewed hope. Help us to live as new people in pursuit of the Christian ideal. Grant us wisdom to know what we must do, the will to want to do it, the courage to undertake it, the perseverance to continue to do it, and the strength to complete it.

CAMBRIA TOTTO-RELLI

Parish Life Director



March 28, 2016

[Monday in the Octave of Easter Acts 5: 12-16](#)

Acts 2:14, 22-33

Ps 16:1-2A & 5, 7-8, 9-10, 11

Matthew 28:8-15



ALLELUIA!

CHRIST IS ALIVE!

SUMMARY

On this first day after our celebration of Easter, the readings skip to Pentecost

where Peter declares to the Eleven and to all of Jerusalem the Mystery of Faith: Jesus died, He is risen, and He promised to send the Holy Spirit. The Psalm of David :

“Keep me safe; O God, You are my hope”, is contained in a song we sing to this very day. The Gospel takes us back to immediately after the Resurrection where Jesus meets the two Marys who found the tomb empty and were “fearful yet overjoyed”. As they hurry to tell the Eleven, they meet Jesus. Meanwhile we read how the chief priests and the guards conspire to hide the resurrection from the people.

REFLECTION

Are you still hearing Alleluias ringing in your ears? This is such a joyous time, the time of fulfillment, the time of Salvation. All things in nature point to the wonder of new life. Our hearts are full; we smile a lot, Lent is over, and we are renewed in Christ. Perhaps you witnessed the Catechumens being baptized at the Easter Vigil. The radiant joy in their faces is beyond description. Perhaps your family got together for an Egg Hunt and a shared meal. Perhaps you watched an inspirational movie or listened to joyful music. Whether you were alone, with your family, traveling, or sitting quietly, please take a few minutes to remember the events of the last few days. Find some sign of new life: a flower,

an egg, a baby, a chick, and remember how much God loves you. Your life is God's gift to you and how you live it is your gift to Him. REJOICE!



PRAYER

Dear all-merciful God,
You gave us your only Son to teach us how to live and die. He promised us Eternal Life. We only need to choose it. Please bless us in this wonderful Easter season and help us to draw ever closer to Your love. We praise You, we bless You, we thank You. Amen ALLELUIA!

Lydia Banales

Parishioner



March 29, 2016

[Tuesday in the Octave of Easter](#)

Acts 2: 36-41

Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20 & 22

John 20:11-18



SUMMARY

Peter's conclusion is clear: Jesus, the One who had been crucified, is both Lord and Christ. Peter's argument was irrefutable. **Cut to the heart**, the Judeans asked what they should do. This was the point of new birth. The Spirit of God brought conviction to their hearts, the spring-board of action.

REFLECTION

In John 20:11-18 - The disciples believed because of what they saw in the tomb, not because of what they knew from Old Testament passages describing the Savior's resurrection. Jesus had prophesied His death and resurrection in the disciples' presence, but the disciples had not understood what He was talking about. Later Jesus would instruct them about how His life and death fulfilled the Scriptures. When Christ uttered her name, Mary recognized His voice. Mary addressed Christ as Rabboni, an Aramaic term. Mary had grabbed Christ and was holding on to Him as if she would never turn Him loose. Christ explained to her that He could not stay because He had to ascend to His Father. My brethren referred to the disciples. Jesus sent Mary to them with the first postresurrection testimony. Though it may be that Mary was a woman plagued with demons, this did not keep Jesus from commissioning her to bring the gospel message to the apostles. My Father and your Father: God is the Father of Christ and of believers.

In Psalm 33: 4-5, 18-19, 20 and 22 – Although the world is filled with evil and with people who have no thought of God, believers must look beyond the apparent confusion of the world to see God's goodness – the goodness that manifests itself every time the sun rises, a bird sings, and a mother lovingly embraces her child. Out of His goodness, God holds together

the earth and provides for the sustenance of all people. One day God's goodness will prevail over all evil. The eye of the



Lord: This is a particularly warm image of God's care for His people. God watches all people, but He looks with delight on those who fear Him and hope in His mercy. To wait on God is to adopt a stance of resolute faith. Just as we hope. The psalm concludes with a phrase similar to "Amen." This is a "yes" to God's mercy, statement of agreement with His provisions.

PRAYER

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of Your faithful and kindle in them the fire of Your love. Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created. And You shall renew the face of the earth.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

LELA BISSNER

Parishioner, Eucharistic Minister



March 30, 2016

[Wednesday in the Octave of Easter](#)

Acts 3:1-10

Ps 105:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8-9

Luke 24:13-35



SUMMARY

In the reading from Acts for today we see Jesus's followers begin to come to terms with His death, allowing the Holy Spirit to continue His ministry through them as they heal a crippled man in the name of Christ. In the reading from Luke, two followers of Jesus encounter Him on the road to Emmaus—but do not recognize Him as Christ until He breaks bread with them.

REFLECTION

As two disciples talked on the road to Emmaus, the risen Jesus drew near and walked with them, “but their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.” Even after a day of travel together, during which Jesus “interpreted to them what referred to Him in all the Scriptures,” they failed to know who He was. Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him only when they all sat at table, and He “took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them.”

Luke here evokes Christ's actions at the Last Supper (22:19) to tell us again that our eyes are most truly opened to the divinity of Jesus at the moment of communion—a sacrament that permits us not only to recognize, but to become one with Jesus through the humble act of eating and drinking. Reaching down to our most primitive level of being, He lifts us to union with the divine.

PRAYER

Almighty and most merciful God, who knows what we need before we ask, grant

that we may with rekindled faith bear witness to the Resurrection of your son Jesus Christ. Shelter us with tenderness and mercy as we follow Him through suffering to eternal life.



PENNY COBEY

Parishioner



March 31, 2016

[Thursday in the Octave of Easter](#)

Acts 3:11-26

Ps 8:2AB & 5, 6-7, 8-9

Luke 24:35-48



SUMMARY

In Jesus there is resurrection of the dead. Many believed. Many saw. All were joyful. All are called to be disciples.

REFLECTION

In the Gospel today, Jesus invites the disciple to use their senses, to listen to his words, to touch, and to enjoy a meal with him. Imagine you were locked in the upper room for fear of what might happen to you, and then in the flash of a moment there you are with Jesus, inviting you to touch his wounds. Inviting you to be a disciple, inviting you to no longer be fearful. What kind of courage would it take for you to be a disciple at the time when being a follower of Jesus was illegal and dangerous?

Spend a moment with your finger within his wounds. How does that feel? Listen to the words Jesus speaks to you. Perhaps they are:

“Why are you troubled?”

“Why do questions arise in your hearts?”

“Thus it is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

You are a witness. How does it feel to be a witness of Jesus' transformation?

As you experienced the risen Jesus in your mind's eye. Bring that truth to the here and now.

Recently, I have heard stories of many people sharing their woes, mostly illnesses that most probably will lead to eternal life. As I listen to the stories I am reminded of how precious life is and how difficult it is to transition through death into our promised eternal life. My invitation is to listen with a compassionate ear and to pray for the person and their loved ones.

PRAYER

Jesus by your cross and resurrection you have set us free for eternal life, help us to long to be with you.

We ask this in your holy name.

Amen



April 1, 2016

[Friday in the Octave of Easter](#)

Acts 4:1-12

Ps 118:1-2 & 4, 22-24, 25-27A

John 21:1-14



SUMMARY

In these readings, we are confronted with stark contrasts: the disabled one desiring healing, the discarded stone that is really the one we desperately need to keep the house standing and the dark night seemingly with no end. We also see images of the miracle worker, the cornerstone and the light that breaks with the dawn. These are signposts of God. These are the pictures we need to keep as we travel through our lives.

REFLECTION

The ultimate question is really a collection of queries revolving around our relationship with God. It is, indeed, the essential quest of the human experience: Is there a God? If so, where is God? When will I find God in my own life? For those who already know, or think they know, the Jesus story these readings remind us to look again; to revisit how even the ones so close to Him could not always see Him.

There are surely myriad interpretations and theologically rich meanings associated with these texts. There is poetry in the words, too, which feels soothing and hopeful even amid the confrontational and confusing elements that are included in the retellings. For people in search of solace, thirsting for enlightenment and ever-growing awareness, these readings do delineate the paramount importance of Jesus' connecting role between us and the realm of heaven. In that sense, the question actually then becomes predominantly one of "what," rather than "when." What will we do when we meet Him? This meeting refers not to the hereafter, but to the now, to those regular, ordinary moments that form a life. Are we living



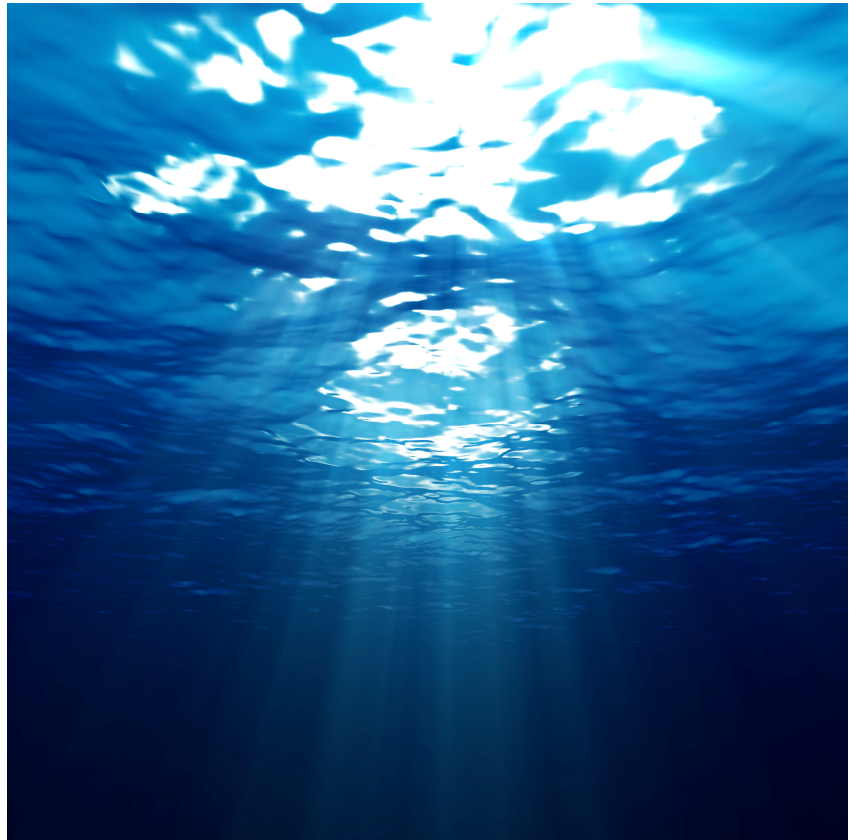
with an open heart and mind? Is there acceptance, even surrender? Or are we, like the ancient priests, unable to see past the rules to the wonders presented to us daily? One hopes, one believes, that we are wiser, better, clearer than them, but we cannot say for sure that is true. We, too, may not recognize that face or feel the grace, which is right in front of us.

PRAYER

Heavenly Lord, please remind me of your presence on the seashore, waiting for me to return from another flight into the night of doubt, fear and avoidance. Gently push me into the deep blue of your love, head first. Help me to always see your face and to embrace the gift of your acceptance. Amen.

JUDITH HAMILTON-MARQUEZ, PH.D.

RCIA Dismissal Ministry



April 2, 2016

Saturday in the Octave of Easter

Acts 4:13-21

Ps 118:1 & 14-15AB, 16-18, 19-21

Mark 16:9-15



SUMMARY

Jesus transforms the heartbreak and brokenness of his confused, bitter, and grief-stricken disciples. As a result, they change the world. We can too.

REFLECTION

The older I get, the humanity of the real people in the scriptures becomes more understandable to me. For most of my life I wondered why the disciples were resistant to believing that Jesus could be alive. They didn't believe (and ridiculed) Mary Magdalene who saw the risen Jesus outside his tomb. Nor did they believe the pair on road to Emmaeus who had chatted with him along the way, later recognizing him as they broke bread that evening. When Jesus appeared to the Eleven, they too were breaking bread together, and they too recognized him at last. He scolded them a little. After all, hadn't he told them he would die and then rise on the third day? Perhaps more so, he was displeased with their hardness of heart, with their criticism and ridicule of those who claimed they had seen him alive. Love one another, he surely reminded them.

However, from experiencing a tragic loss, I better understand the emotions in play. The disciples were deeply traumatized by all that had transpired in the past few days. Life as they had known it, living and traveling with this wonderful, inspired man, dreams and visions of their future, and belief itself, were now dust. The public torture and humiliating execution of Jesus, the man they had followed, given up everything for, was far too much to process. They were in a deep state of shock, of profound grief, con-

fusion, and shame. They were heartsick at their lack of loyalty. They had all run away, from him, from this



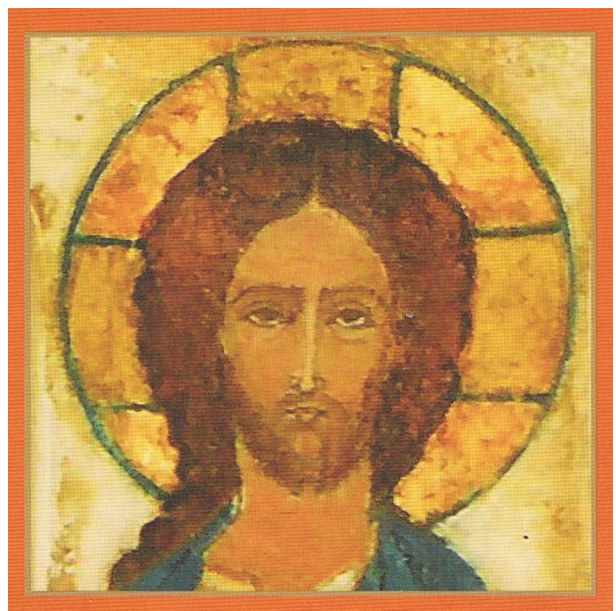
horrid Roman ritual, afraid of guilt by association, and unable to stomach the horror right before their eyes. They heard, secondhand, that he was dead and buried. So much shame, disappointment in themselves, so much regret. So much loss...too much. Unthinkable. Unspeakable. Overwhelmed, trying to make sense of it all. The claims of those who said they had seen him alive were an intolerable additional confusion. Bitterness. He's alive? After all this? No way. Those voices were shut down.

Into this stew of psychic suffering Jesus appears. He works quickly to transform their mood, their faith in him, and in themselves. He heals them with the truth and exhorts them to spread the Good News to every corner of the earth. They do. We are their legacy.

PRAYER

Beloved Jesus, walk peacefully yet powerfully into the stew and chaos of my life. Only say the word, and my soul will be healed. Take the broken dreams of my broken heart, my broken life, and infuse them with your love. Show me, lead me, into my path for carrying out your Great Legacy. Thy will be done. Amen.

KAREN WADE



April 3, 2016

Second Sunday of Easter

Reading 1: Acts 5:12-16

Responsorial Psalm PS 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24

Reading 2: Revelation 1:9-11A, 12-13, 17-19

Gospel: John 20: 19 - 31



SUMMARY

"Give thanks to the Lord for he is good, his love is everlasting." This refrain of the Responsorial Psalm conveys the spirit of each of today's readings. Our God is good! Our God is always here for us! There is nothing to fear so go out into the world to share the mercy of God!

REFLECTION

Can you imagine the confusion and fear that gripped the disciples as they were gathered in the upper room following Jesus' crucifixion? They had witnessed him curing the sick, feeding the multitudes, welcoming the rejected, forgiving the sinful -- constantly showing mercy to others. How could such a good and loving man be subjected to such scorn, humiliation and, ultimately, to death? The disciples must have thought if that happened to him, what would become of them? Locked away in the upper room, their fear must have been overwhelming.

But then Jesus came and stood in their midst saying, "Peace be with you." His work on earth had not ended with his death. It was just beginning. The disciples who had accompanied him throughout his ministry were about to be sent forth to be instruments of mercy. What exactly is mercy? Simply stated, mercy is an act of kindness, compassion or favor.

The prophet Micah informed the people of his day that the only thing the Lord requires is "to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Jesus instructed his disciples to do the same. "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." The disciples believed in Jesus because they saw what he had done. Now Jesus was sending them out to be instruments of mercy to those who had not seen but would come to believe because of the signs and wonders performed through their hands.

Today's liturgy begs the question: what are **we** doing to show mercy? We may not have been privileged to be in the upper room when Jesus appeared saying "Peace be with you". However, we experience and extend

that greeting to each other every time we celebrate Eucharist. Consequently, it is our responsibility not to be afraid to leave the security and comfort of our



own "upper room", to forgive those who have wronged us, to welcome and be respectful to those who are different than we are, to comfort those who are hurting -- in other words, to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly, confident that God is always with us.

Let the community of Holy Family say, "His mercy endures forever."

PRAYER

All powerful and merciful God, your Son, Jesus, suffered, died and rose again to promise us that our life has meaning and that we have nothing to fear -- not even death. Strengthen our belief so that we can become instruments of peace and mercy to all with whom we come into contact. We give you thanks for you are good and your love everlasting. We make this prayer to you in the name of Jesus your Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

WILLIAM C. METZDORF

Parishioner



April 4, 2016

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10

Responsorial Psalm PS 40:7-8A, 8B-9, 10, 11

Reading 2: Hebrews 10:4-10

Gospel: Luke 1:26-38



SUMMARY

One common theme present in today's readings is God initiating... "The Lord spoke...", "Christ came into the world...", "Gabriel was sent from God..." I am reminded of God's sovereignty and involvement in His creation.

REFLECTION

I found the verses in Hebrews 10 the richest as they speak to the need, purpose, and gift of Christ. Read those 6 verses again, and may I suggest you read them in more than one translation. Do you we see the need for Christ? Do you we see the purpose He served? Do you we comprehend the gift?

It is striking to consider that obedience to the law was, and dare I say, "is" not what God desires. "Sacrifice and offering you did not desire...", "you took no delight". Though the law was being kept with burnt and sin offerings, the law could not make men holy, nor can it now. This truth speaks to the *need* of Christ. Ponder that a minute.

Another theme I saw in today's scriptures is that of obedience. Christ was obedient to God, "Behold, I come to do your will" and Mary was obedient through the angel Gabriel, "May it be done according to your word". These expressions of obedience seem to be forms of *living sacrifices*. I believe as we truly grasp the magnitude of the *gift* of Emmanuel, obedience will arise from our

hearts and we experience a deeper desire to live lives pleasing to God.



PRAYER

Lord God, help us this day I pray to appreciate the depth of your life, death, and resurrection so that faith, obedience, and sacrifice grow in our lives. Amen.

MATTHEW HART

RCIA Dismissal Leader



April 5, 2016

TUESDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

Acts of the Apostles 4:32-37

Psalm 93:1AB, 1CD-2, 5

John 3:7B-15



SUMMARY

“The wind blows where it pleases; you can hear its sounds, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” John 3:8

REFLECTION

John chapter 3 reveals a great deal about the Holy Trinity. In verse 7 Jesus reminds us that we must be born from above before we can fully experience the presence and power of God.

In the scripture reading, Nicodemus asks, “How is that possible?” In this case the question refers to being born of the Spirit. At times I feel like the very logical, analytical Nicodemus wanting to know how and (sometimes continually) asking God for an explanation. I’ve questioned God repeatedly throughout my life with “Why God, Why?” I’ve whispered these words in fleeting moments of doubt, questioned God in moments of defiant confidence and cried out from an emotional and physical posture of complete defeat. In contrast, I’ve asked God “Why” in times of complete joy and contentment. Wanting to fully understand where I’m at, what I should learn, and what is next.

Just as Jesus died for our sins without asking if we would accept his sacrifice, the influence of the Holy Spirit is offered to us without invitation. As with many of us, there are times in my life I’ve felt closer or at a distance from God. In both situations, I have found myself reaching for evidence before opening my eyes are seeing the impacts of God in my life. While I am no closer to understanding the path God has provided for me, I can be swept away by the Spirit.

How often do we limit ourselves by demanding that things make sense to our earthly minds, to the outside world, to our friends and family? The question, “how is that possible?” becomes a limit in our fully experiencing the impact of the Spirit.

As I think back through different periods of my life, I see the ways that the Spirit of God influenced me without my conscience realization. I didn't understand it at the time. I've not understood

it why something happened the way it did or why someone was put into my life. What the Spirit has guided me to realize though this scripture reading is that it is my earthly mind that needs the explanation. My soul craves to be swept away by the Spirit of God.



PRAYER

Heavenly Father, Thank you for your powerful presence in my life. Help me to move beyond the earthly limits that I set on what can happen in my life. Help me to experience heavenly things and be moved by the Spirit even when I can't see, with my earthly eyes, where I am going.

NATALIE MURRAY



April 6, 2016

WEDNESDAY IN THE OCTAVE OF EASTER

Acts of the Apostles 5:17-26

Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

John 3:16-21



SUMMARY

One of the most widely quoted verses from the Bible, and has been referenced as the 'Gospel in a nutshell':

For God so loved the world so much that he gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not die but have eternal life'

The verse occurs in a story in Ch 3 where Nicodemus (a member of the Sanhedrin ruling council) comes to speak w Jesus because His miracles have convinced him that Jesus has been sent from God. This verse builds upon the lessons Jesus imparts upon Nicodemus, in that believing in Jesus is necessary for eternal life. But just as importantly, whoever does NOT believe in Jesus is already condemned. Jesus represents the light that has come into our world, but for most it is easier to love the 'darkness', which is representative of evil. Those that do 'wicked' things hate the light, lest his works should be exposed, but those that do what is 'true' come to the light so that their works may be seen to have been carried out in God.

REFLECTION

We have all seen this verse referenced in some capacity: it is often on signs people make to get on TV at sporting events; football player Tim Tebow (and many others, though he is probably the most well known) have put John 3:16 on black sun-shield strips below their eyes during games; even In n Out Burger prints it on the rim of bottom of their paper cups . It is so prevalent because it summarizes what we all SHOULD focus on in our daily actions and lives: Love. Love for our fellow man in the way we act and treat others, and love in the way we GIVE to others in the way that God gave his only Son to us. It can sound overwhelming and 'unattainable' if we try to measure ourselves to the standard of God giving Jesus to the world, but if we think of it in a more 'micro' way in terms of our daily lives we each be better person if we keep Love in mind in the ways we think and act.



God so loved the world- not any one people or race or denomination- that he gave His only Son: Jesus was given to 'us', the world, out of God's love for everyone, and Jesus is part of everyone. It isn't always easy to look at others, whether they be classmates, co-workers, clients, people we run across at the grocery store or drive next to on the freeway, but Jesus is part of EVERYONE, and that is how we should treat all these people whose paths we cross everyday. We will be better people individually, and our world will be a better place collectively, the more we are able to keep this in mind each day.



Jesus is the 'light' that came into the world, but for most of us it is easier to give more attention to the 'darkness' in this verse, which I interpret to be the material possessions of our lives. One of the premises of our faith is that we focus on the eternal life ahead of us, and not the material possessions we find ourselves caught up in or striving for in this life. Those who give of themselves, and are generous with their time and material possessions to others, are living a life more 'true' to that of Jesus and 'will not perish but have eternal life'. Easier to write those words or think those thoughts than to actually DO IT, but choosing the easier path doesn't always result in the most rewarding choice either.

PRAYER

Lord, give me the strength to live today more like your Son, and the wisdom to make better decisions today that reflect your love for me. Infuse me with your Love so that I may love others the same way.

MICHAEL JAMES

Parishioner since 2005

Husband of Julie, Father of Ryan (7) and Owen (3)

