

Lenten prayerBook



Lent and easter

2015

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 9:30 Choir Music Director, Tony Azeltine

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

February 18, 2015

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

Jesus chides the Pharisees for practicing almsgiving, prayer and fasting for all the wrong reasons. Some Pharisees are more interested in the show of outward appearances than in the inner work that brings us closer to God.

REFLECTION

Lent is such an important time in our Church calendar: it's a wonderful time of reflection on where we are with our relationships with God and with one another, as we prepare for the Triduum. But to be honest with you, while I love the season of Lent NOW, I have actually spent a good part of my early life avoiding Lent. Growing up as an Anglican in Bermuda, not only did Lent seem much less important than Christmas, but the whole period of Lent was dominated for me by the two days that bookmarked it: Shrove Tuesday and Good Friday. And I have to say that was for the wrong reasons!!! On Shrove Tuesday, my mother always made English pancakes, delicious thin crepes served with lemon and sugar. We didn't observe Ash Wednesday and the rest of Lent passed by without any real consciousness of it, until we got to Good Friday. On Good Friday, a public holiday, we followed the Bermudian custom of flying kites—beautiful geometric creations crafted out of colorful tissue paper and wooden sticks nailed together like a cross. The kite flying tradition symbolizes Jesus' ascent into heaven and that was the closest we ever came to a religious observance on Good Friday.



After I became a Catholic, Lent was inescapably embedded in my consciousness, but for years I dreaded the weeks leading up to Good Friday and the inevitability of it all: the reliving of Jesus' betrayal, his agony on the cross and his death. I yearned for the good old days when I could get through Good Friday by flying kites, skating over the appalling realization of what we had done to Jesus, and making it safely, painlessly, to the Resurrection and Easter Day. I didn't get Lent.

I suspect that in my response to Lent I was not alone. Christmas is so much easier, which might explain why it is much more widely celebrated, even by non-Christians, than Lent and Easter, the pinnacles of our liturgical year. Christmas has the lovely stories of faith with angels, shepherds, exotic wise men on camels, the baby Jesus in the stable, the doting saintly parents, the wicked villain looming in the background, and the successful escape from the jaws of death to Egypt. Christmas has all the ingredients of a Hollywood blockbuster! Lent is much more like one of those dark, foreign films that only film aficionados go and see. You know: the ones with the subtitles and the cryptic plots that you're embarrassed to admit you don't understand. Lent is full of images of repentance, ashes, dying, suffering, crosses...not exactly the easiest things to market to a world that is looking for feel-good solutions and happy endings.

And then somewhere in the course of my faith journey, things began shifting and Lent started taking hold of me, it started becoming more important than Christmas. You have to live a little, fail in some way, suffer, lose what's important to you, have your heart broken, make mistakes,

hurt others and be hurt yourself before Lent starts making sense. Christmas is for the innocent of heart but Lent is for the spiritually experienced!



And we who are spiritually experienced need Lent. If we take the opportunity that is offered to us, these 40 days of Lent allow us a fresh start in our relationship with God. It allows us time to get our minds off career, social life, problems at work, at home---all the things that distract us---and center ourselves in God. It is a time to put our wounds, our hurts, our disappointments, our fears, our bitterness, and our anger firmly in the context of the almost unbearable revelation of the God who loves us enough to take the form of a man hanging on a tree.

It's such a loss to skate over Lent because we are skating over the unimaginable depths of God's love. It takes courage to do this, but we need Lent to plunge into those depths to take a frank look at ourselves, to see the emotional and spiritual barriers which separate us from God. You know what I am talking about, the kinds of things that sap our energy: the family tensions about how best to raise the children, the slow subtle cooling in a relationship between two people who love each other, the agony of watching someone you love suffer, losing a job or a home, and the shame and fear that may bring. Whatever it is we have done or experienced, Joel tells us that God is waiting for us "abounding in steadfast love and relent[ing] from punishing." Lent allows us the grace to find God lovingly waiting for us at the very center of our lives. Lent helps us to sort through the emotional and spiritual clutter which keeps us from God. And that is why the Church emphasizes fasting, almsgiving and prayer as ways to strip down to the bare essentials. We need the absence of some of our gifts during Lent so that we can experience more fully the only Gift that really counts...the Gift of Godself. We need Lent to understand what this gift means: namely, that we are God's adopted sons and daughters, so priceless that God was willing to go to any length to show us that we are loved, that we have value, and a purpose in life.

Christmas is the revelation of God's gift to us in the baby Jesus. Lent is all about the fulfillment of that Gift, the Gift in action, which is the adult Jesus, who turned our world upside down. Lent definitely has edge, it's not comfortable, and it takes fortitude to embrace it—but with it comes the knowledge and joy of the depths of God's love—a gift like no other in a world starved for meaning, for courage, for comfort, for life.

PRAYER

Oh God, during this Lent help us to find the time to be with you in a deeper way through prayer, to share with you the suffering of your son and those around us through fasting, and to give back the fruits of what you have given us through almsgiving to the needy. We ask this in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

CAMBRIA TORTORELLI

Parish Life Director

February 19, 2015

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

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

Luke 9:22-25

SUMMARY

In the readings today we hear repeatedly about making choices: choosing goodness or sin, life or death. We also hear about the rewards and consequences of those choices.

REFLECTION

I have struggled with today's readings. The reality they present seems stark. We are either one or the other: good and blessed or wicked and doomed, alive or dead. What are we to make of these passages?

In re-reading the responsorial Psalm and the Gospel for today I was re-



minded of the nuance and gift they present to us. In the responsorial Psalm we are compared to trees that are “planted near running water, that yields its fruit in season.” If we are like trees, then our ability to grow towards Christ will be long and ongoing. There will be fruit in season; other seasons will be seasons of growth and rest.

In the Gospel reading, Jesus tells his disciples that the Son of Man will be killed “and on the third day be raised.” It took Jesus three days to die and rise. How much longer

then, will it take us? Jesus tells us we can make the choice to deny ourselves daily. Some days will be easier than others. Some hours, some moments, will be easier than others. It is all about gradation as we move towards the end of our race.



This Lent I am reminded of my mother-in-law, who has spent the last year receiving aggressive treatment for a cancer diagnosis. Her treatment included a harvesting and reinsertion of her stem cells. When your stem cells are replaced into your body, it is called your “new birthday,” because your immune system has been wiped out and you are as vulnerable as a newborn baby. Her sickness has been a journey for us all, a season of little deaths and, thankfully, a season of growth as she continues to heal.

As we enter into the season of Lent we are asked to make daily choices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. We are asked to be intentional and we are asked to be willing to change. Lent is a season of growth, of dying to those things that kill us and rising to those things which give life. But we are also reminded that these seasons will continue throughout our lifetime, that we need not be perfectly good or completely dead to ourselves right at this moment. There is time, there is hope, and at its conclusion we are welcomed into a season of joy.

PRAYER

Loving Jesus, as we enter into this season of Lent, open our eyes to the ways we can grow towards you. Amen.

ANGELINA DUELL,

Middle School Ministry Coordinator, Ministry Assistant to the Religious Education Office

February 20, 2015

[Friday after Ash Wednesday](#)

Isaiah 58:1-9A

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

Matthew 9:14-15

SUMMARY

Today's readings dwell heavily on one of the three focal points of our Lenten obligation—fasting. The passage from Isaiah is quick to point out that fasting from abundance and lying in sackcloth and ashes, although admirable and on the right track for a sinful people, is not the type of fasting that is acceptable to the Lord. Rather, the Lord wishes an opening of the heart and acts of goodness and charity toward one's fellow man ("releasing those bound unjustly...setting free the oppressed...breaking every yoke...sharing your bread with the hungry...sheltering the oppressed and the homeless....clothing the naked when you see them...and not turning your back on your own."). The excerpt from Psalm 51 notes that God is not pleased with sacrifices such as a burnt offering and will not accept them. Instead, our sacrifice should be a "contrite spirit, a heart contrite and humbled." In the Gospel reading, John the Baptist's disciples complain to Jesus that they and the Pharisees follow the law and fast in a very public way and Jesus' disciples do not. Jesus rebukes them and reminds them that fasting comes from within and not from outside appearances.

REFLECTION



Fasting and abstinence have been synonymous with Lent for as long as I can remember. As a child (and even as an adult), it was hard to understand at times how giving up something I really liked (ice cream, chocolate, wine) for forty days could make me holier or wipe away my sins. I almost always craved what I had given up and usually broke the fast sometime before Holy Thursday, ending up feeling guilty and sinful all over again, as if I had "wasted" Lent and disappointed God.

It has only been in the last several years that I have come to a better understanding of what “fasting” during Lent really means and what our Lord is calling us to do during those forty days (and for that matter, during every day of our lives). The outward appearance of giving up something or going without is a helpful reminder of what should be going on within us, but it should never be our objective to merely “show off”



externally. Our fasting should be a catalyst for change and positive action, not a millstone we carry around seeking praise and recognition. Fasting isn't always “giving up”; very often it can be doing something positive, helping, making life better for ourselves and others. This is what the prophet Isaiah, the psalmist and Jesus are telling us in today's readings, and what Lent calls us to do. Our sacrifice should be “a humble and contrite spirit”, always seeking to help others and bring goodness into the world around us. Only then, as Isaiah reminds us, “your light shall break forth like the dawn and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you.” Only then will we truly come to know and experience holiness and the life of Christ within us.

PRAYER

Dear God,

Over this Lenten season, help us to come to understand the true meaning and purpose of fasting and sacrifice by acts of kindness and charity toward those around us, so that we can create within ourselves a humble and contrite heart and grow every day in your grace.

We make this prayer in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who showed us by his own life and sacrifice the way to you in holiness and service. Amen.

Allyson Simpson,

Wife of Roland, Mother of Megan, Erin and Brian, RCIA Team Member and Eucharistic Minister