

# A Heart Renewed: Daily Lenten Prayer

from the Jesuit School of Theology,  
2018



Welcome to the Jesuit School of Theology's first online daily prayer experience for Lent, *A Heart Renewed*.

In the days to follow, you will receive an email with a link to the Scripture readings of the day and a reflection on those readings. The reflections are written by the students, faculty, staff, board members, and alumni of the Jesuit School of Theology, one of Santa Clara's six schools. Our hope is that these reflections will deepen your experience of Lent and Easter, as you walk with Jesus during this special time in the Church's year.

Consider these daily emails an invitation to a retreat experience. Find some quiet in your day to review the readings and the accompanying reflection and let the reflection inspire your own praying and thinking. Ultimately, our goal today is the same as St. Ignatius Loyola's in the sixteenth century: to know Jesus more deeply, so that we can love him more dearly and follow him more closely.

This journey is not a singular experience. The Lord walks with each of us, related to us uniquely and offering divine friendship. Moreover, we make this retreat together, thousands of people in the wider Santa Clara community united virtually with a common desire to grow in faith, hope, and love. You might wish to reach out to a friend, forwarding these emails, or sharing your experiences through the weeks. Or you might journal about what you are experiencing and learning.

St. Ignatius insisted that the most important spiritual disposition as we begin a retreat is generosity, a largeness of heart that is open to God's creativity and activity in our lives. Signing up for this online retreat underscores the generosity of spirit and time that you now offer.

As we begin, I wish to thank all those who contributed their reflections to this series. You will be amazed at the depth and breadth of spiritual insight that our writers offer. I also thank Keith Maczkiewicz, S.J., a Master of Divinity student at JST, for his tireless dedication in editing the reflections and getting this inaugural edition off the ground.

Godspeed on the adventure ahead!

Kevin O'Brien, S.J.  
Dean, Jesuit School of Theology and University Professor

February 14

Ash Wednesday

[Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18](#)

*Behold, now is a very acceptable time; Behold, now is the day of salvation.* When I find myself procrastinating about something that I should be getting done, I often hear my father's voice, who used to say in such situations: "No time like the present, John!" This is true for us as well as begin Lent this year: No time like the present to be the "ambassadors for Christ" that we are called to be, to "rend our hearts" to be more like Christ's heart: gracious and merciful, rich in kindness. Our world needs more of this kind of ongoing conversion that is called for on Ash Wednesday, and throughout this season of Lent. No time like the present to take a look again at our priorities in life, to focus more on what is, rather than what isn't; to keep striving to be our best selves as disciples of the one who calls us. No time like the present to acknowledge our shortcomings and our sins, not to beat ourselves up, but to try and be more authentically who God created us and calls us to be every day, with a "clean heart, and a steadfast spirit." Lent gives us the opportunity to be more intentional in our prayer, so that we can be closer to the Christ, whose ambassadors we are called to be; to fast from those things that keep us apart from others, so that we can be instruments of joy and hope, peace and reconciliation in our broken world; to give alms and to be of service in a world where so many people are in need. No time like the present!



*Great is your mercy, Lord, and bountiful is your goodness to us. In your compassion help us to use this time of Lent to draw closer, to live more freely, and give more generously. Guide us, Lord, in the ways of your truth, and give us the strength to be authentically who we are in relationship to you, for now is the acceptable time, now is the day of our salvation. Amen.*

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John P. McGarry, S.J., M.Div. '92  
Rector, Jesuit Community of Berkeley

February 15

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

[Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1; Luke 9:22-25](#)

After forty years of struggle, perched at the edge of a harsh desert, about to enter holy land, we hear the unwavering voice of Moses crying out to his kinfolk in the wilderness: “I set before you, life and death, the blessing and the curse. *Choose life...*” (Deut. 30:19). Moses challenges his fellow Israelites in an exacting way: what kind of culture will we choose to build in the land promised to our ancestors? A culture of life? Of blessing? Or a culture of death? How appropriate, then, that we hear these words only one day into our Lenten practice, for he frames for us what is at the heart of our forty-day desert sojourn: that through wilderness experiences, we are primed to build a culture of life, the kind of culture that God deeply desires for us to make. Thus, all our practices of denial, of self-emptying, ought to be ordered towards that end.

Yet as Jesus posits in the gospel, there is a counter-intuitive nature in the posture of denial: “Whoever loses [her] life for my sake will save it.” (Luke 9:24) He speaks in the same tenor as Moses regarding the choice before us: saving our life or losing it. It seems resoundingly true to my daily experience that whenever I, or others, try to gain the world, we fall prey to perpetuating a culture of death, and lose ourselves. Therefore, I am consoled when I remember that Jesus’ invitation is not a shallow, unreflective self-denial. It is a denial with its heart set on *blessing*, on the *culture of life*. For Jesus does not ask for a self-denial without purpose. Rather, it is a denial for his sake. It is a denial tied up in relationship. A denial that makes space for the holy mystery of Christ, for Incarnate Love. Therefore, as I start my Lenten journey, I pray that whatever I lay down is ultimately in service of blessing and life.



*Christ, order my steps through the desert that I might love rightly. Let any of my attachments that are ordered towards death or destruction die away in this season so that I may build, with you, a culture of life. Amen.*

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Sara Prendergast, *M.Div.* '16

February 16                      Friday after Ash Wednesday

[Isaiah 58:1-9; Psalm 51; Matthew 9:14-15](#)

Click [HERE](#) to read today's reflection in English.

Las lecturas de hoy nos piden que reflexionemos sobre nuestra separación de Dios y del prójimo. Estamos separados por cosas como el espacio, el tiempo, el idioma y el pecado. Debido a que Dios nos sostiene en el ser, solo el pecado nos separa de El. Podemos comprender al pecado, entonces, en términos de cómo nuestras elecciones o actitudes nos han separado de Dios y del prójimo y nos han impedido actualizar plenamente el amor que damos y recibimos. Todos nos hemos retirado de convivir con compañeros por alguna herida causada por alguien del grupo en que participamos. Y todos hemos sentido que el océano que nos separa de un ser querido desaparece cuando la preocupación o el anhelo hacen que el o ella quede curiosamente presente en nuestros corazones y pensamientos. Es a este curioso espacio de pecado, separación, amor, y cercanía al que nos invitan las lecturas de hoy.

Jesús responde a la pregunta acerca del ayuno con la frase "llevar luto". Cuando estamos de luto, reconocemos nuestra separación y anhelamos tener a alguien cerca de nosotros. Estar cerca de Jesús es estar cerca de Dios. El ayuno, explica Jesús, es un anhelo de tener a Dios cerca. Y cuando Dios está cerca, el salmista nos recuerda, es imposible no reconocer que hemos elegido separarnos de El, pero también nos hace reconocer la misericordia de Dios y la compasión de Jesús frente a nuestro pecado. Tal misericordia y compasión nos obliga a ver al prójimo con misericordia y compasión. Isaías nos dice que encarnamos nuestro anhelo por Dios al ser la presencia de Dios donde aparentemente hace falta. Isaías nos invita a divinizar nuestros hechos, o sea ser: libertadores, alimentadores, protectores, y reconciliadores.



*Señor Jesús, ayúdame a manifestar el amor de Dios. Amén.*

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Ricardo Avila, S.J., M.Div. '19

Today's readings ask us to reflect on our separation from God and one another. We are separated from one another by things such as space, time, language, and sin. Because God holds us in being, we are separated from God only by sin. We can think of sin, then, in terms of how our choices or attitudes have driven us apart from people and God, and kept us from fully actualizing the love we give to and receive from God and others. Perhaps we have felt worlds apart from someone at the dinner table because of a hurtful choice made by someone at that table. And we have all felt the oceans that separate us from our Beloved disappear as concern or longing make the Beloved curiously present in our hearts and minds. It is into this curious space of sin, separation, love, and closeness that today's readings invite us.

Jesus answers a question about fasting with a statement about mourning. When we mourn we acknowledge our separation from and longing to have someone near to us. To be close to Jesus is to be close to God. Fasting, Jesus explains, is a longing to have God near. When God comes near to us, the psalmist reminds us, we cannot help but recognize that we chose to separate ourselves from Him, but we also perceive God's mercy and Jesus' compassion in the face of our sin. Such mercy and compassion compels us to look upon our neighbors with mercy and compassion. Isaiah tells us that we manifest our longing for God in being God's presence where it seems to be lacking. Isaiah, then, invites us to be God-like: liberating, nourishing, sheltering, caring, and reconciliatory.



*Lord Jesus, help me manifest God's love. Amen.*

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Ricardo Avila, S.J., M.Div. '19

February 17

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

[Isaiah 58:9-14; Psalm 86; Luke 5:27-32](#)

There is a glut of conditional clauses in this first reading from Isaiah today. The prophet announces that “if” the Israelites can accomplish certain things - acting properly towards one another, feeding the hungry, and honoring the sabbath - “then” light will shine on them, and the Lord God will guide, provide, renew, rebuild and nourish the people. If this, then that. Conditionally.

I have long-resented conditions, for they feel so limiting. When I was kid I remember feeling weighed down by them. If I cleaned my room and one other space in the house, then I would receive an allowance. If I finished my entire dinner, then I could have dessert. If I did well on my quarterly report card, then I would be rewarded with a toy. Conditions follow one into adulthood, too, as it seems to be the case that ‘conditions apply’, always, as responsibilities become greater and the fine print of life becomes more and more complicated.

However, the conditions that Jesus mentions are not limiting, but rather freeing. Jesus says, simply, ‘if one is sick, then he or she is in need of a physician, but a healthy person is not. Likewise, if one is a sinner, he or she ought repent, but a righteous person need not.’ There is not a compulsion here, but rather an invitation to self-examination: to take stock of my own interior life and choices. Do I dare claim the title of a righteous person, and ‘if’ I do so, ‘then’ what does that say about the role of God in my life? What do I want my choices to say?

Perhaps we ought look to Levi as an example here, for even in his condition - that of a sinner - he is loved and called by Jesus. Levi was sick, in a way, and God sought him out gently, but persistently. In my own life, in my own condition - that of a loved sinner - God calls me, too.

And that’s a condition I can accept, that I can live with, because I do, every day.



*Loving God, in my condition - that of a loved sinner - you continually call me to new life.  
Let me be open to your call, that I might hear and respond to you generously and courageously.  
Amen.*

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Keith Maczkiewicz, S.J., M.Div. '18, S.T.L. '19, Th.M. '19

February 18

1st Sunday of Lent

[Genesis 9:8-15; Psalm 25; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15](#)

This first Sunday of Lent gives us a direction, a way, and a Companion for the rest of the season. God had gathered all the beloved into the ark, women and men, all the animals “wild and tame,” and all the living things which were created as gifts. Together, they show us a community floating on the chaos, not above it, and yet somehow safe in that communal in-gathering. For the ark is God’s vessel. Its rainbow promise for us is a way through rather than being drowned by ‘what we have done and what we have failed to do,’ as the Confiteor prayer at Eucharist acknowledges.

This was the saving way for Noah and his family, along with his creaturely friends, and it is ours now. We need a direction, a way, and a Companion. To do this, Lent asks for a little solitude, a different rhythm in the midst of the chaos, but also a sure direction: we do this together, not alone. And in our silent center, holding us, is the One we call the Christ.

Mark’s account of Christ in the desert is terribly simple. Refreshed from the waters of Jordan’s baptism, Jesus shows us a way, ‘that he might lead us to God’ (1Pet.). Note that isolation does not rule here. He is driven into the desert “by the Spirit”, hallowing and gracing him every step of the way. He was “among the wild beasts,” but they do not harm him. The angelic ones show up to minister to him. Jesus befriends the wilderness within this communion of the Spirit and the friends of God. So can we.

Jesus “remained in the desert forty days, tempted by Satan,” trusting the journey, temptations and all. The ark of God’s promise to all creation is now enfleshed in him. That is the covenant Promise, a rainbow of hope: in Christ, God does not go away.

Do you believe that the Spirit is leading us as a Church, as women and men struggling to find a living faith, even when we are not exactly sure where we are going? Because our Companion Jesus makes our wilderness his own, we have a direction and a sure way – together.



*Lord Jesus, guide our Lenten journey. Teach us simplicity, silence, and awe. Stay with us so we can stay with you. We especially draw close to those who are preparing for the Easter sacraments. They increase the beauty of this Ark of faith we all share. “God patiently waited in the days of Noah,” and we rely on your interceding for us at your Father’s right hand, close to the Divine Heart and close to us. In the Spirit, we pray. Amen.*

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Paul Janowiak, S.J. *M.Div. '84, Th.M. '85, GTU Ph.D. '95*  
Associate Professor of Liturgical and Sacramental Theology

February 19

Monday of the 1st week of Lent

[Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Psalm 19; Matthew 25:31-46](#)

When I first saw the photo of the body of a Syrian toddler who had drowned off the coast of Bodrum, Turkey, in September 2015, I felt like I had been punched in the stomach. It was compounded by the fact that my own daughter was about to turn two, close to the age of the baby in the photo – and that tiny body could have easily been hers. How could we, as fellow human beings, let this sort of injustice occur all around us?

The baby (his name is Alan Kurdî) was one of sixteen who had set out for a better life in a raft, and there are hundreds of thousands like them – hungry, thirsty, and naked. This sounds familiar because, in today's gospel, Jesus gives us a clear impression of our neighbors in need, and straightforward advice on how we can do better. He asks us, simply, to show mercy to others, and (as my daughter was learning at the time in her preschool), to engage in radical acts of love. We encounter Jesus in every face of every migrant and refugee who arrive in our communities, and when we embrace and welcome them we are also welcoming Him, who, as Pope Francis has taught, 'identify[d] with the welcomed and rejected strangers of every age.'

My daughter was, and is, too young to yet fully grasp the extent of the injustices around her, but she is old enough to understand the tenets of compassion that are at the heart of the message of the gospel. "Mama," she told me, "if I meet someone from another country, I'm going to tell them 'Welcome to our neighborhood.' And we can share our dinner together!"



*Dear God, please help us to remember that when we encounter a stranger in need, we are encountering your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant us the courage to show mercy and love to our neighbors, and to engage in radical acts of love throughout this Lenten season. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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Kathryn Barush

Assistant Professor of Art History and Religion



February 20

Tuesday of the 1st week of Lent

[Isaiah 55:10-11](#); [Psalm 34](#); [Matthew 6:7-15](#)

*Lord if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, thy will be done...* At the dawn of this Lenten season we are invited especially to reflect on a deeper understanding of communication with God. We are drawn into the loving dynamics of prayer, which is basically a **continuous dialogue** between God and ourselves. It is continuous because prayer is not a spare wheel that we pull out when the roads are rough, but it is the steering wheel that directs the right path throughout our journey. As dialogue, it is the heartbeat of our relationship with God, it is communication between friends. For how can we sustain our friendship without communication? It is not only important what we say to God, but it is just as, if not more, important what God has to say to us.

Isaiah 55:10-11 remind us not only of God's own end of the dialogue through God's own words, but it points out how much those words to us are aimed and focused at providing the very best to and for us. They water our barren life conditions, making them fertile and fruitful, they provide seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats – in response to our demand for our daily bread. The words meet our needs and shall not return until they have achieved God's plan and will. Jeremiah 29:11 reminds us clearly of what that will and plan is: *plans for your welfare, not for harm, to give you a future and a hope.* Thus, we pray as Jesus himself taught us that the Kingdom of God should come, and that God's will be done on earth. Nevertheless, as humans with struggles and troubles, we would always ask God for our daily bread, forgiveness of sins, and that our difficulties be taken away. However, today's readings open us to the understanding that our prayers must align to the will of God, that which is fervent, steadfast, unchanging, true, and wills the very best for us. Thus, when faced with difficult and trying times, we can pray in the words of Jesus: *Lord, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, thy will be done.*



*Good and merciful God, open our hearts and minds to understand your love and friendship to us, and grant that we may value it more each day in the way we communicate with you in prayer. Amen.*

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Angelbert Chikere, M.Div. '18

February 21                      Wednesday of the 1st week of Lent  
[Jonah 3:1-10; Psalm 51; Luke 11:29-32](#)

*When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil ways, he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them.* The first reading for today reminds me that God is a God of Mercy. The people of Nineveh lived according to evil ways and did wicked things. Although they do not please God with their lifestyles, God still loves them and wants to rescue them from the consequences of their sin. Jonah is sent to them as a sign from God, calling them to repent and return to God. In this way, Jonah becomes a sign of hope for the people. Thanks to his warning, the people of Nineveh are saved.

The reading invites us to reflect upon our behavior and interactions with other people. On the one hand, we should question ourselves as to whether or not we are a sign of hope for others by our words and actions. When the Ninevites repented and returned to God, God did not punish them. How do we behave with people who treat us badly? Do we treat them as God treated the Ninevites, with mercy and forgiveness? On the other hand, when we hear God's words, do we believe and return to God or do we just listen to God's words and then ignore them? Lent is the time for us to reexamine our lives in light of God's love, to return to God, and to tune our lives with God's will.



*God, please help us to recognize your unconditional love for us and strengthen us to return to you with a contrite and humble heart. Amen.*

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Tran Thi Linh Chi, C.N.D., S.T.L. '18

February 22

Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, Apostle

[1 Peter 5:1-4](#); [Psalm 23](#); [Matthew 16:13-19](#)

I remember when I first learned of the Servant of God, Julius Nyerere. I was somewhat surprised by a political leader's cause for sainthood. While there is a history of canonizing Kings, I cannot think of any such causes in the 20th century. This much beloved former president of Tanzania is perhaps best remembered for heeding today's lesson from 1 Peter, "Tend the flock of God in your midst, overseeing not by constraint but willingly, as God would have it, not for shameful profit but eagerly. Do not lord it over those assigned to you, but be examples to the flock." While President Nyerere was far from perfect, his selfless witness to servant leadership has inspired the bishops of Tanzania to promote his cause.

Today's feast commemorates Our Lord choosing Peter to sit in the place of servant leader for the whole Church. We certainly pray for our Holy Father on this day, and we remember the significance of his mission in the world. As the undershepherd of Christ (Jn 21: 15-17), he extends the mission of shepherd to those who lead, revealing how they are to tend the flock under their care. I find it helpful on this day to reflect on leaders like Nyerere, who inspire us by their selfless witness. Their witness teaches us to make room for Christ, the Good Shepherd, who never abandons his flock. The mission of St. Peter's successor extends from the Chair of Peter the Apostle to all who lead, inviting them to oversee willingly, eagerly, and as God would have us lead. Whether we find ourselves in a position of authority or not, all of us will have influence over others today. May this feast give us that space to let the Lord into our hearts so that Christ might shine forth in what we say and do.



*Lord God, in choosing St. Peter you reveal how you find the weak and make them strong in your service. Grace us with the freedom to hear your call this day, as St. Peter heard your call to be the rock on which your Church was built. Grace us with humility and courage to be servant leaders for your people. Amen.*

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Timothy P. Kesicki, S.J., M.Div. '94

Vice-Chancellor, JST

Member, Board of Directors

President, Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States

February 23                      Friday of the 1st week of Lent  
[Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130; Matthew 5:20-26](#)

In today's readings, the theme of judgment echoes, inviting us to reflect interiorly on how it may manifest in our lives. In the first reading, the prophet Ezekiel proclaims that those who commit "iniquities" will "die" and those who are "right and just" will "live." In the Gospel, Jesus preaches that one must "be reconciled with one's brother" and then "offer one's gift"; "otherwise, your opponent will hand you over to the judge." How often do we find ourselves judging others for their "iniquities?" Perhaps when we are too focused on judging others, we overlook how we have failed to do what is "right and just."

This Lenten season provides us an opportunity to reflect on our "iniquities." Through this, we can strive to practice what is "right and just" rather than judging others for "ways they have been unfair." As we move beyond ourselves, we are more attentive to those around us, whether it is a friend who has been overlooked, a family member who has been misunderstood, or a person on the street who has been forgotten. As we become more empathetic with our sisters and brothers, more free from judgment, we can offer the gift of ourselves. Perhaps through this we can embody how God desires for us to be "right and just." Through this interior examination of our "inequities," we can experience the Lord's "kindness" and "plenteous redemption," proclaimed in Psalm 130. We may also move outwards to show compassion towards others and discover how to "make for ourselves a new heart and a new spirit" (Ez 18:31).



*Merciful God, during this Lenten season may we be aware of the ways we may commit iniquities in our life. As we reflect on ourselves, may this move us outwards to discover the ways you call us be right and just towards others. Amen.*

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Justine Javier, M.Div. '18

February 24                      Saturday of the 1st week of Lent  
[Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119; Matthew 5:43-48](#)

When I was seventeen years old, I asked my parents if they would be willing to help me buy a new car. Both my mother and my father almost fell over, laughing. When they finally stopped, they peppered me with questions: “When is the last time you took out the trash? Or walked the dog? Or cleaned your room? How much money have you saved from your job?” Embedded in these questions was the underlying message that my parents wanted to communicate to me: *Do the little things first. Only when you do the little things will you be ready to have an adult partnership with us.*

Lent is oftentimes the period where we get back to basics and intentionally spend forty days trying to do the little things: fasting, almsgiving, and prayer. But the aim of these little “self-imposed laws” and commands is less about self-improvement or conquering a challenge. For what good is giving up coffee if the only result is rage and crankiness? Instead, these acts of *habitus* are a means to dispose ourselves more deeply to a richer relationship with God. Sometimes, God blesses us with a great epiphany which changes the relationship. But more often than not, our relationship with God moves in inches: by being a bit kinder, a bit more forgiving, a bit more prayerful, and a bit more loving. It only happens if we seek to do so by putting our all of our heart and soul into these things day by day.

These forty days are the perfect time to move in inches. What are some “little things” you can ask God to help you with over this Lenten season to grow in this relationship with God?



*Loving God, these forty days are an intentional time to grow in relationship with you. I ask that you reveal to me the ways in which I can be more attentive to the areas in my life that keep our relationship at a distance. Help me to more fully recognize how we are deepening our relationship each day, inch by inch. Please fortify me in my Lenten promises so that through small acts of sacrifice and other-centered action I may grow in greater compassion and love. In your son's name, Amen.*

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Jeffrey Sullivan, S.J., M.Div. '20

February 25

2nd Sunday of Lent

[Genesis 22:1-2, 9-18; Psalm 116; Romans 8:31-34; Mark 9:2-10](#)

My 93-year old father came to mind as I reflected on these readings. As well as I think I know him, I continue to learn who he truly is when I hear Pop's insights from so many years of living. There is always more to receive and upon which to reflect.

Our readings today focus on two individuals who discovered much from their encounters with God. Abraham thought that the Almighty desired the life of Abraham's son, when in fact God sought an ever-deeper relationship than that of a bloody sacrifice. Because of this encounter with the divine, Abraham learned that he was to be the father of a whole people, as numerous as "the stars of the heavens."

Jesus also heard an amazing revelation in the voice from the cloud. Unexpected, dazzling in its intensity, Jesus received word of God's love for him, a love as intimate as that of a father for his son. As he often did, Jesus had retreated with three followers to a deserted place, away from noise, bustle, and distraction. On that mountain, Jesus encountered for the first time in Mark's Gospel, an affirmation of God's relationship with him. Not only that, the three disciples witnessed this theophany, and, like us, they could not comprehend the significance of what they saw and heard.

Lent once again summons us to listen. No matter how well acquainted we may feel we are with God, this amazing God has so much more to share with us. God invites us to withdraw to a quiet place to reflect on our experiences in which God unexpectedly speaks with evermore startling intimacy. As Abraham discovered and as Jesus encountered, there is always more to receive from God, more to learn, and more to relish, knowing that I am God's beloved child.



*Loving God, summon me closer to you this Lent that I may encounter again your affection. Open my eyes to see that my daily experiences are repeated invitations into a closer relationship with you. Yes, Lord, prod me from my complacency and transfigure this dull heart of mine so I might embrace you in each person I meet. Amen.*

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Michael Engh, S.J., M.Div., '82  
President, Santa Clara University

February 26

Monday of the 2nd week of Lent

[Daniel 9:4-10; Psalm 79; Luke 6:36-38](#)

Today's readings speak of God's mercy and forgiveness. The Gospel reading encourages us to be merciful to others, just as God is merciful toward us. We are called to be God-bearers to one another by exercising mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. What might our gracious and loving God be asking you to focus upon today? In what ways can your attitude and demeanor reflect that of our merciful God?

Jesus assures us in today's Gospel reading that if we give, we will receive an abundance of overflowing gifts in return: "Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap." What feelings do Jesus' words evoke in you? Take a moment to reflect upon the God-given gifts for which you are grateful. Is there a gift you would like to ask of God?

Jesus states that the measure we use will be the measure used for us. In what ways can you give to others today, or this week, and in doing so reflect God's loving presence? Ask God for the grace to pay attention to the opportunities where you may speak God's loving words of joy, peace, or reconciliation to another.



*Loving God, please bless and guide me on my Lenten journey. Help me to be attentive to the many gifts you have given to me. May I return these gifts to you through loving service and by exercising merciful compassion toward others. Amen.*

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Deborah Ross

Lecturer and Director of Ministerial Formation

February 27

Tuesday of the 2nd week of Lent

[Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalm 50; Matthew 23:1-12](#)

Today's readings confront us with a probing question: how are we living out discipleship? In the Gospel reading, Jesus gives us a disciple's how-to guide of what to avoid. Per usual, Jesus takes issue with the Pharisees, pointing out that everything they do is in name, but not in spirit. In name, they check off all of the boxes: they preach, they lead public prayer, they are recognized leaders in their communities. Yet in spirit, they do not practice what they preach. Their prayers are for public show, and their leadership is more about ego than humble service. His admonishment echoes the lament of today's psalm, "Why do you recite my statutes, and profess my covenant with your mouth...and cast my words behind you?"

This makes me wonder about the ways that I may live out discipleship in name, but not in spirit. For example, in name I may attend Mass, but in spirit I may find it boring and dry. But instead of going just to check off a box, what if I prayed with the Sunday readings the day before? How might Mass come to life in a richer way now that I bring my experience of the readings to it? Similarly, in name I may give someone experiencing homelessness a few dollars, but in spirit I might still take very little notice of his or her humanity. But what if I turned that exchange into an encounter, an opportunity to learn someone's name and a little bit about who they are? Then I would be living discipleship in spirit.

Isaiah voices the refrain to our Christian lives: "Come now, let us set things right." As we journey through the desert of this Lenten season, emptying ourselves to make more room for God, how might we set things right by letting go of the habit of going through the motions, of doing things in name, but not in spirit?



*Creator God, author of my every breath, you who know each step I take along the way of life, draw close to me, please, and blow your Holy Breath upon the glowing embers of my heart, so that the desire may ignite in me to transform ordinary routines and motions into moments of discipleship that bear witness to the constant in-breaking of your love and tenderness in the World. Amen.*

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Andrew Shahamiri, M.Div. '18



February 28

Wednesday of the 2nd week of Lent

[Jeremiah 18:18-20; Psalm 31; Matthew 20:17-28](#)

Click [HERE](#) to read today's reflection in English.

En el evangelio de hoy, somos invitados a reflexionar acerca de las situaciones que escapan nuestro control. Una madre preocupada de lo que les pueda pasar a sus hijos siguiendo a Jesús, y sabiendo que pueden haber problemas en Jerusalén, se dirige a Jesús y le pide algo que va más allá de su control. La madre de Santiago y Juan quiere proteger a sus hijos de la incertidumbre. ¿Qué es lo que quieres? Le pregunta Jesús. Ella quizás pensaba en sus hijos, en el pequeño Juan, en los problemas y disturbios que habían en la capital. La madre de los Zebedeos pide un lugar seguro para sus hijos. Quizás su petición es una mezcla de miedo, amor y preocupación por la incertidumbre. En tiempos complejos, probablemente todos queremos estar seguros y en control de la situación, evitando momentos de incertidumbre.

En este día de Cuaresma, podemos reflexionar acerca de esta actitud y ser más conscientes de ella como preparación para seguir a Jesús durante la Semana Santa. En muchas oportunidades mientras seguimos a Jesús tendremos que caminar hacia lo desconocido y salir de nuestras seguridades. Nuestra reacción más natural es miedo... y si podemos, intentaremos tomar control de la situación.

La actitud de Jesús es completamente distinta y hoy nos muestra dos detalles. Primero confía completamente en Dios Padre y luego nos invita a caminar a Jerusalén junto con él. Todos podemos aprender de Jesús en las situaciones que van más allá de nuestro control a tener estas dos actitudes: confiarse completamente en el Padre y concentrarse en Jesús en vez de nuestras dudas.



*En este día de Cuaresma, te pedimos Señor la gracia de creer y confiar en el Padre como Jesús lo hace. Te pedimos la gracia de seguir a Jesús donde sea que nos invita a caminar. Te pedimos la gracia de liberarnos de nuestros esfuerzos por tomar control en cada situación que nos produce ansiedad y miedo. Que más bien sea el Espíritu Santo quien resuelva estas situaciones y venga a nuestras vidas con paz y confianza. Amén.*

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Juan Pablo Valenzuela, S.J., S.T.L. '18

In today's gospel, we are invited to reflect on our attitude when facing situations that escape our control. A very protective mother, knowing that her sons will go to Jerusalem with Jesus, and knowing that it might be trouble there, approaches Jesus to ask for something that is beyond her control. The mother of James and John wants to protect her sons from the uncertainty. "What do you wish?", Jesus asked her. She might have thought about her little son John and how rough things were happening in the capital. Then she asks for a safe place for them. Her request is a mix of fear of the unknown and protective love. In difficult times, perhaps we all want to be safe and in control and we all want to avoid uncertain situations for ourselves and those we love.

During these days of Lent, this is an attitude that we could be more aware of, for we are preparing ourselves to follow Jesus during Holy Week. To follow Jesus, we will have to walk into the unknown, and go out of our comfort zone. The natural reaction is probably fear and then, if we can, to try to control the situation.

But Jesus' attitude is different from the mother of the sons of Zebedee. He trusts in God the Father, and invites us to follow him, to walk with him to Jerusalem. We all can learn from him how to face uncertainty: have trust and confidence in the Father and keep our eyes fixed the entire time. Focus on him, not on our fears.



*In these days of Lent ,we pray for the grace of trust and confidence in the Father, as Jesus shows us. We pray for the grace to follow Jesus wherever he is inviting us to walk. We pray for the grace to give up our efforts to control situations that bring us anxiety and fear, and to let the Holy Spirit work through these instead. Amen.*

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Juan Pablo Valenzuela, S.J., S.T.L. '18

March 1                      Thursday of the 2nd week of Lent  
[Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1; Luke 16:19-31](#)

We are now nine days into Lent. Just when our initial enthusiastic Lenten intentions begin to wane, the scripture readings jolt us with a radical message of hope. The responsorial Psalm repeatedly reassures us: *“Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.”* This message echoes the first reading from Jeremiah who proclaims the power of trust in the Lord: *“Happy is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord...He alone can understand the human heart.”* No matter how unworthy or broken we are as we present ourselves before our God today, the Lord welcomes us just as we are. It is not about our worthiness; it is about approaching God and others with an open, generous, and renewed heart.

Each of us is gifted in countless ways like the Rich Man in the Gospel, but our challenge relates to how we make use of those gifts. During this season of reflection we are called, first of all, to be conscious of the gifts we are given - physical, intellectual, material, social, and spiritual - to acknowledge their Source and to share them with others, especially with the vulnerable of our communities, those challenged with illness, poverty, loneliness, isolation, and discrimination. As we meet our “Lazarus” in many forms each day, we are invited to use our gifts to connect with another human heart with a smile or handshake, a word of encouragement, a helping hand, a listening ear or some witness to the dignity and value of the other.



*Loving Lord, help me to lift up others in all my encounters today. You love me unconditionally and have given me a model of selflessness through your own life and death. Help me to overcome my hesitation to connect with the unpleasant. Give me the patience and the courage to open my heart and hand to others, especially those most in need of encouragement. Amen.*

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Jacqueline Powers Doud  
Member, Board of Directors

March 2

Friday of the 2nd week of Lent

[Genesis 37:3-28; Psalm 105; Matthew 21:33-46](#)

In today's gospel, Jesus tells the parable of a vineyard owner who attempts to collect his appropriate share of the vintage at harvest time. Repeatedly, the landowner sends his trusted servants as his emissaries, and each time the tenants rise up to kill the messenger. Finally, the vineyard owner sends his beloved son but loses all patience when the tenants choose to kill his son rather than share the fruits of the land. "The stone that the builders rejected has become the Cornerstone."

This parable calls me to reflect on the ways in which I have been resistant to hear and fully live the more challenging elements of the gospel message. Where has the Lord prodded me to be more generous in sharing the gifts he has bestowed on me? Have I ignored the Lord's persistent urgings to be less immersed in my work and more present to the people in my life? Lent calls me to put aside my own selfish ways and follow the radical call of the Good News.

In my teenage years, I was reluctant to heed the advice of my parents, because I sought to exert my independence and naively believed that my wisdom was greater than theirs. It was only later in life, that I came to realize the folly of my juvenile ways and discovered the beneficial counsel that my parents lovingly provided.

How many more times do I need to hear the gospel's challenge, before I allow it to be the cornerstone of my life? Instead of setting aside the stone that I perceive to be inconveniently placed in my path, my Lenten resolution is to build upon the cornerstone that Christ has gifted to me.



*Lord God, you have proclaimed the Good News through the life and words of Jesus Christ. Along our Lenten journey, help us to recognize the areas that we most need to change in order to share in the fullness of your abundant life. May your wisdom and love become the cornerstone of our lives. Amen.*

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Dennis C. Jacobs  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs  
Professor of Chemistry

March 3

Saturday of the 2nd week of Lent

[Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Psalm 103; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32](#)

Lent is a time to grow in personal *conversion*, to express *compassion* to others and to grow in intimate *communion* with the Lord. Both of today's readings highlight these dimensions. The Gospel reading relates these three predominant messages to the life of the prodigal son: the younger son experienced conversion when he recalled the unfathomable love of his beloved father, then experienced compassion, and was reunited with his father in communion.

To understand profoundly these messages of conversion, compassion, and communion, a real-life example might help: Blessed Mariam Vattalil (Rani Maria), a member of the Franciscan Clarist religious community, was engaged in development programs for the empowerment of the poor tribal people of Udayanagar in North India, those who had been exploited by moneylenders. Gradually, through her dedicated service and trust in the Lord, the conditions of the poor there improved. Consequently, she became an object of hatred for the exploiters, and they decided to get rid of her. On February 25, 1995, as she was on her way to Indore in a bus, she was brutally murdered in broad daylight, in front of all the passengers. She had 40 major injuries, besides bruises. Until the last she kept on praying loudly, "Jesus! Jesus! Have mercy on them." Her murderer, Smandhar Singh, who was of another faith, is today Catholic because he was accepted, forgiven, and loved by Rani's mother as her son and as brother by Rani's sister. Today, he is engaged in acts of mercy and proclaims Christ courageously. Singh is today united with the family of Rani Maria and he is accepted as their family member.

Today, let us spend some time before the Lord, guided by the Holy Spirit, to understand the depths of God's unconditional forgiving love expressed in the life of sinners, especially in the conversion of the prodigal son and the murderer of Rani Maria.



*Lord, give us the grace daily to experience personal conversion, to express compassion to others by forgiving their limitations and to be united with you. Amen.*

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Fabian Jose, U.M.I, S.T.D. candidate

March 4

3rd Sunday of Lent

[Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25](#)

Today's gospel reminds us that the Lenten season is not only a season of reflection and repentance for ways in which we individually fall short, but also an invitation to follow Jesus in resisting structural evils as well.

Money changers and vendors of animals for sacrifice served a useful purpose for people traveling to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem: money changers exchanged travelers' home currency for the coinage used to pay the Temple tax. Animal sellers allowed people to offer a sacrifice without the mess and risk of bringing the animals with them. Basically, if you wanted to conduct business at the Temple, you first had to do business with these folks, who made their living by skimming their percentage of the deal. For poorer people, already burdened by the costs of travel, temple tax, and animals to sacrifice, losing that extra percent probably hurt, sometimes a lot. But what could they do?

Structural evil describes social arrangements that, whether by intention or not, enable or even incentivize practices that abuse or oppress others. The money changers turned the Temple into a marketplace, a social space defined by profit, while the Temple should be a place where God's justice reigns, marked by an option for the poor and a privileged place for those left behind by the injustices of the world. The business of the money changers and animal vendors had inverted the right priorities of the Temple, so Jesus flipped their tables in return.

In his ministry, Jesus consistently railed against institutions - civil and religious - that unjustly afflicted the vulnerable. We who follow him must not merely absent ourselves from the more egregious structural evils we see, but, like Jesus, act to dismantle them. The kingdom of God is a kingdom of holy resistance to oppression, subjugation, and persecution.



*Brother Jesus, in this holy season of Lent, please ignite in our hearts the same zeal for the reign of God that led you to chase the money changers from the Temple. Open our eyes to the injustices in our world, and send your Spirit to enkindle in us the blessed rage to confront them. Amen.*

Lisa Fullam

Professor of Moral Theology

March 5

Monday of the 3rd week of Lent

[2 Kings 5:1-15; Psalm 42; Luke 4:24-30](#)

A great man is made famous by the little ones. Naaman goes through a process of becoming humble. Even the gospel does not remember these minor characters who suggested to Naaman what to do. "Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." All in Naaman are congruent to his encounter with the God of Israel. Although he is great, he is a leper. The little girl, servant of Naaman's wife, perhaps with a trembling voice, said to her mistress, "If only my master would present himself to the prophet in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy." Right in Israel, Naaman's servants are the ones to reason with their master. It seems ironic that the master does not know for himself; he is told what to do. This is a biblical reversal: the servants teach their master. Then, the miracle happens; he becomes a little child and confesses God's uniqueness. Everything in Naaman is becoming little; he seems to be diminishing. But, at the end, he regains his greatness, and there is a qualitative newness, a new creation. Naaman went through the Nicodemus experience: he is born again; he is born from above (Jn 3:3); he is born of water and the Spirit (Jn 3:5). Of water, Naaman recovers the flesh of a little child after bathing in the water. And of the Spirit he discovers for himself the uniqueness of God.

The focal point of the story is humility and childlikeness. It is only then that one trusts God. In this vein, St. Bede the Venerable said, "Those who refuse to be humble cannot be saved." The celebrity of this great man, Naaman, is praised through the story of the little ones: leper, little girl and servant, servants, little child. Shall we pay attention to and welcome the sayings and deeds of the little ones? They teach us the value of hospitality.



*Lord, sometimes I feel like a person who gets sick in the pursuit of grandeur and things beyond my reach. Now that I empty myself to listen to the little voices, almost lost in the vain noise of my folly, I am filled with gratitude, because I see, hear, smell, touch, taste and perceive your doing. Help me always to be so. Amen.*

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Ablam Augustin Atsikin, S.J., S.T.L. '15, S.T.D. candidate

March 6

Tuesday of the 3rd week of Lent

[Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Psalm 25; Matthew 18:21-35](#)

Today's readings invite us not to miss out on the joy and freedom of loving justly. We find a master who summons his servant, one who owes his master a huge debt. The master wants to see his servant face to face and hear his voice and invite him into a trusting and loving relationship. When the servant speaks, the master is moved with compassion. The master loves him.

The master knows what his servant needs; he knows his struggles, his weaknesses, and his strengths. After listening to his servant, the master decides to bless his servant by forgiving him his huge debt. The servant is happy and so is the master. The master has served him justly.

When the servant leaves, he finds his brother that owes him a much smaller amount. The servant snaps at his brother, begins to choke him, and demands that he repay his debt. The servant cannot accept that his brother is broke and unable to pay him. The servant is abusive, cruel, and degrades his brother, causing him great harm. The servant treats him unjustly; he fails to reciprocate his master's treatment which leads the servant to dig his own grave and miss out on the joy and freedom of loving justly.

God invites us to follow his lead: to learn to be just with our brothers and sisters; to be patient; not to hold on to grudges; to accept our brother's weaknesses and our own; to help each other; and to bless anyone who comes into our lives.



*Lord, teach me to love justly so that I may experience your freedom and joy. Amen.*

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Laura Nieto

Admissions and Scholarship Aid Specialist



March 7

Wednesday of the 3rd week of Lent

[Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Psalm 147; Matthew 5:17-19](#)

As we continue our Lenten journey, we remember our spiritual ancestors, Moses and the Israelites, wandering through the wilderness in search of the Promised Land. Throughout this Lenten season, our fasting and the temptations that we encounter throughout our time will be more directly compared to Jesus' forty days in the desert, but we can observe Moses and his time in the desert as an example for how we have been instructed to remember and worship God.

Today's readings focus on what God prefers for us to do as believers. God views us all as individuals and, as individuals, God wants each of us to grow closer to God's self. The path that we can take to do this is by listening to God and learning what would help us to draw closer to God and what would put obstacles between us and God. What Moses tells the Israelites is that our God is an intimate God, a close God, a God who can be called upon and is present to us. What the Israelites have a problem with is remembering the omnipresence and all-caring nature of God. Moses tells them not to let the memories of God's presence and beauty slip from their minds. The Israelites' struggle to remember God's presence might mirror our struggle, too.

Have there been times when we have forgotten God's presence in times of great happiness and joy, or in times of sorrow and desperation? Can we remember times of elation or stress in which we felt the supreme consolation and warmth of God's closeness? Looking forward to tomorrow and the rest of Lent, what actions can we take in order to love God more and allow ourselves to become nearer to God?



*Good and generous God, aid us in remembering your presence in every moment of our lives. Amen.*

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Marselys Lucero, *M.Div.* '19

March 8

Thursday of the 3rd week of Lent

[Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 95; Luke 11:14-23](#)

Today's readings invite us to contemplate the significance of listening to God's voice and speaking in praise of Him. In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah addresses people who are spiritually deaf to the call and commands of the Lord. In other words, they do not want to listen to God's voice. The voice and tone of Jeremiah indicate that God is displeased with God's people who "walk in the hardness of their evil hearts and turn their backs." Therefore, the invitation of the Lord is, "listen to my voice." What does it mean to listen to God's voice? Listening calls us to pay attention more deeply to what we hear as well as what we do as a result of listening. For Jeremiah, listening is not a passive activity but rather is an active effort whereby we are moved to obey the law of the Lord, do what is right in the sight of the Lord, and to walk in the way of the Lord. Ultimately God's invitation to listening is a call toward deeper trust, obedience, and commitment.

Luke's Gospel presents a person who is physically mute. In contrast, though the people around him can speak, they use this gift to speak ill of Jesus' power to heal the sick. In response to seeing the mute man speak in front of their eyes, instead of praising God, they accuse Jesus of having done so by the power of Beelzebul. An anonymous proverb states that it is better for someone to be mute than to speak ill or gossip about others. In a similar light, the gospel invites us to use the gift of speech to glorify God and his simple and mighty deeds in our daily lives. Moreover, we are also called to give hope, encouragement, support, and love to one another through speaking.

Especially in this Lenten season, we are reminded that, just like Jesus, we too must both listen to the voice and message of God and to use the gift of speech to thank God and everyone whom we meet in our life journey.



*Lord Jesus, lead me to listen more deeply to your voice in my heart and teach me to speak just as you spoke to those who were discouraged. Amen.*

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Louis Leveil, S.J., S.T.L. '16, S.T.D. candidate

March 9

Friday of the 3rd week of Lent

[Hosea 14:2-10; Psalm 81; Mark 12:28-34](#)

Today's readings speak of fidelity. The first reading is taken from the beautiful book of Hosea. Here, God's faithful love for Israel is likened to that of an ardent husband who, in spite of her unfaithfulness, cannot stop loving his wife. No matter their treachery, God wants only to shower his people with love and blessings, "I will love them freely; they shall blossom like the vine." If only they will turn back to the God who loves them. If only I will turn to the God who loves me.

The psalm provides a singular clue to help us turn to the God who loves us and to stay faithful: we are to listen. "If only my people would hear me, and Israel walk in my ways." If we substitute our own names for Israel, we will hear the message meant for us today.

Now that we are listening, the Gospel reminds us of what fidelity means. We are to love God with our whole being and our neighbor as ourselves. At this halfway point in Lent, we listen to this ancient command and pray to understand how we are being called to live it today. Do I need to review the resolutions I made? Is my practice of the Lenten call to pray, fast, and give alms drawing me closer to loving God with my whole self? In my prayer, am I making time to listen to God? Does my fasting create a space for me to be more attentive to the needs of others? Is my relationship with God reflected in acts of loving care for others?



*Dear God, help me to hear your call to me today. Help me to respond with all that I am and all that I have. Amen.*

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Kathy Enright

Member, Board of Directors

March 10                      Saturday of the 3rd week of Lent  
[Hosea 6:1-6; Psalm 51; Luke 18:9-14](#)

Today's first reading from Hosea is a prelude of what we will commemorate in a few weeks: the suffering, death, and eventual resurrection of our Lord. It also reveals to us what happened in the lives of the people of Israel as they experienced suffering and the awareness of God's healing power and presence. God chastises. God heals.

It is bewildering to know that the Lord strikes, but also consoling to realize that He heals our wounds (Hosea 6:1-2). His mercy and compassion are the rain that quenches our thirsty, dry souls. When the Israelites sinned in the desert, God sent the serpents as a way to punish them, but through His mercy, He ordered Moses to make a scepter in order to bring healing and life (Numbers 21:9). How do we reconcile God's chastisement with his consolation? He strikes but also heals. He consoles so that we may not drift away in the darkness of our sorrows, but rather renew our relationship with Him.

In the gospel reading, Jesus reminds us that a contrite heart is one that pleases the Lord. Indeed, without mercy, meekness, and humility, our fasting and almsgiving are in vain.



*Lord, as we continue to meditate on your compassionate love and mercy, may we be open to the work of the Spirit in our lives, that we too may be vessels of mercy and advocates of justice for the oppressed in our communities. Lord, let us know your love and your healing. Amen.*

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Vivian Nabuule, *M.Div.* '18

March 11

4th Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday)

[2 Chronicles 36:14-23; Psalm 137; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21](#)

Click [HERE](#) to read today's reflection in English.

Con toda honestidad, a veces las palabras de la Sagrada Escritura nos suenan muy duras. Por ejemplo, en el Evangelio de hoy, lo que dice Jesús sobre la salvación nos puede sonar como muy excluyente. Después de decir tan amorosamente de cómo “. . . tanto amo Dios al mundo, que le entregó a su Hijo único, para todo el que crea en el no perezca, sino tenga vida eterna,” una citación que a veces se ha llamado “el evangelio en miniatura”, y también después de haber proclamado que “Dios no envió a su Hijo para condenar al mundo, sino para que el mundo se salve por él,” lo que sigue a continuación puede sonar como algo bastante cerrado para esta época después del Vaticano Segundo, que asume el diálogo interreligioso como algo esencial para la vida cristiana: “El que cree en el no será condenado; pero el que no cree ya está condenado . . .” Según estas palabras, entonces, ¿qué actitud deberíamos tener hacia otras religiones que no conocen o reconocen a Jesús como su salvador, especialmente si sabemos que este Dios amoroso se preocupa por la salvación de todos?

Esta pregunta me vino a la mente mientras visitaba, en los locales de mi Facultad, una exhibición de arte islámico que incluía también algunas obras modernas. Mientras veía algunas de ellas, pensaba: “Son bonitas, llaman la atención por sus colores y diseños complejos ¿pero son religiosas?” Hasta que me encontré delante de un cuadro titulado: “Misericordia para todos”, de Salma Arastu, con abundantes, delicados y graciosos caracteres árabes que no sólo ilustran la misericordia divina, sino que encarnan el amor de Dios tan evidente en las lecturas de hoy.

Ellas nos muestran, como escuchamos especialmente en la carta a los Efesios, a un Dios rico en misericordia que opta por la luz, la luz de las buenas obras, que resume la misma vida de Jesús. No es suficiente tener buenas intenciones, sino más bien, como hace nuestro Dios, tenemos que comprometernos con los acontecimientos de la vida y así encarnar la misericordia de Dios para todos.



*¡O Dios Misericordioso! Enséñame a ser misericordioso como lo eres tu, especialmente hacia mi pequeño y combatido corazón, el lugar santo en donde habitas. Amén.*

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Eduardo Fernández, S.J. *M.Div '91*

Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ministry

In all honesty, sometimes the words of Scripture can seem very harsh. For example, in today's gospel, in his discourse with Nicodemus, Jesus seems to come to a very exclusivist conclusion concerning salvation. After having spoken so lovingly about how "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life," (this consoling passage has sometimes been referred to as the "little gospel"), and adding that "God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him", the concluding part of this conversation takes us aback in these post Vatican II times of interreligious dialogue: "Whoever believes in him will not be condemned, but whoever does not believe has already been condemned." What to make of other religions who do not know or acknowledge Jesus as their savior, especially in the context of a God concerned about the salvation of all?

Perhaps this question was in the back of my mind as I visited an exhibition of Islamic art, some of it modern, at my school recently. "Decorative, even something which catches your eye for its intricate colors and patterns, perhaps - but a religious experience?" Then I came upon a painting entitled "Mercy for All" by Salma Arastu. Its abundant, generous, graceful, and yes, merciful Arabic characters, in hindsight, not only illustrate, but also embody the love of God so apparent in today's readings. Here is a God, rich in mercy, as we hear in Ephesians, who opts for the light, the light of good deeds, which summarizes the life of Jesus. It is not enough to have good intentions but rather, like our God, to become involved in the messiness of life, and thus embody God's mercy towards all.



*O Merciful one, teach me to be merciful as you are merciful, especially towards my own small, struggling heart, the holy place where you reside. Amen.*

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Eduardo Fernández, S.J. *M.Div '91*  
Professor of Pastoral Theology and Ministry

March 12                      Monday of the 4th week of Lent

[Isaiah 65:17-21](#) [Psalm 30](#); [John 4:43-54](#)

It is hard to believe we are already approaching the end of our Lenten journey. In two weeks' time, Jesus will move through the streets of Jerusalem toward Calvary.

Yesterday, the Church celebrated Laetare Sunday. Laetare from the Latin means "to rejoice," or "to be joyful." Today's gospel continues this call to rejoice as we prepare our hearts for Easter: Jesus demonstrates his role as miraculous healer, assuring the royal official that his son will not die, but live. Without having seen or touched the boy, Jesus brings him back from death, revives joy, and bolsters hope, both in the royal official's heart and those of his household. It is a foreshadowing of Jesus' coming resurrection and a revelation of God's kingdom on earth.

What in your life needs God's healing of resurrection touch? Our daily lives are often undramatic, but can be filled with small disappointments. Our Ash Wednesday hopes can quickly turn into disappointing reality as we give in to habitual sin or apathy. Regardless, Easter is on the way.

As you reflect on the gospel today, consider also the Isaiah reading: "I am about to create new heavens and a new earth...no longer shall the sound of weeping be heard there, or the sound of crying" (Is. 65:17, 20). Where do you find death and decay in your life? Where do you hope for resurrection and joy? Reflect on these things now, knowing that God longs to breathe new life into your heart.



*O God, I will praise you, for you have answered me. I look forward to the dawn and desire to rejoice in your presence. Amen.*

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Margaret Warner, *M.Div.* '19

March 13

Tuesday of the 4th week of Lent

[Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; Psalm 46; John 5:1-16](#)

The central image of our readings today is water. Water is a very powerful metaphor because it cleanses, heals, and brings about new life. Therefore, by using the imagery of water, the readings of today encourage us to reflect on the areas of our lives that need healing, cleansing, and new life. In the first reading, we see that the river of Ezekiel's vision brings life and healing to the dead places. The river that flows from the temple of God not only brings the desert alive with fruit trees, but it turns the Dead Sea into a beautiful garden with fresh water and abundant life. This vision of the river thus serves as an image of the healing and forgiveness that God brings to a world that is sterile because of its sins.

The Gospel confirms this vision of Ezekiel by presenting Jesus as the source of the water that brings healing, forgiveness, and life. There is healing water in the pool of Bethesda, but when Christ is present, it is not needed. For Jesus is the source of the water that brings healing, cleansing, and abundance of life. God loves each and every one of us and wants us all to be healed. But the question Jesus asks is: "Do you want to get well?" It is a very good question, one which we need to ask ourselves at this time of Lent. Do I want to be healed? To be forgiven? The first essential step towards healing is the desire for healing. For if we have the sincere desire for healing, Jesus will never refuse us his forgiveness and healing. Let us pray earnestly for this desire and healing.



*Lord Jesus, put in me the desire to open my heart to your healing water so that I may be healed, cleansed, and filled with new life for your greater glory. Amen.*

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Francis Fernandes, S.J, S.T.L. '18



March 14

Wednesday of the 4th week of Lent

[Isaiah 49:8-15](#); [Psalm 145](#); [John 5:17-30](#)

*The Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for what he does, the Son will do also.* Jesus could work with the Father because he saw the Father's actions clearly. For those of us who have a more difficult time figuring out what the Father is doing, we have Lent.

Through prayer, fasting, and taking care of Christ in the poor, God invites us to witness His work. Through prayer, we become more sensitive and responsive to the subtle movements of the Spirit that draw us toward God. Through fasting, we get rid of unnecessary distractions so that we can better focus on the things of God. Through directly serving the poor, we encounter those God cares most about, in both their joys and their needs.

The hustle of daily life can put us spiritually to sleep. It might be tempting to stay under the covers - our daily hustle can be comfortable, after all. These three Lenten practices, like good, strong coffee, help us to open our eyes, stretch a bit, and get to work. When we do finally encounter the living God, we will find that He has not been asleep at all; like a mother who wakes up before her children to take care of all their needs, our God has already been at work freeing the prisoner and calling out to those in darkness. Once we see it, may we have the courage to join in that labor.



*Heavenly Father, you sent your Son among us to restore sight to the blind and proclaim liberty to captives. May we not be blind to your work, and may your Spirit move us to labor with those you hold most dear. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

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Brian Konzman, S.J., M.Div. '18

March 15

Thursday of the 4th week of Lent

[Exodus 32:7-14](#); [Psalm 106](#); [John 5:31-47](#)

Today we are offered a simple but challenging invitation to take a closer look at what or who it is that we worship. In today's story from Exodus, the people have "turned aside from the way [God] pointed out to them, making for themselves a molten calf and worshipping it, sacrificing to it and crying out, 'This is your God'..." We might read this think: *'Well, I haven't made any molten calves lately, so we're all good there.'* However, when we take a moment to look more deeply, we might ask ourselves: where and on what (or whom) is our gaze focused?

David Foster Wallace once remarked, "In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships." He went on to say that most of the things we spend our time worshipping, unfortunately, eat us alive. Our own beauty, sexual allure, power, intellect - when we put these things at the center, we feel perpetually unworthy. We forget that we are loved and held by God and put on this earth to be salt and light for each other and for the World.

While I haven't built any molten calves this Lent, I *have* experienced moments of being eaten alive, where my focus was more on how I can impress or please the people around me - my colleagues, my classmates, my romantic partner - than on how I might be able to more fully express God's love in the world. In these moments, I have forgotten "the God who saved [me]," the God who holds and loves me first and calls me to love others more freely. In the Gospel, Jesus asks us, "How can you believe, when you accept praise from one another and do not seek the praise that comes from the only God?"

Lent is a time to remember the God who saves us, the God who loves us first. What have been moments of grace for you in these weeks of Lent? How might the God of your prayer and your experiences in the world be calling you to respond to these moments of Grace?



*Jesus, help me be your hands, your feet, your heart, and your mouth. Help me see the world as you do. Give me the senses to hear, feel, and touch your Grace and the resilience to look for life, even in the midst of darkness. Amen.*

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Sullivan Oakley, *M.Div.* '17

March 16

Friday of the 4th week of Lent

[Wisdom 2:1, 12-22; Psalm 34; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30](#)

Take a moment to imagine being in Jesus' sandals in today's gospel. Imagine what it would be like knowing people around you intensely hate or fear you. Jesus was truly a person with deep love and compassion for all, yet he was challenged and threatened by the people who were beginning to plot against him. Today's first reading from the Book of Wisdom also reminds us of Jesus' sufferings and his continued sufferings in those Christians who are being persecuted for their faith in our world today.

The Christian life is the way of the Cross, but we also know that the way of the Cross leads us through Calvary into the eternal Jerusalem. In our difficult times, Jesus remains close to us as the psalm proclaims, "the Lord is close to the brokenhearted." However, do we remain close to Jesus when we are hurt or angry? Is there a fear that wants us to shut down and pushes us away from Jesus? As we continue to hear the suffering stories of Jesus throughout this remaining Lenten season, will we let His sufferings be part of our tears, disappointments, and dreams?



*Jesus, through the story of Your life, You teach us that we are never alone even in our difficult times. You understand our tears and disappointments because You have also experienced them. Give us the grace to always remain close to You and allow You to simply be with us in those moments of our lives. Amen.*

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Francis Nguyen, S.J., M.Div. '20

March 17

Saturday of the 4th week of Lent

[Jeremiah 11:18-20](#) [Psalm 7](#); [John 7:40-53](#)

If we are honest, we have to acknowledge how often we dismiss good ideas, valuable opportunities, and plausible narratives from those we peg as ‘Galileans’. We box them in, disdain and even mock them because they do not share our backgrounds or values, or simply because society affirms that we need not credit their witness. The Galileans today are women posting ‘me too’ incidents of sexual harassment. They are migrant workers in our fields or in service, violated yet silenced for fear of losing their meager livelihood. Today’s Galileans are victims of racial injustice, who testify to the daily indignities both large and small, imposed by the white privilege enshrined in national customs and laws. Modern Galileans speak prophetically to us about the ever-increasing injustices and oppressions across the globe, yet we hold their witness in contempt, because “no prophet arises from Galilee.”

It is telling that we can read today’s Gospel and deride the Pharisees for failing to listen to Jesus. As a Galilean, Jesus was labeled insignificant, a rabble-rouser rather than a messiah. With the distance of centuries and cultures, we readily identify with Nicodemus, assuring ourselves that, had we heard Jesus, we would have believed in him. But, honestly, wouldn’t we have reacted more like the Pharisees and the elites in the crowd? Even though today’s Galileans are speaking astonishing truths to us, we disregard their words. We quake before the insinuation, “You are not from Galilee, are you?”

So for today, let us heed the social and cultural Galileans of our world. Let us give full credence to their experiences; let us allow ourselves to be moved by their stories. The Church’s direction to be in solidarity with those whom society has marginalized must mean, at the very least, listening with generosity and humility to our sisters and brothers from Galilee.



*Compassionate God-Among-Us, give us the humility to listen to the Galileans of today, our sisters and brothers whom we have excluded and scorned. Like Jesus, they speak your prophetic word to us. Have mercy on our deafness; open our ears and our hearts to listen generously and respond courageously. Amen.*

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Alison Benders

Senior Lecturer in Systematic Theology and Associate Dean

March 18

5th Sunday of Lent

[Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) [Psalm 51](#); [Hebrews 5:7-9](#); [John 12:20-33](#)

Deep below deep within deep...today's readings invite us to sink into the depths of our hearts and of holy mystery. Our first reading reminds us that God's covenant with us is planted *deep within our hearts*. The new covenant of which Jeremiah speaks is not written on stone but etched within the very core of our being. Its message is one of unequivocal assurance, forgiveness, mercy. "I will be your God, you shall be my people, you shall know me, and I will not remember your sin." What a word of consolation to Lenten hearts in a hurting world!

Our psalm prayer is a plea *from the depths*. Generation upon generation has prayed this prayer with the psalmist. Generation upon generation has begged God, through all circumstances, for a clean heart and for a steadfast spirit. For our generation, might steadfastness of spirit be a gift to a troubled world?

In our Gospel reading Jesus too invites us *into the deep* as he enters into his own suffering and death. With "loud cries and tears," he prays from the depths of his being. In our lives today Jesus' prayer invites and urges us to bring *our* pleas and cries to God in prayer, with whatever fears and sorrows and big and small deaths we hold in this moment.

Yet death is not the final word. As Jesus approaches his own death, he points to the mystery of new life emerging from death: "Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies..." Once more we hear a call to the deep: unless the seed "dies" and is buried, its fruit will not emerge. With the simplest image of a grain of wheat, Jesus invites us to trust the mystery of life emerging from death, the ultimate mystery of resurrection.

Deep below deep within deep... Just how far do you want to go into the mystery of death and resurrection as we approach the final weeks of Lent?



*God of Life, renew your covenant deep within our hearts. Strengthen our spirits so that we may be steadfast in these times. Attune us to the mystery of the seed that dies. Bring your people and our world to resurrection. Amen.*

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Clare Ronzani  
JST Career Advisor

March 19

Solemnity of Saint Joseph

[2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14, 16; Psalm 89; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; Luke 2:41-51](#)

Imagining Samuel, Paul and Luke's readings as musical lyrics, they resonate with the universal Christian song refrain, "Faith of our Fathers! Holy faith! We will be true to thee till death." Samuel prophetically assures that God's Covenant is guaranteed, predicated on a partnership demonstrating sustainable faith and hope. This is manifested by our forefathers Abraham, David, Jacob, Joseph and even our own biological fathers. During a time when secular culture encroaches on and strives to replace Christian values and truths, we have the promise of Our Father's Covenant in the midst of a nation with millions confused, some frozen in fear; in the midst of a community with thousands experiencing the strife of homelessness, impoverishment, violence, and separation. Going back to our biblical roots, we recall where our forefathers have fallen, repented, and emerged as role models with a stronger faith, hoping against hope that we would become cognizant of God, Our Father who had already forgiven.

Luke portrays Joseph, a descendant of Jacob and David, as a partner of this Covenant - not of obligation nor of the law, but out of Love. Pope Francis, in his inaugural homily, called St. Joseph "the perfect example of fatherhood." Joseph, a man, a husband, and a father progressively became closer to God with openness and an embrace widened to unite with repentant hearts. Even though the transgressions may have been initially misperceived, he did not abandon Mary to societal norms during her mysterious impregnation nor did he chastise his Child Jesus who had separated from his family to do His heavenly Father's will in the Temple. Joseph stood with an enduring faith like our Heavenly Father's Covenant, awaiting awareness of an already forgiving heart.



*Dear St. Joseph, descendant of the lineage of Abraham, David, and Jacob, instill in us the faith and repentant hearts of our forefathers that we may be the living Covenant of God's love passed onto generations with hearts that sing, "Faith of our Fathers! Holy faith. We will be true to thee till death." Amen.*

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Yolanda Brown

Member, Board of Directors

March 20                      Tuesday of the 5th week of Lent  
[Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 102; John 8:21-30](#)

When we get impatient, it is very easy to get tunnel-vision. We do not look too many steps ahead, or look too many steps back, but mostly focus on our annoyance. But if we are not looking back at where we have been, we might lose sight of how we got where we are. Impatience leads to ingratitude. This is the problem the Israelites have today. They forget that it is by the power of God that they are free. They even forget that it is God who is providing “this wretched food” in a miraculous way (Nm. 21:5). So God inflicts serpents upon the people as a reminder that they are not strong enough to fend for themselves. The bronze saraph is a reminder of the power of God. Those who look upon the saraph, those who are reminded of God’s power, will live.

The modern world is unrelenting in its demands. We can so easily get swept up in its impatience that we, too, stray into ingratitude, and forget what God has done for us. When Jesus says that he is not of the world, this is a comfort. He is not here to add to the impatience and the rush of things, but to be lifted up as a living reminder of God’s power and God’s love. As we look upon Jesus, lifted up on the Cross like the bronze saraph, we remember what God has done for us, and we remember that we depend on God. We are not strong enough to fend for ourselves. We are given a gift we do not deserve, but that we badly need. As we see Jesus lifted up on the Cross, we see the power of God, we see our dependence on God, and we are grateful to God.



*O God, widen our vision. Help us to see how you love us, how you support us, and how you save us. Free us from the cares and worries the world imposes upon us. Give us hearts that are patient and grateful. As we look upon the Cross, help us to look upon your Son, and appreciate his gift to us: a heart that touches ours, bleeds for ours, and cleanses ours. Amen.*

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David Paternostro, S.J., M.Div. '17, S.T.L. '18, Th.M. '18

March 21

Wednesday of the 5th week of Lent

[Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; John 8:31-42](#)

Click [HERE](#) to read today's reflection in English.

“...porque no aceptan mis palabras.” Estas son palabras escuetas de Jesús en el Evangelio de hoy, en el medio de un discurso en la Verdad, esclavitud, libertad, y descendencia. Estamos en los últimos días antes del Domingo de Ramos y la entrada en triduo santo. En este Evangelio de Juan, escuchamos cosas familiares y sorprendentes, la frase familiar “la verdad los hará libres” y una realidad profunda. Jesús percibe bien los sentimientos y conocimientos de los que se le acerca. Él dice sin pretensión que ellos no aceptan sus palabras, porque tratan de matarlo.

Quizás sería más fácil no hacer caso a este verso, en el medio de este pasaje de Juan. Jesús está hablando de su propia muerte, ¡después de todo! Tal vez tú te preguntas lo que dice Jesús de verdad aquí: *¿Jesús está prediciendo su propia muerte? ¿Si Él sabe que ellos trataban de matarse, por qué no hizo nada? ¿Él está enojado, molestado, o resignado?* Sigue y sigue, nuestras propias preguntas y preocupaciones... y éso es una respuesta válida. Pero, tal vez tú puedes hacer algo más.

El Evangelio de hoy nos compele a desacelerar, a reportarse, y prestar atención en como esta parte de Cuaresma ha desarrollado. Si nos paramos por algunos momentos, podemos contemplar si, en actualidad, creamos espacio en nuestros corazones para las palabras de Dios y si observamos como la Verdad nos anima y nuestras acciones.

Quizás tú puedes considerar lo siguiente: *¿Hice espacio yo en mi corazón para Jesús? ¿Cómo vivo yo la verdad de la vida, muerte, y resurrección de Jesús? ¿Cuando yo incorporo a Jesús en la vida cotidiana, cómo me siento? ¿Más libre?*



*Dios de Verdad y Vida, esté conmigo en estos últimos días de Cuaresma. Que abra mi corazón a Tu presencia en la Escritura, el mundo natural, relaciones con otros, y oración. Yo pido por Tu misericordia mientras yo examino como yo te he rechazado en el espacio de mi corazón, y por tu gracia immeasurable para que Tú residas en mis espacios íntimos cada día. Amén.*

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Lisa Cathelyn, *M.Div.* '18



“...Because my word has no room among you.” These are stark words attributed to Jesus in today’s Gospel, in the midst of a discourse on truth, slavery, freedom, and descendants. We are in the final days before the Church marks Palm Sunday and enters into the Holy Triduum. In this Gospel passage from John, we hear notes of the familiar and the surprising, both the well-known adage “the Truth shall set you free...” and a profound reality. Jesus perceives the deepest chambers of those around him when he states without pretense, that his word has no room among them, for they are trying to kill him.

It might be easier to brush off this verse, tucked in the midst of this selection from John. Jesus is speaking about his own death, after all! You might wonder what Jesus is really saying here; *is Jesus foretelling his death? If he really knows they are trying to kill him, why isn’t he doing anything? Is he angry or upset or resigned?* On and on, our questions and concerns spill out...and that is a valid response. But perhaps we can try something else.

Today’s Gospel can compel us to slow down, check in, and pay attention to how this season of Lent has unfolded in our lives. Here is a point to stop and see if, indeed, we have made room in our hearts for God’s Word, to observe how the Truth is animating our actions. You might consider the following: Have I made room in my heart for Jesus? How am I living in the Truth of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection? Am I more free to follow Jesus in daily life?



*God of Truth and Life, be with me in these final days of Lent. Open my heart to Your presence in Scripture, the natural world, relationships with others, and prayer. I pray for Your mercy as I examine how I’ve shut you out of the rooms of my heart, and for your immeasurable grace so that You will dwell in the depths of my being each day. Amen.*

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Lisa Cathelyn, *M.Div.* ‘18

March 22

Thursday of the 5th week of Lent

[Genesis 17:3-9; Psalm 105; John 8:51-59](#)

In today's Gospel reading from John, Jesus assures his followers that "whoever keeps my word will never see death." As we prepare to accompany Jesus in his Passion next week, Jesus offers us strength and hope with these words. We know that the joy of the resurrection and its promise of eternal life await us at the end of Holy Week. Jesus describes how "Abraham your father rejoiced to see my day," for Jesus represents the fulfillment of the covenant established by God with Abraham. This covenant was God's promise of "an everlasting pact, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."

As we come to the end of the Lenten season, we may find ourselves wondering whether we are truly prepared to enter into Holy Week. We might ask ourselves whether we have been able to empty ourselves of our selfish inclinations and desires through prayer, fasting, and penance in order to be fully present to Jesus in his Passion. Perhaps we find ourselves feeling like those in today's Gospel reading who question Jesus' words. On the other hand, we may have found that we are able to embrace Jesus' words as Abraham did in the first reading. Wherever we may find ourselves, God invites us to recall with the psalmist that "the Lord remembers his covenant forever." So, in these last days of Lent, let us ask for the grace to place our hope in the mercy and love reflected in God's covenant.



*Loving God, we come to you with humble hearts in these last days of the Lenten season. We ask you for the grace to hear and embrace Jesus' words about God's covenant of fidelity and love. May we allow these words to remain deeply within us as we prepare to walk with Christ in his Passion. We present to you these, and all of our prayers, through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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Kyle Shinseki, S.J., M.Div. '18, S.T.L. '19, Th.M. '19

March 23

Friday of the 5th week of Lent

[Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 18; John 10:31-42](#)

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus faces stoning for his mission and ministry. This passage invites us to recall all those who are martyred while working for God's kingdom. In a special way, this story anticipates tomorrow's anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Óscar Romero, of San Salvador. Like Jesus, Óscar Romero faced assassination for speaking out against injustice, proclaiming the truth during El Salvador's civil war. Before being killed, Archbishop Romero made a final plea to soldiers, begging them to stop the violence and oppression. During this Lenten season, we welcome the prophetic witness of those who reject violence. Lent also calls us to put down the stones that may be in our hands. We ask God to help us abandon our habits of judgment and violence. In this spirit, let us work together to transform our community into one founded on mercy and kinship.

Finally, we reflect upon Jesus' teaching: "believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father." According to Jesus, believing in the work of the Father leads us to better understand who God is. In the first reading, Jeremiah celebrates God's work: "praise the LORD, For he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked." God invites us to share in the work of peace and justice. By working for God's kingdom, we grow into closer relationship with God and with each other. On this late day of the Lenten season, let us recall and be thankful for those who do the work of the Father, which helps us to grow in faith and love. Together, let us do the work of the Father and realize God's presence among us.



*Dear God, help us to put down the stones which harm our sisters and brothers. Instead, lead us to participate in the work of the Father so that we may bring about your reign. Amen.*

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Tony Ferrari, M.T.S. '18

March 24

Saturday of the 5th week of Lent

[Ezekiel 37:21-28; Jeremiah 31:10-13; John 11:45-56](#)

As we near the end of our Lenten journey, we are invited to ask ourselves today: *Where in my life do I feel divided?* As we pause for a moment to mull on this question, consider the cry of today's readings as we are reminded of God's deepest desire to live in our hearts. He seeks to "gather" into one nation not only the divided kingdom of Israel but to unify all "the dispersed children of God" – to be shepherded by one Prince and to be led to and fed by one God.

Closing your eyes, imagine Jesus sitting beside you. You and he are conversing, enjoying the company of each other. He begins to ask you, "Do you trust me?" Deeply humbled, you exclaim, "Of course. Guide me, I seek a new spirit. I seek a new heart." He gently replies, "If you were to trade the old with the new, what in your life is holding you back?" You take a moment to ponder the gift He is offering; He desires to bring "joy to my mourning and to gladden each of my sorrows." This is the immensity of love He has for me – one sheep, in His large flock. I examine:

*Is it a fear, desire, or want I am wrestling with and find difficult to let go? A relationship that I've neglected and needs mending? A fabricated self-lie that I've clung to despite its negativity, inward-focus and inability to give me life? An interior wound I've tried to clean and bandage, all by myself?*

As we approach Easter, Jesus invites us to be vulnerable with Him as He was in the Garden of Gethsemane when he expressed His doubts, fears, and sorrows to His Father. Where in our division do we need our Shepherd to illuminate His great love?



*Lord, shepherd me beyond my wants, beyond my needs, beyond my fears. Even more, teach me to be vulnerable with the Father as you are. My divisions and disordered attachments, I surrender. Please, O God, lead me from old to new, from death into Life. Amen.*

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Maika Hefflefinger, M.Div. '20

March 25

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

[Mark 11:1-10; Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47](#)

Of all the Sundays of the year, Palm Sunday paints things in the sharpest contrast: it moves from the joyful celebration of Jesus' entry in Jerusalem to the sorrowful death of the cross. This set of readings is therefore emotionally demanding on any audience that accepts to be moved by these texts. We are expected to rejoice with the crowds when Jesus enters the city on a donkey, a rare extravagance, assuming that Jesus normally walks to work. We witness the foods, drinks, and good company of the dinners at Simon's house and for Passover. We are expected to undergo with Jesus the quick process of social and physical death that occurs from the arrest to the death on the cross interspersed with betrayal from a disciple and being dumped by the others.

The other readings underline such sharp contrasts. Isaiah speaks of being gifted with a "well-trained tongue," a trait of Jesus in the Gospel that is nevertheless absent at the trial and at the cross. The psalm, even if it ends on an optimistic note of redemption, is played in a minor key that speaks of abandonment. Like the Gospel readings, the passage from the letter to the Philippians contrasts Christ's downward movement to death on the cross with his upward movement to the position of Lord.

Emotionally, Palm Sunday is demanding because it entertains joy and sorrow at the same time. We encounter such situations from time to time: funerals where sorrow from death blends with the joy of seeing family and friends that we have not seen for a long time, all being present at the same time, or retirement parties that gather colleagues in a happy moment to be succeeded by the absence of this colleague.



*Lord, as you accepted to live among us, you went through moments of joy and sorrow. You experienced silence, betrayal, and loneliness. Help me to feel your presence in my greatest joys and my deepest sorrows. Amen.*

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Jean-François Racine

Associate Professor of New Testament

March 26

Monday of Holy Week

[Isaiah 42:1-7](#); [Psalm 27](#); [John 12:1-11](#)

The first reading presents an image of a gentle Savior whom God appointed to bring justice to the world, to brighten the gloomy world of sin, or dispel the darkness of sin, for the Lord has set him as “a light for the nations.” He is our light and our salvation. The Gospel tells us that Jesus is a guest at the house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus in Bethany six days before the Passover, and he is anointed by Mary with an expensive perfumed oil such that “the house is filled” with its fragrance. We also learn of Judas’ disapproval of Mary’s act as well as the shocking plan of the chief priests to kill Lazarus, too, to regain control of the people.

We are presented with contrasts: the gentleness of a Savior who wins people over through his compassionate actions and graceful words contrasts with the rashness and roughness of the leaders who plan to regain control of the people through violence. Jesus’ actions for the poor contrast with Judas’ pretensions about caring for the poor. Mary’s act of love and devotion to Jesus, which is the hallmark of discipleship as well as the decisive mark of Christian life, contrasts with Judas’s self-centeredness, greed, and disdain for Jesus.

The fragrance of Mary’s love and devotion fills the house and overwhelms the stench of our sins which Jesus will carry in his body to the cross and the tomb. Nevertheless, because of Judas’ ill disposition of heart, the fragrance could not mask his greed and corruption. We are like Judas sometimes through lack of proper dispositions of heart and mind towards God and one another. The question for us to ponder is: where do we stand in the contrasts? Do we identify with the gentle Savior or with Jesus’ rough opponents; with Mary or with Judas? What is our disposition towards Jesus, especially in this week as he enters his passion for our sins?



*Good and compassionate Savior, enlighten my heart and mind to offer you love and devotion for your sacrifice for me. Grant me the grace of true discipleship. Please, do not permit me to fall to the temptation of selfishness, greed and corruption. Amen.*

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Chidube Joseph Chukwu, S.J., M.Div. '18

March 27

Tuesday of Holy Week

[Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71; John 13:21-33, 36-38](#)

Of all betrayals, the cruelest are the most intimate. For only those we entrust with our heart can break it. And here, in our Gospel today we see the very heart of betrayal. For Jesus has gathered his intimate friends, his beloved disciples, for a last supper. "Reclining at table," John tells us, "Jesus was deeply troubled and testified, "Amen, amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me."

Judas has been so demonized over the centuries, we are tempted to forget that he too was Jesus' disciple, his intimate, beloved. In the verses preceding our Gospel today, we read "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." Not only Peter's feet, but Judas' would be washed; it is the "one who ate my bread" who will "lift his heel against me."

"Judas took the morsel and left at once. And it was night." An ending yes, but also in John's Gospel, a beginning; for "now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him." For here is truth greater than betrayal - of love crucified for us, loved to the end. Here tragedy is redeemed in tragedy; and the truth of crucified love revealed. For we are not spared tragedy, even betrayal in our lives; but love is greater. And so even in our dark nights, we can make Isaiah's words our own: for "though I thought I had toiled in vain and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength, yet my reward is with the Lord, my recompense with my God." In the glory of that crucified love, nothing, no labor in love, is wasted: For "I am made glorious in the sight of the Lord, and my God is *now* my strength."



*Lord, in times of trial and despair, when we too are deeply troubled, come incline with us. Feed us with the bread that is broken, that what is broken in us may be healed. Gather us at your table as your beloved disciples that we may know, more deeply, the power of your crucified love. And when we too feel we have toiled in vain and for nothing, keep us fast in your love. That is reward enough. Amen.*

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William O'Neill, S.J., *M.Div.* '81, *S.T.M.* '82, *S.T.L.* '85  
Associate Professor of Social Ethics

March 28

Wednesday of Holy Week

[Isaiah 50:4-9; Psalm 69; Matthew 26:14-25](#)

It is probably not too difficult to position ourselves in Jesus' place with today's readings. Most of us have felt betrayed, alone, or isolated at one point or another. Reading the Gospel passage, we can easily fall into the habit of seeing Jesus as stoic and all-knowing: he knows who will betray him and even knows the sign that will indicate who his traitor is. But if we place the words of today's Psalm in Jesus' mind and in his heart as the Gospel story unfolds, I think we get a better picture of how Jesus might have been feeling:

*"I have become an outcast to my brothers..."*

*"I looked for sympathy, but there was none; for consolers, not one could I find."*

So what keeps Jesus going amidst this isolation? If we continue to look at both Isaiah and the Psalm as the mind of Jesus, it becomes clear that it is an awareness of God's presence: *"The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced..."* *"For the LORD hears the poor, and his own who are in bonds he spurns not."* Being in close relationships with people inevitably leads to feelings getting hurt and wounds that require reconciliation. Sometimes it even leads to betrayal. When the people closest to us cause us pain, God can be all we have. It is important to keep a steady gaze on the presence of God as our anchor and inner peace amidst such trials. God does not betray. There may be pain and a cross to bear, but just as sure as they are part of life, so too is resurrection. And when we experience the healing resurrection, we must be ready, like Jesus, to greet our betrayers with the words "Peace be with You."



*Lord God, thank you for being my anchor and my companion. Help me to focus on your sturdy love and presence, especially when I feel alone or betrayed. Help me to bring your love and embrace to anyone around me who is feeling isolated and without love. May my presence bring your presence to them. Amen.*

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Joseph Tomaso, M.Div. '18



March 29

Holy Thursday, Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

[Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15](#)

In John's Gospel, literalist misunderstanding by the participants in an episode (here, Simon Peter) is often the key to its real meaning. As Jesus vests himself as a servant and pours water into a washing basin he unleashes a revelatory flood that will redefine all human relationships, revealing the radical meaning of the Incarnation, of God becoming human. Peter is profoundly scandalized by Jesus' subversion of the master/slave relationship. But Jesus replies that failure to accept this action, which is at the heart of His mission, will end their relationship! Peter will henceforth "have no part" with Jesus (13:8)! Peter thinks Jesus is reversing the natural superior/inferior relationship. But Jesus is not reversing it. He is *abolishing* it.

The Incarnation established a radically new relationship between God and humans and, therefore, among the disciples themselves, namely, friendship, a relationship of radical equality. As He says a little later in this same discourse: "I no longer call you servants (inferiors)... I have called you friends (equals)..." and my love for you is the model of your love for one another (cf. Jn. 15: 13-14). Indeed, the Risen Jesus will commission Mary Magdalene to announce to his disciples the fruit of his Paschal Mystery: "My Father is now your Father" (cf. Jn. 20:17). Jesus has made us really children of God (cf. Jn. 1:12). Among the children of the same family there are no inferiors or superiors. Holy Thursday challenges us to accept this startling new relational order of radical equality and mutual service unto death: "*As I have done to you (washed your feet and poured out my very self in the Eucharist) you are to do to one another.*" What would the abolition of all relationships of power over others, in favor of equality in universal friendship mean in our world and our Church?



*Jesus, you have chosen not to dominate us but to be our Brother, Servant, and Friend. Help all of us, especially in our Church, to experience ourselves as friends of You and of each other, to find our joy in being your presence to one another; to be in and for our world an image of the new family you birthed on the Cross and empowered by your Resurrection. Amen.*

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Sandra Schneiders, I.H.M.

Professor Emerita of New Testament Studies and Christian Spirituality

March 30

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

[Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 31; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42](#)

As we commemorate the passion and the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the readings set the mood of Good Friday. Furthermore, they invite us to consider deeply what it means for us that Jesus suffered and died on the cross. The Prophet Isaiah relates and portrays what the suffering servant endured, he who "was spurned and avoided by people, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, one of those from whom people hide their faces, spurned, and we held him in no esteem." Who could be that suffering servant, "pierced for our offences" and "crushed for our sins," but Jesus? As is emphasized in the Letter to the Hebrews, "Christ became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." How can our broken and suffering world recognize that it is indeed our infirmities that Jesus bore, our sufferings that he endured?

The way the passion narrative in the Gospel of John unfolds makes it clear that Jesus did not die for himself but for us. Pilate finds no guilt in him; however, Jesus must be crucified! Jesus represents here, all the victims of injustice and intolerance. He stands for all those who have been dehumanized in so many ways and, at the same time, he gives hope that a new world is possible, and all can make it happen. The truth and the kingdom to which he came to testify remain open to everyone, without distinction. To get there, Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Just follow him!



*Lord, ever loving God, through the passion, the death and the resurrection of your beloved Son, you have showed me, once more, how much you love me. I implore you to bestow your blessings and grace upon our world torn by conflicts, intolerance and injustice. Help me contribute to make it a welcoming place for the spurned and the marginalized, through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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Setibo Batuzolele Victor, S.J., S.T.L. '17, Th.M. '17

March 31

Holy Saturday - The Resurrection of the Lord at the Easter Vigil

[Genesis 1:1-2:2](#); [Exodus 14:15-15:1](#); [Mark 16:1-7](#)

As we enter the darkened worship space of our churches on this Holy Saturday evening, we recall the three women, armed with spices to anoint Jesus' body, journeying to his burial place. As they bent down and peered into the pitch-black emptiness of Jesus' tomb, the dimness of that enclosure matched their own confused and dampened spirits. But like our candles illuminated by the new Light of Christ at the Easter Vigil service, the women are enlightened when they hear, "He has been raised. He is not here." (Mark 16:6).

What was presumed a death now revealed itself as new life to these first witnesses. For us, Resurrection holds a potency and a disclosure about mystery that need not be lost in a debate about how or whether it happened. To behold the mystery of Resurrection is to experience it. But how do we do this? Resurrection presumes a void, an emptying of oneself, perhaps even a death of sorts. But this is not the end. If we dare embark upon such a clearing in our own lives, it rids us of those passive attitudes that allowed others to be harmed; it addresses those deep-seeded prejudices that made someone an excluded "other"; it remedies those occasions where we failed to forgive; and it begins to reverse those omissions when we failed to act justly. Such an emptying of oneself not only parallels Christ's self-emptying that culminated in his death on Calvary; it makes space for a new and unfathomable amplitude of resurrected being, where love knows no limits. To embrace Jesus' resurrection and to partake in it is to engage the core of our existence where an unprecedented partnership between human and divine becomes possible. For both believer and nonbeliever alike, each of us has the capacity to allow Love to have its way with us. Each of us is summoned to partake in this new life. Light has replaced darkness. Love has conquered death. The emptiness has been filled with new life. Jesus has risen. *Alleluia!*



*Come Lord Jesus, help me finally to roll back the stone that prevents me from seeing and clearing those darkened areas of my life. Help me to be bold and to partake in a Christ-like self-emptying so that the Light of Christ can illumine a new openness in me. Fill me with the abundance of your Love and enlighten me with an understanding that begins to grasp your Resurrected presence. Enable me to believe ardently in your presence and to become a means of your life-giving Love to others. Amen.*

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Gina Hens-Piazza

Professor of Old Testament Studies and Joseph S. Alemany Endowed Chair

April 1

Easter Sunday - The Resurrection of the Lord

[Acts 10:34, 37-43; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; Mark 16:1-7](#)

It took a while for Mary Magdalene, Mary, Salome and the other disciples to figure out what was happening. This was not another Lazarus moment: the dead awakening. The resurrection is not resuscitation of a corpse; it is something entirely different. The gospel writer offers a clue when setting the scene: “Very early when the sun had risen, on the first day of the week....” In these words, we hear echoes of the creation story in Genesis, when on the first day of the week, God created light, and the creation of the world followed. Like at that first dawn, God was fashioning a new creation on Easter Sunday.

The angelic young man clothed in white shares the good news: Jesus has been raised. Amazed, the women are given no time to rest in the glory. Go to Galilee, they are told, back to where it all began when the disciples first met Jesus and shared his ministry. They do not dwell on the events of Jerusalem but go back to work, making God’s dream for the world, for which Jesus gave his life, a reality.

At times, we too visit our own empty tombs: losses, uncertainties, anxieties, fears, hurts and regrets of different kinds. Reckoning with them, we face the same decision as the disciples did on that glorious morning long ago. Do we keep staring into those tombs, or do we go back to the Galilees of our lives – home, work, school – and start getting busy, bringing life and light to the deadened and dark parts of our world?

The Risen Lord waits for us there as we participate in the divine project of redeeming all emptiness and creating something new.



*Lord, let the joy and hope of Easter live in me, and through me, be shared with others. Amen.*

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Kevin O’Brien, S.J.

Dean of JST and University Professor

April 2

Monday in the Octave of Easter

[Acts 2:14, 22-33; Psalm 16; Matthew 28:8-15](#)

Yesterday, we celebrated the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is risen, and we are missioned to spread the good news. In this reading, Peter proclaims this good news, stating:

*“God raised this Jesus;  
of this we are all witnesses.  
Exalted at the right hand of God,  
he poured forth the promise of the Holy Spirit  
that he received from the Father, as you both see and hear.”*

For Peter, spreading the good news was a literal task; proclaiming to his community the events that had passed, and encouraging them to believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Like Peter, we are missioned to spread the good news, too, to live in the new reality of a world that has been saved by the resurrected Christ. Peter boldly proclaimed this new reality, sharing the news with joyful certitude. In our world of pluralism, in our world where literal evangelization makes many cringe, how do we follow Peter’s example? What does it mean to proclaim the resurrected Christ?

Unlike in Peter’s time, there seems no longer an urgency to spread the story of the resurrection that has indeed been accomplished. The story of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection is common knowledge. Yet, Peter’s example remains crucial for Christians. The meaning of Jesus’ life and resurrection can be watered down, ignored, or even used to further aims counter to his. There continually remains an urgency to spread the good news, an urgency to share the meaning and spirit of this story. Like Peter, we are called to proclaim the good news, not necessarily through words, but in spreading our joyful certitude of the *kin-dom* of God through loving action.



*Compassionate God, inspire my imagination that I may more deeply enter the Easter story. Imbue my actions with your love that I may seek to find you in each encounter. Incite in me the urgent desire to enact your presence in the world, that I may spread the meaning of your resurrection through my actions. Amen.*

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Caroline Read, '12, M.A. '18

April 3

Tuesday in the Octave of Easter

[Acts 2:36-41; Psalm 33; John 20:11-18](#)

Mary Magdalene mistakes Jesus for the gardener. But why a gardener? Why not a guard, or a farmer, or a merchant, or really anything else at all? In fact, while John's Gospel places the tomb in a garden, the other three do not.

This is a detail that matters. When we hear about Mary in this garden, we are meant to hear distant echoes of a different garden, the garden of Eden planted by God at the beginning and filled with every good thing God could imagine. And when Mary mistakes Jesus for the gardener, we are meant to remember Eden's gardener, God the Creator who tended the garden and breathed God's own life-giving breath into a human formed from the clay of the earth. Mary's misapprehension helps us put the pieces together: in the face of the Resurrected Jesus, Mary sees the face of God who created heaven and earth. Moreover, she starts to see the connection, that Jesus' resurrection is not simply Jesus' personal coming back to life. Rather, it is an undoing of death, decay, and destruction. It is creation made new again, the way it was in the beginning.

In the end, I suspect that this connection probably did not answer all of Mary's questions, just as it does not leave us with any simple answers. Jesus' appearance in a garden was a sudden and unexpected announcement of God's saving and renewing work in Jesus. In her wisdom, Mary does not try to understand it all or answer all her questions. She goes to the disciples and with great faith tells what she knows: "I have seen the Lord." And because of what she has seen, she makes it clear that there is still more to see.



*God, You created life at the beginning and breathed your own breath of life into us. Through your Son's Resurrection you have continued your act of creation and have sent us to proclaim what we have seen. As we celebrate the mystery of your Son's resurrection may we always be mindful of your saving work among us. Like Mary Magdalene may we go to others and proclaim your saving mystery to others. Amen.*

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Matthew Spotts, S.J., M.Div. '19

April 4

Wednesday in the Octave of Easter

[Acts 3:1-10; Psalm 105; Luke 24:13-35](#)

Our readings for today share a common theme and that theme deals with our need as human beings to search for that which we feel is absent from our lives. According to Webster's dictionary, the word 'search' means *to look through in order to find something*. We find ourselves living in a world where people are searching high and low for answers, for purpose, for validity, and for hope.

In Acts 3:1-10, the beggar sitting at the Beautiful Gate found himself searching daily. He couldn't take care of himself financially, therefore he depended on the generosity of those he met passing through the gate. One day, his search ended. Instead of receiving alms, he received something much more life giving, something much more enriching. Like Peter and John, many of us do not have alms to give our sisters and brothers in need but we do have something more life giving which we can share with them: the spirit of Christ and His Word.

Psalm 105:4 (NLT) encourages us to, "Search for the LORD and for his strength, and keep on searching." It is in our search for the LORD, that we find Him. Despite the challenges we face, the disappointments we experience, the pain we endure in this life, the Lord is always near to us. Just as He manifested Himself to the disciples on the Road to Emmaus amidst their pain, sadness, and disappointment, He will do the same for us today!



*Lord Jesus, I pray during this Easter season that You will open our eyes and help us to recognize Your presence. Instead of searching in the wrong direction for answers, help us O Lord, search for You, for in You we can find everything we need. Amen.*

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Tanisha Sparks

Associate Director of Housing and Building Operations

April 5

Thursday in the Octave of Easter

[Acts 3:11-26; Psalm 8; Luke 24:35-48](#)

*The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, and the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus...* The prophetic power of the Hebrew Scriptures is accentuated by both Peter in the first reading from Acts of the Apostles, and by Jesus, himself, in the Gospel passage from Luke. As Peter speaks to the crowd, he affirms the Jewish ancestry of his brothers and sisters, reminding them that the covenant God made with Abraham has not been forgotten, but it has been fulfilled through Christ. Peter, then calls for repentance and conversion. In Luke, Jesus appears to his disciples and also reminds them of the words of the prophets, the psalms, and the law of Moses. What had been written has now come to life in the man of Jesus, the Christ. Again, we read at the end of the passage Jesus tasks the disciples to preach repentance in his name.

What does repentance mean for us now? When asking the question, it seems repentance is arduous and somewhat vague in today's language. Perhaps a better question is, how do we choose to respond to Jesus' invitation to know him more intimately? Scripture is read throughout the year, and while most times we hear it, perhaps we often find ourselves not listening. Like the crowd Peter spoke to, and the disciples of Jesus, we can lose sight of the transformative power of Scripture and what it really means for our lives.

For this reason, as we continue to celebrate Easter, we ought to remember both the prophetic wisdom of Hebrew Scriptures, and the Good News of the New Testament. God is a God who works in history and who makes God's self known to us. We are not left to figure things out on our own, but, rather, if we are alert and make ourselves ready, our lives will be transformed through the prophesied death, resurrection, and salvation of Jesus Christ.



*God, keep us attuned to the ways you reveal yourself in our world and give us the courage to act faithfully as we wait in hope of the coming of your son, Jesus. Amen.*

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Stephanie Boccuzzi, M.Div. '19



April 6

Friday in the Octave of Easter

[Acts 4:1-12; Psalm 118; John 21:1-14](#)

Today's readings invite us to celebrate Easter by reflecting on the marvel of the risen Christ. We very well may be familiar with these accounts, but the question they pose are ever important and true: do we recognize the risen Lord? And when we do, do we respond appropriately?

John's Gospel shows the disciples, demoralized notwithstanding having seen him risen, returning to their old lives. Peter, in particular, has returned to his old life. We can imagine the pain he felt at seeing his friend and teacher, the one he called Lord, tortured and crucified like a criminal. It has seemingly broken him. But at the first sign of Christ manifest again, he eagerly abandons his labor for a second time.

We too are often bogged down by the pain and suffering of our world and can often feel helpless. It is easy to find solace in the mundane, in the world we know. But the risen Christ challenges us to rise up and preach the good news, even in the most challenging of places. In the reading from Acts we see how transformed Peter is, filled with the Holy Spirit, even in the face of danger. He is fearless, eager to proclaim the miracle of the Resurrection.

We should hope to mimic the courage of Peter and the disciples. Let us be reminded of the wonder of Easter. Instead of dejection and desolation, let Easter fill us with the renewed vigor of the disciples who witnessed the risen Lord, that we might go out and live the Good News in our lives.



*Lord, help us recognize you risen this Easter. May your presence among us give us strength to proclaim your word in a world in need of tenderness and love. Amen.*

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Pietro Bartoli, M.A. '19

April 7

Saturday in the Octave of Easter

[Acts 4:13-21; Psalm 118; Mark 16:9-15](#)

Today's readings show us what it means to witness. Our tradition tells us that we witness not only by proclamation, but also by actions. We see this connection when we consider the word martyr - which comes from the Greek word *martys* - meaning *a person bearing witness*. Perhaps because of the individualism of my American culture, I have an image of martyrs as singular actors, maverick heroes who go to the extreme for God. This is admirable, for sure, but not the most accessible model. Mark's gospel today offers a different, perhaps more relatable, example of witness - one that occurs in community, and persists amidst real human doubt.

Jesus visits his grieving disciples three times in this passage: first to one, then two, then to the eleven. After each witnesses to the life of their beloved friend, they are moved to share it with others, so that a community of witnesses might snowball. Like Peter and John say in Acts, once they experience Christ "it is impossible not to speak about what we have seen and heard." Indeed, when an experience profoundly touches our hearts, how can we keep it from others? However, Jesus' closest friends do not believe each other, reminding us how difficult it also is to trust the voice of life that persists, especially when death and darkness seem to surround. Thankfully, Jesus does not leave these men and women to their own devices. He pursues each of them, continuing the snowball effect despite their doubts.

Two thousand years later, we remain a community of witnesses who are moved to share the joy of the resurrection with all creatures. We do this with each other and with Jesus, our friend, whose love reaches across our limitations.



*Jesus, thank you for pursuing me through your Spirit and through the witness of those around me. Grant me the courage to continue to share your message of joy by my words and deeds, so that every Creature may share in your promise of everlasting life. Amen.*

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Catherine Holcombe, *M.Div.* '19

April 8

Divine Mercy Sunday

[Acts 4:32-35; Psalm 118; 1 John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31](#)

Have you ever been asked to give your “elevator speech?” In today’s Gospel, recounting a Resurrection appearance (actually two) in the Gospel of John, Jesus delivers a very short speech announcing some very important things to a stunned audience. Like an elevator speech, we only get to hear the bare bones of a message, but this announcement is memorable and makes its points most effectively, if succinctly.

The invitation to the disciples to experience peace is an especially urgent one. Recall that they, probably fearing for their lives, were locked away in an upper room after the Crucifixion during which they had by and large abandoned Jesus to his captors. They were feeling anything but at peace about everything that had transpired in Jerusalem that week. The soothing words of the Savior must have greatly encouraged them and eased their sense of guilt, doubt, and fear. The messages about receiving the Holy Spirit and about the power he was investing in them to forgive sins were probably baffling to them at the time; making some sense of those parts of this discourse of Jesus would have to wait until a more serene moment after the present turmoil.

In his interchange with doubting Thomas, Jesus reaches out even further to an especially baffled member of his audience. By inviting this apostle to probe his bodily wounds, Jesus demonstrates his ardent desire to announce the good news of the Resurrection with words and gestures that would allow Thomas to complete the journey from incredulity to deep faith. In a sense, we are all witnesses to the same overflowing love that God was sharing with humanity at this pivotal moment of human history - a love that triumphs even over death. Jesus packed quite a lot into his elevator speeches!



*Lord, as we continue our celebration of Easter, help us to walk with the early disciples along the path of faith. Lead us through whatever pain, confusion, and doubt we may be experiencing to spiritual growth and ultimate joy in the full realization of the message of the Resurrection. May the consolation experienced by the first disciples be ours again today, as we share the joy of new life in Christ with all whom we encounter. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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