

*St. Ann Catholic Church
S. Chesterfield, VA*



Lenten Daily Reflections

March 5--April 20, 2025

*The reflections in this booklet have been
written by members of our parish.*

*The booklet is designed for you
to use your own bible to read
the scriptures assigned for the day
(or you can find them here:
<https://bible.usccb.org/>)*



*We are very grateful to all who took
part in this project.*

Thank you!

*We wish each of you
a blessed and holy Lenten season.*

***“Lead us Lord, into the desert:
lead us through the wilderness.
Through this journey we will follow,
for we long to see your face.”***

Wednesday, March 5

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2: 12-18

Psalm 51: 3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17

2 Corinthians 5: 20-6:2

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Ash Wednesday is a memory-scarred day for me. There were very few Catholics in my home town and going to school on Ash Wednesday wearing ashes made us easy targets for bullying and ridicule. In recent years I have skipped the church experience of Ash Wednesday, preferring the quiet fasting and prayer of my home. Being assigned this reflection has created a profound challenge to my status quo.

The writings of the prophet Joel are only five pages in my Bible, hidden away near the end of the Old Testament. Yet, the message is universal and quite forceful. He cries out to get up, leave your home, and gather together because the Lord is coming to offer his people mercy and show the way to salvation.

If Joel's message were not enough, St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians declares that without us, God's voice will not be heard on the day of salvation. If we stay away, locked up in our distorted memories, fears, and guilts, how can we feel the stirring of the Holy Spirit in our hearts? God did not need to create us, but he did. He did not need to love us, but he does. We need to be loved. We need to be forgiven. We need to feel the strength of standing together on Ash Wednesday, offering our hands and hearts to each other in solidarity with a God who longs for us to come to him.

- Mary Henrich

Thursday, March 6
Deuteronomy 30: 15-20
Psalm 1: 1-2, 3, 4, 6
Luke 9: 22-25

Today's readings set the tone for the beginning of the Lenten journey. The actions needed to choose life instead of death, from the Deuteronomy reading, given to the nation of Israel. True happiness is attained by following God, from the Psalm reading. As well as the necessity of daily taking up our cross and following Jesus in the reading from the Gospel of Luke. Our belief and actions that reflect that belief are what is needed for the daily journey.

It is a popular concept that if you are a good person, good things will happen. This type of lifestyle does help prevent regrets and by not creating inequality by selfish actions. But in some situations and events this type of goodness is not enough. Innocent people do get hurt by others and by events. God works especially in these situations to bring good from bad. It is this belief that sustains us in difficult times; heeding his voice and holding fast to him means life. By keeping the focus on God's love, we don't lose or forfeit ourselves. We continue whatever we do by loving God which brings life. This also brings a future of eternal life. It is today and is renewed every day till we are forever in the arms of the Lord.

- Cara Moore

Friday, March 7

Isaiah 58: 1-9

Psalm 51: 3-4, 5-6, 18-19

Matthew 9: 14-15

Lent is a time for honesty. It is a time for stripping away that which is not necessary, and especially for changing those things in our lives, those parts of us, that create barriers between us and God. Through these 40 days, if we're serious about the season, we take a deep, honest look at ourselves. Am I acting out the faith I say I believe? Am I following Jesus – really? What do I need to change? What is keeping me from following more closely?

In particular, Isaiah reminds us that fasting is not about ourselves. God doesn't really care about whether we give up chocolate or refrain from eating meat on Fridays – except as our practice helps us draw nearer to the Holy One. It's not the action itself that matters, but the affect this discipline has on our relationship with God.

Isaiah tells us that our fasting ought to be about others, about justice and peace. What do I plan to do during Lent that sets others free, that shelters those who are vulnerable, that feeds those who are hungry? These are the true disciplines of Lent – to change ourselves so that we can be Jesus's hands and feet in the world, so we can collaborate with God in bringing God's kingdom here on earth.

- Katie Johnson

Saturday, March 8

Isaiah 58: 9-14

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

Luke 5: 27-32

Through the daily readings, what is revealed is God's heart for ALL. When Jesus came to save the world from sin, he came to help make all who followed him better. Jesus showed that God's mercy and love are for everyone, especially those most in need of healing and saving. Today, it's when we are struggling with sin most that God wants us to turn to him. God promises he will always listen. And we know that God keeps His promises, with Isaiah 58: 9 and ..."when you call, the Lord will answer, 'Yes, I am here'..." He will never leave or forsake you, even when you make mistakes. When we sin, we can just cry out to God because David reminds us in Psalms 86 that the Lord is "forgiving and good, abounding in love to all who call." It makes confession a lot less scary when we know God wants to hear from us and not just punish us. But we must not miss what God also asks – that we turn from our previous bad behavior, follow the Ten Commandments, take care of those in need. Then not only will He forgive us but give us many blessings.

- Samuel & Ainsley M.

Sunday, March 9
First Sunday of Lent

Deuteronomy 26: 4-10

Psalms 91: 1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15

Romans 10: 8-13

Luke 4: 1-13

In the first reading from Deuteronomy the image of the basket that was presented to the priest and set before the altar spoke to me. The people remembered what God had done for them and responded with thanksgiving and worship. Does this remind you of anything? It sounds to me like what we do every weekend when we gather for liturgy. As the Israelites present their offering to God, they acknowledge that they are returning to God what God has given to them. This is what we do each week as we present the bread and wine at the altar. But for us that bread and wine doesn't remain just bread and wine. It becomes the real presence of Jesus. Recent studies show that many Catholics no longer believe that Jesus is really present in the Eucharist – that it is only a symbol. I sincerely believe that Jesus is truly present in the bread and wine. But sometimes I find my mind wandering or I am distracted by something. I miss the miracle that is taking place before my eyes. Is this just me or do you sometimes do the same?

What should we do about it? I think prayer is the answer. I am praying this Lent to try harder to be fully present to God's gift of Godself to me in the Eucharist. I invite you during the few minutes of silent prayer before liturgy to join your prayers with mine that this might happen for all of us.

- Myra Weathington

Monday, March 10

Leviticus 19: 1-2, 11-18

Psalms 19: 8, 9, 10, 15

Matthew 25: 31-46

“No good deed goes unpunished.” That’s been my mantra lately as I’ve noticed that every time I try to help others, it seems to backfire a bit!

For example, I once witnessed a man berating a teenager, and the poor kid was in tears. I decided to step in and inform the teenager’s parents, who appreciated my concern and even asked me to write a letter to the board of the organization. But then I got a response telling me to “mind my own business.”

There was another occasion when I saw a loose dog and thought I could help by letting the owner know. Instead, I was waved off rather harshly!

At work, I helped a coworker with a task. Unfortunately, when things didn’t go as planned, I ended up being blamed, even though I had done my part right.

As this new season begins, this reading is telling me to let go of any grudges and keep reaching out to help others, even when it feels challenging. Jesus, please guide me!

- Theresa Grizzle

Tuesday, March 11

Isaiah 55: 10-11

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

Matthew 6: 7-15

A couple of years ago, when I first went to Workcamp, I learned a simple children's Easter song. It proclaims simply: "Jesus has risen from the tomb, tomb, tomb, tomb, tomb!"

God's word in Isaiah speaks to much more than a promise; Isaiah tells us that God has a plan for us, that his plan is fact; God's plan is inevitable and there is nothing we or anyone can do to change God's plan.

What's the plan you ask? "Jesus has risen from the tomb, tomb, tomb, tomb, tomb!"

Life is both hard and messy. Are you distressed? If you look around at Mass and wonder if anyone else is having a tough week, problems, embarrassments, humiliations, wants, needs, and challenges - the answer is yes, everyone! Those appearing to be living with only minimal difficulties or none at all are just showing you their public face and hiding their private pain. The Psalm tells us - from your distress, God rescues!

How does God rescue? "Jesus has risen from the tomb, tomb, tomb, tomb, tomb!"

So how are we to live our lives and be one of "the just"? Exactly as Christ instructed us to pray. The words are simple, but profound:

Worship,

Follow God's lead,

Forgive.

Christ dying on cross did all three things. He talked the talk, and he walked the walk.

But God wasn't done. He then gave us proof beyond question that he meant what he said.

"Jesus has risen from the tomb, tomb, tomb, tomb, tomb!"

- Ed Robbins

Wednesday, March 12

Jonah 3: 1-10

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

Luke 11: 29-32

After I read through the readings, I was looking for something to really stand out, but nothing was coming to the forefront. I guess in a way, I was looking for that sign Luke wrote about. I wanted to know more about Jonah, so I read a little more. Turns out Jonah was a rather hard-headed prophet, and it took getting thrown into the sea, being swallowed by a fish for three days, and heavy duty praying to turn his head and heart in the right direction. As I settle into my Lenten journey, am I somewhat like Jonah, not understanding God's infinite mercy and forgiveness? Jonah was mad at God because he didn't feel the Ninevites (Assyrian army) were worthy of God's care. Having the entire city, including the king himself, repent and turn from their evil ways was not what Jonah thought would happen.

I am reminded that I am to pray for my enemies, not despise them. I am reminded that I share equally in God's love and mercy. By sparing the city, God shows his love and compassion to those who have changed their hearts. I am reminded that I can change. I can be a better person if I focus on the good in myself and the good in every person I encounter. May we all reach our goals for this Lenten season and truly become renewed.

- Chris Lothamer

Thursday, March 13

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

Psalm 138: 1-2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8

Matthew 7: 7-12

During Lent, we are called to deepen our relationship with God through prayer, fasting, tithing, and philanthropy. In Matthew, Jesus assures us, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you." This passage reminds us of God's boundless generosity and love.

Yet, Lent challenges us to reflect: What are we asking for? Are we seeking worldly success, or are we yearning for a heart transformed by God's grace? True prayer is not about demanding what we want but aligning our will with God's. When we knock on his door with humility and trust, he gives us what we truly need - his presence, his mercy, and the strength to grow in holiness.

Jesus also calls us to extend this same love to others: "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you." As we journey through Lent, let us not only seek God's blessings but become his instruments of mercy. Let us give, forgive, and serve, reflecting the generosity we receive from our Father in heaven.

This season is an invitation to persist in prayer, trust in God's goodness, and love as Christ loves. May our Lenten sacrifices open our hearts to receive and share his abundant grace.

- Alison Stingel

Friday, March 14

Ezekiel 18: 21-28

Psalms 130: 1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8

Matthew 5: 20-26

The first thing I have to say is God is truly great.

Now, I'm not going to waste my time and words by just rephrasing all the readings, but the first reading truly stuck out to me. To summarize what Ezekiel said, he states that it doesn't matter if you are a wicked person, for if you follow God's word, and turn away from your transgressions, you shall live forever. A verse that stuck out to me while going over the reading was, "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?"

God is good. He would pardon all your inequities if you even just put in the effort to make up for the things that you did. But if you are a righteous person, and turn against God, and become a wicked person, you shall surely die. He would pardon every single wicked thing that you did so long as you try to make up for them. As a person who needs forgiveness more often than not, this really spoke to me. We should pardon people for making mistakes and doing things that hurt us, because that's what Jesus would do.

In the second reading, a verse that stuck out to me was, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." I take that as, if you are offering something to God and to other people, make sure you are not doing it with spite or bad intentions.

I have a little brother. He and I are always arguing about something. But at the end of the day, I have to realize that he is my brother. I'll always have him. The Holy Spirit empowers me to forgive, just like Jesus. And that's our goal, isn't it? Be like Jesus.

- Braelynn C.

Saturday, March 15
Deuteronomy 26: 16-19
Psalms 119: 1-2, 4-5, 7-8
Matthew 5: 43-48

Moses speaks to the people saying, "This day the Lord, your God, **COMMANDS YOU TO OBSERVE...** statutes, decrees..." To love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you!

This is all good if you walk with God; however, times are different now. Many have left the path that God walks on and have gone into a survival mode... a betrayal to God... to protect themselves, families, and "things" that are meaning for them. Not realizing the Church with God, the living Son, Jesus in the holiness of the consecration through his Body and Blood... is what is REALLY or should be IMPORTANT to us!

But I know, because I have witnessed myself without recognition of any God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit. My back was completely turned away! I was ANGRY with God! I had no spot or pew in any church where I sought to find myself (I didn't know I was missing); but once I came to the realization that life is LONELY without God... I fell in love with Jesus... the greatest romance ever! And because of a kind, loving shepherd named Fr. Ernest... I found a community of people who share my Christian values... who enveloped me and accepted me with all my strangeness. These scripture readings ground me and continue to enlighten me to the JOY of reading the Bible, the commandments, the order of the Church, the people of our church that are all parts of the message.... complete me! We have our rules and regulations we aspire to and are willing to accept and, as in Psalm 119, do not leave me alone... reach out to your pew neighbors... show them you love them and care! Reach out to all Christians and embrace all religions... and **KEEP THE FAITH!**

- Betty Freudig

Sunday, March 16
Second Sunday in Lent
Genesis 15: 5-12, 17-18
Psalms 27: 1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14.
Philippians 3: 17—4: 1
Luke 9: 28b-36

In Genesis 15, Abram trusted God's words even when they puzzled him. He believed God's words to be true for him and his future children to come. Trust and belief in God is the central message. We have not seen God, yet we believe. Believe his love and forgiveness. Accept his grace to us; we are worthy. The Holy Spirit is leading me/us to trust God through all life's challenges.

In Psalm 27, the theme again is trust in the Lord. Every trial we struggle through makes us stronger by trusting in God's amazing love for us. He will never abandon us.

The apostle Paul wrote in Philippians be "wary of false teachers". In today's world we read much from social media. We accept everything is correct. Should we question this information? Is there a hidden agenda in the information? In verse 3:20 Paul states, "Our citizenship is in heaven from there we await our savior the Lord Jesus Christ". This statement caused me to pause and think about waiting and trusting; is "waiting" worthy of my time? Again, the words "waiting and trust" surfaced.

In Luke 9, God spoke to three apostles who went up the mountain to pray with Jesus. God said to them, "Jesus is my Son, my chosen one".

As Catholics we were not encouraged to read scriptures. We attend Mass and listen scripture passages. Do we take time to reflect on the messages?

This is our journey for 2025: Be still; listen to the words of our Lord.

- Laurel Rothenberger

Monday, March 17

Daniel 9: 4b-10

Psalm 79: 8, 9, 11 and 13

Luke 6: 36-38

The season of Lent—the battle continues—the mercy of God versus the weakness of us. Today’s readings highlight some of that struggle. Sometimes it seems hard to name exactly where I fail. I look for a moment, an action, or specific words to bring to the forefront—something specific to say I’m sorry for, something that can be acknowledged, healed, and finished! But I find that it’s not so simple. Why do I struggle with critical attitudes that pop up so often? How can I realign my thinking to avoid those unwelcome negative thoughts? What can I do to fix this? Me, me, me! See how that works?

And then I realize, it will never be me—it is only through Him. For me to experience God’s “help”, His grace, to move forward in being more like Him, I first need to acknowledge that I can’t change without Him. That humbling reality is the first step in removing some of the barriers that I can accumulate and let block the Holy Spirit. The lesson in today’s gospel is one of my favorites—“For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.” My prayer for this Lenten season and beyond is that I can lovingly offer to all those around me that same compassion, mercy, and forgiveness that I continue to receive.

- Lois Ann Guschke

Tuesday, March 18

Isaiah 1: 10, 16-20

Psalms 50: 8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23

Matthew 23: 1-12

If we help those who are oppressed or who feel downtrodden and left out, God will bless us endlessly. We are all his creation, no matter where we come from or who we are, so providing aid to those who are less fortunate than we are will contribute to us having a positive human experience. Furthermore, we must try our best every day to strive to do good, stay away from temptations and sin, be humble, be thankful and grateful, and focus on the positive. We must pray for each other, with each other, and help each other do good and know the positivity and salvation that God provides.

If we all love one another and respect each other, God will look highly on us. We must not slander our brothers and sisters in Christ. We do not need to make animal sacrifices. We just need to praise God, love God, love one another, and be grateful and thankful for everything and everyone.

Jesus wants us to be the complete opposite of the Pharisees. Jesus calls us to be humble and considerate of others. He wants us to see each other as the same because we are all God's creation, no matter who we are, no matter what we are, and no matter what we do. Rather than putting all our burdens on people who we think are beneath us, we must instead never place people below us, and we must complete our tasks regardless of the difficulty and be grateful to God for helping us along the way. If we see someone struggling to complete an activity, we must step in and help. We must not let the items and glimmers of the world influence us, but we must give ourselves to God our Father and continuously be grateful for all that he provides. In the end, we must just simply let go and let God.

- Alex Clark

Wednesday, March 19

Feast of St. Joseph

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

Psalms 89: 2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29

Romans 4: 13, 16-18, 22

Matthew 1: 16, 18-21, 24a

Joseph was a righteous man the Gospel tells us. Righteousness has to do with being in right relationship with God. In that time, that meant following the Law of Moses, praying and making sacrifices in the temple, going to synagogue, observing the festivals, keeping the Commandments. But God asks more of Joseph – that Joseph trust God that taking Mary as his wife will turn out right. The law at the time allowed Joseph to “divorce” Mary because she was carrying a child. But God needs Mary and Joseph to carry out God’s plan for the world, so God asks Joseph to trust and be part of that plan. God asks Joseph to react with love rather than with the law.

Righteousness means more than just following the rules. It’s easy for us to follow the “rules” of being a Catholic Christian – well, maybe not easy to do, but they are easily understood. God asks more of us, though, just like God asked more of Joseph. I think the foundation of righteousness for a Christian – for anyone, really – is love. Jesus came to show us that love is the only lens through which we should look at the world. How can I be more loving? Do I need to shift my view so I can look at my enemies with love? What do I need to sacrifice in order to be more loving? Being a Christian isn’t primarily about following rules, it’s fundamentally about loving, about trusting in God’s love for me so I can be God’s love to others.

- A Parishioner

Thursday, March 20

Jeremiah 17: 5-10

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

Luke 16: 19-31

Who do you listen to? The rich man in our Gospel was listening to greed and a complete lack of charity. The poor man listened to God's will. In the end, the poor man was granted the ultimate wealth by living through God. The rich man received "a lava waste."

What influences us to make good decisions? Do we sit in silence and sulk, or do we put in action what God wants from us? It can be so hard to be yourself in a world where the expectation is to be identical to everyone else. But listening to what God has been telling us can and will liberate our actions for love of neighbor, again, only if we listen. Whoever we may be listening to, no matter if it's a music artist, favorite influencer, or even a news channel, God should always be first.

- Ryan Claire C.

Friday, March 21

Genesis 37: 3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a

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

Matthew 21: 33-43, 45-46

Sometimes it is hard for us to relate the stories from 2,000 years ago to our life today. The readings here make that easy to do. They are a precursor to the life of Jesus. Joseph was sold for silver, as was Jesus. Joseph was chained and suffered in captivity, as Jesus suffered and died at the hands of his people. The prophecies of Joseph came true, and he became the lord of the master's household because now they believed in him. Jesus rose from the dead just as the Scriptures prophesied and he became the Lord of all.

We know this story; we have heard it many times. Our focus is always on the goodness of Joseph and Jesus. If we stop there, we have missed the boat. What about the brothers who were jealous and greedy and selfish? What about the tenants who were jealous and greedy and selfish? Jesus says the Kingdom of God will be taken from them and given to a people who will bear fruit. What does that mean? What fruit is Jesus talking about? He speaks about the opposite of greed, jealousy, and self-service. We are called to be generous, kind, and giving.

In the world today, sometimes it is hard to find generosity, kindness, and a giving spirit. Some of us have no concept of doing for others first, then doing for ourselves. We find it easy to criticize others, to spread gossip or repeat whatever we hear, whether true or not. It is easier to walk past someone who needs help rather than stop to offer assistance. But you know what, being a disciple is NOT EASY. Joseph's life was not easy. Jesus' life was not easy. The readings today tell us to leave behind the greed, the jealousy, the self-service that drags us down and to embrace the light of kindness, generosity, and giving. After all Jesus gave His life for us. What can we give others?

- Joyce Navary

Saturday, March 22

Micah 7: 14-15, 18-20

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

Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32

During Lent, we seek God's mercy and guidance, much like the people of Israel in Micah's time. The prophet's words remind us of God's unwavering compassion: "Who is a God like you, who removes guilt and pardons sin?" (Micah 7:18) Despite our failings, God remains faithful, guiding his people with love and restoring them through his grace.

Lent calls us to return to our merciful God with repentant hearts. It is a season of conversion, a time to acknowledge our sins and trust in his promise of redemption. Just as God led Israel out of Egypt, he desires to lead us out of the bondage of sin into the freedom of his love.

Micah assures us that God does not hold onto anger but "delights in mercy". This is the heart of Lent: not fear of punishment, but the joy of a Father eager to forgive. He "casts our sins into the depths of the sea", inviting us to embrace the new life offered through Christ's sacrifice.

As we journey toward Easter, let us surrender our weaknesses to God's mercy. May we, in turn, extend that same mercy to others, reflecting the love of the One who calls us his own.

- Alison Stingel

Sunday, March 23
Third Sunday in Lent

(A note: we are using the readings for Year A on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Sunday of Lent because we have candidates preparing to join the Church at Pentecost.

During Mass those Sundays, they will undergo the traditional Scrutinies.)

Exodus 17: 3-7

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

Romans 5: 1-2, 5-8

John 4: 5-42

When things are not going the way we think they should, it's hard to trust God to give us what we need. Both the Israelites and the woman at the well needed something and were struggling to see how God would provide it. The Israelites could see no well, no stream, no source for the water they needed. The woman at the well points out that Jesus has none of the tools necessary to draw the water from that well.

Often, like the woman at the well and the Israelites, we feel like giving up on God's plan and relying instead on our own tools. As is often the case, the way in which God provides for these people is unexpected. Trusting God in these moments is extremely difficult. Romans reminds us that "hope does not disappoint." God will provide for us even when we have no idea how he is going to do it. We simply have to trust that plan and wait to see how God does it. This Lent, let us pray for the patience necessary to hope for the living water which prevents us from ever thirsting again. May God help us to trust him to provide for all our needs.

- Anne Ortman

Monday, March 24

2 Kings 5: 1-15ab

Psalm 42: 2, 3; 43:3, 4

Luke 4: 24-30

The theme that strikes me from the readings is that of deliverance: God will deliver us from our despair. God's deliverance is always assured, but it requires our trust and acceptance in God or God's messenger. In the Book of Kings we meet the man Naaman, a well-respected individual and a powerful commander of King Hadadezer's army. His social status is high, but he is engulfed in despair on account of a skin malady, leprosy. The psalmist tells of feelings of deep despair. He pleads with God for intervention, for vindication and deliverance from whatever is that ails him. He also expresses hope in God, in God's goodness and guidance. In the Gospel, Jesus expresses his amazement at the lack of faith of his fellow Nazarenes. They know him one way and find great difficulty in accepting him any other way.

What can we learn from Naaman's story? His leprosy has caused him anguish and despair. The prophet Elisha has a prescription for Naaman's healing, but it enrages Naaman. He is offended by the notion of dipping himself in the simple waters of the river Jordan. Have you ever wanted something so bad... yet insisted on getting it your own way or you would hit the highway? Sometimes we look for and want great things to happen to us, but we are unwilling to put out even the littlest effort.

Do we desire miracles but have no faith or trust to receive them? What did Jesus say? In Nazareth he wasn't able to do many miracles on account of their lack of faith. Whenever Jesus healed someone, he insisted it was because of their faith. "Go, your faith has saved you."

God comes to us in humility. Naaman's healing began humbly with the intervention of a slave girl.

This Lenten season, we pray for humility. We pray for faith and trust. We pray for deliverance from whatever ails us. We pray that we accept the will of God in our lives, in whatever form it comes to us. Lent calls us to reflect, to repent, to forgive, and to trust... to trust in the one whose promises are forever sure.

- Fr. Ernest

Tuesday, March 25
Solemnity of the Annunciation

Isaiah 7: 10-14; 8:10

Psalm 40: 7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 11

Hebrews 10: 4-10

Luke 1: 26-38

The refrain of today's psalm is emblematic of both how we ought to be coming into this season, and who we hope to be at the end of the season. This simple statement, "Here I am" alone packs a lot of flavor. But the complete refrain, "Here I am, Lord; I come to do your will" is important to spend time with and meditate on.

As we see in today's Gospel, Mary herself was at least a bit skeptical of the angel Gabriel and the proposal she was being given. She expressed concerns and asked questions, because she's human, like us. So, this means we are also allowed to have questions when discerning God's will for ourselves.

Today, I encourage you to ask yourself, "Am I present before God and ready to receive His will like Mary was"? Am I more likely to say, "I'm on my way, Lord, to doing your will, but I'm running late ... again"? Or perhaps, "I am here Lord; but I'm not quite ready to do your will"?

Take some time today to uncover whatever your "not quite" is, bring it all before God, and understand, while Mary's questions were answered immediately, yours may take days, weeks, months, even years. Big picture, the objective of Lent is to be active participants in creating holier, Easter versions of ourselves. May Mary inspire you, and the Holy Spirit guide you as you continue on your journey this season.

- Samuel Moss

Wednesday, March 26

Deuteronomy 4: 1, 5-9

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

Matthew 5: 17-19

Both of today's readings speak about the law. We know that the law is necessary for order in society. But for the Israelites the law meant life. It flowed from their covenant relationship with God and bound them to God and to one another. We believe that Jesus was the fulfillment of the law. He speaks of keeping the smallest letter of the law. And yet Jesus was anything but a literalist. As he walked among the people, he saw their needs and responded to them with compassion and love. Because of this he was accused of not following the law, as when he broke the law concerning Sabbath rest by healing on the Sabbath. Jesus followed the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law.

Sometimes laws bring order but not justice. They favor some people while dismissing or even hurting others. The challenge for us is balancing strict obedience to the law with Jesus' greatest commandment – that we love God with our whole heart, soul, and mind and love our neighbor as ourselves. If a law does not allow us to do this, if it violates our conscience, perhaps it is time to ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" and to proceed accordingly.

- Myra Weathington

Thursday, March 27

Jeremiah 7: 23-28

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

Luke 11: 14-23

In this passage, Jesus casts out a demon, yet some accuse him of working through the power of Beelzebul. Others demand a sign, failing to recognize the divine authority already before them. Jesus responds by declaring that a house divided against itself cannot stand and that whoever is not with him is against him.

This passage challenges us to examine our own faith this Lent. Do we truly recognize Christ's presence in our lives, or do we, like the crowd, demand more proof before fully surrendering to Him? Jesus reminds us that neutrality is not an option - either we stand with him, or we stand against him.

Lent is a time to cast out the "demons" in our hearts — the sins, doubts, and distractions that pull us away from God. Take a moment to truly look internally and acknowledge your own personal demons. Is it too much time on your phone? Maybe you spend too much time on social media comparing your life to what others portray? Are you truly leading with love and kindness, or are you judging other people's lives and decisions while not noticing the ungodliness in that act alone? Do you seek first to understand, or are you too worried about being understood first?

It is a season to recommit to our faith, ensuring that we are firmly aligned with Christ. Just as Jesus drives out evil, he desires to free us from whatever keeps us from him. Trust in God to handle evil and commit to doing what we are called to do – love with judgement. Today, let us ask: Are we with Christ in our thoughts, words, and actions? Truly and honestly reflect on the expression, "What would Jesus do" and choose love. Do we trust in his power, or do we allow doubt to divide our hearts? May we use this Lenten journey to stand firmly with Jesus, rejecting all that separates us from him and embracing the new life he offers.

- Alison Stingel

Friday, March 28

Hosea 14: 2-10

Psalms 81: 6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14 and 17

Mark 12: 28-34

We judge ourselves and allow the opinions of others to impact us. We feel angry, guilty, fearful, and depressed and take our negative feelings out on others. When we try to do our best and fall short, we are left feeling hopeless, defeated, and discouraged. This causes us to stumble and fall down.

With God all things are possible. When we stop listening to those judgments and listen to God, we get back up. Our soul is healed and we are restored.

The more we listen to God, the stronger and more powerful our faith becomes. God is almighty and perfect. Loving God with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength is easy.

God tells us to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is not easy to love those that have caused pain and suffering. We are told to forgive and have mercy and compassion. God loves all people, and he challenges us to do the same.

- Sharon Dorin

Saturday, March 29

Hosea 6: 1-6

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

Luke 18: 9-14

Sometimes after a reflection song at Mass, the congregation claps. I cringe inwardly because I think we should be so collectively enmeshed (musicians, congregation) that we feel ourselves as part of the hymn. Applause during the Mass makes me feel like it was a performance, not prayer.

When we brag about our good actions, it shows a mind of comparing and contrasting: contrasting shows a spirit of separateness. In Hosea, when God says, "For it is love that I desire," that is a call back to our original state of being with God. In the Psalm and Luke, the request for God's mercy speaks to a contrite spirit that is an admission of our need for connectedness. While our actions may be inherently good, our soul only develops when the spirit of the action is toward unity.

- Melinda Aileo

Sunday, March 30
Fourth Sunday in Lent
1 Samuel 16: 1b, 6-7, 10-13a
Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6
Ephesians 5: 8-14
John 9: 1-41

These mid-Lenten readings deal with seeing as God sees. In the book of Samuel, the prophet is instructed to go to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse and anoint one of his sons as the new king of Israel. David isn't even present and is sent for after the other older sons are not chosen. God sees the heart, not appearances as man sees. After David is anointed the spirit of the Lord rushes upon him. In the 23rd psalm the Lord anoints his head and his cup overflows. The Lord is the shepherd and leads us on the path of righteousness. In Ephesians it talks of the light of the Lord that produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes a blind man see and Jesus tells him he came so that those who do not see might see.

How often do we want a sure thing, something that looks good – but is it really? What is in the heart of the situation? Once the blind man was able to see, he was rejected from the synagogue when he tried to make them see that Jesus must be from God. They didn't want to see that. Jesus sought him out just as he does us. He leads us on the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The Spirit of the Lord rushes in giving sight and it produces goodness which lasts and is seen.

- Cara Moore

Monday, March 31

Isaiah 65: 17-21

Psalms 30: 2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b

John 4: 43-54

See, I am creating new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind. Instead, shout for joy and be glad forever in what I am creating. (Isaiah 65:17)

These words were welcome news to the Hebrews who were being held in captivity in Babylon. Their time of captivity and penance for being unfaithful to the covenant had been fulfilled. They were going home to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem. God promised them prosperity, long life, and good health. In his creative love, God inspired their captor, Cyrus, King of Persia, to lift his people up once again and set them free and to provide for them to rebuild their beloved city once again.

This faithful and creative love of God is revealed again through Jesus; the love of God incarnate. His faithful love created something new as the gift of salvation was offered beyond his chosen people, to the gentiles.

These words spoken by the prophet are as relevant to us today as they were to the Hebrews and to the people of Jesus's time. Our trials, our sorrows, things that hold us captive, nor the darkneses of our time, will prevail. God never gives up on his people. He is always faithful. He is always creative. His love is unfailing. New heavens, and a new earth, he will surely create.

At dusk weeping comes for the night; but at dawn there is rejoicing. (Psalm 30: 6b)

- Linda Mingos

Tuesday, April 1
Ezekiel 47: 1-9, 12
Psalms 46: 2-3, 5-6, 8-9
John 5: 1-16

In the first reading, the river symbolizes the blessings to be conferred on Jerusalem by the Lord's returning to live among his people after their Babylonian exile. It is linked to the crippled man who wanted to be healed in Bethesda's waters but was healed by Jesus instead.

We see God alone is the source of life and provides the word of life that is the life-giving water which quenches the thirst of the human heart for life, forgiveness, and salvation.

The psalmist tells us we will not be afraid though the world falls apart, as God is our refuge. We see also that God provides for his people. "God is with us" emphasizes the intimate relationship believers have with God. This conveys security and stability that comes from God with his unwavering support and assistance, especially during trials. The psalmist emphasizes the comforting presence of the Lord highlighting God's role as protector and fortress.

God intended the Sabbath as a day of rest. Large sections of early Jewish laws detailed what was allowed and disallowed on this day. This law placed emphasis on personal discipline and conduct leaving no room for exemptions.

Jesus' ministry was to save people. He healed not only out of compassion, but to show His power to individuals so we would believe in Him. By this, he is doing God's "work." And "God's work" should be performed every day of our lives.

- David Martin

Wednesday, April 2

Isaiah 49: 8-15

Psalm 145: 8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18

John 5: 17-30

In today's reading Jesus explains the motivation for his actions. He is in such deep unity with the Father that every word and action is in submission to the Father's will. When he healed a man who was outside of the protection of society, he was condemned for working on the sabbath. He explains that the Father is always at work and so is he. And where the Father is at work there is healing and life. Resurrection is always taking place and salvation will reach even the physically and spiritually dead.

Jesus is the reflection of the Father and in turn we must be also. And like Jesus, we can perform miracles, live a holy life, and teach the truth.

We honor Jesus by believing him at his word; we display our belief by walking with and through the Spirit of God working in us, seeking to become more like him, and to draw others to him. To put it another way: we bring glory to God, through Jesus, when our motivation is to walk in this world like Jesus and with Jesus. The amazing thing is, when we walk with Jesus we are living out of our new life.

Ultimately the Jewish leaders (as representative of all people outside of Christ) preferred to receive glory from each other, rather than to see who Christ was and seek the glory of God, a motivation which would lead to condemnation and not life. So today we are challenged to consider: what motivates our living?

- Susan Amos

Thursday, April 3

Exodus 32: 7-14

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

John 5: 31-47

Today's readings took me from the Old Testament view of God to his Son's true knowledge of him, his Father. Lord God, by giving us your Son, you reveal to us that love is your nature, your being. You love us into wholeness, into a fuller understanding of your goodness, our goodness, and the goodness of others. The loving, healing acts of Jesus are not ambiguous, not unclear. Through these acts of mercy, compassion, and generous self-giving, he witnessed to your untiring love, to who you are.

I say to myself and to others that I believe in you and, of course, I do in my mind and heart. The question is, do my daily interactions and internal thoughts witness to that belief in Jesus as true God, as giver of a NEW way to live? Is there room in my being to grow kinder, more generous, more willing to ever expand the boundaries of my love, to stretch to an all-inclusive level?

During these days of Lent, may your Spirit strengthen my belief in your Son and in your presence within myself and within the people I encounter. May my belief extend to seeing you within my brothers and sisters throughout the world and lead me to deepened daily prayer and advocacy on their behalf. May my actions that affect the preservation of the earth reflect my belief in your oneness with all creation. Lord God, you lead me this Lent to new life, to deeper belief in the power of your love - may I be strengthened as I follow and give witness to who I say you are.

- Christine Petri

Friday, April 4

Wisdom 2: 1a, 12-22

Psalms 34: 17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23

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

For the past several years, I have been exploring my own faith and internalizing my understanding of God - and away from an externalized "Sky-God" understanding. I struggle with the conflicts between man-made rules, organized religion, and faith. I recently read Viktor Frankl's "Man's Search for Meaning" which explores how individuals can endure immense suffering by finding purpose in their experiences, emphasizing that meaning is not given but discovered through love, responsibility, and a deep inner life.

I relate to the man in the first reading who has beset himself against the doings of others, yet hoping that what I am doing is right in God's eyes. The psalm tells me that God confronts the evildoers and gives refuge to the good. So, I hope. In the Gospel, our ultimate good guy, our hero, is on his way to a bad ending. A boss once told me that I would just need to "sit down and take this one..." but my supposed transgression was telling the truth.

Jesus reminds us, "*I know him because I am from him, and he sent me.*" I parallel this to remind me that my faith is not about external expectations but a deep, lived experience with God, and thus God has gone from "sky-god" to internalized.

Frankl's struggles with faith are not signs of loss but of growth. Jesus' identity was not defined externally by others but by his internal relationship with God. So too, our faith deepens when we move from knowing *about* God to encountering Him personally. Is this the work of the Holy Spirit?

- Paul Laurenz

Saturday, April 5
Jeremiah 11: 18-20
Psalms 7: 2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12
John 7: 40-53

In biblical times a common bias against Galileans was to consider them as "less than" Jews. The Pharisees considered Jesus as less than what was necessary to be called a messiah. Nicodemus asked his colleagues how they could be so narrow-minded, despising Jesus without even knowing him, without asking him a few pertinent questions. Then they threatened Nicodemus with public humiliation. How terrible it must be to live in constant fear of powerful people "hatching plots" against you! Knowing they are spreading lies to defame you! Yet, Jesus, the Son of God, endured such calumny from the priests and Pharisees who lied about his birthplace and origins and spread rumors about his "blasphemous" healings on the Sabbath. They wanted him arrested and condemned without investigating the truth of Jesus's identity or mission. Though Jesus was surrounded by fearful events, he showed no fear. He did not hide or stop preaching to anyone who would listen. He encouraged his disciples and trusted God completely, taking refuge in God's promises.

But I am often fearful because God does not always save the innocent or pure of heart. There are countless stories of martyrs and heroes who died for noble causes. Jesus knew and accepted his fate. Even during his arrest and execution, Jesus courageously did not fight back or try to change his destiny. It makes me wonder how I might behave under such circumstances. Would I be able to accept with grace such punishment for my personal convictions?

It seems to me that there are now many people who live in great fear in our own country. Fear of losing jobs, losing homes, losing safety, losing children, losing lives, is constantly in the news. Millions are considered "less worthy" of justice; their humanity is ignored and their dignity destroyed by heartless powerful people who are not interested in knowing their stories. These desperate poor or displaced people are often left to defend themselves. Who could be a Nicodemus? Who could stand up to the forces of evil in our world? How can I help relieve these people of their terrible fear?

- Marie Ascenza

Sunday, April 6
Fifth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37: 12-14

Psalms 130: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8

Romans 8: 8-11

John 11: 1-45

My faith has been tested in recent years. I have found myself questioning God on a regular basis. Why do good and innocent people suffer while sinful people seemingly prosper? And most disheartening, how could Christians support people with such egregious behavior?

I found myself on a continual search for truth. My cell phone was a constant companion. I was inundated with a barrage of notifications informing me of recent developments in the news. I devoured each article and video detailing each social injustice inflicted on the disenfranchised. I often engaged in terse and combative dialogue on social media, especially with persons calling themselves Christians yet exhibiting no Christlike behavior. I often fell asleep disheartened and woke up with an overwhelming sense of hopelessness.

Thankfully, I attend Mass every Sunday and meditate on his word. I'm reminded of God's promises to the people of Israel in the first reading, Ezekiel 37: 12-14. Psalm 130 reminds me to trust in the Lord and because of his loving kindness, there will be mercy and redemption. The second reading, Romans 8: 8-11, reminds me that we can't please God in the flesh. The spirit of God must dwell in us. Finally, the gospel, John 11: 1-45, reminds me that if we believe, we will see the glory of God!

God is faithful to his word. If we believe, we will see the glory of God. I no longer reason in the flesh. The spirit of God leads me to pray for mercy and redemption for all.

- Kathleen Parker

Monday, April 7

Daniel 13: 41c-62

Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

John 8: 12-20

Many times in our lives we come upon temptations unexpectedly. What or how do we respond to these situations? Do we continue to entertain them, or do we release them and turn towards the radiance of God's grace? "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder!" comes from Margaret Wolfe Hungerford's book "Molly Bawn," published in 1878. So often we get tricked by our observations. Our perspective can quickly carry us down the rat hole of Satan!

In the psalm today, David acknowledges his vulnerability and dependence on the Lord. He leads me, guides me, and anoints me! We desire to place our trust in the Lord and ask for his protection. In today's gospel, Jesus proclaims himself the light of the world. My spirit is lifted by the sunlight I receive through a window. This draws me closer to the source of light, and I feel joy and warmth.

I think about my journey as a Christian. Should I be more watchful of my intentions, my temptations, my feelings towards myself and others? Comparisons draw me into a judgmental frame of mind, allowing me to analyze the situations I enter. What should I pray for in this moment? Am I thankful for the "now" in which I live? What image does God have of me? Do I radiate joy or sadness? Hopefully, I give back to God most of what He created me to be – **in his image**.

- Mike Guschke

Tuesday, April 8

Numbers 21: 4-9

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

John 8: 21-30

Do you have that friend or family member who hears what you say or advise, but doesn't really listen? Even though you have said to do this is a bad idea and could be trouble, they have to try it out themselves anyway. And guess what? Bad things happen. Well, the Israelites were exactly the same. The Lord took them out of Egypt to save them. But they could not trust the Lord completely. They complained against God and Moses. And guess what? Bad things happened. Snakes overtook the community. Once the bad things happened, the Israelites were sorry they did not trust God to save them, and they repented. God saved them again. He heard the cries of his people.

We often find ourselves in need of saving. And this is when we pray for help, asking the Lord to save us. Do you find yourself only praying when you need something? Think about the last time you prayed to thank God for all the blessings you have. Do we really need God to show us his glory for us to believe? Do we have to see miracles to believe? Do we have signs in our everyday lives that show us God is with us? He protects us. He knows what we need, and that may not be what we ask for! The Lord hears your cry. Be patient and faithful; help will come.

We often pray for earthly blessings to make our lives easier, but the Lord says that we must look for him above. He means that we should work on our spiritual life. While on earth we must prepare for our life in heaven. We do that by helping our neighbor, whether near or far, being kind to others, forgiving those who hurt us, and loving those who are different. The Lord did not just preach to the Jews in his community, but to gentiles, the outsider, those who persecuted him. This is not an easy road to travel. God asks us to do the hard things in his name, so that we might die to sin. He is always with us and wants us to be with him in heaven.

- Joyce Navary

Wednesday, April 9

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

Response: Daniel 3: 52, 53, 54, 55, 56

John 8: 31-42

I think today's readings are about courage. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had great courage. They were willing to die for their faith and because of that truthfulness and courage, they were spared. Jesus is also encouraging his followers to have courage, because it takes courage to know and speak the truth, especially in the face of those who insist the truth is something different.

Our faith calls us to look at the world through God's eyes, through the eyes of faith, the eyes of truth. There are a lot of people these days claiming to speak the truth, but we know that not everyone is speaking the truth. It takes courage to go against the crowd and say, "That's not true." We come to know truth deep in ourselves when we pray and ask God to teach us what is true, to lead us to see the world as God sees it.

And the courage to speak the truth also comes through prayer, through building a relationship with God that allows us to do and say the right thing, no matter the consequences. When we have that relationship and know that God always "has our back," we can stand up for what is right and invite others to do the same.

- A Parishioner

Thursday, April 10

Genesis 17: 3-9

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

John 8: 51-59

In Genesis 17:3-9, God establishes his covenant with Abraham, promising to make him the father of many nations. This covenant is not just a blessing but also a call to faithfulness: "Walk before me and be blameless" (17:1). Abraham's response is one of humility where he falls on his face before God, in an act of surrender and reverence.

We are also being invited into a deeper covenant relationship with God. Like Abraham, we are called to trust in God's promises, even when they seem beyond our understanding. We are reminded that faith is not passive, rather it is an action verb; it requires obedience and transformation.

Lent is a time to examine our own response to God's call. Are we walking before him in faith, or are we distracted by the world? Have we surrendered our hearts completely, or are we holding back? Do we show love and encourage love of ALL of God's people, or are we surrendering to powers and influences that tell us not to love as Jesus loved? During this season, we renew our commitment to live as God's people, just as Abraham embraced his role in God's divine plan.

As we journey toward Easter, let us trust in God's covenant of love, fulfilled in Christ. May we, like Abraham, bow before him in humility and embrace his call to holiness.

- Alison Stingel

Friday, April 11

Jeremiah 20: 10-13

Psalm 18: 2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7

John 10: 31-42

Today's readings make me think of roller coasters. We buckle ourselves into the seats, anticipating a wild ride. For me that first climb is not pleasant, it is slow, filled with tension and anticipation. Jeremiah is climbing, his enemies are closing in around him and he is pleading for help. In John's Gospel Jesus is also climbing, faced with stoning by his enemies and eventually escapes a frightening situation.

Sandwiched between these two tension-filled accounts of threats and danger comes David's psalm. His song is one of praise and thanksgiving for his victory over his enemies. On this last Friday before Holy Week, we are preparing for our climb, entering into a fearful suffering heart. We know there will be a pause for us at the top – Good Friday – that will last for a while until that giant fall into the wonder of Easter with its praise and thanksgiving that we were invited to join this wonderful ride once again. All I can do is buckle up and be ready to be amazed.

- Mary Henrich

Saturday, April 12

Ezekiel 37: 21-28

Response: Jeremiah 31: 10, 11-12abcd, 13

John 11: 45-56

Sometimes I feel like the question I am always asking myself is “What Am I going to do? Often, it’s in response to something I’m struggling with, and sometimes it’s just a matter of planning and preparing for what comes next. I wonder if those who reported Jesus were also asking that question from both sides of the proverbial fence. Those that struggled with “what to do” may also have been struggling with what Jesus was calling them to and how they would have to change in response to answering that call. Would they be accountable if they followed this man? Did they cower under the directness of those perceived to be more in power? Or for the others, was it simply a done deal as to what needed to be done so they could move on to life as usual?

In my parents’ bathroom, there is a label taped under the mirror that says, “Jesus, what are you and I going to do today, together?” Each day we are challenged to ask ourselves the question, “What are we going to do?” Sometimes that answer is an easy one. Sometimes we must intentionally look within to see the challenge God is calling us to: Is what we are choosing to do of God or of our own selfish desires? Is our choice life-giving to ourselves or someone else, or life-taking? As we continue to move through Lent, may your choice be to ask yourselves these questions and act accordingly.

- Elise Chapman

Sunday, April 13

Palm / Passion Sunday

Luke 19: 28-40 (at the blessing of the palms)

Isaiah 50: 4-7

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

Philippians 2: 6-11

Luke 22: 14—23: 56

As they led him away they took hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian who was coming in from the country; and after laying the cross on him, they made him carry it behind Jesus. (Luke 23:26)

A common man going about his daily business was forced into service to help the Christ carry his cross to his crucifixion. Did he know Jesus? Was he aware of the signs and wonders that Jesus performed during his ministry on earth? Or was he randomly caught up in the horrific scene of a man being led to his death? The Jewish leaders and the Roman officials were all involved. Did he fear for his own safety as he was forced into association with Jesus of Nazareth?

We too are called to help Jesus carry his cross. We are called to perform signs and wonders by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, giving shelter to the homeless. We are called to give mercy to those who may not deserve it by the standards of our time. We are called to bring justice into this broken world. As we help Jesus carry his cross, we too may be placed in danger. Some have been martyred carrying that cross. We may not be called to martyrdom, but carrying that cross could bring ridicule, rejection, or isolation. Being Christ to others has a cost. But the way of the cross brings us to the ultimate reward; being united with our loving God as we enter into His glory.

- Linda Mingos

Monday, April 14
Monday of Holy Week

Isaiah 42: 1-7

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

John 12: 1-11

Although Isaiah's prophetic messages for the Holy Week readings were from 700 BC, they can be summed up in the first reading. Isaiah wrote/prophesied (and this is the theme/message of today's readings to me): "He shall bring forth to the nations, not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street... a bruised reed he shall not break... until he establishes justice on the earth."

Jesus NEVER sought violence, rioting. He allowed others to have their views and questions. He did not judge them... he LISTENED, he HUGGED THEM, he LOVED THEM ALL – from lepers to adulterers. And he continued to preach the Kingdom of God with its call to FOREGIVENESS when he inaugurated the ministry of mercy because he loves us all! He loves us, not matter our skin color, our sins, our political party, or our belief in UFO's. ☑ HE LOVES US!!

At the Last Supper Jesus leaves us with the Eucharist... his Body and his Blood! Under the signs of bread and wine, which is a testimony to his love for humanity, for whose sake he offered himself in sacrifice for us... FOR US! He died for us so that WE can LIVE! During Holy Week we are preparing for the loneliness of Gethsemane, the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, and the humiliation of the crucifixion.

As a mother of an only son who passed away at age 31, my heart always breaks for our Blessed Mother Mary. Her heart so aching as she witnessed the brutal death of her only son. I reach out to her daily for strength, humility, and comfort.

- Betty Freudig

Tuesday, April 15
Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49: 1-6

Psalm 71: 1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15 and 17

John 13: 21-33, 36-38

We are in the final days of Lent. These weekdays between Palm Sunday and Holy Thursday move us step by step toward the suffering, tragedy, and triumph of Good Friday and Easter. And in these final days, we're facing really hard questions – Can I follow Jesus to the cross? Would I lay down my life? How would I have responded? It can be easy for us to believe that we would have been among those who stayed faithful to Jesus, but I'm not so sure. Part of that is because we know how it ends – it ends in the triumph of the Resurrection. But in the midst of all the suffering and threats and violence, Jesus's disciples didn't know how it would end. And some of them found they couldn't follow. In humility, I have to admit I may have done the same.

The same thing happens in every person's life. We suffer tragedy, loss, and violence; it's easy to be overwhelmed by events and circumstances. There seems to be no end to suffering. But our faith calls us to be steadfast because we do know how it ends. In the midst of tragedy, we take heart and encourage one another in faith. Because we know that death is followed by resurrection, and that love always wins.

Let's not be afraid of the hard questions. Let's embrace the tragedies and sufferings in our own lives and in the world. As we near the end of Lent, let's not turn away from the hard stuff, but experience it deeply and allow it to deepen our faith.

- A Parishioner

Wednesday, April 16
Wednesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 50: 4-9a

Psalms 69: 8-10, 21-22, 31 and 33-34

Matthew 26: 14-25

My mother was brilliant both mentally and spiritually. These are her thoughts, which I have come to believe (paraphrased).

Regarding Judas—many view him as evil for betraying Jesus. However, consider this: Jesus chose him as one of the twelve main disciples, indicating that he must have had some good qualities to be part of Jesus' inner circle. Judas didn't believe he was betraying Jesus; he thought that when the time came, Jesus would reveal His power and might, rather than being the Lamb led to slaughter. Judas took matters into his own hands instead of surrendering to God's plan. When he realized that his actions were driven by his own will rather than God's, he was filled with agony.

As we approach the holiest of holy days, I am still trying to let go and let God. Lord, help me to understand and do your will!

- Theresa Grizzle

Thursday, April 17

Holy Thursday

Exodus 12: 1-8, 11-14

Psalms 116: 12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18.

1 Corinthians 11: 23-26

John 13: 1-15

As a convert, Holy Week is especially meaningful for me. The powerful images during The Triduum strike right to the core of my heart each year, as I bathe myself in the joy of my commitment to Jesus, and His commitment to me.

Foot washing is a powerful introduction into what Jesus is teaching me/us. As feet go, they are not the most attractive parts of our bodies... young pretty ones, pedicured ones, old, worn out, craggy ones. They pretty much tell the tales of our lives. Yet, we allow our feet to be washed by someone else, and, in some cases, do a little washing ourselves. But what happens after we leave our church building? Do we continue living out Jesus' lesson? Are we serving the vulnerable, the young, the old, craggy, people the look or sound different than us? Are we openly demonstrating that true POWER is NOT power OVER someone, but rather something to be shared WITH everyone.

My grandmother used to tell me that our nation was/is only as rich as its poorest. A farmer's wife from Texas, with very little formal education, impressed upon me, through my mother, and then me to my own daughter, that true power lies in compassion and caring for one another.

So, how rich are we really? How many times have we chances to "wash feet" and ignored them or made excuses?

There's a commercial airing on television with this message, "Jesus gets us." My question... Do we REALLY get Him?

I'll wash my husband's feet again this year, and those of any that will allow me to. I'll allow mine to be washed as well. We are ALL on this planet together, each of our experiences connected TO each other. Jesus is giving us this chance to, not only love, but BE loved through the simple act of foot washing.

- Chit Peters

Friday, April 18

Good Friday

Isaiah 52: 13—53:12

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

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

John 18: 1—19: 42

Today's readings, both Old and New Testament, reminded me again that to gain fullness of life with God, I must lose the life of "self": your will Lord, not mine; your forgiving love, not my possessive, judgmental love; your inclusive love, not my limited, exclusive love; your "willing-to-die-for" love; not my provisional love.

These readings for me, sum up the journey of Lent - to come to a fuller understanding of how your life, suffering and death accompany me on my journey to new life. I trust in Isaiah's words: "upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed."

I am grateful for your willingness to show me how suffering can be endured with humility and how it can lead me to forgive and to be forgiven. Through your suffering, you understand my weakness, sympathize with my needs and offer your grace (Hebrews 4:15-16). From the encounter with the guards in the garden to your crucifixion, you submitted to the imposed pain and did not speak words of impending retribution, angry frustration, or contempt. You urged Peter to be gentle and answered Pilate in such a way that he saw your innocence even though he gave in to the power of others. You comforted your mother before surrendering your spirit. Love was on full display, conquering all negative internal instincts and allowing wholeness leading to resurrection. Total healing and wholeness of a loving spirit is who you are and what you call me to know and to be. You count on me and all who follow you to share your Spirit with others. The journey continues. There will be more Lents, more life to live. I pray that the continued journey will allow my love to grow deeper, wider, and more joy-filled; that I will learn how to commend my spirit fully to you in the knowledge that through your life of healing, teaching and suffering, you HAVE redeemed me, Lord (Ps 31:6).

- Christine Petri

Saturday, April 19

(Because there is no Mass on this day until the Great Vigil of Easter after sundown, these readings are from Lauds [Morning Prayer] on Holy Saturday.)

Psalm 64

Isaiah 38: 10-14, 17b-20

Psalm 150

Hosea 5: 15b-16:2

I hold my breath through Holy Saturday; it is one long, profound pause. Nothing is happening. Jesus has been crucified and buried, and Easter has not yet come. (What deep grief his friends and family must have been going through!) Today's readings from Morning Prayer are words of suffering and lament. The psalmists are not afraid of negative thoughts and words; they embrace the truth of bad things and even blame them on God.

I had a friend in divinity school who joked about wanting a "perky gospel" – it would have none of those bad things like betrayal and scourging and death on the cross. She didn't really mean it, of course. But I think we humans are tempted to skim over the tough parts of the gospel and what they say about us and our world. During this pause between crucifixion and resurrection, how do you see yourself in these biblical stories? Who are you in these events? What is God asking of you as you ponder the familiar story?

Realistically, Holy Saturday is busy for many of us. Traveling, getting ready for Easter at church and at home, cooking, etc. For me, underlying all of this busyness is a sense of waiting. I try not to jump from Good Friday to Easter too quickly. I need to embrace the middle, the emptiness, the grief, the tomb. I hold my breath and wait.

- Katie Johnson

Sunday, April 20

Easter Sunday

Acts 10: 34a, 37-43

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

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

John 20: 1-9

Witnessing to the resurrection in our lives is certainly a challenge given all the negativity and assault on common respect and decency for one another in our country. Consider Mary of Magdala's response to the angel's question, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" Christ is risen! He is truly risen! Did she fall deeper into despair? No, she ran to announce the great news of Christ Jesus' resurrection.

With all the chaos in our lives, there is the one hardened fact of our faith, Christ Jesus Lives! Let us take a lesson from Mary, to always express that Christ is Risen through our actions of charity, peace, justice, and forgiveness. We need to understand from Mary's life both before and after the Cross, that doing good in society is often hard to accomplish (because of hate and greed) but it is no less worthy of our effort.

We Catholic Christians are Christians of the Cross and of the Resurrection. Mary teaches us that we need to know what put Jesus on the Cross (our sin), but more importantly, what has made His tomb empty. She did not dwell on her feelings of despair but what her life was, in light of the empty tomb.

We are challenged by the empty tomb to live lives centered on love of God and love of neighbor and to always announce the joy of the Good News, regardless of its popularity.

Christ is Risen! He is truly Risen!

- Deacon Chris Corrigan

