



Reflections for Lent 2023
from the people of
the Church of the Redeemer

Each year there is a decision to be made regarding whether or not to create this booklet of reflections. The second COVID year of 2021 was my first year to oversee this ministry. Many connections had been lost during the pandemic and it was a difficult to find people who would contribute a reflection. 2022 saw an outpouring of assistance, which made the work much easier.

In late January of 2023, I realized that too much time had passed to create the booklet of 47 reflections and decided to let it pass. I heard a voice* kindly guiding me to continue the tradition. Once again, there was rapid and enormous response to the emails asking for help. Those who agreed to write a reflection were given a deadline of days instead of weeks. Everyone did a great job – quickly!

Thank you to:

- ✚ All who generously served as the authors
- ✚ *Mary Atkinson for compiling the 47 reflections
- ✚ Laurie Richman, Rita Wingfield, Kate Chittum, Regina Watson-Fields, Diane Atkins and other staff and volunteers for their dedication to the printing and distribution of hundreds of these books

All of us hope that you find these reflections helpful in your spiritual journeys during Lent 2023.



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ASH WEDNESDAY

February 22, 2023

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

“Did you know you have something on your forehead?” That’s often the question we are asked on Ash Wednesday, especially if we are out in public. I will tell people, “It’s Ash Wednesday,” and leave it at that. I imagine in this Gospel Jesus wants to remind me, “It’s ok to tell folks why you have ashes, but it’s not okay to look miserable about fasting, post your Lenten sacrifice on social media for likes, or tout your good works to your friends to stoke your pride.”

While God wants us to glorify him in all we do, he wants us to know that he sees all we do. We don’t need to be boastful to win the praise of others. As the Gospel says, “Our Father, who sees what is hidden will repay you.” That’s infinitely superior to any human praise we might receive.

Julia Crowder



THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

February 23, 2023

Luke 9:22-25

The disciples of Jesus as well as the majority of the religious leaders believed that the Messiah was coming to overthrow the Romans and to lead a new, powerful Jewish nation. This announcement by Jesus was a major shock to their system, difficult to understand and impossible to accept. “The Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the priests and elders and be killed” was not easy for them to accept. They wanted a warrior, not a martyr.

This passage highlights the theme of sacrifice and redemption and is considered an important moment in the life of Jesus as It shows his commitment to his mission and his unwavering faith in God.

Steve Trucchi

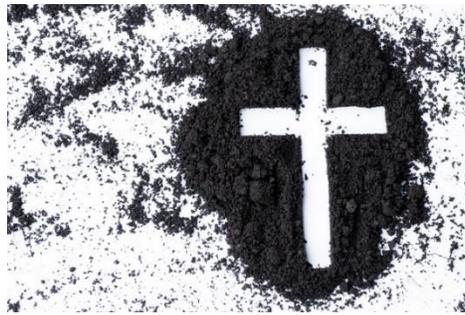
FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

February 24, 2023

Matthew 9:14-15

John's disciples and the Pharisees fasted often, following the rules. Fasting is a sign of mourning. Just as one would not mourn during a wedding celebration, how can one mourn while Jesus is with them, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom? Jesus invited them to spend their time and energy, rejoicing with him and getting to know him. I think it comes down to building a relationship with the Lord rather than checking off boxes that you're following rules.

During Lent we are called to pray, give alms, and fast. Let us strive to use our fasting to look at our lives and free ourselves from obstacles that keep us from proclaiming his kingdom to others. Let us fast to grow closer to God.



Susan Darling

SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

February 25, 2023

Luke 5:27-32

Jesus calls the tax collector, Levi, to follow him. Levi doesn't hesitate to leave his post and follow Jesus. Why does Levi so readily follow Jesus? Has he heard about the miracles Jesus did as healer and teacher? Does Levi want to witness them for himself? Perhaps Levi feels he is lacking something in his life and he believes Jesus will fill that void. Will I answer Jesus' call to follow him this Lent? I need to make room for Jesus just like Levi did.

Levi's banquet for Jesus causes the Pharisees and their scribes to complain, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus replies, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do." Jesus (the healer) came to call sinners to repentance.

Lent is a time to reflect on my life and identify my sins and seek Jesus' forgiveness. I am ready to change my life with Jesus' help. Like Levi, I need to leave my attachment to worldly things and concerns and follow Jesus. Jesus is ready to forgive my sins and help me to improve my life with him.

Janet East

THE FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

February 26, 2023

Matthew 4:1-11

In each of the three years of the cycle of readings for this first Sunday of Lent, we learn of the temptation of Jesus in the desert prior to beginning his public ministry.

Jesus is tempted by the devil three times to show proof that Jesus is the Son of God. The temptations are (1) food, (2) comfort and (3) power and praise. These readings at the beginning of Lent remind us that evil is always present in our earthly existence.

My hope for this Lent is that I(we) can better recognize ways that the evils present in our world can lure us into sin by making sin seem conventional and reasonable.



Deacon Ron Reger

MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

February 27, 2023

Matthew 25:31-46

Today's Gospel illustrates how Jesus intends for us to live; our hearts should be open to helping others and remain unseeking of any reward. He encourages us to help, clothe, feed, serve, visit and welcome without discrimination.

He teaches us that why we help is just as important as if we help. There is no gray area in this reading, the people are divided into the righteous and the accursed; there are none left in the middle. We are either willing and wanting to help everyone – including our “least” brothers and sisters - or not.

This Lenten season, be open to helping in ways that you may not have before. When we can volunteer, donate food and serve our communities, we should do so selflessly and with pure intentions. In today's busy world, it is increasingly easy, and even second nature at times, to brush past someone, ignore a phone call, or miss a request for help. Giving someone the time, holding the door, or saying “thank you” may seem insignificant to you in the moment, but may be the way that someone needs to be helped that day.

If we allow ourselves to help without limitations, we are open to whomever Jesus may send us. Our help may be Jesus' way of answering someone else's prayer.

Adrianna and Colin McFadden

TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

February 28, 2023

Matthew 6:7-1

We all know the Lord's Prayer, BUT do we take time to listen to the words? Take the time to slow down and listen to this perfect prayer.

Prayer is like a 24-hour hotline to our Heavenly Father. I am always available for your heartfelt prayers, and I don't reject your requests to me. Even though you may not think I hear you, I do. You may not always get what you want when you want it because my will may be entirely different from your request. But know that I hear you, and I care. I care so much that at times I must direct you in a way that doesn't make sense to you.

My Spirit is always at work in you – I have a plan and see the entire picture and know what is ultimately best for you. Part of my plan is for you to trust me. When you trust me, you will experience my faithfulness, which produces more faith in me. Whatever you do, DON'T give up coming to me in prayer. Your part is to pray and show up; the rest is up to me. No matter what, pray and don't give up.

Dennis Fiore



WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

March 1, 2023

Luke 11:29-32

Sign, sign, everywhere a sign. Is this what we want in a relationship with God? Signs? In our technological, instant messaging world, we want proof of everything - immediately. We are conditioned to “see first before believing.” Unconsciously, we tend to demand proofs of God’s existence and religion’s relevance.

TRUST - Jesus gave us his Resurrection as his love for us. We don’t need to keep looking for proof. Be willing to trust God, no matter what.

FAITH Do we get amnesia, sometimes forgetting that God keeps coming around and “patches” us up every time we falter? He never lets us down if we have faith in him.

FORGIVENESS - His mercy never stops. Just ask for forgiveness when your faith slips. By trusting in him, having faith in him, asking for forgiveness when we stumble, we pray our lives will be a reflection of God in us.

Judy Saunders

THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

March 2, 2023

Matthew 7:7-1

In reflecting on these verses, it occurs to me that we are being told to stick to the basics. No one believes that if you ask for a new Corvette, one will magically appear in the driveway. This is bigger than that.

This about entering the kingdom of God. The keys to the kingdom are easy to find. Simply ask for them, and as you seek entry, the door will open. As you walk through that door, Jesus will also walk into your heart.

Fittingly, the final verse in this reflection is one of the most basic biblical instructions on how to live our lives, the Golden Rule. It’s all about sharing love, simple brotherly love.

Canova Peterson



FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

March 3, 2023

Matthew 5:20-26

I encourage you to begin your reading of today's gospel at the start of Matthew Chapter 5, which encompasses the Sermon on the Mount, beginning with the beatitudes. These beautiful and familiar words gently outline how Christians must conduct themselves in order to reach the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus also tells us that we must let our Christianity shine brightly: "Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father" (Matt. 5:16). When we get to the verses for today's gospel, the sermon turns more serious as Jesus reminds us that those who do not follow the commandments will face judgment, including the "fiery Gehenna."

The Sermon on the Mount continues through the end of Matthew Chapter 7. These chapters give us a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the three pillars of the Lenten season: prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Take twenty minutes to read them, and as it says in Matthew 7:28, "When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his teaching." Open your Bible and be astonished.

Paula Otto

SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

March 4, 2023

Matthew 5:43-48

What a challenge today for us! Our Lord is asking us to go beyond selfish nature and to change our hearts to love those whom we hate. The only way for that to happen is for the Holy Spirit to work within us to make us view others as he sees them. Our hearts must be softened to allow this change to happen within us. It

will change not only how we view those whom we hate or who persecute us but will also let us see the forgotten and unseen.

But what do I do if I fail? Luckily, the Lord has given us the sacraments and the Church community to restore and guide us. This is not work that we can perfect in our own lives, but must rely daily on the Lord and his blessings to change us through prayer. And what a reward that we can be called sons and daughters of God!

Greg Chew



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

March 5, 2023

Matthew 17:1-9

When Jesus was transfigured, Peter, James and John saw him as God saw him – his face shining like the sun. He was still recognizable as himself; he was not completely transformed beyond all recognition. God claimed Jesus as his beloved Son, just as he claims us. God sees our holiness and our beauty and sees beyond whatever we try to put between God and ourselves. We are called to put aside fear, to act as children of God and to see as God sees – with infinite love.

Jane Nucup

MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

March 6, 2023

Luke 6: 36-38

Jesus continues to teach us in St. Luke's version of St. Matthew's "sermon on the mount." St. Luke says that Jesus "stood on a stretch of level ground" to teach instead of "on a mountain" (Matthew 5: 1) before he began his beatitudes. After preaching about love of enemies, Jesus offers us a section about "judging others."

Jesus begins by telling us two things not to do: stop judging and stop condemning. In other words "don't play God" by standing over others and judging or condemning them.

Then he tells us two things about how to live: "forgive.... and give." If we forgive, we will be forgiven, and likewise, if we give, we will be given back even more than we gave. That's the way God works. If we take the risk of giving, being vulnerable, God's grace works abundantly and gives us more than we risk. Be a giver!!!

Loretta and Dennis Beeman



TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

March 7, 2023

Matthew 23:1-12

I was very small as a child and was always at the head of the line or in the first row. That made me feel pretty special. I was also a good student, and my parents were always proud of me and happy to point me out to everyone. But the time came when I realized that I had done nothing to earn those accolades, I just didn't grow fast and had a good brain.

That was God's doing, not mine. That meant that I needed to work hard to be worthy of the praises I received. It's hard to have a skill that others admire and not be tempted to show it off. It's all right to want to be admired by others, but we need to strive to be worthy of their admiration for the good we do and for the glory of God, not for our own satisfaction.

Jackie Droujinsky

WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

March 8, 2023

Matthew 20:17-28

*Just so the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve,
and to give his life as a ransom for the many.*

Once again Jesus tells his disciples he is going to Jerusalem to die. No response from his followers. But the mother of James and John asks for places of honor for her sons after Jesus dies, something the other disciples want as well! Honor, glory, recognition.

All miss the point entirely: Jesus comes to serve by suffering; the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve. The vision is for the disciples to be great by serving, just as Christ served. This applies to every Christian as well; we serve Jesus and show his love by modeling his actions in service.

This week, think of a way you can love the church by serving.

Today, think of a way you can love others by serving. We are called to love others within the church and outside.

Now, think of how you can be like Jesus in suffering; suffering can also mean sacrifice.

Redeemer offers many ways to serve the church, and others - everyone can do something. It's up to you to serve!

Martha O'Keefe

THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

March 9, 2023

Luke 16:19-31

This Gospel reading is about more than just a rich man and his not sharing his treasure (money, food, etc.) with Lazarus. We are all both “rich” and “poor” through the blessings (spiritual and material) we each have in talent, time, and treasure. God has shown us one way, through Jesus and the grace of the Holy Spirit, we can share what we have in abundance with our brothers and sisters who are poor, or lacking, in those same blessings.

This Gospel reading also tells us the way for not following (or even trying to follow) Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The ways and their respective consequences are before us. Which way will you choose?

Bill Michie, III

FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

March 10, 2023

Matthew 21:33-43,45-4

Many times, it feels like there is so much hatred and evil in the world, it's hard to find hope. Then, one day, you're watching a football game on TV and see a group of big and strong NFL players from rival teams bowing their heads together in prayer. This occurred recently after a fellow teammate, Damar Hamlin, collapsed on the field after a tackle. There was a hush over the field and in the stands as people prayed openly on the air. People stood outside of the hospital to show love and support and said their prayers of hope out loud. Millions prayed at home asking for God to bless Damar and heal him. After a week, good news arrived that Damar is going to be okay after a near fatal cardiac arrest.

Damar declares now that God is using him as a vessel to share his passion and love directly from Damar's own heart to the entire world. I remember thinking that night, “What a beautiful sight, hearing and seeing so many asking God for healing, and with so many witnesses.

In today's reading, Jesus tells the parable about the landowner and his vineyard. The landowner planted his vineyard, dug a winepress, and built a tower. He then leased his property and crops to some local farmers. The landowner left and when time for harvesting the grapes drew near, he sent servants to go get his share from the farmers. The farmers beat, stoned and killed the servants, and the landowner was greatly outraged and deeply saddened. The landowner sent twice as many servants who were also killed. The landowner eventually decided to send his own son. The farmers killed the son so they could seize his

inheritance. As Jesus was telling this parable, he knew this scenario would play out in his own life.

Christ has established his vineyard: the world. Christ pays us the compliment of entrusting us with his work. He not only gives us a job to do but mysteriously puts the eternal salvation of our souls in our own hands. Even then, Christ is patient with our failures. Each one of us should be looking for ways to share the goodness and mercifulness of Christ in our daily lives, unshaken and unafraid.

The Bible tells us the “the kingdom of God is a gift from God.” Sharing the message of hope in the face of oppression and discouragement is the challenge God has set out for us. I hope we all feel moved to be as intentional about sharing Christ to others as were people in the stands this past January and as the landowner was in sending out his servants. May we always pray and glorify the Lord, intentionally and unafraid.

Peggy Hott



SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

March 11, 2023

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Jesus, in this scripture, is trying to teach us that we are all welcomed back if we go astray, just as this father welcomed his son back home. When we do wrong, our earthly parents try to get us on the right path. They never stop loving us and caring about what happens to us.

God made each of us! He loves us and he wants the very best for us. He will always welcome us back to him, if we repent and return to him.

Kay Berlin



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

March 12, 2023

John 4:5-42

Consider how the people of the town came to believe in Jesus. They first believed because of what a woman had told them. The very people who shunned her initially came to believe by what she said. After they encountered Jesus, their belief became stronger. He's everything she said he was and maybe more. We initially come to believe in the Gospel because of what we are told growing up or as an adult from others who believe in that Gospel message.

It is important that our faith in the Gospel message is our own; that it has grown from what others believe to a belief in the Gospel message because we have experienced it ourselves.

Deacon Chris Colville

MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

March 13, 2023

Luke 4:24-30

This is a tough one, guys. The people of Nazareth were getting it wrong – they didn't believe Jesus. Ultimately, this lack of understanding led to his crucifixion. On the cross, Jesus acknowledged their ignorance with his grace, saying, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing."

Unfortunately, we do not have excuse of not understanding. We live in a country founded on Judeo-Christian principles, have 2000 years of church history to guide us, enjoy a thriving church that provides numerous opportunities to learn and serve, and have endless Christian resources at our disposal.

I pray that this reading, and this Lenten season, will inspire us to trust Jesus entirely – and get it right.

Greg Chittum

TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

March 14, 2023

Matthew 18:21-35

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

To review the parable, the unforgiving servant appears very sincere as he begs his master for leniency in meeting the terms of his large debt. The master shows mercy and compassion and forgives the whole transaction. Then, the unforgiving servant shows great hostility for a man that owes him a small amount of money, acting in exactly the opposite manner of his master.

Through this parable, Jesus shows us that forgiveness means to let go. By asking God to handle the situation in his own time and in his own way, you release your own emotional behaviors of bitterness, malice, revenge and anger. This choice is not easy. People can very easily get stuck in their own negative, emotional feedback loop.

Jesus teaches us how to mercifully forgive each other because God has forgiven us. He sent his only Son to redeem our sins. He is calling on us to be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other and freeing ourselves of negative emotions. He even gives us "The Lord's Prayer" as a reminder to "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

During this Lenten season, try to break the negative, emotional loop by opening yourself to forgiveness.

Jaime Wright Stefan

WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

March 15, 2023

Matthew 5:17-19

There are two messages I come away with from this biblical passage:

1. Jesus is not here to change what God has already set forth. The 10 Commandments are the law and will continue to stay that way – forever. They are what we should live by.

This next piece may not be the same response for some, but for me:

2. It says all of us will get to heaven. “Least in the kingdom,” “Greatest in the kingdom” says to me we can all get to heaven. I think this passage should be encouraging to all of us. We do our best, but we all have a bad day, now and then. Our salvation is truly God’s love for us, as long as our hearts belong to him. With that, heaven is ours to have.

Shirley Husz

THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

March 16, 2023

Luke 11:14-23

The reading refers to the exorcism of demons. I interpret it as a metaphor, referring to the differentiation of our thoughts, words and deed versus the word of God as demonstrated by God’s presence.

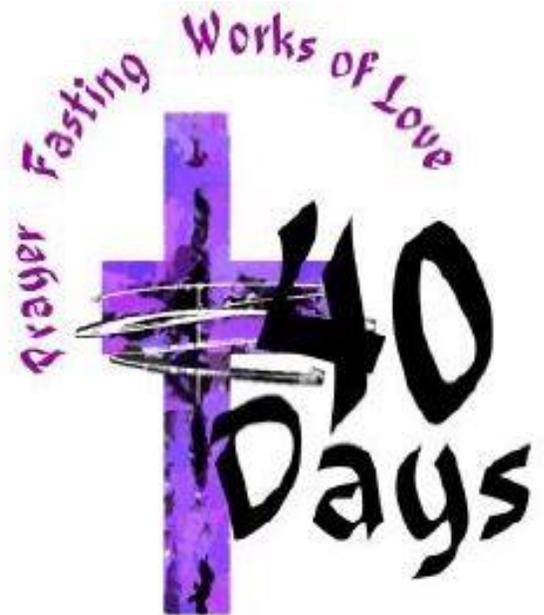
When God speaks to multitudes of men, each one often hears what they want to hear. Their fear may cause them to question the word of God. Others may wonder by whose power that God is able to heal the mute.

Similar to this, do we really hear what God, the Bible, the readings, the teachings of the Catholic faith, etc., tell us; or do we form our own conclusions and hold onto these as the ultimate truth?

How do we really “hear” what God is teaching? Do we accept what he and his apostles have taught us or do we form our own demons in reaching conclusions that are false?

If we clothe ourselves with the Armor of Faith in God, we remain steadfast.

Lorraine Ross



FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

March 17, 2022

Mark 12:28-34

How often do we think about the first and second commandments? Think about making God our singular priority? God tells us to love him with everything we are, our whole selves. There is no negotiation. The scribe in this reading seemed to have an understanding of what God was saying. Do we listen and understand?

What about loving our neighbor as ourselves? The second commandment requires us to show kindness and mercy to others. Think of these commandments as we prepare for Easter. Do we get it? Put God first with our hearts, souls, minds and strength . . . no question. Treat others as we want to be treated. That's building a relationship with God and with our neighbors. It's that EASY and that IMPORTANT.

Judy Adkins



VI
VERONICA WIPES THE
FACE OF JESUS

SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

March 18, 2023

Luke 18:9-14



Oftentimes, as Christians, we tend to view our sins as a sliding scale – lying as less harmful than stealing, stealing as less harmful than murder, etc. We judge others whom we perceive as “more sinful” than ourselves and aim to be pure and just and right.

However, God views all sin from above, not seeing mine as less than or greater than another’s.

I like to think of it as a bar graph, created with blocks and cubes like they gave us in elementary school. In looking at it from the front, we see that some columns contain more blocks than others, sometimes far more than others.

But if we look at our creation from above, there is nothing but a single line.

In today’s reading, the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, God is asking us to humble ourselves and take notice of our own sins, NOT the sins of others. We should not use justification or comparison in addressing our sins with God and within ourselves.

It’s as easy as looking for forgiveness when the person on the interstate cuts you off during your morning commute. Or responding with love and acceptance instead of criticism, judgment, or hatred to our minority or LGBTQ+ neighbors. It is the challenge of our faith and at a minimum, our church should be one of acceptance and collective repentance. For we are all sinners created in the image and likeness of God.

Our calling as followers of Christ is to love one another and work, within ourselves, to abide by the teachings of Christ during his life here on Earth. Until we humble ourselves and see that Christ lives within each one of us, we cannot and will not be able to fully see and accept the mercy and grace of our Lord.

This Lenten season, let us aim to acknowledge our own sins and do something good for one another each day.

Rachel Hott

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

March 19, 2023

John 9:1-41

Have you heard of the game of “Would You Rather?” The concept is that a dilemma is created between two “good” or two “bad” options. Today’s Gospel offers an example of the game: Would you rather be born blind and have to beg on the streets in your adult life for your livelihood – OR – be an educated, religious-authority member afflicted with hubris?

Sounds easy to answer that one, but as we all know, the blind man saw who Jesus is and disciplesd others; and the Pharisees were (tragically) blinded to the Light of the World due to their lack of trust and inability to believe. Can we identify our own blindness? How can we overcome it?

LuAnn Orie

FEAST OF SAINT JOSEPH

March 20, 2023

Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a

One of the things I have always noticed when angels appear to people in the scriptures, they either start with “Fear not!” or “Do not be afraid!” somewhere in the pronouncement. Because, let’s face it, seeing an angel in all his reflected glory must have been frightening, to say the least. There were no strobe or fluorescent lights



back then, just candles or the light of the sun. How the angel must have glowed to them!

With our focus today on St. Joseph, the angel appeared to him also as he was considering not taking Mary as his wife. Sadly, he planned to break the legal betrothal and put her aside quietly so as not to humiliate her.

You can tell from these few words that he loved her, cared for her and wanted no hurt to come to her. But the angel had good news for him also! He was going to be able to love

Mary anyway, with God’s protection and ultimate blessing. Praise God for the wonderful gift of loving husbands.

Mary Nuckols

TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

March 21, 2023

John 5:1-16

Jesus the Teacher! Jesus the Compassionate! Jesus the Healer! Jesus the Rebel!

All of these descriptions apply to Jesus in this reading. Jesus shows us how to act towards our fellow man – always with compassion and love – especially for the downtrodden, the poor and the sick. Always living his beatitudes. At the same time, being very modest and not boasting of his miracles. Leading by example while being humble and not boastful. We must show love through actions.

Finally, looking at the laws of man and applying his law, which is paramount, feed the hungry and make the sick well. If that means doing it on the Sabbath, then so be it.

Tom Franco

WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

March 22, 2023

John 5: 17-30



Jesus' conviction came from within and without. His Father, the one in heaven, surrounded him like the air he breathed. His Father's will, seen in sending him for the salvation of the world, was the priority of his life. It is hard to understand the relations of divinity and humanity, but we can enter in prayer into the willingness and hope to do and fulfil the will of God for his people. Prayer is giving time to the big wish, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Our time in prayer, silent or verbal, is our wish that his will be done, and the love of his reign be made visible on earth.

Jesus' relationship to God was threatening to those who saw God differently. Jesus spoke of God as a loving father with whom he related closely and confidently. I think of the human relationships that have helped me to understand what Jesus meant. I relax in the presence of God who loves me deeply. Such was the unity of the Father and Jesus that the work of one is the work of the other. Jesus trusts me enough to call me into the same closeness. He reminds me that whatever I do, I do with him and that what I do to others, I do to him.

Pat McCarthy

THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

March 23, 2023

John: 5:31-47

In today's reading, Jesus continues to answer the Pharisees about the works he does and by whose authority he has to do that work.

Jesus exposes how they live their lives to glorify themselves by quoting scripture, praying and giving their gifts at the temple for all to see rather than give the glory to God. They placed their faith in knowing and reciting scripture instead of taking the words into their hearts and responding to it.

Jesus was warning them that their faith was misguided and, unless they changed, they would not have eternal life. But they were too busy trying to interpret the scriptures that they didn't have time for God or others in need, and didn't recognize Jesus as the Living Word.

Are we like the Pharisees? Are we too busy, too self-righteous and/or too hard-hearted to hear and respond to God's plan for us?

Lorraine Goulet

FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

March 24, 2023

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

Are you ready to testify to Jesus as John the Baptist did? Would you recognize Jesus?

The first words of John's Gospel takes us past creation to the proclamation claiming Jesus as the word of God and the one who reveals the Father to us.

When the priests questioned John the Baptist, he admitted that he was not the Messiah. He told them that there was one coming who ranked ahead of him and existed before him. John the Baptist testified to Jesus when he saw him, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world."

Eileen Dumansky

FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION

March 25, 2023

Luke 1:26-38

Have you ever had a time when you knew, that you knew, that you knew, you heard God speak? This is Mary's moment! Reading this scripture of the Annunciation (Luke 1: 26-38), there were words that came off the page for me.

The first word "name" is repeated four times in twelve verses, followed by "will be called" Son of the Most High and Son of God. This is personal. God knows his people. He names them. He knows who they are! He knows where they live. This is no accident. God in his perfect timing sends forth his angel Gabriel to the virgin betrothed to Joseph. Mary is listening. She is receptive.



This means he knows your name and who you are. He is sending forth his Word Jesus to you. Are you seeking, listening, receptive? Your answer matters.

Barbara Wolf

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

March 26, 2023

John 11:1-45

"When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who came with her, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled... and he wept." The Jews thought Jesus wept because his friend Lazarus was dead. But Jesus waited another two days before coming to Bethany and he said to his disciples, "For your sake, I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe". Jesus knew that he would raise Lazarus. Jesus wept, not because Lazarus died, but because of their weak faith.

How many times do we turn to grief, fear, or despair rather than to Jesus when something goes wrong? Faith is easy when things are going well. But real faith means trusting Jesus completely, even with our very life.

Deacon Bill Blatnik

MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

March 27, 2023

John 8:1-11

I always find the passages where people are trying to test or trick Jesus fascinating. I envision the scribes and the Pharisees saying to each other, “Ha ha! We’ve got him now!” only to be disappointed when Jesus so beautifully and simply shows them the error of their ways through his unbounded love and knowledge.

In this case, Jesus, who is without sin, could have condemned the woman once everyone had left. But he chose not to. I find this very powerful and such a great example of his love. As a mother, I, very superficially, understand loving my children even when they make mistakes. If I have this love for my children, then it is no wonder that God’s love for his children is so much greater and all encompassing.

It’s very comforting to know that we have God’s love no matter what, and it makes me want to please him all the more.



Christy Evanko

TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

March 28, 2023

John 8:21-30

Typically, when we think of the words of Jesus, we think of things like “love your neighbor as yourself,” but in today’s reading he is much harsher. Phrases like “Why do I speak to you at all?” are not what we are accustomed to hearing. But in today’s reading, that is exactly what Jesus says. “Why do I speak to you at all? I have much to say about you and much to condemn; but the one who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.” (John 8:25-26).

Throughout the whole passage, Jesus speaks harsh truths. He is preparing to go to his death, and at this point he is telling the disciples that they cannot follow him there. He is ready to die because he is without sin; the same cannot be said about us. Jesus says to pick up our cross and follow him, but we cannot do that while we are still burdened by our own sin, and during this time in Lent while Jesus goes before us into death we must learn what about ourselves is not ready. Jesus could come at any hour. We must be prepared when that time comes.

Liam Brehm

WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

March 29, 2023

John 8:31-42

“The truth will set you free!” This Bible verse was used in one of my favorite movies, Liar Liar. This 1997 comedy, starring Jim Carey, was about a lawyer who frequently broke his promises and lied about his actions. The main character faces many challenges when he is forced to tell the truth. The movie has a happy ending when he finally learns to change his ways. This one Bible verse can stand alone as a strong message to us on the virtues of honesty. As you read further, however, there is an even more powerful message for us.

In John 8:32, Jesus uses the word “truth” to mean they have come to know and believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He was calling upon them to believe, and to live by his example of love. The disciples at the time struggled to understand his message. They got hung up on what he meant by freedom. They took the statement literally and didn’t understand why they needed to become free, when they did not consider themselves slaves.

We are in a similar situation today. We are very fortunate to live in the United States, the “land of the free.” Slavery is not a part of our everyday lives. In this passage, Jesus goes on to explain that he is speaking of a different kind of freedom. He was describing the spiritual freedom you can achieve if you leave behind sinful lifestyles and choose to live as he lived. As you reflect upon this passage, think about what lifestyle habits may be keeping you from the spiritual freedom Jesus describes? What choices can you make to live a life that is more Christlike? How can you live God’s truth, and be set free?

Catherine Cary



THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

March 30, 2023

John 8:51-59

The one thing all human beings have in common is that their time on Earth will end in death. Today's Gospel deals with the Jewish leaders challenging what Jesus has been telling the crowd. It highlights the difference between the ways of Jesus and the ways of the authorities.

Jesus tells the Jews that "Eternal life will come to those who keep his word." The Jewish leaders could not grasp at all the unique life of Jesus; his relationship with God the Father was beyond them. They believed he had a demon inside. Jesus is not offering his followers eternal life in this world but rather in heaven with God's great and eternal glory.

Jesus refers to himself as I AM. Jesus is God. The Jews to whom he was speaking understood what he was saying and immediately began to stone him for blasphemy. Miraculously, Jesus escapes harm!

The Lord Jesus Christ is the true God, and our eternal life is secure. The divine way of looking at things is the deep meaning that Jesus brings to life. This Lent let us spend more time praying and proclaiming his Word .

Terry DelVecchio

FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

March 31, 2023

John 10:31-42

I wonder how stubborn I would have been, even when faced with proof of miraculous works. What would it have taken for me to believe that Jesus was the Messiah? I wonder which crowd I would have chosen – the one that attempted to stone Jesus or the one along the river Jordan that chose to believe?

This passage is a warning to choose my “crowd” carefully. I am also reminded that Jesus had to work constantly to overcome fear of confrontation and resistance to help people attain salvation. My daily prayer includes a petition for courage to do the same.

Barbara Gross

SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

April 1, 2023

John 11:45-56

I was raised on a farm and always helped my parents with the various chores that living on a farm entails. There were days when it seemed as though the work would never allow for a break; but Sundays were days for church, family and friends.

Easter Sunday was always a special event because we all got new clothes for church! My mom always told us the reason for new clothes was to show Jesus the appreciation we had for the sacrifices he made for us.

This reading shows us the appreciation we must feel. God gave his only son so that our sins could be forgiven; Jesus bore the pain of the cross so that our sins could be forgiven. He loved us that much!

So, each year, when you get those new clothes for Easter morning, put them on and remember you're showing Jesus, in a very small way, your appreciation for the sacrifices he made.

Peggy Anderton

PALM SUNDAY

April 2, 2023

Matthew 26:14—27:66



Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

This reading generates outrage and disdain when Judas betrays Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. But how often do we Christians deny Jesus for far less - fear of rejection, peer pressure, spiritual insecurity, fear of persecution. Jesus knew who would betray him, "the one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me," but did not betray him in return. He trusted in God's greater plan without allowing natural, human fear to compromise his role in that plan.

Are we any better than Judas? Can we honestly say we will follow Jesus under any circumstances? Receiving the Eucharist is a time to be humbled, remembering and trusting that we, too, are part of a greater plan.

Celie Thomas

HOLY WEEK



MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

April 3, 2023

John 12:1-11

There is an old song by Porter Wagner called “What Would You Do (If Jesus Came To Your House).” I just listened to it on YouTube a few times and it made me think. What would I do? What food would I make? Would I be prepared?

This reading from John tells us what Martha and Mary did when Jesus came to visit them. Martha served the food and Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with an aromatic costly oil called nard. They spared no expense because Jesus was worth it. In Mark 13, we read that Jesus will be returning, but it also says that “you do not know when the time will come.”

We need to be prepared for Jesus to come at any time. The best way for us to prepare is to live every day as if this is the day he will come knocking on our door. We need to clean up our lives for Jesus just like we clean up our homes when friends or relatives are visiting.

Shirley Winter



TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

April 4, 2023

John 13:21-33, 36-38

In this reading we hear Jesus announcing Judas' betrayal. The disciples were together with Jesus, at their last supper, when he announced that one of them would betray him.

Let's think for a moment about times in our own lives when we, too, have betrayed Jesus. Times we may have ignored someone in need of help, told a lie, or perhaps simply just ignored that which Jesus asks us to do.

Sometimes fear may keep us from doing the right thing. Let us pray for the strength to help where we are needed, and to always shine with the light of Jesus.

Terry and Randy Ferrance



WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

April 5, 2023

Matthew 26:14-25

In this Gospel reading, we hear that Jesus knows that he will be betrayed by Judas. I can imagine when Jesus told his disciples that he would be betrayed, they all started to look at one another, asking each other who could it be? All of them left their families, their livelihoods, and their friends to follow Jesus. So why did Jesus believe one of them would betray him? Imagine the emotions Jesus must have felt knowing that one of his closest friends would betray him.

I imagine myself seated at the table listening to Jesus, and I want to believe that I would be the one who stood firm and loyal. For all of us, we have the advantage and the challenge of knowing how the story ends. But I know that, too often, I am Judas. I want to be loyal, but I am weak and fearful. How many times in our lives do we deny Jesus and not realize that we are doing so? We may deny Jesus when we don't appreciate the things that we have in our lives, when we don't answer the call to serve, or when we ignore someone who needs us and when we don't love.

The message for me today is that we often don't know where things are going or what lies ahead and that our lives will have disappointments, losses, and betrayals. But if we follow the example of Jesus with humility, patience, compassion and courage, we can face whatever lies ahead in life's uncertainties and unexpected turns.

Ellen Spain



HOLY THURSDAY

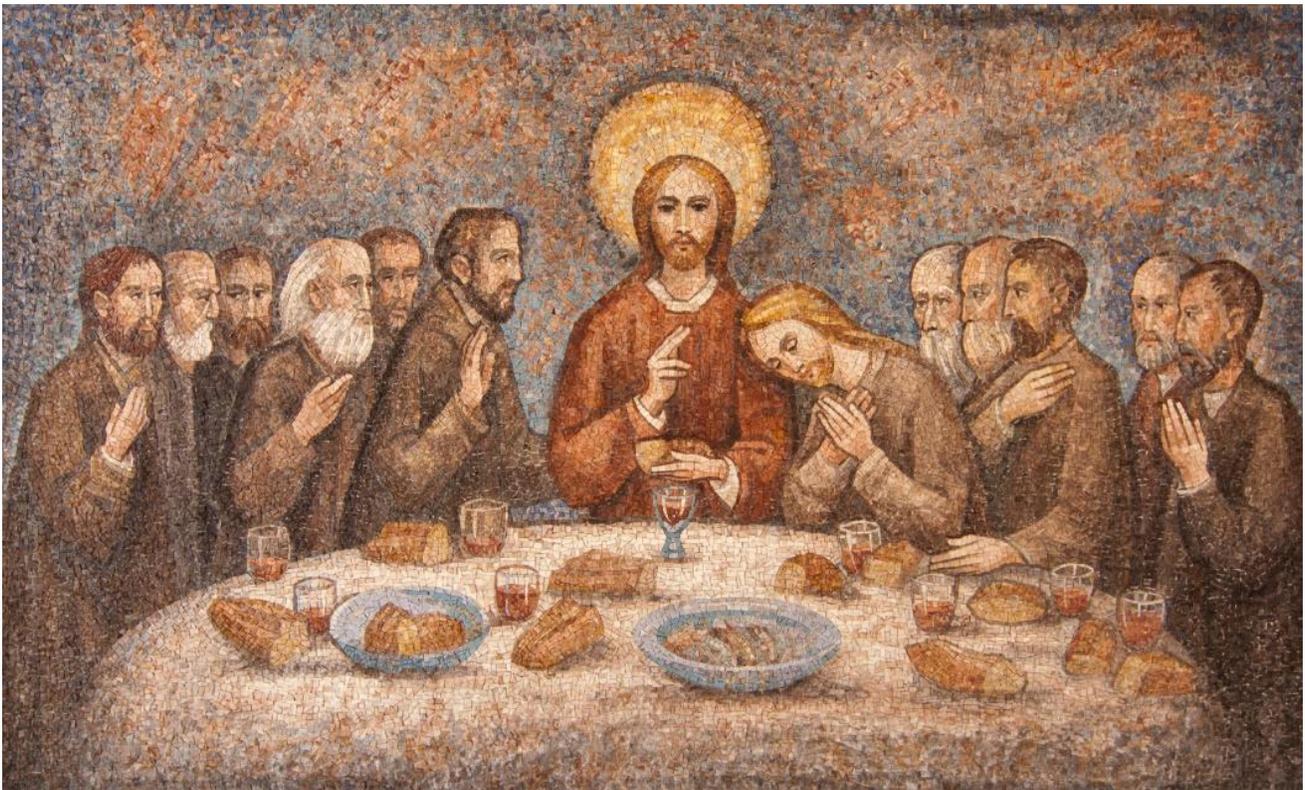
April 6, 2023

John 13:1-15

It was customary that when men came into a Jewish home to dine, a servant would wash the dust and grime from their feet. Would you want to recline at table with someone's stinky, dirty feet so close to your food? That Jesus washed his disciples' feet in the manner of a domestic servant is a powerful reminder to Christians that to enjoy life in Jesus, we must serve others.

But wait! There's more! That Jesus performed this service as a prelude to the Passover meal, signifies that he, through the institution of Holy Communion, is the servant of God whose precious body and blood would be sacrificed to wash away the dust and grime of our sins upon our souls, leaving us worthy of God's attention. Thus, in our Catholic tradition, we wash each other's feet and feast together in the Heavenly Banquet, that which Jesus requires of us.

Tad Stilwell



GOOD FRIDAY

April 7, 2023

John 18:1—19:42

Why doesn't God swoop in and stop this? Why did Jesus stop Peter from protecting him? Why did all the suffering take place? Couldn't Jesus just have died and rose from the dead to make his point?

We have all witnessed and experienced suffering and want to remove it from our lives. Today, we are reminded to embrace it.

There was no final blow that killed Jesus. He decided when he took his last breath. Jesus willingly accepted the sins of man as he dove into the polluted waters of the Jordan to be baptized. Jesus wasn't baptized because of his own sins, but rather the sins of those cleansed in the water. He jumped in the dirty water.

God who is LOVE always brings the light into the darkness. We must patiently endure our sufferings just as Jesus showed us and TRUST that the story is true. God does triumph over Satan's pull on us. When was the last time you offered up and endured your sufferings to remove the sin around you? Today is a great time to try it.

Renee Reisenweaver



HOLY SATURDAY

April 8, 2023

Matthew 28:1-10

As I reflect on this reading, I try to imagine the thoughts and feelings that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James & John must have been having. Just a couple of days before, they witnessed the horrifying spectacle of the tortured death of their friend and teacher. Many of their contemporaries are scattered and hiding, fearful of what fate might befall them, and I am sure that these two women were fearful as well. Despite that sorrow, that anguish and fear they must have been feeling, they came forth to properly tend to the battered, broken body of their late friend.

And then I try to imagine their shock and amazement at the sight of the angel there to announce that Jesus was **not** dead in the tomb but had risen and would be seeing them soon! I imagine their incredulity, the joy that they must have felt on their way back to Galilee to tell the Eleven what they had just seen, and how that awesome joy was magnified further when Jesus himself greets them on their way! In the span of what may have only been a couple of hours, the emotions that I imagine these women felt had spun 180°, from the deepest lows to the highest highs.



That is exactly what knowledge of the risen Christ does for all who attain it. Once we are aware of Jesus - his message, his sacrifice for us, his promises fulfilled - we cannot help but be forever changed. Nothing is the same, nor should it be. How could it be the same? Knowledge and understanding of his death and resurrection serve as that pivot point for us as to how we are to live in this world. We have joy we can't contain and have to spread around! Alleluia! He is Risen!!

Bill Adams

EASTER SUNDAY

April 9, 2023

John 20:1-9

Christ is Risen! Alleluia, Alleluia! For the past forty days, followed by Holy Week, we have been called to an intentional time focused on prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Some of us may have chosen to offer up a sacrifice each day, or maybe do something extra, to draw us closer into our relationship with God and our faith.

Whatever the circumstances, Easter calls us to rejoice and to give thanks. We rejoice because Jesus has risen from the dead. We give thanks, for it is through Jesus' example that we learn that new life can come from death, and death is not the end. No matter where we have been, no matter what we have or will endure, Jesus' life, death and Resurrection will continually serve as a reminder of God's unending love for each one of us.

While we feel the unbounded hope of the Easter message, we suffer at the same time with the citizens of Ukraine, Russia and dozens of other countries who experience daily the effects of brutal conflicts and tyrannical regimes. Fueled by a multi-national "war machine" rather than meaningful efforts to achieve peace, the loss of life and human despair escalate. They and so many other victims of violence globally and locally remain foremost in my prayer this Easter. May our Lord of Resurrection and peace be with those who have lost so much. May they sing with us one day the song we sing today: *Alleluia! The strife is O'er, the battle done. Now, is the Victor's triumph won!*

Fr. Jim Cowles

