



RETURN TO ME
Lenten Reflections
from Holy Cross | 2021

*Even now,
says the
LORD,
return to
me with
your whole
heart, with
fasting, with
weeping,
and with
mourning;*

JOEL 2:12

In a year of extraordinary challenges, one filled with much weeping and mourning, when we have fasted from so much of our “normal” lives, it can feel as if we have been living in a prolonged Lent. For many, this year has been filled with loss: loss of loved ones, loss of jobs, loss of community, loss of daily routine... And those losses highlight the disparity and divisions in our society. We have been living through a dark time in human history. What we hear from the prophet Joel on Ash Wednesday can be a beacon of light and hope in the midst of that darkness. It is a reminder that “*even now*” in the midst of pandemic life, God continues to invite us to bring our whole hearts on this Lenten journey. Even now, God desires to offer us healing, mercy, nourishment.

Within these pages you will hear the voices of many people from the Holy Cross community — faculty, staff, students, alumni, administrators, members of the Board of Trustees, benefactors of the College and Jesuits — personally reflect on the readings for the Mass each day. We hope that their own prayerful reflections will help you to pray more deeply during this Lenten season. We hope, too, that the reflections might help to serve as a bridge to the College where faith is nourished and character is formed.

Preparing this Lenten reflection booklet and its accompanying digital format involves many members of our community: writers, editors, graphic designers, website administrators, and former coordinators of Return to Me. To each of these people — too many to name here — we offer our profound thanks.

To subscribe to daily emails from Return to Me throughout the season of Lent, please visit our website: holycross.edu/returntome

Be assured of our prayers during the season as, even now, our hearts journey to Easter.

Marybeth Kearns-Barrett '84
Director of the Office of the College Chaplains

Crista Mahoney '02
Return To Me Editor





FEBRUARY 17 | ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:12-18; Ps 51; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Several years ago, when my son Michael was learning to write, he liked to leave little notes around the house. If it had been a hard day, these notes let the rest of the family know, in no uncertain terms, that he was unhappy. But more often than not, they were love notes. Instead of the standard “I love you,” he’d scribble: “You are my heart.” I remember being struck by how wonderfully descriptive that simple phrase is. It reflects a love so deep and resonant that it becomes part of your physical being, something you can’t imagine living without.

Such is the love we are called to in today’s first reading from the prophet Joel. This proclamation came amidst a dark time in Israel’s history, as a plague of locusts clouded the sky, destroyed vegetation and created overall misery. Our own lives may feel similarly dark at times: loved ones fallen ill, financial difficulties, academic or work-related stress, broken relationships. Yet the words of the prophet point to God’s unceasing desire to be close to us: “*Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart.*” Even if you doubt, even if you’re angry, even if you’re struggling to forgive, even if you fear you’ve done something unforgivable, God’s invitation remains. Even now, says the Lord, I want you back.

This Lent, may we surrender ourselves in trust and hope to the God who loved us into being, and who is always calling our hearts home.

Emily Rauer Davis '99

Assistant Chaplain & Director of Domestic Immersions, Office of the College Chaplains

FEBRUARY 18 | THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Dt 30:15-20; Ps 1; Lk 9:22-25

In today's readings, Moses teaches the Israelites that the path to God is reached by "loving him, and walking in his ways, and keeping his Commandments, statutes and creeds." Through our faith in God and our actions carried out in His name, we are called to "choose life." However, Moses also warns us of the presence of both good and evil, and how this duality can impact our decision-making. The pathway to God is clear, yet the challenges and complexities of life can sometimes lead us astray. Even in times when our faith is strong, we can find ourselves distracted, worried or invested in the temporary.

As we've served in our role as SGA Co-Presidents, worries about whether we're making the right decisions in the interest of the student body often occupy our thoughts. Rather than become consumed by these worries, we try to remind ourselves to take a step back, lean on the support of others and make the decision to place our faith in God to guide us. As we continue making decisions as individuals and in our shared role, we aim to consistently walk with God and place Him at the center of our decision-making processes. This Lent, how can we "choose life" by walking in God's ways, even in the midst of the challenges and complexities we face?

Noah Sisk '21 and Victoria Tara '21

Co-Presidents of the Student Government Association





FEBRUARY 19 | FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Is 58:1-9a; Ps 51; Mt 9:14-15

An hour into my attempt to nudge my student to prepare for an interview that would comprise her religion final, I was frustrated with the insufficiency of our question list. Before I could surrender for the day, however, she softly interjected, “Maybe I can ask about where you look for and find God?” Not for the first time in my year as a Jesuit Volunteer, the profound curiosity and wisdom of my students humbled me. Here I was, halfheartedly helping her so she could earn better grades and I could earn a to-do list checkmark. And there she was, inviting me to transfigure my task-oriented impatience into wholehearted generosity and awe.

Today’s reading tells us that God wants us to honor fasting periods by sharing our bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and homeless, clothing the naked and caring for our fellow people. Yet, how often do we all do good in a halfhearted, performative, or expectant manner, failing to recognize God’s call for deeper spiritual transformation? Like the Israelites fasting to earn God’s favor while ignoring the suffering around them, I had set out to help my student with high expectations and limited patience.

Fortunately, her thoughtful question cracked open my heart so that generosity and compassion could settle in. So, the next time my “fast” is not immediately rewarded, I will try to ask: Am I being presented with a greater opportunity for spiritual transformation here? Oh, and that student? She completed her final and passed the class.

Kerry Shortell '20

FEBRUARY 20 | SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Is 58:9b-14; Ps 86; Lk 5:27-32

Today's reading serves as a challenge to continue to trust in the Lord. In Isaiah, we are asked to "*remove from [our] midst oppression, false accusation, and malicious speech.*" You may be asking yourself like I do, how Lord? Throughout my time at Holy Cross, I have not only been pushed academically but as an individual. The most recent example of this was experiencing the pandemic while facing racial injustices and the constant unknown. In facing all this I was filled with frustration and sadness; however, through prayer and faith, I was able to leverage the time to become a better daughter, friend and sister.

This past year, I think it is safe to say, there were many times we may have expected not to endure these trying times. The challenge before us today is not seeking our interest and speaking with malice. When we follow the word of the Lord as best we can, "*Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday; Then the LORD will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land.*" We may struggle to remove these obstacles — "*oppression, false accusation, and malicious speech*" — from our being, but trusting in the Lord's word we can reach heights beyond what we have ever imagined. He will forever be our beacon of light, so how will we continue to let his light shine on our path?

Jordyn Shubrick '22

Co-Chair of Black Student Union; a founder of Women of Color Athletes





FEBRUARY 21 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 9:8-15; Ps 25; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Mk 1:12-15

It seems fitting that faith and salvation is the theme running through the readings for the first Sunday of Lent, for it is faith in the Lord that ultimately leads to salvation. Noah showed remarkable faith in the Lord when told to build an ark which took many years. Noah's faith enabled him to build the ark of salvation. After the flood waters had receded, the Lord made a covenant with Noah to protect him and his descendants. This Old Testament covenant parallels the New Testament covenant which was made with Jesus' death to save those of faith from sin rather than flood waters.

Today we live in extremely stormy times, with a global pandemic testing the faith of humanity. As we have sheltered in place to ride out the storm of the pandemic, we need more than ever to maintain faith. Faith in our medical professionals, faith in each other, faith in our collective support of the most vulnerable and most importantly faith in the Lord to guide and protect all of us. While this past year has been unlike any other in our lifetimes, with each of us sheltered in our respective arks, how can we remain a community of faith until we can all, once again, commune together, in what will be a most joyous time?

Maritza and Bob Guillochau '82 P24

FEBRUARY 22 | FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER, APOSTLE

1 Pt 5:1-4; Ps 23; Mt 16:13-19

Today, on the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, Apostle, the readings tell the story of Jesus's call to Peter to lead the early Church and spread the Word of God. Peter's call reminds me of what I was called to in the Sacrament of Confirmation. Through Jesus, Peter was given authority over the early church. Through Confirmation, we are given the charge to carry on the mission.

In the first reading, Peter entreats church leaders to "*be examples to the flock.*" We walk in Christ's footsteps in order to serve others. Like the Golden Rule I grew up learning about, Peter is teaching his fellow clergy to treat others with kindness and compassion so their flock can learn by example. Similarly, my small hometown of Sandy Hook, Conn. preaches a message of love and kindness with the hope of spreading it to others. We have a message in our town that says, "We are Sandy Hook. We choose love." From a tragedy and nightmare that shook my community to its core eight years ago, came extraordinary kindness and an awareness to love one another.

As men and women blessed to serve others, we are united in a sacred community. In a society that often experiences division, hatred, and suffering, we are reminded to exemplify our faith through meaningful acts of kindness. Just as Christ once called upon Peter to lead, we, too, must be ready to hear Christ's call to be compassionate leaders and empathic examples.

Connor McNerney '22





FEBRUARY 23 | TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Is 55:10-11; Ps 34; Mt 6:7-15

Today's first reading reminds me of how easy it is to want more than I have. I can think of times when I have prayed to the Lord to help me achieve my desires. The statement in today's gospel, "*Your Father knows what you need before you ask him*" is so powerful. The Lord has provided me with so much, why would I consider asking for more? Can I learn to allow my heart and mind to seek out all that the Lord has provided, to simply be grateful for it, instead?

I frequently get up early in the morning to photograph the sunrise. In this prayerful and meditative moment when I feel the warmth on my face, there is a magical feeling and deep thankfulness every time. As the psalm today says, the Lord not only provides rain and snow, but He does it in such a beautiful way as to provide life. Have you ever said that the weather is "bad" when it is raining? Can it be bad when it is providing life? If we take a walk in the rain or snow, can we admire it for what it provides? The Lord has surrounded us with beauty. What would our days be like if we spent five minutes in the morning looking for a blessing from the Lord?

John Cannon P16, 20

Director of Facilities Operations

FEBRUARY 24 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Jon 3:1-10; Ps 51; Lk 11:29-32

“Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed.” Jonah’s warning to the Ninevites was, to put it mildly, a wake-up call. I cannot read this passage without contemplating the current pandemic, our present-day wake-up call.

Though Lent is traditionally a time of reflection and preparation, many enter the season with little more than a plan for personal deprivation. I’m not too proud to admit to many years of avoiding chocolate as my sole Lenten preparation. For those of us who often experience Lent as a time of “don’t,” the pandemic may feel like one endless Lenten season. But can we find a way through the suffering and loss and embrace the opportunity for reflection? How can we prepare ourselves for an eventual return to our “old” lives, but as new people, who have seen more, sacrificed more, know more? Can we come through this experience and present ourselves to God with *“a heart contrite and humbled”*?

A colleague suggested we all need a list of pandemic lessons titled “keep forever/ never go back.” I’ve given a lot of thought to my work and personal lists. My spiritual list needs tending. This Lenten season, I will reflect; I will prepare. After all, it is most certainly not the year to go without chocolate.

Lynn Verrecchia (Onofrio) '01

Senior Associate Director, Office of Admission





FEBRUARY 25 | THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Est c:12, 14-16, 23-25; Ps 138; Mt 7:7-12

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” Jesus offers three straightforward verbs to consider in our prayerful relationships with God: ask, seek and knock. In my own personal life, I find that these simple words are not quite as effortless to carry out as they are to read, when I, myself, turn to God in prayerful petition. In times of turmoil, conflict and anxiety, I often fail to reach out my broken hands and heart to God in order to ask Him for his loving and gentle guidance. Are those not the times when God’s desire for us to call on Him is the strongest? He so deeply longs to free us from what blinds us to His unconditional love, healing touch and wonderful wholeness.

Today, as I reflect on the overwhelming events of the past year, I realize that the Lord’s eagerness to hear our prayers is His own offering of love and selflessness so that we might be able to offer the same for our earthly brothers and sisters. A year of sickness, anxiety and violence has also brought miraculous signs of forgiveness, unity, and love. In Jesus’s preaching of His Golden Rule he says, *“Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.”* God answers us in so many ways, and oftentimes, the work that He does in our lives is not always immediately satisfying. I wonder if, in our asking, seeking and knocking, God ultimately longs to bring goodness to the world, and in our brokenness make us channels of His great peace.

Mary Grace O’Shea ’21

FEBRUARY 26 | FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Ez 18:21-28; Ps 130; Mt 5:20-26

My vice of choice is anger. Though many know me as a barrel of “Midwestern nice,” I’ve got a temper, and it can flare. I like to think that some of my anger is righteous. I hate injustice. I deplore ignorance. I can’t stand people’s disregard for each other; the COVID-19 pandemic has provided plenty of examples. I have strong, unpopular political convictions; I’m frustrated when people don’t share them.

I read today’s readings and I don’t feel so righteous. Anger is a vice. Ezekiel cautions against vice. More than cautions: he threatens. Those who turn toward vice (me!) risk death. Jesus, the one whom we’re taught is all-loving, continues the threats: angry ones will be condemned to Gehenna!

This all makes sense, if you think about it. Anger directed at “issues” may seem virtuous, but when I yell at my kids on the ride to school, I feel in my bones that anger isn’t righteous. It’s more death-dealing than anything. I’m so challenged by the Bible’s demands that I choose life over death, virtue over vice. This fearful challenge casts me toward Psalm 130’s eloquent expression of hope in God’s kindness and forgiveness. My five-year-old daughter sometimes sings an adorable song: “Have patience, have patience, don’t be in such a hurry. / If you don’t have patience, you only start to worry.” Anger’s opposite is patience. May God’s merciful patience be the standard for my life—for all our lives.

Peter Joseph Fritz

Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies





FEBRUARY 27 | SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Dt 26:16-19; Ps 119; Mt 5:43-48

Growing up, there were many times when I questioned all the things I had to do as a Catholic. There were so many rules, so many commandments, so many ways to fail and so many ways to not be perfect in the way I thought God wanted me to be. So, I started drifting away. I was afraid I couldn't do it all, so I did nothing. Rejecting His commandments and expectations meant that I couldn't fail in the first place, which I somehow convinced myself was the better option.

However, I've been trying lately to convince myself of one thing: God already knows all of this. He created me, and He knows everything there possibly is to know about me. God would not give me a challenge that I could not overcome. God's commandments are not some threshold that must be met to receive His grace, but how we can enter into a loving relationship with Him. It's a mutual agreement meant to help me be who He intends me to be. To truly enter into this relationship, however, I will have to shift and change and grow. And I will do that, but only with God by my side. Thinking like this reminds me that the commandments were made by God for me, for us, so that we can be with Him fully. Trying to be perfect like God is actually trying to love more fully and deeply, and making my life somewhere God can exist in communion with me.

Layo Ojo '21

FEBRUARY 28 | SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Ps 116; Rom 8:31b-34; Mk 9:2-10

It's not easy being human. Our lives are inevitably touched by times of pain and suffering, and 2020 was a stark reminder that the challenges we face can sometimes feel overwhelming. Faith can feel insufficient in these moments, and I admit that my own faith has been shaken by this past year. Today's gospel passage reminds us that even in these dark moments when God may feel absent, His love for us is enduring.

The Transfiguration reveals Jesus's fully divine nature, exemplified by his dazzling white robes and the presence of Moses and Elijah. The terrified disciples hear a voice from the heavens speak, "*This is my beloved son. Listen to him.*" Jesus's glory on the mountaintop will give way to His suffering on the hill. God's divine love as shown at the Transfiguration does not waiver even in the darkness of Calvary, and Jesus is raised from the dead.

We all face struggles in our lives, such as the loss of a loved one or a significant illness. It's understandable if God feels absent during these times. Much like the Transfiguration, however, God's love for us is unshakeable. Faith allows us to abide in His love and trust that God will help us overcome the challenges that we face. In these moments and throughout our Lenten journey, I hope we hear God speak to each of us, "This is my beloved child."

Chris Ricciardi

Assistant Director, J.D. Power Center for Liberal Arts in the World





MARCH 1 | MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Dan 9:4B-10; Ps 79; Lk 6:36-38

“Stop judging and you will not be judged... Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap.”

Years ago, while in Jesuit Volunteers International, my fellow JV said to me, “We are called to love one another – even if you don’t like the other.” He was expressing his commitment to Love one of our other community members, even though he didn’t particularly like her. This reminder, that our commandment is to Love, not necessarily like, has become a principle to which I return again and again.

In this current era, it is easy to focus on polarization and division; likewise, it is easy to focus on what we dislike in another person, our neighbor’s politics or what we deem as our friend’s “poor choices.” Focusing on this division, the dislike, distracts us from Love. It becomes constricting, and constricts the ability to notice and receive the overflowing gifts of God that are around us. Even our physiology reflects this — when I hate or judge, my body contracts. My shoulders get tight, my breath shortens, my vision narrows. When I focus on Love, my body relaxes. I become open to receiving. In this world that can be so polarized and divided, the task at hand, then, is to listen to my own heart, and be the best human I can be. It is through Loving, even when I don’t like, that I can be present and receive God’s gifts that are overflowing in my lap.

Melissa J. Carrick, D.C. '98

MARCH 2 | TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Is 1:10, 16-20; Ps 50; Ez 18:31; Mt 23:1-12

As my children are getting older (11 & 14) two of my go-to parenting refrains — “Because I said so” and “Don’t worry about what other people are going to think” — just don’t cut it anymore. They want explanations, they ask questions and, even worse, they point out contradictions between my words and actions.

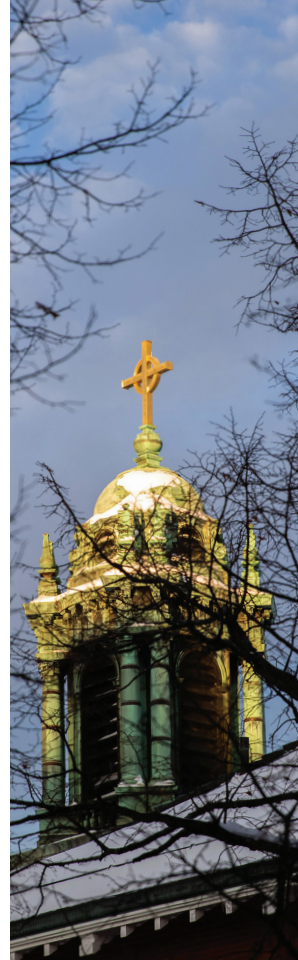
Today’s gospel warns that the scribes and the Pharisees “*preach but they do not practice*” and that they were too concerned with appearances. Am I like the scribes and Pharisees? Am I setting a bad example? Am I just going through the motions? Am I too vain?

Asking these difficult questions forces us to look within ourselves, to examine our true motives and desires, and to admit our sins. It’s uncomfortable. However, I am encouraged by the first reading; it almost makes it sound so simple, “*cease doing evil; learn to do good.*”

Maybe it is that simple. This Lenten season, what would it be like to practice humility and have a greater understanding of our own wrongdoings so that we can become closer to Jesus? Because “*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*”

Jennifer Guerin DiFranco '99

Director, Alumni & Parent Annual Giving and President’s Council





MARCH 3 | WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Jer 18:18-20; Ps 31; Mt 20:17-28

What does it mean to be great? The world suggests that greatness is power, wealth, possessions. We strive for greatness, recognition, success in our studies and careers. We want to be the best, which often means being better than those around us. But in today's gospel, Jesus reminds us that greatness is kindness and love for others. Jesus is great— not because He sits on a throne in heaven but because He is there for, and serves, others.

In today's gospel, James, John and their mother approach Jesus and ask to be granted the highest honor—to sit on either side of Jesus in heaven. They ask, Jesus listens, and without scolding them or the other disciples who also seek greatness and recognition, He tells them, *“whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant... the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”* We want to be great like Jesus, but can we handle greatness? Can we put aside our pride and ambition to be humble, selfless servants for others? We see Jesus in the faces and needs of those around us.

Just as Jesus did not rebuke James and John for their ambition, He does not scold us either. He lovingly reminds us that we have what it takes to be great.

Alex Nazzaro '21

MARCH 4 | THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Jer 17:5-10; Ps 1; Lk 16:19-31

“Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance.”

Today’s readings have inspired me to reflect on how to respond in times of distress. It is important to ground yourself in who you are, with God, no matter what life experience you are going through. These last twelve months have tested me through various trials and obstacles, both personally and professionally. As I was presented with adversity, it was always important for me to fall back on my principles and values. Being able to do so allowed me to reflect and prioritize the things that are most important in my life. When confronted with adversity, it can be easy to take the most convenient option, but oftentimes taking the path less traveled allows for greater personal growth.

There is an opportunity to experience growth by persevering in the face of adversity. If we are able to persevere, we will see the fruits of our labor. As a first-generation Latino, my parents instilled the phrase, *siempre pa'lante* (always forward), as part of my life. This phrase has allowed me to keep the faith in myself and God, which allows me to stay true to who I am, and show grit to be able to succeed through any challenge that is presented. Through each obstacle, I ask myself one question: How do I stay true to myself and my beliefs while moving forward?

Chris Holguin

Associate Director, Office of Student Involvement





MARCH 5 | FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Gn 37:3-4, 12-13A, 17B-28A; Ps 105; Mt 21:33-43, 45-46

“Remember the marvels the Lord has done,” the psalmist tells us in today’s reading. I think we could all agree that this last year has been hard. COVID-19 has upended all aspects of our daily lives. Some of us have not seen our loved ones since last March, almost a year ago. Some of us have lost people we care about. Today’s readings talk a lot about misfortune. The reading from Genesis tells us how Joseph was sold into slavery and was stolen from his home and taken to Egypt. However, the psalmist reminds us of how God has raised Joseph out of his lowly position. He writes, “*the word of the LORD proved him true.*” In times like these, it can be hard to see how God cares about us. With all the sickness and death in today’s world, it is hard to find the good. However, it is important to remember that God does care about us, and have faith that good will triumph over this evil. Just as God guided Joseph out of slavery, our faith in him will get us through this pandemic. What if we take the advice of the psalmist and reflect on the wonders of the Lord? Remember all the times he has helped you? What if we just spend some time with him, be honest with our struggles, and ask him for strength to get through these difficult times? He has been there for us throughout history; there is no reason to think God cannot help us now.

Joe O’Brien ’22

MARCH 6 | SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Mic 7:14-15, 18-20; Ps 103; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

All of the readings today have a strong message of acceptance, forgiveness, compassion and kindness. Through all of the readings we are assured that when and if we sin, God our Father will still welcome us with open arms. What a comforting message.

The parable of the father with two sons is simple, yet complex. No matter what the younger son has done, the father will accept him, no questions asked, for “*he was lost and is now found.*” The other obedient son is angry and seems to be jealous (among other emotions) that his brother, who left them and sinned quite a bit, is now welcomed back so graciously.

I am new to parenting; I have a one-year-old and 2.5-year-old and love them more than I ever knew I could. I am sure at some point along the journey they will disappoint, they may stray, which will be difficult I am sure to process as a parent. However, Jesus shows us in this parable that our Father will always love us, and will also be as the psalm today says, “*kind and merciful.*” So, I am reminded and conscious to be kind and merciful not only to my family, but all those around me.

Lindsay Jackson

Head Field Hockey Coach





MARCH 7 | THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Ex 20:1-17; Ps 19; 1 Cor 1:22-25; Jn 2:13-25

The readings this Sunday begin with the Ten Commandments and conclude with the gospel passage describing Jesus' angry challenge of common practices in the temple. Both of these texts run through my mind in vivid images built by Sunday school book illustrations, as well as movies and paintings. These images can make it easy to place our modern-day selves as outside of these readings, perhaps to say we would never break these Commandments, nor dishonor or anger God.

However, this year, most striking to me are the subtle words at the closing of the gospel, "*Jesus...did not need anyone to testify about human nature. He himself understood it well.*" Jesus recognized how difficult it would be for his disciples to absorb the signs and teachings he was sharing with them. He knew they would struggle to do the right thing as fear and distress overtook them. The same is true for us: Jesus knows not only (all) human nature, but each and every one of us in our entirety, including our faults, failings and intentions.

Lent is a time for "cleaning out the Temple," for preparing ourselves for the Lord's victory over death and therefore over sin. Let us use our Lenten reflections to look not only at how we measure up to "the rules," but to also humbly explore our hearts and examine in what ways we need to improve. How can my thoughts and actions today better reflect who I strive to be, who Jesus sees that I can be?

Cheryl Martin '84

Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 8 | MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

2 Kgs 5:1-15AB; Ps 42; Lk 4:24-30

When I finished high school, I wanted to continue my football career, but when I did not receive any offers to play from schools that met my academic interests, I assumed my athletic career was over. A friend of mine had jokingly mentioned that I should join the men's rugby team at Holy Cross, but I had shrugged off the comment because it was not the sport I knew or loved. One of my first weeks at Holy Cross, however, a member of the team came up to me and said that I should try out. The two incidents, seemingly coincidental, led me to join the team. Looking back, it was one of the best decisions I had ever made.

Today's first reading reflects on the power of God and how difficult it can be to understand. For Naaman, it was trusting that he was hearing the word of God, and his skin was cleansed. This reading offers us an opportunity to reflect on gifts we are grateful for, but were not certain of initially. When I reflect on how God has sent messages to me, I can look back and see what his intentions were, but I am also able to understand that what I wanted at the time got in the way of my being able to fully understand God's path. This Lent, what path is God laying for us, even though it might not be a path we would at first lay for ourselves?

Richard Cabral '22





MARCH 9 | TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Dan 3:25, 34-43; Ps 25; Mt 18:21-35

Compassion and forgiveness. In today's gospel reading, Peter asks Jesus how many times should we forgive those who have wronged or sinned against us. Jesus responds to Peter through the parable of the unforgiving servant that we should be patient and forgive our brothers and sisters with our hearts more times than we think. Speaking from personal experience, I have had moments in my life where I was the wicked servant, the begging servant and the master.

In re-reading the gospel, I noticed that the passage also refers to the Kingdom of Heaven. I have always had this image that the Kingdom of Heaven is an abstract place, a place that is separate from our daily lives. But in actuality, the Kingdom of Heaven is among us. In a webinar I attended this past year, Father Michael Martinez S.J. mentioned that the Kingdom of Heaven is the full communion with God, others, and self, and we should embrace all of these relationships. If we do not give ourselves the opportunity to demonstrate compassion and forgiveness towards each other, we are not living in the Kingdom of Heaven; in fact, we are working against it.

I have come to realize that I am my fullest and happiest self when I follow the example of the master because that is when I demonstrate my most vulnerable self and embrace the Kingdom of Heaven. I am continuing to learn to forgive people with my heart, even when they do not necessarily stay in my life.

Erica Mendoza '18

Brooks Alumni Fellow, Office of Alumni Relations

MARCH 10 | WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Dt 4:1, 5-9; Ps 147; Mt 5:17-19

When I was growing up, my grandmother always found the right time to remind me of Eleanor Powell's saying, "What we are is God's gift to us. What we become, is our gift to God." This was usually after I had been acting up in some way.

Today's reading from Deuteronomy reminds us that God has given us many gifts, including the opportunity to be obedient to God's laws or commandments. Moses says to the people, "...hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you...that you may live...and take possession of the land which the Lord...is giving you." In this passage, "the land" refers to all of the gifts that God gives to us.

The "With All your Heart" virtual retreat offered by the College chaplains during the fall semester this year helped me to foster my relationship with God. Through prayer and reflection, I renewed my covenant with God and was reminded that being obedient allows him to be present in my life. This has helped me realize the gifts that God provides for me in my everyday life. In turn, my grandmother would be happy with what has become of my gift to God. How have you experienced God's gifts and presence in your life this Lent? What gift will you offer God?

Scott Slaboden

Assistant Director of Purchasing





MARCH 11 | THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Jer 7:23-28; Ps 95; Lk 11:14-23

In today's passages I was reminded of one of my favorite Bible verses: "*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*" (1 Jn 4:8) Read alongside today's readings, one might question how this statement can be true when there are many examples in the Bible of God punishing His people for failing to obey Him or choose Him. However, love and jealousy are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they can be one and the same.

Jealousy is a feeling we are taught to be ashamed of. However, in the Bible we are repeatedly told that God is a jealous God. We even learn that His name is *jealous* in Exodus 34:14. God's jealousy should not be mistaken for covetousness, which God specifically warns against. Rather, His jealousy should be understood as a form of His love for us and desire for us to draw closer to Him.

Just as it pains a parent when a child disobeys or chooses to follow another over them, I wonder if it pains God more than we can ever know when we turn our backs to Him? It is during the times that we feel a void in our relationship with God that an opportunity is presented for Him to come into our lives. Daily, He pleads with us to make space for Him. "*Come near to God and he will come near to you.*" (James 4:8)

How can you draw nearer to God today?

Kelly Saintelus

Director, Academic Services and Learning Resources

MARCH 12 | FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Hos 14:2-10; Ps 81; Mk 12:28-34

In today's Gospel reading Jesus said: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."*

Selfish acts may be gratifying in the moment, but they have no long-term satisfaction. Our needs and wants are important but focusing our love solely on fulfilling our own desires leaves no room to love God and our neighbors. The scribe in today's reading finds comfort in Jesus's words. Despite our sins we still have the opportunity to love God with all our heart and love our neighbor as our self. By doing so, Jesus said we *"are not far from the kingdom of God."* We put our faith and love in God, and we are forgiven for our prior selfish acts and can find further strength to live our lives in solidarity with our neighbors.

When given the opportunity, how can we choose to be selfless in our actions for others?

Evan Realbuto '21





MARCH 13 | SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Hos 6:1-6; Ps 51; Lk 18:9-14

I had a hard time with these readings, about sacrifice, grace, humility and connection to God. They reminded me that I have been lacking in my one-on-one time with God. Except for a quick morning and evening prayer, I have not spent my usual time with the Lord. I was stuck on “*Come, let us return to the Lord*” in Hosea. In my mind, I kept reading “return to me.” Then as I read further I was reminded of Jesus’s death, and on the third day when Jesus rose from the grave after being torn, stricken and dead.

In Hosea 6:6 we hear, “*For I desire and delight in dutiful steadfast love and goodness, not sacrifice, and the knowledge of and acquaintance with God more than burnt offerings.*” Our model of sacrifice is Jesus, who died without relief from pain, separated from God, with the burden of every sin ever committed or going to be committed. Nothing we can do can equal that. We have past hurts, trials, people who have betrayed us, but Jesus has already felt it ALL, not just ours but everyone’s—every mass shooting, its victims and their families, and on and on. He felt the pain of the killer and everyone affected by that killer’s actions. Jesus is the sacrifice; return to him. Only by daily returning to God can we be saved.

Raquel Whidbee

Administrative Assistant, Residence Life and Housing

MARCH 14 | FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23; Ps 137; Eph 2:4-10; Jn 3:14-21

One year ago today, our Holy Cross campus community was evacuated as thousands of students, faculty and staff prepared to finish the semester remotely. People all over the world were afraid, confused, sad and uncertain about what was next. Why? Because we were faced with unfamiliar circumstances that challenged us and made us feel like everything was out of our control.

Today's readings serve as an excellent reminder of the unconditional love that God has for us. Further, we're reminded of His unconditional loyalty. Even as God watched His people turning their backs on Him and subscribing to the ways of the secular world, His response was to bless them. If we know that our God will take care of us even when we sin, why then do we worry so much when we fall upon hard times? None of us like to feel unable to control our situations, but the Lord is faithful! Not only does He love us unconditionally, we've been promised eternal life in Him if we just believe and trust in Him.

Not one of us can control every single thing that happens in our lives, but what we can do is make an intentional choice to trust God through it all.

Hannah Baker '21





MARCH 15 | MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Is 65:17-21; Ps 30; Jn 4:43-54

As a child, I was a fan of the “Super Friends” cartoon that aired on Saturday mornings. When I was feeling sad, I would wish for a superhero to come to earth to fix what was broken in the world. Recently, as I drove alone in my car, I felt a twinge of despair and was reminded of that childhood desire for a “better world,” for what I would now call clarity, healing and justice.

In today’s reading from Isaiah 65, the Lord describes a new beginning for humankind that seems to respond, point by point, to a list of modern-day concerns: our ailing planet will be replaced by “*new heavens and a new earth*,” people will be freed from the memory of a painful past; “*the sound of weeping*” will be banished; and people will have land on which to build their own homes and “*eat the fruit of the vineyards they plant*.” In particular, the Lord’s promise of longevity brings painfully to mind the many lives lost over the past year, especially among our elders: in the new Jerusalem, “[*h*]e dies a mere youth who reaches but a hundred years, and [*h*]e who fails of a hundred shall be thought accursed.”

Yet, as appealing as the promise of a better world may be, the idea of accepting it passively leaves me uneasy. Who will come to our rescue, then? Only we can, recognizing the spirit of renewal, but also the hero and villain in each of us.

Susan Amatangelo

Professor of Italian; Chair, World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures

MARCH 16 | TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Ez 47:1-9, 12; Ps 46; Jn 5:1-16

“Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live [...] Their fruit shall serve for food, and their leaves for medicine.”

God created the Earth with the resources we need, regardless of our background. In our modern society, it has become easy to get distracted by our daily tasks without taking a meaningful break to reflect on equitable access to these resources. I believe that this pandemic can allow us to stop and reflect on what is going on in our country, and more importantly to challenge and dismantle social injustices.

At the forefront of the news, we see education and healthcare inequities, and environmental and racial injustices that have been here long before the pandemic but have now been amplified. We’ve all been given a wake-up call to do our part and to work together towards a society that we all want to live in where love and compassion are a driving force in the work that we do. As children of God, we must challenge injustices and actively work towards a society that serves everyone to have a share of the resources provided by our Earth.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all of the essential workers, those whose work is seen and those whose work happens in the shadows, for being the river that provides the resources for others to continue to live.

Yesenia Gutierrez '21

SGA Co-Officer of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Community-Based Learning Intern





MARCH 17 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Is 49:8-15; Ps 145; Jn 5:17-30

The story is told of the sharp and biting retort that a recently deceased brilliant yet curmudgeonly Jesuit liturgist would give whenever he encountered people who complained that they ‘don’t get anything out of going to Mass.’ “The Church is not a gas station or a 7-Eleven where you fill up your tank,” he’d say, and what you get out of going to Mass, out of gathering with the rest of Christ’s Body, is “the inestimable privilege of being able to glorify Almighty God.” Father Bob Taft, S.J. (who received an honorary degree from Holy Cross in 1990 and who died in 2018) was never one to mince words.

At the root of those words is the truth we find in Isaiah: that we ought to give thanks and praise –glory– to God precisely because it is God who has made us and kept us, who has offered countless covenants to his people over and over again even as we have broken our promises and turned from our Maker. Since our faithful God celebrates his relationship with us, we can take advantage of opportunities to glorify the God who “*comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted.*” Our God - “*gracious and merciful,*” as the psalmist reminds us - is worthy of our worship as, even now, he continually works for our salvation.

Rev. Keith Maczkiewicz, S.J.

Assistant Chaplain - Liturgy, Office of the College Chaplains

MARCH 18 | THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Ex 32:7-14; Ps 106; Jn 5:31-47

One of the most significant moments of my year with the Jesuit Volunteer Corps was when a student said, “my normal is something that shouldn’t be normal.”

This past year, we’ve been required to physically distance in the interest of the common good. While certainly necessary, this has diminished our capacity to live our faith in an embodied way, as Jesus did. As we hopefully get closer to “the new normal,” this Lenten season is a fitting time to simultaneously discern how we will return to God as we prepare for Holy Week, how we will return to society and what we will hold as “normal.”

Jesus directly associates his testimony with works: *“These works that the Father gave me to accomplish, these works that I perform testify on my behalf.”* Contrary to standards of his time (and ours), many of his “works” – works of embodied love – placed him directly with the most vulnerable and outcast. Our critical task at hand, then, is to ensure that the distance required of us this past year is not part of the “new normal.” To be most faithful to the God revealed concretely through the life and works of Jesus, we must not solely look inward to Scripture, but outward from Scripture. How might we spend this Lent preparing for embodied discipleship as an integral part of our return to a more fully embodied life? How can we choose works of embodied love, drawn from Jesus’ example, as our new normal?

Anthony Russo '14





MARCH 19 | SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH, HUSBAND OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

2 Sam 7:4-5A, 12-14A, 16; Ps 89; Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22; Mt 1:16, 18-21, 24

In our society, success is often synonymous with material goods. However, this notion of success can blind us from the importance of faith when discerning our own vocation. In today's gospel, we see that Joseph had decided to quietly divorce Mary after hearing that she had conceived a child that was not his. After hearing from the angel of the Lord, however, Joseph allows for faith to shape his vocation as the father of Jesus.

In search of my own calling, Joseph provides a concrete example of allowing faith to shape my vocation. During my first year at Holy Cross, I felt as if I had discovered my true vocation in serving others by providing care through dentistry. Later that year, at the Mission of Mercy free dental clinic, I interacted with individuals in need of oral health care who forwent treatment, likely due to socioeconomic barriers. Witnessing the vulnerable who were previously unable to receive care rattled my idea of who I imagined myself serving. Reflection upon who I truly desire to serve has allowed for my vocation to be shaped by faith. This Lenten season let us allow for faith to mold our vocation and our interpretation of success.

Andrew Ludwig '21

MARCH 20 | SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Jer 11:18-20; Ps 7; Jn 7:40-53

The Gospel acclamation today from Luke says: “*Keep the word with a generous heart,*” and the psalmist talks about “*the upright of heart.*” These words remind me of the essential question: Who am I called to be? Everyone associated with Holy Cross has heard this question in one way or another. When I was a student here, I heard it on the surface as a question about what I wanted to do with my life, my career. But underneath was always the underlying question of WHO am I called to be, as opposed to WHAT am I called to be. But I didn’t really think about that then.

As I made my way in the world, however, it became clear to me that not everyone was pushed, or pulled, to ask this question of themselves. Somehow, my Holy Cross education had impressed this question on me and had me asking it of myself all the time, which makes life a bit more complicated! But I believe it is the right question and that listening to — make that hearing — what the answer might be is challenging.

Listening is challenging. Hearing is even more so. Do I always take the time and spend the energy to listen, to hear what my family, my friends, my colleagues are saying? To what is happening in our country and our world? To those with whom I disagree? Who I am called to be in response? I can only have a generous and upright heart if I am listening, trying to understand, and discerning the call to respond.

Jane Corr '84 P13

Chief of Staff, Office of the President





MARCH 21 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jer 31:31-34; Ps 51; Heb 5:7-9; Jn 12:20-33

John's Gospel speaks of the culmination of Jesus' salvific mission as his "hour" when he will be "*lifted up from the earth,*" his ignominious death hoisted on a cross as the paradoxical revelation of his glory. Such is not glory by any typical human standard, least of all that of popular stardom or public adulation. Indeed, Jesus confides to his closest friends, "*I am troubled now.*"

Troubled, Jesus prays to the God and Father with whom he shares an intimate (faith believes, unique) bond of love. In his very person, his prayer and his actions, Jesus is the realization of God's promise through the prophet, "*All, from least to greatest, shall know me.*" In the Hebrew tradition, this knowing has the affective character of trust, of love, of giving oneself over in mutual surrender to the other. Such a prayerful life lived unto death is human perfection itself, *himself*. The Jesus whom we follow, whom we "*obey,*" is now the "*source of [our] eternal salvation.*"

Obedience is hardly a word that falls easily on the ears of an individualistic, market-driven society. But for us believers it is Good News, bespeaking the divine-human love ever with us, even when troubled, even when we may not feel it. Saint Ignatius teaches us that times of dread or despair are when the evil spirit preys on our thoughts. Then is the moment to invite Christ's Spirit to pray with and through us, knowing ourselves profoundly loved.

Rev. Bruce T. Morrill, S.J. '81

MARCH 22 | MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

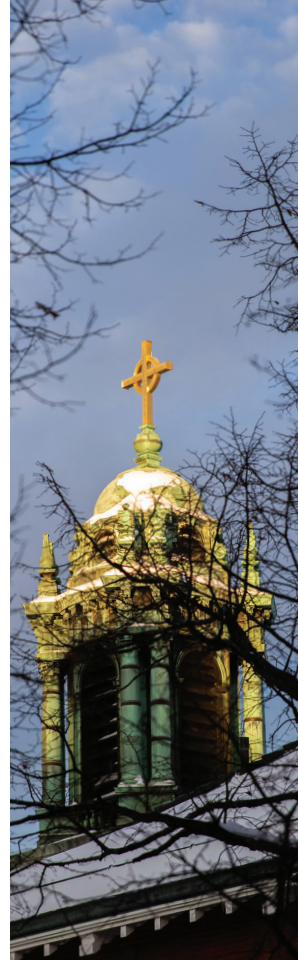
Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Ps 23; Jn 8:1-11

In both readings today, we see women on trial, indicted because of their sexuality, at the mercy of powerful men who would decide their fate without any regard for their testimony. Their vulnerability as women is exposed, their word not trusted. This is not a matter of guilt or innocence; Susana was innocent, but we don't have enough information about the unnamed woman in the gospel. In both instances, the women stand accused by others. But I can also imagine the way these women are standing; with strong, upright posture characteristic of one who knows her truth. They stand with the faith that nothing, not false accusations or transgressions, will separate them from the love and mercy of God.

In the Gospel, Jesus comes not to condemn the woman, but to challenge the crowd to stand in their own truth; to know that they, too, have flaws and transgressions and are in need of God's mercy and compassion. Author Bryan Stevenson calls those who intervene in the face of injustice to promote compassion for the most vulnerable "stone catchers." Jesus knew his invitation was convincing enough to halt the stoning. I imagine that even if they began hurling stones at the woman, Jesus would have met her vulnerability by making himself vulnerable, catching the stones cast on her. Isn't Jesus' willingness to make himself vulnerable what we remember in his Passion?

How is God inviting us to stand in our truth, challenging us to be stone catchers, to meet vulnerability with vulnerability, to show that love wins over death and violence?

Sara Janecko Milone '04





MARCH 23 | TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Nm 21:4-9; Ps 102; Jn 8:21-30

In today's gospel reading, Jesus reminds us that He is sent from the Father and that the only way to the Father is through Him. Realizing that He has come to His final days on earth, Jesus's words come almost as one last chance to open the door for people to understand and accept that He is the Savior, and that although He spent time on earth, He "*does not belong in this world.*"

Rather than an "I told you so" type of lecture, this is one last in-person invitation for all to join Jesus not as a political savior but as the one who will be able to save people from their sins forever. As John Newton, the author of "Amazing Grace" and former slave ship owner famously recognized, "I am a great sinner and Christ is a great savior."

As we endure the challenges of the current pandemic, and we are told to remain at safe social distances from one another, let us erase any spiritual distance we have and grow closer to Jesus, knowing that He will embrace us and forgive our sins. During these unpredictable days on earth, it is comforting to close our eyes and picture the sun shining brightly on the beautiful gold cross on top of St. Joseph Chapel, knowing that with the saving power of Jesus we will never be alone.

Peter G. Flaherty II '87 P21

Distinguished Visiting Lecturer, J.D. Power Center for Liberal Arts in the World

MARCH 24 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Dn 3:52-56; Jn 8:31-42

Today's readings focus on the steadfast faith of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, who trusted in the word and love of God, and believed that God would never forsake them. Because of their faith and courage, God sent an angel to deliver them from the white hot furnace and they were set free.

Our Holy Cross education entrusts us to be “men and women for and with others.” Following graduation, I served as a Jesuit Volunteer, worked for social justice and participated in political marches and protests. This spring, my daughter and son reminded my husband and me of God's continued call to work for truth and justice. They encouraged our family to participate in a peaceful march and demonstration for racial justice and equality. As I lay face down in a soccer field, surrounded by hundreds of others, I was deeply moved and humbled.

We hear in today's Gospel, “*Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance.*” How can we remain faithful to God's word in today's world? Are we courageous enough to stand with others and speak the truth? Is our faith strong enough to eradicate racial and social injustices from our culture and our lives, so that we will be set free?

Margot LaFortune Flionis '89





MARCH 25 | SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Is 7:10-14; 8:10; Ps 40; Heb 10:4-10; Lk 1:26-38

The readings from today remind us to trust God in moments of uncertainty and doubt. Throughout the past year, the pandemic has filled the world with many uncertainties. For me, I began my senior year thinking about how I would make my last year just as meaningful and memorable as the past three years even in such an unconventional manner. Throughout these moments of uncertainty and the desire for answers, I remind myself to trust God. God is with us, as God brings us hope and faith even in moments filled with uncertainty. Today, one of the questions I ask myself the most as my time at Holy Cross slowly starts to close is who I will become outside of the Hill? Will I be fulfilled? Will I follow the right path?

Like many people, my heart holds many fears rooted in the uncertainty and the unknown. However, the fear and uncertainty that I feel in my heart brings me closer to God. The fear of the unknown is a reminder to embrace the uncertainty by trusting God. As my time on the Hill will come to an end very soon, with many things left unanswered and uncertain, I am also able to walk away with a sense of hope and confidence “*for nothing will be impossible for God.*” Regardless of the uncertainty of the world, our trust in God will guide us to where we belong and the passions that call us.

Yulianna Ocampo '21

MARCH 26 | FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Jer 20:10-13; Ps 18; Jn 10:31-42

Almost a year ago now the world shut down. At first it seemed to be a unifying event that would bring us all together, but seemingly the opposite happened, at least in part. Tremendous amounts of civil unrest built, all the while we were confined to our homes. I was specifically not able to do my job, my calling, my source of meaning. I felt cut off from worthiness. I had a stretch of months where a feeling of burden to do good in a time of great turmoil was growing and weighing heavily on me. Thoughts of despair about just what to do were numerous, and beginning to be all-consuming.

Like the psalmist today, *“In my distress I called upon the Lord, and he heard my voice.”* I remember praying for the answer, really meditating on it. One night God answered my prayer. That night in my stillness of contemplation God spoke through my voice and I said out loud, “Carry it, and carry it you shall.” This was the first time I felt a real time answer from God to my prayers in a moment of despair. The answer to carry it was clarifying because it provided certainty about it being my duty to carry it, and it was no longer possible to shirk the responsibility. The second part of the answer was ultimately consoling, carry it you shall. I felt certain that God knows my unquestionable ability to carry the burden through to the end of my earthly life.

Jim Barr

Head Men’s Rowing Coach





MARCH 27 | SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Ez 37:21-28; Jer 31:10, 11-12ABCD, 13; Jn 11:45-56

These readings make me want to stand up and shout, yes, please, God — gather us from all sides and bring us back to yourself. Heal our divisions, deliver us from the idols we worship and from the idea that we do not need you in our lives. Grant us your peace; dwell with us.

Ezekiel's words have never felt timelier. Our world cries out for God's healing presence, for the shepherd who carefully tends the flock. And even as I ask for God's presence, I know I have a role to play, too, in the work. I know I am called — we are all called — to co-labor with God, to respond to God's invitation of relational love. Ezekiel's words invite me to consider what that co-laboring looks like. What will it take for me to be gathered up to God, to people I care for, to people I don't? What divisions do I flame? What balms of forgiveness do I offer? From whom do I need to seek pardon? What idols wrestle my attention away from loving God, neighbor and self?

Spending time reflecting on these questions is one of the ways I'm preparing my heart to enter into this holiest week of our liturgical year. I imagine Jesus similarly taking stock of his heart with his disciples and in prayer in Ephraim. What we can trust from his example is that we do not prepare alone, but accompanied by our friends, our family and God, who loves us.

Catherine Mikula '14

MARCH 28 | PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Mk 11:1-10; Is 50:4-7; Ps 22; Phil 2:6-11; Mk 14:1-15:47

Today we are asked to reflect on our devotion to others, ourselves, and our faith. Jesus said to his disciples, *“All of you will have your faith shaken, for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be dispersed.”* Peter, very sure of himself, says *“Even though all should have their faith shaken, mine will not be.”*

How many of us feel as committed as Peter in this moment? We believe our faith is unwavering. In good times, it is easy to acknowledge and sit in the light of Jesus' love. It is in the challenging times that I ask, *“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”*

Jesus' closest disciples betrayed him repeatedly for their own individual reasons. They were faithful until doubt, fear, or weakness persuaded them otherwise. Through all of the challenges I have faced, I ask myself: How have I acknowledged the doubt, fear and weakness that attempts to persuade me away from my faith? How have I remained devoted to my family, friends, neighbors and faith?

On the path to living into your greatness, there will be much doubt. Our fears may manifest in unforeseen ways. Betrayal, even when expected, can challenge us to practice our faith and trust in God. In this season, and always, let us pray for the strength to stay committed and the courage to overcome with love and light.

Michelle Rosa Martins

Director, Office of Multicultural Education





MARCH 29 | MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Is 42:1-7; Ps 27; Jn 12:1-11

In today's readings I am reminded of how unexpected God can be, just as the person and preaching of Jesus were often not what anyone expected. Born into poverty in a forgotten corner of a conquered land, He was not the Christ anyone anticipated. With leadership often (though inaccurately) equated with assertiveness and volume, a leader who is "*not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street*" would not be expected to change many minds or hearts, much less change the course of history.

Yet through inexplicable love, we can join with Christ, this week and for all eternity, knowing that though suffering will come, resurrection follows. Though enemies of justice and mercy encircle and encamp, our hearts need not fear. We strive on, despite uncertainty and at times crippling doubt, despite our faith at times reduced to a "*smoldering wick*" that feels nearly quenched, because the God "*who gives breath to [earth's] people and spirit to those who walk on it*" remains the light and salvation calling us all out of darkness. And thus we, imperfect as we are, can unite with Christ in seeking to "*bring forth justice to the nations...open the eyes of the blind, and bring prisoners from confinement.*" As Holy Week begins, I pray that you feel the presence of God in all things, and that – if you are anything like me – your restless spirit can find its rest in the depths of this mysterious peace which surpasses all our understanding.

Jon Niconchuk '09

MARCH 30 | TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Is 49:1-6; Ps 71; Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

Reading of Jesus's troubled relationship with those closest to him is both jarring and centering. It is sometimes difficult to consider that, when seated next to Christ, followers falter in their discipleship. I understand faith as the enduring experience of drawing closer to Jesus and of attempting to be Christ-like in thought and action. How is it, then, that Judas sat so close to Jesus and still betrayed him? How could Simon Peter confidently declare "*I will lay down my life for you*" only to deny Jesus three times? How does someone stand in the very presence of Christ and still wander?

Jesus's disciples teach not what it means to be Christ, but what it means to follow him. Their imperfections, uncertainties and naiveties are equally as comforting as they are frustrating. Had the disciples displayed devout faith, perhaps we would have an insider's guide to mastering what it means to be Christ-like. Instead, today's gospel offers an understanding of the trials of discipleship. I have not met anyone who claims to bear an unwavering, perfected faith. In fact, I find myself most moved by those whose faith persists despite their wandering. When betrayed, even by those closest to him, Christ speaks with certainty and understanding. Though troubled, Jesus assures his disciples "*you will follow later.*" Christ's knowledge that their faith will endure rests in his forgiveness of their trials. To stumble in the presence of Jesus appears inevitable in discipleship, yet the invitation to still follow after faltering endures.

Emma Davison '21





MARCH 31 | WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Is 50:4-9A; Ps 69; Mt 26:14-25

In today's gospel reading, Jesus is celebrating Passover with the disciples, knowing that his betrayer Judas is with him. I remember early childhood reactions to this passage, thinking how angry Jesus must have been at this betrayal. While age has seen my raw emotions of anger and hatred towards Judas shift towards compassion and awe for Jesus, betrayal is still a hard concept to accept.

In 2019, betrayal took on a new meaning for me. How was it that a healthy person so full of life could be betrayed by her own body? Why had my body given no signs of the aggressive, advanced cancer that was spreading throughout my abdomen? Why had my own cells betrayed me?

During my treatment and recovery, I was fortunate to be surrounded by a loving family, thoughtful friends and a truly supportive Holy Cross community. I can only hope that Jesus continued to feel the love of God the Father as he navigated the suffering of betrayal, crucifixion and death. The scars (both literal and emotional) of cancer and its treatments are still present for me. How shall I accept this betrayal and trust my body again? I am grateful, for the blessing of Jesus' message and to know that we are not alone in dealing with the suffering caused by betrayal. I continue to find hope and peace as we move into this Easter season.

Bianca R. Sculimbrene

Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry

APRIL 1 | HOLY THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Ex 12:1-8, 11-14; Ps 116; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Jn 13:1-15

To accept help, kindness or love requires us to drop our defenses. It requires us to be vulnerable. In today's reading, Jesus knows his death is imminent. He knows that he will be betrayed by Judas and denied by his disciples, yet he begins to wash their feet. Many a theologian has commented on this as an example of God's undeserved, unconditional, perfect love. But perhaps, we would learn too from Peter, the disciple in the reading. Peter initially withdraws from Jesus' request to wash his feet; how odd it is that someone of Jesus' status would perform a lowly servant's task on him!

"I'm fine," we say to our roommate, even though we are not. "I can do it on my own," we assert to a parent, even though we would benefit from a hand. We grow embarrassed opening a gift or receiving a compliment. Peter does not feel all that comfortable accepting this act of unconditional love. Like it does for many of us, it may have brought up feelings of guilt or repayment. To show joy in receiving may be to admit to wanting or needing something from another, and to not be independent may be to show weakness.

The passage ends with a call to follow in Jesus' model to love one another. To follow God's word, we must not just pour love onto others, we must learn to accept the love we are offered. And to allow others to pour love out, too. That vulnerability takes great courage.

Paulina Martin '21





APRIL 2 | GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Is 52:13-53:12; Ps 31; Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9; Jn 18:1-19:42

"I am like a dish that is broken." (Ps 31:12)

For many years I directed music at several parishes in Manhattan, and always marveled at the crowds on Good Friday. It seemed as if some had wandered into an unfamiliar place for the first time. Why would so many come on so somber a day?

Who can speak of what lies in another's heart? Perhaps they were drawn to hear the Passion reading, or to observe the Triduum, or for some deeply-held tradition? Yet I could sense this: here gathered those who felt *"like a dish that is broken"*—weary office workers and sales people, those who clean bathrooms, dig up streets, work long hospital shifts and always, always, the homeless. They too, like those who mourned on Calvary, had ached with grief watching by the side of the dying. They too had wept over an innocent treated unjustly, a relationship betrayed, a young future turned to ashes. They, too, had worn a crown of thorns.

The grief of Good Friday was a reality in their own lives, as it is in ours. Yet still we trust in the Alleluia to come on Easter morning, and pray with the psalmist: *"Take courage and be stouthearted, all you who hope in the LORD."* Probably few realized that just behind their pews lay a closed chapel. Within, the flowers of Easter had been stored away and waited, ready to spill out once more in all their fragrance, fresh beauty, and joy.

Laurence Rosania

Director of Liturgy and Music, Office of the College Chaplains

APRIL 3 | HOLY SATURDAY

Gn 1:1-2:2; Gn 22:1-18; Ex 14:15–15:1; Is 54:5-14; Is 55:1-11; Rom 6:3-11; Mk 16:1-7

The regular and seemingly mundane occurrence of night and the dawning of a new day are often lost on me. Like breathing, it is part of daily functioning that I do not think about often. Evening comes, and morning follows — another day arrives. Every now and then, though, I can be stopped in my tracks when the rising or setting sun paints the sky with colors that seize my breath. It is in these moments that I am filled with awe of the creative power of God’s love. On this holy night however, we are told, *“Do not be amazed!”*

God loved creation into existence and that love is infinite. It includes all and excludes none; it is not up for debate. Tonight’s readings remind us that God desires to be in radical relationship with creation and offers us an invitation to be co-creators with God. Humanity is invited to participate in the creation of a world filled with justice, with each day presenting opportunities to embrace and model God’s love. This is a love that can end oppression, transform relationships and overcome death. While today we may be amazed with the phenomenon of the empty tomb as we celebrate God’s victory, we must remember that God’s invitation to embrace the law of love and participate in this triumph is ever present. So when evening comes and morning follows, and another day arrives, how will you be a co-creator with God of a world where love and justice reign?

Malcolm McCluskey '99





APRIL 4 | EASTER SUNDAY - THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Acts 10:34A, 37-43; Ps 118; Col 3:1-4; Jn 20:1-9

The last time I visited Tony Kuzniewski, S.J. (aka Fr. K) at Campion Center before his death in 2016, I realized that in all likelihood it would be our final meeting and I was doing my best to monitor my emotions.

In the late 70s, Tony and I were in theology studies in Chicago where we lived in a lively community of 12. It was a special time of brotherhood as we all were preparing for ordination. Many years later, when I came to Holy Cross as president, Tony was a member of the Ciampi Jesuit community, and again our friendship flourished. Tony was a generous and faithful brother to me, who knew well the blessings and challenges of the College and always was there for me with encouragement and support. Little did he know that in our conversation that afternoon in the infirmary, he would give me the most important gift of all.

As I was about to leave, Tony asked for my blessing, and when I finished, he said with enthusiasm, “You know, Phil, I can’t wait to see our loving God face to face.” That simple message of deep faith summarized his whole life: living to see God face to face. Tony had given his life for God’s people out of his deep love for Jesus, and now he was approaching death not in sadness but in an assured quiet joy. I have never forgotten his faith-filled excitement, nor could he have given me more reason to live in Easter hope.

Rev. Philip L. Boroughs, S.J.

President





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