RETURN TO ME

Lenten Reflections

from Holy Cross | 2024

"O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise"

PSALM 51:17

As we begin this Lent, the words of the psalmist today bring to mind the First Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola: "God who loves us creates us and wants to share life with us forever. Our love response takes shape in our praise and honor and service of the God of our life" (trans. David L. Fleming, S.J.). In our reflections this year, we hear a desire for hope in the midst of turmoil, persistence in the face of challenging questions, comfort at the heart of pain. This year's *Return To Me* series invites us to enter this season of Lent with renewed intention, that we might connect more deeply with God, in the hope that it might help transform our world.

In these pages you will hear many voices from the Holy Cross community—faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends, administrators, trustees, and Jesuits—as they reflect on the readings for each day's Mass. We hope that these prayerful reflections will help you pray more deeply during the Lenten season. We hope, too, that the reflections and images in this year's collection will offer you a bridge to Holy Cross, where faith is nourished and character is formed.

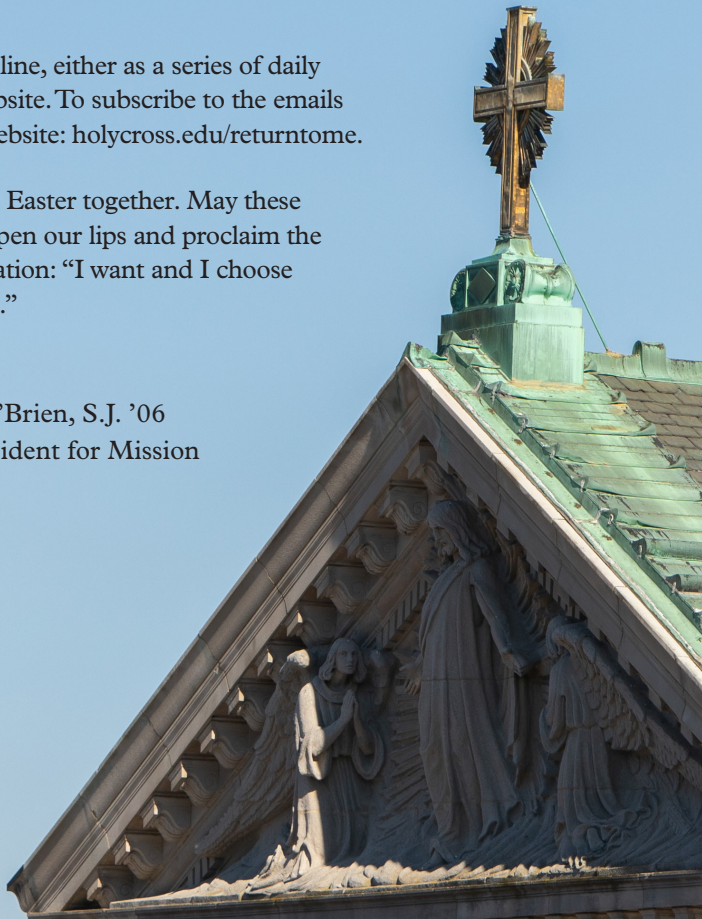
As always, the preparation of this series involves many members of our community: writers, editors, graphic designers, website administrators—to name a few. To each of these individuals, and to so many others, we offer profound thanks.

This year *Return To Me* is offered exclusively online, either as a series of daily emails or in its entirety via download at our website. To subscribe to the emails or to access the PDF version, please visit our website: holycross.edu/returntome.

Be assured of our prayers as we journey toward Easter together. May these weeks be an intentional time when we can all open our lips and proclaim the closing words of the First Principle and Foundation: "I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening life in me."

Crista Mahoney '02
Editor, *Return To Me*

Rev. Timothy W. O'Brien, S.J. '06
Associate Vice President for Mission



FEBRUARY 14 | ASH WEDNESDAY

Jl 2:12-18; Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

"Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting and weeping, and mourning" (Joel 2:12).

"God help me. The sea is so big and my boat is so small" (unattributed Celtic prayer). This brief prayer speaks to the moment we find ourselves in as we begin this holy season of Lent. Amidst the chaos and violence within our world, there is a sense of urgency for our prayer, for our dependence on God, and for transformation. The invitation is the same each year on Ash Wednesday: "Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting and weeping, and mourning…" How can we return to God in this season of Lent with more intention and purpose?

Omid Safi, a contributor to the podcast "On Being," writes, "There will come a time in our lives when we will truly have only two hours to live. How lovely will it be to have lived a life in which we have told everyone how loved they are, asked for forgiveness for all that we have to atone, and forgive all those around us who yearn for forgiveness. How lovely to greet that moment with no regrets, but with a sense of purpose, meaning, love, tenderness and forgiveness." As we find ourselves at the start of this holy season, we are asked to look at what is at the center; to strip things down to the core and to consider how we desire to move forward. What relationships in your life need tending? Who do you need to forgive? And, from whom do you need to seek forgiveness? What are you holding on to that is preventing you from being the person that God has called you to be?

Lent is a time of conversion and God takes the lead in this conversion. The invitation as we embark upon this journey together, is to allow God to transform us and to lead us. May our prayer be to listen with openness, to see with eyes of clarity and to respond to the reassuring invitation to return to God.

Megan Fox-Kelly, LCSW '99
Associate Director of the Office of the College Chaplains
Associate Chaplain for Retreats and Pastoral Care

FEBRUARY 15 | THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Dt 30:15-20; Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6; Lk 9:22-25

"Blessed are they who hope in the Lord" (Psalm 40:5a).

I have always found it hard to find hope during Lent. It is a time of repentance and reflection, not a time of celebration. Upon reflecting on my time spent at Holy Cross these last three years, however, it is actually in times of hardship where I have found myself being the most hopeful. It is in times of sacred hope that I have found myself feeling the most blessed. When I missed home, it was hope that helped me create a sense of home away from home. It was the late nights spent with friends in the library, when hope blessed me with some of my favorite memories made at Holy Cross. It is hope in the Lord, hope in his Resurrection where, I believe, we will find blessings during the time of Lent.

I believe it is hope that can get us through the events that cause us turmoil within our lives. In the gospel story for today, Jesus instructs us to "take up" our crosses and follow him. As we pick up our crosses this Lent, it is through hope in the Lord, that we will find our strength to carry our cross. As we continue our journey through Lent, as we reflect on the readings we listen to during this time, it is through hope that we will be blessed by his grace.

Daisy Fanter '24
Co-Chair of Spring Break Immersion Program

FEBRUARY 16 | FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Is 58:1-9a; Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19; Mt 9:14-15

"Cry out full-throated and unsparingly, lift up your voice like a trumpet blast" (Isaiah 58:1).

Today is our third day of Lent, a time of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Growing up, my Lenten fast was in accordance with Church rules. Today, I fast in honor of One who humbly hung on a cross for us. Also, as a young person I would pick something to give up for Lent. Now I add something in: I try to attend daily Mass. I worked over 30 years in Chicago. It was easy to find a church to stop by before, during or after work. But I had to find the time. That time is important to me as it leads to a closeness to God. Work, raising a family, and now doting on my granddaughter takes up most of my time. During Lent, I set some time aside from all that to strive for a more intimate relationship with God. I find that same relationship with God on Christmas morning. I tell all my CCD students, "If you want to hear God, go out and sit on your doorstep at nine o'clock Christmas morning. What will you hear?" Nothing. 2000 plus years later our world stops and is quiet. How does that happen?

This season, I look forward to the Lenten fast and daily Mass. Both offer me another chance to hear God's voice, just like on Christmas morning, and to "lift up my voice" to him.

Stephen A. Lovelette '78
Member, Board of Trustees

FEBRUARY 17 | SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Is 58:9b-14; Ps 86:1-6; Lk 5:27-32

"Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth" (Psalm 86:11ab).

Some of the most important and transformational conversations I've had have been on walks. There is something holy about moving steadily forward accompanied by someone beloved. These cold February days remind me especially of the origin of walking as sacred time. In high school, with my big sister off to college (Holy Cross '98!), my mom and I would walk in the late afternoon, the time of shadow-trees, when the sky was a deep blue and the trees looked inky black against it once the sun sank below the horizon. It's still my favorite time of day. I would share about my day, ask questions, talk through friendship challenges… Although she was not shy about dispensing motherly advice and coaching me through the throes of adolescence, what I loved about those walks is that my mom would hold the space for me to verbally process so that eventually I would intuitively find my way into the answers I needed.

In today's psalm, the psalmist calls out "Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth." How often do we call out, "Incline your ear, O Lord", to plead with God to hear our prayers? Although I admittedly don't practice it every day, the beauty of the Ignatian examen is that it's the mundane moments of life that help us shed light on God's presence in our lives. Reviewing our day with God, we can experience the ordinary moments in our ordinary world as holy ground upon which God walks with us each day. Because we make room for God in the quotidian, we can see how God holds the space for us to learn what it means to walk the way of divine truth.

Crista Carrick Mahoney '02
Editor, Return To Me Lenten Reflection Series

FEBRUARY 18 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 9:8-15; Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; 1 Pt 3:18-22; Mk 1:12-15

"This is the time of fulfillment. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:15).

Today's Gospel recalls the trials that Jesus faced in the desert leading up to the beginning of his public ministry in Galilee and quotes the first message he had for the people. There is a sense of urgency in his words, one I recognize in my daily struggles to get my toddler out the door in the morning: "It is time to leave! We're going to be late. Get dressed now." But here, I am reminded that my priorities are misplaced–I must repent. In common parlance, to repent is to feel remorse or regret for wrongdoing. The first three readings, however, remind us that being sorry for one's sins is not enough. For Christians, repentance fundamentally begins with baptism, a sacrament through which one accepts God's merciful love and turns toward God by dying and rising with Christ to new life in the waters of baptism. Taken together, today's readings thus extend to us a threefold invitation: 1) to recall and ponder the significance of our own baptism; 2) to examine our conscience for temptations that are barriers for fully living out our baptismal obligations—the triple office of priest, prophet and king; 3) to discern our public ministry, that is, the unique message that each of us bring to the world in everyday life that reflects our baptismal identity. Knowing that Jesus and the angels are with you throughout these 40 days, will you accept this invitation?

Audrey Seah
Assistant Professor of Religious Studies

FEBRUARY 19 | MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Lv 19:1-2, 11-18; Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 15; Mt 25:31-46

"Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

A spiritual advisor encouraged me to see Christ by looking into the eyes of the person across from me. I struggled with this. In a world which tries to force me to pick sides, politically, religiously, professionally, culturally, it's easy for resentments to build with those I interact with daily.

Fortunately, my experience at Holy Cross prepared me to navigate the challenges our world presents. Its educational pedagogy provided me with sound perspective, a launch point, and encouraged me to be a lifelong learner, servant, and problem solver; a person for others. With the encouragement and support of leaders who precede me, I make every effort to act with God's will in mind.

Waiting for a bus in the rain, I observed a very short middle-aged woman occupying the bus stop shelter as her permanent home. Sopping wet and freezing without a proper coat, I craved the comfort of the shelter; of her home. I knocked and politely asked the woman if I could stand in the cluttered space while I waited for my bus. "Of course you can. It's pouring out," she said. After a few moments she tapped me on my shivering shoulder, and looking down at her, I saw her holding up an unused rain poncho from her stockpile of belongings. Her eyes were gentle and kind, and she said, "I haven't worn it. You need it more than me." At that moment, I saw Christ in her eyes.

"Ite inflammatte omnia. Ad maiorem Dei gloriam. Amen."
(Go and set the world on fire. To the greater glory of God. Amen.)

Kevin Golden '09

FEBRUARY 20 | TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Is 55:10-11; Ps 34:4-7, 16-19; Mt 6:7-15

"Your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8).

God knows what I need before I ask. This past April, I had the opportunity to go on the women's retreat at the Joyce Contemplative Center. I was surrounded by strong women who quickly became role models, whether chaplains, alumnae or current students. We listened to different talks that touched upon being women of faith in the Catholic Church, something that I often struggle with.

During our free time, I walked around the retreat center and came across my voice memo app to find a recording of my grandma. She was my hero; the matriarch of our family, my biggest mentor and one of my best friends. It took me more than six months after she passed away before I realized I kept a recording of her talking about love from one of my high school theology projects. In the voice memo, she told me how love continues to live on even when someone has passed away. Tears filled my eyes, but love filled my heart. I knew in my heart that this was God providing me with a reminder that my grandma is always here with me. God's timing struck right when I needed it, because I wasn't ready to listen to it before the weekend of feeling empowered on the women's retreat.

God knows what I need before I ask. As I enter the Lenten season during my last semester, I am reminding myself to uplift others in time of need, just like my grandma did, and continues to do for me. How can we all be signs of God's love for those who need it the most?

Allison Leahy '24

FEBRUARY 21 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Jon 3:1-10; Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19; Lk 11:29-32

"The word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time" (Jonah 3:1).

One can imagine Jonah: indignant, disappointed, obstinate, poignantly aware of the disjuncture between his desires and the ways of divine love. He had hoped for a very different outcome when he delivered his message to the residents of Nineveh. Now it was his vision of retribution that lay in ruins, not the Assyrian capital. It was not a new understanding of God that disturbed Jonah, for it was precisely the salient disparity between what he wanted and what he knew of that all-embracing love that sent him fleeing from God; or at least trying to.

The story recounts that God's word had to reach Jonah twice before he accepted his task. Twice. And still no real change occurred within him. Why did the radical difference that Jonah perceived between his way of relating to others and God's way of relating to those same persons make him want to disappear rather than change? Can it really be that challenging and painful to love those who have been othered? Do the different lines and boundaries we create between ourselves and others, both individually and collectively, acquire such power and importance that clinging to them might seem preferable to a life which more closely resembles what we should be?

I often wonder about the idols that dwell in my own way of thinking about love. What am I clinging to that brings Jonah into proximity? Jonah remains a sign in several ways, one of which prompts me to consider how often I flee from what I should be.

Eduardo Gonzalez
Assistant Professor of Religious Studies

FEBRUARY 22 | FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER

1 Pt 5:1-4; PS 23:1-3a, 4, 5, 6; Mt 16:13-19

"You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church" (Matthew 7:18).

Earlier this school year, I spoke with a prospective student who was reflecting on her interest in Holy Cross. "I want to go to a place where I will be taught to act on my beliefs," she said. I smiled and paused to take in the wisdom she shared. She, so simply and yet so profoundly, articulated what drew me to Holy Cross when I was a prospective student myself. As I reflected on her words, I recalled a short passage that I once wrote about the Jesuit mission to be "people for and with others." In the passage, I wrote: "Those that live under the guidance of this motto open their minds and their hearts to every person that they meet… by showing understanding in the face of ignorance, peace in the face of violence and love in the face of hate. Furthermore, it is a pledge to do so, not by yourself for personal glory or selfish gain, but to do so with others in an effort to combine, build upon, and transform the many talents and abundant knowledge that they possess."

As members of this community, we are called to grow into the leaders of our wider world, to become the mission in action, to "be examples to the flock." Today, on the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, Apostle, we are invited to answer the question: How will we, grounded in our experiences upon this Hill, continue to lead, serve and build our own legacies?

Kevin Hamilton '24
SGA Co-President

FEBRUARY 23 | FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Ez 18:21-28; Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8; Mt 5:20-26

"Do I not rather rejoice when he turns from his evil way that he may live?" (Ezekiel 18:23).

For several years I worked part-time as a chaplain at San Quentin state prison in California. The men held there had committed serious crimes and they lived always in the shadow of death row. Some succumbed to rage and despair as they marked their days sealed off from the world. Others, however, discovered new life and hope in conversion. They accepted responsibility for their crimes, embraced a life of prayer, and grew in virtue through daily struggle. They became lights for their fellow inmates and modeled the Christian life to me. One man I came to know was released and now works for a restorative justice project, helping former incarcerated with their reentry into communities. Through conversion, these men now truly live in ways that we, the indifferent, have yet to discover.

Today's reading from the prophet Ezekiel speaks of conversion, the redirection of one's life toward the righteousness of God. Turning away from virtue and responsibility leads to spiritual death; but repentance and conversion means one "shall surely live, he shall not die." In the gospel reading, Jesus calls for the release of anger, the practice of forgiveness, and end of hypocrisy – in short, he invites us to turn toward freedom and hope. Will we accept that invitation? How are we called to convert and truly live during these sacred days of Lent?

Rev. John Gavin, S.J.
Associate Professor of Religious Studies

FEBRUARY 24 | SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Dt 26:16-19; Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8; Mt 5:43-48

"And today the Lord is making this agreement with you: you are to be a people peculiarly his own, as he promised you; and provided you keep all his commandments" (Deuteronomy 26:18).

It's a blessing to be "a people peculiarly his own"! I was brought up with atheism in China. Darwin's evolution theory was taught as the only truth. I believed humans and apes had a common ancestor. After moving to the United States, God's people sought me out. I was indifferent towards God's call, but God was persistent. One day, I drove on a highway through the mountains in Vermont, watching the highway extend over the mountaintop and disappear in the sky. I was in awe of humans' ability to invent cars and blast a pathway through mountains. Questions came to my mind: "Why was no other species on earth ever advanced like humans? Did we really evolve from apes?"

Years later, I became a Christian. My faith and experience have taught me that separation from God is a life of living hell. God gave us the commandments so we can understand who he is, and abiding by them brings peace and joy. At last, my questions were answered: We were made by God, in his image. He gives us wisdom, knowledge, understanding and discernment to steward the earth. This made sense. I am grateful today God called me to be "peculiarly his own" and to live a life in peace and joy through him, and only through him. Praise be to God!

Zhuoman "Zoomy" Gardner
Associate Director, Holy Cross Fund

FEBRUARY 25 | SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Ps 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19; Rom 8:31b-34; Mk 9:2-10

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

I am a serial overthinker.

My loved ones will rejoice–I'm owning the label! This manifests several ways, from studying weeks in advance to thinking through a variety of hypothetical outcomes when making a decision. I find comfort in feeling prepared and the illusion of control ... even if the outcome seems unlikely.

I'm sure many can relate to this phenomenon; the older I've gotten the more universal it seems to be. Through reflection, I've noticed this pattern stemmed from a fear of the unknown. I often worried about my friends and the wellbeing of my family, particularly, my aging parents. I worried for their health, their sustained comfort and offered my time and knowledge whenever possible (even if it wasn't welcomed!).

In today's readings, I was struck by the recurring themes of unconditional and, dare say I, illogical love and trust. Abraham, after several childless years, gives himself to God and follows his command… to sacrifice his first and only son. Something so unimaginable, yet, Abraham obediently ascends to the top of the mountain to carry out the order–only to be stopped moments before the child is harmed. Likewise, the message, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" reiterates this concept of releasing ourselves to God… fully and unconditionally.

This past fall, I suddenly lost my mom, a scenario that was completely out of my control, but a reminder that God was there when I found comfort in my faith and in those around me. I learned a new value in thinking less and believing more. We only have so much control, and, if we release our worries, we may find some peace of mind.

Siobhan Kiernan '21
Assistant Director, Holy Cross Fund

FEBRUARY 26 | MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Dn 9:4b-10; Ps 79:8, 9, 11 and 13; Lk 6:36-38

"O Lord, we are shamefaced, like our kings, our princes, and our fathers, for having sinned against you" (Deuteronomy 9:8).

Reflecting on sin and rebellion feels like an open acknowledgment of the stumbles and wrong turns in my own life journey. As a young Guatemalan immigrant in the U.S., I often struggle with finding the right path, and I tend to forget that God is always there to guide me. When reading this passage, it made me reflect and think, "I get it. I've messed up, gone off course, and sometimes ignored the advice I should have followed."

With time, in the pursuit of personal and professional growth, I have noticed that there is a fundamental connection between the plea for forgiveness and the desire for guidance. This reading is a great narrative that captures the struggles, resilience and aspirations of immigrants seeking a better future in terms of our relationship with God. The need for forgiveness becomes not just a spiritual plea, but also a deep human desire for acceptance in a world that sometimes feels indifferent.

Nonetheless, despite our missteps, there is a genuine desire to do better; to live up to the potential we believe we have as God's creation. How can we continue to grow, learn and try to make a meaningful impact, while navigating the twists and turns of life, offering consolation to those who find themselves in similar circumstances?

Fátima Oseida '20

FEBRUARY 27 | TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Is 1:10, 16-20; Ps 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23; Mt 23:1-12

"The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:11-12).

Like many, I wrestle with questions of identity and belonging. At different times of my life, these questions have resembled: What career do I want? What is important to me? Who am I? How do I hope others will remember me? Though these are questions about me, I often compare myself to others to answer these types of questions–whether it be comparing myself to others' happiness, success, relationships or material items. Of course, I believe it is important to seek counsel from others, but there are plenty of times that I lean too far toward seeking others' perspectives of and for me that I stray so far away from my own answers. In these moments I become almost unrecognizable to myself and who I am called to be.

Today's readings call us to avoid distraction and to examine how we might understand ourselves and use our own gifts and characteristics–uniquely bestowed to each of us by God–to serve each other and bring forth his mission. The emphasis is not on achieving or exalting ourselves, but on serving. While I still worry about others' perceptions of me and compare myself to others, I know I must align my behaviors and actions with my own values and the type of person I am called to be to truly be of service in this world. I know I will continue to have questions, and I will continue to discover and revise how I might answer them as I continue to grow, but my prayer during this Lenten season is for each of us to more closely know ourselves, our gifts and our own worth and dignity, in service to God's mission.

Patrick Rogers
Director of Orientation and Transition, Office of Student Involvement

FEBRUARY 28 | WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Jer 18:18-20; Ps 31:5-6, 14, 15-16; Mt 20:17-28

"You do not know what you are asking" (Matthew 20:22).

"Bye for now, enjoy your life, and see you when the time comes," read a Facebook message I received from one of my coworkers after another great summer had flown by and I returned back to school for another year at Holy Cross. In just a few simple words, change was confirmed, an end of a season was noted and hope for the future was established. I was grateful for what was behind me, and I was unsure of what lay ahead as I moved in for my senior year.

In today's gospel, Jesus circles those closest to him, asking them to prepare for an unsettling future. As two of the disciples wrestle with what is to come, they, with their mother, try to gain footing and a sense of certainty for themselves. They think they know what is best, but they know not what they are asking.

So often in our lives we cling to our pasts, hoping that the best parts of our lives will not change, and when things do end up changing, we try to navigate around what will best suit our past selves. God knows a version of us far greater than our pasts. This Lent, I invite you to live in the hope of a great future, enjoy the present moment and meet God in whatever he has for you when the time comes.

Elsi Ojanen '24

FEBRUARY 29 | THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Jer 17:5-10; Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6; Lk 16:19-31

"Blessed are they who hope in the Lord. He is like a tree planted near running water, that yields its fruit in due season, and whose leaves never fade" (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

Today's readings remind us that God's wisdom is infinite, intimate and life-giving.

Many summers ago, I slept under the stars in Utah's southern desert. The night sky arched up and around me, and land spread out in every direction to the purple-blue horizon in the west. I tried to imagine what was between and beyond the vast spaces of earth and sky–coyotes, underground springs, Pinyon Pine, petroglyphs, Rabbitbrush, ancient ruins, precious artifacts, cold mountain tops, meteors, comets, other galaxies… the creative exercise was exhilarating, but it ended far too soon. I was finite–incapable of imagining much beyond what I could see or had read, and there, under the stars, I wished for a glimpse of what God must see.

God fathoms the vast landscapes of our lives, sees what we don't, and knows how to care for the weights and wants we carry deep inside. "I, the Lord, alone probe the mind and test the heart…" God knows where the bones are buried and where the fresh water hides; why don't we let him guide? Trusting in divine and perpetual insight roots us in hope and opens us to limitless possibility and joy.

Jennifer Summerhays
Director of Study Abroad

MARCH 1 | FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Gn 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Ps 105:16-17, 18-19, 20-21; Mt 21:33-43, 45-46

"Just throw him into that cistern there in the desert; but do not kill him outright" (Genesis 37:22).

Today's readings speak to the things that can get in the way of our relationships with others, which inevitably gets in the way of our relationship with God. Hate and jealousy can easily lead us to sin when we stew over the most minor things. During these readings, I immediately reflected on a childhood memory in which jealousy was directed at me, causing hate from some of my closest neighborhood friends. Unfortunately, jealousy isn't unique; it is seen often, and we all face it at some point.

We can all find ourselves and those around us judging one another too quickly or harshly. We are often tested with doing the right thing. Taking the longer route to do the right thing requires more effort, commitment and thoughtfulness. Why do some choose the easy route that lacks caring and commitment to each other? God reminds me of the importance of examining my life and repenting. I can do better and find opportunities to improve.

With the turmoil in today's world, finding the good can sometimes be challenging. Seeing how God cares about us in these unprecedented times can be difficult and confusing. However, it is essential to remember that God does care and we can have faith that good will deliver us over evil. What if we spend time with him, be honest with our struggles and ask him for strength to overcome these difficult times?

May this season of Lent remind us always to do the right thing regardless of the pressures that may invite us to do otherwise.

Rich Perna
Executive Director of Dining, Hospitality and Auxiliary Services

MARCH 2 | SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Mic 7:14-15, 18-20; Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

"The Lord is kind and merciful.
He pardons all your iniquities,
He heals all your ills.
He redeems your life from destruction,
he crowns you with kindness and compassion"
(Psalm 8a, 103:3-4).

During Lent, I often find myself reflecting on my connection to God. Is it real? Am I listening enough? Am I sharing enough with God? How am I creating a real relationship with God that has meaning?

The story of the prodigal son has a way of whipping me back into consciousness. For me, Lent is often a time when I try to explore spiritual practices that aren't as present for me throughout the rest of the year, and so, can feel unfamiliar. Hopefully, it's a time when, at the very least, I'm a bit more intentional. This gospel reading always reminds me that I feel closest to God, in relationship with God, and understand God's love through relationships with others.

When I read today's readings, I find myself relating to the father and each of the two sons almost daily. And with each, there's an opportunity to better understand my relationship with God. As a parent of two children, I have an easier time believing that God loves me exactly as I am, just as the father loves his two sons. As a husband, brother, son, friend, and co-worker, I find myself needing forgiveness and struggling to ask for it, but also fighting resentment when I I think I'm the "good son." It is, however, when I do seek forgiveness, and when I do release resentment, I feel closest to God. When I focus on kindness and mercy, both giving and receiving them, I feel a real connection to God in my life.

Michael Mahoney '00

MARCH 3 | THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Ex 20:1-17; Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11; 1 Cor 1:22-25; Jn 2:13-25

"Stop making my Father's house a marketplace" (John 2:16).

The Cleansing of the temple in today's gospel is a big shake-up. A "come-to-Jesus" moment, for sure. A frustrated, disgusted–even angry–Jesus clears the distractions, the false idols, the static. He beseeches us: Stop! Pay attention! Do not waste another moment rushing mindlessly away from God! Reset!

This past fall, my wonderful dad died. The approximately two-week period before he passed was one big "come-to-Jesus" moment for me–an emotional and spiritual shake-up, for sure. It was also a gift. Although dad had been unwell with a serious diagnosis for quite some time, he took a stark turn. A daily, and ultimately, hourly decline was dramatic. There is nothing like witnessing a moment-by-moment passing across the threshold between human life and death to punctuate the gravitas of the gift of life. One slows the frenetic pace of our world to the measure of an individual breath, each tiny moment. The chaotic temple is cleared. Nonsense falls away. And in the quiet space between breaths is where the rubber meets the road. Illuminated here, is the contrast between the static of the money-changers, the false idols and such, and the outreached hand of Jesus asking, do you trust in me? How have you spent your moments? The example of my father's faith and trust in God, vigilance towards God's signs around us, and my own faith, helped me as I sat at his bedside. The opportunity to clear the temple, discern, and reset using only God's instruments of measure of a good and successful life is a gift, and I have work to do.

Have you had a "come-to-Jesus" moment?

Maura (Kelly) Fredey '94, P25

MARCH 4 | MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

2 Kgs 5:1-15ab; Ps 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4; Lk 4:24-30

"Athirst is my soul for the living God. When shall I go and behold the face of God?" (Psalm 42:3).

When I am looking for God at work in my life, am I like Naaman, who expected to experience something extraordinary and was disappointed at the simplicity of God's response to his prayer? Am I like the crowds, who were furious when reminded that God's own people do not always recognize those sent by him to guide us in his path?

My soul thirsts for God and longs to behold the face of God. Yet pride, anger and other factors of the human condition can often prevent me from noticing the many ways God is always present in and around me. I am caught up in sadness and frustration, rather than the "gladness and joy" to which I am invited.

When Elizabeth was visited by her cousin Mary, she exclaimed "Who am I that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Unlike Naaman, her response to God's presence was one of humility. Perhaps by trying harder to practice humility I, too, will more readily and enthusiastically see God at work in my life, in both small and large ways. For who am I that my Lord should suffer and die for me? I am one loved by God, called to "the altar of God, the God of my gladness and joy" (these words from Psalm 43 are inscribed in Latin above the doors of St. Joseph Memorial Chapel). His love and mercy are ever present, if only I allow myself to see and receive them as they are offered, on God's terms, not mine.

Lisa (Sacovitch) Villa '90, P27, P22, P20
Digital Scholarship Librarian, Dinand Library

MARCH 5 | TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Dan 3:25, 34-43; Ps 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9; Mt 18:21-35

"With contrite heart and humble spirit let us be received" (Daniel 3:39).

I first read today's parable at the very beginning of what would become my conversion to Catholicism. It was my first exposure to the 'logic' of God's forgiveness, which is, like all his grace, given abundantly. We have been forgiven a great debt, and given much more. Why should we not approach others the same way?

As a whole, today's readings are a reminder of mercy. Azariah implores God to remember the mercy he had previously shown to Israel, now in exile. The psalmist does the same. In the gospel, through the parable of the wicked servant, we are told to remember the mercy that we've received in times when people implore us for forgiveness.

Azariah, without anything else to sacrifice, offers God a contrite heart and a humble spirit. It is with these two things we can forgive as we are forgiven, as Jesus commands. With contrition, we can approach God to receive forgiveness, and with the humility that comes with being forgiven, we can offer forgiveness to others. When we understand that we are not too good to need forgiveness, we realize we are not too righteous to forgive. These things, contrition and humility, cannot be faked, and we cannot manufacture them for ourselves.

Liam Murphy '25

MARCH 6 | WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Dt 4:1, 5-9; Ps 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20; Mt 5:17-19

"…be earnestly on your guard not to forget the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live, but teach them to your children and to your children's children" (Deuteronomy 4:9).

What do you see in your home and daily life? What traditions are alive in your kitchen and living room? What stories have you learned from your elders? Oral tradition weaves the fabric of human experience. Pause and mindfully tap into the stories and traditions that shaped who you are.

What do you see in the world today? I see war over land, culture and religious beliefs. I see innocent suffering. How do I explain this to my child and to his children? There are no easy answers. There is, however, an invitation to go into the desert as Jesus did, to slow down and bring these questions to God this Lenten season.

My personal reflection points to the choices we make. How do we choose to respond to injustice, conflict and destructive forces in our lives?

We can choose to react with rage, or respond with strength.
We can choose to react with divisiveness, or respond with grace.
We can choose to react with apathy, or respond with empathy.

We are the choices we make. Our choices write our own stories. Our stories inform generations to come.

What choices will you make?
What will you teach to future generations?

Michael Palumbo '98

MARCH 7 | THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Jer 7:23-28; Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9; Lk 11:14-23

"Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute, and when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke and the crowds were amazed" (Luke 11:14-23).

Plants come to my apartment to die. No green thumb here. My apartment in Brooklyn is like the elephant graveyard in "The Lion King." I can just see Mufasa warning his son, Simba, not to come to my apartment. Simba looks at his future kingdom and asks his dad: "What about that spot over there?" The camera zooms through a window in my apartment. Plants are dying. Mufasa, in James Earl Jones's voice, warns: "You must never go there, son. Plants do not grow there at all." Sometimes, after a long run, I will drink a tall glass of water right in front of my plants and neglect to water them.

One day, my wife was like, "But, you're a teacher! I'm surprised you're not good with plants. You're such a good teacher." This clicked in my head and in my heart. Children come to my class with a range of needs. When I think about the quiet kids in class, they're certainly not possessed like the mute brother in the Gospel of Luke. Educators call these quiet kids "deep processors." How do we draw their voices out? If God created the universe with the power of his voice, and if we were made in God's image, then we have that same power to create and speak life to one another with God. Similarly with plants, you get to know them, learn about how much earth, and water, and light they need, be friendly to them, and their growth is just as amazing and awe-inspiring as the Scriptures tell us, and arguably even more amazing because it doesn't take a miracle to do it. We simply have to water the plants, and show love to one another.

Dave Robles '02

MARCH 8 | FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Hos 14:2-10; Ps 81:6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14, 17; Mk 12:28-34

"Which is the first of all the commandments?" Jesus replied, "The first is this: …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" (Mark 12:28).

As I sat down at 7:30 a.m. on a Saturday morning to quietly pray and reflect on today's gospel, my next-door neighbor, Frank, loudly revved up his leaf blower as he does every Saturday morning, even when there are no more leaves on the ground. I sighed, forget your hopes for a quiet morning, forget the rules about 8:30 a.m. sound ordinances, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. Not an easy task.

What strikes me about this gospel is that to Jesus, the most important thing is love, not rules. It is easy to obsess over the rules. And though rules can provide much needed order and direction, Jesus reminds us that the priority above all is to give total love and commitment to God, while extending that same love and commitment to humanity, as we would want it extended to us. Having such a loving heart is a demanding task, but as Jesus dictates in the gospel, it is what is required to build God's kingdom in our fractured world.

Libby (Reichard) Sims '99

MARCH 9 | SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Hos 6:1-6; Ps 51:3-4, 18-19, 20-21ab; Lk 18:9-14

"He will come to us like the rain, like spring rain that waters the earth" (Hosea 6:3).

Growth does not come from comfort. Easy times do not create strong people. The most beautiful views come after the most challenging climbs...

I have always found strength and peace in believing that God does not give us challenges we are not capable of handling. Unfortunately (or fortunately!), there are too many examples of unexpected and/or undesired challenges from both my personal and professional life to mention in the space provided. That said, I have found it helpful in each of those times to first allow myself to ask a few basic questions: "Why this? Why now? Why me?" Usually they are followed by a few absolutes like: "I can't. I won't." When presented with challenges–especially those that are particularly scary or "unfair"–I recognize that this sort of questioning and venting is normal, but I try to view that as a mental "place" only to visit, and never stay. I have worked to focus less on the "why" and more on the "how" as a process to move forward.

I believe that God wants us to thrive, but in order to do this fully we must also know what it means to struggle. Rain nourishes our growth, fosters our resiliency, and allows us to develop the grit and persistence necessary to lead a life of impact; to truly "live" our life rather than succumb to the trappings of comfort, ease and the eventual decline into the role of bystander of our own lived experience. The rain will continue to fall, and God will be in it. This can aid us in our preparation to respond with faith and certainty that we are indeed up to the challenge–and soon to be stronger because of it.

Kit Hughes
Associate Vice President for Intercollegiate Athletics

MARCH 10 | FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

2 Chr 36:14-16, 19-23; Ps 137:1-2, 3, 4-5,6; Eph 2:4-10; Jn 3:14-21

"But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God" (John 3:20).

As my senior year passes by, I have been reflecting on my time on The Hill. I think about my first year, in my childhood bedroom on Zoom, doubting myself and my place here. I think of how far I have come alongside my peers who have become best friends, and how all of my experiences here have shaped me into the person I strive to be–a woman for and with others.

Some of the experiences that stand out to me are through my involvement with the Spring Break Immersion Program, experiences full of light. I have been fortunate enough to travel to several L'Arche communities across the United States. In these homes, people with and without intellectual disabilities live in community with one another, and, through my time with them, I learned the true meaning of service. To commit to society by means of service to others, I needed to spend time to truly get to know the community in which I planned to serve. When I think back to my initial take on the Jesuit motto, of being "for and with others," I realize I now more fully understand the truth of the "with" aspect of that motto. Throughout my time at L'Arche, I moved towards the light of these beautiful people, and I was struck by how I was not necessarily doing service, but instead being served by learning from teachers of the heart.

During this Lenten season, how can we gravitate towards, and ourselves be those who radiate light, as a reminder of the good works that God does through us?

Maggie Smith '24

MARCH 11 | MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Is 65:17-21; Ps 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b; Jn 4:43-54

"I am about to create new heavens and a new earth…the things of the past shall not be remembered" (Isaiah 65:17).

What a beautiful promise God makes to the faithful. Not remembering has its appeal. The things I remember tend to keep me up at night, keep me fearful of tomorrow, keep me wary of change and anxious of uncertainty. And it's not that I have suffered greatly or inordinately–I've just lived long enough to find the promise of a new earth attractive.

The strangest part of reflecting on this reading is how relevant the description of human misery still is. In describing a new earth, he also illustrates our current one: a place of untimely death, hunger, devastating poverty and grief. I live in a world that is considerably safer and more stable than the one from which these readings derive, but it still pales in comparison to the new earth.

This promise is difficult to comprehend, which Jesus acknowledges. "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe." Incredibly, many of us do believe. Mired in this current reality, we believe in God, in each other, in justice and the promise of a better tomorrow. We do all this with the signs and wonders that surround us each day. Today I will celebrate the signs that strengthen my faith; the wonders that help me shed fear; and the belief that makes it possible to find joy in the present.

Cecilia Hylton
Director of Executive and Internal Communications

MARCH 12 | TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Ez 47:1-9, 12; Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9; Jn 5:1-16

"Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live, and there shall be abundant fish, for wherever this water comes the sea shall be made fresh" (Ezekiel 47:9).

In this reading, we are reminded that God is the river that flows within us, through us and around us. He is the constant source of life that keeps us going and moving every day. All things are possible through him and it is he that deserves our love and praise always. God is our creator, he is the one that made life possible and it is because of him that we should strive to be our best selves. Lent is the time in which we slowly break away from bad habits and form new ones. We reflect on our actions and our character to decide where we need to improve. How can we put God first in our busy life? How can we all place God at the center of our life and put everything we do before him?

In the responsorial psalm, we say, "The Lord of hosts is with us; our stronghold is the God of Jacob." This response suggests that we want to and should make God a priority in our lives because he is the foundation of our strength. It is through God that sometimes we are able to do the impossible. As we continue to go through Lent, how do we want to move as strong and resilient individuals? How can we resist temptation and inspire others? With God by our side, we can work to form new habits and encourage those around us to do the same.

Arianna Moore '24

MARCH 13 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Is 49:8-15; Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18; Jn 5:17-30

"Even should she forget, I will never forget you" (Isaiah 49:15).

On the day my parents adopted me, my mother gave me a stuffed elephant. A sweet gift for her new daughter and a reminder of the devoted love she would give to me throughout my life. I can hear the echoes of her voice in my childhood, "an elephant never forgets," she would say. This elephant now sits on a shelf in a closet of my childhood home, and each time I happen to see it, I am overcome with emotion, as if the weight of my mother's love rests in its simplicity. It was the sign of a promise that could never be broken.

Isaiah speaks of the promise of God's love, the covenant, that provides abundance, guidance, and beauty to the chaos of our humanity. But perhaps most importantly, Isaiah highlights that the "Lord comforts his people, and shows mercy to the afflicted." God's love does not guarantee a perfect life, but promises that amidst even the darkest hours, God will stay with us. Like a loving mother, God will help us up when we've fallen, dry our tears when we are crying and hope in our joy.

Today, I can't help but think of that little stuffed elephant sitting on my shelf. A visible sign that my mother will always be there to love me and support me. This Lent, I pray that we might all find our "little elephant" as the symbol of God's devoted promise of the deep love God has for each of us.

Olivia Catherine Hastie '22

MARCH 14 | THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Ex 32:7-14; Ps 106:19-20, 21-22, 23; Jn 5:31-47

"I have come in my Father's name, and you do not accept me…" (John 5:43).

These two Lenten readings are loaded with intensity. In short, God is not accepted. God, who has everything and is omnipotent, nevertheless wondrously and paradoxically cares about being accepted; God cares about humanity. God loves his chosen ones and displays a type of lover's righteous anger and blazing disappointment in their infidelity. They don't get it. They don't appreciate God's gifts and love. Moses, almost maternal-like, pleads with and for God to relent and reconsider the covenant of love with his people. God is "moved," so to speak, by Moses' intercession. God loves! God is love! It reminds me of St. Alphonsus Liguori, who describes God as madly in love with us! How beautiful is it for me to be loved so lavishly?

As a licensed clinical therapist with families and youth in crisis, and a certified disaster response counselor, I often see the most devastated situations, and shattered and broken lives. I try to work to facilitate new paths of healing, of good choices, of renewal. I often feel pulled by God's own magnanimous and transforming love. I'm challenged to channel this love into everything. In the gospel, Jesus is disappointed, sad, hurt even, so it seems, by those who don't recognize him, don't accept his gospel, or his total self-giving love that just keeps pouring itself out. This palpable love calls me today to personally accept Jesus as savior, friend, lover, brother, and as Lord and Son of God. In accepting this love into my life, Jesus shows me life in its fullness and leads me into prayerful union with him, even while pushing me out and beyond myself to find him in others, in service, in healing adventures, ongoing love, and in paths of bringing him to those who don't really know, accept, and love him yet.

John J.D. Schweska, LPC '74

MARCH 15 | FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Wis 2:1a, 12-22; Ps 34:17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23; Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

"Many are the troubles of the just man, but out of them all the Lord delivers him" (Psalm 34:20).

Whenever my mother experienced a setback or had been wronged in some way, she would often recite to herself, "God doesn't sleep" and "God will repay me in the end." I always heard these statements loud and clear, no matter how quietly or gently she repeated them to herself. In many ways, these phrases were not meant to go unheard by others, or else she would have refrained from saying them aloud, even if only to herself.

Today's responsorial psalm proclaims, "Many are the troubles of the just man, but out of them all the Lord delivers him." These words remind me of my mother and her faith. One may say and do all the right things, never straying from his teachings and example, yet no one is immune from troubles, heartbreak and hardship in this life. Today's reading from the Book of Wisdom notes the error of the unjust and the wicked in discounting the reward God will bestow upon his followers. There is comfort in knowing God will repay his servants. There is peace in knowing God will bless us in ways that outweigh any setback or wrongdoing we have endured in his name.

As a child, I used to hear these phrases from my mother as a sort of retaliation toward those who had wronged her, that they would endure the wrath of an angry God. Faith has taught me that her words were, instead, affirmations: God is loving, understanding and patient, thus shall we be.

Jerrel A. Burgo
Director of Student Inclusion & Belonging,
Center for Justice, Equity, Belonging, and Identity

MARCH 16 | SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Jer 11:18-20; Ps 7:2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12; Jn 7:40-53

"Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance" (Luke 8:15).

When I was in sixth grade my church hosted a Friday night event for all the altar servers. We had full reign of the social center, we played basketball, watched "Hoosiers," and ate meatball subs. When I returned home and told my parents about the fun we had, I could see the terror in my mother's widening eyes. Did she not like Gene Hackman's portrayal of Norman Dale, a new coach that brings his spotty past with him to the small Indiana town? No, it was the fact that we had meatball subs, on a Friday, during Lent.

So many of my early thoughts and memories around Lent are about giving something up, meat on Fridays, candy, soda. The things I chose to give up were often things I missed and looked forward to forty days in the future. Reflecting on today's gospel acclamation, I was struck by the call for us to give more with "a generous heart," instead of giving up.

We are invited to give kindness, give care, and give goodness. This giving "yield[s] a harvest through perseverance", carrying on through this Lenten season, and beyond, giving the same love God gives us, these acts bring us more joy than that first sip of soda or bite of candy from our Easter basket ever could. Reach out to others and give your love, offer to help, reconnect, and share a meatball sub–today is Saturday, I promise it is okay.

Cameron Smith
Assistant Director, Center for Career Development

MARCH 17 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Ez 37:12-14; Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8; Rom 8:8-11; Jn 11:1-45

"…I will forget their evildoing and remember their sin no more" (Hebrews 8:12).

As a young child, I remember becoming separated from my mother during a shopping trip at a department store. I was frightened when I discovered that she was nowhere in sight. Suddenly I could hear my name over the intercom instructing me to come to the front of the store. Fearing the chastising I would receive from my mother once found, I decided to hide in the nearest clothing rack. Shortly thereafter, I was discovered by a store employee who returned me to my mother. Dreading the tongue lashing I was expecting, I was utterly shocked to instead be enveloped in a warm, welcoming hug. She was so happy and utterly relieved to have me returned to her safely.

This is a common story that so many of us can relate to. A human experience of he/she/them losing his/her/their path and returning to a loving embrace.

Reflecting on this anecdote gives life to the words "All, from the least to greatest, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more." In order to be a servant of God we do not need to seek out perfection. Rather, instead of hiding in fear of sin and wrongdoing, seek out the one that loves us most: God. Ask for forgiveness and find the loving acceptance of the Holy Spirit. During this time of preparation for the Resurrection of Jesus, remember the words, "A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew within me."

Monica (Thornton) McMahon '98

MARCH 18 | MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Dan 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Ps 23:1-3A, 3b-4, 5, 6; Jn 8:1-11

"Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7).

As an educator, volunteer and mother, I am living my best life. It is a blessing to spend most of my waking hours with children. Children are easy: their problems straightforward, their words unfiltered, their love unconditional.

Children have a strong sense of right and wrong. Their moral compass is focused not on people being right and wrong, but on a true sense of justice as it impacts humanity.

Children respect others–even while piling on top of one another with total disregard for physical boundaries because they're kids! When a classmate is excluded from a game, it cannot stand, because inclusion is right. When a friend proclaims that "she" now prefers the pronoun "he," the transition is effortless and swift without question or judgment.

I remember my youngest telling my elderly father about her beloved teacher, who preferred the pronouns "they/them." My father questioned her, "How many teachers do you have? Why are you saying 'they'?" Without hesitation, my preschooler answered concisely, "They like to be called 'they,' so that's what we do because it's kind. Now listen to my story…" When given the space, children choose kindness. "Let the one among you who is without sign be the first to throw a stone at her." Children, not yet "grown evil with age," are innocent. They aren't carrying the invisible baggage of bias from which adults pull their judgment. Children opt not to throw stones. I am forever inspired by the grace of the children in my life: their ability to accept without judgment and to practice kindness. Let the children lead the revolution: it shall be kind.

Meaghan Brown Guziewicz '02

MARCH 19 | SOLEMNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH, SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

2 Sm 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29; Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22; Mt 1:16, 18-21, 24a

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid…" (Matthew 1:20).

Forty years ago, I spent the summer significantly revising a master's thesis in philosophy. I was struggling. Every day on the way to the library, I passed a statue of Saint Joseph on the campus of Gonzaga University. At the same time I discovered a four point prayer to Saint Joseph, which I used daily as I passed the statue to and from the library. I invoked his intercession. The four points involved pondering Saint Joseph's fidelity to grace, his devotion to the interior life, his care for Mary and his protection of Jesus.

All four of these points can be observed in the gospel selection from Matthew on this solemnity of Saint Joseph. Joseph heeded the voice of the angel. Joseph paid attention to his interior movements. At first he planned to divorce Mary quietly, but as a result of the angel's revelation, Joseph trusted what he heard from the angel. Joseph took Mary into his home. He protected Jesus from Herod's slaughter, watched over him on the journey to Egypt and the toilsome return to Nazareth.

Lent offers us an opportunity to notice the movements of grace in our lives, to ponder what is happening in our interior space. Lent provides a time to seek the intercession of Mary, and a deeper companionship with Jesus. May Joseph show us the way to a deepening communion with God.

Rev. James Hayes, S.J. '72

MARCH 20 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Dan 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Dan 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56; Jn 8:31-42

"If our God, whom we serve, can save us from the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O king, may he save us! But even if he will not, know, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue that you set up" (Daniel 3:17-18).

Today's readings inspire and encourage individuals to stand firm in their convictions, even when confronted with adversity, reminding us that faith can turn these challenges into opportunities. As I reflect on these readings, I think about my college experience. I went to a liberal arts college 1,500 miles from home, where the majority of people held starkly different religious and political views. I was challenged to consider different viewpoints and how they interfaced with my values. For the first time in my life, I had the freedom to apply and redefine my values to contexts without the one-sided influence of my home church, political state and social structure.

At one point during my college journey, my mother said to me "you are just so easily influenced and I did not raise you that way" regarding a political stance we no longer shared. If I were brave enough at the time, I would have responded with "this is exactly how you raised me." This journey and transformation has cost me a great deal. I've lost family members and friends; some of my relationships are strained. However, I have also gained family, friends and opportunities along the way.

Have you ever been in a situation where standing firm in your convictions has resulted in sacrifice? Has your notion of the truth ever evolved?

Justine Fisher
Director, Academic Services and Learning Resources

MARCH 21 | THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Gn 17:3-9; Ps 105:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; Jn 8:51-59

"Whoever keeps my word will never see death" (John 8:51).

Christ's promise that "Whoever keeps my word will never see death" can strike us as a bit galling. It clearly bothers Christ's original scriptural audience who ask him if he is better "than our father Abraham, who died? Or the prophets, who died?" We have all known (or will know) good people, people who have served as illuminators of Christ's love, and who have not only died but have suffered greatly. Is it simply that no one can fully "keep [the] covenant throughout the ages" as God admonishes Abraham and his descendants to do?

Perhaps Christ's promise in today's reading is not so much that we and our loved ones will never suffer but is instead a promise that, if we keep his word, we will come to witness the world as God intended it to be. A consequence of the sin of Adam and Eve is that sometimes our perception is warped, we pursue what is harmful, we prefer what we should reject, we waste our nature as God formed it and instead try to bend reality to how we have determined it should be.

But when we surrender our will to his, we will "never see death," not because death is not real, but because we will see that death is birth into eternal life. Christ's Crucifixion and Resurrection effected a real change in creation that redeemed humanity. Let us pray in this Lenten season that we will develop the courage to accept his gift.

Patrick Gavin '07

MARCH 22 | FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Jer 20:10-13; Ps 18:2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7; Jn 10:31-42

"In my distress I called upon the Lord, and he heard my voice" (Psalm 18:7).

A number of years ago now, I was speaking with a wise spiritual director. I was recounting a particular difficulty that I was dealing with at the time, one about which I was constantly praying. Looking back, I know that I was frustrated because God was not "fixing" the problem to my satisfaction–I wasn't getting the exact resolution that I thought appropriate. At the time, I could only think that God wasn't hearing my prayers or, worse still, was just not listening to them at all.

After listening to me for a little while, my spiritual director offered: "Tim, God always hears your prayers. This time is no different. But sometimes we confuse getting what we want with being heard by God. And, sometimes, the answer to our prayer can be 'no.'" I know now that he was right.

Today's psalm brought this lesson back to me forcefully. "In my distress, I called upon the Lord, and he heard my voice." In this Lenten season of prayer, we constantly bring our needs and our hopes, our distress and our joys before the Lord. We are to ask, always, for what we seek–and we can be confident that we are always heard. May we have the grace to be open to the ways in which God answers our prayers…even if not in the ways we would have imagined ourselves.

Rev. Timothy W. O'Brien, S.J. '06
Associate Vice President for Mission

MARCH 23 | SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

"I will make with them a covenant of peace" (Ezekiel 37:26).

When reflecting on the Scripture passages for today, one might notice a stark contrast between the first reading and the gospel. In Ezekiel 37, God promises, "I will make with them a covenant of peace" and expresses God's plan to further grow God's kingdom. Later on, in the gospel, we witness many leaders starting to plan out Jesus' death. Interestingly, there is a large gap between the expression of God's love in the first reading and the violence of humanity in the gospel. With so many intense conflicts occuring inside and outside of the United States, and in our own lives, we often forget the unending presence of God's love.

As we experience conflict in both big and small ways in our everyday lives, we are invited to consider the persistence of God's compassion and kindness in the face of difficulties. While we try to navigate our personal relationships, our role in social movements, and our connection with our local community, God reminds us to try our best to reflect God's promise of peace. This Lent, how can we try our best to bring about peace and kindness, to embody a contrast to the cultural and structural violence of the world?

Claire Wolf '25
Co-President of the Worcester Student Government Association

MARCH 24 | PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Mk 11:1-10; Is 50:4-7; Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24; Phil 2:6-11; Mk 14:1—15:47

"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Mark 11:9).

This cry of praise–"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes…!"–was on the lips of the crowds that welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, a man so many had come to believe was the Messiah of God, the healer and teacher who changed people's lives. I have always been stunned that the crowds in Jerusalem went from celebrating him, to betraying, abandoning and even calling for his execution, within a few short days. On Palm Sunday, we get this snapshot of human frailty and fickleness. We too sing "Hosanna!" to Jesus, and then minutes later when he's standing before Pontius Pilate, shout "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

It seems that the point of the liturgy of Palm Sunday is to remember that we share the human weakness of Jesus' first friends and followers, who didn't find the courage to stand up for him before the authorities and hid away in fear for their own lives. Peter was sure of his strength and yet he denied Jesus three times. Would I abandon doing what's right if it would cost me dearly? Would I stand up for those I love or save my own skin? We may count ourselves lucky not to face circumstances that give answers to those questions. Still, embracing my weakness through this Palm Sunday experience makes me want to fix my eyes on Jesus, not get distracted by fear or ego, and thank him for forgiving my failings just as he did for Peter.

Rev. Brent H. Otto, S.J. '01

MARCH 25 | MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Is 42:1-7; Ps 27:1, 2, 3, 13-14; Jn 12:1-11

"You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me" (John 12:8).

I remember reading these words as a social justice-focused religious studies major at Holy Cross, and finding them jarring. They did not fit the compassionate image of Jesus that so inspired me in and outside the classroom. I found myself—alarmingly—agreeing with Judas: why not sell this valuable oil and use the funds to help the poor? I remember thinking there is so much work to be done, so many problems to solve! How can Jesus tell us that people will always be poor, that we will never achieve justice, and instead sanction using something valuable on himself?

Now, a quarter century later, I look back at my prior self, seeing her passion and well-intentioned restlessness perhaps in the way her professors and beloved chaplains did, or in the way I see my own children today. I want to tell her gently to stop and to breathe. To remember that life is a marathon, not a sprint. That Jesus was not being selfish or entitled, and he certainly wasn't turning his back on the poor. To the contrary, he was reminding us that it's okay—essential, even—to take a break from the struggles and trials of our days, our causes and our world every now and again. There will always be work to be done, and we only diminish our effectiveness and our power if we fail to take the time and space to care for ourselves, to enjoy our loved ones and to nourish our faith. May we each remember to give ourselves the gift of doing so this, and every, Lent.

Nicole Crifo '99

MARCH 26 | TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Is 49:1-6; Ps 71:1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15, 17; Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

"Though I thought I had toiled in vain,
and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength,
Yet my reward is with the Lord,
my recompense is with my God" (Isaiah 49:4).

In our culture that is so focused on success and immediate validation, I feel a profound sense of failure when I have "wasted" time and energy on something that does not meet my own expectations or goals. Today's readings are a reminder that our ultimate reward is not in success or recognition (immediate or otherwise), but in aligning our own expectations with God's plan for us. Of course, first we need to accept that God does have a plan for each of us, "The Lord called me from birth"; and then we must strive and struggle to understand what that plan is, which is a lifelong process. For this we need two things that I pray for often–trust and patience.

Believing God to be my "rock of refuge, a stronghold to give me safety" has already carried me through many challenges, and gives me hope to confront future challenges, as I figure out God's plan for me. While the disciples did not begin to fully understand what Jesus said to them at the Last Supper, they profoundly trusted in Jesus as they tried, and sometimes failed (as all of us humans do), to understand God's plan for them.

Lord, grant me the bedrock of trust and faith needed to understand your plan for me, and the patience to listen to your voice, as you reveal it to me.

Eileen (Nee) McGinn '81, P22

MARCH 27 | WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Is 50:4-9a; Ps 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34; Mt 26:14-25

"What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" (Matthew 26:15).

What a simple but nagging question! What prods an apostle like Judas, or any of us, to betray our covenant with the Lord? Which disappointments in God that we perceive, which shattered dreams, which unanswered prayers, are enough to change the trajectory of our lives here and in the world to come?

Judas does us a favor if his story causes us to rethink our basic commitment to Jesus Christ. The story of Judas is in Sacred Scripture for many reasons, not the least of which is that before we take anything for granted, we at least ask the question the other apostles asked that fateful night: "Surely it is not I, Lord?"

Do you know who is most likely to be the Judas in my church? Me. Someone says, "Surely not you, Deacon Paul." That's what they said about Judas. The shock of Judas' betrayal was that he looked so good on the outside. If I retell the story of Judas without searching my own heart, then I have missed the point.

Deacon Paul L. Robert '77, P06, P04

MARCH 28 | HOLY THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Ex 12:1-8, 11-14; Ps 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Jn 13:1-15

"What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later" (John 13:7).

I love literature. Reading historical accounts, I always find myself noticing moments that would make excellent drama in a story. Reading our passage today, I found Jesus' statement "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later" especially chilling. Though it specifically refers to the washing of the feet, it's an apt description for the entire Last Supper narrative. We've been reminded at the beginning of the passage that Jesus is about to die, yet the disciples still fail to understand the sacrificial nature of Jesus' mission. They won't understand it until the Resurrection. They won't understand until even later the sacrifices they themselves will be asked to make. What poignant dramatic irony in one sentence!

We tend to think of whatever we experience as normal, which can easily become "unexceptional, inevitable and boring." This is a particularly great danger with religion because the experiences have been familiar for centuries. How often has my mind wandered at church because it seems normal, and therefore unimportant, that God died to feed us his flesh? Passages like today's remind me that there is nothing boring about God's actions in our world. The gospels are more than stories (they really happened), but they're not less. If I find fictitious tales of sacrifice moving, how much more moving I should find reality! This Holy Week, I'm reminded to scrub the familiarity and "normalcy" from the Passion narrative, and be pierced afresh by this most strange and wonderful love story.

Emma Robinson '24

MARCH 29 | GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Is 52:13–53:12; Ps 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25; Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1–19:42

"So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple cloak. And he said to them, 'Behold, the man!' When the chief priests and the guards saw him they cried out, 'Crucify him, crucify him!'" (John 19:5-6).

Good Friday's very name places us in conflict with the gospel we are invited to reflect on. The cruelty of Roman rule is laid bare as imperial administrators target, humiliate and torture in the name of maintaining order. The images of his suffering are seared in our minds.

How do we make sense of this day? Good Friday can be a herald: the Lenten last mile; a sorrowful, reflective day before a weekend of pastels, chocolate and palm leaves. It also marks a liminal space. The deprivation of Lent is nearing an end. We will soon have much to celebrate, if we can hold on through this retelling of suffering and loss.

And hold on we will. Our faith inspires and demands it of us every day. Suffering is a process, familiar to us all at various points in our life. You might be experiencing it right now. When we become aware of our own suffering or the suffering of those around us, words can feel trite. Can I fast forward to the part of my life that looks more like Easter and less like this? No, sadly, I can't, but I can surrender to this moment, endure and ask for help. I can rely on my faith and my loved ones. And I can look forward to the unknown and, hopefully, better days ahead.

Vincent D. Rougeau
President

MARCH 30 | 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

"God saw how good it was" (Genesis 1:25).

I have always been terrified of really considering that God thinks I'm good. I can understand that God thinks creation is good and, as a campus minister, I'm constantly reminding students that God thinks they are wonderful. But me? Maybe God and I disagree here.

I have internalized a different message: that I'm not good enough. I'm not the high-earning lawyer my father wanted me to be. I'm far from the epitome of western beauty standards. I have fewer followers than Meta might want me to have. I have neither property nor influence. A lifetime of not meeting society's measures of success has made me feel that I will never be good enough.

And yet, while on the Spiritual Exercises, I was inundated with the opposite message: God sees how good I am and revels in me. God sees my goodness where others see only fault, failure, weakness. God's love doesn't demand I first meet expectations, it is the starting point from which the rest of my life begins. God sees me in my totality–faults, failures, weaknesses included–and sees how good I am. To live with that knowledge is freeing: it allows me to be happier, to give more generously, and to love God, myself and others more deeply.

That is the grace of the Easter Vigil for me. We enter in the darkness and leave in the light. Whenever I feel degraded, devalued, depreciated by the world around me, I need only remember that the "Gloriously Triumphant" loves me for me. And then, I need to go out and share that love.

Kevin C. Molloy '13

MARCH 31 | EASTER SUNDAY– THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Col 3:1-4; Jn 20:1-9

"Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb" (John 20:1).

When you stand by and witness someone you love with your entire being, suffer and die, death can feel final. As I imagine the scene in today's gospel, I try to sense the weight on Mary Magdalene's heart as she neared the tomb in the dark. My sister died at the age of 26 after a short and cruel battle with cancer. I remember feeling completely helpless. Her death seemed totally incomprehensible, as I'm sure Jesus' did to Mary. And yet, as I reflect upon today's gospel I am struck how the empty tomb, while not readily understood, invites us to hope in the God of new life.

Mary's encounter with her beloved teacher reminds me that death does not have the final word. That in the midst of our sorrow, we may find the tomb empty and discover hope in love's triumph over death— that in the Resurrection we re-encounter life. Perhaps that is why we race to the tomb because faith, love and hope compel us.

My two-year-old son furrows his eyebrows just like my sister once did. This is an everyday resurrection occurring right in front of me if I take the time to notice it. This does not mean that it is easy, especially in the midst of deep sorrow, but then again, neither is discipleship. Blessed be Mary of Magdala who leads the way for us to be an Easter people. Happy Resurrection Sunday.

Kyle Woolley
Director of Mission Initiatives, Office of Mission

COLLEGE OF THE
Holy Cross

One College Street
Worcester, Massachusetts
01610