



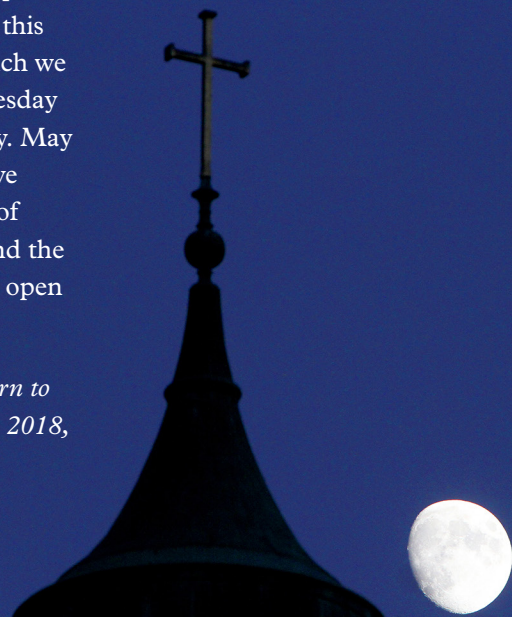
RETURN TO ME
Lenten Reflections
from Holy Cross | 2018

“This year, Ash Wednesday coincidentally falls on Valentine’s Day. May this popular “Hallmark Holiday” serve to remind us in faith that the season of Lent is most truly about our hearts...”

“ Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, with weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the Lord, your God.”

Each year on Ash Wednesday, the prophet Joel offers us both this challenge and this invitation: to return the love with which we were first loved. This year, Ash Wednesday coincidentally falls on Valentine’s Day. May this popular “Hallmark Holiday” serve to remind us in faith that the season of Lent is most truly about our *hearts* and the journey that these hearts take as they open themselves to others.

It is our hope that this resource, *Return to Me: Lenten Reflections from Holy Cross 2018*, will assist you on your journey.



Within these pages you’ll hear the unique voices of many people from within the Holy Cross community: faculty, staff, students, alumni, administrators, members of the Board of Trustees, benefactors of the College and Jesuits. Each contributor reflects on the readings prescribed for the Mass of a given day, and while we hope that their own prayerful reflections help you to pray, we hope, too, that the reflections contained herein might help to serve for you 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, from the writers, to editors and graphic designers and website administrators. 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: <http://www.holycross.edu/returntome>

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

Rev. William R. Campbell, SJ ’87
Vice President for Mission

Ms. Natalie Auteri ’19
Return to Me intern



FEBRUARY 14 | ASH WEDNESDAY

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

“Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart.”

Ash Wednesday invites us to embrace wholeheartedly this season of Lent. What could it mean for each of us freely to choose this homecoming with our “*whole hearts*”?

We recently engaged in a forum exploring the spirituality of parenting and the experiences of the heart that accompany this adventure — vigilance, joy, heaviness and hope. One need not be a parent to experience this particular rollercoaster. All of us who accompany and hold God’s people deeply in our hearts, each in our unique way, often fail to integrate the intensity of it all the busyness and chaos of our everyday living. As we walk with others in their struggles, these encounters of the heart can leave us feeling vulnerable. Yet, this is precisely the place where God guides our hearts to expand and break open.

“Even now, says the Lord, return to me,” and bring your whole heart and all that you have accumulated through your years of vigilance, joy and heaviness. And so, we take time to look back with gratitude for our graced history of friendship with God and to look forward with hope to what God might be seeking to reveal to us during this season of Lent.

Today is also Valentine’s Day, a day when we try to find words to express what lies in our hearts. Coincidentally, we hear Jesus reminds us to take time to pray, to go deep within, “*to your inner room*” where God knows all that we can’t express.

Lent is a journey that lies within this heart.

Brian P. '84 and Katherine Maher (Sullivan) '84

President, Nativity Preparatory School (Boston) and Guest Spiritual Director, College of the Holy Cross (respectively)

FEBRUARY 15 | THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Deut 30:15-20; Ps 1; Luke 9:22-25

“Today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and doom.”

These words of Moses reverberate with such epic power and drama that I expect to hear tympani and cymbals punctuating what I imagine is his thunderous voice. Instead, I am stilled by something quieter but much more powerful. In my daily routines, the difference between life and death is not always easily discernible, yet God loves me enough to grant me the freedom to choose, and God trusts I will do so wisely.

My heart scans, and easily finds, profound, life-changing choices that have led me into a deeper relationship with God. Choosing a marriage partner, having a child, responding to a vocation — times when I have most decidedly chosen “*life and prosperity*” over “*death and doom.*” For these blessings and for the ways God calls me to them, I am ever grateful.

Looking deeper, I see, too, seemingly inconsequential moments when choosing wisely has been more difficult. Engaging email rather than my family, being unkind or self-centered — everyday distractions and other false “*gods*” hiding in plain sight to steal my attention and, little by little perhaps, threatening to harden my heart.

Moses’ insistence to “*choose life, then,*” holds significance for me not in the big moments of my life but in the small. I reflect on choosing blessings rather than curses more decidedly in my daily words, thoughts and actions. This Lent, as I give up interacting with mobile devices in the presence of my family, may I also choose to be more compassionate, generous and loving. May I choose wisely the path that leads me to God.

Michele Murray

Student Affairs and Dean of Students





FEBRUARY 16 | FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Isa 58:1-9a; Ps 51; Matt 9:14-14

“Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness; in your compassion blot out my offense.”

The ashes have hardly faded from our foreheads and our penances are still at the forefront of our minds. Two days on from Ash Wednesday, these are easy words to say. But like our penances and our ashes, they are external. I can pray and never mean it. I can give something up without understanding why. How easily all these become vanity!

That is a word God speaks to Israel. The Israelites hope to earn God’s favor with their fasting and sackcloth. But their lives do not manifest the spirit of their penance; while they ask for mercy, they oppress the poor and hungry. These external signs alone are insufficient and maybe even blasphemous.

“A heart contrite and humble” is something entirely different. By the grace of contrition, I can look at my own sin and behold its gravity. I stand humiliated by it and recognize that I cannot remove it. And so the contrite heart is humble, too. It longs for its sin to be taken away, but it knows it does not possess that power. This is the sacrifice pleasing to God — a wounded heart, which knows that only He can heal it.

The fasts and abstinence of Lent embody our contrition — our grief for sin made manifest in flesh. And so with our heart, our body prays: *“Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness; in your compassion, blot out my offense.”*

Claude Hanley '18

Fenwick Scholar

FEBRUARY 17 | SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Isa 58:9b-14; Ps 86; Luke 5:27-32

As a Baptist, I have never been in the habit of observing Lent. But I have come to appreciate the wisdom of Lenten practices. For those of us still figuring out how we might “return” to the Lord this Lenten season, these passages offer some really good ideas — albeit not the typical ones that involve giving up chocolate or abstaining from meat on Fridays. The practices recommended in these texts don’t require sacrifice so much as they ask for solidarity.

Isaiah suggests the following: fight oppression, feed the hungry, honor the Sabbath. In doing these things, we become *“repairers of the breach.”* What an evocative phrase! In today’s particularly divisive politically climate, why not dedicate ourselves this Lent to repairing the breaches in our lives and in our world?

There are so many ways to do so, both little and large. We might speak a reconciling word to an enemy. We might commit to making a friend across the political aisle. We might pursue policies and programs that benefit our most vulnerable neighbors. Perhaps a good place to start is to follow Jesus’ lead: enjoy a dinner party! Invite and share table fellowship with all the *“disreputable characters”* you can find. For as Jesus makes clear, eating and drinking across the breach is the beginning of *“a changed life.”*

Karen Guth

Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies





FEBRUARY 18 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Gen 9:8-15; Ps 25; 1 Pet 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15

Today's Gospel tells us that Jesus was tempted by Satan. Both of these terms — temptation and Satan — sound strange to modern ears. If I am entirely focused on my daily life with my family, if I am only concerned with my daily business and professional career, and if I am constrained by the artificial structures of the world so much so that I exclude the transcendent, then I may view this Gospel's point with suspicion: Jesus being tempted? Yet if I open myself beyond the distractions and constraints, then I may be confronted with a spiritual dimension of my own life.

The starting point for the spiritual life involves discernment between two options that are mutually exclusive. One option is “right,” and the other is “wrong.” One is “good,” and the other is “bad.”

In their original Greek, the words “*tempted by Satan*” (*peirazomenos hypo tou Satana*) express the reality of each human being, that is: I must face my “adversary” (*Satana*) within my soul in order “to make proof of” (*peirazomenos*) my real being. So, I ask myself: Is there more appearance than substance in me? What option am I choosing for my life?

In order to answer myself, I must examine and order my desires. They are the real causes of my temptations. This Lenten season offers me a possibility to confront them, to shed light on their origins and to redirect myself to the right path with Christ.

Rev. Janez Percic, S.J.

International Visiting Jesuit Fellow, McFarland Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture

FEBRUARY 19 | MONDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Lev 19: 1-2, 11-18; Ps 19; Matt 25: 31-46

From a very young age, my family discussed the concept of hierarchy, albeit generally referring to it with the term “pecking order.” Regardless of the terminology we used, I quickly realized that in every organization there are people with more authority and influence than others. What became even clearer to me is how easily one might determine who has the most authority or influence — an important title is prominently displayed, this person's office is bigger than that person's office, a person sits daily at the “cool” lunch table. Or, perhaps it is because even when there are no visible signs, people are often quick to inform newcomers of who are “highest in the pecking order,” as though to subtly remind them to be on their best behavior.

Not surprisingly, in the same way that it can be obvious who is at the top of a hierarchy, there are often clues to suggest the identity of those who may have a lower perceived status. The reality is that each of us holds some hierarchical position in multiple aspects of our lives — whether it be at home, work or in our community at large.

Leviticus challenges me to think about what it takes to “*show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty, but judge your fellow men justly.*” I hope that in my daily interactions, I can find the strength (and courage) to consistently follow this guidance.

Elizabeth Dionne

Director of Finance and Assistant Treasurer, Office of Administration and Finance





FEBRUARY 20 | TUESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

Back in the 1980s, a prestigious New York-based brokerage firm aired a well-remembered TV commercial: “When E.F. Hutton speaks, people listen.” And listen they did. The power of suggesting a successful outcome from a well-respected financial adviser led many to trust Hutton with their investments.

By parallel, Psalm 34 clearly spells out the expected outcomes if we follow the word of God: rescue from all of our distresses and delivery from all of our fears. What is the value proposition? To me it seems to be an incredibly powerful promise of hope — a game changer! Can we even begin to comprehend the impact on our lives and the lives of the many around us?

Yes, it commences with the word of God: “*One does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*” But that is only one phase of the process. Isaiah is quite clear about God’s expectation that the words He speaks shall not return to Him void. I must be open to listening to God’s words and most importantly, responding to them.

Seems pretty simple doesn’t it? God speaks. I listen, and I respond.

Why do I sometimes make it so difficult?

Thomas F. McCabe '65 P96

In Hoc Signo Award Recipient

FEBRUARY 21 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

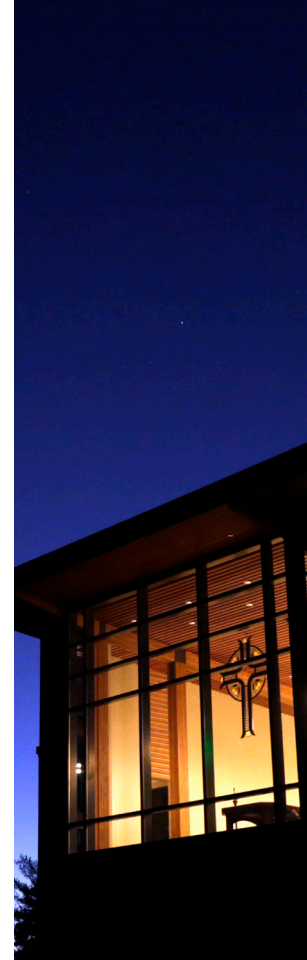
Jonah 3:1-10; Ps 51; Luke 11:29-32

The season of Lent is often seen as one of sacrifice. We give up “this” and start doing “that” in order to ingratiate ourselves with the Lord and prepare ourselves for the celebration of His resurrection. However, Psalm 51 seems to contradict this mindset and reveals at the same time that which is the crux of Lenten sacrifice: “*for you are not pleased with sacrifices . . . a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.*” God does not ask us to make sacrifices or to punish ourselves but only to come to Him humbled and contrite. In making sacrifices, we remind ourselves that we are servants of God; we humble ourselves when we admit that nothing we have in this world is comparable to the reward that awaits us in the Kingdom of.

When the Ninevites fasted, God was not pleased by the fact that they went a day without food. Instead, He was pleased that they submitted themselves entirely to His word. Therefore, as we approach this season of Lent, let us remember why we celebrate it. Let us come to God with a sense of littleness and humility and allow ourselves to be inspired by His word.

Just as the Ninevites humbled themselves in front of Jonah and just as how the Queen of the South humbled herself in front of Solomon, may we humble ourselves this Lent so that we hear and live the message of Christ — greater than any message that has come before it.

Jacob Marcus '20





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

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

“Beloved, I exhort...you...to tend the flock of God in your midst...not for shameful profit but eagerly...And when the chief Shepherd is revealed, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

Do I help others willingly or for my own benefit and recognition?

Saint Peter’s letter calls us “*to tend the flock of God*” in our midst and to “*eagerly*” lead by example. Peter further admonishes us not to serve others for “shameful profit.” In our hectic lives that can so easily be focused on individual accomplishments, it seems we so often only devote our energy to works that benefit us directly, missing opportunities to help others in their need — even those very close to us.

May we find time to see and serve the “*flock of God*” in our midst and “*give it hurts*” during this Lenten season and beyond. For this will lead us to the ultimate gift of eternal glory.

Helen B. Boucher (Whamond), M.D. '86

Member, Board of Trustees

FEBRUARY 23 | FRIDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Ezek 18:21-28; Ps 130; Matt 5:20-26

What would you have to do to be remembered? To be really remembered — to be immortally famous? Now, what part of your life is so embarrassing that you are sure that it would destroy your reputation if people were to find out about it? Would you trade the fame to have the shame erased?

Today’s readings catch us in between that human desire to be remembered — to be immortal — and that all-too-human acknowledgement of our shame — to be made to feel insignificant. And they simultaneously point us away from our efforts to define the terms of our immortality and toward a higher immortality. They remind us that we must question the short-lived remembrance that comes from self-promotion and acquisitive grasping and to look instead to that righteousness through which we “*shall surely live.*”

Notice that Ezekiel’s version of immortality here is utterly counterintuitive from the fame that our culture offers us. Instead, he describes an immortality that comes from setting aside the self and making peace with our sisters and brothers, from waiting on the Lord and from seeking righteousness. Christ’s teaching also addresses that same human desire — to make the case for ourselves, to insist upon our reward, to accuse others of standing in our way. Like Ezekiel, He reminds us that our own shortcomings must keep us humble our drive for righteousness should outpace our drive for fame and that humility, forgiveness and doing justice to others is a firmer basis for immortality than is our striving for self.

Daniel Klinghard

Professor, Department of Political Science and Director, Center for Liberal Arts in the World





FEBRUARY 24 | SATURDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Deut 26:16-19; Ps 119; Matt 5:43-48

When I read about rules in the Bible, I tend to tune out. I do not find a lot of the regulations that I deal with each day to be life-giving. I find homework, paperwork and trips to the Department of Motor Vehicle as both stressful and tiresome experiences.

Although today's readings discuss laws, I think they're much more focused on a sense of belonging. We belong to God. We are His no matter what. God gives us certain instructions so that we can remember that we're His children. For me, when I don't act in agreement with His love, the worst part about it is that I forget that I'm actually His.

In the first reading, Moses encourages the Israelites to accept God's commandments, so that they will be for God a "*people peculiarly his own.*" Likewise, in the Gospel, Jesus gives his disciples an instruction: "*Love your enemies.*" It's true that this is a high expectation and very countercultural. As in Jesus' time, we belong to a culture and a campus in which we are friendly with those who correspond to our friendship, but we are rarely outside of our comfortable "friend" groups.

Jesus urges us to do something much more difficult in loving and accepting those who do not do this for us. It's so worth it to try to do this, though, because that's how we can remember we're His children. Jesus says to love those who are against us so "*that you may be children of your Heavenly Father.*"

Lord, give us the courage to belong more to You.

Teresa Murphy '19

Brooks Music Scholar

FEBRUARY 25 | THE SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gen 22:1-18; Rom 31-34; Mk 9:2-10

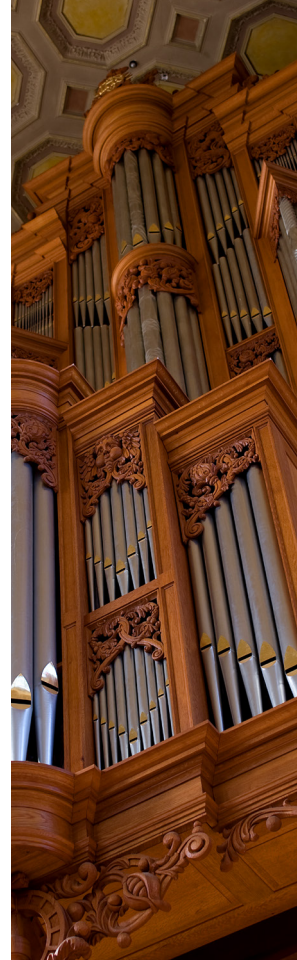
I love the mountains. Their air is crisp and their views overflow in my soul. If you've ever hiked in New Hampshire's White Mountains, you've probably seen one of many signs along the upper trails that read: "STOP! The area ahead has the worst weather in America. Many have died there from exposure, even in the summer. Turn back now if the weather is bad." This sign always reminds me of the danger that lurks behind my mountain joy. "Be mindful," I say to myself. The food and first aid on our backs is all we have; the creeping sundown shadow is getting closer.

God is similarly at work in the dangerous spaces of biblical mountains. Behind Abraham's intense love of Isaac is the mountaintop reminder that Isaac belongs to God. Behind the disciples' dazzling encounter with Elijah and Moses is the mountaintop reminder that divine power can be terrifying. I love to think of Jesus, sitting exhausted on a mountaintop with the Samaritan woman, languidly and lovingly chatting together about the future.

Despite the uncertainty of life's terrain, today's scriptures remind me not to shy away from joy! Conflict and despair are part of every journey, but God is present in the mountaintop danger and always provides a new path.

Samuel Lovett

Assistant Chaplain





FEBRUARY 26 | MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Dan 9:4b-10; Ps 79; Luke 6:36-38

The message about compassion and forgiveness in these readings is clear and direct. There is no oracular obscurity or contradictory connotation to work out. In Daniel, God has compassion and forgiveness even when the people of Daniel's day have failed him in so many ways. The psalmist directly asks God to be compassionate and not deal with the ancient Israelites according to their sins. And Luke reminds us that we, too, should be merciful and compassionate when others fail us. Jesus gives the command several times in different words to make sure his disciples — and we — get it: *"Forgive and you will be forgiven."* What could be more straightforward than that? Moreover, when I witness others genuinely forgiving those who have seriously hurt them, I feel profound admiration for them.

I have no trouble comprehending and appreciating this message. So, why is it so difficult for me to put it into practice? Why do I struggle to stop judging and to be compassionate? Why do my hurts and angers overcome my intentions to forgive? That gap — the disparity between my rational understanding and desire to extend forgiveness and my shortcomings in truly doing so is where I find the power, the mystery and the grace of God's forgiveness of us all.

Mary Ebbott

Professor, Department of Classics and Dean of the Faculty

FEBRUARY 27 | TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Isa 1:10, 16-20; Ps 50; Matt 23:1-12

I am struck by the corporeal imagery in today's reading: our sins in scarlet and crimson yet can be made white as snow and wool. How? Wash yourselves clean.

My mother always referred to the ultimate clean as a squeaky clean — the noise that clean flesh makes when you rub your hands over it quickly. Of course, she always used Ivory soap, which we know is 99.44 percent "pure" and can float on water.

I used this soap and phrase, and replicated this sound countless times bathing my infant daughters — washing away the dirt of our daily indiscretions, a sacramental cleansing that made our skins as *"white as snow and wool."* These are fond memories now that my daughters are grown and my mother is gone.

Our physical cleansing is a daily affair. Spiritual hygiene, however, is more abstract and less obvious. How can it be employed in our day-to-day so that we can *"eat the good things of the land"* and not have *"the sword...consume you?"*

Scripture tells us: *"Cease doing evil by setting things right and making justice our aim."* Aldous Huxley, the 20th century writer, is alleged to have said on his deathbed what is most important about life: "It's embarrassing to tell you this, but it seems to come down mostly to just learning to be kinder."

So, clean daily, squeak more and be kind.

Richard Schmidt

Professor, Department of Psychology





FEBRUARY 28 | WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

As we move through life each day, constant opportunities ask us to respond with a “yes” or a “no.” While the “yes” may seem daunting, more often than not, I have found the experiences that challenged me to step outside of my comfort zone to be the most rewarding. The distinguishable feeling of the right decision, even amid ambiguities surrounding the choice, leads me to respond to the call with a “yes.” The potential for the greater good in the decision outweighs my fears and ultimately comes from God’s call within my heart.

The story in today’s Gospel reveals that, while God’s love is always present, we must return it through our actions and interactions with one another in order to come to know the Kingdom of God. The verse *“I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life”* beautifully comforts us in the midst of a difficult “yes.” We are reminded that God has called us to this decision in our mutual relationship.

Furthermore, Psalm 31 challenges us to say: *“... my trust is in you, O Lord; I say ‘You are my God.’”* Saying “yes” to the things that challenge us to make a conscious effort to practice compassion, love, and empathy toward others each day actively places our trust in God. This Lenten season, may we respond to God’s calls of “the light” even when they are surrounded by the darkness of ambiguity. This is when we will truly experience God’s light.

Sara E. McLean '17

MARCH 1 | THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

“Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord.”

I am thinking back to when I first came to work at the College of the Holy Cross. Truthfully, it was something I really did not want to do. I had always had a certain impression of Holy Cross in my mind. I thought its rich tradition and storied history was overhyped. When I was working in restaurants, I would say that I would never work at Holy Cross. I reluctantly came anyways.

After being here for 25 years, I can’t imagine my life without Holy Cross! I am an introverted person by nature, and God has put me here in an environment where I can thrive. Working for the members of the Jesuit Community has enriched my life immensely. Occasionally, I will be asked to do something outside of my comfort zone, but this allows me to grow. One example is when I was asked to speak at Fr. Boroughs’ inauguration as the College’s President. I was so nervous, but I knew I had to do it.

Trusting in God has helped me to grow spiritually. Trusting in God for me is like a daily examination without any condemnation. For me, trusting in God helps to remove some of the pride and judgement I have toward others. Trusting in God (even reluctantly) leads me to a more fruitful life in this world and, I know, to eternal life in the world to come.

Kenneth McNickles

Chef/Manager, Jesuit Kitchen in Ciampi Hall





MARCH 2 | FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Gen 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Ps 105; Matt 21:33-43, 45-46

“They noticed him from a distance, and...plotted to kill him.”

Joseph’s brothers didn’t literally kill him. Instead, they sold him so that his blood would not be on their hands. They assumed that they would never see him again. Just as Joseph was the fair-haired child of his father, he later became the fair-haired one of the Pharaoh. Imagine how shocked his brothers were to see him again and to realize that he was not going to extract his revenge upon them? Joseph became what his father had always recognized in him — a genuine leader.

His eldest brother Reuben wanted to save him, but he lacked the fortitude to do so outright. How often are we tested with taking the most difficult path, the one that requires our full commitment and depth of character? Do we commit fully to doing the right thing even when it may not be the popular option? Or, do we choose the paths that are most comfortable for us? May this season of Lent strengthen our resolve to do the right thing regardless of the pressures that may invite us to do otherwise.

Susan F. Feitelberg '84

Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 3 | SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

Reading the parable of the Prodigal Son, I cannot help but see parallels between my own life and that of the youngest son. I was raised Catholic. I attended a Catholic high school. I went to Mass regularly with my mom. I chose to attend a Catholic College — Holy Cross. However, despite all of this, I struggle to maintain my own faith.

For much of my college career, I have felt hopeless in my own religious life. Like the Prodigal Son, I have longed for the security, love and community which God provides. But, I have lacked the willpower to return to my faith. Oftentimes, I feel like I am in a famine (like the son), and I am waiting for the call to return home. I know that I could be happier more fully practicing my faith and that God will welcome me back to it with open arms. But, unfortunately, I still struggle. In the parable, the son “*comes to his senses*” and returns home. This is easy to say, but I find it much more difficult in practice.

Have you ever questioned your faith? Have you ever felt like you were stuck in a famine, longing for the love and hope that God’s love provides? It is even more difficult to acknowledge this, and work proactively to return. However, it is important to remember that the famine is not the crux of the story. Rather, it is the happy feast that occurs when the son comes home.

Matthew Silberstein '18





MARCH 4 | THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Exod 20:1-17; Ps 19; 1 Cor 1:22-25; John 2:13-25

Each Sunday at Mass, we profess the Nicene Creed together. It is one of my favorite parts of the Mass as it reminds me of our core beliefs as Catholics. And it becomes more meaningful for me since the entire congregation speaks it in unison. Today's readings make me reflect on the first line of this Creed: *"I believe in one God."* Though I speak it so effortlessly each week, am I truly worshipping only one God in my daily life?

In Jerusalem, Jesus finds a temple area overcome with people dedicated to buying, selling and making deals. He tells the people there: *"Take these out of here, and stop making my Father's house a marketplace."* Today's Gospel reminds me that even though I think I am obeying God's first commandment — *"You shall have no other gods besides me"* — I am in fact allowing other things to get in the way. Can I identify the things that are obstructing my true worship of my one God?

Throughout Lent, it is my hope that I can eliminate the barriers that keep me from fully obeying God's first commandment. In doing so, I can more fully experience God's unending love for me. After all, as today's Gospel acclamation states: *"God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life."*

Sarah Jensen '08

MARCH 5 | MONDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

2 Kings 5:1-15ab; Ps 42; Luke 4:24-30

Naaman, in his desire to be healed, trusts the word of a foreign captive. The young woman, despite having been recently enslaved and taken from her homeland in Israel, encourages Naaman to seek the prophet of Israel who could cure him. But when Naaman visits the King of Israel, Joram, and requests to be healed by this prophet, Joram suspects he intends to incite further conflict with Aram and turns Naaman away.

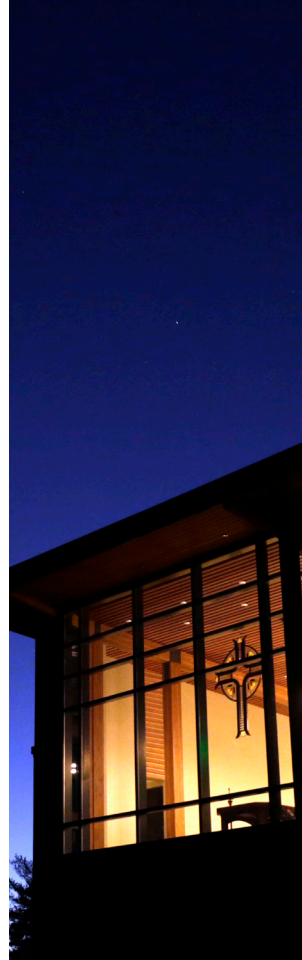
Perhaps with God's guidance, the prophet Elisha then sends for Naaman and instructs him that in order to be cured, he needs to bathe in the river Jordan seven times. Though skeptical at first, stating that the rivers in Aram are better than the Jordan, Naaman is convinced by his aides. The simple remedy cures him.

With these seemingly opposed figures able to trust in each other, we can see God's love. Namaan's slave shows care for her foreign enslaver when there seems to be no reason to do so. Namaan trusts in the King of Israel and the prophet Elisha despite having defeated Israel in battle. Elisha provides healing to a man he never knew before. We see trust and acceptance across borders and across enemy lines.

Jesus addresses this with the Nazarenes, pointing out that prophets are not recognized or accepted in their own land. Jesus' rejection in Nazareth and acceptance elsewhere calls us to seek the face of God in those foreign to us and those we assume may oppose us.

Ryan Grant

Senior Associate Director, Residence Life & Housing





MARCH 6 | TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Dn 3:25, 34-43; Ps 25; Matt 18:21-35

We all stand in need of God's mercy and forgiveness. Once coming to recognize my own sinfulness and limitations, yet also seeing myself through God's eyes as a loved sinner, was undoubtedly one of the greatest and most difficult graces of God for me to receive. But, we need not fear seeking forgiveness, for the Lord is full of compassion and mercy. As we pray in the psalm today, "*He shows sinners the way. He guides the humble to justice. He teaches the humble his way.*" God teems with compassion and a desire for justice, calling us to "*return with your whole heart, for I am gracious and merciful.*"

Yet we do not simply receive God's forgiveness as if it were some quick and convenient remedy to a past failing. Divine mercy changes us — it makes a demand upon us to forgive others in similar fashion. In today's Gospel, we witness the failure to forgive likewise, a refusal to share that mercy. Having received forgiveness of an incredibly large debt, the unforgiving servant later refuses to forego a considerably smaller amount. Jesus similarly places the expectation on us: "*Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?*"

Forgiving others is difficult. But how many times "must" we forgive others? Jesus calls us to love like God, to forgive "*not seven times but 77 times.*" Jesus demands that we love without limit — to share the very grace that we ourselves have undeservedly and yet mercifully received.

Mr. William Woody, S.J.

Pre-Doctoral Teaching Fellow, Department of Philosophy

MARCH 7 | WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Deut 4:1, 5-9; Ps 147; Matt 5:17-19

Moses speaks statutes and decrees to his people so that they may observe them: by their careful observation, they would try to live in the world according to God's will, thus testifying to both the justice of their law and the wisdom of their nation. The psalmist praises the Lord for sending forth to the earth commands that turn harshness and coldness into warmth and comfort. And Jesus confirms the familiar list of Ten Commandments.

What do these statutes, decrees and commandments mean to us?

In a globally fraught socio-economic system and within the altered academic landscape of the last decades, I often find myself thinking about two commandments in particular: "*You shall not steal*" and "*You shall not kill.*" I am troubled by the relationship between inequitable contractual arrangements and stealing. I am distressed by the notion that the diminishment they bring about may not be all that far away from killing.

How might we observe God's decrees so that justice and wisdom truly rule?

Claudia Chierichini

Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Modern Languages and Literature





MARCH 8 | THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

Listening to God's call can be a challenge, and we often don't want to answer it. But we must never forget that God is the source of all love and goodness, and His call invites us to be as well. It is never an unjust call, and God will never ask of us anything that we are not capable of doing. Even if what is attempted is met with failure, God might be using it as an opportunity to instill in us a virtue. When God says, "*Walk in the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper,*" He is calling us toward a spiritual prospering, a growing in holiness. Ultimately, God wants to bring us into loving communion with Himself.

There is only true failure when we actively reject God's call, because in rejecting God's call, we reject God. We say to Him: "*There is something else that I love more than You, and I choose that thing over You.*" We must realize how much this wounds God. For God to have the humility to suffer His passion for us means that He has absolute love for us. He will never abandon us nor reject us. So, when Christ says, "*Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters,*" it is not God who sets Himself up against us, but we who set ourselves up against God.

Therefore, may we always pray for the humility and strength to recognize and answer God's call in our lives.

Gregory Giangiordano '18

MARCH 9 | FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

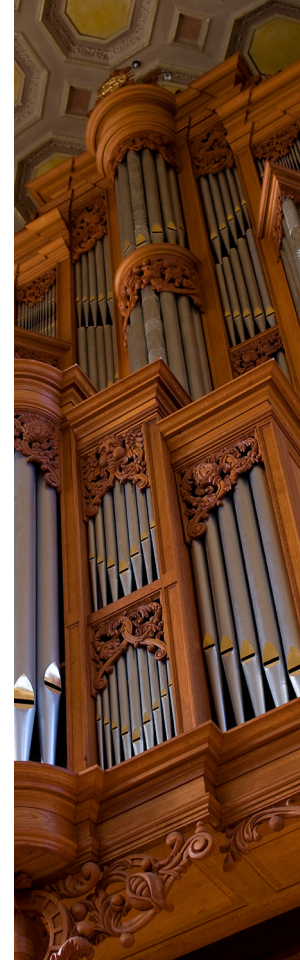
Today's readings focus on our loving God. Truthfully, this seemingly simple concept is a daily challenge. The world around us pulls us to concentrate on ourselves. It is easy to claim we are serving God while pursuing actions that are self-serving. For example, if we say our work deserves all of our attention, but it is at the expense of time spent with our communities and family, we fall short in our faith.

The command to worship and love God and our neighbor is a constant reminder to consider the "intent" versus the "impact" of one's actions. In this season of reflection, it is easy to say, "I might not have meant well, but nobody got hurt," or its inverse, "Well, my intent was not to hurt someone, so my behavior shouldn't matter." But if we are sincerely focused on loving God and our neighbor, both of these arguments suddenly fail to convince — we must hold ourselves accountable. If we truly love others, we should care deeply if we cause harm, regardless of our intent.

In this Lenten season as we consider times we fell short of fully loving God and our neighbor, how do we move forward? Hosea tells us that God will heal us and love us and that we "*shall blossom like the vine.*" This knowledge that God will forgive us is a charge as well as a comfort. Knowing we are forgiven means we cannot wallow in the pain of guilt for long but that we are invited to move our best selves forward into the season of new life that is just around the corner.

Allegra Martin

Director, College Choirs





MARCH 10 | SATURDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

Today's scripture invites us to reflect on humility. The prophet Hosea tells us that God has little use for "burnt offerings" if we are not "men and women for others." We can be Pharisees and make sure that we are seen in public acts of worship, but what value does that have if we are not "contemplatives in action" in our daily lives? *"Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled."* Thirty years of practicing medicine have reminded me of this truth more times than I can count. Just when I think I have all the answers and I've got life down pat, the unpredictable and complex nature of pathophysiology (life) is always ready to knock me down a few pegs.

To help us practice humility in the second half of Lent, I encourage my friends to download Tim McGraw's song "Humble and Kind" to their playlists and listen to it daily. Be sure to pass it on.

Frank Gleason, M.D. '71

President, Holy Cross Club of Virginia

MARCH 11 | FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETERE SUNDAY)

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

I love meat. So, naturally, I hate Fridays during Lent. Growing up, I never quite understood how me not eating a cheeseburger somehow made God happier. Especially as a little kid, I took the mindset that Lent was just about more rules — "do's and don'ts." And if I were to mess up...I would have to face the divine judge.

As with most things, I was wrong.

In today's psalm and the first reading, we hear about how the Israelites disobey God again and again. They ignore the prophets and desecrate the Temple. Yet, no matter how badly they behave, God doesn't condemn them or give up on them nor does He swoop in like a divine "helicopter mom" and save them from their mistakes. Instead, God works through the messiness of their lives, even using a foreign king to deliver the Israelites from slavery.

So, God is a divine judge, and our sin does have consequences. But, as we hear in our Gospel, *"God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."* The verdict of this judge is one of love. Lent isn't just about rules; it is an opportunity to enter into the salvific plan of God and to choose light over darkness.

The good news is that no one wants us to go to heaven as badly as God does, and He's willing to use foreign kings and the self-sacrificing love of His only Son to get us there.

John "Jack" Rosenwinkel '21





MARCH 12 | MONDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Isa 65:17-21; Ps 30; John 4:43-54

Lent inspires us to focus on the spiritual rebirth of our relationships: each other, our family, our friends, with ourselves and, most significantly, with God. It is a time for each of us to explore ourselves and consider how we choose to live within the world of God's creation.

Raised by a transcendentalist mother, I often reflect on that point of divinity within us all, that "divine spark" given to us by providence that not only defines us as individuals but also unites us within God's world. How we choose to nurture this spark and allow it to guide and light our way forward defines our relationship with God and allows us to let go of the anxieties and pains of the past.

As we move through these sacred weeks and truly consider ourselves and each other as beings living within God's heaven and earth, we are asked to celebrate His creation and to delight in our world. We are asked to consider that within His world, age does not define us. It is what we build and what we plant of ourselves that contributes to God's exultation.

Heather Kurtz

Director, Foundation and Corporate Relations, Office of Advancement

MARCH 13 | TUESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Ezek 47:1-9, 12; Ps 46; John 5:1-16

The readings today invite us to reflect on the healing qualities of God through the element of water. Water flows outward from the sanctuary so that "every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live." The same water with which Jesus heals the sick man in the pool of Bethesda is also available to us.

During this Lenten season, I am drawn to reflect on times when I have felt hopeless and when I have felt I've been waiting for healing for far too long. Have there been times in your life when Jesus is inviting you to stand and walk to the healing water? Have there been times when you've been too distracted or too busy to pay attention to His invitation?

This spring is my final semester as a student at Holy Cross. Therefore, I desire to pause and appreciatively look for signs of God's "healing water" around me. Whether it be attending a retreat, starting my day with a silent reflection or simply taking time to relax, I know that God's love is near me.

"Take up your mat and walk."

Frederick Boehrer '18





MARCH 14 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Isa 49:8-15; Ps 145; John 5:17-30

Every once in a while, a passage from scripture takes my breath away, distracting me from what I was thinking before or even from what follows it. This reading from Isaiah could do that at any time of the year, but in Lent, a time of abnegation and awareness of the darkness that is to come, this passage sweeps in like a gust of Advent hope. Could it be out of place? Why would it appear now? “*Break forth into song, you mountains,*” we’re told. What could seem less Lenten?

The utter and unquestionable message of mercy — inviting prisoners “*and those in darkness*” not only to come out and show themselves, but to share in abundant pasture, springs of water and every good thing — describes a God profligate in his generosity. It is certainly an image of a God infinitely more generous and merciful than we can be — toward prisoners and those whose lives have gone awry. God’s love, God says to Isaiah and to us, is even more constant than a mother’s love for her child.

This passage, from the section known as “Second Isaiah,” dates to an era of Israel’s captivity and destruction, a time of grief and loss that Lent can only mirror in a small way. John’s Gospel also promises that “*the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out,*” offering us a measure of hope. Lent and loss are real, and in our daily midst, but even in Lent, we get to remember that the time of joy is near.

Thomas Landy

Director, McFarland Center for Religion, Ethics and Culture

MARCH 15 | THURSDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Exod 32: 7-14; Ps 106; John 5:31-47

I have to admit that I was initially challenged by today’s reading from Exodus. We encounter God full of anger and despair as He sees that the people He has lead out of Egypt into Israel have become depraved, are worshiping false idols and are turning away from the path that He has shown them. His anger is so great that He threatens to destroy His people. But, Moses prevails upon God to reconsider His actions and instead show His people mercy and forgiveness.

Despite God’s great disappointment in His people generation upon generation, His love is not diminished. As we read elsewhere in John’s Gospel: “*God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.*”

The power of these words never fails to inspire me, to restore my faith and give me hope for the world around me. God was present to Moses and the people of Israel, as imperfect as they were, and He is present to us today, offering a love that is complete and unconditional.

Ann Bowe McDermott '79

Director, Office of Admissions





MARCH 16 | FRIDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Wis 2:1a, 12-22; Ps 34; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

There is a very comfortable couch in the Office of Student Involvement, and this is where we find ourselves most days. After hours of meetings and classes, we muddle our way up to the second floor of Hogan Campus Center and sit on this comfy couch. Not for rest, but for thinking: Are we doing our jobs correctly? Are we fulfilling our roles as leaders and advocates for the student body? The fear that we are not consumes our minds.

In today's Gospel, Jesus chooses to be present with his Apostles for the Feast of Tabernacles in Judea, even in the face of great danger and fear. In the end, Jesus is protected by the Father. In our world today, as in the time of Jesus, fear is a constant. It seems like each day there is a new crisis that fills us with unease. This Gospel message teaches us to be brave and place our trust in God, which should comfort us as we live out our mission to be men and women for and with others. We must not be afraid to face fear and stand up for the injustices that we see but to trust that God gives us the strength to do what is right.

The Gospel challenges us to have faith and that, despite our fear, God is always with us. This faith gives us the strength to leave our places of comfort, whether that be the couch on Hogan 2 or the front gates of Holy Cross, and to go out into the world to do what we are called to do.

Margaret Scanlon '18 and Donald Stephens '18

Co-Presidents, Student Government Association

MARCH 17 | SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

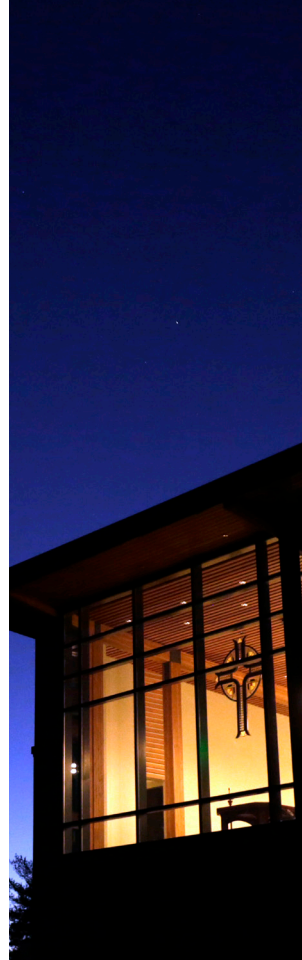
Jer 11:18-20; Ps 7; John 7:40-53

As a child, I devoured every Nancy Drew mystery story I could find in my local library. There was something so satisfying about a book demonstrating good triumphing over evil. Whether Nancy was chasing down identity-stealing kidnappers in "The Bungalow Mystery" or jewel thieves in "The Mystery at Lilac Inn," Police Chief McGinnis would also appear to arrest the evil-doer in the final chapter. We see the same thing in detective TV shows from "Murder, She Wrote" to "The Adventures of Scooby Doo." The criminal would have gotten away with the crime were it not for those meddling justice seekers!

The prophet Jeremiah, surrounded by his foes, is preparing for his possible death. Persecution is common for Jeremiah. So, he reaches out to the Lord for protection and justice. Those want-to-be assassins will now take on the Wrath of God! Our justice theme continues: "*A shield before me is God, who saves the upright of heart; a just judge is God, a God who punishes day by day.*" The message is clear: when we obey the Lord and live the life He desires of us, we will be protected and saved. "*Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance.*"

This Lent, I want to be like Jeremiah and Nancy Drew — a Crusader for Christ. I want to do the right thing — evangelize the one true Faith, avoid sin and repent. Being a Catholic has always presumed the risk of social persecution. I trust that God will mete out merciful justice to His foes in the end.

Anne Murphy '94





MARCH 18 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

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

One night, I got called to intensive care. I was not prepared. A woman was holding her dying husband, and there were two distinct conversations going on. She was yelling at God to let her husband live. And, she was gently telling her husband it was OK to die. In the same breath: “No! Don’t take him!” And, quietly: “Honey, you go home now.”

Her words were the most honest prayer I have ever heard: “No!” and “Yes” in the same breath. She was dying, too. I was not prepared for that, and I didn’t know what to say. I simply witnessed this incredibly strong and weak woman bear her cross.

“*Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies...*” Such images are difficult for us. Our culture rewards strength, self-sufficiency and hard work. These are important qualities, but they don’t lend themselves to Lenten prayer or to humble, vulnerable hearts. I always have to work extra hard to discover that Lent is not about working extra hard. It’s about letting ourselves be worked upon, letting go and dying.

Do we want that grace? I say no! And yes. I don’t want to forgive, but I need so badly to forgive. I don’t like being weak, but I truly desire to know my weakness. I want control, but I know, deep down, I’m not in control. When I struggle with these tensions, and these feelings, I realize Lent might actually be at work in me.

Rev. Michael Gilson, S.J.

Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 19 | SOLEMNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH, HUSBAND OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *(Patron Saint of the Society of Jesus)*

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

Joseph, a noble, faithful and righteous man, is immediately faced with a decision to make once he learns that his wife is with child through the Holy Spirit. He could choose to divorce Mary quietly, as he originally planned, or he could trust the angel that spoke to him in his dream commanding him to take his wife and raise her child as a child of God.

Reading this, I put myself in Joseph’s shoes. The evidence was clear before him that the child was not his, and to him, the angel’s explanation must have seemed impossible. However, Joseph must have realized that our God is not bound by what we consider to be possible. He is a God of miracles, and God chose Joseph to play a main role in this miracle story.

Joseph understood that a family’s foundation is not blood but rather love. This is represented in the New Testament as we are called sons and daughters of the living God. I understand this now more than ever. My son, whom I carried in my womb, is forever my son, and I cannot imagine being able to love him more. My daughter, whom I did not carry, is forever my daughter, and I cannot imagine being able to love her more. They are my world. They are my miracle story from God.

It is a choice to live in love every day. I choose, like Joseph did, to love my children and to help them grow closer to God so they too can experience the depth of His true love. God chose me to play the main role in my miracle story. God is choosing you, too.

Linda Nardella

Director, Holy Cross Dining Services





MARCH 20 | TUESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Num 21:4-9; Ps 102; John 8:21-30

One popular question we students ask ourselves is: “Where am I going after college?” We seek to find the answer in God, but a lot of the time it can feel like He’s not providing answers and maybe not even hearing us. Amidst all the busyness in our lives, we fail to realize where He is present or how He is working through us. I am currently a senior. I definitely feel this way sometimes. As I write this reflection, I do not yet have a job, and I do not yet know where I am going after graduation. But in the end, with God and hard work, I know that I will end up in the right place.

Today’s readings bring answers to that popular question. The people of Israel complain to God and Moses about making their long and tough journey, and they ask what its purpose is. They fail to realize that Moses and God were there with them every step of the way. In order for them to realize this, God sends serpents among them. Many die due to serpent bites. The people ask Moses to pray to God for a cure and He provides it, showing them light.

God shows us that He has a plan for us, whether we see the plan or not. We must not fear, for He is with us every step of the way. That’s why I confidently say to people: “It’ll all work out. You’ll end up where you need to end up.”

Pedro Guarcas '18

MARCH 21 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Dan 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Dan 3; John 8:31-42

“A slave does not remain in a household forever, but a son always remains.”

Growing up, our house had a formal living room, used only when visitors came. It was the rest of the house that was used by my family every day. It was in the den and the kitchen where we played, laughed, talked and worked as a family. My house, my home, was where I could be myself. I knew, without a second thought that my family loved me and accepted me, annoying habits and all. They would celebrate my successes but also challenge me, ask me hard questions, push me to be better, all because they loved me. When I left my parents’ house, I extended my “family” to include people who provide me with the same feelings of belonging and love from my childhood. They, too, accept me and tell me the truth about myself. I am at home with them.

That sense of belonging and love is the feeling we have in God’s house. It is a place where we can be ourselves, a place where God will allow us to celebrate, to struggle with hard truths, to fail and to ask for forgiveness. We are not in a formal living room just for guests — we are in the rest of the house. We are with family. We are the children of God, and we have a place in God’s house forever. God will love us unconditionally. All we need to do is ask.

Katherine Kiel

Professor, Department of Economics and Accounting





MARCH 22 | THURSDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Gen 17:3-9; Ps 105; John 8:51-59

With today's readings, my thoughts wander in many directions, yet return to one line from Genesis: *"I will give to you."*

Since before He proclaimed these words, God has been giving to us. He has given us life. He has given each and every one of us individual spirits to make these lives our own. And He has given all of us the energy and love to appreciate each other, to support one another and to work for and with others.

As a child, I was taught that we give up something for Lent as a way to fully renew ourselves with Christ. However, today's readings remind me that we must also add something to wholly connect with Him. There are multiple ways to pray, but each of us can always bring more intentionality into our acts of prayer — especially our prayers of thanksgiving. When our prayers of thanksgiving grow in intentionality, we can more fully rejoice in His mercy and love. Today's readings encourage us to purposefully answer the questions: What are we thankful for and how can we act out our gratitude? The answers to these questions empower us to grow closer to God, allowing us to find beauty in the mundane and the power in being fully present and intentional in our lives.

Sean Teebagy '17

Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 23 | FRIDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

Why would anyone want to kill Jesus? He preached a message of love and peace. He cured the sick, gave sight to the blind and even raised the dead to new life. He had no aspirations for worldly power. In fact, he eschewed political influence.

Yet, something provoked a crowd of people at the Temple to try and stone him. Why? Part of the answer lies in a response Jesus gave to a question posed: *"How long are you going to keep us in suspense? Tell us the plain truth: are you the Messiah?"*

Jesus replied that he already told them, but they would not believe, even after seeing His miracles. The angry people in the crowd came to the realization that they simply did not know the voice of the Good Shepherd. Their hearts were not oriented toward God.

Throughout their history, the people of ancient Israel grappled with the realization that they often failed to keep faith with God. Jeremiah warned them they had abandoned God and defiled His temple and would, therefore, suffer terrible consequences. Because of his giving this warning, Jeremiah found himself beaten and put in chains.

The season of Lent is a great blessing that gives us the opportunity to ask ourselves whether our hearts are truly oriented toward God. If we do not know the voice of the Good Shepherd, Lent is the time to open our ears to hear the words of everlasting life. It is a time to change our hearts.

Maureen Hodgens '19





MARCH 24 | SATURDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Ez 37:21-28; Jer 31; John 11:45-56

What a wonderful feeling it is to bring people together to accomplish a single goal, to build a family with folks who are relatively unknown to one another. There is no greater sense of pride than seeing those individuals develop a love for, and a sense of, commitment to one another. As a coach, I strive for that feeling each day.

Ezekiel warns us not to lose sight of what God has sacrificed for us and truly given to His people. We must put all of our variations and contrasts aside and listen to, learn from and love one another, uniting with God in an attempt to live for Him.

Jesus urges us to believe — to believe in our hearts, to believe in our minds and to do so unconditionally. We are not to worry about what others may think or how they may perceive us. Instead, we are called to not be afraid and to believe in Jesus. We are to trust these feelings, no matter who may follow.

Parents, teachers, students, coaches...not a single person is exempt from having these wonderful opportunities to profess one's faith and believe.

Gregory DiCenzo

Head Coach, Baseball

MARCH 25 | PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Isa 50:4-7; Ps 22; Phil 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47

As Christians, we weekly profess our belief in the ultimate triumph of Jesus' resurrection over sin and death. However, we often enter Holy Week with mixed feelings. In the midst of our busy lives, we aren't always sure what to feel spiritually or emotionally as we move between sorrow for Jesus' suffering, gratitude for his unconditional love, sadness for not appreciating his love more deeply and embarrassment that we live so superficially. Yet, we desire to live with greater intentionality and spiritual depth, and each Lent we pray that our relationship with Jesus increasingly will center our minds and hearts and shape our living and loving.

Life itself often makes real for us what our liturgies hope to achieve when we or someone we love experiences betrayal; when the security of one's family is threatened by unemployment, when neighbors or fellow parishioners face deportation, when a spouse or we ourselves are diagnosed with a terminal illness. Suddenly, the journey of Lent is now our own and, as people of faith, we turn to Jesus for strength, comfort and hope knowing that our suffering is now joined with his.

Today's reading from Philippians reminds us of Jesus' human companionship and compassion when Paul writes: "*Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*" This Holy Week as we accompany Jesus in his passion and death, let us pray that he will gift us with deeper faith and hope-filled trust in his companionship as we live into the challenges of our lives.

Rev. Philip L. Boroughs, S.J.

President





MARCH 26 | MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Isa 42:1-7; Ps 27; John 12:1-11

The prophet Isaiah says that the Lord will grasp God's people by the hand. God's hand led me to Holy Cross, and I have challenged myself to make the most of my four years on the Hill. As part of a course last semester, I taught a weekly language arts course to Spanish-speaking immigrants at Worcester East Middle School. I did my best to teach lessons that these young students could understand despite my limited Spanish language skills. Although I was frustrated with myself for my lack of vocabulary and my difficulties with conjugating verbs, the students were always appreciative of my efforts.

I have not only been grasped by God's hands, but God's hands have shaped me. I have been formed through the Jesuit tradition of self-reflection. By taking the time to acknowledge my gifts, such as a Holy Cross education, as well as my short comings, I was better able to teach and learn from the students at Worcester East Middle. In addition to my personal reflection, I directed my thinking outwards to others as well, specifically non-English speaking students. Through my own experiences, I have formed a lifetime goal of improving my Spanish skills so I can best help those non-English speaking students further strengthen their confidence in the classroom.

As we enter Holy Week, may we all take some time for personal reflection and reflect upon how God's hands have grasped us and formed us into the people we are today.

Janna Hearty '20

MARCH 27 | TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Isa 49:1-6; Ps 71; John 13:21-33, 36-38

"I am made glorious in the sight of the Lord, and my God is now my strength!"

God has given us diverse gifts and graces that make us who we are. These graces and the experiences we have in our lives shape us to be unique beings that God loves without restraint. His hand has been there for us, to guide us along a path, but have we accepted His guidance or have we chosen our own path? Do we recognize God's presence in the small and large decisions we make every day and how each decision shapes us and those around us? While His love for us is endless, do we return His love and the gifts we have received if we stray off the path? In our daily decisions, do we honor God? In our future decisions, can we foresee the greatness that God hopes we will achieve? Have we allowed something to blind us to the graces of God, something that prevents us from recognizing our path as we come to various crossroads in our lives?

How have we sacrificed parts of ourselves for God's love and graces? He sacrificed His only son to die for us to absolve us of our sins and to provide us a chance at everlasting life. How have we shown our love of God, our love of others and an acceptance that we are His instrument for a greater glory?

"I will make you a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

Edwin A. Coolbaugh II

Assistant Dean of Students and Director, Residence Life and Housing





MARCH 28 | WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Isa 50:4-9a; Ps 69; Matt 26:14-25

The prophet Isaiah and our psalmist illustrate how living one's faith with integrity can lead to persecution and isolation. They speak of being spat upon, beaten, heartbroken and treated as an outcast and stranger — even among one's own family. Yet, in Isaiah we hear assuring words from God: "*I...have not turned back.*"

These scriptural passages may resonate deeply for those striving to live the Gospel each day — especially the Gospel messages of seeking to be in solidarity with the marginalized and working to combat injustice in our world. Choosing this countercultural path can indeed lead to isolation or persecution. Others may be resistant to thinking about challenging questions of social justice and, therefore, distance themselves from those who cause them to think about such questions. Similarly, the choice to live a life of faith can be seen as irrational and naïve by some and can leave one feeling ridiculed in this pursuit.

However, today's scriptures and the Easter season tell us we are not alone in our suffering. Not only have human beings faced similar struggles for centuries, but so has God. Through Jesus, God experienced pain, suffering, humiliation, and persecution resulting from living a life of faith in pursuit of God's kingdom of justice, love and mercy. Today's readings provide examples of persisting in faith despite persecution and ridicule, while the upcoming Easter season provides the example of Jesus not only persisting, but ultimately triumphing through the Resurrection — an example that can provide us all hope in our own moments of despair.

Michelle Sterk Barrett

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MARCH 29 | HOLY THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

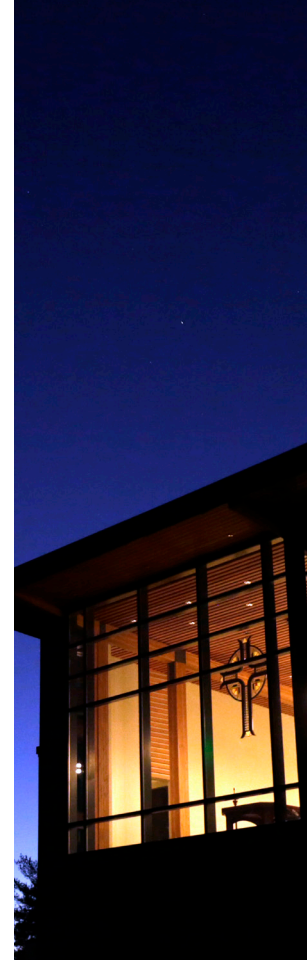
Exod 12:1-8, 11-14; Ps 116; 1 Cor 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

Today's readings present us with a varied set of messages as to how to properly serve and honor God — from Old Testament ideas of presenting sacrifices so as to be saved from the wrath of God to New Testament statements on the importance of remembering and proclaiming the death of Jesus. While these ideas are not to be overlooked, it is today's Gospel that states what is perhaps God's most important message to us as we live our lives in this world: "*Love one another as I have loved you.*" Because we know that God loves us fully, in a way that we cannot truly comprehend, what we are being asked to do is quite challenging. We are to love one another; that means all of the other people in the world, in just as full and incomprehensible ways as we are loved by God.

Imagine a world where the focus of everyone's attention is love of others in the world. While we may never realize this situation fully, each of us is able to move the world closer to this reality though our daily actions in the way we treat those around us — how we show to them that we love them just as God does.

Robert M. Bellin

Professor, Department of Biology





MARCH 30 | GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

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

No matter how many times one reads the story of our Lord's Passion, the betrayal of Judas, the cowardice of Pilot and the brutality of the Crucifixion leap from the page and land in our hearts and minds. Battered and broken, Jesus hangs from the cross, and with the simple statement "*It is finished*" gains each one of us salvation.

And yet, what I realize is that with each reading of the scripture, not only do the old and familiar images and ideas flood my mind, but because I am reading them in the context of my life's experience, a new depth of understanding emerges.

Isaiah foreshadows Christ's obedience reminding us that although brutally treated, Jesus "*submitted and opened not his mouth.*" St. Paul echoes this idea explaining that Christ carries obedience to his heavenly Father "*to the point of death on a cross.*" And after Jesus' brutal torture and crucifixion, St. John reminds us that Jesus "*... handed over the spirit.*"

Yes, Jesus gained for us eternal life, but His simple obedience to God the Father is truly a compelling Good Friday lesson. Each one of us experiences our own walk up Calvary and our own personal passion. We need only look to Christ to understand that we must put our faith and trust in God, persevere through the difficulty and disappointment and ultimately trust that our reward will be great.

Elaine Clark (Nalty) '86

MARCH 31 | HOLY SATURDAY

Gen 1:1-2:2; Gen 22:1-18; Exod 14:15-15:1; Isa 54:5-14; Isa 55:1-11; Rom 6:3-11; Mark 16:1-7

We, at this very moment, are participants in the salvation of all humanity by being united with Christ in death. Being made in the image and likeness of God, we are designed to glorify our Maker in all we do. We share in such intimacy with our Maker that we truly have been endowed with a dignity greater than the angels. The "fall of man" was not only a denial of God, but of all humankind. Therefore, our salvation had to be realized by Jesus Christ, at once both human and divine.

In following the footsteps of Christ, by denying ourselves and loving Him, we are made anew. Often, with rejecting earthly temptations comes suffering. In this way, we are "*baptized into His death ... For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be untied with him in the resurrection. We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.*"

Every time we suffer in denying ourselves earthly pleasures, we pick up our cross and follow Christ to Calvary. The more we say "yes" to God's will, the more we open ourselves to share in His own sacrifice; the same sacrifice which opened the gates of heaven and saved humanity.

As every person participates in the sacrifice which led to redemption, it is an ongoing event; one that continues through time. The Resurrection, transcending human time, is proof of God's abounding mercy every time we sin. By sharing in His sacrifice and accepting His mercy, we are joined more closely to Him who is love and perfection and make manifest salvation history to the world.

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