



RETURN *to* ME

Lenten Reflections

the best of
2015-2024



“Even now,
says the LORD,
return to me
with your
whole heart,
with fasting,
with weeping,
and with
mourning...”

—JOEL 2:12

From time immemorial, thus has begun the Lenten Season. Each year during this holy season we are reminded of the tension first laid out on Ash Wednesday: that we live our lives between challenge and invitation and this is where we might find endless stores of grace, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

For the last ten years, we have been pleased to offer rich reflections from members of our campus community - students, staff, faculty and alumni during Lent. *Ten editions of Return to Me: Lenten Reflections from Holy Cross* have helped countless others to pray through this penitential season, to help others see more deeply and to hear more clearly the experience of God in their own lives.

In this anniversary year, we hope you enjoy ‘this best-of collection’, highlights from across the series, from 2015-2024. The reflections still comment on the readings for the Mass of the day and the timelessness of the messages contained therein endure.

Preparing this Lenten reflection resource these past ten years has involved so 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 emailed reflections from *Return to Me* throughout Lent, please visit our website: holycross.edu/returntome

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

Rev. Keith Maczkiewicz, S.J.
Associate Vice President for Mission and Ministry

Ms. Jane Feeney '25
Return to Me intern

SCAN TO VISIT ►

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MARCH 5 · ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

As odd as it sounds, I often begin Lent in the same way I greet New Year's Day, with resolutions. It is a moment of new beginnings, a time to reflect and grow, to be a better and more caring human being. It is a moment when all things seem possible. As a child, like so many others, I marked the period of Lent by giving up the things I enjoyed most: chocolate, dessert, even television on a rare year. As I grew older, I also focused on prayer and acts of kindness. And yet, so many times, I found myself on Easter Sunday unsatisfied with how I used the 40 days. Although I might not have eaten the candy readily available at the office, I found that there were days when no thought of Lent crossed my mind.

Over the years I have learned that Lent is a time of continual renewal. Even if our promises — to give up something, to commit to deeper prayer, to be kinder — falters for a moment, our Gospel Acclamation today brings us back to the daily opportunity to start again. “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” Lent is a gift to us. It is a time of reflection, reconciliation and prayer. It is a time when we get to say, “Yes” to God’s call, over and over. And at the end of the 40 days, the joy of the resurrection of Easter always greets us — no matter our desert experience.

Ann McElaney-Johnson '79

MARCH 6 · THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 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

Senior Vice President for Student Development and Mission



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MARCH 7 · FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Isaiah 58:1-9a; Psalm 51; Matthew 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



MARCH 8 · SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalm 86; Luke 5:27-32

This week, the 58th chapter of the Book of the Prophet Isaiah calls to us with a series of “if/then” appeals. Most of them begin in an ordinary way: “if you stop pointing fingers and speaking evil” and “if you stop oppressing and instead care for each other.” Yet, these “ifs” are followed by “thens” that are anything but ordinary: “then your light will rise in the darkness,” “then you will become a watered garden” and “then your community will be renewed.” In these extraordinary metaphors, I hear both a call and a promise: all I have to be is ordinary. In my simple, daily life, I am called to be kind and generous. I am called to care for people.

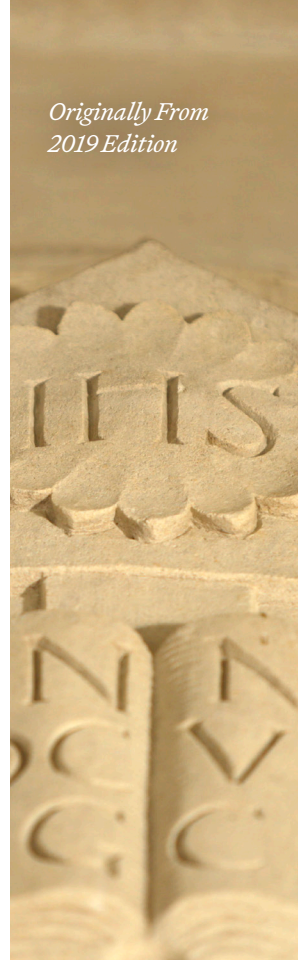
In these ordinary actions, God will act extraordinarily.

Perhaps the truly extraordinary promise comes at the end of Isaiah 58, the climax of the chapter. Again, the “if” is simple enough: “Honor the Sabbath.” Guard it. Stop pursuing our own desires. If we do this, then we will “delight” in the Lord. The Hebrew is stronger than the English translation: we will not just delight but take “exquisite delight” in the Lord. This delight will be like riding on the heights of the earth. It seems this exquisite delight is the ultimate promise, the truly extraordinary gift in our ordinary lives.

Does this promise sound extraordinary enough? What would it feel like, look like and mean to live a life of “exquisite delight” in God?

Mahri Leonard-Fleckman

Associate Professor, Departments of Religious Studies and Classics



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MARCH 9 · FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Psalm 91; Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13

In this time of great challenge, both locally and globally, today's readings provide a much needed reminder: None of us has to get through this alone. We may be strong and resilient but we are not immune from suffering. And that is okay. God sees us. God hears us. In times of trouble, let God be our refuge and strength. Ask him for help.

We can also honor God by helping others who may be suffering. God's compassion for the oppressed, for the marginalized, is without limits. "No one who believes in him will be put to shame. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." This Lent, how can we honor God by offering what we have to those in need, knowing that salvation is by his Grace rather than by our efforts?

Heather Hayes

Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives and Chief of Staff



MARCH 10 · MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Psalm 19; Matthew 25:31-46

“Whatever you did for these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

God’s invitation to us in today’s readings is clear: we are drawn outwards to the margins, or as Karl Rahner, S.J., famously encourages, “to break out of the narrow circle of self.” We are invited to see God in our “brother,” whether in a close friend or family member or simply a stranger I’m passing on the street. In doing this, God welcomes us to see and love him in all corners and reaches of life. I needn’t look far to see God’s invitations in my life.

I see them at work, where we support men in addiction recovery as they get back on their feet. The other day, a new resident walked into the office and asked whether anyone had a belt, as he was in need of one. Within five minutes, three senior residents, all of whom arrived to treatment with only the clothes on their backs, had come to the office to offer the young man one of their belts. God invites! I see invitations within my family, where we recently said our goodbyes to my great-aunt, who spent the final years of her life battling Parkinson’s and mixed dementia. Towards the end, she could no longer recognize us but could still smile and squeeze my hand tight as anything. God invites!

Today, may we break out of our “circle of self” and love as God loves; outwards, towards the margins and without reservations, knowing that God invites!

Christine Church '20

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MARCH 11 · TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 34; Matthew 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

MARCH 12 · WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

Amid all the recent campus construction, a new sign “COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS,” stands at its center, beckoning all brightly each night. Years ago, no such signs welcomed my classmates and I when we arrived, but we were looking for signs of hope that might transform our lives, and even help direct us as we commenced life beyond Mount St. James, in those turbulent times of assassinations, war and protests.

Similar signs of hope shine forth in today’s readings for a world also riddled with sin and suffering. Jonah emerging from the whale’s belly to proclaim God’s threatened destruction of Nineveh prompted a quick and thorough conversion. It invites us to reflect on the signs of hope we all need for an equally thorough conversion of mind and heart in our world, one transformed by the pandemic and climate crisis. In today’s gospel, Jesus reminds us that his passion, death and resurrection is the primary transformational sign of hope we need to keep alert for as we enter more deeply into this Lenten season.

How do we remain alert in our daily lives? Responding to the Gospel Acclamation’s invitation “return to me,” we can keep Christ at the center of our lives and allow the light of God’s love for each of us to burn brighter than that new campus sign of welcome. Let’s resolve this Lent to let that hopeful sign of Christ’s sacrificial love shine out through us to guide others home, so they too can experience God’s transformative love, mercy and grace.

Rev. Edward J. Vodoklys, S.J. '72





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MARCH 13 · THURSDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Psalm 138; Matthew 7:7-12

*“Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.
This is the law and the prophets.”*

I know I heard this statement —The Golden Rule — for the first time at a very young age. I can’t quite recall whether it was during one of my first-grade religion classes, or during a Sunday homily at my parish, or because my grandmother always repeated it at holiday time whenever there was a conflict among my cousins about who could play with what toy. Though my memory is fading, I know the Golden Rule was how I was taught to live my life: to accept people for where they are in life and to love each person individually and whole-heartedly at every moment, even when it may be difficult.

These days, I catch my husband and I teaching the same thing to our two daughters, Maeve, age 6 and Kaeleigh, age 9. (Sometimes we don’t even realize we’re teaching it.) My girls sum up what we’ve taught them when they say, “Love and be kind to people just like you would want people to do to you, even when they’re mean.” Their summary is basic, yet true and it makes me smile when they say it. My grandmother would be proud.

During Lent, perhaps we might take time to think about who or what has influenced our lives. What are the faith experiences that form who you are today?

Brenda Hounsell Sullivan

Assistant Dean, Director of the Office of Student Involvement

MARCH 14 · FRIDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

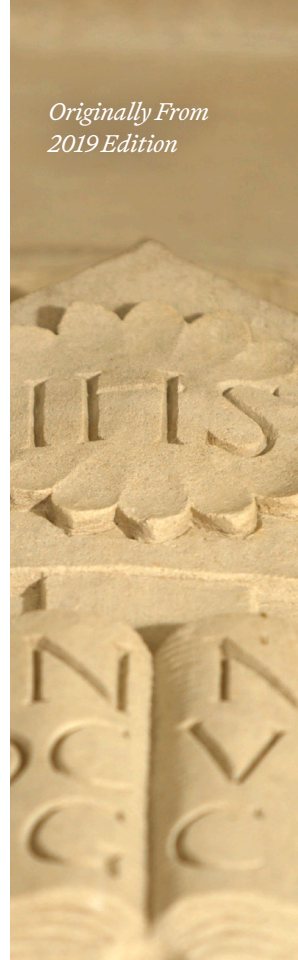
Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130; Matthew 5:20-26

Last semester, each of my professors gently reminded me that the material we would cover was not confined to absolutes. Even so, I consistently struggled to leave the bounds of black and white and enter into the full spectrum of gray that exists in between. In academics and most every other aspect of my life, the “grays” are hard for me to acknowledge and even more challenging for me to accept.

Naturally, I defaulted to this extreme way of thinking in my first couple of reflective passes through today’s readings; those who do good will have eternal life and those who do bad will not. Once again, I failed to see the in-betweens. While our highest and lowest moments do matter, they’re not the totality of our existence. We are blessed to have a God who forgives us in our lower moments, recognizes our potential to again experience higher ones, and deeply values us in all the ordinary moments that lie between. Today’s readings do not portray a God whose judgement is confined to black and white, but rather a God who sees, embraces and loves us in the gray.

As we enter this Lenten season, may we consider the ordinary that makes up the gray in our own lives. It’s easy to see only the black and white in ourselves, others, and the world, but in doing so, we miss out on all of the beauty that lies in the gray. What gray do you overlook?

Katherine M. Elacqua '19



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MARCH 15 · SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119; Matthew 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

MARCH 16 · SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 9:28b-36

I am challenged by the idea of God as an ever-accessible entity. I am more disposed to imagine a removed and distant authority who hears our prayers but who answers in mysterious and indirect ways. This separation between heaven and earth is a common imagery among Catholics — we tend to believe that only the most pious saints can speak face-to-face with God. Suppose this spatial difference between God and ourselves were to disappear. We could engage God in conversations as though he were among us on earth.

In today's readings, God speaks directly with his children on earth. In the gospel, the disciples hear his voice: "This is my chosen Son, listen to him." In the first reading, God speaks directly to Abram, giving him specific instructions to sacrifice certain animals. Moreover, he sends a sign after the sacrifice is complete; a "smoking fire pot and a flaming torch" appear on the altar.

Although we may not hear a voice coming from the clouds, God can speak directly with us in our daily lives: through our thoughts during prayerful meditation, through the Gospel, or in the words of those around us. Lent provides us with the suitable means to open ourselves to His voice through solemn meditation and devotion. In this way, we might realize that God does not hear our prayers from a lofty, distant throne, but from close beside us and that he responds to us in our day-to-day lives.

Abe Ross '16

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2016 Edition*





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MARCH 17 · MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Daniel 9:4B-10; Psalm 79; Luke 6:36-38

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

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

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

Melissa J. Carrick, D.C. '98

MARCH 18 · TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalm 50; Matthew 23:1-12

Perhaps many of us can feel an uncomfortable twinge of self-recognition in Jesus' description of the scribes and Pharisees in today's gospel: "they preach but they do not practice. ... All their works are performed to be seen [so] do not follow their example."

How can we find a different way to live? This comes, first, from a precise appraisal of our own lives, with a thoughtful examination of our own values and practices, with a healthy sense of what we have done wrong — and of lost opportunities to do right. Yet our goal is not simply guilt and repentance, although both are key aspects of the process. In both Isaiah and Matthew we see that the focus is on a new model of behavior, to "cease doing evil; learn to do good" for we "are all brothers."

This may sound utopian and unrealistic on Wall Street or Capitol Hill — and perhaps even in our own communities. But since his election we have seen widespread admiration for the words and practices of Pope Francis who seems to practice what he preaches, and this offers a glimmer of hope. We can learn to do good, for in the promise of Psalm 50, "to him that goes the right way I will show the salvation of God."

Brian O'Connell '71



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2015 Edition

**MARCH 19 · SOLEMNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH,
HUSBAND OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
(PATRON SAINT OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS)**

2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Psalm 89; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; Luke 2:41-51a

For this reflection, I interviewed Sis, the iconic campus employee in Kimball Dining Hall.

“I consider all these students my kids,” she told me. “I call them by name, not by a number. They love it when I call them by name.”

Meeting Sis is a memorable experience, as generations of Holy Cross students know. At 77 years old and a 30-year employee of Dining Services — first in the serving line and for the last five or six years as a permanent ID checker — Sis has seen many students come and go. But the constant turnover of students does nothing to impact how she looks upon each new crop of arrivals. “I treat them like one of my own — they’re part of my family. Instead of having two kids, I have 2,000 kids.”

And what about Sis’ own family? “I love spending time with my family. I love cooking — everything from scratch.” She describes the times spent around food, having her children and grandchildren over for meals. “My gang,” she calls them.

In the readings for today we hear much about family relationships, from Abraham and his descendants, to Mary and Joseph with the child Jesus. In familial bonds — whether of blood or not — we share a common lineage, united with the God who made us to live together in various communities, and many families. We are all parents; we are all children — part of the same family, God’s own gang.

Rev. Keith Maczkiewicz, S.J., with Charlotte ‘Sis’ Wise
Associate Vice President for Mission and Ministry
A longtime employee of Holy Cross Dining, Sis Wise died in 2016.



MARCH 20 · THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1; Luke 16:19-31

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream,”

As the past years have shown us, the only constant in this world is truly God. I often reflect upon God’s presence in my daily life and consider if I connect deeply enough with Him. Do I check in often or just in times of duress? Am I tapping into this source of abundant love? Today’s Scripture reminds us to place all trust, hope and wanting in Him. The analogy of a tree beautifully illustrates how we can soak up His love, protection and guidance. Rooting ourselves in our faith allows us the richest opportunity for a fruitful life.

This sentiment is easier said than practiced. It is worthwhile to note that tree roots are naturally imperfect. Knots, cracks and crossovers lace the surface. Perfectly imperfect, we are created to come as we are with our cracks. As children of God, what if we use this Lenten season to deepen and re-root ourselves in our faith? Deepening our roots creates an unshakable bond with our Creator that is unmoving. We grow and transform daily, constantly evolving into who we are meant to be. As we grow, how can we remember that we owe our transformation thus far to God? Moving forward, how can we seek transformation in hope and trust from that source of life as we develop our spirits?

Margaret Mary Telling ‘22

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MARCH 21 · FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Psalm 105; Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

The taxi ride to the airport lasted 10 minutes. To pass the time, I asked the driver my ordinary battery of questions: What's your name? Have you been busy today? How late will you work tonight? As we arrived, tears streamed down Mohammed's cheeks. "You're the first person to ride in my cab today," he told me. "Two other people who came up to the cab looked at me and turned away."

Jesus uses the Parable of the Tenants to advise us against exploiting others for our own benefit. Just as the tenants murdered the landowner's heir to secure the landowner's property for themselves, Joseph's brothers sold him to the Ishmaelites for their own gain. Similarly, the Chief Priests rejected Jesus out of fear and misunderstanding and to retain their standing in society.

What would Jesus say to us when refugees seek shelter, our neighbors call for equality, and taxi drivers are avoided because of their appearance? How are we to confront the pervasive self-centeredness evident in the news? The temptation to succumb to selfishness and greed engulfs us daily. Today's gospel preaches, "The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit." Holy Cross calls us on a journey toward this service, solidarity, and selflessness. How might I respond to Jesus' call to recognize the humanity of others? Who have I overlooked or rejected recently? Will I take up His cross?

John Milner '15

MARCH 22 · SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Psalm 103; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

During a particularly troubling time in my spiritual life, I found myself sitting in the confessional before the Lord and confessing, yet again, to the same sin that continually drew me away from Him. There, I brought my failures before the Lord and was blessed with the best confession I had ever experienced.

Admittedly, the thought of entering the confessional sometimes fills me with anxiety; it demands humility of self, the facing of one's actions and the recognition that the person that I am striving to be has not yet been fully realized. Making an honest confession requires that we recognize that our failures hurt not only ourselves but also our relationship with God and with those around us. It also requires that we forgive ourselves as we embrace the compassionate forgiveness of God.

In today's gospel, Jesus tells a familiar parable sometimes known as the Prodigal Father. I like to think that this is how Jesus actually knew God the Father — as one who unconditionally loves and forgives. Today's gospel shows that our God is loving, continually welcoming all of us home. He calls us all to enter back into a relationship with Him, and He eagerly awaits our return. When we decide to come back, He runs out to the gates and excitedly meets us with joyful celebration. Are we willing to meet Him there?

Brian SanGiacomo '18





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2016 Edition*

MARCH 23 · THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15; Psalm 103; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9

Each night at dinner, I can count on Magdalen — one of my housemates at the L’Arche Home where I work and who has a disability — to grow impatient for her food. As soon as we hear her cue “p-p-p-please,” we respond with the British sign language gesture for “waiting”, to encourage her patience.

The sign repeats a circular motion that ends with the palms open to grab onto something new, expressing anticipation for excitement to come, yet not giving any indication of when that will be. Jesus suggests that the fruits of prayer can feel like a similar waiting game, especially since the gifts are not necessarily guaranteed in any concrete way.

Last year as a member of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, I often felt confused, too deeply immersed into the pressures of an intentional community to recognize myself. I felt distanced from the easy-going student I was at Holy Cross, a distorted image that I felt my community sometimes held of me, and the greater human I was becoming through all of it. More than ever, I leaned into God deeply during my “JVC” year. Sometimes when I felt lonely and lost, I was tempted to ask God, “P-p-p-please, give me an answer, some clarity.” I now understand, however, that God was silently gesturing the “sign” for me to wait a little while longer, encouraging me that something greater would eventually unfold. It did.

Today’s gospel asks us: “Can the Lenten spirit of waiting be enough?”

Sara Bovat '14

MARCH 24 · MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT 2

2 Kings 5:1-15ab; Psalm 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4; Luke 4:24-30

*“A thirst 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?

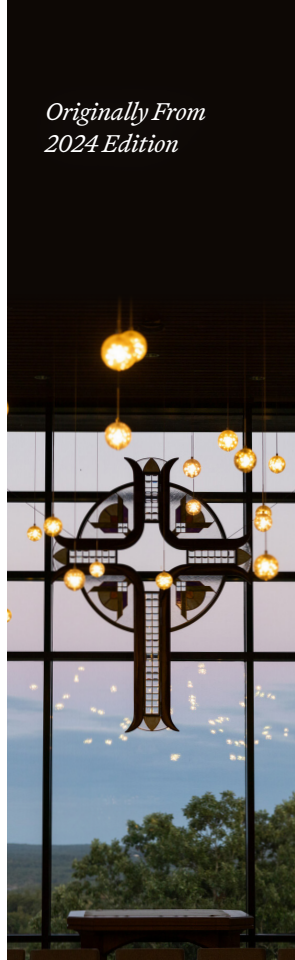
My soul thirsts for God and longs to behold the face of God. Yet pride, anger and other factors of the human condition can often prevent me from noticing the many ways God is always present in and around me. I am caught up in sadness and frustration, rather than the “gladness and joy” to which I am invited.

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

Public Services and Engagement Archivist, Dinand Library

*Originally From
2024 Edition*



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2020 Edition*

MARCH 25 · SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10; Psalm 40; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

“Is it not enough for you to weary people, must you also weary my God?”

How weary God must be of me. Throughout this difficult year I have called upon Him relentlessly: “Dear God, heal my sister’s heart broken by betrayal.” “Please God, give strength to my brother as he battles cancer once again.” “No, God, don’t take my husband yet.” And then, in the same breath, “Take him home, he has suffered enough.”

I have asked much of God this year. And yet, like Ahaz, I have not trusted in Him. In moments of grief and loss, I have surrendered to anger and despair. I have asked Him to follow my plan. I have been unable—or unwilling—to turn over the burdens of my heart to God’s infinite wisdom and mercy. But He does not let us go so easily. Despite Ahaz’ obstinance, God sent him a sign of His constancy: a child named Emmanuel, “God is with us.”

During these grueling days when I have struggled with heartache, I find comfort in Isaiah’s reassurance that God is with us. Suffering will always be part of the human condition. And our humanness allows us to respond to suffering with fear and grief. However, if we trust in God, if we truly believe that He is with us, then we will not despair. He will walk us through our trials. During this Lenten season, may you trust that God walks with you through your darkest days.

Elizabeth O’Connell-Inman ’79 P15, 18, 20

Senior Lecturer, Spanish Department

Director, Directed Independent Spanish Curriculum



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MARCH 26 · WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Psalm 147; Matthew 5:17-19

We sat in a small home, tucked in the mountains of El Salvador. Gathered around a makeshift table, 12 of us, a few on the dirt floor, joined hands in prayer. My host mother, Deisy, asked me to give thanks. Overwhelmed, since this was my first day there, I hesitated. She nodded in assurance.

In this moment, I learned gratitude in the deepest way. I thanked God for my new family who loved, our tortillas that filled, our firewood which warmed, the sun that illuminated and the breeze that cooled. And I thanked God for the earth, which although teeming with catastrophe, is the most beautiful gift.

Gracias a Dios...Thank you God. Salvadorans give thanks by ending most sentences with this simple, yet incredibly powerful prayer, gracias a Dios. With each breath, they give thanks. Their lives are a prayer of gratitude. And this has become my daily prayer, gratitude discovered through the Salvadoran people.

As today's gospel describes, "I cannot do anything on my own," particularly, "because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me." Perhaps we cannot do anything without the inspiration of God, but I discovered that this inspiration is within us. Therefore, we cannot do anything without others, for God's wisdom and mercy, manifests within them.

Do you open your heart and mind to others, so that they can inspire you? Is there someone in particular who has inspired you to be grateful? Do you see God manifest in others? For we cannot do anything but with God, who dwells in the other.

Emily Muldoon '16



*Originally From
2016 Edition*

*Originally From
2018 Edition*

MARCH 27 · THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 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 Giangjordano '18



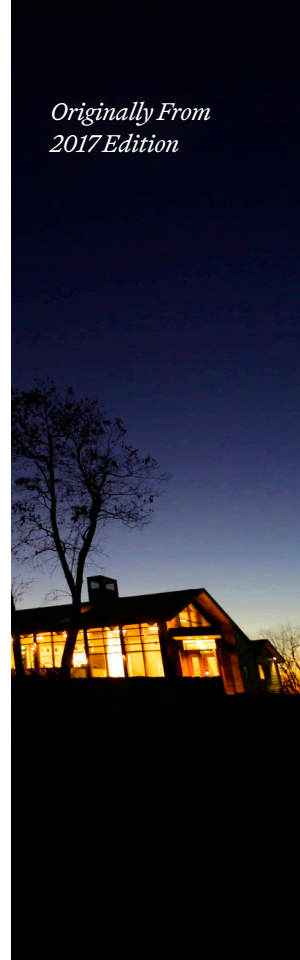
MARCH 28 · FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Hosea 14:2-10; Psalm 81; Mark 12:28-34

The prophet Hosea speaks for God — inviting all of Israel to return to Him and to ask for His forgiveness since Assyria will not be able to save them. He ensures them that He will “heal their defection...will love them freely; for my wrath is turned away from them.” Today’s “invitation” reminds us once again of the fact that God has been and always will be there for us during times of triumph, but also during times of tribulation — even when we are on the verge of doubting Him.

Whenever I find myself celebrating a certain accomplishment, I always turn to God and thank Him for helping me to succeed. Sometimes turning to God is difficult to do when things aren’t necessarily going in the right direction, because I’m constantly questioning why I’ve been put in those situations. However, I always remind myself that I will prevail if I continue to lean into the same faith, that things will get better. This is the same message that God reminded the people of Israel, and it is the same message that He reminds us all: “straight are the paths of the Lord” and “in them the just walk, but sinners stumble in them.” It is important that we all remember to remain on this path and trust in the Lord, even during times when we are in pain. Only He can save us.

Adrian Cacho '19





Originally From
2019 Edition

MARCH 29 · SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Hosea 6:1-6; Psalm 51; Luke 18:9-14

“...and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Often life here on the Hill can be demanding: a meeting here, a study group there, homework everywhere. There is little time to decompress, except, perhaps, on the weekends. But these seem to fly right on by! Today is Saturday, so I sit to ponder today’s readings, and I hear words of humility and mercy. As my week draws to its end, I review it to see how I have humbled myself before God, to reflect on how merciful (or not) I have been to others. Where have I felt resentments and anxieties over grades and friendships?

My mother is wise, reminding me: “Jared, be kind to yourself.” It can be overbearing to attend an incredibly competitive (sometimes ruthless!) academic institution, during years of tremendous social, personal and cognitive growth, while trying to live (mostly!) on my own. The easiest thing to do is to fight like it’s “me against the world,” and in such a mindset, it is easy to grow in resentment — when I see that my classmates are doing well, and instead of feeling happy for them and celebrating their accomplishment, I resent them because I didn’t do so well.

I have learned in my four years at Holy Cross how important it is to be humble and merciful. Yes, I can be proud of my own gifts and talents and accomplishments, but I am also called to be humble and to be thankful for the opportunities that are in front of me.

Jared Cosby '19

MARCH 30 · FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETARE SUNDAY)

Joshua 5:9a, 10-12; Psalm 34; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

How lucky are we that God doesn't count each time we 'trespass against him'? In my daily life, I find myself taking note of the times someone's "hi" didn't seem as friendly as the day before, or when someone snaps back in a brief interaction. Unlike God, I unfortunately am always taking offense or taking other people's actions to heart.

Imagine if God felt this way every time I missed a prayer before I went to bed? God's perfect love for us is exemplary, and as imperfect beings this is something we can only strive for. To love like God requires an ability to forgive and see other people through God's eyes. He loves each of us equally, and calls us to work to love each other with great love.

In today's gospel, crowds gather around Jesus to determine the punishment of a member of their community. Looking for him to either support stoning or condone her sin, Jesus does neither, saying "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." No one is without sin and Jesus calls us to love each other rather than keep track of each other's imperfections. Is there space for more forgiveness in our interactions with each other rather than condemnation and keeping score? How can we love more like Jesus does, even if imperfectly?

Jane Feeney '25

Return to Me Intern





*Originally From
2022 Edition*

MARCH 31 · MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Isaiah 65:17-21; Psalm 30; John 4:43-54

In light of everything we have been through in the past few years (a global pandemic, increased awareness of racial, economic and social injustice, unprecedented climate disasters across the globe, and the anxiety and uncertainty that accompanies the loss and struggle many of us have experienced) this reading speaks of hope. That God cares for us and provides for us and will “create new heavens and a new earth.”

This means it is important to examine where we have been. Taken literally “the past shall not be remembered” leads me to think that the past and all that was problematic is behind us. Although God may forgive our past transgressions, it feels important that we do not forget. The past is what helps define us, what we have lived through, survived and even triumphed over. So as we embrace our future it is important that we reflect on our past hurts and foibles, so as not to repeat them. Hope lies in our awareness and intentions to live differently and to live better going forward.

There is a rebirth in moving forward. In reflecting during this Lenten season, we have opportunities to recognize where we may have fallen short; moments where we could have taken the perspective of our neighbor; occasions where we would have been able to show more kindness and compassion for our community members; instances when we did not exhibit compassion and care for ourselves; the times we let fear control our actions. It is in this recognition and commitment to change course that we can fulfill our purpose of living in God’s image by caring for ourselves and our community and truly embodying *cura personalis*.

Adriana DiPasquale

Associate Director and Coordinator of Training, Counseling and Psychological Services

APRIL 1 · TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

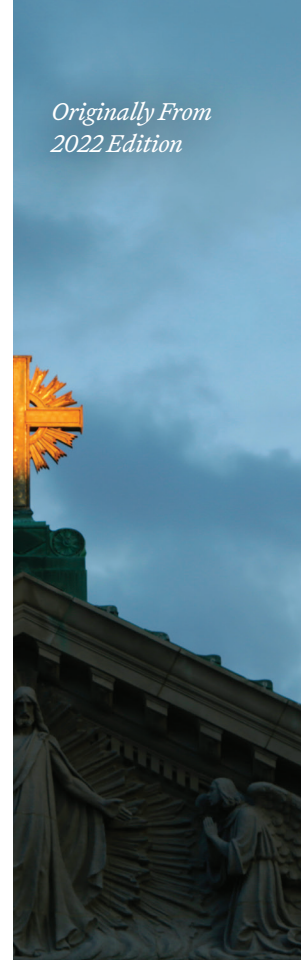
Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; Psalm 46; John 5:1-16

In today's readings, we encounter images of flowing water and its abundant presence which leads to life and renewal: "Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live, and there shall be abundant fish." After graduating from Holy Cross, I spent a year in the Jesuit Volunteer Corps (JVC) in Detroit, Michigan. Before I arrived for orientation in August 2013, I had never been to Michigan and knew very little about the city of Detroit. There were so many unknowns leading up to the start of that year and I was worried about what I was leaving behind at home. Should I have taken the job opportunity with a salary I was offered back in Boston? Will I be behind my peers who are starting their careers or graduate school? What does living in community really mean?

During orientation, there was time devoted to each of the four core values of JVC: spirituality, simple living, community and social justice. On the topic of simple living, John Staudenmaier, S.J. spoke to us about entering our volunteer year with a mindset of abundance versus scarcity. Instead of focusing on the limited resources we had as volunteers, notice what new gifts present themselves when our traditional way of thinking and living is challenged. Starting with a foundation of hope and gratitude, opportunity abounds.

My year in Detroit has given me gifts that are still revealing themselves to me, years later. In this Lenten season, 40 days in a spiritual desert, how can God's limitless love inspire a deep sense of possibility and gratitude each day?

Elizabeth Deliberto '13



APRIL 2 · WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Isaiah 49:8-15; Psalm 145; John 5:17-30

“The doctor says I’m very healthy for my age. Well, except for the cancer, of course.”

This was one of Dad’s favorite jokes after his diagnosis. Less than two years after losing Mom to the same disease, we didn’t think it was very funny. I’m sure he didn’t either. But Dad feigned a brave good humor for our sake, and we laughed along for his.

Sometimes, the known is worse than the unknown. This time we knew what to fear. We knew about clinical trials (not eligible), wonder drugs (not a candidate), and hospice (not yet). Faced with so much knowing, Dad did a remarkable thing. He rented a home in the Outer Banks and planned a family vacation.

All twenty-seven of us went. When Dad was not feeling well, he would stay in his room with the windows open looking at the ocean and listening to games and laughter by the pool. When well, he would play his ukulele and sing. The trip was joyful, stressful, and deeply moving.

We returned home on a Friday. Dad died early that Sunday morning — a few hours after receiving Last Rites. Dad’s final gift to us was not the vacation but its lesson. By bringing us together in joy and sorrow one last time, Dad was teaching us how to die. Today’s gospel makes me think of Dad, and of this lesson: “For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything that he himself does, and he will show him greater works than these, so that you may be amazed.”

Kathleen (Mahoney) Moylan '87

in memory of Edward L. Mahoney '62

APRIL 3 · THURSDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Exodus 32: 7-14; Psalm 106; John 5:31-47

“Yayita, no seas una hija de poca fe y ora para fortalecer tu fe.” “Yayita, don’t be a daughter of poor faith and pray so God strengthens your faith.” Those are the wise words of my abuelita when she would advise me to continue believing in our merciful God. Since graduating from Holy Cross, I have struggled to maintain my spirituality in this materialistic and consumerist world, aware that even when times get tough we are called to believe and trust God.

Today’s readings remind us that despite being poor believers, we stand before a merciful God who forgives: “Remember us, O Lord, as you favor your people.” The Ancient Israelites singing today’s Psalm were a people of poor faith who gave up on the God who provided them with everything. As it states: “They forgot the God who had saved them, who had done great deeds in Egypt, Wondrous deeds in the land of Ham, terrible things at the Red Sea.”

I often feel like them. It is always easier to choose the easy road instead of choosing God. Every word from this Psalm tells me to continue to trust in God and never forget that even when the road before me gets tough, God doesn’t give me something I can’t handle.

God will always remember us, if we have faith and believe in Him.

Yarlennys Villaman '14

*Originally From
2016 Edition*



*Originally From
2023 Edition*



APRIL 4 · FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22; Psalm 34; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

At the end of eighth grade, I spoke at a very prestigious event. Not something trivial like a TED Talk or Nobel Prize acceptance ceremony. No, something more important. It was eighth grade graduation. I spoke of the “superpower” of forgiveness, defining it as “the ability to let go of something negative that was done to you even if the other person doesn’t apologize or admit their guilt.” A strong starting definition, but certainly not all-encompassing. It was only after my speech, when my CCD teacher told me how proud she was, that I realized I just gave a homily at a public school.

Today’s psalm reminds us of God’s forgiveness, similar to my definition, but adding the crucial part that I omitted: love. God loves us as “He watches over all his bones; not one of them shall be broken.” God wants to forgive us. He actively wants us to, when broken, “[take] refuge in him.” In a few weeks, we will hear of Jesus dying on the cross. God’s sacrifice of his only Son is a manifestation of his forgiveness; a reminder to not simply let go of wrongs done against us, but actively love the people who committed them – not to simply strive for those we have wronged to let go of our faults, but earn back their love. This Lent, let us allow forgiveness to break open our hearts, allowing us to adopt our own small form of God’s “superpower” of forgiving.

Edwin Ryan '25

APRIL 5 · SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 7; John 7:40-53

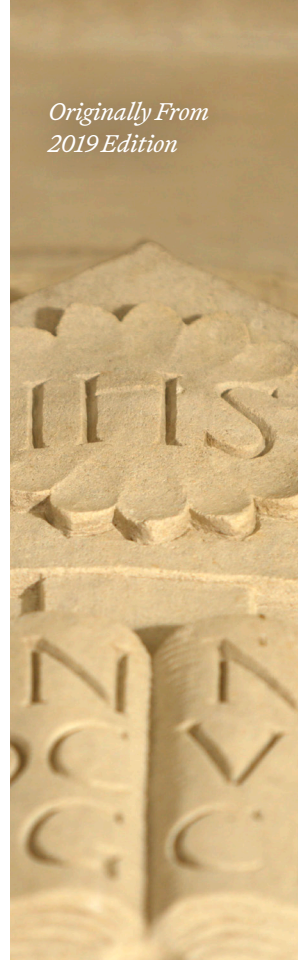
As a child, I remember once asking my grandmother: “Why doesn’t God punish evil people who commit crimes and create so much chaos in the world?” She responded that the “wheat and the weeds had to grow together until the day of harvest.” Today, Jeremiah cries out to the Lord, angered by those who hope to hurt him and desperate for God to discipline them for their actions.

It is difficult to experience or witness injustice in our daily lives. Living in a world where crime, violence and hatred towards marginalized groups are rampant and increasing in their frequency, we can become demoralized. We cry out to God to rescue us. We hope for an immediately better world filled with peace, understanding and empathy. The promise of a brighter future often rings hollow when one has to endure suffering or watch others they love suffer. But as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. reminded us: “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”

I have learned to trust in God’s plan for a better world. Like Jeremiah, my world will be determined partly by my ability to speak truth to power; standing firm in my convictions and my desire for a more just, equitable society.

Andre Isaacs '05

Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry





*Originally From
2016 Edition*

APRIL 6 · FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11

By habit, I consider penance as the focus of Lent. After all, my memories of the holy season involve dozens of uneaten cookies, hundreds of unwatched television shows and a host of other mundane pleasures that never were.

Yet a hasty privileging of penance can quickly descend into a veritable obsession. Is my penance as strict as last year's? Is my penance as exacting as everyone else's?

Today's readings give a different emphasis to the Lenten season. When my penances become rigidly legalistic, I am no better than the Pharisees who condemn the adulterous woman in John's Gospel. When I obsess over my penances, I am — as Philemon describes — like one who claims “righteousness of my own based on the law.” In both cases it is not any observance of the law that is important, but “faith in Jesus Christ.”

Now, this certainly does not mean that we should throw out our penances altogether. But it does call us to change our focus. To be a Christian is to have a radically personal relationship with Jesus Christ, who is Himself the Law. From this relationship flows forth our observance of the law. It is thus that Christ calls the adulterous woman to “go and sin no more” — to observe the law — only after He has had a personal encounter with her.

So, too, must the primary focus of Lent be a deepening of our love affair with the person of Jesus Christ, in which context alone can our penances operate.

Rev. Joseph MacNeill '16

APRIL 7 · MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Psalm 23; John 8:1-11

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want...Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.”

Psalm 23 is surely one of the most recognizable, oft-quoted, mis-quoted and reinterpreted texts of the Bible. From a decorative plaque in a great-aunt’s kitchen to seemingly every movie funeral scene to Coolio’s “Gangsta’s Paradise,” these words (or some version of them), are very familiar.

Maybe it was all the funeral scenes, but I always found this psalm a little scary: the imagery of “shall not,” “evil” and “dark valleys” evoked a sense of dread. Then a few years ago I became a preschool and kindergarten catechist. The children light up when they hear the parable of the Good Shepherd and the Good News Bible translation of Psalm 23, “The LORD is my shepherd; I have everything I need.” What the children respond to in the parable is love—that because the Good Shepherd loves the sheep so much he takes good care of them and knows them all by name. Hearing the children’s responses made me realize what I was missing when I had allowed myself to be afraid of the dark valleys. Psalm 23 isn’t about the dark valleys. It’s about how the dark valleys don’t control or define us when we are strengthened by God’s love for us, when we feel at peace and when we have trust in the Lord. We have everything we need.

Michelle A. Mondoux

Associate Professor, Department of Biology

*Originally From
2020 Edition*





*Originally From
2016 Edition*

APRIL 8 · TUESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 102; John 8:21-30

I remember well a conversation I had with a friend of mine in college not long after his father had died unexpectedly. I asked him how it was possible to have such strong faith after such a tragedy. He told me that when his father died there were only two options: either reject God or embrace Him. It didn't make much sense to him to reject God when he needed Him the most. It was his faith in God that gave him strength to endure the most difficult time in his life. In that experience my friend's fundamental orientation was toward God.

Worn out by their journey through the desert, the children of Israel complain against God and Moses. How quickly they had forgotten the wondrous things the Lord did for them in rescuing them from slavery in Egypt. It's only when they're afflicted by a plague of poisonous serpents that they turn toward the Lord. What strikes me most is that God doesn't take the serpents away like the community asks. What God does is render the serpents ineffective.

Like my friend in college, all of us experience difficulties and pain in this life, caused by loss, sickness, sin, addiction, etc. We may be tempted at times to think that God has gone deaf to our sufferings because He doesn't take these things away when we ask. But when our lives are oriented toward God we find that the things that once caused us to suffer are rendered ineffective.

Rev. Nicholas Desimone '04

APRIL 9 · WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

I used to think that moments of conversion would result in a permanent transformation, like unlocking a new ability in a video game. I, too, would one day have the confidence and clarity of purpose of a Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego. Bring on the proverbial white hot furnaces!

The reality is far more muddled. I am quick to lose sight of the truth of the gospels in the chaos of the mundane. Often I find myself feeling far less certainty while facing far less than a Babylonian king's anger. Like most people, the furnace intermittently runs hot and cold on an average day. My emotions often run higher than they should as my wife and I try to keep up with our young sons and the ups and downs of any given stretch. It is easy to feel like we are always moving but often in circles.

In my own experience, the truth of the gospels is not a state, but rather a landmark. It is something that when we find once, we can hopefully find again in those moments when we need to recenter and reorient ourselves.

So let us take this time to stop, to look around, to re-familiarize ourselves with the truths of a God who loves us in all our brokenness and beauty and calls us to do the same for one another. In a modern world that is easy to get lost in, it is helpful to remember what guides us and what we are pointed towards to help us navigate through it all.

Chris Staysniak

Lecturer, Montserrat

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*Originally From
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APRIL 10 · THURSDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Genesis 17:3-9; Psalm 105; John 8:51-59

Let's Make a Deal! Today's readings reminded me of the old game show in which the host, Monty Hall, offered the contestants the choice of what was behind one of three doors. The contestants could win various prizes, but then Monty might offer to let them "trade" that choice for something in an envelope or behind one of the other doors.

Today's readings present God as a deal-maker of sorts, although there are no hidden tricks or surprises. God presents a "deal" to Abraham: in return for his faithfulness, he honors Abraham as the father of a new nation and grants him a vast area of land to settle. Jesus presents a slightly different "deal" to the Jews: if you follow my word and teachings, you will never die (of course, he was referring to everlasting life). Relative to the prizes in that old game show, this was a pretty good deal! And yet, they wanted to stone him!

Every day, God is offering us a pretty good deal as well. Do we recognize it? Are we willing to say yes to God's offer? We have been given so many wonderful things from God. Are we honoring our part of the deal? Perhaps today we can take a few moments to put away our cell phones, step away from our computers, and find a quiet place to pray. For a few moments we might ask — what more does God want from me?

John Mullman '82, P07

APRIL 11 · FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 18; John 10:31-42

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

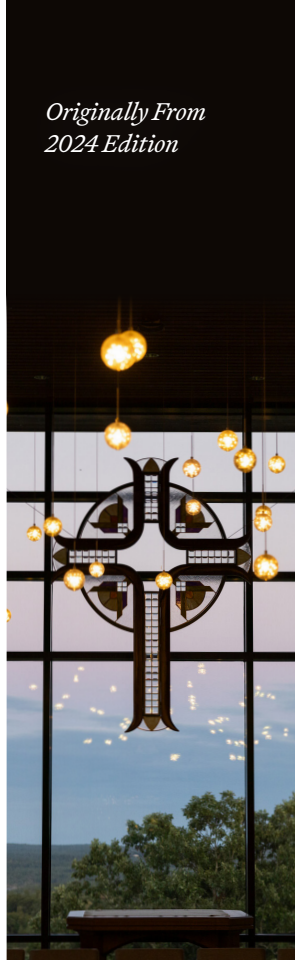
A number of years ago now, I was speaking with a wise spiritual director. I was recounting a particular difficulty that I was dealing with at the time, one about which I was constantly praying. Looking back, I know that I was frustrated because God was not “fixing” the problem to my satisfaction—I wasn’t 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

*Originally From
2024 Edition*



*Originally From
2015 Edition*

APRIL 12 · SATURDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Ezekiel 37:21-28; Jeremiah 31; John 11:45-56

Where is He? When is He coming? Is He coming?

So often in our lives we assert and insist on the presence of God. He is present to us in all things, we say: “he will guard us, as a sheep guards his flock.”

But if we are honest, there are times when it doesn’t feel that way. There are times when we feel alone, and we wonder if God is there at all.

We are trained by our contemporary culture to dismiss such uncertainties and doubts as stumbling blocks to real experience, as weakness.

But today’s readings tell us that those feelings are a real and important part of our experience of this God who is in relationship with us.

On the one hand, so much in the reading speaks of promise, of the coming presence of God, of the saving and unifying strength of His love.

And yet there is an equally forceful accounting of his absence — of the waiting that our human condition (which is His as well) imposes upon us. The anxiousness of John 11:56 is palpable: “What do you think? That he will not come to the feast?” Like a child waiting for the return of a beloved parent at the end of a long day, they waited, and they worried.

Following Him does not mean that we will always feel safe and assured. Waiting, John tells us, is part of loving and being loved by God.

And Jesus did come.

Jonathan Mulrooney

Professor, Department of English

APRIL 13 · PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Luke 19:28-40; Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22; Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14-23:56

During my professional life, I have attended workshops on the topic of leadership. I have been told that I need to be: creative, strategic, proactive, empathic, collaborative, visionary, fiduciary, operational, tactical, local, global, inspirational, motivational, transformational, and aspirational. I've been taught the five essential characteristics of a successful leader, been encouraged to develop the 12 crucial qualities of a successful leader and been reminded of the three necessary "senses" of a successful leader (oversight, foresight and insight, just for the record).

I wonder which of these leadership concepts, models and qualities Jesus thought about while riding his donkey through the cheering crowd as he made his way into Jerusalem for the Passover. I like to think none of them. Instead, I like to think Jesus was thinking about the weary to whom he had spoken a rousing word, the ill to whom he had restored a semblance of health and the grieving to whom he had restored the possibility of hope.

And I wonder which of these leadership concepts, models and qualities Jesus thought about while he sat at the Passover Table taking bread, blessing it, breaking it and giving it to others. I like to think none of them. Instead, I like to think Jesus was thinking about how he offered himself as a child in the Temple and was blessed as an adult by John the Baptist. I wonder if he anticipated his body being broken on the Cross and his handing over of his soul to the Spirit.

At the name of our spiritual leader, Jesus, every knee should bend ...

Rev. William R. Campbell, S.J. '87



*Originally From
2016 Edition*



*Originally From
2019 Edition*

APRIL 14 · MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Isaiah 42:1-7; Psalm 27; John 12:1-11

Before his final week in Jerusalem, Jesus travels to Bethany (a name which means “The House of Affliction” or “House of the Poor”) to visit his friends Martha, Mary and their brother Lazarus. During their meal, Mary anoints the feet of Jesus with costly perfumed oil which Judas considers a wasteful act; he asks why she didn’t sell the oil and give the money to the poor.

Just as Judas misunderstands the intention of Mary, I, like many of us, am sometimes misunderstood, and this reading highlights difficulties in understanding one another. At the same time, we are asked by the reading to consider the response of Jesus that “You always have the poor with you.”

If indeed the face of the Lord is especially visible in the faces of the poor, brokenhearted, needy, disconsolate, downtrodden and abandoned, how should we behave with the poor? Mary acts from love and devotion. Judas would rather take her gift of oil and sell it to give to the poor. His attitude reflects a supposed concern for the poor that would use “the poor” for self-promotion by giving to them rather than sharing with them, since in many places in Scripture the poor man is defined as “your brother.”

Thomas Doughton

*A Senior Lecturer in the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies,
Professor Doughton died in 2024.*

APRIL 15 · TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71; John 13:21-33, 36-38

In today's gospel, as Judas leaves the table in order to betray Jesus, Christ proclaims: "Now is the Son of Man glorified." From his lowly birth to his public ministry, Jesus sought to turn our earthly understanding inside out. It all leads up to this, the ultimate scandal: Christ's Passion is his glory, beginning with fatal betrayal by one of his best friends. To us, glory might denote recognition, renown, and respect. Yet, Christ is glorified when he is reviled, when he is lonely, when he is in pain, when he suffers profoundly for our sake.


Judas, the betrayer, cannot see the power in Jesus' inglorious glory. Contrast this with the response of John, the beloved disciple, who leans against Christ's chest in a tender moment of fraternal intimacy. When John sees Christ's troubled spirit, he seeks to draw closer and share in whatever is to come. Later, the beloved disciple will stand with Mary at the foot of the cross.

A few verses after Christ's words, the disciple Peter asks, "Master, where are you going?" As we struggle to comprehend the suffering that today's gospel sets in motion, we might ask the same question. Christ will lead us through his Passion, and if we choose to draw close to him, he will lead us through our own suffering as well. This Holy Week, into what kind of glory is Jesus entering? Are we willing to follow him there?

Marian Blawie '16

*Originally From
2016 Edition*





*Originally From
2021 Edition*

APRIL 16 · WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Isaiah 50:4-9A; Psalm 69; Matthew 26:14-25

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

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

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

Bianca R. Sculimbrene

Professor, Department of Chemistry

*Originally From
2021 Edition*

APRIL 17 · HOLY THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

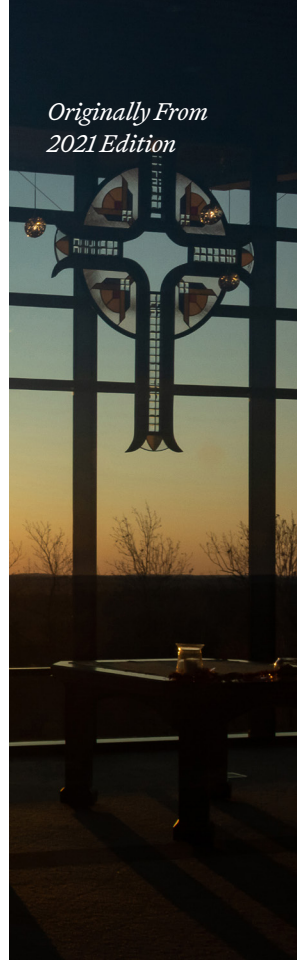
Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

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

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

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

Paulina Martin '21



*Originally From
2024 Edition*

APRIL 18 · GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Psalm 31; Hebrews 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

APRIL 19 · HOLY SATURDAY

*Genesis 1:1-2:2; Psalm 104; Genesis 22:1-18; Psalm 16; Exodus 14:15-15:18;
Romans 6:3-11; Luke 24: 1-12*

At the end of my Lenten journey, I'm conscious that Holy Saturday feels like a large transition from the introspection of Lent to the celebration of Easter. How can I sustain the new habits I've developed as the joy of Easter replaces my Lenten preparation?

As I thought about the Easter Vigil, I found myself focusing on the peace that attends the Scriptures, the stillness at its beginning. The story of Creation that begins the Vigil Mass reminds me of God's goodness that exists in all the world. The Old Testament stories of Abraham and Isaac, Moses and of God's relationship with the people of Israel remind me that God is present in our life today just as God was present to the people of ancient Israel. How can we feel God's goodness in our world today?

Finally, we come to the joy of Easter as Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome arrive at Jesus' tomb to find he is not there. The joy of Easter arrives, but not before Paul reminds us of our responsibility to think of ourselves as "dead to sin" and "to live for God in Christ Jesus."

We've arrived at the end of our Lenten journey. As the weather is getting better and new life returns to the world, I'm trying to bring the lessons learned to life. How can I keep God's presence and promise of new life at the forefront of my mind amidst the distractions of the wider world that spring brings?

John J. Mahoney '73

Originally From
2019 Edition

APRIL 20 · EASTER SUNDAY – THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Psalm 118; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

This is what life is about! Mystery and uncertainty are removed from our lives with Christ's Resurrection victory over death and sin. This is the foundation of the Church's beliefs. We can now say: "Death, where is your sting?" In the Acts of the Apostles, Peter, an eye witness to the Risen Christ, proclaims Christ's resurrection and the salvific effects it has for our lives and those of all who believe in Him.

The late Cardinal Avery Dulles wrote a small book titled: "Apologetics and the Biblical Christ." The Cardinal, who himself had once been an unbeliever, reflects on the historical questions proposed by unbelievers. He acknowledges the sincerity of their doubt, but with the eyes of faith, joined to reason and logic, he writes:

"The initial proclamation of the paschal mystery represents the unanimous faith of the infant Church. It is accepted without any shadow of doubt, though it contradicted the previous expectations of the Apostles and their contemporaries. Most importantly, the witnesses of the Resurrection were totally transformed by their experience. Face to face communion with the Risen Christ fashioned them into new men. It made them slaves of the Gospel, urgently compelling them to preach the Gospel with power to the whole world."

Neither threats nor ridicule could reduce the Apostles to silence. Their faith and the proclamation of the infant Church is the result of their life with Christ before His death and their meeting Him after His death. From that day on, they were willing to proclaim the Gospel in the face of suffering and martyrdom. Today, we can proclaim: "This is the Day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad."

Christ has risen!

Rev. Earl L. Markey, S.J. '53

Easter Sequence - *Victimæ paschali laudes*

Christians, to the Paschal Victim
Offer your thankful praises!
A Lamb the sheep redeems;
Christ, who only is sinless,
Reconciles sinners to the Father.
Death and life have contended in that combat stupendous:
The Prince of life, who died, reigns immortal.
Speak, Mary, declaring
What you saw, wayfaring.
“The tomb of Christ, who is living,
The glory of Jesus’ resurrection;
bright angels attesting,
The shroud and napkin resting.
Yes, Christ my hope is arisen;
to Galilee he goes before you.”
Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining.
Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!
Amen. Alleluia.



Holy Cross

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