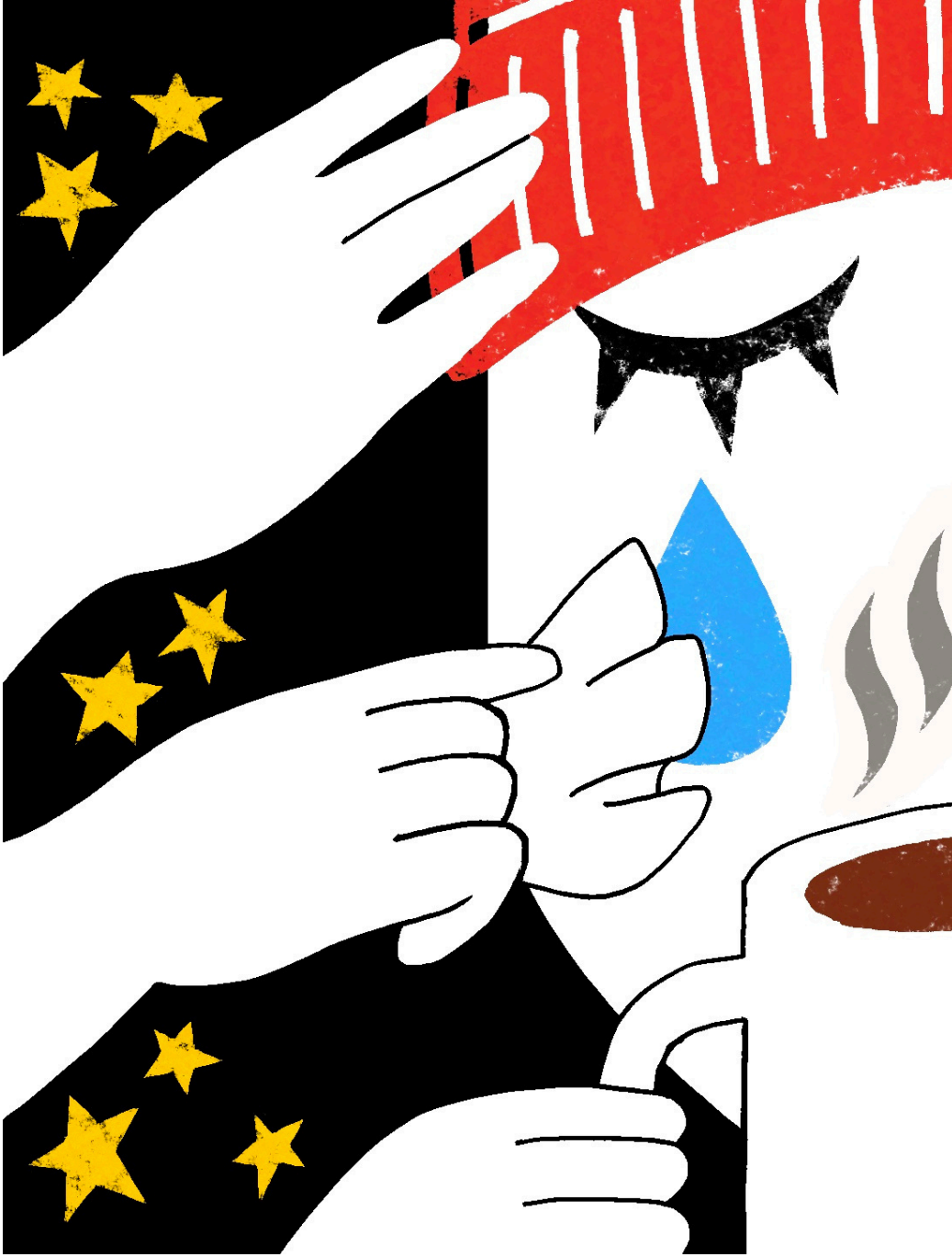


THE WORK OF MERCY

LENTEN REFLECTIONS

For College Students and Sojourners

THE WORK OF MERCY

Dear Friends and Fellow Sojourners,

Lent does not begin with answers—it begins with an invitation: come closer. I have felt this invitation most deeply when leadership demanded more listening than speaking. There are days when responsibility feels heavy and the path forward unclear. Lent meets us there—not with quick solutions, but with a call to pause and trust that faithfulness unfolds one quiet step at a time.

The Work of Mercy: Lenten Reflections for College Students and Sojourners invites us to experience Lent not only as personal discipline, but as a season that shapes how we show up for others. In my own life and leadership, I have learned that mercy is rarely dramatic. It is lived in presence—in staying at the table for hard conversations, choosing curiosity over assumption, and drawing near when it would be easier to walk away.

The Gospel stories that guide us through Lent reveal a God who meets people where they are. Jesus listens. He heals. He walks alongside those who are searching or weary. These stories remind me that mercy does not require perfection—only willingness. Care offered with humility becomes a source of dignity, hope, and belonging.

For those who study, teach, work, and journey together at the University of Providence, this season offers both challenge and promise. I see how full your lives are—filled with deadlines, responsibilities, and questions of purpose. Lent reminds us that mercy is practiced in small, faithful choices: patience over judgment, accompaniment over avoidance, compassion over convenience. These choices shape our community and reflect the mission we share.

I am grateful to the Division of Mission Integration and to the many contributors—students, faculty, staff, alumni, and trustees—who shared their voices and wisdom. This guide reflects the heart of the University of Providence and our sacred trust: to form people who lead with competence, compassion, and care.

As we journey toward Easter, I invite you to pause with these reflections. Listen more carefully. Walk patiently with one another. Trust that even in uncertainty, love is quietly at work. May this Lenten season be one of honest reflection and renewed hope.

With prayers for a meaningful and grace-filled Lent,



Caroline Goulet, PT, PhD
President, University of Providence

The Work of Mercy
Lenten Reflections for College Students and Sojourners

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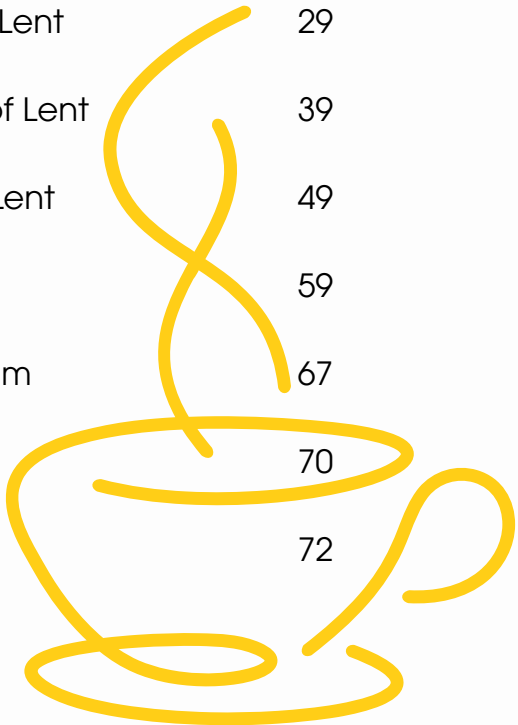
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Feb. 18 - Feb. 21



THE WEEK OF ASH WEDNESDAY

Feb. 18

Reflection by A.J. Hoy, M.T.S., PhD(c)
Vice President for Mission Integration
Interim Vice President for Student Life

Ash Wednesday

- **FIRST READING: JOEL 2:12-18**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 51:3-4, 5-6AB, 12-13, 14, AND 17**
- **SECOND READING: 2 CORINTHIANS 5:20 - 6:2**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 6:1-6, 16-18**

"Return to me with your whole heart," says the Lord through the prophet Joel. These words open the season of Lent not with condemnation, but with invitation. God does not ask for perfection, only presence. To return to God is to acknowledge that we've wandered—individually and collectively—and to trust that mercy still finds us there.

Ash Wednesday always begins in the dust. We are marked with ashes, signs of both our fragility and our belonging. These ashes don't declare us worthless; they proclaim our dependence. They remind us that we are creatures, not gods, and that even in our weakness, God continues to breathe life and meaning into us. In that humble recognition lies the beginning of mercy.

The readings today invite us into a posture of honesty: about our failings, our need for grace, and our need for one another. As Saint Paul writes, "We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Reconciliation, however, is never merely personal. It always flows outward. The mercy we receive from God is meant to be shared—embodied in acts of compassion, justice, and accompaniment. As James Keenan, SJ, writes, "Mercy is the willingness to enter into the chaos of another."[1] Lent, then, is not only about avoiding sin, but about entering the places where mercy is most needed—the places that may feel chaotic, uncomfortable, or uncertain.

[1] James Keenan, SJ. The Works of Mercy: The Heart of Catholicism (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017) xi.

For college students and sojourners, these "places" might look like the stresses of academic life, the loneliness of transition, the tension between ideals and realities, or the quiet suffering of others that often goes unnoticed. The work of mercy begins there—in the willingness to see, to listen, and to respond with tenderness rather than judgment. When we take on prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we are not merely performing rituals of piety; we are learning to orient our hearts toward others, to create space for mercy to take root and grow.

Today's Gospel calls us to live these practices sincerely, "in secret," not for appearance or approval, but because mercy itself is relational. When we pray, we enter the heart of God. When we fast, we create room for others. When we give alms, we participate in the healing of the world. Each practice becomes a small act of entering the chaos of another—through intercession, empathy, and solidarity.

Lent is not a season of self-loathing or punishment. It is a season of reorientation. It helps us remember who we are, whose we are, and what we are for. We are loved. We are not yet whole. And we are not alone. These ashes remind us that even in the dust, God is at work—transforming brokenness into beauty, and failure into compassion.

As we begin this Lenten journey together, let us commit ourselves to the work of mercy. To enter the chaos not with fear, but with courage. To admit our need for grace, and to offer that grace freely to others. To walk with one another toward Easter, trusting that every act of mercy draws us closer to the God who first entered our chaos out of love.

- Where in your life are you being invited to "return to God with (your) whole heart"?
- Who around you might be longing for someone to enter their chaos with mercy?
- How can your prayer, fasting, or giving this Lent become a real act of accompaniment?



Thursday after Ash Wednesday

- **FIRST READING: DEUTERONOMY 30:15-20**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 1:1-2, 3, 4 AND 6**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 9:22-25**

As I read the Gospel, one line stands out to me the most: "What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self?" For many of us, especially as students and young adults, we are constantly chasing our dreams, carrying expectations, and continually trying to prove that we are capable of achieving what we set out to do. Whether we like to admit it or not, there is a silent belief that we absorb from the world around us: the more we accomplish, the more worthy we are.

As an international student, this pressure often feels heavier on most days than not. In the quiet of my dorm, I feel the weight of the distance and the silence of expectation. There are moments when the dreams I carry begin to feel like they're carrying me instead. Yet, there is an extra drive to succeed, not just for myself, but for the people who sacrificed for me, for the family watching from home. The world teaches us to chase the next accomplishment, the next goal, the next version of success. And the times when that drive becomes a burden, when our dreams start to demand that we lose parts of ourselves along the way, Jesus asks us to pause and consider the cost: What part of ourselves are we willing to lose in the process?

Deuteronomy reminds us that God places choices before us not to frighten us, but to remind us of who and whose we are. And Psalm 1 tells us that the one rooted in God is like "a tree planted by streams of water," rooted and nourished. These readings are not telling us to stop thriving or chasing our dreams, but rather gently warn us of the danger of chasing a future so intensely that we forget the person God is shaping right now.

We do not need to lose ourselves to get where we need to go. The plan and dream God has for us will never require us to sacrifice our peace, integrity, or the truth of who we are. Success is not measured by how far we go, but by how rooted we remain in Christ along the way. Our value, identity, and purpose do not come from what we accumulate, but from the One who accompanies us.

- In moments in which you do feel the pressure to prove yourself, how might God be inviting you to rest in who you already are?

- How might you allow God to root you more deeply in your identity so that you do not lose yourself while pursuing your goals or future?

Friday after Ash Wednesday

- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 58:1-9A**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 51:3-4, 5-6AB, 18-19**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 9:14-15**

In the controlled chaos of an academic year, Lent arrives as a gentle but consistent reminder amid our busyness: Pause. Reflect. Return.

In Isaiah 58, the prophet speaks to a people convinced that their religious observances should please God. They fast and bow their heads in prayer, yet their heart and spirit remain distant from God. God's response is clear: "Is this not the fast that I choose? To loose the bonds of injustice, to share your bread with the hungry, and not to turn your back on your own?"

In the context of higher education, I feel this calls us to examine how our learning and our lives serve others. Fasting, then, becomes more than personal sacrifice; it becomes social transformation. Are our studies leading us toward compassion? Do our campus communities reflect inclusion, justice, and care for those in need? The fast that pleases God is one that transforms both the individual and the community, strikingly like our Mission here at the University of Providence.

In Matthew 9, Jesus redefines fasting in relational terms. When asked why his disciples do not fast, he replies that the guests cannot mourn while the bridegroom is with them. Jesus reminds us that fasting is not about sacrifice for its own sake, but about longing for his presence.

For our university community, this means that all our Lenten practices, such as fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, help those find their meaning in relationship. They are not boxes to check or spiritual chores, but a way to encounter Christ and our faith more deeply: in prayer, in our peers, and in those we serve. I leave you with a challenge on this day:

- Fast from indifference or cynicism; cultivate gratitude and hope.
- Pray for a heart open to new experiences and learning, not just in your classes or books, but with one another.
- Give your time or attention to someone who feels unseen or in need.

When we navigate through Lent this way, Isaiah's promise comes alive: "Then your light shall break forth like the dawn." God's light will shine through us, in our classrooms, our service, and our relationships, illuminating the world with compassion and truth.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 58:9B-14**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 5:27-32**

As we embark on our Lenten journey, let us be reminded of the need for us to throw away our predisposition to judge people. We, instead, should look at their potential to contribute to society and improve their lives and the lives of others. It matters not their background or social status, but rather their ability to make a difference.

Let us recognize the human unity of people rather than focusing on their differences. We are all the same in God's eyes. The Pharisees and the scribes in today's gospel criticized Jesus and his disciples for eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus, never one to take the bait, reminded them that he came "to call not the righteous to repentance but sinners."

Lent, the season of preparation, gives us the opportunity to rise above our own prejudices in judging others, avoiding the smug attitude of the Pharisees.

Those who are skilled do not need someone watching their every move. Rather, they merely need to be provided with the resources they need to perform their job successfully. Jesus provides us with the greatest resource: grace, which allows us to live our lives in his image and break down the walls of discrimination and judgement of others.

I'll close with the lyrics of "Let the Walls Fall Down." As you read them, ask yourself where in your life do you need to break down barriers and respect others for who they are in God's eyes.

One by one, we're drawn together,
One by one, to Jesus' side.
One in Him, we'll live forever,
Strangers He has reconciled.

In His love, no walls between us,
In His love, a common ground.
Kneeling at the cross of Jesus,
All our pride comes tumbling down.

Let the walls fall down,
By His love, let the walls fall down.[1]

[1] Bill Batstone, Anne Barbour, John Barbour, Let the Walls Fall Down, (Maranatha Music, 1993).

Feb. 22 - Feb. 28



THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

REFLECTIONS BY

MATTHEW PIETROPAOLI, PH.D.

Associate Professor of Philosophy

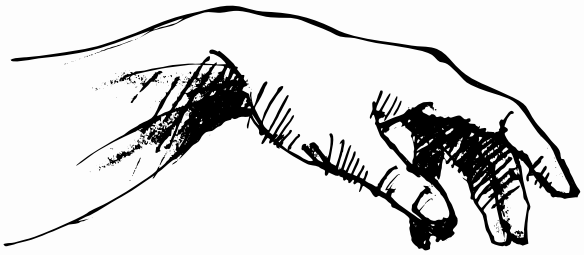
Feb. 22

First Sunday of Lent

- **FIRST READING: GENESIS 2:7-9; 3:1-7**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17**
- **SECOND READING: ROMANS 5:12-19**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 4:1-11**

In today's first reading, Adam, who is made from the earth, fails to act according to his status as a humble creature before God. (The word "humility" comes from "humus," meaning "of the earth.") Rather, he and Eve pursue the knowledge of good and evil, which, because of the serpent's cunning, they believe will make them to be like God.

One striking aspect of this story concerns idolatry. According to Anglican theologian, NT Wright, sin is essentially idolatry, a perverted form of worship.[1] It consists in the failure to give proper worship to the One who is worthy of it, namely God. Adam and Eve attempt to ascend to the heights of divine understanding and place themselves on par with God. They refuse to submit to the Almighty, that is, they refuse to worship him. But in refusing to worship God, Adam and Eve end up worshiping themselves or at least the divine knowledge they attempt to incorporate into themselves. Yet instead of achieving a God-like status that is worthy of worship, they become aware and ashamed of their own nakedness. The unbridgeable incongruity between their creaturehood and their attempt to play God is fully displayed in their shameful nakedness.



[1] https://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/2016/09/26/at-the-heart-of-nt-wrights-newest-sin-re-defined/.
[2] Matthew 4:10.

Christ, as always, points in a different direction. His temptation involves a more obvious instance of false worship: the tempter offers to Christ all the kingdoms of the world, so long as Christ falls to his knees and worships him. Christ, however, replies, "The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve."[2] As Christ shows, the path away from sin is the genuflection of humble worship. St. Paul states much the same: "Christ did not regard equality with God something to be grasped (or consumed, as did Adam and Eve). Rather, . . . he humbled himself."[3] In imitation of and participation in Christ, we learn anew the perpetual obligation of humble worship before the Lord our God which reconciles us to Him.

Thus, in Christ, we might become caught up in what St. Paul terms "the abundance of grace."[4] Per U2: "if you want to kiss the sky, you'd better learn how to kneel," i.e., learn how to kneel only ever before God and nothing else.[5] But to push this notion further: perhaps, as our worship unfolds toward God alone, our way of life in the world—the world that is also God's alone—is itself a prayer of worship.

Let me close with insights from the Indian poet Kabir: "I utter (God's) name, and whatever I see it reminds me of Him; whatever I do it becomes His worship."[6]

- Idolatry, according to one philosopher, is akin to shining our own self-generated light on the world and seeing the world accordingly. What might be one of your own "lights" which ultimately hinders your ability to perform proper worship before God?

- Lent is a time of fasting and abstaining from certain things. It might enable freedom regarding such things that have become, in subtle but significant ways, objects of worship. What might be one thing which has become such an idolatrous object in your life? What might it mean to see this thing as a reminder of God and a means to worship him alone?



[3] Philippians 2:6-8.
[4] Romans 5:17.
[5] U2, Mysterious Ways (song) On Achtung Baby (Island Records, 1991).
[6] Rabindranath Tagore. "Poem XLI" in Songs of Kabir. The Literature Network. https://www.online-literature.com/tagore-rabindranath/songs-of-kabir/5/.

Monday of the First Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: LEVITICUS 19:1-2, 11-18**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 19:8, 9, 10, 15**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 25:31-46**

Today's readings invite us to think together the importance of the law and the recognition of Christ in the least, last, and lost. But how best to do so?

The first verses of Psalm 19, from which today's response is taken, affirm that "the heavens declare the glory of God."[1] The philosopher Immanual Kant juxtaposed the marvelous splendor of the sky with moral commands: "Two things fill the mind with . . . admiration and reverence: . . . the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me."[2] After all, the "command of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eye," one aspect of which might mean witnessing the aforesaid "glory of God" expressed in the night sky.[3] Adhering to God's laws might lead to a corresponding awareness of his glory.

To speak more on glory: Christ "made his dwelling among us," such that "we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son."[4] Yet that same glorious Christ is, per today's gospel, present as the homeless, the starving, the sick, and the imprisoned. Mother Theresa, in this same vein, said that she went every day to meet Christ in all his distressing disguises.[5]

Hence, when we take to heart God's commands, we likewise attend to his glory, be it in the resplendent Montana sunset or in the seemingly disfigured face of an unhoused person in Great Falls. But not only do these readings ultimately fit together insightfully, but they also issue a challenging question: how can we fix our hearts justly before God so as to witness and respond to his glory revealed all around us?

- What in you works against witnessing and responding to God's glory? Impatience? Distractions? What is one practice that might foster a contemplation of and response toward that glory?

- When did you just let yourself, without photographing it, gaze upon a magnificent sunset? How might the God revealed therein also be found in the face of someone asking for money in a grocery store parking lot?

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[1] Psalm 19: 2.
[2] Immanual Kant. Practical Philosophy Trans and Ed. Mary J. Gregor, with general introduction by Allen Wood (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 269. Emphasis original.
[3] Psalm 19: 9.
[4] John 1:14.
[5] https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/jesus-in-his-most-distressing-disguise/.

Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 55:10-11**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 6:7-15**

Today's readings speak of God's word issuing from him and spreading to all the earth, crying out with words to the Lord in times of distress, and the need to avoid superfluous words when praying to God. A subtle but still significant implication, moreover, is that such words, coming from or going toward God, are profoundly tied to silence. T.S. Eliot's incomparable poem "Ash Wednesday" presents vividly this paradoxical relationship between silence and godly words.

Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard/The Word without a word, the Word within/The world and for the world . . . Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled/About the centre of the silent Word . . . Where shall the word be found, where will the word/Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence.[1]

The season of Lent, which begins with Ash Wednesday, invites us into the desert of silence. Silence is often terrible to endure, especially the silence that greets a heartfelt prayer. A response of silence can be distressing to the extreme. But perhaps a deeper and more patient dwelling in silence is precisely the meeting point with the corresponding silent depths of the Divine. I'll end with two quotations that express this theme far better than I.

Accept what comes from silence/ Make the best you can of it/Of the little words that come/out of the silence, like prayers/prayed back to the one who prays/make a poem that does not disturb/the silence from which it came.[2]

"Silence is the invisible laying on of the Divine Pontiff's hands upon the world . . . Silence is the only Voice of our God."[3]

- When was the last time you sat in silence for 5 or 10 minutes? What might it be like to start or even end the day with silence? What might you encounter of the hidden depths of God's silence?

- How might this attention to silence help foster an awareness of God's glory as discussed in yesterday's reflection?

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[1] TS Eliot, "Ash Wednesday," https://englishverse.com/poems/ash_wednesday.
[2] Wendell Berry, "How to be a poet," Poetry Foundation, https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/41087/how-to-be-a-poet.
[3] https://www.azquotes.com/quote/606151#google_vignette.

Wednesday of the First Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: JONAH 3:1-10**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 11:29-32**

Coming from a large family, I grew up with four other siblings. As one can imagine, this gave my parents quite a run for their money, as they were outnumbered 5:2. I am sure it was especially challenging when some of us enjoyed being mischievous and misbehaving from time to time. Whether we were taunting each other or uniting together to conspire against our parents, we'd usually bite off more than we could chew and face the consequences. I remember this being a time of growth and learning, but the way that my parents showed us forgiveness is something that I will never forget. No matter how mischievous we were, we would accept responsibility, apologize, and be shown mercy because my parents loved their children, just as God does with all of us.

In the readings today, we are reminded of how powerful God's mercy truly is. Jonah travels to the sinful city of Nineveh to spread the message that the city will soon be destroyed. As Jonah delivers his message, the people of Nineveh begin to repent and turn from their evil ways. Because of their changed hearts, God showed his powerful mercy and did not destroy the city. During this season of Lent, it is an important reminder that God shows mercy to those with a change of heart. No matter how far we have strayed, it is never too late to repent and change our ways because God wants to show all of us how powerful His mercy truly is.

- What are some ways that God has shown mercy in your life?
- When have you failed to show others mercy?



Thursday of the First Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: ESTHER C:12, 14-16, 23-25**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 138:1-2AB, 2CDE-3, 7C-8**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 7:7-12**

The penultimate line in today's gospel is the famous golden rule. This rule, on its own, is worthy of further contemplation. However, I would like to ponder it in comparison with the preceding part of Matthew's Gospel.

What these readings express is that God, who is all-loving, will hear and respond to the prayers of his people. In fact, we are encouraged to make petitions before God, precisely because of his desire to pour out abundant blessings upon us. We are reminded that God will, in response to our prayers, bestow on us the good things which we deeply desire.

That idea, however, seems hard to square with the golden rule. The golden rule and other similar principles were presented to me, in my childhood, based on the assumption that selfishness was supremely sinful. Approaching God obediently meant the selfless renunciation of what was desired, not the petition for its realization. To articulate, express, and ask God for help in achieving such heartfelt desires was seen as irreconcilable with the selfless surrender to God's will. Since the needs and desires of others came first in the eyes of God, then it necessitated forsaking one's own such needs and desires. At least that was a lesson I learned early on.

But maybe that was a mistaken lesson. Not because my own desires are more important than anyone else's, but because we are all children of God, our Abba, who, as Father, loves us equally and desires all of us to flourish. Hence, my petition to God for the realization of what I desire might be done for the glory of his beneficence, not the expression of problematic selfishness. After all, as St. Ireneus states, "the glory of God is a human being fully alive."[1]

- What might it mean, during Lent, to ask God that certain good things come into your life, for your full aliveness and his concurrent glory? How might being "fully alive" help you participate in and manifest God's glory?

[1] https://www.wordonfire.org/articles/barron/the-glory-of-god-is-a-human-being-fully-alive/.

Friday of the First Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: EZEKIEL 18:21-28**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7A, 7BC-8**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:20-26**

"If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, Lord, who can stand? But with you is forgiveness, that you may be revered."[1]

When done honestly, an examination of conscience—that is, a focused reflection on how I have acted—reveals many "iniquities," i.e., failures, sins, misdeeds. My impatience, my misplaced anger, my laziness, my unkindness, my juvenileness, and my pride all come to the fore.

But I have also found a strange paradox here. When I feel close to God, I am also, strangely enough, more aware of my iniquities. And yet, I have not found this to be a judgmental and condemning gaze which articulates my sinfulness. Instead, it pertains to these words from St. Paul: God "will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will manifest the motives of our hearts, and then everyone will receive praise from God . . . (Thus,) I do not even pass judgment on myself."[2]

Coming into God's presence—he in whose Light see light—is jarring for what it shows of our sinfulness but also, and more importantly, wonderful for the welcome it bestows on us. The hidden recesses and motives of the heart will be brought out as the "the daybreak from on high" unfolds upon us.[3] And yet that light is the gaze of "tender mercy" which beckons us ever-homeward into his eternal kingdom of love.[4] Thus, as we come into God's presence, we are fully revealed, including being revealed in our sinfulness, but only because we are fully loved by God who desires intimacy with us.

- What is a particular sin that you struggle to acknowledge and bring to light? How might doing so allow you to be bathed in the glorious and abundant mercy of God?

- How might bringing this sin to light allow you to "revere" God more intensely? How might it allow you to be drawn into and participate in his infinite glory and love?



[1] Psalm 130:3-4.
[2] 1 Corinthians 4:1-5.
[3] Luke 1:78.
[4] Luke 1:78.

Saturday of the First Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: DEUTERONOMY 26:16-19**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:43-48**

A cursory overview of today's readings might lead to the following conclusion: God asks us to follow fully all of his commands in order to achieve divine perfection. We are called to make no mistakes, like a perfect score on a math test, in enacting comprehensive adherence to every divine precept. Nonetheless, such an understanding, though common, misses a vital consideration.

The Greek word for "perfect" as used in Matthew's Gospel is teleios. When something or someone is in a state of teleios, they are whole or complete, fully realized. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, when discussing the fulfilled state of human life, said that such a life could not be articulated with mathematical precision. Even for a pagan philosopher like Aristotle, teleios was not to be understood in mathematical terms.

All the more so for us Christians. God is not teleios, nor are we, because of an unfailing adherence to moral precepts. Reconsider Christ's command from today's gospel, "love your enemies." Love, not mathematical exactitude, is the core of Christian obedience. "This is my commandment: love one another as I love you."[1] Yet this love is not self-generated but ultimately only ever received. "In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us."[2] This brings us to Christ's statement from the Last Supper: "As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love."[3] Hence, the real command of Christ is love, and the real teleios of our life in imitation of him is to remain in his love. Being in God's love is our human perfection.

- What in you works against the possibility of being and remaining in God's love? What causes you to hesitate in entering and staying in that love?

- What is one concrete action you could take this week which would show love for someone you might consider an enemy? How could you extend to that person the same love of God that surrounds you?

[1] John 15:12.
[2] 1 John 4:10.
[3] John 15:9.

March 1 - March 7



THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

March 1 *Reflection by Kelly Quick, Ed.D.*
Professor of Exercise Science

Second Sunday of Lent

- **FIRST READING: GENESIS 12:1-4A**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22**
- **SECOND READING: 2 TIMOTHY 1:8B-10**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 17:1-9**

I have a folksy wooden motivational quote that states, "We can do hard things."This phrase, popularized by Glennon Doyle, author of *Untamed*, is the name of her podcast, where she, her wife, and her sister interview guests to discuss how we, as a collective of people, can live our best lives while striving against angst-producing situations. Her full quote is, "We can do hard things, like be alive and love deep and lose it all, because we do these hard things alongside everyone who has ever walked the Earth with her eyes, arms, and heart wide open."[1]

In our readings, Paul is writing his mentee, Timothy, for the second time. They were well acquainted with striving together through hardships, as Timothy kept Paul company while Paul was under arrest for the first time in Rome for two years.[2] Today's Timothy passage is written during Paul's final arrest, where he was facing execution, and among other things, he asks Timothy to visit one more time. Paul had work for Timothy to keep doing for moving the gospel forward, but he also missed his friend. It shouldn't be difficult to think about how Paul probably felt as a man about to be killed. When the going gets hard, we look for our friends.

I will never forget standing in front of my house as the fire department sprayed water on it, as they entered it with a chainsaw—wait, what? A chainsaw? At some point I knew I had to call for support, but how do you decide who to call? I realized I just needed to reach out because I didn't know what I needed to do, but I knew whatever it was, I couldn't do it alone. I called a friend just to say I wasn't going to drink over it…someone who did the hard thing of sobriety with me. I called my pastor who arrived with blankets and cat carriers. A former student who lived nearby just

[1] Doyle, G. (2020). Untamed. The Dial Press.
[2] Jackson, W. (2025). Paul's Two-Year Roman Imprisonment. Christian Currier. https://christiancourier.com/articles/pauls-two-year-roman-imprisonment.

showed up unbidden, with connections to a veterinarian and more cat carriers. In the days, weeks, and months that followed, many entered my chaotic life: friends, family, colleagues, even folks from a professor-only group on Facebook. They lifted me with their gifts, their time, all of which were expressions of love. Expressing one's vulnerability seems to activate the love of others. Honestly acknowledging our needs can be scary, but God is there in our terror, telling us to not be afraid.

"We admitted…" the first two words of the First Step of any 12-step recovery program.[3] Members call their program a "We" program because of these beginning words, also acknowledging that without the admission of need, others who have suffered the same way cannot come alongside in love to help. Helping each other works to keep both sober.

I have shared the observation that at times I wondered if people genuinely liked me or if I just have good utility for others. I realized on that sidewalk, at that moment in time, I had no utility for anyone. I wouldn't have utility for any foreseeable future either. But that was the time I experienced the most love.

At the easiest time to walk away from me, when I was a babbling idiot, a ball of dysregulation, people came to me instead of walking away. That was God working through those people for our mutual good. Together, we did the hard thing.

- Reflect on a time when you received care or support without being able to give anything in return. How did that experience challenge or deepen your understanding of worth, community, or God's presence?

- What does this reflection suggest to you about the role of friendship and mentorship during seasons of hardship? How do you see this reflected in your own relationships?

- In what ways have you experienced difficulty differently when you faced it alone versus when you allowed others to support you? What made it hard—or easy—to let people in? How would these experiences motivate you to show this type of mercy to others?



[3] Alcoholics anonymous big book (4th ed.). (2002). Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.

Monday of the Second Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: DANIEL 9:4B-10**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 79:8, 9, 11 AND 13**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 6:36-38**

As a good 'Sconnie girl schooled in Minnesota, I am well versed in "Midwest Nice," especially when it comes to driving. I swear we invented "car karma," where our good driving behaviors like letting people in ahead of us and always using the "thank you" wave assures us of receiving these behaviors from others. Isn't that what Luke's gospel is telling us today? And if you make a mistake, a quick "Ope!" as you pat your chest is a true confession of wrongdoing.Isn't that what Daniel is saying today as well? We certainly don't put our own interests ahead of others when driving! That would be selfish. Unfortunately, as relatable as the driving examples are, these are not what today's Scriptures are telling us. Daniel's confession of sin encompasses more than himself (though it probably doesn't even truly apply to him), but to all the people and the government. He was referring to idolatry and the lack of justice and mercy being enacted by people and the government because of social inequities.[1] He was referring to individual and systemic societal sin. Jesus is letting us know in Luke that one should not expect mercy if one is not ready to practice it at either the personal or system level. So maybe we can be instructed by car karma. Maybe it's a good place to start practicing mercy and setting aside our wants for the good of others. Our desire to get somewhere two minutes sooner does not outweigh our need to show goodness to others. Maybe we can learn to be faithful in mercy in the little acts as a way of becoming more faithful in mercy in the larger acts.[2]

- What does it mean to ask for God's mercy as a community rather than as individuals? How might this shift influence the way communities respond to injustice, inequality, or shared moral failure today?

- Do you believe that practicing compassion in small, everyday actions can meaningfully shape our responses to larger societal injustices? Why or why not? Provide a personal example if possible.

- How does this teaching complicate or deepen the common idea of "karma" or reciprocal kindness (such as the driving example used in the devotion)? How might Christian mercy differ from simple social politeness or "Midwest Nice"?

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[1] (2024-2025) Bible Hub. https://biblehub.com/q/Daniel_9_5_Disobedient_actions.htm#google_vignette.
[2] Luke 16:10.

Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 1:10, 16-20**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 50: 8-9, 16BC-7, 21 AND 23**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 23:1-12**

In today's readings, God invites us to experience this Lent as an opportunity for conversion of heart. Such a conversion is not simply expressed in words, but in actions. These actions foster community, give hope, serve others, and ultimately seek to build the kingdom of God.

In such a kingdom, we call no one on earth our father but our Father in heaven, and we call no one our master but Christ himself. This vision for a better world requires a deep sense of humility wherein we do not allow the titles we have to control our motivations.

In our lives, we will encounter people who have earned the titles of master, or doctor, or father, but we should never forget that God alone is our ultimate Master, and Doctor, and Father. After all, it is God who rules the world with love, who seeks to heal our souls, and who nurtures us with a parent's concern. By keeping in mind the infinite love the Lord has for all of us, we can humble ourselves to be willing to learn from each other and grow as a community that shares wisdom and seeks truth.

While God's love invites each of us into relationship with himself, we are called to live this relationship in communion with each other, to help uplift each other in ways that lead all of us to growth. Saint Teresa of Calcutta once wrote, "Today, if we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other—that man, that woman, that child is my brother or my sister."[1] This Lent, as we journey with Christ to Calvary, let us never forget the others on the road beside us.
·In what ways do your daily actions show a true conversion of heart during this Lent?

- How often do you let your titles, roles, or achievements shape your motivations, and how can you practice deeper humility by remembering God alone is your ultimate Master and Father?

- Where in your life are you being called to uplift others as brothers and sisters in Christ, and how can you better live out this sense of belonging to one another?

[1] Mother Teresa. Love: A Fruit Always in Season. (San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 1987).

Reflection by Jonathan H. Nelson, Ph.D.
Professor of Philosophy
Interim Associate Dean for Academic Excellence & Integrity

Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: JEREMIAH 18:18-20**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 31:5-6, 14, 15-16**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 20:17-28**

In today's Gospel, Jesus asks the mother of James and John the all-important question, "What do you wish?" It seems that she and her sons wished for political power. Similarly, if we were to ask Saul the same question, he might well have responded, "Uncontested political power and the love of the people undiluted by affection by the young upstart David." The chief priests and scribes who ultimately had Jesus executed might have said, "To maintain the traditions that keep us in power over the people."

In Jeremiah 20:1-2, the chief priest Pashhur has Jeremiah beaten and placed in stocks for proclaiming God's judgment against a corrupted religious system. Pashhur, too, might well have said that he wishes for the people to keep listening to him rather than to Jeremiah, so that his religious power structure be maintained. But what would David, Jeremiah, and Jesus answer if we asked them the same question? They were all misunderstood, maligned, and attacked for answering God's call—why? What was more important to them than social capital, political power, physical safety, and life?

After being released by Pashhur, Jeremiah proclaims, "But if I say 'I will not remember Him or speak anymore in His name,' then in my heart it becomes like a burning fire shut up in my bones".(1) Simply put, Jeremiah had tried to ignore God's call on his life and to ignore what God told him to say, so that he would no longer be a target for conspiracies and beatings, but he could not do so. Likewise, David could have abandoned his anointing and Jesus his calling, if they valued what the disciples or the priests or the false king desired. The question for us is to discern what is better—what is it that David, Jeremiah, and Jesus found worth suffering and dying for?

- What do you wish? What, for you, is worth suffering and dying for?

- When have you been faced with the choice of either following the call of God and receiving spiritual blessing, on the one hand, or following the call of people and receiving material or social blessings, on the other? Which did you choose?

(1) Jeremiah 20:9, NASB.
(2) Psalm 31:19-20, NASB.

Thursday of the Second Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: JEREMIAH 17:5-10**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 1:1-2, 3, 4 AND 6**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 16:19-31**

"Blessed are those who trust in the LORD, whose trust is the Lord."

Jeremiah contrasts the one who leans on human strength with the one rooted in God like a tree beside water. In the Gospel, the rich man looks strong and secure while Lazarus is weak and ignored. Yet in the end, it's Lazarus who rests in God, and the rich man who learns how fragile his comfort really was.

If mercy is "the willingness to enter into the chaos of another," the rich man's sin is not only excess but distance. Lazarus is close enough to see every day and still never is truly seen. Only after death does the rich man recognize the "great chasm" between them—a chasm formed by countless choices to stay comfortable instead of drawing near.

Campus life can plague us with the same distance. We rush through days with earbuds in and eyes down, wrapped up in grades, money, or plans. The "Lazarus" at our gate might be the quiet classmate, the roommate who is struggling, or the worker who cleans our spaces. Trusting in the Lord is not just an inner feeling; it means letting God loosen our fear of being inconvenienced so that someone else's pain interrupts our lives.

Lent invites us to ask: where are my roots? In control and image, or in the God who knows Lazarus by name? To trust this God is to believe that stepping toward another's chaos will not undo us, but free us from smaller stories about success and security that one day later on will seem insignificant and even costly.

- Where in your daily routine do you tend to "walk past the gate"? Who might be your Lazarus right now? What small steps could you take toward them?

- What false sources of security do you lean on? How might trusting more deeply in the Lord reorient your time, attention, or resources toward mercy?



Reflection by Ashley Rosario Ramos, Class of 2027
B.S. in Forensic Biology, A.S. in Criminal Justice, Minors in Philosophy and Chemistry

Friday of the Second Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: GENESIS 37:3-4, 12-13A, 17B-28A**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 105:16-17, 18-19, 20-21**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 21:33-43, 45-46**

The parable of the vineyard in Matthew 21 is a piercing story that speaks directly into the heart of the Lenten season. The landowner carefully prepares the vineyard with hedges, a wine press and tower, all representing God's abundant provision. Yet the tenants, entrusted with these gifts, respond with violence, greed, and rejection. They beat the servants, kill the messengers, and ultimately cast out and murder the son. This is not only a parable about Israel's history but also a mirror for us today.

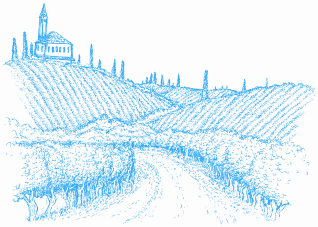
Lent is a time of self-examination, a season to ask whether we are living as faithful tenants in God's vineyard. The vineyard represents the kingdom of God, in which he has entrusted us to cultivate it with justice, mercy, and love. But too often we resist His call, clinging towards control of our lives, while withholding the fruits of our goods from God and his children. The tenants' rejection of the son foreshadows Christ's passion; Jesus, the heir, cast out and crucified.

This passage reminds us that God's kingdom is not inherited by status or tradition, but by fruitfulness. Lent invites us to return to God, to surrender our resistance, and to bear fruit worthy of his vineyard. It is a season to let Christ reshape the foundation of our lives. Where we stumble, he steadies. Where we resist, he redeems. The parable is both a warning and an invitation, as it warns against hardened hearts and invites us to live as people who produce fruit in his kingdom.

- What fruits of faith, mercy, or justice is God inviting you to cultivate during this Lenten season?

- How does the image of Christ as the rejected cornerstone speak to your own experiences of weakness or renewal?

- In what ways might you be resisting God's call, and how can Lent be a time of surrender and transformation?



Saturday of the Second Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: MICAH 7:14-15, 18-20**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 15:1-3, 11-32**

He met me at the repair shop garage door, partly covered in ink and grease. His well-worn cap and tattoos carried one word: Jesus. I asked why. His answer was quick and sure, "Jesus rescued me time and time again!" My response was just as certain, "Me too!"

In today's Gospel, a young man brushes aside unconditional love—one that protects dignity and affirms belonging—and chooses another love, one that proves to be merely utilitarian. Things go well while he has money and strength, but when these fade, the "love" dies and he is abandoned. Alone, poor, hungry, and afraid, his thoughts return to his father's house: "No one under my father's care was treated like this." He decides to return and beg for mercy, confessing, "I have sinned against Heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."

Moved with compassion, the father runs to him, embraces him as he is—still marked by the life he had been living—and welcomes him home. Through his actions he declares: You are my son. You belong. You are loved.

This same mercy echoes throughout today's Psalm and prophetic readings: God delights in mercy, pardons and forgives, remembers our sin no more, is faithful, heals, and crowns us with love and compassion.

J.R.R. Tolkien called moments like this a eucatastrophe—when what appears hopeless suddenly turns for good. He saw Christ's Resurrection as history's greatest eucatastrophe: the catastrophe of the Cross transformed into the hope of Easter morning.

This is the good news of Lent: when we go to God, He runs to us. He turns our failures and wounds into new life. My friend at the repair shop and I are living proof—because with Christ, anyone, anywhere, anytime can begin again.

· Can you think of someone who has cared for you during a time of hurt or difficulty (someone who ran toward you when you were down and not away from you)? How did it impact who you are today?

· Is there a time in your life when God rescued you after you made a decision that might have been less than wise? How did it feel to have a second chance?

March 8 - March 14



THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

REFLECTIONS BY

A.J. HOY, M.T.S., PHD(C)

Vice President for Mission Integration
Interim Vice President for Student Life

March 8

Third Sunday of Lent

- **FIRST READING: EXODUS 17:3-7**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9**
- **SECOND READING: ROMANS 5:1-2, 5-8**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 4:5-42**

I remember when my eldest son discovered the word literally. He used it incessantly and almost always incorrectly. "Did you know literally the dinosaurs died all at once, Dad?" "Literally?" I'd reply. "Literally!" he'd double down.

Children exaggerate with a confidence adults try to cloak in sophistication. They broadcast what we whisper, and when we laugh, it's not only at them—it's at ourselves, reflected back in miniature. They take in the world exactly as it's handed to them. This Third Sunday of Lent works similarly. Scripture gives us people who can't—or won't—see past the immediate. They are stuck on the surface of things: thirst, a well, a staff, a stranger, an enemy, the midday sun. Each scene contains chaos, and each scene contains God. The drama isn't that chaos is present, but that mercy is required to enter it.

The Israelites are barely three chapters into freedom and already nostalgic for captivity. Yes, they are thirsty—but thirst is not the tragedy. Amnesia is. They forget the point of their liberation. They quarrel because they can only narrate the present crisis, not the larger story. They demand answers from Moses as if he is the source of both rescue and suffering, unable to see that he stands between them and God, bearing their fear. And here is the detail we often miss: Moses does not strike the people in their absurdity; he turns toward God on their behalf. He steps into their panic and pleads for them, not against them. Their chaos becomes his intercession, and God's response honors this posture. Mercy moves first, not correction. The path to water leads through advocacy.

In the Gospel, Jesus does the same—and more. He goes through Samaria instead of around it and sits alone at a well at noon. Everything about this moment defies prudence and tribal logic. The place is hostile, the timing extreme, and the woman morally scrutinized, socially sidelined, and

theologically distrusted. Christ crosses every predictable boundary to reach her in the one place she'd rather not be seen. This is not a saccharine encounter, but the lived work of mercy: choosing paths others reject, initiating conversations others avoid, remaining present when misunderstanding compounds, and revealing dignity before agreement is reached.

The woman begins suspicious and combative, focused on logistics—no bucket, deep well, ancient rivalry. Jesus does not withdraw from her literalism, defensiveness, or complexity. He accepts the terms of her chaos and speaks into it without demanding that she resolve it first. This is the deeper work of mercy—not observing disorder from a safe distance, but stepping inside it. Doing mercy means entering confusion without preconditions, accompanying without full comprehension, and bringing clarity not by argument, but by presence. It is staying long enough that someone remembers their dignity, and perhaps their direction.

This is the charism of the Sisters of Providence. Blessed Emilie Gamelin shows us that God's care is revealed in the risk of showing up—in hospitals, streets, courtrooms, boarding houses, and wherever human life feels undone. Providence plunges into chaos, convinced God meets us there. So this week, look for someone's "noon"—their inconvenient, unpolished hour. Mercy may look like listening when you're tired, accompanying without answers, mediating when it's messy, or walking with someone through a struggle you can't fix.

Lent asks us not to stand outside the well explaining things. Doing mercy begins when we sit by another's cistern and refuse to leave until love speaks louder than chaos.

· Have you ever missed an opportunity to sit with someone in their chaos? What did that moment look like, and what kept you on the sidelines instead of stepping in?

· When has someone entered your chaos with patience or compassion? How did that experience change you, and how might it shape the way you accompany others?

· Where on campus or in your daily life at the University of Providence might there be a "noon moment" waiting—an inconvenient or uncomfortable hour where someone needs presence more than solutions, and are you willing to show up there?

Monday of the Third Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: 2 KINGS 5:1-15AB**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 4:24-30**

There have been moments in my life when I met someone I assumed had it all, an impressive car, a beautiful house, a loving family, brilliance I could only admire. I remember them clearly because those assumptions were wrong. Each carried a quiet anguish that felt out of place in their success story. Most brushed aside the appearances I was stuck on, gently steering the conversation toward what weighed on them instead.

Naaman, in today's first reading, stands in this same tension. By every outward measure, he has everything: power, wealth, victory, renown. Yet he suffers from leprosy, a disease that isolates him from the life of community. His privilege buffers his body, but it cannot restore his belonging. What looks enviable from a distance is, up close, deeply fractured.

What stands out, especially in this collection of Lenten reflections that takes mercy seriously, isn't only that Naaman is healed—it's the path mercy takes to reach him. God meets him in the chaos itself: on an unfamiliar road, through unexpected people, and through a simple invitation that initially offends his pride. Mercy doesn't awe him, argue with him, or shame him for resistance. Instead, it patiently draws near, accompanying him toward the humble place he most needs, even before he understands.

He becomes whole only when he consents to enter the waters—not in control, not triumphant, but honest and dependent. Mercy comes as presence, not spectacle: stepping toward someone's suffering, staying when the outcome is unclear, walking into confusion rather than waiting for calm.

- Have you ever assumed someone's life was whole because it looked impressive from the outside? What changed when you saw them up close, and how did that reshape the way you offer presence to others?

- When have you hesitated to step into someone's struggle because you wanted clarity, control, or a predictable outcome first? What did that hesitation cost you—or them—in that moment?

- Who in your daily life at the University of Providence might be carrying a hidden, isolating burden right now? How can you choose proximity over distance and respond with presence instead of waiting for their chaos to settle?

Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: DANIEL 3:25, 34-43**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 25:4-5AB, 6 AND 7BC, 8-9**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 18:21-35**

Mercy is not merited. There is nothing we can do to earn, manufacture, or demand it. And yet we recognize mercy because each of us—directly or indirectly—has been held by it and carried through something we could not endure alone. Today's readings offer a clear angle: mercy is not a reward; it is a decision.

The First Reading from Daniel places us in the Babylonian exile, a long and painful displacement for the people of Judah. In the prayer of Azariah, we hear the voice of someone saved from inside chaos. He survives the fiery furnace not by cleverness or strength, but by God's unqualified presence. The flames were real, the danger undeniable, and God entered fully rather than remaining distant from suffering. Barely past rescue, Azariah does not turn inward. He prays outward, interceding for his fellow captives and pleading that mercy not be withdrawn from them. Mercy received becomes mercy chosen—for others still living in fear and exile.

In Matthew's Gospel, mercy collides with resentment. Peter asks how often forgiveness must be offered, and Jesus responds with a parable that strips away abstraction. The problem is not the number of offenses, but the refusal to let mercy move beyond oneself. The servant who receives forgiveness yet withholds it exposes the fracture that occurs when mercy is treated as a transaction.

Lent reminds us that mercy is the willingness to enter another's chaos. God does not need us, yet chooses to be present in our trials and fears—not because we deserve it, but because God continues to choose us. That is mercy's true currency: presence without prerequisites.

- Have you ever received mercy or patience in a moment when you didn't feel you had earned it? What did that encounter look like, and how did it shape you afterward?

- When have you resisted stepping into someone else's chaos because you wanted them to "figure it out" first? Where did you miss the invitation to draw near, and what might choosing mercy in that moment have changed?

Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: DEUTERONOMY 4:1, 5-9**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:17-19**

In our daily lives God guides each of us through his teachings. These teachings help us to strive to choose peace, wisdom, and a better life for not only us, but for those around us. Through the presence of this light that He gives us, we can help make the world into something beautiful for all. This can be in a variety of ways from smiling at a stranger to volunteering. In my own life I have seen how these small choices shift the environment around me.

During Spring Break of 2025, I went on a faith immersion trip to Philadelphia to help serve the homeless. In the time I was there, I could see the work of God, not only within myself but in those around me. In a place where people might view suffering and loss of hope, there truly was the sense that God was showing his way through all of us, the volunteers and those we served, each reflecting the presence of God in powerful ways. It caused the negativity that most people would feel to go away. When we were able to see God's presence, it brought the true beauty of God's teachings. When people view the true presence of the Lord within us, his children, it makes others want to open their hearts as well. This ripple of love is what God's teachings strive for us to live for. As humans we sometimes struggle to live by God's ways and instead choose the temptations of the world, but when we find ourselves in these teachings, he can help fulfill our lives and others in many beautiful ways.

- How can reflecting on God's teachings help you view his presence within you and those around you?

- How can you find ways to serve and show the love of God in a way that ripples to others?



Thursday of the Third Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: JEREMIAH 7:23-28**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 11:14-23**

Have you ever tried to help someone who simply wouldn't listen? Maybe you watched them repeat the same pattern, walking into the same mistake and enduring the same poor results. You pointed toward another path, a wiser route, a gentler way of moving forward, and they rejected it. Even harder, your concern was interpreted as judgment. Your care was heard as criticism. It is painful and frustrating to want good for someone who cannot yet imagine life beyond the cycle they are stuck in.

This same ache runs through today's readings. In Jeremiah, God calls his people to listen to God's voice, to live in covenant, to walk in the path God sets before them. Yet the prophet tells us plainly: they did not listen. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus casts out a demon, revealing liberation breaking into real life, and the crowd immediately accuses him of acting by the power of Satan. The particulars differ, but the deeper pattern holds steady. God repeatedly steps into the chaos of misunderstanding and remains there, engaged, insistent on freedom, even when God's intentions are misread.

Mercy, in these passages, is not sentimental rescue from afar. It is the stubborn, faithful willingness to stay involved when things are messy, misinterpreted, or exhausting. Mercy chooses to walk closer, not away, when another's confusion, stress, or shame produces defensiveness instead of gratitude. Sometimes mercy means entering someone else's disorder long before solutions appear, holding presence in the mud of struggle without giving up on the possibility of new life. We step toward the mud because love compels us, because withdrawing would only deepen the isolation.

Mercy is practiced in patient listening when pressures rise, in accompaniment when answers are unclear, and in choosing closeness when misunderstanding makes distance easier. Mercy doesn't wait for chaos to end before moving toward it. Mercy moves first and stays.

- When have you extended care that was misunderstood as criticism? What did that feel like, and what kept you from staying present with patience rather than withdrawing?

- Where in your life recently has someone repeated a harmful pattern, and you chose to comment from a distance instead of accompanying them up close? What might choosing proximity, solidarity, and presence have changed in that moment?

Friday of the Third Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: HOSEA 14:2-10**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 81:6C-8A, 8BC-9, 10-11AB, 14 AND 17**
- **GOSPEL: MARK 12:28-34**

Have you ever entered a conversation certain of your perspective, only to encounter someone whose insight widened your own? A receptive heart allows wisdom to seep in. Growth requires openness, but openness alone is incomplete without mercy—someone patient enough to meet us where we are and walk with us toward deeper understanding. Mercy makes space for conversion. It allows a change of heart we cannot force in ourselves or others.

This is how God appears in Hosea. In the closing chapter, God pleads tenderly, "Return to me." There is no wrath in the invitation, only the steady love of a God who desires restoration over punishment. The Responsorial Psalm echoes this longing—not for compliance, but for communion. God speaks as one who has listened first, calling the people to trust again and walk out of confusion into covenant.

In the Gospel, a scribe asks Jesus which commandment matters most—not to learn, but to test him. Rabbinic tradition debated hundreds of commandments. Jesus does not bristle or shame the question. He answers simply and mercifully: love God and love your neighbor. The test becomes conversation. The adversary becomes witness. The scribe affirms the truth only because mercy entered the misunderstanding first. Jesus does not win an argument; he accompanies the questioner into a larger story.

Mercy is not weak concession. It is courageous closeness—choosing relationship in moments of testing, confusion, or division. It is stepping toward another before agreement and staying long enough for hearts to widen. Conversion becomes possible not through force, but through presence.

- When have you entered a conversation sure of your conclusions, yet resisted a perspective that could have widened your heart? What kept you from listening with mercy instead of defending certainty?

- Where have you offered answers without patience, or presence without clarity? How might you accompany another's questions with both truth and mercy, meeting them in misunderstanding rather than waiting for agreement?

Saturday of the Third Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: HOSEA 6:1-6**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 51:3-4, 18-19, 20-21AB**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 18:9-14**

This week's reflections conclude with an invitation to examine how mercy and humility are intertwined. Today's readings remind us that God desires hearts shaped by compassion rather than mere outward actions. In the First Reading, Hosea tells us: "It is mercy I desire, and not sacrifice." The Responsorial Psalm echoes this sentiment, calling us to turn to God with contrite and humble hearts, aware that true devotion is measured not by ritual, but by openness to God's grace and a willingness to act with love.

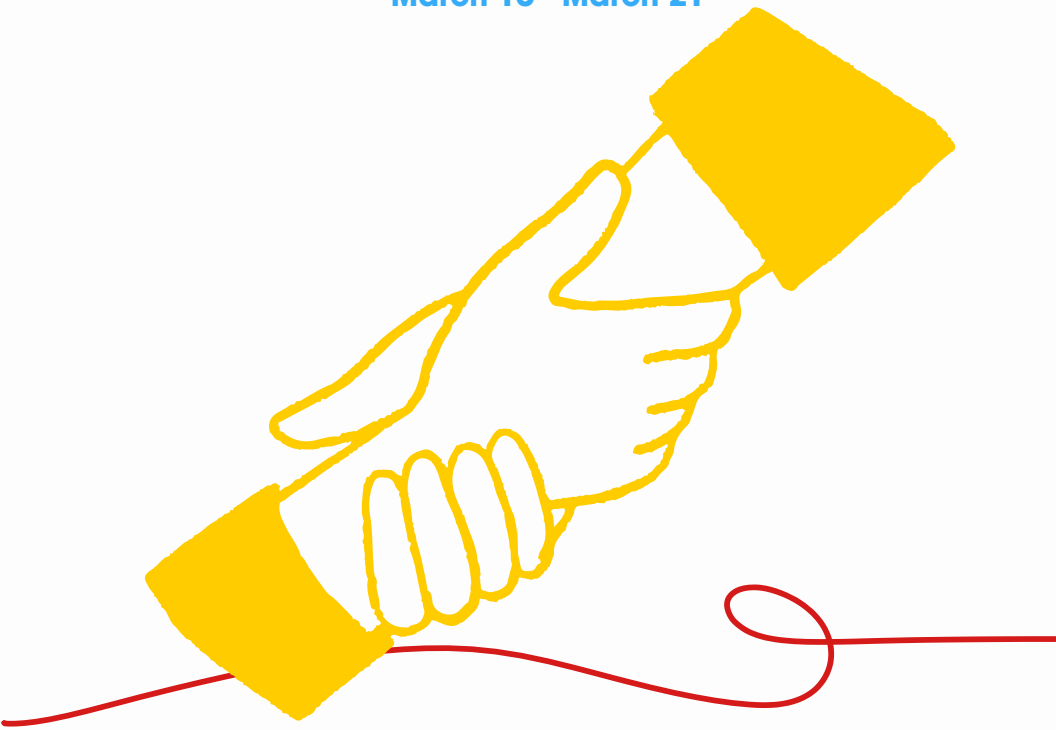
The Gospel presents the parable of the self-righteous Pharisee and the humble tax collector. The Pharisee relies on his own sense of virtue and the public recognition of his deeds, while the tax collector acknowledges his shortcomings and pleads simply for God's mercy. Jesus makes clear that it is the humble, not the proud, who are justified. Humility, in this sense, is the posture that allows mercy to enter. It frees us from self-reliance, judgment, and comparison, enabling us to receive mercy and to extend it to others.

This parable challenges us to reflect on our own lives. Where have we acted from pride, measuring worth by achievement or adherence to rules, rather than responding with mercy? Where have we withheld compassion because it was inconvenient or uncomfortable? God's desire is not for perfection, but for hearts willing to acknowledge brokenness and to step into the lives of others with care and forgiveness.

To live mercifully is, therefore, to embrace humility: recognizing our own need for God's mercy while choosing to bend toward others in patience, understanding, and compassion. Mercy and humility are inseparable; one opens the door, and the other guides us through it, shaping us into people who reflect God's love in the world.

- When have you approached someone from a posture of pride rather than humility, and how did that affect your ability to show mercy?
- Where in your life have you struggled to receive God's mercy because you were too focused on your own achievements or righteousness?
- Who in your daily life might be in need of mercy, and how can you approach them with humility to meet them where they are?

March 15 - March 21



THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

REFLECTIONS BY
JODIE SMITH, ED.D.
Assistant Professor Education

March 15

Fourth Sunday of Lent

- **FIRST READING: 1 SAMUEL 16:1B, 6-7, 10-13A**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6**
- **SECOND READING; EPHESIANS 5:8-14**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 9:1-41**

In the first reading today, Samuel is trying to decern which of Jesse's sons God has chosen to be King and from whom Jesus will descend. Jesse presents seven sons, all outstanding in appearance, but the Lord says "no" to each, telling Samuel not to judge by appearances. Finally, David is brought from the field where he is tending sheep, and he is anointed. In reflecting upon this, it is clear that we should not judge others based on appearances.

Yet society teaches us to judge on appearance. There are entire industries based on how people look from fitness to weight loss, to makeup and plastic surgery. I am not saying these should be eliminated. But why do we make our initial judgements on people based on their appearances? Why do we take things people say out of context and vilify them for what they said? Again, I am not saying that words do not matter, but could we extend the same grace we desire from other to others? Could we ask why did they say something in anger? Were they lashing out because they were hurting internally? Maybe they do not understand, so they crack jokes instead of asking questions because they do not want to look stupid.

Moving on to David, a mere shepherd boy in this reading, who became a king: do you ever look at people and see past who they are and to their potential? I will say that I look at the potential of students all the time, and I have various versions of a talk regarding how someone is not living up to their potential. How much better would the world be if we encouraged each other to be the best person that we can be or helped someone improve skills or knowledge? Maybe I am describing a utopian world, but maybe that is what we are being called to do. Would you rather be on a team where everyone builds each other up or tears each other down? I am all for constructive criticism because we do need to know what we are

doing wrong so we can improve, but can we choose to orient ourselves so that our words are meant to help and not hurt?

The second reading today furthers these themes by showing us the importance of being in light rather than darkness. Then, in the Gospel, Jesus opens the eyes of the blind man. This miracle reminds us of how we need to open our eyes to see the needs of others. Who are the others we should see? Certainly, the marginalized but what about that classmate who annoys you? How about your roommates? What about that driver who cuts you off? How about the coach or professor who could have used better words? Every time you catch yourself judging someone today, stop and say a quick prayer for them.

- How can you be light to others today? Can you say "thank you" or just a kind word? Can you call a friend or family member? Can you ask someone if they are okay?

- How can you help someone improve a skill or knowledge constructively with the intent of putting their betterment before your desire for the person to change?



Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 65:17-21**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 30:2 AND 4, 5-6, 11-12A AND 13B**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 4:43-54**

In today's Gospel, Jesus describes how people would believe if they received signs, yet true faith is believing without seeing. Over two thousand years after Christ's death and resurrection and we believe without having seen the Risen Christ. We profess that he will come again. Yet how often do we pray for signs or physical things and call it "faith"? It is almost as if we say, "Thy will be done, but, God, do it this way." The problem is not the asking, but rather the thinking that we know best. Instead of demanding of God, can we ask and then listen for his response? Think about it, do you prefer to have a dialogue with someone or be the recipient of a monologue?

Rather than think of God as the wizard behind the curtain, we are called to a relationship. There is a beautiful prayer that we sing at my home parish that draws me to Jesus in the most intimate way. The middle of the Anima Christi says, "Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me. O good Jesus, hear me. Within your wounds hide me. Never permit me to be parted from you."[1]

- How amazing would it be to be so close to Jesus that you are hidden in his wounds?
- He endured an agonizing death for our sins. How does that model strength to you?
- Instead of simply praying for something today, take the time to enter into a dialogue with God and listen to what he says to you.



[1] https://www.usccb.org/prayers/anima-christi.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: EZEKIEL 47:1-9, 12**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 5:1-16**

Have you ever taken the time to just be in awe of the greatness of God? It is truly unfathomable. Today's reading gives us just a glimpse. In Ezekiel all the water that flows out of the temple of the Lord gives abundant life. As Christians we are called to bring Christ to all whom we encounter. Put differently, what if everything that flowed from us gave life and glorified God? How awe-inspiring would that be?

God is not limited to just being inspiring. In the Psalm today, we hear how God is our refuge and our strength. I don't know about you, but there are days that I need strength. Nothing is mightier than God, so I need to remind myself that I do not have to be strong enough but trust that he is. Some days I want to pull the blanket over my head and pretend like a child that no one can see me, so I love the image of God as my refuge. I do not think that he is going to hide me under the covers, but he will protect me and help me endure.

In the Gospel, Jesus miraculously heals a man who could not walk for 38 years! Instead of rejoicing in this miracle and how the man could now be a functioning member of society, the Jewish leaders criticized Jesus for breaking the rules by healing on the Sabbath. Instead of celebrating the miracle this man received, the officials began persecuting Jesus for his alleged lack of reverence for the Sabbath. What they missed, though, was the abundant life he had just poured into this paralytic and, as a result, the subsequent glory the man would give God for the rest of his life.

- How often are we quick to judge a wrong instead of celebrating a good?
- In what ways can you bring "abundant life" to someone today?
- How do you need God's refuge or strength today?



Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 49:8-15**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 145:8-9, 13CD-14, 17-18**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 5:17-30**

In today's readings, I am reminded that God's care for us is steady and unchanging. Isaiah speaks about a God who never forgets his people, even when they feel abandoned or unseen. The line about a mother not forgetting her child helps me realize how personal God's love really is. Then, in the Gospel, Jesus explains how everything he does comes from the Father, and it shows how closely God walks with us, guiding and supporting us even when we don't fully understand it.

These readings made me think about the times I assume God is distant simply because I'm busy, stressed, or not paying attention. But the more I reflect, the more I see that God is always working in the background, steady and patient. Jesus reminds me that God's actions are about giving life and helping us grow, even in the areas where we feel weak.

This reflection challenges me to trust more, especially during the moments when I feel unsure or overwhelmed. If God is as faithful as these readings show, then I can take small steps with confidence, knowing I'm not doing everything on my own.

- Where do you see God supporting you right now?
- What keeps you from trusting God more fully?
- How can you stay aware of God's presence in the middle of your day?



Solemnity of Saint Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary

- **FIRST READING: 2 SAMUEL 7:4-5A, 12-14A, 16**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, AND 29**
- **SECOND READING: ROMANS 4:13, 16-18, 22**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 1:16, 18-21, 24A**

Today we honor Saint Joseph. Talk about a man of faith, and what responsibility! To raise the child Jesus and to keep him safe. We do not hear much about Saint Joseph in the Bible, but what we do know is that instead of becoming angry when he learns his betrothed, Mary, is pregnant, he decides to divorce her quietly so she could preserve her honor. Be honest, who would worry about protecting someone's honor when it seemed she was unfaithful to her fiancé? Today, her supposed transgression would be angrily and quickly posted to social media. Instead, Joseph wanted to be merciful.

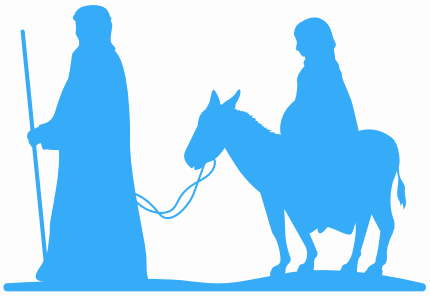
Then, an angel appears to him in a dream and basically says, "No, she did not cheat. It is by the Holy Spirit (or breath of God) that she is pregnant, so marry her." Ok, I would have been thinking that was some crazy dream in so many ways! An angel of the Lord appears to him. I would have been terrified! We talk about Mary's faith and Mary's "yes," but Joseph had faith and said "yes," too.

Can you refrain from:

- Posting or sharing things on social media that dishonor others?
- Gossiping or slandering others' reputations?

Instead, can you:

- Show honor to someone in your words or actions?
- Listen for the Holy Spirit to speak to you and like Mary and Joseph say "yes"?



Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: WISDOM 2:1A, 12-22**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 34:17-18, 19-20, 21, AND 23**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 7:1-2, 10, 25-30**

The Book of Wisdom is one of my favorites. Today's verses foreshadow the coming of Christ. They explain how people will vilify him for doing what is right and for not falling into wickedness. Isn't it interesting how people have not changed after all these years? We make fun of others for following rules and doing what is right. We use peer pressure and justify our behavior with the excuse "but everyone is doing it." We are so afraid to be different that we go along with the crowd even if we know it's wrong.

It takes courage to stand up for what is right, especially if that makes us seem like the outcast. Yet, each day in so many little ways, we fail to take that stand. We go along when someone talks about another; even worse, we join in. We do not want to be uncomfortable, so when asked to try something new or difficult, we complain rather than give it our best attempt. We find it easier to send a complaint electronically to someone else than go talk with the person who has upset or frustrated us. We make assumptions every day about other people based on our own point of view without considering theirs.

Have you ever looked out the window of Sullivan Hall at the trees? They look different from the first floor than from the second. I am pretty sure they look different to the squirrels who eat all the berries than to us. They are different when they have flowers than when they have berries. Yet they are still the same trees but seem different from different points of view.

- How can you look through multiple lenses at the world, at an issue, or even at history?
- How can you show courage today?
- Is there someone you should apologize to for what you said or how you failed to stand up for them?



Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: JEREMIAH 11:18-20**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 7:2-3, 9BC-10, 11-12**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 7:40-53**

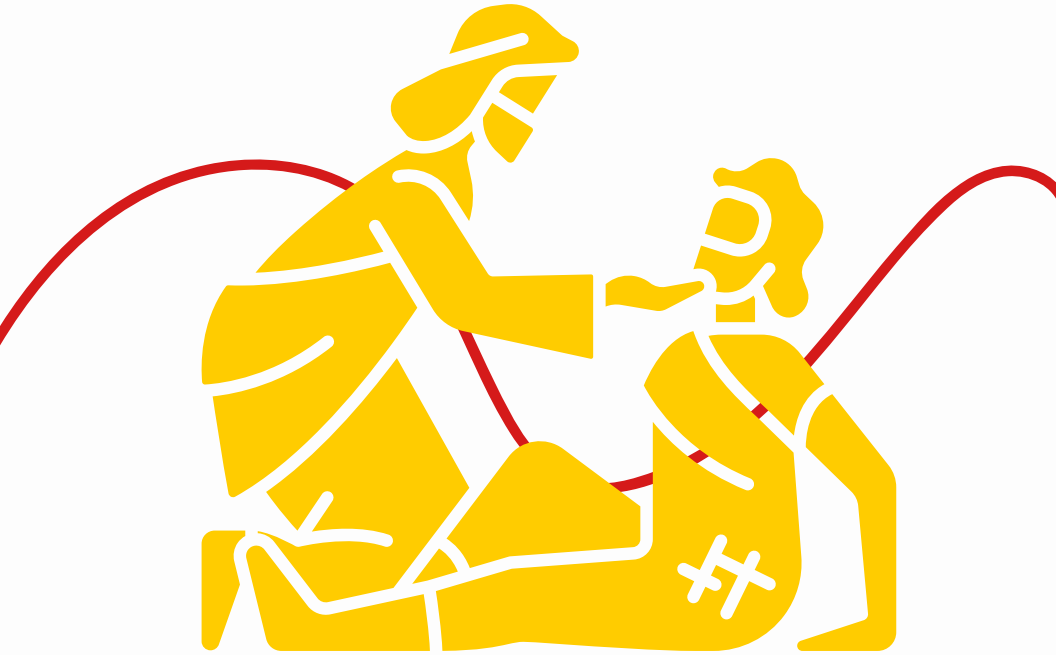
I taught a class last Fall, and in it we discussed the 4 P's of marketing. Today's readings are about 3 P's: persecution, Pharisees, and perseverance. Jesus is once again persecuted by the Pharisees, this time for being a prophet…so I guess that's 4 P's… They want to put Jesus to death for glorifying God and doing good. Seems a little ironic, but we know that Jesus was crucified and resurrected. They did not. They knew that he was different, performed miracles, and seemed too good to be true. It must have been tough to look at someone who appears to be a man and yet is perfect. Fully human and fully divine is still difficult to grasp over 2000 years later.

Despite the persecution, Jesus persevered. He continued to teach and model how to live. The Pharisees said he could not be a prophet because he was from Gailee. How often do we judge someone because of where they are from? People were amazed at how he spoke and said no one had ever spoken like him before. Picture this: you are sitting there listening to this man speak of God in ways you have never heard. You are drawn to him, completely tuned in to what he is saying. You have heard that he has performed miracles and wonder if he will do one in front of you, perhaps even for you. Then, there are others saying he has to go. Do not listen to him! He should die! Yet Jesus persevered and continued to teach rather than hide.

We are in the second half of the semester, and Spring Break already seems like weeks ago rather than days. Maybe your instructors are piling on work, and if you teach, you feel like grading keeps multiplying. You are likely already thinking of the semester ending as you are feeling overwhelmed. Now is the time to persevere. You can do this. It is the time to be courageous and ask for help. Do what is necessary to persevere and finish strong.

- Create a plan for success the rest of the semester.
- Do something each day for stress relief. It does not have to be grandiose.
- Easter is less than two weeks away. How will you rejoice in the Resurrection?

March 22 - March 28



THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

REFLECTIONS BY

ROY LANHAM

Director of Campus Ministry

March 22

Fifth Sunday of Lent

- **FIRST READING: EZEKIEL 37:12-14**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8**
- **SECOND READING: ROMANS 8:8-11**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 11:1-45**

Friendships matter. In a 16-week video series from the late seventies entitled Genesis, Fr. Vince Dwyer led parish communities around the United States to explore their relationships with one another and God, as well as exploring God's desire for us. Fr. Vince was a precursor to Bishop Robert Barron and Fr. Mike Schmitz, but with a piece of chalk, a chalkboard, and the Bible as his only tools, I remember Fr. Vince shared as if he spent all his time hanging with the Lord. I was rapt when we played the videos each week. One thing he shared has always stayed with me.

He spoke of being invited into a friend's garden and of how important this would have been in 1st Century Palestine. The roads were dusty and miserable, but behind the doors of homes, there would be a courtyard/garden. To be invited into this garden was a sign of hospitality, as well as potential friendship. He used this to speak of our own garden. We invite folks into various parts of our lives, some moving closer to the center and others out on the edge. The closer we get to the center, the more intimate it is. He went on to say in the innermost part of our garden, there is only room for one or maybe two people and God.



I believe Lazarus was one of those friends Jesus invited into the innermost section of his garden. In today's narrative from John's gospel, we get a hint of the love shared by Lazarus, Martha, and Mary with Jesus. They cherished each other and were real with each other as only friends who choose to be vulnerable with one another can be. The pain shared by Martha and Mary moved Jesus to weep for them and for his friend Lazarus. They must of have shared stories and laughter, meals and conversations, and grown in love knowing their friend was indeed "the one who is coming into the world." They wanted their friend to heal Lazarus, but they also trusted that the story of their lives does not end with death. When Jesus asks Martha if she believes he is "the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live..." she does not miss a beat, but acclaims him as the Messiah.

All of that comes from allowing Jesus into their innermost garden and them into his. Do we believe that Jesus wants this for each of us? He desires that kind of intimacy with us. Fr. Vince believed it. Lent gives us the opportunity to seek the Lord, to cast aside our own self-deception, and to encounter the living God who desires nothing more than to be in relationship with us. For most of us, it will not be some great epiphany, but rather embracing the ordinary, taking a risk, and seeking friendship via prayer and community. The Lord invites us to untie what binds us in this season and come out of the tomb.

- Who is in your innermost garden? Invite the Lord to be there with you.
- Who is in your "circle of influence" that you could invite to explore a friendship with Christ? Invite them out for coffee or a meal and explore what that might look like for you.



Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: DANIEL 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 23:1-3A, 3B-4, 5, 6**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 8:1-11**

Today, we have two very familiar stories. Both involve women accused of adultery. One is innocent, Susanna, and the other is guilty, so much so she is not named and we only ever know her as the woman caught in adultery. In both stories God intervenes. The prophet Daniel steps in as the voice of God and brings justice. Jesus does the same even though the woman is indeed guilty. Mosaic law (cf. Deuteronomy 22: 22-29) states both the man and the woman caught in adultery would be put to death. Where is the man? Why is only the woman brought before Jesus?

It is a test to trap Jesus. Yet, something beautiful happens. Compassion and mercy weave their way into the story. Those who were using the woman to ensnare Jesus are called to account for themselves. Knowing their hearts, he calls them to stand in the truth. In doing so, none are left to condemn the woman, and Jesus gently wraps her in mercy and invites her to live a life free of sin.

I often think about the woman caught in adultery. Would I have been sitting there listening to Jesus when she was brought into his midst and picked up a couple of stones to cast at her without a second thought? Often, we seek to right what we know is wrong without even considering the whole story. We even twist the narrative to suit our need to be right. But Jesus gives us a different path. The path of the shepherd. One who leads with care. One who guides us along the right path. The one who reminds us we have nothing to fear with God at our side.

- What is it that drives us to be quick to judge? This week in your conversations take holy pauses seeking understanding first and foremost.

- People sin. We sin. Humbly seek forgiveness from the Lord. If you are Catholic, avail yourself to the Sacrament of Reconciliation before Easter to experience the merciful grace of God.



Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: NUMBERS 21:4-9**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 102:2-3, 16-18, 19-21**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 8:21-30**

It's uncomfortable for the mind to fully grasp the idea that God allows suffering. As children of God on this side of the kingdom, we naturally ponder and ask why? In today's reading from Numbers, the Israelites complain to God, and in punishment he sends the serpents, biting those who sinned against the Lord. At first glance, one might question God's merciful nature, but let us not hesitate, remain stuck, or turn blind to his truth and goodness. Instead, let us open our hearts and remain rooted in our faith.

At times, God allows us to be bitten, not to be destroyed but to be awakened, to allow the conscience, our inner voice, to begin to find its way back to the Lord. Like the Israelites, our suffering can lead us to believe that there is no hope, therefore, justifying our position to blame and question God. However, the truth is the same for us as it was for them: In our suffering, God always gives us the opportunity to be saved, a gift that we must freely choose.

As we go about our daily lives, let us use this reading as a reminder that God's discipline is not meant to punish us, but to give our conscience room to breathe and guide us back toward the life we are all called to live. Our pain is not worthless or forgotten; God hears our voices, our cries, and remembers our suffering. We never carry this weight alone. Let us lift our sins up to the Lord, trusting in his mercy and love.

- How have the disciplines of Lent (prayer, fasting, almsgiving) given you a clearer sense of the spirit of God at work in your life?

- The Lord asks each of us to embrace a sliver of the cross. How can your suffering connect you with the suffering of Christ and others?



Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 7:10-14; 8:10**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 40:7-8A, 8B-9, 10, 11**
- **SECOND READING: HEBREWS 10:4-10**
- **GOSPEL: LUKE 1:26-38**

We speak of the world as being Christocentric. The world has been saved by our Lord's willingness to die on the cross for all, not for a select few or a group that had yet to be named, but for each and every one of us, regardless of if we are aware of it or not. What is up with that? Such extravagant love! It is all possible because of the love of another who said, "I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." These are the words Mary speaks in Luke's gospel.

Mary made her "yes" without knowing what it would demand of her, without knowing the pain it would bring as she stood at the cross. She made her "yes" and became the first disciple of our Lord. She knew her story. God had been writing on her heart, making it possible for her to be all in. Today's feast is about Mary's "yes," but just as important is God's initiative. God's grace didn't start at the Annunciation, but when Mary herself was conceived without sin.

We, too, have been washed clean in the waters of baptism. God has been writing on our hearts as well. Mary is the first disciple, but we are disciples as well. We are invited to make our "yes" to God's initiative. It is humbling to realize our faith isn't something we work to achieve but rather is given to us by a God who loves us beyond measure. Our yes to this love is like Mary's, in that we do not know the demands it will make of us, but we know God will show us the way.

- Read, or better yet sing, Mary's Canticle (Luke 1:46-55). Allow the words to transform your own story of faith. What do you need to give thanks to God for this day?

- Pray the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary today. Through the intercession of Mary, ask for the gifts of humility and obedience.



Reflection by David Velasquez, Class of 2029
Major in Nursing, Concentration: Public Health
Minor: Psychology

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: GENESIS 17:3-9**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 105:4-5, 6-7, 8-9**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 8:51-59**

We are now approaching the end of the Lenten season, on the fifth week, awaiting the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is easy to feel impatient when we are waiting for so long, especially with the addition of fasting during this wait. With this, we may find ourselves falling into distrust as the Jews did with Jesus in today's gospel reading. Some of us may be in desperation as we want to go back to what we have given up this Lenten season. However, it is important to first remember the new covenant that was given to Abraham. This is why I find the order of the readings to be interesting. First, we are reminded to remember the wonderous works and the many ways that God has shown his love to his people before going into a time when Jesus himself was questioned and distrusted, to the point where stones were going to be thrown at him.

It is important to remember during the final stretch of this Lenten season that the waiting, the fasting, the silent times for reflection were things that the Lord himself did to show his love for us, but in more extreme ways, without asking for anything in return. These acts also help us focus more on how becoming closer to the Lord and his unconditional love through prayer nourishes our soul, which sometimes can be forgotten as we focus on getting through assignments, chores, errands, commitments, etc. It is now time to take in and embrace the silence to hear the Lord speaking to us in our hearts, saying things that he has been trying to say but only now is quiet enough for us to hear him.

- When in your life were you so distrusting of others, or even of God, that you picked up a stone? How did it feel to distrust in that way?

- How have you been utilizing the opportunity of the Lenten season to reflect on your spiritual hunger?

- How else can you better prepare yourself for the Lord now that the Lenten season is coming to an end?



Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: JEREMIAH 20:10-13**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 18:2-3A, 3BC-4, 5-6, 7**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 10:31-42**

In my neighborhood, there is a group of middle school kids that I have dubbed "The Phoenix Gang." They are not from Arizona, nor have they arisen from the ashes. Rather, they live in the Phoenix Apartments. These young men roam about, and like many a youth without much supervision, make some poor choices. One of their less than stellar decisions is to pick up landscaping stones and throw them at street signs. Given that I believe in the principle of subsidiarity, I find myself speaking up for the signs that are taking a beating. I let the boys know we don't throw rocks at signs in our neighborhood. After yelling less than kind words and informing me I can't tell them what to do, I remind them that, indeed, I can because I live in the neighborhood and we don't throw rocks at signs. It's just not our thing. One time the rocks were thrown at me. Gratefully, they are only good at hitting street signs from six feet away.

Jesus is no street sign, but on a couple of occasions, and one being in today's gospel, folks are picking up stones to stone him. They have decided Jesus cannot be who he says he is. They have decided Jesus's words make no sense, so he must pay the price for making himself into someone he is not.

However, the truth is he is exactly who he says he is. He has nothing to hide. This truth is too much, and the response is to shut down the one who has come to bring us back into right relationship with our God and Creator. The question for us is, do we believe? Or is the truth too much for us as well?

- Gossiping is a form of stone-throwing. Make an examen of conscience and ask yourself if you have thrown a stone. Then, make amends by seeking forgiveness.

- Take some time to sit with someone you disagree with. Listen with a compassionate heart to what they have to say. See if it brings you a new perspective.



Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent

- **FIRST READING: EZEKIEL 37:21-28**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: JEREMIAH 31:10, 11-12ABCD, 13**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 11:45-56**

The plot thickens. Much like a chess game, John in his gospel is moving all the pieces into place. The entrance into Jerusalem is tomorrow. Just before this passage, Jesus raised his friend Lazarus from the dead. The Sanhedrin has been convened. The Pharisees fear that if Jesus is left unchecked, their whole existence and way of life will come tumbling down. From this moment forward, they enter into a plan to put Jesus to death. The stage is set for us to enter into the Passion and Holy Week.

I give you this invitation: Even if your observance of the disciplines of Lent has been half-hearted, make a decision today to embrace the liturgies of Holy Week starting with Passion (Palm) Sunday. Something I have discovered on my faith journey is my faith is not a private matter. It is personal, and hence, communal. You and I best live our faith life out in the context of community, a community in prayer. Set aside the time to enter fully into these holy days. Allow the Lord to speak to you as we experience his passion, death and resurrection. Allow the drama of these days to touch you and transform your understanding of your relationship with our Lord. If you take the time to celebrate these sacred days, you will come to Easter Sunday morning with a renewed hope and love for what God has done for you and what it means for you to be a Christian. Don't delay, check out your local parishes to find out their Holy Week schedule.

- Google where Masses/Services are being held in your community for Holy Week. Write them in your calendar. When asked if you have plans, you can say, "Why yes, I do! Care to join me?"

- Not sure what to expect or not sure you want to go alone? Invite a friend. Talk with your campus minister. He will make sure rides are provided.



March 29 - April 1



HOLY WEEK

March 29 *Reflection by Roy Lanham*
Director of Campus Ministry

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

- **AT THE PROCESSION WITH PALMS: MATTHEW 21:1-11**
- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 50:4-7**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24**
- **SECOND READING: PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 26:14 – 27:66**

As we enter into Holy Week, I am reminded of part of an Easy Essay from Peter Maurin, the co-founder of the Catholic Worker.

On the Cross of Calvary
Christ gave his life to redeem the world.
The life of Christ was a life of sacrifice.
The life of a Christian must be
a life of sacrifice.
We cannot imitate the sacrifice of Christ
on Calvary
by trying to get all we can.
We can only imitate the sacrifice of Christ
on Calvary
by trying to give all we can.[1]

[1] Peter Maurin. "The Spirit of the Masses." Catholic Worker, October 1933, p. 2.

Maurin believed Christ's sacrifice of his life to redeem the world was instructive, and for us to follow Christ is to embrace a life of sacrifice. Today we learn in Philippians what this self-emptying means: humility and obedience. Our following of Christ in a life of sacrifice transforms our view of ourselves and our neighbor. Marc Ellis, in his biography of Maurin, states, "with this transformative faith, Maurin could no longer see the person as an individual with individual rights, but instead as a person with personal duties toward God, himself, and his fellow man."[2]

In embracing the cross, Jesus shows us what it means to be fully human. We get to imitate Christ. We get to embrace this same obligation/duty. This obligation is an obligation of love. I am reminded of this every day as I have taken up a practice the Sisters of Providence do every morning as they put on their habits. As they do so, they pray that they will live the habits of humility, simplicity, and charity. If you will, they "put on" these habits as well. I now pray to live these same habits each day. It has become part of my morning offering.

Parents with small children understand the sacrifices they must make each day to care for their baby or toddler. There might be a sigh now and again thinking back to a time when they were kid free, but they understand their duty. It is no different for us in our life in Christ. In naming ourselves as Christians, our lives become a reflection of Christ's. This naming makes a demand of us.

Today, as we sing our "Hosannas" welcoming the Lord as he travels the road to Jerusalem, and shout "Crucify him" as we enter into his passion and death, let us be reminded that we imitate Christ "by giving all we can."

- Take some time in these days before the Sacred Triduum to re-read Matthew's account of Jesus' passion and death. Sit with the story and enter into meditation to see what the Lord might speak to you in the silence.

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[2] Marc Ellis. Peter Maurin: Prophet in the Twentieth Century (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1981) p. 62.

Reflection by Bryan Fox, Brigadier General, USAF (Retired)
Board of Trustees, University of Providence
B.S. in Economics, Class of 1985

Monday of Holy Week

- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 42:1-7**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 27:1, 2, 3, 13-14**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 12:1-11**

What worries you the most at the moment? In the Responsorial Psalm, fear is the real enemy. Each of us carries fears of our misdeeds, failures, rejection, misunderstanding, uncertainty, sickness, even death. Yet no matter the circumstances or burdens we face, the Lord remains our shelter and the protector of our souls. We overcome fear by placing our trust in God, the giver of mercy and salvation, the One who assures us that death will not conquer us. The Holy Spirit works within us breathing hope into the hidden corners of the heart. When fear and anxiety weigh heavily on us, even when God seems silent and distant, we turn to him. Our hearts cling to his providence, which sustains us. "The Lord is my light and my salvation."

The dinner held in Jesus' honor at the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary always reminds me of an office Christmas party, familiar faces crowded into one room, old tensions humming beneath the surface. In that charged atmosphere, Mary steps forward in a simple, tender act of devotion. She breaks open her most precious perfume and pours it over Jesus, filling the room with fragrance. Judas responds as many of us do when faced with extravagant love: he criticizes, questions, and hides behind practical objections. Scripture tells us his protest came from greed, but it also reveals a deeper truth, a heart that never surrendered to Jesus, despite standing closest to him. What is the Lord calling us to see? That love for Christ is measured not by cost but by willingness. Mary gave her best because she truly knew him. Judas withheld his heart because he never allowed himself to be known by the One who called him.

What unites these readings is this: trust in God doesn't erase danger, but it gives us the strength to face it without losing our peace. Jesus walks toward the cross with confidence in the Father. Mary worships him boldly, even under judgment. And the psalmist reminds us that courage isn't the absence of fear; it's choosing to remain faithful right in the midst of it.

- What do you fear or agonize about at this moment?
- As one of God's servants, how will you bring justice to the world?
- What are you willing to give up of your own comfort or possessions for the sake of your faith?

Tuesday of Holy Week

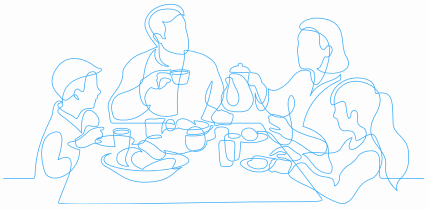
- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 49:1-6**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 71:1-2, 3-4A, 5AB-6AB, 15 AND 17**
- **GOSPEL: JOHN 13:21-33, 36-38**

Our mothers and fathers are probably the people who knew us best as kids. We told them everything. We knew they would help us without a second thought. They love us and care for us deeply. From them we learn how to live. We learn right from wrong, how to drive a car, and how to love other people through the love they showed us. As we grow up, we don't always see what our parents have done for us or understand why they expected what they did, but as we age, leave for college, and find our passions, the lessons we learned from our parents become important. It's like their hands are guiding us even if they aren't there with us.

It's the same with God. We learn lessons, some through heartbreak or loss, and others through joy and thanksgiving. The lessons are there to help us grow. To grow into who he knows we will be. He guides us through these lessons, just like he guided Jesus to the Cross for his glory; your growth is to further his mission. The general mission is to love others and help them find God, and the mission designed by God just for you.

God knows us fully and completely. Isaiah says, "the Lord called me before I was born" and "he gave me my name." God has a mission for each one of us that is unique to us. Nobody but you can fulfill the mission God has laid out for you. Even if you feel the mission is in vain or if you feel like you aren't the right person for the job, remember that God believes you are. How does it feel to think God knows you better than you know yourself? And loves you fully? Dwell on these questions.

- What lessons have you learned from God in the last year?
- What is your mission right now? How has your mission changed or not changed in the last few years?
- What factors do you think contributed to the change (or lack thereof) in your mission? Are you a contributing factor?



Wednesday of Holy Week

- **FIRST READING: ISAIAH 50:4-9A**
- **RESPONSORIAL PSALM: PSALM 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, AND 33-34**
- **GOSPEL: MATTHEW 26:14-25**

These readings are ones that put us in a hard place where mercy faces betrayal. Isaiah's servant stays steady in humiliation, confident that God will strengthen and guide him. His willingness to listen and stay present in the face of misunderstanding shows mercy is not just a feeling but a commitment. Mercy is the choice to stay faithful when it would be easier to step away.

Psalm 69 follows with a description of deep loneliness. I feel like this is something a lot of college students may resonate with because many students are away from home for the first time and there is with it a sense of disconnect along with being overlooked or carrying pressure that other people do not see because it's invisible. This Psalm really turns in the direction of God as the one who truly notices and comes to our aid when we are struggling. Here is where mercy becomes a reminder that God doesn't forget anyone in a time of distress because he is the one who truly knows what we are experiencing.

I always find this gospel a bit powerful because it puts us at the table where Judas gets ready to betray Jesus, and in this passage, Jesus does not withdraw even while knowing what is going to take place. He embraces the moment with trust in the Father. His reaction truly shows a mercy that does not flee from chaos or pain, even though the pain is caused by the betrayal of a friend.

Holy Week is a time where we look at our own forms of betrayal, which could be the ways we may step back from others or turn away from God. Even though we may do these subtle acts, the one thing that doesn't change is God's mercy. His unfailing mercy allows us to choose being present instead of avoidant and living in compassion instead of selfishness.

- Where in my life am I being invited to "stay" with someone rather than withdraw?
- How do today's readings reveal ways God remains close to human suffering?
- What hidden betrayals—to myself, others, or God—am I being called to confront honestly and with mercy?



April 2 - April 5



THE PASCHAL TRIDUUM

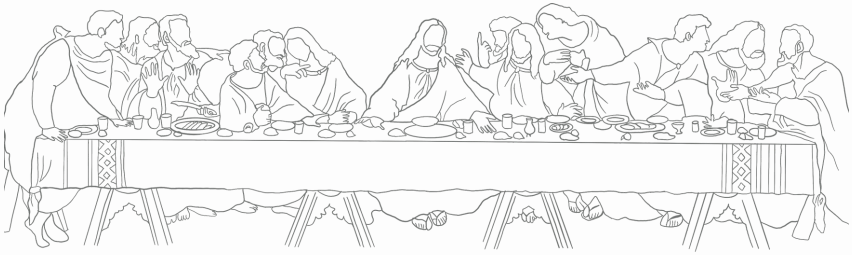
April 2

Reflection by A.J. Hoy, M.T.S., PhD(c)
Vice President for Mission Integration
Interim Vice President for Student Life

The Paschal Triduum

Throughout the next three days, the Church celebrates one continuous liturgy. What begins on Holy Thursday with the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the commemoration of the institution of the Eucharist reaches its fulfillment on the eve of Easter Sunday, when we proclaim the resurrection of our Lord. While attending the entire three-day liturgy is not obligatory, participation is a profound way to enter the heart of the Paschal Mystery. What follows is a reflection on the journey of the Triduum through the lens of mercy.

Throughout this Lent, we have walked together along the path of conversion and renewal. Though we have not fully completed the journey, walking with one another and with our Lord—who himself embodies mercy—is the essence of Christian life. On Holy Thursday, as the Church gathers to recall Jesus' last supper with his friends, we are invited to learn his ways through both the Eucharist and his example of humble service. The liturgy recalls not just the institution of the Eucharist, Christ's abiding presence with us, but it also commemorates Jesus' servant leadership. On this night, we wash one another's feet, following the example of Christ the Servant, who entered into the lives of his disciples with compassion and care. In giving us his body and blood, Jesus provides not only sustenance for our journey, but also a model for how to accompany others in mercy, especially when the path is difficult. From the supper, we follow him to the Garden of Gethsemane, witnessing a God who chooses to enter the depths of human struggle with patience and steadfast love.

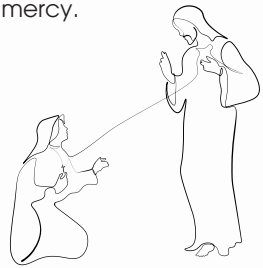


Good Friday brings the trial and death of Jesus. The liturgy continues with profound solemnity. There is no introduction, no consecration of the Eucharist, no outward celebration. Christ's body is received from the reserve of the altar, emphasizing his presence even in absence. We hear the Passion according to St. John and venerate the cross, the instrument of suffering that becomes the ultimate symbol of merciful love. In the cross, God's mercy is revealed in its radical form: entering fully into human suffering, refusing to abandon, and transforming even pain and injustice into a source of hope. As we leave, Jesus is dead, and we remain in waiting, called to contemplate how mercy often unfolds in the spaces of silence and sorrow.

Holy Saturday deepens this waiting. Jesus is dead, and the resurrection has not yet occurred. The Church lives in the tension of the "already and not yet"—we have experienced mercy but not yet seen its fullness. This waiting is sacred. It asks us to dwell with discomfort, to sit with uncertainty, and to trust that God's mercy continues to work quietly in the world. It is a time to recognize that our own work of mercy, like God's, may not always produce immediate results, but its presence can transform hearts and lives.

As the sun sets on Holy Saturday, churches around the world are illuminated by a new light. From the ashes that marked our foreheads on Ash Wednesday emerges the light of Christ, risen from the dead. He is the light of the world, walking with us, calling us to mercy, and inviting us to extend that mercy to others. The Triduum is not only a remembrance of what God has done; it is an invitation to join God in the ongoing work of mercy in our communities and in the lives of those around us.

As the new light of Christ rises on the night of the Easter Vigil, we enter the pinnacle of the Triduum. From this darkness comes the light that conquers death, the mercy that transforms despair into hope, and the love that calls us to join God in the work of mercy for the world. It is in this moment of anticipation and joy that the Church proclaims the Exsultet, the Easter Proclamation. The Exsultet is more than a hymn of praise; it is a theological reflection in song, recounting God's saving deeds from creation, through the Exodus, and into the resurrection of Christ. As we listen and sing these ancient words, we are invited to join in the Church's proclamation, to recognize the mercy we have received, and to commit ourselves anew to bringing that mercy into the lives of others. In the light of the risen Christ, our celebration of Easter begins with awe, gratitude, and the call to participate in God's enduring work of mercy.



The Exsultet

Exult, let them exult, the hosts of heaven,
exult, let Angel ministers of God exult,
let the trumpet of salvation
sound aloud our mighty King's triumph!
Be glad, let earth be glad, as glory floods her,
ablaze with light from her eternal King,
let all corners of the earth be glad,
knowing an end to gloom and darkness.

Rejoice, let Mother Church also rejoice,
arrayed with the lightning of his glory,
let this holy building shake with joy,
filled with the mighty voices of the peoples.

It is truly right and just, with ardent love of mind and heart
and with devoted service of our voice,
to acclaim our God invisible, the almighty Father,
and Jesus Christ, our Lord, his Son, his Only Begotten.

Who for our sake paid Adam's debt to the eternal Father,
and, pouring out his own dear Blood,
wiped clean the record of our ancient sinfulness.

These, then, are the feasts of Passover,
in which is slain the Lamb, the one true Lamb,
whose Blood anoints the doorposts of believers.

This is the night,
when once you led our forebears, Israel's children,
from slavery in Egypt and made them pass dry-shod through the Red Sea.

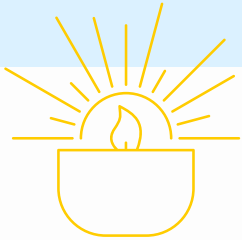
This is the night
that with a pillar of fire banished the darkness of sin.

This is the night
that even now, throughout the world,
sets Christian believers apart from worldly vices
and from the gloom of sin, leading them to grace and joining them to his holy ones.

This is the night,
when Christ broke the prison-bars of death and rose victorious from the underworld.

Our birth would have been no gain, had we not been redeemed.

O wonder of your humble care for us!
O love, O charity beyond all telling, to ransom a slave you gave away your Son!
O truly necessary sin of Adam, destroyed completely by the Death of Christ!
O happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!



O truly blessed night,
worthy alone to know the time and hour
when Christ rose from the underworld!

This is the night
of which it is written:
The night shall be as bright as day,
dazzling is the night for me,
and full of gladness.

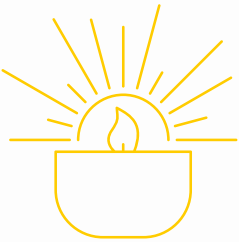


The sanctifying power of this night
dispels wickedness, washes faults away,
restores innocence to the fallen, and joy to mourners,
drives out hatred, fosters concord, and brings down the mighty.
On this, your night of grace, O holy Father,
accept this candle, a solemn offering,
the work of bees and of your servants' hands,
an evening sacrifice of praise,
this gift from your most holy Church.



But now we know the praises of this pillar,
which glowing fire ignites for God's honor,
a fire into many flames divided,
yet never dimmed by sharing of its light,
for it is fed by melting wax,
drawn out by mother bees
to build a torch so precious.

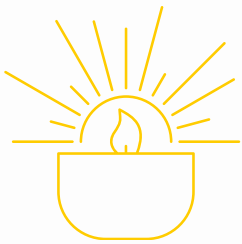
O truly blessed night,
when things of heaven are wed to those of earth,
and divine to the human.



Therefore, O Lord,
we pray you that this candle,
hallowed to the honor of your name,
may persevere undimmed,
to overcome the darkness of this night.

Receive it as a pleasing fragrance,
and let it mingle with the lights of heaven.

May this flame be found still burning
by the Morning Star:
the one Morning Star who never sets,
Christ your Son,
who, coming back from death's domain,
has shed his peaceful light on humanity,
and lives and reigns for ever and ever.



R. Amen.

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A note on the cover art for

THE WORK OF MERCY

The work of mercy is close-up work. It is not something we can watch from a distance or something we can delegate. The work of mercy is the comforting of those who are suffering, the clothing of those who are cold, the giving of a drink to those who are thirsty (and not just any drink, but rather a warm, comforting hug-of-a-drink), and the bringing of light to those in darkness. These important tasks are symbolized by the hand with a tissue providing comfort, the placing of a hat, the coffee-holding hand, and stars emerging as light from each act of kindness, each work of mercy. You'll notice that not just one person is doing the work of mercy; each hand is a right hand. The work of mercy cannot be done by one person alone. Jesus calls us to be community-minded. We enter each day not knowing if we will be called to give or to receive mercy. The work of mercy can be done by all of us, for all of us.

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