

40 DAYS



LENT

February 18 – April 5, 2026



ST PAUL'S CATHEDRAL
EPISCOPAL

Love Christ • Serve Others • Welcome All

A note from an editor:

First, thank you so much for picking up this labor of community love in hardcopy or online! It means a great deal to us all that you'd make this part of your Lenten journey.

I also want to thank all of our contributors. This is truly the voice of St. Paul's in these pages. While each page is a personal reflection, it very much is a "point in time" for how we are feeling about our world through the lens of Lenten daily readings.

And last, but by no means least, thank you to fellow editors for all of their time, effort, and eagle eyes. I very much appreciate Rev. Vesta Kowalski, Donna Perdue, and Calvin Johnson for their willingness to spring into action on this work each year. I couldn't do it anywhere near as well without you!

For the lectionary and liturgy folk: this year's selections are from Year Two of the Daily Lectionary cycle (which is different from the three-year Eucharistic lectionary cycle). You'll also find a couple of poems this year, and I'm glad people are feeling freer than ever with their expression of faithfulness within these pages.

You all have my deepest gratitude. May your Lenten journey be a blessed one!

~ Rev. Cn. Richard Hogue

Ash Wednesday, February 18

Amos 5:6-15; Psalm 32; Hebrews 12:1-14; Luke 18:9-14

I recently read the season of Lent is one of becoming, of which Ash Wednesday is the threshold. It is an interesting perspective, as most of us tend to focus on our need for repentance, to make ourselves right with God, so to speak. The ashes placed upon our foreheads on Ash Wednesday—“remember you are dust and to dust you shall return”—are a mark of humbling ourselves before God and acknowledging our need for God to be made whole.

But when looked at solely from this narrow perspective, we can miss much of the richness this time asks of us. Yes, certainly repentance calls us to acknowledge our sins and the ways in which we fall short. However, this is not done solely for the purpose of dwelling on our less than stellar behaviors, thoughts, and actions. Repentance is not just about turning away from these things but turning towards God and who and what we are created to be. Yes, we are created from dust, but God is continually creating, acting upon, and molding our lives. This time calls us to examine, be curious about, what distracts us, or even keeps us from seeing and responding to God in our lives and in the world.

Think for a moment of a time in which you were able to quiet the noise in your head and just focus on something lovely, something meaningful. There is an expansiveness to such a time that gives us clarity we might normally miss. Lent provides us with such an opportunity. The sign of the cross placed on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday marks our renewed focus on what matters.

It is safe to say many of us are weary, worried, and just tired. The world feels like a particularly chaotic place right now. Perhaps we can approach this Lent as a gift with an intention of seeking more quiet and space in our lives. Say less, listen more, rest, and take note of what comes to us. The Rev. Barbara Crafton puts it beautifully: “Another Lent begins in austere weariness, ready for a season of spareness, a little more quiet. Forty plainer days are just what we need.”

Thursday, February 19

Habakkuk 3: 1-18; Psalm 37:1-18; Philippians 3:12-21; John 17: 1-8

I have to confess: originally, I wrote a reflection based upon the *completely wrong set of verses*. And, just between you and me, it was a brilliant little essay: both erudite and grounded in human experience, with sly comic touches and an uplifting twist at the end.

Then I saw my mistake, and I read *these* verses. Alas, at first these readings did not inspire me to prophetic heights. Ash Wednesday is a hard enough act to follow, but, *come on*. Habakkuk has some nice poetry, but I preferred the snark of his previous chapter. Jesus is not at his most quotable here, and I could imagine falling asleep with the rest of the disciples in the garden.

Next, I came to Yet Another Psalm Contrasting the Wicked and the Righteous. I thought, *I'm not envious of the wicked and the wrongdoers*. But I realized, I *was* envious. Envious of contributors to this booklet assigned “more interesting” (in my mind) passages with real meat, contributors who then wrought astonishingly perceptive and moving reflections. Another confession: my pride had ballooned into jealousy.

That balloon needed popping. Lent isn't about me, or at least not about my barking ego. Paul may have addressed his letter to the Philippians, but it was an arrow aimed straight at my heart: even more than Paul I am far from perfect, and like Paul, I need to press on, leave behind that snarky little ego, and walk swiftly after the saints who humbly do good works all around us. I am not, despite appearances, that good with conformity, but transformation—that I can do.

Life is transformation: oxygen into energy, neurotransmitters into thoughts, small gestures into love. More important, faith is transformation. Faith is not sitting still and believing six impossible things. Faith is transformation of lack into plenty, of loneliness into family, of evil into compassion. Even the transformation of confounding verses into new meaning. This is the transformation we have been looking for all along.

Friday, February 20

Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Psalm 31; Philippians 4:1-9; John 17:9-19

Where have all the prophets gone? It seems like we could use some of that Old Testament anger. Wake up, guys! “Turn back, O man, forswear your foolish ways!” (Some of us remember “Godspell.”) But wait; there is more. Some friends and I have been reading *The Tears of Things: Prophetic Wisdom for an Age of Outrage*, by Richard Rohr. He suggests that prophets move through three stages—anger to lamentation to joy and hopefulness. In reading Ezekiel, as well as the other prophets, we can see that there is a back and forth, it’s not all linear. So here we are almost to the middle of Ezekiel and we already see hope.

I was thinking about the word atonement. It starts out feeling heavy, burdened with sins from which I need to repent. Luckily, according to the word of the Lord in Ezekiel, I only have to worry about my own sins, not my parents’ nor my children’s, but that’s enough! Also, luckily (by grace alone!), God refuses to leave me there, already leading me into atonement (at-one-ment). He takes no pleasure in my “death,” death of spirit (v. 23).

God wants me to turn from my alienation to being at one. Then, casting away all the transgressions that I have committed against God, God will gift me a new heart and a new spirit (v.31.)! We just need to “turn, then, and live” (v. 32).

I am planning to help close my “alienation gap” with daily morning and evening prayer this Lent, and hope that from here it will become routine. I am also going to attend the Creation Care Community Lenten Book Study starting February 26. Maybe I’ll see you there; there’s still time to register ([click here to check it out!](#) or view it in EDSO news).

May my—and your—Lenten journey bring us to one-ness with our out-reaching, gracious, loving God!

Saturday, February 21

Ezekiel 39:21-29; Psalm 30; Philippians 4:10-20; John 17:20-26

Jesus prays “that all may be one” and in Philippians we see an instruction “to be content whatever the circumstances.”

What could be more timely for me, for us, in these confusing, troubled times. I understand this as a prayer that we all (in the world, in this country) might agree to disagree and act in the best interests of all, forego revenge and retribution, and pray for the well-being of all. “God will meet all your needs”—in my case so much more than my needs. I’m blessed with abundance and a desire to be generous in mind, body, soul, spirit, and money to everyone, especially through my humble contributions to various St Paul's ministries. I pray that I will live up to these principles and reject negativity and selfishness. It’s humbling to be reminded now in Lent, and always, to live up to these ideals sent through Jesus. An appropriate antidote to anxiety and troubling distractions.

1st Sunday in Lent, February 22

Daniel 9:3-10; Psalm 63; Hebrews 2:10-18; John 12:44-50

The Book of Hebrews has a murky provenance, but there is no doubt that it wrestles mightily and fruitfully with the identity and significance of our Lord, in a thoroughly Jewish context. While the author begins with a ringing declaration of Jesus as the Son of God, he or she moves quickly to something just as essential for understanding God's salvation plan—Jesus's full, suffering humanity. "Since therefore the children [that's us] share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature" (2:14), and "Therefore he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect" (2:17). In short, within a couple of generations, Christians had realized the logic of Christ's Incarnation, laying the foundation for a process that would take over 300 years to bear fruit in the Councils of Nicaea, 325, and Chalcedon, 451.

I love the wild, absorbing story of those 300 years. Yet I love even more the Book of Hebrews' insight into why both Jesus's humanity and divinity matter so much. The author did not sit down to write theology, but to give us the portrait of a Savior able to meet us in the midst of all our brokenness and woundedness, and to provide the means of victory over ourselves and our mortality:

For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted (verse 18). How could God possibly know what it's like to experience the temptation of anger, or lust, or apathy, or any other sin? Not from the outside, because God is all-knowing, but from the inside, because God became human. This does far more than give us a warm feeling. It breaks sin's power over us, "making expiation" in the Jewish language of verse 17 (see Romans 6).

...that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage (verses 14-15). What more can God do for us than die? And doing so, death has no power over him or us (Romans 6, again).

Thanks be to God.

Monday, February 23

Genesis 37:1-11; Psalm 41; 1 Corinthians 1:1-19; Mark 1:1-13

The parts of these readings that keep coming back to me are the stories of Joseph, Paul, and John serving as leaders but saying truth to power. Saying the difficult parts “out loud.” Joseph told his brothers and his father of the dreams he had experienced that indicated they would one day bow before his feet. Paul told the Christians in Corinth that they should quit bickering and just “get along!!” John told the people he was baptizing in the Jordan that one was coming *whose sandals he was unworthy to untie*.

Years ago, when I worked managing people in biotech companies, I was taught that giving bad (or good) news (e.g., a bad review, a lay-off, a demotion, the cancellation of a big project) was just part of the job, but it should usually be done in a certain way. First, tell the employee the good things about them, the project, etc. Second, give the bad news in context. Finally, reiterate the good news.

This is done in the readings. Joseph first did positive work with his brothers, and posed the news as dreams. He did not say, “You will bow down to me someday!” Second, he told them the dreams. Finally, his father Joshua understood and did not get angry. He *“kept the matter in mind.”* Paul, speaking to the church in Corinth, first tells them what great people they are: *“you are not lacking in any gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Then, he rebukes them for quarreling among themselves. He finishes by explaining why he said what he did and reiterates the love of Christ. Finally, in the Gospel of Mark, we are told of the prophecy from Isaiah: *“I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way, the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight,’”* Then we are told about John’s purpose: *“The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the strap of his sandals. I have baptized you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”* Then Jesus shows up, is baptized and chosen by God: *“You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”* And they all got to be witnesses!

So, the next time you must give news, good or bad, put it in context of the good the person has done, give the news, then reiterate the Good News.

Tuesday, February 24

Genesis 37:12-24; Psalm 45; 1 Corinthians 1:20-31; Mark 1:14-28

The passage in Mark starts with John in prison. Unfortunately, this is happening with some immigrants being held in detention centers now. During this time, Jesus begins his preaching in Galilee. Jesus's central message is that the kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus was focused on love, humility, and grace, not on the politics of the day.

He calls four disciples to do this work along with him. He shares with them that they will be fishers of men, the idea that he would work alongside them in spreading the word of the kingdom of God. He specifically called these men as they were hard working fishermen. He may have chosen these men not for what they could do, but maybe for what he could do through them. He further asked them to "follow me."

It is interesting, as this simple message is the heart of Christianity. We often get caught up in the rules and theological systems and lose sight of the simplicity of following Jesus.

There is hope in this passage that Jesus does bring the kingdom of God to these people along with his disciples even today. We have people working in many ministries to share love, humility and grace with those who need some support. We are blessed with people who work tirelessly to support migrants; we have people who give support to our unhoused neighbors; we have people who teach children; we have people who visit and provide love to those incarcerated; and we have those who visit and minister to those who are unable to leave their home or the hospital. I only highlight a few of the many ministries taking place every day in this work both within and outside the church.

It just takes one person feeling the call to a ministry and finding even one way they can add to the kingdom of God right here, right now. Blessed are those who continue to share in this love and grace.

Wednesday, February 25

Genesis 37:25-36; Psalm 119:49-72; 1 Corinthians 2:1-13; Mark 1:29-45

In this passage from Mark's Gospel, we see Jesus healing a leper, telling him to show himself to the priests to be declared clean, but to tell no one. (Only priests could declare a leper clean, which would allow the leper to return to society.) The leper disobeys the instruction, which creates a poignant irony. Prior to being declared clean, the leper was an outcast, forced to live in isolation, in "lonely places"; his disobedience in spreading the word of Jesus's healing creates the very publicity Jesus was hoping to avoid, forcing Jesus into the same "lonely places" to avoid being mobbed.

Haven't we done our own form of disobedience creating unintended consequences? Lent gives us the opportunity to reflect on them.

Thursday, February 26

Genesis 39:1-2; Psalm 50; 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:15, Mark 2:1-12

Joseph was quite a guy, the sort of man who walked on water before it was popular. Potiphar entrusted him with his entire household, including his wife, and there's where we see him doing what was right as opposed to what would no doubt have felt good. She clearly wanted a roll in the hay with Joseph who, on top of everything else, was handsome. He rebuffed her and that made her mad and set her on a course of getting even. She lied to her husband by telling him that Joseph had been more than friendly with her, and he believed her because she was holding on to part of his apparel. Off he went to jail, where the Lord was with him and he got chummy with the jailer.

You might well ask why God let this happen, but we aren't here to question the mind of God. The Psalm reminds us that our God comes and does not keep silence, and that God himself is judge. It doesn't invite us to question God's plans or motives; instead, it tells us what sacrifices are the ones God wants, and that we must be steadfast in presenting them to the Divine. "Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High." Spiritual gifts, not burnt offerings, that's what God expects of us, just as he expected, and received, spiritual gifts from Joseph.

Paul takes this theme further as he talks to the Corinthians, who must have been wondering as we might about why God allows unpleasant things to happen to them and us. Paul has us readjust our thinking to a higher mind, one in which faith reveals God's wisdom, and that is sufficient for us, or it should be. Lent is the ideal time of the Church year when we can examine our faith, see if we have risen above the need for what passes for human evidence, and are prepared to believe "what no eye has seen nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him." That's what Joseph did, and by doing so set us an example of what a child of God does and acts.

It was Jesus who cured the paralytic, not by anything the paralytic did, but by what his friends believed Jesus could do. Again, a lesson in profound faith that we can use this day to secure it for ourselves and to "re clothe us in our rightful minds," as the hymn has us sing.

Friday, February 27

Genesis 40:1-23; Psalm 40; 1 Corinthians 3:16-23; Mark 2:13-22

In the Genesis reading, Joseph interpreted the dreams of fellow prisoners who were Pharaoh's servants. Joseph asked the chief cup steward, when reinstated, to plead Joseph's case. The cup steward forgot. And Joseph continued to languish in prison. My first reaction was to judge that ungrateful man. But as I remembered more of the story, the cupbearer's forgetfulness began to seem a blessing.

The first line of Psalm 40 is, "I waited patiently for the Lord." It wasn't Joseph's time yet. Pharaoh wasn't ready to hear. I reread Genesis and saw the occasion of the cupbearer's reinstatement was the celebration of Pharaoh's birthday. Pharaoh had no reason then to believe he was in need of another dream interpreter, or to listen to a servant in the midst of his party.

The Psalm immediately shifts from patient waiting to: the Lord "heard my cry . . . He put a new song in my mouth." Joseph moved from slave and prisoner to powerful architect of a plan that saved many from starvation.

In Mark, Jesus reminds us, "No one puts new wine into old wineskins, otherwise the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins."

Maybe the chaos and injustice happening now is the difficult birth of new ways of being that will further God's kingdom of peace and justice. I am so heartened by the actions of so many to aid their neighbors and strangers. We want that kingdom. "Do you not know . . . God's spirit dwells in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

My formerly-known-as-EFM group is reading a book I'd like to recommend, *The Tears of Things* by Richard Rohr. He argues we must learn to hold paradox—righteous anger at the things that are wrong along with deep love for **all** creation. He believes that tears for the sorrow of everything and everybody make the bridge that allows us to hold these opposites at the same time, the essence of living in God's kingdom now.

Probably few of us can sustain that state (I only manage flashes), but Rohr quoted Dorothy Day, "It's heaven all the way to heaven"—a new song.

Saturday, February 28

Genesis 41:1-13; Psalm 55; 1 Corinthians 4:1-7; Mark 2:23-3.6

OK, I'm going to focus here on the story in Mark of Jesus's rebuke to the Pharisees about what you can and can't do on the sabbath. I would guess we all know the story—Jesus and the disciples are walking through grainfields on the sabbath and the disciples are hungry so they help themselves to some grain. The Pharisees pop up and point out that harvesting is not allowed on the sabbath, and Jesus responds “The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath.” Then in case we didn't get the point, Mark tells a similar story about Jesus curing the man with the withered arm— healing also apparently being forbidden on the sabbath. The Pharisees remain silent (Jesus's question to them about doing good or harm on the sabbath apparently shuts them up) but then (later?) determine to destroy Jesus.

The key point is that compassion (and maybe flexibility) should trump legalism—a hard-hearted rigor with regard to the law is no match for real love—and that surely doing good on the holiest day of the week is more important than abiding by every jot and tittle of Pharisaic law. I get that, but I want to riff a little on the text in Ezekiel that Mark is probably referring back to when he mentions hard-heartedness. It is this (God is speaking to Israel): “I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” That has always struck me as replacing something permanent, solid (upon this rock I will build my church) with something alive, yes, but also soft, fragile, prone to failure. And I think that is exactly Ezekiel's and Jesus's point. God does not ask us for perfection, for the most solid thing, for certainty even. God wants us to be alive and to love each other (and Him/Her) and *all* the trappings of Judaism/Christianity are tools to get us there. Yes, they must be treated with the deepest respect, but they must never get in the way of the much harder work of loving, helping, and healing others as fully as we can. People want a religion that gives them all the answers and tells them exactly how to live, and people are very prone to judging those who are not like them, members of other faiths or of no faith. But Jesus points in another direction—towards a heart of flesh. (And even as I write this, I can feel myself judging and condemning all those fools who just don't get what religion is about—channeling that inner Pharisee!)

2nd Sunday in Lent, March 1

Genesis 41:14-45; Psalm 24; Romans 6:3-14; John 5:19-24

Paul writes in Romans 6:13 of “instruments of unrighteousness” and “instruments of righteousness” using a Greek word that can be—and has been—translated in this passage as instrument or weapon.

An instrument is a means for an intention to be manifested in the world. Anyone involved in crafting an instrument must consider how to choose the values and functions that are best suited for its intended use. In today’s selection from Romans, Paul exhorts us to actively craft ourselves as instruments that can be conduits to manifest God’s intentions in the world.

Paul tells us in Romans 6:4 that “even as Christ was raised up out of the dead through the glory of the Father, so also we might walk in the newness of life,” where “newness” means transformation. Using incarnational language, he tells us that our old self was crucified with Christ so that the physical body of sin would be rendered powerless (6:6). He tells us we have options to not let sin reign in our mortal body (6:12), because we can discern and reject actions that would present ourselves to sin (error) in such a way that we become instruments (weapons) of unrighteousness (injustice, wrong, iniquity, falsehood, deceitfulness) (6:13). Likewise, he trusts that we can discern and choose to offer every part of ourselves to Christ to be an instrument of righteousness. The conclusion (6:14) tells us that sin will no longer be our master because grace will help us find the strength and guidance we need to make these choices.

Today’s Old Testament and Psalm provide additional understandings of an instrument to manifest God’s purposes. In Genesis, Joseph is commanded to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams and he answers that it is God who answers Pharaoh (41:6) and has shown Pharaoh in dreams what God will do (41:25, 28, 32). Joseph presents himself as a mere instrument for interpreting and strategically responding to God’s intentions. In Psalm 24, it is those God-seekers that have made themselves instruments of integrity and follow God’s moral code who will stand in God’s holy place (24:3-6).

What actions can we take now to actively craft ourselves into instruments (or weapons!) of righteousness?

Monday, March 2

Genesis 41:46-57; Psalm 56; 1 Corinthians 4:8-20(21); Mark 3:7-19a

Joseph the dreamer was prepared for famine before anyone else considered it possible. So when it came, not only did he have a solution (food wisely stored away), but he could share the fruits of his foresight with the whole world!

Unlike Joseph, most of us aren't great at preparing for what's to come. Being cautious in a world filled with treacherous behavior is not on our radar. Many of us assume that "those things" won't happen to us. And when they do, we may not starve (or be terrorized) but we and others may suffer. And some even die.

Many of us never thought the day would come when our democratic (for some of us) way of life would be threatened. We never thought that God's glorious creation would ever be desecrated. Yet here we are.

In *Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness*, Nan C. Merrill's version of the *miktam* (precious poem about deliverance in the face of danger), Psalm 56, offers a gentler way of connecting our fears with an answer of hope.

Be gracious to me, O Merciful Love,
for I dread the power of others;
all day long my fears consume me....

Now, when I am afraid, I put
my trust in You.

In You, O Guide and Comforter,

I find the strength to act.

What can others do to me?

Yes, if we are honest, we are afraid. Yes, we ALWAYS have our God beside us. Yes, with God we can find the strength to act. And when we act as the people of God, we are strong together and for each other. Indeed, what can others do to us?

Tuesday, March 3

Genesis 42:1-17; Psalm 61; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; Mark 3:19b-35

The readings for today tell us we are all connected as a family, and, unfortunately, our family is often dysfunctional.

In Genesis we learn that Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery, not realizing they would need him for their very sustenance and that of their community. However, Joseph in his turn insists on reconciliation of the entire family, reaching out even to the innocent youngest brother, to include them all in a better future.

In another family drama in Psalm 61, King David despairs as he flees the wrath of his son, the usurper Absalom. Yet later David will mourn the death of the son who hunted him.

Although Joseph and David, like Jesus, suffered greatly from rejection by their people, their relation to God became their north star and enabled them to take the long view in their personal journeys. Ultimately David found his rock and refuge in the God who had watched over Israel from ages past. Joseph forgave his brothers and treated them with God's compassion resulting in positive consequences for Israel.

That fealty to Jesus's greatest commandment leads to serious consideration of how to love thy neighbor, also a beloved of God. And Kierkegaard might add that if we choose to have a passionate commitment to God, we will not be unduly concerned about what those other relatives might think or do. We can be fortified by Paul's pure, "unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" to work to grow God's Kingdom.

In Mark 3:35 we have Jesus's admonition which defines his idea of family: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." Here is the good news: under any circumstances we can attempt to discern the will of God and endeavor to be Christ's brother or sister.

Wednesday, March 4

Genesis 42:18-28; Psalm 72; 1 Corinthians 5:9-6:8; Mark 4:1-20

What If?

Jesus tells a large crowd a story about Someone Who Scatters Seed. There is no backstory. Some person scatters all the seeds and Jesus describes four places where the seeds fell: the hardened path, the rocky soil, the thorns, and the good soil.

With each of the first three, Jesus describes the poor result. He describes each result, not judging or condemning, and not raising his voice. Then he gets to the good soil and his description crescendos with an abundance of growth—thirty, sixty, a hundredfold! (Okay, I added the exclamation.) Did you feel it? He ends the story there. “Anyone with ears to hear, listen.”

The passage continues with an explanation. I don't believe that's Jesus and I'm ignoring the rest of the passage for this reflection.

What if Jesus was encouraging everyone, including you and me, to just give it our best. Scatter the seeds of Good News/Grace that we've received—everywhere. When we see injustice, we scatter some Grace and stand with those at the center of harm. When we are cut off in traffic or miss the parking place that was "ours," we take a breath and scatter some Grace. I'm sure each reader knows of many situations in any day that might benefit from a scattering of Grace. Familial, professional, and even political relationships are fair soils on which to scatter your seeds of Grace throughout the day. Don't be stingy. Repeat. Then wait.

Note the places where the Grace didn't sprout and celebrate every place where it did. As you look back on your first day scattering, don't nag yourself for scattering in hard, rocky, or thorny places. Don't blame those places either. You're not responsible for everything.

Tomorrow, scatter the Grace you've been given without judging yourself or others. Remember the places where the sprouts were abundant, where Grace grew. And start there.

Thursday, March 5

Genesis 42:29-38; Psalm 71; 1 Corinthians 6:12-30; Mark 4:21-34

Today's reading from Mark's gospel includes three well-known short parables. It's a risky business to attempt a definitive explication of Jesus's parables; the genius of parabolic speech is that it elicits a range of responses in its hearers. Nonetheless, here is my response to what I see in Jesus's words today.

We're living in trying times. We're bombarded daily by news of cruelties, violence, and oppression. We see the message of Jesus being trampled by some who claim to love him. Yet we also see countless selfless acts of caring, compassion, and Christian love offered as both relief to those suffering and resistance to evil. We see right action amid the darkness. The more we see faithful friends, neighbors, and fellow congregants engaging in God-filled actions, the less dark the world is. Thanks to these servants of God, the light is no longer hidden under the bushel basket (Mark 4:21-25), but is beginning to illuminate our dark world.

All actions are interrelated—some closely, others remotely so—and have a mutual influence that we may never clearly see. We don't always grasp or comprehend the consequences of actions we undertake out of our faith in God, but they are like the seeds sown in the parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26-28). They are not only good in themselves, but also serve as acts of evangelism, showing others the Way.

Finally, in the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32), we are comforted by a vision of the Kingdom of God, a shelter and shade for all of creation. From the very smallest of seeds, the majestic yet unpretentious mustard tree has sprung. Where have we sown our mustard seeds today? The smallest of deeds can have a result far beyond human understanding.

Gracious God, give us the courage to sow the seeds of healing, justice, and peace. Keep on reminding us during this Lent that the smallest of actions can have immense consequences.

Friday, March 6

Genesis 43:1-15; Psalm 69:1-38; 1 Corinthians 7:1-9; Mark 4:35-41

In today's gospel from Mark, we hear the story about Jesus and the disciples on the sea, when a frightening storm comes up and, while Jesus slept, the disciples were panicking and frightened. Even more, they were critical of Jesus sleeping while they were afraid. Eventually he awoke and his response was anger (and probably disappointment) because with everything they should know about him, everything he has taught them and showed to them in miracles, they still had doubt. Their faith was not strong and there was no confidence in their well-being.

In the current environment of our country, and our world really, where fascism is once again (if it ever stopped) rearing its ugly head, there is always a faction of people who are led to believe that fascism would protect them and their well-being. For those of us who rightly fear the growth of fascism, it is frightening, possibly alienating us from those who support it. We may be praying for God to give us wisdom and courage to fight back, or we may pray asking why, and begging God to protect us, and yet we might find ourselves ever fearful.

What would Jesus say to us? Would he be disappointed? As followers, we should know better? Would he be angry? I think probably not! He already knows we are stiff-necked people and likely He's not surprised in any way regarding the reactions of his people as society once again stands of the edge of fascism.

God, help our unbelief, help us to know what we should be doing and our small ways to make things better. This could be as simple as taking cookies over to our Trump supporter neighbors and working to create a relationship of understanding and love. Love is the answer!

Saturday, March 7

Genesis 43:16-34; Psalm 87; 1 Corinthians 7:10-24; Mark 5:1-20

In today's passage from Genesis, we jump into the middle of the remarkable story of Joseph's journey to Egypt. Exiled there into slavery by his less-than-admirable brothers, Joseph, through the merit of his own character, rises to a position of wealth and power. His brothers, now on hard times, end up in the court of Joseph and face an uncomfortable truth—they were wrong and they're busted. And they need, in fact, to depend on his generosity. One can't help but feel that one of the deeper layers of this powerful story is an intimation into our relationship with God, that we all too hastily exile God, only to come to the painful realization later that our dependency on divine abundance is ultimately inseverable. As is God's mercy.

So too the 87th Psalm sings of unbroken oneness—this time between the land and her people. For the Hebrews, the association between God and the land of Zion is total and complete, a joyful marital covenant beneficial to both parties. Just as God's presence and power animates the land, so too we are animated by God—"All my springs are in you."

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, his unending fascination with law and regulation is on full display. Here the issue is marriage—how to form one, how to maintain one, and how to end one. Passages like these remind us that so many parts of the Bible are more useful as windows into ancient culture than as binding codes on how *we* might conduct *our* lives. Still, there is in Paul a world-weary wisdom that counsels Stoic acceptance of one's fate and gracious perseverance in the face of life's imperfections.

In Mark 5, we get the story of one of Jesus's more dramatic healing sessions. Through a modern, scientific lens, all this talk of demonic possession again reminds us how distant this ancient culture is from ours. Any reasonable diagnosis of this poor man's symptoms suggests long-term, untreated psychosis—an utterly different paradigm. So you have some interpretive choices—read it literally, or go looking for the metaphorical meanings suggested by this stark agrarian folk tale. (Those poor pigs!) For most folks, the story is ultimately about God's power to overcome any obstacle.

3rd Sunday in Lent, March 8

Genesis 44:1-17; Psalm 93; Romans 8:1-10; John 5:24-29

By now in Genesis, we are approaching the end of the saga of Joseph and his brothers. The tables have turned: the spoiled boy once sold into slavery now has the power of life and death over his entire family. His brothers fail to recognize him and he has a little fun with them, planting a silver cup in Benjamin's sack, accusing him of theft, and threatening to enslave his youngest brother. This is masterful story-telling: each episode of the Joseph story has suspense, reversals, drama. Will Joseph forgive his brothers for their murderous intent? Will he allow them to take food back to Canaan? In the end (spoiler alert!) the one who was thought to be long dead reveals himself to be alive, and the family is reunited, the brothers and their father settling in Egypt for the short-term benefit of abundant food. And we are set up for the next great chapter in the story of salvation, when God's people will be enslaved in Egypt and God will send Moses to set them free.

Our reading from Paul's letter to the Romans speaks of being set free from the law of sin and death. As in Genesis, Paul places us in the midst of a great drama, moving from death to life, from slavery to freedom, only this time, we already know that Jesus lives and that we have been redeemed. And in the Gospel Jesus too uses the language of life after death, saying that the [spiritually] dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and be raised to new life in the Spirit.

In this Lenten season we are called to hear that voice and to answer the call to live in newness of life. In this Biblical context the verb "to hear" also means "to obey"; those who both hear and obey Jesus's words are invited to the new life that he promises. In the northern hemisphere, Lent occurs in the spring, when new life is burgeoning all around us. All the signs are there for us. Will we choose to remain enslaved to sin and death or will we choose true freedom in Christ? That is for each of us to ponder, on this Lenten Sunday.

Monday, March 9

Genesis 44:18-34; Psalm 80; 1 Corinthians 7:25-31; Mark 5:21-43

In life's uncertainty, I find two things are certain. Change is certain. Our world is forever changing. We grow older and our circumstances fluctuate. Our relationships with God and others are a journey of change. Life is dynamic.

The second thing in which I am certain is knowing that God is with us. When one spends time in stillness and silence, one may sense an abiding Presence. Or you may sense the presence of a higher power when appreciating nature, experiencing a difficult diagnosis, attending church, viewing art, comforting a friend, listening to music, or walking in meditation, to name a few.

With these windows into Presence, we see beyond ourselves. Seeing beyond ourselves can mean breaking down the walls that separate us from grace and gratitude...rolling away the stones of our heart to reach a softer place. Some may call this surrender.

I believe this may be what was experienced by the woman plagued with a broken body and Jairus, the synagogue ruler, in Mark 5, and Judah, Joseph's brother, in Genesis 44. With their challenging and changing circumstances, came a desire/need/humility to see beyond themselves. There was a softening of the heart, a surrender. This surrender allowed space for God to make them whole.

Jesus says in the Mark passage, "your faith has made you whole." For me, faith involves a surrendering to God, knowing the Divine is with and for me in the challenges/joys of my life. My part is to roll away the stones of my heart so that faith may grow.

Tuesday, March 10

Genesis 45:1-15; Psalm 78:1-39; 1 Corinthians 7:32-40; Mark 6:1-13

I am choosing the Genesis reading for my reflection this Lent. I recommend that as you are reading the reflections, you start at the beginning of the Lenten readings and read all the assigned texts. If you start with Genesis 45, you will not know how Joseph and his brothers got themselves in the perplexing situation that is unfolding. It would be true for any of the texts that you choose to read. Also, it is good Lenten discipline.

Now to Genesis. The reading is something many people know if they know nothing else in the Bible. The many times performed play, Coat of Many Colors, is a favorite for many.

When I read the passages about Joseph and his brothers, I have an emotional feeling. It is because I admire Joseph so much for his act of forgiveness to his brothers and the acts of kindness to his father and brother Benjamin.

Each one of us is placed in a position where we need to forgive more than one time in our lives. Not many are in such a dire situation as Joseph. Whatever the need, the reason for forgiveness can look very large and take over our lives. Once forgiveness happens, we can carry on and live as we should. When you have forgiven the first time, it is easier to repeat.

May you have forgiveness as a Lenten discipline.

Peace.

Wednesday, March 11

Genesis 45:16-28; Psalm 119:97-120; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 6:13-29

Mark 6:13: “They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.”

Was this the underlying reason that John was imprisoned and eventually executed? Why does the act of casting out demons present a risk of persecution and death? Maybe we need to consider what a “demon” means.

Let’s assume that a demon is something that causes someone to behave badly. This can be self-destructive, or externally directed, and it may be caused by many things: mental illness, traumatic events, a troubled upbringing, and there are ways to address these things. Psychiatric drugs, counselling, or sometimes just talking it out with a friend. Bottom line is that casting out demons involves changing behavior, however that occurs.

Was John’s public criticism of Herod intended to change his behavior by embarrassing him? What about the anti-ICE protesters? Discouraging ICE’s behavior by disrupting their operations? Taking real-time videos that become viral certainly does that. Having an underground network that provides advanced warning of their approach? Starving them of on-the-ground intelligence through non-cooperation with the local authorities? And all that stuff is risky. It sure was for John, and in today’s world for Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti!

Here’s the thing: All of this bad behavior eventually backfires on the perpetrators. The execution of John sparked what was a local messianic movement into the much broader religious force known as Christianity. The murder of Good and Pretti caused a national outcry, making the administration back down, and maybe it is sparking a broader resistance movement that will eventually prevail and “overthrow” the existing government with the mid-term elections. I remain optimistic.

Yet we must remain aware that the perpetrators (ICE agents) are being hurt too, maybe in personal ways that are not obvious or intended. Things like PTSD, broken relationships, or perhaps the worst thing that can ever happen to anyone—rejection by your community. So while we struggle with the outrage, we must remain compassionate for ALL who suffer. I think that’s what Jesus would want us to do.

Thursday, March 12

Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34; Psalm 42; 1 Corinthians 9:1-15; Mark 6:30-46

Today's readings remind me that faith is an action, not a condition. Each reading shows a way of walking in faith, even when the path is unknown or the journey feels impossible. Each reading also shows that the journey of faith means not only stepping ahead, but also stepping up.

In Genesis, Jacob obeys a vision that tells him to go with his offspring and everything they own, to a land they do not know. Faithful Jacob undertakes the journey in reliance on the promises of that vision in verses 3-4. Pragmatic, wily Jacob steps up in verses 28-34: he sends Judah to get directions to Goshen and takes Joseph's advice to pitch to the Egyptians that Jacob's family can fill an undesirable niche in their labor market.

Psalm 42 is sung from exile, with vivid images of loss, longing, danger, suffering, and despair. The psalmist asks "why," but does not accept cheap promises of transactional power (God's blessing in return for my worship) or triumphal vengeance (God will smite my enemies). In hard times, stepping up can mean trusting that God will provide the guidance we need.

Paul has sharp words for the Corinthians in today's epistle, goading them to become the faith community they want to be. Faithful Paul regards the community as a proof of his sowing spiritual seed. Pragmatic, disgruntled Paul cites Mosaic law (Deut. 25:4), temple practice, labor theory, and his own knowledge of how to make organizations work, to exhort the community to step up and support their spiritual leaders.

In the gospel, after the apostles rejoin Jesus and report what they had done and taught, they go with Jesus in a boat to a deserted place for rest. Their plans are upended when people seeking Jesus guessed His destination and ran to be there when the boat arrived. Feeding the crowd's spiritual hunger was the easy part—Jesus began teaching them. Feeding their visceral hunger was going to be a stewardship problem. When the disciples asked Jesus to send the crowd away to find food on their own, Jesus told them to step up: "You give them something to eat." Let's not ask for a whizzbang miracle of food cloning, and instead, wonder how the disciples could have stepped up five loaves and two fishes to feed five thousand souls.

Where is each of us being called to step up, and how will we respond?

Friday, March 13

Genesis 47:1-26; Psalm 88; 1 Corinthians 9:16-27; Mark 6:47-56

Maybe one of the more spiritually potent, but often emotionally disquieting, tensions in the Christian story is present in this collection of readings: the gap between what we feel we deserve and what is offered.

Joseph's family had, in the chapters of Genesis prior to our selection, conspired against him. They are the reason that he is in Egypt and far from his homeland. And yet, once they arrive, he welcomes them, and purchases fertile land for them to settle. Somewhat oppositely, the Psalmist laments their fate, describing their pitiable position, crying that they feel rejected by God. Paul, in his usual way, urges the people of Corinth with equal grace, anxiety, and vigor. He has been through much, changed much about himself, and continually disciplines himself to be made worthy of his call to preach the Gospel. We hear in his urgency the need to improve himself, to always practice, to be made worthy of his evangelical obligation. How often have we felt like Paul? The Psalmist? Or perhaps even Joseph's family?

As often, it is Jesus who provides unexpected resolution to this rising feeling of anguished unworthiness. In Mark's Gospel, we see Jesus wandering out to meet the fishermen and bring them along on his ministry. This passage also contains one of the most subtly moving images in scripture: that of desperate people reaching out to touch the hem of Jesus's garment, and from just that being healed.

This is perhaps one message one can take from these jarring juxtapositions. Our ideas about deservedness—about what we are owed, or what we've done wrong—are often completely out of step with God's. When we believe ourselves to be unlovable and irredeemable, Jesus arrives unannounced, showing us this is not true with a feast and a place to rest our heads even after some betrayal. And likewise, when we are proudest of ourselves, when we have worked hardest, we might find that we are not so superior in God's eyes as we suppose ourselves to be. Yet all are seen and loved by God, whether they meet Christ face to face or merely dare to touch the end of his robes.

Saturday, March 14

Genesis 47:27-48:7; Psalm 87; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Mark 7:1-23

The Undefined

The first time I walked into my new church, a breeze came with me.

I sat in a back row by a young man in sweats, who was nursing an iced latte.

The woman in the seat before me wore a delicate pashmina shawl.

Two men to my far right had a small dog cuddled between them.

An intrepid priest gave an incisive sermon on Jesus and the money changers.

The choir sang a magnificent Latin offertory with soaring, close harmonies.

During the Prayers of the People, I prayed for my dog Lucy, who had just died, and my Muslim relatives in Palestine.

When we rose to take communion, I checked my carefully curated outfit.

The woman to my right was wearing an Aloha shirt, rumpled shorts, and sandals.

We observed the Covid ritual of hand-cleansing with sanitizers before approaching to take communion.

The celebrant's green silk chasuble rustled softly as she smiled and placed the wafer in my hands.

One bedraggled woman in the side pews was tapping her feet to a song only she could hear, expectant, waiting with us for the sure cleansing of the Holy Spirit.

From behind me, the usher's sweet harmony sang the recessional "Breathe on me, Breath of God."

Laetare Sunday, March 15

Genesis 48:8-22; Psalm 66; Romans 8:11-25; John 6:27-40

The Genesis reading tells of Jacob/Israel blessing his grandsons. He gives preference to the younger. Joseph, the father of these boys, objects. Jacob persists. How do I react when something doesn't go the way I think it should? It all depends. Frustration. Confusion. While my stomach may churn, my mind thinks, "maybe this is better." May Lent provide us the space and time to reflect on our basic values and how we live them out.

Psalm 66 reminds us of the many ways God has been with us in good times and bad, how God has blessed us and tested us. In this current time of political and social unrest, let us remember that God is always with us. And let us remember that God calls us to do our part to bring about a world in which the poor and rich, the stranger and neighbor are viewed as our sisters and brothers, blessed with dignity and diversity. God is with us. Are we with God?

St. Paul counsels the Romans, "Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience." What are you hoping/waiting for during this season of Lent? What are you doing during this time of hoping/waiting, for patient hoping/waiting requires us to do something. Lent invites us to self-examination and repentance; to prayer, fasting, and self-denial; to reading and meditating on God's holy Word. These activities are what Christians pin their hopes to.

In the Gospel assigned for today Jesus says, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst." For what do you hunger? For what do you thirst? Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer. Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, giving us the Beatitudes. Take a phrase or two from either or both of these, and use it for your daily prayer/reflection. Let us live as faith-filled followers of Jesus, courageous in our prayer, speech and actions.

Monday, March 16

Genesis 49:1-28; Psalm 89:1-17; 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1; Mark 7:24-37

This Gospel reading challenges me. Does Jesus consider me, a Gentile, to be a dog, only deserving of his attention after our more-worthy siblings have had their fill? I hope not. Compare this to the story in Genesis. Jacob is dispensing his blessing on his 12 sons. There is no mention of his daughters. Females, like me, didn't count for much in those days. Jacob's resources were not divided up evenly, even among the sons. Rather, he gave to them according to what he perceived to be their needs, abilities and merits. He had some unkind words for some of them, too. Jacob had his favorites, and wasn't afraid to say so.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians reminds us that we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Does this mean that those of us who aren't part of the "right crowd" are no longer considered second-class citizens of the Kingdom of God? There is some comfort in that thought. Jacob gave each his sons what was considered an appropriate inheritance and blessing. Jesus went beyond fulfilling the expectations of the local culture by showing mercy to someone who was both a Gentile and a woman.

Tuesday, March 17

Genesis 49:29-50:14; Psalm 97; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Mark 8:1-10

Reflection after reading Psalm 97

Verse 2: “Clouds and thick darkness are all around him,
righteousness and justice are foundations of the throne.”

I preface this reflection by saying I have a very vivid imagination. When I read a book, I can literally see the story in my mind. After studying all the readings for today, I kept coming back to Psalm 97, “clouds and thick darkness are all around...”

For over two years I haven't watched or read any political news. I do watch some YouTube, mainly some favorite dogs and cats. I became aware of the Buddhist Monks Peace March. In my mind I can vividly see the Buddhist monks, and their dog, peacefully walking from Texas to Washington D. C. As they prayerfully walked, I visualize they are surrounded by dark clouds of craziness, and ugliness, and the divisiveness in our country. The Psalm says, “clouds and thick darkness are all around,” and in my vivid imagination I see the monks walking through that darkness, and as they walk, the clouds part for them. In my imagination I don't see myself walking with the monks. I imagine myself standing by the side of the road as they walk by. I can feel their calmness. I sense their prayers for the peace of our country. Though I don't see them in person, I can feel their purposeful mission. They have blessed our country with their every step.

God of peace, thank you for the monks as they silently demonstrated LOVE for our torn country.

Wednesday, March 18

Genesis 50:15-26; Psalm 101; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Mark 8:11-26

Where do we see God's work in the world around us? In our lives? There are some easy, straightforward answers—in the beauty of nature, in random and deliberate acts of kindness, in love wherever it occurs. But today's readings suggest that it could be useful to open our eyes a little wider, to expand our vision of what God's work looks like.

When Jacob dies, Joseph's brothers fear that he will take the opportunity to exact vengeance for the evil they did to him by selling him into slavery. But Joseph insists, as he did when he first identified himself to them, that their evil deed was used by God to make it possible for him to preserve his family through the years of famine. God can even use evil deeds for good.

Paul reminds us that God's work takes an infinite number of forms, and can be done by anyone. Each of us has a God-given gift that can be used to do what God intended it for. It is our responsibility to identify our gifts and to use them appropriately. God made each of us capable of doing God's work.

And Jesus reminds us that seeing God's work is often a matter of looking more carefully at what is going on around us. The Pharisees asked for a sign, missing the point of all that Jesus had been doing. The disciples too once again miss the point, worrying about bread after Jesus had fed the multitude. The man who is healed of his blindness is a metaphor for the inability to see God's work when it is staring us in the face.

Of these three ways of seeing God's work in the world, discerning God's work coming out of evil is by far the hardest. One problem is that it often takes decades, as it did with Joseph and his brothers. In the meantime, we can get so bogged down in resentment of the evil or fretting about its consequences that we cannot move forward.

Again, Joseph can be a good model. Joseph's early days in captivity were far from pleasant, but Joseph had a gift from God that he used for the benefit of the people he was with in the situation in which he found himself. He found a way to do God's work, a way to be positive, in the worst possible circumstances. Can we do the same? Can we use the gifts God has given us to do whatever good we can in difficult times, always looking for signs that others are also doing God's work in this world in which we find ourselves?

Thursday, March 19

Exodus 1:6-22; Psalm 69; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Mark 8:27-9:1

As I write this, I read in the news that, in addition to executions of protestors and prisoners, most of whom are American citizens, ICE officers claim to be recording faces and license plates and maintaining a database, very likely cross-referenced with data supplied by DOGE. These Americans are being labeled as “domestic terrorists.” To be blunt, this is a Bonhoeffer moment for Christians, and Scripture supports the call to resist as one body of Christ-followers.

In Exodus, the Hebrews lived peacefully for over 400 years in Egypt, until one Pharaoh grew paranoid about their strength and number and began a campaign to enslave and oppress them. He finally ordered the midwives to kill all male children born to the Hebrews. The midwives knew their God would not approve of this, so they organized a campaign to refuse to obey Pharaoh’s orders. God blessed the midwives and the Hebrews continued to grow in number. While we know how Exodus ends, this reading ends with Pharaoh doubling down. Psalm 69 is a lengthy and deeply personal lament, expressing David’s anguish over being oppressed and hated, objectified and “othered” by his enemies. He cries out to God, proclaiming his innocence and trusts that God will end the torment of him and his people. In 1 Corinthians, Paul describes what it means to be “one body, many members.” He says, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer recognized that to be a Christ-follower is to oppose systems that dehumanize, oppress, objectify the other and foster violence. He believed the church must stand with the vulnerable, even when doing so puts us at odds with prevailing powers. He said, “Christianity stands or falls with its revolutionary protest against violence, arbitrariness, and pride of power.” How are Christians called to resist fascism? We must stand on the frontlines with the peacemakers, defend the oppressed, aid the vulnerable, the prisoner and the foreigner, speak truth to power, and demand justice, even when it is costly. As Paul alluded to, we must humbly rely on each other’s special skills, experience and wisdom. We cannot be silent.

In the name of the Holy Trinity, we pray for wisdom, strength, and courage to “make good trouble” trusting that God is with us in the fight for peace, justice and the dignity of all people.

Friday, March 20

Exodus 2:1-22; Psalm 102; 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:3; Mark 9:2-13

The Transfiguration in Mark 9:2–13 stands as the moment where the veil between heaven and earth thins, revealing Jesus’s otherworldly nature and his magical being to his friends, mere mortals. Scholars often note that this scene echoes Moses’s encounter on Mount Sinai, where God’s glory was similarly revealed in cloud and light (Exodus 24, 34). The presence of Moses and Elijah situates Jesus within the long narrative of God’s saving work, yet the voice from the cloud—“This is my beloved Son; listen to him”—makes clear that Jesus is not merely another prophet.

The disciples’ confusion is relatable. I wonder what it would have been like for one of us to be on that mountain. They don’t understand the vision, nor Jesus’s command to keep silent until after the resurrection. How would you respond to the experience and then the direction to keep quiet? Lent invites us to lean into the mystery rather than rush to explanation—to descend the mountain with Jesus and keep walking even when the light dims and the questions multiply.

The Transfiguration affirms that these mountaintop glimpses are not illusions; they are gifts meant to sustain you for the journey ahead.

Saturday, March 21

Exodus 2:23-3:15; Psalm 107:33-43; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Mark 9:14-29

After reading and reflecting on the above readings, the predominant thought that came to me was that God is Love! This is probably no surprise, especially after reading the passage from Corinthians. After all, this is a very popular reading at weddings and really spells out what love is all about.

But, if we look beyond the “Hallmark moment” of love, we quickly come to the reality of love. It can be real work! How do you love someone who treats you badly or offends you in some way? Granted, it is not easy. When I am faced with this challenge, I try to remember that we are all children of God and commanded by God to “Love one another.”

Some people are easier to love than others. I suppose that’s the challenge of this Lenten season. We all have friends and neighbors that are easier to gravitate to. Perhaps it would be a step in the right direction to approach someone outside our comfort zone. Just to engage them and say “Hello” is the first step in sharing God’s love.

5th Sunday in Lent, March 22

Exodus 3:16-4:12; Psalm 118; Romans 12:1-21; John 8:46-59

“I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. I declare that I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt... go to the king of Egypt and say to him, ‘The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; let us now go a three days’ journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.’ I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go except by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go.”

This isn’t a political endorsement of anyone; it is a theological comment on US reflecting on the scripture above. Remember the state of the nation in early 2021? COVID was a plague on the earth. The capital was attacked. It’s hard not to think about that time, feel how much worse things are now, read this passage, and not be worried. The oppression that so many are facing, the lack of consequences for those perpetrating it, and the outright avarice are astonishing. Breathtaking really. Pharaoh is truly damnation for us all. We can hope for freedom though.

But we cannot look at Egypt without seeing the Egyptians. Many were, by omission or commission, guilty of the sins of Pharaoh too. We, the people, are willing to trade the work of freedom and justice for all for a low effort, a false sense of security in tyranny. That’s how fascism works. Many are finding out that their assent to the current state of affairs, by omission or commission during early November of 2024, was not safe. Far more suffer though.

And how will God move a hand mightily against Pharaoh and Egypt this time? It took ten plagues the first time. We chose this one, twice.

We can hope for freedom, because in Christ we are always free. We have passed through the waters of baptism into his death and new life. The ways we participate in God’s reign make it shine in Eucharist, thanksgiving, together. Loving our neighbors regardless of the human divisions is at the root of seeing Christ Jesus in everyone. But we must speak the truth of Christ crucified for and to those same neighbors as well as Pharaoh, for all to see it. When it’s heard, we can all be free.

Monday, March 23

Exodus 4:10-31; Psalm 31; 1 Corinthians 14:1-19; Mark 9:30-41

A Lenten Reflection: "Please Send Someone Else"

Exodus 4:13: "But Moses said, 'Pardon your servant, Lord. Please send someone else.'"

During Lent, we're invited into the wilderness—that uncomfortable space between our ordinary lives and the calling God places before us. Like Moses at the burning bush, we find ourselves confronted with invitations that feel beyond our ability. Underneath every excuse lies a deeply human confession: I don't think I can do this.

Perhaps it's a call to forgive someone who has wounded us deeply. Maybe it's prompting to speak truth when silence is safer, or to serve where we feel unqualified. Whatever form it takes, we recognize Moses's anxiety as our own.

Yet God persistently chooses the unlikely: stammering Moses, doubting Thomas, impetuous Peter, persecuting Paul. The biblical narrative is crowded with reluctant prophets and inadequate heroes, each one initially certain that God has made a terrible mistake.

Here's the pattern we miss: God's call is rarely about our adequacy. God meets Moses's objections not by dismissing them, but by promising presence. "I will be with you." That promise echoes throughout Scripture and reaches its fullness in Christ—Emmanuel, God with us.

Moses did finally go. He went with his weaknesses intact, his eloquence still lacking, his fears still whispering. But he went with something more powerful than confidence: he went with God's presence. And that made all the difference.

Perhaps that's the true Lenten invitation—not to become someone else, but to bring our actual selves, flaws and all, to the God who says: "I know exactly who you are, and I'm still asking. Will you go?"

May our prayer this Lent be not only "Lord, have mercy," but also, slowly and trustingly, "Lord, here I am."

Tuesday, March 24

Exodus 5:1-6:1; Psalm 121; 1 Corinthians 14:20-33a, 39-40; Mark 9:42-50

In contemplating these readings (with the help of Gemini), I find a common thread of “community building.” In this case, it is about building the Christian community in the early church.

The Christian community is not just “any” community. It was radically different at the time because it shifted the focus from “it’s all about me” (or us) to “it’s all about you” (or others). In the time of Christ, Roman culture was about “honor” (self-promotion and your standing in society), superiority (the Greek word for humility was *tapeinos*, which had a negative connotation and was considered a virtue only among slaves), and the preponderance of a *quid pro quo* culture that had no concept of giving something for nothing in return. It really was “all about me,” and anything else was considered bad, or at least socially repugnant behavior.

Since this was such a radical shift in perspective, Christ used radical metaphors to get the point across. He was trying to build a community that was compassionate, loving, giving, outward focused, and humble, turning the contemporary meaning of humility on its head. No self-promotion. No superiority. Changing humility from something pathetic to something divine. He was telling his listeners that joining this community meant a lot of hard, personal work to overcome these societal obstacles, and that required intense focus, discipline, and sacrifice. Paul echoes this with his call to discipline in prescribing these standards of behavior for the church.

The sacrifice that his followers were being asked to make was massive: to give up their social identity in what was their contemporary society and to embrace a new way of thinking and behaving that made them “fools” in the eyes of their secular peers.

In today’s world, humility is considered a virtue and consideration of others is not only socially accepted but encouraged. But the temptation to act selfishly is still there and we all succumb to it. Yet, if we are called to be disciples, then we must remain disciplined: to ourselves, to each other, to our baptismal covenant, and to our church community. It is there where we get our strength to stay on track by gathering together.

See you on Sunday!

Wednesday, March 25

Exodus 7:8-24; Psalm 119:145-176; 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6; Mark 10:1-16

Marshall McLuhan's famous line "the medium is the message," reminding us how important it is to "consider the source" when evaluating information, could be tweaked to read "the messenger is the message" as we look at today's readings. In them, we have three messages from three messengers, each in contention with a competing message from a competing messenger.

Moses is in contention with the magicians of Egypt, but one demonstration after another of God's power is not convincing Pharaoh to let the people go. The magicians answer Moses plague for plague, wonder for wonder, and neither has a clear advantage.

Paul far more subtle, but in the background of his loving words to the congregation at Corinth we can read his frustration with people who seem to ask him again for credentials, who easily follow the most recent preacher, who forget Paul's message and discount his ministry.

Jesus is, as he often is, in contention with the religious authorities in Jerusalem, debating points of law and demonstrating his different view of God's relationship with God's people by paying attention to the most vulnerable and discounted members of society, women and children.

All three are "fringe" figures, lone voices, not part of the power structure. If any of them were trying to be "influencers" in today's popularity-focused world, it's highly doubtful that he would go viral. And yet each of the three still has enormous influence in our world, millennia later. Why?

Perhaps, in the long run, the answer is credibility. If the messenger is the message, the person is at least as important as the words. The person must have credibility and integrity. The source must be considered. Each of these messengers was not looking for fame, not trying to gain power or elevate himself, but instead spoke on behalf of those who needed an advocate—Moses for the enslaved Hebrew people, Paul for the new Christians suffering persecution, Jesus for the weakest members of society.

Do we need such a messenger today? If so, where do we find one? Perhaps the best place to look is in the mirror. Might God be calling each of us to speak up for today's vulnerable people? To be a messenger, a message?

Thursday, March 26

Exodus 7:25-8:19; Psalm 131; 2 Corinthians 3:7-18; Mark 10:17-31

Every year, Lent invites us to slow down and take a closer look at our lives. It asks us to notice what we are holding onto and whether those things are drawing us closer to God or quietly getting in the way. In today's Gospel, the story of the rich man reminds us that following Jesus is not easy, even when our intentions are good.

The rich man approaches Jesus sincerely. He wants to live faithfully and asks the right questions. But when Jesus looks at him with love and invites him to let go of his wealth, he cannot do it. Not because wealth itself is the problem, but because it has taken on too much power in his life.

His possessions are more than things. They shape his sense of security, his identity, and his comfort. They weigh him down. They occupy the space where trust in God is meant to live. In the end, they are the very thing that keeps him from following.

Jesus's words are not only about money. They are about whatever we cling to that keeps us from being fully free. Whatever we rely on instead of God, whatever makes it harder to follow with open hands and an open heart, Jesus invites us to release.

Jesus also offers a promise. He assures us that letting go leads to life and abundance, but that promise only becomes real after we take the risk. Between the invitation and the blessing is a leap of faith, and that leap is hard. It is no surprise the rich man walks away grieving.

Lent places us in that same moment. Jesus looks at us with love and asks whether we are willing to trust that what he offers is greater than what we are afraid to release.

Friday, March 27

Exodus 9:13-35; Psalm 22; 2 Corinthians 4:1-12; Mark 10:32-45

Today Moses is sent as a messenger of the Lord to Pharaoh: “Let my people go, that they may serve me.” He informs Pharaoh of the consequences of failing to heed an all-powerful God. Those who fear the Lord safeguard their belongings against disaster, while those who do not believe leave servants and cattle in the fields to face their demise. After delivering the message, Moses stretches out his arm and the Lord brings the promised rain, hail and fire upon the land of Egypt, while sparing his chosen people of Goshen. Pharaoh sees the destruction and implores Moses to end the disaster. Moses relents and raises his hands to the Lord to end the onslaught—though Pharaoh has not had a lasting change of heart.

In Psalm 22, David is tormented for his trust in the Lord. He is mocked by his contemporaries, described as strong bulls, roaring lions and dogs who persecute him. His condition foreshadows the crucifixion, such as the casting of lots for his clothes. David does not succumb to the crowd and declares his praise for the Lord to all of the people so that they may know his mercy and worship before him.

Those who deliver the word of God through the ministry are addressed in Corinthians as those who strive for goodness and preach for Jesus’s sake. They give all glory to God and accept none for themselves, and while they may suffer, do not let suffering defeat them. Paul also describes our human soul as being in weak earthen vessels, but the power comes from God. While these vessels may be tested in many ways, they do not break and they persevere.

Finally, today in Mark, Jesus and the disciples converse on the way to Jerusalem, where he describes future events, including his own death. James and John ask to share in his glory. Jesus tells them it is not his to give, but that they all would share in their common baptism. The others are displeased with James and John, but Jesus explains that they are not born to power or to exercise power but to become the servant to all—which is the greatest of callings.

Saturday, March 28

Exodus 10:21-11:8; Psalm 137:1-9; 2 Corinthians 4:13-18; Mark 10:46-52

In the pitted battle between the Empire (Egypt), and the Rebel Alliance (the enslaved Israelites), the pain and suffering were real. There is “a darkness over the land of Egypt, *a darkness that can be felt*.” For three thousand years people caught in their own clashes between might and right have felt that darkness deep down in their soul, as we do now. And in every iteration, the darkness is a womb of rebirth—eventually. Later, as a final terrible plague descended on the Empire, a great sorting occurred. This may make some people uncomfortable, but God picked a side—he chose to protect the powerless at the expense of the powerful. So should we.

Six centuries later, when the Babylonians sacked Jerusalem, slaughtering thousands and taking 7,000 hostages to Babylon for seventy years, it seemed as though once again a power-mad king had shattered a peaceable nation. The 137th Psalm chronicles the moral indignation and righteous grief of the captives. Who among us cannot empathize with the rage-fantasy of the poet in these passages? Purging rage through art is a positive act—actually smashing infants against rocks is a horrific war crime under any circumstance. Still, poets gonna poem and singers gonna sing.

“So...do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.” So wrote Paul to the Corinthians four centuries after the Babylonian Exile, this time under the boot heel of yet another oppressor (and Paul’s former employer), the Roman Empire. Again and again the Bible calls us to the audacity of hope, no matter how deep the darkness, or how wide the gulf between the powerful and the powerless. Our strength lies not in wealth or weapons, but in the wealth of our inner light and the weapon of our tenacious loving-kindness. Stay true to the path, Paul says, and let grace do the rest.

Finally, in Mark 10, we are illumined with another tale of Christ’s healing power. As Jesus says in John 14:10, *My healing power does not come from me, but from “the Father in me who does his works.”* So, too, it is not Christ who heals the blind man, but the faith of the man himself. There’s a grace that wells up from within if we let it, enough to open all of our eyes.

Palm Sunday, March 29

Zechariah 9:9-12; Psalms 24, 29; 1 Timothy 6:12-16; Luke 19:41-48

Jesus deliberately and with purpose is on his way to Jerusalem to confront the powers that be, to complete his mission. On the way, looking at the city from a short distance, he weeps over the city and says: “If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!” He predicts the destruction of the city, which indeed took place in 70 CE.

Jesus approaches the city riding on a donkey, fulfilling the words of the prophet Zechariah: “Lo your king comes to you, triumphant and victorious is he, humble, riding on a donkey...” It was the tradition of Hebrew prophets to make dramatic statements to capture the attention of their audiences.

The people of Jerusalem were looking for a military leader, riding on a horse, who would overcome their Roman oppressors. But Jesus comes not with military authority but with the authority of the love of God. In the strength of *this* authority, he dares to make his entrance to Jerusalem—even though the powers that be seek to kill him.

Even more daringly, Jesus then enters the Temple. He begins to drive out those who were selling things there saying: “My house shall be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.”

There is a familiar and true story: An African bishop was meeting with his clergy. Six paramilitary young men burst into the room. The leader says: “I am here to kill you.” The bishop responds: “May I pray before you do that?” The leader agrees. Here is what the bishop prays: **“Dear Lord, forgive these men for what they are about to do. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you. And since you have given me my life, I now give it back to you.”** There is a deep silence in the room. The leader puts down his gun and responds: **“I want what you have.”** Jesus puts his life on the line for the people of Jerusalem. And the bishop for these young men.

Monday, March 30

Lamentations 1:1-2, 6-12; Psalm 51:1-20; 2 Corinthians 1:1-7; Mark 11:12-25

Paul lived in times that tested humankind's souls, akin to today. Politically, morally, and ethically, we face oppression from those who see themselves above the law. The infant Christianity struggled to prove its worth, and now, Christianity is often seen as untrustworthy and hypocritical. Followers often see the poor as not favored by God, while the wealthy are. Many believe sickness or disability is punishment for sin. Along with concerns like food, housing, medical issues, birth, and death, these make for challenging times.

It is evident that Paul is focused on the word "console"; in one form or another, he uses it ten times in five verses in today's epistle. Paul is hurting, and so are we. And who do we turn to? To God!

N.T. Wright writes that to "console" is to call for someone to come near and speak of courage, hope, and new insights to face the next moment, day, or life. I think Paul is talking about comforting grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

We must trust that "God with us" is true. Jesus endured suffering and death for us, rose again, and ushered in a new creation. Through Jesus, God gives hope and assures His presence. Jesus shows mercy and teaches us to be merciful and comforting, empowering us to be lights in darkness. Like Paul, we face challenges but benefit from God's unwavering "yes" in Christ.

Penpark is a hymn I have sung during Lent for most of my adult life. It has comforted me time and again. If you are not familiar with it, it is, in itself, a wonderful devotional for this sacred time of preparation.

"Jesus, I live to Thee, the loveliest and the best; My life in Thee, Thy life in me, in Thy blest love I rest. Jesus, I die to Thee, whenever death shall come; To die in Thee is life to me, In my eternal home. Whether to live or die, I know not which is best; To live in Thee is bliss to me, To die is endless rest. Living or dying, Lord, I ask but to be Thine; My life in Thee, Thy life in me, makes heaven forever mine!"

Tuesday, March 31

Lamentations 1:17-22; Psalm 6; 2 Corinthians 1:8-22; Mark 11:27-33

“Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him and said, ‘By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?’ Jesus said to them, ‘I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me.’ They argued with one another, ‘What should we say? If we say, “From heaven,” he will say, “Why then did you not believe him?” But shall we say, “Of human origin?”’—they were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet. So they answered Jesus, ‘We do not know.’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.’”

Whatever our answer to Jesus’s question is, I hope we recognize the power of our baptism. It’s not an exclusive thing, it’s available to anyone. It changes the nature of how we look at the world. Perhaps slowly, perhaps imperceptibly, it opens us to seeing the world in a sacramental way.

The sacraments are fundamentally about helping us see common things as holy. The water of baptism is not made holy because of baptism, it is holy because God blessed it in Creation. The wine and bread we use in Eucharist (thanksgiving) is not holy because of the liturgy, the liturgy helps us focus our prayers and intentions on seeing the elements for what they are: gifts of God to us that we take in with sacred remembrance. Same for the oil of anointing, confirmation, marriage, ordination, and reconciliation (confession). The oil, and we ourselves, are already blessed in God’s sight; it’s just about seeing it that way anew.

So, if our answer is that Jesus’s power comes from heaven, we are seeing the source. If our answer is that it is from human origin, then we are simply acknowledging the manifest sacredness of our earth and our bodies as God’s blessed instruments. Perhaps if we are bolder than those who questioned Jesus in this pericope, naming what we feel is Jesus’s source of authority, we can find it in ourselves and the world around us. Amen.

Wednesday, April 1

Lamentations 2:1-9,14-17; Psalm 55; 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11; Mark 12:1-11

Our readings today do not provide the relief I so desperately seek from current events: the scriptures, like the news, are full of desolation, despair, anger, betrayal, distress, grief, selfishness, and murder. The authors lament, cry, call for reciprocity and justice. God seems far away.

So familiar.

Those I currently perceive as enemies may not yet be at *my* door, but they are drawing closer and closer, threatening those I love and hold dear, or those with whom I empathize. At these times it is very hard to hold on to faith, hope, and trust. This is more a time of lamentation, of grief, of feeling hopeless and overwhelmed.

But...

The thing about lamentations and grief, particularly when shared, is that they can lead to individuals and communities coming together to make *good* things happen in shared hope and ardent faith. In the midst of our communal distress and anger, we feel the urge to *do* something; so we build and stock food pantries, provide free legal assistance, form neighborhood buddy-systems to walk innocent—yet at-risk—children to and from school.

In short, the clear and present evil around us can serve to nudge us towards becoming and showing our better selves, God-within-us; to grow, hopefully, into the deserving tenants of this fragile vineyard, Earth.

Maundy Thursday, April 2

Lamentations 2:10-18; Psalm 102; 1 Corinthians 10:14-17, 11:27-32; Mark 14:12-25

“Where do you want us to go and make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” the disciples asked Jesus. Isn’t this the question we ask God often about our own lives: logistics, plans, and next steps? Of course, Jesus answers them, calmly, already knowing what is to come. This will be a preparation not only for a sacred meal, but also to prepare themselves for a mystery they do not yet understand.

The room is ready, the table set; the ancient words spoken are familiar and comforting, yet this particular Passover holds the unexpected. “One of you will betray me,” Jesus says. The table now becomes a place of sorrow in addition to the fellowship. *Is it me?* Not, *is it him*, or *who is it?* but, *is it me?* In this question lies the beginnings of repentance; the recognition that betrayal is something the human heart, even our very own heart, is capable of, even in the Presence of Love.

Knowing the impending betrayal is to come, Jesus does not stop the meal. Instead, he breaks bread with his friends. He blesses the bread and offers it as his own body. He blesses the wine and offers it as his own blood. He gives his body and blood to *all of them*, even the one who will betray him; even the one unworthy of such a gift.

To this same table we are invited not as the worthy, but as the hungry. We come with questions, fears, and faith at different levels. Even as we fail, we ask Christ’s love and blessing. Jesus says to us, “take, eat, this is my body given for you.” He does not deny our brokenness, but transforms it.

We will rise from this table, not of the church, but of Jesus, in anticipation of Gethsemane and prayer, in anticipation of the Cross of death, but we will not endure this anticipation alone. We move towards the resurrection having received a love that does not retreat, a covenant that will not and cannot be broken, and a promise that even betrayal cannot undo. We go with Jesus, beyond fear, drinking the Cup of Blessing in the Kingdom of God.

Good Friday, April 3

Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-33; Psalm 22; 1 Peter 1:10-20; John 13:36-38

According to the author of Lamentations, God alone is responsible for his abject misery, citing in great detail a list of grievances against God's immeasurable cruelty. And yet, a few verses later, the tables turn. Now God is proclaimed as the source of steadfast love and mercies without end. So which is it? Both. A common theme throughout the Bible, and in any monotheistic religion where all of the bewildering facets of existence must be traced to a single First Cause, this paradoxical life just won't fit into neat little boxes. Instead, when troubled, we should "sit alone in silence...and put one's mouth to the dust...for the Lord will not reject forever." Sitting down, shutting up, and waiting sounds like good spiritual advice most days.

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" sounds familiar because that's what Jesus cried out as he hung dying on the cross in both Matthew's and Luke's account. And here it is in its original iteration in the 22nd Psalm, where, as in Lamentations, the author (traditionally thought to be David), expressed his grief in the face of God's apparent absence and silence. Especially for anyone who accepts a leadership position—Cathedral Dean, Department Chair, Police Chief, parent, or President—it can be a lonely place. King David's isolation from authentic, non-transactional human community costs him dearly. Everyone either wants something from him, or resents him, or both. As David models for us, returning again and again to gratitude, humility, and the consciousness of service saves every would-be leader from unnecessary torment.

The unknown author of 1 Peter—possibly the disciple Peter, probably not—shares his conviction that "the spirit of Christ within" is the wellspring that will carry us through the chaos ahead. "Prepare yourselves for action," he writes, and cleave to virtue. That's something we *do* have power over—our own choices and actions.

In John's telling, Peter's fierce advocacy for his beloved teacher Jesus faded like morning dew when his own life was in danger—a portrait of bluster vs. perseverance: the kind of quiet, steadfast courage that's actually going to get us through these hard times. In other words, less shouting and more silence, less self-righteousness and more discernment born from stillness.

Holy Saturday, April 4

Lamentations 3:37-58; Psalm 88; Hebrews 4:1-16

“The three sad days are quickly sped...”

This line from one of my favorite Easter hymns has become more and more true over the years. As we have adjusted our liturgies to suit the realities of our lifestyles, we have also, possibly inadvertently, accommodated the realities of our sensibilities.

Is anyone but me old enough to remember when Good Friday was a holiday, on the assumption that everyone would want to be in church at noon that day? That, of course, was in the “bad (or dull) old days” before the Easter Vigil was rediscovered and became the liturgical norm. Our current pattern of offering a Good Friday service in the evening, when more people are free to attend, and celebrating the Easter Vigil the following evening compresses the “three sad days” to a scant 24 hours—most of which are likely used by most of us to begin the preparations for our Easter feasts and celebrations.

What may be lost in this new pattern is the opportunity, the encouragement, to grieve liturgically. Our liturgies offer us many ways to “practice” a theological response to, and appreciation of, both the major and the more mundane events of life. Advent is about preparation and waiting, Christmas about new possibilities. Lent encourages us to reflect on how we might change our habits for the better. Easter reminds us that death is not the end.

Holy Saturday is a day of grief. A day of loss. The day before we realize that death is not the end. The day when the bottom has dropped out of everything and our hearts are sick and we are emotionally paralyzed. These are not emotions we enjoy. This is not an experience we ordinarily welcome with open arms. No wonder we are happy enough to compress this time.

But grief is an experience we can’t escape. It will come to each of us at some point, and more and more often as we live longer. And as with almost every aspect of life, practice helps. Experience helps. Living through it and surviving it is an assurance that it can be lived through and survived again when it comes again—as it surely will. So perhaps using at least a little of today to experience emptiness, to reflect on what Jesus’s loved ones must have felt on that day two millennia ago, would be a useful exercise to make our Easter richer—and prepare us for what might be coming our way.

Easter Day, April 5

Psalm 148; Exodus 12:1-14; John 1:1-18

FORTY DAYS AND A GRAND SLAM

Spiritual spring training has me focused
Ready for exercises, poised for future victory.
I've got my purple uniform of contemplation,
My glove is aching to catch the fast (ball).
I'm ready to run the Stations, but am I off base?
I want to be on a winning team. I want to follow Jesus.
If I train hard enough, I know I can make the cut.
No pain, no gain. I think I can; I think I can.
Strike one!
It's the love of the game that counts,
The camaraderie, the teamwork.
The Angels will bear me up on their wings,
Lest I strike . . .out.
It's root, root, root for the home team.
Strike two!
Who am I fooling? I hate baseball!
I want to dance. This training is not for me.
It's the stage I want, not the field.
Curve ball, spit ball.
Strike three! You're out!
The lights are out; the field is empty.
The stadium is dead, dead, dead.
The players are on strike. The heroes have fallen.
The Giants are Dodgers; the Padres Pirates, so what's the use?
Play ball!
What's that? The crack of the bat, the pas de trois?
What do you mean the players are safe, safe, safe?
Dare I hope against hope?
Bottom of the ninth; bases loaded.
What's the score?
ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!

Contributors

40 DAYS



LENT

- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Feb 18: | Rev. Cn. Allisyn Thomas | March 21: | John Will |
| Feb 19: | Calvin Johnson | March 22: | Rev. Cn. Richard Hogue |
| Feb 20: | Carolyn Lief | March 23: | Walker Shaw |
| Feb 21: | Terry Kelly | March 24: | Frank Borik |
| Feb 22: | Andrew Welch | March 25: | Rev. Vesta Kowalski |
| Feb 23: | Blair Shamel | March 26: | Angel Ibarra |
| Feb 24: | Stephanie Pierce | March 27: | Jeff Erwin |
| Feb 25: | Cherie Dean | March 28: | Peter Bolland |
| Feb 26: | Robert Heylmun | March 29: | Rev. Cn. Richard Lief |
| Feb 27: | Cindy Schuricht | March 30: | Rev. Michael Kilpatrick |
| Feb 28: | Phil Petrie | March 31: | Rev. Cn. Richard Hogue |
| March 1: | Donna Perdue | April 1: | Lisa Churchill |
| March 2: | Diane Lopez-Hughes | April 2: | Don Mitchell |
| March 3: | Mary Bowman | April 3: | Peter Bolland |
| March 4: | Andrew Green | April 4: | Rev. Vesta Kowalski |
| March 5: | Mark Lester | April 5: | Rev. Robert Bryant |
| March 6: | Ellen Hargus | | |
| March 7: | Peter Bolland | Edited by: | Donna Perdue, Calvin Johnson, Rev. Vesta Kowalski, Rev. Cn. Richard Hogue |
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| March 14: | Jane Batarseh | | |
| March 15: | Rev. Thomas Wilson | | |
| March 16: | Kimberly Fernandez | | |
| March 17: | Joanna Airhart | | |
| March 18: | Rev. Vesta Kowalski | | |
| March 19: | John Clemens | | |
| March 20: | Kathleen Burgess | | |



STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Fridays, Feb. 20 – March 27, 6 pm, in the Cathedral

Each Friday during Lent join us in the Cathedral for Stations of the Cross. Stations of the Cross is a contemplative spiritual practice in which participants walk around the Cathedral stopping at 14 sculptures which depict Jesus' last days on earth.



Palm Sunday, March 29

8 am – Liturgy of the Palms, Passion, and Eucharist in the Cathedral.

9:45 am – Procession, Liturgy of the Palms, Passion, and Eucharist in the Cathedral or worship online.

5 pm – Choral meditation on the Passion in the Cathedral or worship online.



Holy Wednesday, April 1

7 pm – Choral Tenebrae in the Cathedral or worship online.



Maundy Thursday, April 2

7 pm – Liturgy of the Day and Eucharist in the Cathedral or worship online.

8:30 pm – Vigil in the Chapel of the Holy Family

St Paul's Cathedral – 40 Days of Lent 2024 – February 18 – April 5



Good Friday, April 3

12 pm – Choral Music and Meditations on the Passion in the Cathedral or worship online.

7 pm – Good Friday liturgy.



Holy Saturday, April 4

9 am – Holy Saturday liturgy in the Chapel of the Holy Family.

7:30 pm – Great Vigil of Easter, Bishop Susan will preside and preach in the Cathedral or worship online.



SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION, EASTER DAY

Sunday, April 5

8 am – Holy Eucharist in the Cathedral with the Dean preaching.

10:30 am – Festival Eucharist with the Dean preaching in the Cathedral or worship online.

Cathedral Closed, Monday and Tuesday,

St Paul's Cathedral – 40 Days of Lent 2024 – February 18 – April 5