

2-2015

Return to Me: Lenten Reflections from Holy Cross (2015)

Office of Mission, College of the Holy Cross

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A close-up photograph of a dark wooden door. The door features a grid pattern of raised panels. Several small, square metal studs are visible, some of which are slightly worn or chipped. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows, emphasizing the texture of the wood and the metallic sheen of the studs.

RETURN TO ME
Lenten Reflections
from Holy Cross | 2015

*Even now,
says the LORD,
return to me
with your whole
heart, with
fasting, with
weeping, and
with mourning;*

Joel 2:12

SO BEGINS THE LENTEN SEASON. In Catholic Ash Wednesday services around the globe, the prophet Joel offers a striking challenge and invitation: to return the love with which we were first loved. Each year during the holy season of Lent we are reminded of the tension first laid out on Ash Wednesday: that our lives are lived between challenge and invitation and this is where we might find endless stores of grace, if we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

It is our hope that this resource, *Return to Me: Lenten Reflections from Holy Cross, 2015*, will aid you as you pray through Lent, to help you see more deeply and to hear more clearly the experience of your own life with God.

Within these pages you'll hear the unique voices of many people from the Holy Cross community: faculty, staff, students, alumni, administrators, members of the Board of Trustees, benefactors of the College and Jesuits. Each contributor reflects on the readings prescribed for the Mass of the day and while we hope that their own prayers help you to pray, we hope, too, that the reflections contained herein might also help you to return in a way to the College where faith is nourished and character is formed.

Preparing this Lenten reflection booklet and its accompanying digital format involves many members of our community, from the writers, to editors and graphic designers and website administrators. To each of these people — too many to name here — we offer our profound thanks.

To subscribe to daily emailed reflections from *Return To Me* throughout Lent, please visit our website:

www.holycross.edu/returntome

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

Rev. Paul Harman, S.J.

Vice President for Mission

Mr. Keith Maczkiewicz, S.J.

Assistant Chaplain

Ms. Mary Cunningham '17

Return to Me intern





FEBRUARY 18 | ASH WEDNESDAY

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

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

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

Ann McElaney-Johnson '79

Member, Board of Trustees

FEBRUARY 19 | THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

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

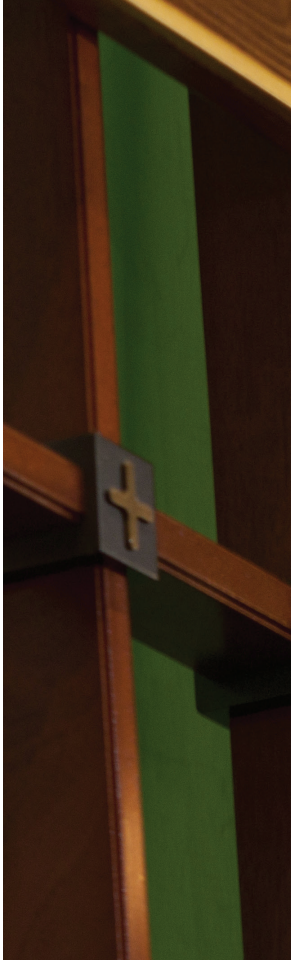
We are faced with countless choices each day. Some are simple and pass in and out of our mind quickly with very little thought (*should I wear the blue shirt or the white one?*). Every so often, we are faced with transformative choices — those that can alter our life's path in one direction or another (*should I take that job opportunity across the country or stay where I am?*). These transformative choices often take significant time and energy to think through. We want to get them right!

Today's readings highlight the importance of choosing wisely. In Deuteronomy, Moses offers a clear choice to the Israelites: follow God's commandments and enter the Promised Land, or disregard those commandments and perish. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus unpacks the meaning of that choice, and then takes it a step further. In order to truly follow Christ, one must “take up his cross daily” and embrace the fullness of God's love and compassion. Following laws and the commandments is important, but so is observing the meaning behind those statutes: caring for our neighbors (especially those at the margins of society), fighting against injustice, and working for peace. Jesus admits that choosing this path is not easy — we may “suffer greatly and be rejected” just as he was. Our reward, however, is a place in God's kingdom, our own ‘Promised Land.’

Choices we make have consequences for ourselves and our neighbors. How might I make better choices?

Tom Cadigan '02

Alumni Relations





FEBRUARY 20 | FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Isa 58:1-9a; Ps 51; Matt 9:14-15

While reflecting on the today's reading from Isaiah, I wondered, "How does this scripture relate to me?" I find I often read scripture as a way to solve my own problems, though I don't intend to. While God certainly wants me to seek encouragement in my own spiritual life, I know that I can become too caught up in my circumstances, and I simply forget to consider the situation of others.

But I was caught short by the Lord's words in the first passage: "This, rather, is the fasting that I wish. ... Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed."

Wounds: mine and theirs. When I fast this Lent, I'll think of people like Dawn, a woman I met in Biloxi, Mississippi, who had lost her home during Hurricane Katrina. Or I'll remember those closer to home like that friend struggling with worries or my twin who might be stressed with school work. Lent is more about others than it is about me and I think taking time to attend to these people's needs is the kind of fasting that God must be talking about. Although I often forget, I know that when I give myself to others I feel closer to God, and I find greater comfort and peace within my own woundedness.

Cassie Brouillard '18

FEBRUARY 21 | SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

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

In the first reading from Isaiah, God tells the people of the Old Testament and us that, "If you hold back your foot on the Sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath delight, and the Lord's holy day honorable; if you honor it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice — then you shall delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob, your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken."

What a promise we received from our loving Father, who gave his adopted children 10 laws to protect their relationship to Him: three for God and seven for neighbors. Among these, there is the third commandment: "Remember the Sabbath, to keep it holy..."

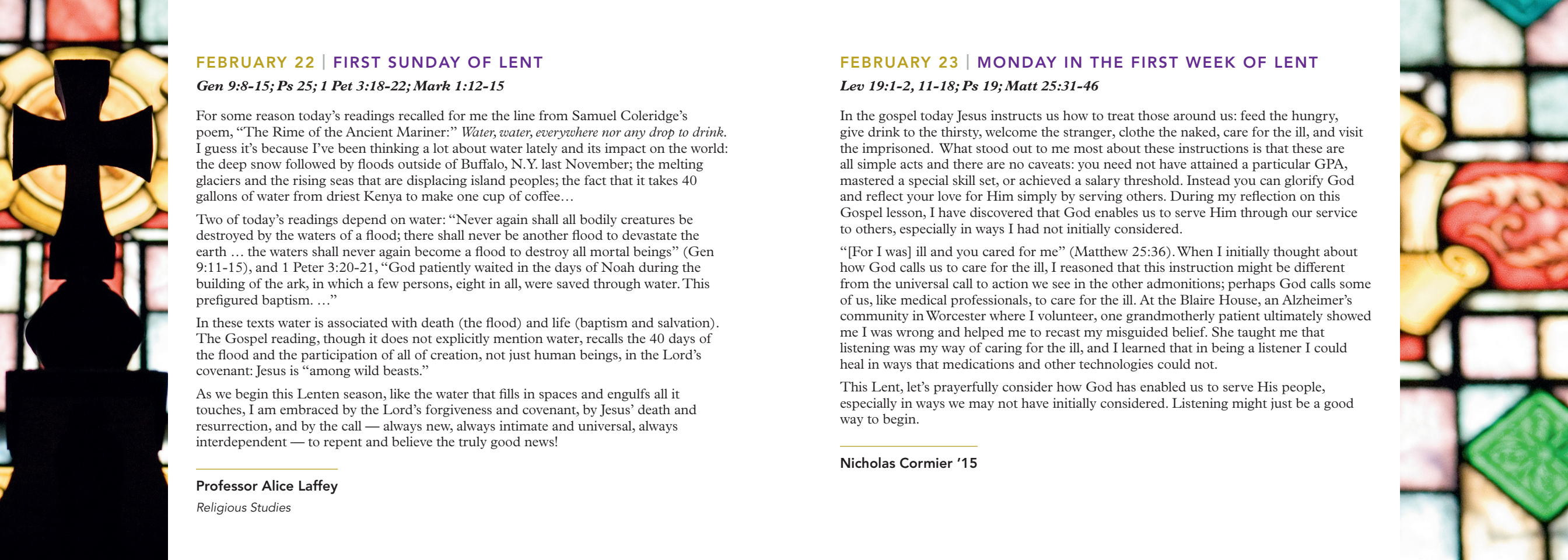
Still, many will argue that Sunday is the only "free" day they have. "I have errands to do and need to take some time for recreation," they'll say. Yes, of course, but there are 168 hours in a week. Surely there's time in there to talk with Him, to listen to His saving Word.

Today, perhaps we might reflect with Isaiah and embrace the invitation to rest in the Lord. Take back Sunday, and let God "nourish you."

Rev. Charles Dunn, S.J.

Vice-President Emeritus





FEBRUARY 22 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

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

For some reason today's readings recalled for me the line from Samuel Coleridge's poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner:" *Water, water, everywhere nor any drop to drink*. I guess it's because I've been thinking a lot about water lately and its impact on the world: the deep snow followed by floods outside of Buffalo, N.Y. last November; the melting glaciers and the rising seas that are displacing island peoples; the fact that it takes 40 gallons of water from driest Kenya to make one cup of coffee...

Two of today's readings depend on water: "Never again shall all bodily creatures be destroyed by the waters of a flood; there shall never be another flood to devastate the earth ... the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings" (Gen 9:11-15), and 1 Peter 3:20-21, "God patiently waited in the days of Noah during the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were saved through water. This prefigured baptism. ..."

In these texts water is associated with death (the flood) and life (baptism and salvation). The Gospel reading, though it does not explicitly mention water, recalls the 40 days of the flood and the participation of all of creation, not just human beings, in the Lord's covenant: Jesus is "among wild beasts."

As we begin this Lenten season, like the water that fills in spaces and engulfs all it touches, I am embraced by the Lord's forgiveness and covenant, by Jesus' death and resurrection, and by the call — always new, always intimate and universal, always interdependent — to repent and believe the truly good news!

Professor Alice Laffey

Religious Studies

FEBRUARY 23 | MONDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

In the gospel today Jesus instructs us how to treat those around us: feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, care for the ill, and visit the imprisoned. What stood out to me most about these instructions is that these are all simple acts and there are no caveats: you need not have attained a particular GPA, mastered a special skill set, or achieved a salary threshold. Instead you can glorify God and reflect your love for Him simply by serving others. During my reflection on this Gospel lesson, I have discovered that God enables us to serve Him through our service to others, especially in ways I had not initially considered.

"[For I was] ill and you cared for me" (Matthew 25:36). When I initially thought about how God calls us to care for the ill, I reasoned that this instruction might be different from the universal call to action we see in the other admonitions; perhaps God calls some of us, like medical professionals, to care for the ill. At the Blaire House, an Alzheimer's community in Worcester where I volunteer, one grandmotherly patient ultimately showed me I was wrong and helped me to recast my misguided belief. She taught me that listening was my way of caring for the ill, and I learned that in being a listener I could heal in ways that medications and other technologies could not.

This Lent, let's prayerfully consider how God has enabled us to serve His people, especially in ways we may not have initially considered. Listening might just be a good way to begin.

Nicholas Cormier '15



FEBRUARY 24 | TUESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

“Take 30 minutes to yourselves,” they told us, the incoming class of international Jesuit volunteers. “And come back with your own version of the Lord’s Prayer.”

I hesitated. *Rewrite the Our Father?* Weren’t those supposed to be the words Jesus himself had taught us? I really doubted our Savior’s need for my editorial assistance.

The closer I looked, however, the more I realized that while the prayer itself didn’t need work, my engagement with it desperately did. I discovered how little time I’d actually spent with the prayer; I’d always just said it. So I set about changing that, line-by-line.

The fruits of the exercise came to me like most of God’s graces do — unexpectedly — when, the following day at Mass, I was deeply moved by the Lord’s Prayer. I recited the prayer with everyone, but this time, for the first time, I wasn’t just saying it. I was praying it and in words I’d hand-picked myself.

In today’s Gospel Jesus gives us a great gift: a how-to for prayer. But I’m convinced that those who instructed me to write the Lord’s Prayer in a new way were on to something. By challenging me to rewrite it, they invited me to pull an already familiar prayer closer to my heart, to a deeply personal encounter with God.

This Lenten season, how might we call upon God in our own words? How would we rewrite the familiar?

Lauren Hammer ’14

FEBRUARY 25 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

The importance of being a good listener is obvious. But listening — really listening — is hard to do. This is especially true today with so many amazing technologies and gadgets clamoring for our attention. Many of us, without even realizing it, crave distraction. We avoid moments of quiet and stillness by turning to our phones and computers, or turning on the TV or radio. As John Kabat Zinn, the renowned researcher and promoter of mindfulness practice, is fond of saying, “We call ourselves human beings. It would be more appropriate to call ourselves *human doings*.” We find it is far easier to fill our days with busyness and noise than to make time to think, to listen, to just be.

Scripture is filled with stories of listening—or not listening, as in the case of Jonah. When God first called him to preach to the Ninevites, Jonah ran away.

My first real awareness of this need to listen came in a theology course I took in college in which we read Carlo Carretto. He wrote in *Letters from the Desert*:

“God’s call is mysterious; it comes in the darkness of faith. It is so fine, so subtle, that it is only with the deepest silence within us that we can hear it. ... This call is uninterrupted: God is always calling us!”

What does God want for us? What does God want us to do? The answers to these questions are elusive, but our chances of finding them increase the more we make time to listen.

Professor Edward O’Donnell

History





FEBRUARY 26 | THURSDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Esth C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Ps 138; Matt 7:7-12

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

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

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

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

Brenda Hounsell Sullivan

Office of Student Involvement

FEBRUARY 27 | FRIDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

While preparing this reflection, I struggled with a portion of this gospel reading: “But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. ...”

At first glance, it seems to make anger a negative quality. But as a community organizer, I tell leaders we need to organize around anger. After all, anger is a natural human emotion and could be a valuable tool for motivation, action and agency. A mentor of mine once told me that whenever he felt anger it was a sign to him that an injustice had occurred either to him or to someone else.

Anger, from the Nordic word *angr*, means to grieve. It is tied to loss, and it seems to me that life is often enough about loss — of loved ones, of opportunities, of potential, of capacity, and eventually life itself. Anger is part of the grieving process, and can help us turn the corner from grief and even despair to a renewed commitment to re-engage. Our faith teaches us that loss (and, as a friend reminded me, a lot of hard work) leads to new life.

In today’s gospel reading Jesus once again urges us to go beyond the law to see the broader impact of our actions. How might we use our anger at injustices to re-establish right relationships with our neighbors? How might loss be transformed into new life again?

Frank Kartheiser '72





FEBRUARY 28 | SATURDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

I have often heard that holidays are among the most difficult times for those who have lost a loved one; I now know that this is true!

As I began preparing the Thanksgiving meal for my family this past fall, I found myself with an ache in my heart, knowing that my mom would be absent from the family gathering. I thought about the immense love and gratitude that I have for her and I reminisced fondly about the positive influence she had on me as my greatest spiritual teacher.

She was the person who taught me that we ought to walk in love as God first loved us, that we should strive to treat others not as they deserve, but as God wishes them to be treated, and as we would wish to be treated, too. She taught me to exemplify the loving grace of God.

In today's gospel Jesus admonishes us to love others, including those whose motives and behaviors may be ungenerous. His words, "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father," remind me of my mom and the message she gently reinforced: that learning how to walk in love is the single greatest commitment that we can make to God and to one another.

Jackie Peterson

Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

MARCH 1 | SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gen 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Ps 116; Rom 8:31b-34; Mark 9:2-10

"Let us make three tents. ..." After seeing the grandeur, beauty, and radiance of the Lord dazzle right before him, Peter's knee-jerk reaction is to make tents or shelters so as to prolong the experience. Tents. This is such a human response. Obviously, they don't need tents.

There is this beautiful prayer said by the priest at Mass during the preparation of the gifts. He says, "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." Christianity in general, but Catholicism in particular, holds dearly the teaching that God entered our human life so that we may share in God's divine life. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods." Saint Athanasius of Alexandria explains, "For He was made man that we might be made God."

Do we really understand the importance of the Incarnation? The gravity of the Resurrection? Do we recognize the Risen Christ? Here is Jesus in the Transfiguration—a foreshadowing of the Resurrection. This is the perfect setting to remind ourselves of how God has come in our direction so that we can be partakers of divine life. It reminds us that we rise with Jesus. It reminds us that we are eternal. It reminds us to not only see the humanity in the other, but also the divinity. It reminds us of the power of the Eucharist — that we are physically transformed and divinized.

Do we recognize Jesus' divinity? What can we offer besides a tent?

Nicholas Barresi '15





MARCH 2 | MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

Today's readings speak to us about mercy, compassion, and forgiveness. After being reminded of God's mercy, we are called to be merciful, to not judge, and to not condemn.

These exhortations are easier to read than put into practice. American university culture subtly or not so subtly can encourage a constant undercurrent of judging — whether it be about who has the best grades, the most professional accomplishments, or any number of metrics of comparison. More insidiously, both within a college environment and in the broader society, we are often all too quick to judge those who do not look like us or who we otherwise feel are “different” than us. These judgments can lead to misunderstanding, division, or worse.

In this time of Lent, these readings remind us that we need to infuse our lives with a sense of compassion and mercy. In stopping to remind ourselves of God's mercy and to become more aware of the judging within and around us, we can become more merciful, open, and loving to others. We are indeed our brothers' and sisters' keepers, and we share a common humanity. That which wounds one member of our community, wounds us all. By focusing on mercy, compassion, and forgiveness, we can let go of judgment and condemnation and become a more authentic community built on love and understanding.

Professor Susan Crawford Sullivan

Sociology & Anthropology

MARCH 3 | TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

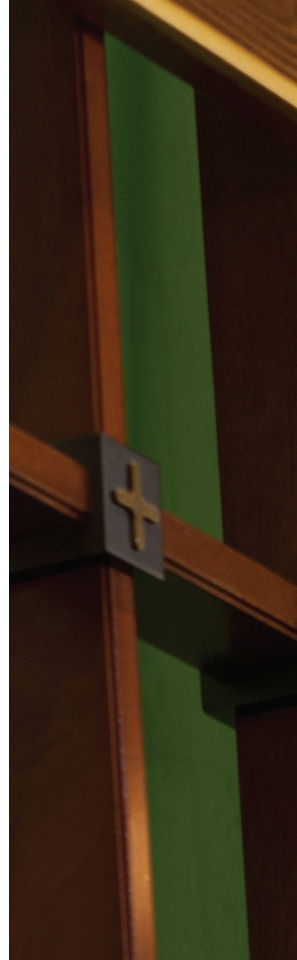
Isa 1:10, 16-20; Ps 50; Matt 23:1-12

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

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

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

Brian O'Connell '71





MARCH 4 | WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

These days, it seems that people are fixated on confrontation. From trivial passive aggressive driving interactions to protracted legal battles, conflict is nothing new. In today's readings we see people who need God to protect them from conflict and persecution. First we read in Jeremiah that the people of Judah are plotting against him and want to destroy him with his own words. Then the psalmist, too, is in the midst of a conflict with enemies as he appeals to God with the refrain: "Save me, O Lord, in your kindness."

Repeating that refrain reminded me that God is always available to listen to us as we work to deal with conflict. How frequently have we found ourselves wallowing in our own self-pity because we had a disagreement with a family member? Or how often do we refuse to admit that we have mistreated a friend? How many times do we feel invisible because a colleague refuses to acknowledge us?

While we might gain some clarity by talking with another person when we are troubled, sometimes we simply need to find the time to sit quietly and talk with God, with whom we can speak openly. Perhaps if we focus more on building positive relationships through our dialogue with God, we might find ourselves surrounded with kindness, not confrontation.

Mary Morrisard-Larkin

Office of Educational Technology

MARCH 5 | THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance. ~ verse before the gospel from today's Mass

I stood there before Sra. Ingrao, my arm cocked up behind my head, my hand moving backward toward an imagined past and she said, "No!"

"No, try again. More like this ..." I was learning to teach the Spanish imperfect tense, notoriously hard for English speakers to distinguish from the preterite, or simple past. "The imperfect is for actions that continued, that repeated, that were a habit, a custom," she intoned, smoothly, in a sort of chant, her wrist turning outward as if to bid her fond memories goodbye. She looked at me and I tried again, but this time she said I looked like I was shooing flies. Try again. Again. Again.

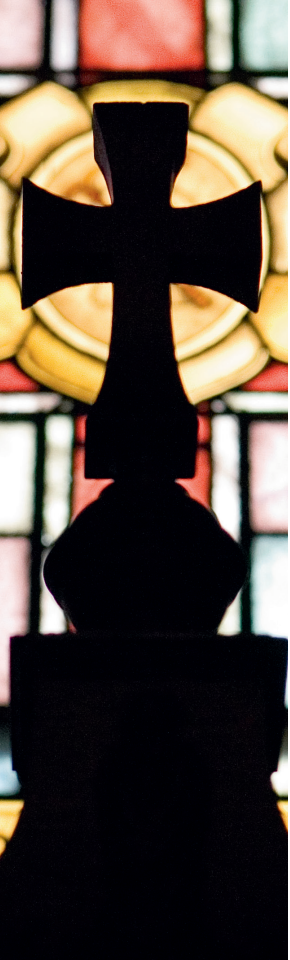
The hour ended and she smiled charitably. "*Paciencia y perseverancia*," she said. Keep trying.

Her words have been echoing in my head ever since. Patience and perseverance. An enjoiner to stay hopeful and active in learning, because, as she, the *maestra*, knew, knowledge doesn't come all at once; knowing takes time. Now, my students look at me up there in front of them, teaching the imperfect, my arm cocked up behind my head and my wrist turning outward slowly, patiently, as if to bid my fond memories goodbye. *Paciencia*, I tell them, *perseverancia*. The harvest will come.

Professor Dan Frost

Spanish





MARCH 6 | FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

I've never seen my grandfather drink. No wine at family dinners, he had ginger ale at his daughters' weddings — he even turned down champagne at the party celebrating his 50th wedding anniversary. I always wondered why and, although I was curious, I never asked.

In the fall, while my grandmother and I were chatting, she began to tell me about her own battle with cancer years ago. After describing a long, painful course of treatment, my grandma paused for a moment, “Oh, but it was your grandfather who really saved me.”

I pressed her for more details and learned that while my grandmother was in the midst of treatment, my grandfather vowed to give up drinking alcohol altogether, not because he needed to, but rather in the hope that, with his gesture of sacrifice, God might give my grandma the strength she needed to recover. For 30 years my grandfather has kept this vow, and today, my grandmother is healthy.

In the verse before the gospel from today's Mass, we are reminded that “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son; so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.” This verse highlights an under-celebrated element of love: sacrifice. God sacrificed his Son for us, so that we might not perish, but live eternally. In gratitude for this sacrifice, and in keeping with the examples of those in our lives who love unflinchingly, let us not hesitate to give wholly of ourselves for those whom we love.

Hope Tobin '15

MARCH 7 | SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

Today's Gospel is frequently called the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but that is a misnomer. The parable is about two sons, and the father who loves them both. It is about the psychology of sibling rivalry and the strength of paternal love. Above all, it is a story without an ending.

The younger son is indeed prodigal — the word means “wasteful.” He takes an inheritance that reflects his father's legacy, and squanders it selfishly. When the money is gone, he returns to his father with deep remorse and receives an unanticipated welcome of joyful love. Irresponsibility meets responsibility, and the latter wins. The older son will not accept the situation. His self-righteousness justifies envy and self-pity. When his father pleads with him to accept his brother, he responds by calling him “your son.” Still, self-centeredness meets compassion: the father's love for his older son proves stronger.

The constant in the story is the father's love for both sons. Did the older brother ever stop feeling sorry for himself and attend his brother's party? Jesus doesn't tell us. Did the younger brother develop a sense of responsibility and self-sacrifice? Jesus doesn't tell us. Will we progress in virtue, growing as persons for others, leaving faults and limitations behind? Jesus doesn't tell us. All we know is that God's promise of love is absolute. Our Father is less interested in our faults than in our potential for good. To God, each of us is still, and always, “my son” and “my daughter.”

Rev. Anthony Kuzniewski, S.J.

History





MARCH 8 | THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

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

Do you believe that God's words and promises are true?

Today's readings provide us with much to contemplate. In Exodus we see God delivering his people from slavery in Egypt, to Mount Sinai where he established his covenant with them. God gave them a new way of life embodied in the Ten Commandments and also gave Moses instructions both for worship and for constructing the Tabernacle, which ultimately became the Temple. In the gospel, we see a very dramatic scene: Jesus cleansing the temple, expelling the moneychangers by physical force. When asked for a sign, Jesus declared "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." In that moment, his disciples recalled the words of Psalm 69: "Zeal for your house will consume me." Later, when Christ rose from the dead these same disciples knew a prophecy had been fulfilled and believed the word of God.

To me, Lent is the time to cleanse my mind, soul and body. It is a time to fast and to pray with expectant faith and confidence. During this season, we can recall that Jesus brought about a new covenant of love. When we are steadfast in our faith and focus on our love for Christ and our neighbor, we share the victory that he has won, rest in his words and receive what he has promised — everlasting life.

Bernadette Semple '82

Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 9 | MONDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

Today's psalm invites us to awaken to a thirst within us, "a thirst for the living God." It leads us to wonder how we might find "running water" that will quench our thirst. Today's Gospel, which concerns the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry, suggests a way: Jesus, "filled with the power of the Spirit," speaks gracious words, words with prophetic power. A challenge remains, however: How can we prepare ourselves to hear those words, to let their power kindle our hearts and illumine our minds? How can we experience them as being "fulfilled in our hearing?"

One obstacle, it seems, is our very familiarity with these words and with the prophet who speaks them. Those in Nazareth thought they knew Jesus: "Is this not Joseph's son?" Thus the prophet is not accepted in his own town. In 2 Kings, Naaman the Aramean initially fails to respond to the prophet's words because of his conventional assumptions about ritual cleansing. Still, when his servants admonish him, he consents, and his leprous flesh is restored. For Luke's Jesus, Naaman's openness stands in contrast to Israel's lepers, who remained closed off and unhealed despite the prophet Elisha's presence among them.

In our search for those "running waters" that will quench our thirst, perhaps we need to consider the ways in which we have domesticated Jesus. Perhaps we need to feel addressed again by the question he always puts to those who would follow him: "Who do you say that I am?"

Professor James Kee

English



MARCH 10 | TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

A calm silence filled the night air as I sat in the dimly lit kitchen of my host mother on the outskirts of San Salvador. Although we had met only a few hours before, she welcomed me into her home by cooking a meal and sharing her memories from the civil war there.

As we sat around her table, exposed to the night sky through the holes in the tin roof, she spoke of the many people she knew who were killed or displaced by the war 20 years ago. She recalled the time when her family was forced to abandon their home after receiving death threats from government soldiers. She also spoke about her son who was recently murdered in the gang violence that now paralyzes her country. Even with the violence and hatred that have dominated her life, my host mother remains a woman of faith by caring for her family, the sick and the poor in her community, and me.

I wonder: how could she be so strong and faithful when others have brought her so much pain? The answer is love and forgiveness. In today's gospel, Jesus reminds us that we must forgive our brothers and sisters. The Lord will teach "the humble his way" if we live in Him by forgiving and loving one another.

My host mother forgave those who sinned against her and as a result found happiness and peace amidst pain and sadness. If we love and forgive one another, we follow the way of our merciful Lord who forgives our sins and guides us to eternal peace.

Mary Angevine '17

MARCH 11 | WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

I believe that Lent is a time of spiritual growth, a time of sacrifice and prayer, a time of obedience and forgiving. In the Old Testament reading for today's liturgy, the Lord our God gives Moses the statutes and decrees to live by, presumably, the Ten Commandments, and commands Moses to teach his people to observe them, "nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live." In the gospel we hear Jesus speaking to his disciples saying "whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

But are we, as contemporary humans, up to the challenge? Moses and Jesus speak with clarity. Today we are still guided daily by the Ten Commandments and though we believe in the grace of a loving God, we are still susceptible to ever-present distractions in prayer, and in our daily lives at home and at work. Distractions seem to occupy so much of our time and energy that I wonder if we are testing the limits of God's grace.

Still, Lent is that special opportunity to allow us to focus on God's grace and our spiritual well-being. Lent is the time for us to stay our course, to get close to Jesus, and to cut out that which causes God to "slip from our memory."

Jack Rehm '54



MARCH 12 | THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

In the readings for today's liturgy, Jeremiah tells us: "Listen to my voice; then I will be your God and you shall be my people." It doesn't get simpler than this, does it? Pay attention! That is all God asks of us. So why don't we?

A close friend of mine was diagnosed recently with cervical spondylosis. For a long time she has been losing range of motion in her neck. She is, as Jeremiah says, "stiff-necked." She resisted going to the doctor because she didn't pay attention to how much she was missing and she didn't believe that much could be done to change it. She finally saw a physician because she realized that she couldn't keep up with her granddaughter, a very active toddler, and the love of her life! My friend's condition has limited her in profound ways. It's scary to think about what she wasn't noticing while driving or crossing the street. But it wasn't until her heart was softened by her love for her granddaughter that she faced her limitations.

When we start to pay attention to God's voice in our lives (and it's more often than not a whisper), we may find ourselves freed from the pain of a hardened heart or a stiff neck or, in the case of the man with the demon in today's gospel, a case of muteness. Lent offers us the opportunity to choose to pay attention to Christ and to announce that the Kingdom of God is upon us — all of us.

Professor Virginia Ryan

Religious Studies

MARCH 13 | FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

If we were to reduce the way of Jesus to one word, I believe that word would be love. Not the kind of love that we have come to equate in our contemporary society with a good feeling, something that is always making me happy, or a constant high, but rather the kind of love Jesus was speaking about when he said: "Love one another as I have loved you.

What does that kind of love look like in real life?

For several years before she died, my Mom, after a series of strokes, was in a nursing home. She could no longer communicate in a way that she could be understood, nor could she understand anything that was said to her. She was completely dependent upon others. Yet every day my Dad went to visit her, washed her face, combed her hair, fed her, spoke to her even though she could not understand, listened to her even though she made no sense. Yet he was there every day, rain or shine.

The love that Jesus is calling us to involves commitment. It involves a decision to do the loving thing, even when it is difficult, even when it costs something, even when it doesn't feel good.

What does that love look like in real life? Gaze upon the crucified Jesus and you'll see. This Lent perhaps we might pray that we grow to love God and others in the manner that God loves us.

Rev. Tim Brewer '75

Diocese of Worcester





MARCH 14 | SATURDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

In the midst of the Lenten season, we are preparing ourselves to receive the grace of God by re-inviting Him into our hearts. To do so requires that we humble ourselves so that we may wholeheartedly accept God's love and live in community with His church.

In the Gospel, the Pharisee prays to God "O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity." By doing so, he affirms his own righteousness and virtue, not through God, but through his own self-adulation.

Compare this with the tax collector who prays, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." He has acknowledged his flaws and has come before God to seek forgiveness and to be embraced by His mercy. By telling this story, Jesus is trying to open the eyes of sinners to the grace of God. The parable teaches us that God does not want us to be perfect but is calling us to come to Him with all of our flaws and sins and be truly open to receiving His forgiveness and mercy.

During this Lenten season, it is easy to become like the Pharisee and to declare our own righteousness. However, we must attempt to embrace our faults by coming back to God. Like the tax collector, we must embrace our imperfections in order to be fully embrace God's love and to walk humbly with the Lord.

Sarah Curran '16

MARCH 15 | FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT *(Laetare Sunday)*

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

It happened on a subway train. A man, seeing my black suit and white collar, pointed to me and said in a voice loud enough for others to hear, "I think you Catholic priests were misled in your training."

"Why do you say that?" I asked.

"Because you were taught to put your trust in the Pope and Mary and rituals instead of putting your trust in Jesus." I smiled at him.

"Sir, my life would have no meaning if Jesus had not come to save us. Rituals and devotions and popes have no significance without Jesus' promise of eternal life."

He continued: "Do you believe that Jesus Christ has saved you?"

"Yes," I said, "but I need to grow in that belief." The man nodded and fell silent.

In today's Gospel, the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus is the conversation the Risen Lord wants to have with each of us: a conversation about redeeming love, about accepting what St. Paul says is "the gift of God."

This grace, this gift that God gives freely and without condition, does not always sit easily with us. We like to be givers and doers, trying harder, leaning in, barreling through with our shoulders. St. Paul says that the love that comes from God in our direction "is not from works, so no one may boast." It is simply about opening our hands humbly to receive.

I want to make time for this conversation, to accept the gift on offer.

Rev. Paul Harman, S.J.

Vice President for Mission



MARCH 16 | MONDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

Snow gently falling outside the window, a beautiful sunset, the first blossoms of spring, gentle breezes caressing a meadow, the rhythmic sound and feel of the ocean — these are moments that can take our breath away. These little miracles often provide us a glimpse of how God speaks to us through the activities of our world.

But what about our everyday experiences? Are we missing the signs and wonders uniquely placed in our path that might further awaken our hearts to Christ's message? We are often so distracted in our busy lives that we neglect to truly see that those moments of laughter, joy, tears, anger, frustration, confusion are all full of grace. Jesus tells us to believe, not because we have seen but because we feel. That awareness of his grace in our everyday life connects us to each other and provides light for our spiritual journey forward.

We recognize Jesus' divinity not only through the miracles he performed but in the compassion, acceptance, mercy and love he exhibited throughout the ministry that was his daily life. These ordinary acts are interwoven with the extraordinary ones. We have been called to live in his image and follow his example. Recognizing the mystery and beauty of God's presence in our daily lives is possibly the most wondrous sign of our faith.

Marcy Dolan Haley '84

MARCH 17 | TUESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

In Psalm 46, the psalmist writes, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." My trouble began the very moment I heard my doctor say I had breast cancer. When I was presented with this, the challenge of my life, I learned quite quickly that I could not face this challenge alone. It was bigger than I was, and I knew early on, that yes, God was going to be my "refuge and strength," and it was He that was going to get me through this challenge. My faith allowed me to know that I could always place my trust and faith in His strength.

It is often more difficult to place our trust in Him during the most challenging times. I was faced with a life threatening diagnosis, a course of difficult treatment, and the struggles of surgery, radiation and chemotherapy. Through all of that, I learned to try and relax, place my trust in God who used the skills of my medical team to help me conquer this insidious disease.

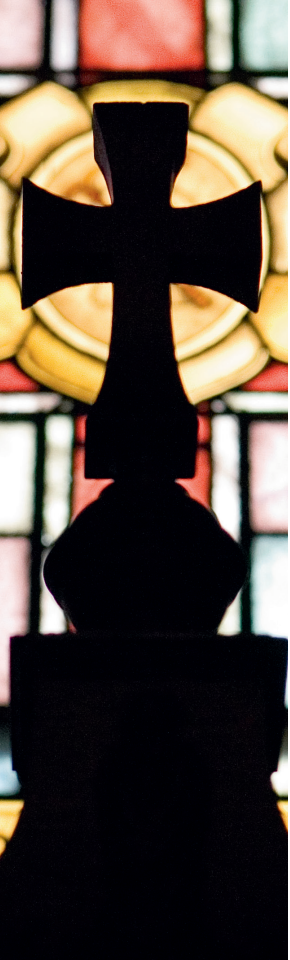
In the end, when it was all over, I came away knowing that never was my faith stronger and that God had a plan for me in return and that was to get involved in working to assist others as they go through their own battles with breast cancer.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." It is my calling to spread that message.

Ann Zelesky

Athletics





MARCH 18 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

The class begins as usual with a review of the prior lecture: theories of contemporary ethnic conflict, civil war, and genocide. The numbers are staggering — nearly 200,000 dead in Syria with millions of refugees suffering through what will undoubtedly be a wretched, cold winter; hundreds of schoolgirls kidnapped in Nigeria facing a future of slavery and torture; tens of thousands of unaccompanied children risking their lives to flee violence in Central America; and the list goes on. “Introduction to International Relations” can feel like the systematic study of torment and suffering on earth.

The overwhelming nature of the conflicts and the sense of helplessness in the face of intense human suffering can be debilitating. Given the overpowering evidence of evil in this world, students inevitably ask, how can this be God’s will? I can only answer that this is not God’s work. God gave us free will to make choices and to determine our futures. Across our world, human choices have all too frequently led to intense misery and suffering. However, God’s Word assures us that he has not forsaken us. “The Lord is near to all who call upon him,” the psalmist writes.

Individually, we cannot solve the problems of our world, but as the Body of Christ on earth we can make a difference in the areas that we touch and demand that those responsible for human suffering be held to account, that our world might eventually be a more just and peaceful place.

Professor Loren Cass

Political Science

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

2 Sam 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Ps 89; Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22; Luke 2:41-51a

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

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

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

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

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

Keith Maczkiewicz, S.J., with Charlotte ‘Sis’ Wise

Chaplains’ Office

Dining Services





MARCH 20 | FRIDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

In two weeks, along with millions of Catholics around the world, we will recall the loss of our Lord. While Good Friday is a day on which we recall Jesus' pain and suffering each year, we also experience brokenness in our own lives. Some of these experiences are minor, such as failing a test or not being chosen for a team, while others are major, such as the loss of someone we love or a bad health diagnosis. However, we are not the only ones who suffer; people around the world also suffer: in refugee camps, from starvation and from the Ebola virus.

Today's responsorial psalm refrain is, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted." Often, we feel isolated in our suffering. The psalmist reminds us of God's presence in our time of misery and that we are not alone. Where do you experience heartbreak or suffering today? When do you feel alone? Recently, I witnessed the passing of my friend's mother. Heartbreak shrouds lives in darkness, and in this darkness we can lose our sense of God. Within these experiences, we often feel powerless and paralyzed by devastation.

However, it is through these experiences that we can fully acknowledge our humanity through the vulnerability of suffering. The next time you feel broken hearted and abandoned perhaps you might remember the omnipresence of God and call out to Him. God is present with us even in the darkest of days. You are never alone. You are not forsaken.

John Milner '15

Co-president, Student Government Association

MARCH 21 | SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

The truncated readings heard during Mass can often trouble as much as instruct. Given the pervasiveness of contemporary sectarian violence (intellectual and physical), I recoil when I hear the psalmist insist that his actions are just but that God will punish his enemies "day by day." The theme of the just persecuted by the wicked, naturally, was announced in the first reading from the prophet Jeremiah. We need to remember that Jeremiah upbraids the Jews in the context of their defeats and captivity; he maintains that their sins are why God is not sustaining them. We might read these as introductions to a gospel account that focuses on the chief priest and Pharisees' persecution of Christ.

John's Gospel restructures the historical narrative with interpretive nuances. Throughout the gospel text, Christ models human actions as well as performs miracles to demonstrate that he is our brother and also that he is the Son of God. The passage selected for today is part of a longer description of Christ's journey through towns of Israel. Christ shows that he cares for each person: he heals the lame, cures the blind, feeds a multitude of the hungry, and comforts his disciples fearful in a storm. He does not discriminate among Jew or foreigner, man or woman. Yet he causes dissension. This is hard for us to fathom, for we want good to face down evil. Such thoughts, however, should enable us to more cheerfully just keep on trying, unencumbered by elusive testimonials of success.

Professor Virginia Raguin

Visual Arts



MARCH 22 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

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

Stop and listen. Read and read again. My soul is full of gratitude as I reflect upon the readings for this fifth Sunday of Lent. I am an overcomer who by stopping and listening, reading and reading again, has accepted the great joy there is by strengthening my relationship with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Often in my busy life, I have to find time to listen to what God is saying to me and showing me. But there are constant pressures I feel — what time can I spare? Still, I was able to grab five minutes here and there and that seemed to be enough: I truly began to stop and listen. I no longer stress to find huge blocks of time, but I try to relish every moment available to slow down and smell the flowers all around me.

When I was asked to offer this reflection, I read the readings and a strange thing happened: the verses sounded vaguely familiar. Vague in a way that caused me to question why I had not read them in a very long time. So I stopped and listened. I read and read again. And the joy I felt when reading them was as though a geyser opened up in my skull. Oh, what a feeling! Another reminder to value each moment, to stop and listen. I need to read and read again to remind myself of the joy God's word brings to me. Give me a clean heart so I can do your will!

Rob Jones

Office of Multicultural Education

MARCH 23 | MONDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

The woman in today's gospel can represent all whose voice goes unheard, all who experience rejection, shame, and persecution. From my own experience as a post-graduate volunteer in Ecuador, many faces come to mind: the women immersed in an oppressively *machista* culture, socialized to believe they are worthless; the ill with no access to treatment of preventable ailments like malnutrition, influenza, or scoliosis; a one-year old screaming *agua* (water), possibly her first word, as the truck passes by refusing to drive down her road to distribute water because of the flooding — her family will go without water to drink, cook, or bathe with for another few days. The structures of society condemn all these people because they are poor. The marginalized and vulnerable of our world are unjustly persecuted every day and their voices are not met with mercy.

I am struck by how Jesus responds: patiently and silently. Jesus listens first. He does not judge, he does not accuse. He gives dignity to the worth of this woman. In entering into the text, I ask myself which role I play in this story. Am I the condemner? Am I the condemned? Would I respond as Jesus does with mercy? The gospel today provides a window into the profound humanity of Jesus as teacher and an invitation to further contemplation of our role in modern day social justice.

Colleen Melaugh '12

Chaplains' Office



MARCH 24 | TUESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

Last fall I made the decision that I didn't want to be a doctor. As a cancer survivor, I had wanted to inspire others and bring hope even in the face of a seemingly hopeless diagnosis. But as good as that sounded to me, whenever I prayed about pursuing medicine I felt anxious because I realized the other desires that accompanied the altruistic one: money, title, and the stability that I assumed would come from pursuing medicine. Like the Pharisees, I loved thinking that I knew exactly where I was going and that I had everything figured out. Yet I realized that in stubbornly pursuing the path to becoming a doctor I was closing myself off to a wonderful unknown, to a life where I would trust in God.

I worried about talking to my dad, a physician himself, about my reservations. But when I told him about the conflicting desires and my newfound hope to be a writer and teacher, he was incredibly supportive. He told me to stop pursuing medicine if I wasn't happy, and encouraged me to both do what I love and to continue to discern God's plan for me.

I returned to Holy Cross eager to heed my father's advice and open to letting God shape my life. When I unpacked my suitcase, I found a note from my dad:

"Will, Have faith in God's plan for your life. Trust that He will provide and guide you. Make sure to listen to His voice. I love you! - Dad"

Will Peters '17

MARCH 25 | SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Is 7:10-14; 8:10; Ps 40; Heb 10: 4-10; Lk 1: 26-38

The first scriptural passage I ever had to memorize was Luke 1:26-38, the story of the Annunciation, for a Christmas play in grammar school. I remember facing the spotlight and freezing with fear when I saw the packed hall. Sister nudged me gently from behind the curtain and the words started coming out, "The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee ...". Little did I know, telling the rest of the story would become my life.

I love two of the texts in today's readings: "To do your will, O my God, is my delight / and your law is within my heart" from Psalm 40; and "for nothing will be impossible for God" from Luke.

What makes the words of the psalm so comforting? God's will is seldom obvious, once we get beyond the commandments; heavenly messengers don't meet us in church or surprise us at home to clear things up. We have to figure out a lot for ourselves. The words of the psalm come, I think, from the soul's longing and seeking; praying them quiets the heart. As for the second text, what made Gabriel so sure that nothing is impossible for God? Most of us have to struggle through many wilderness moments before learning this mystery. Or rather, before we come to share the faith of the evangelist. After all, he was the storyteller, standing at that moment behind the angel's mask.

Rev. William Reiser, S.J.

Religious Studies





MARCH 26 | THURSDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

My favorite song from the Tarzan soundtrack is “You’ll Be in My Heart.” As a little girl, whenever I would hear this song I would run to find my teddy bear, pick him up, and dance with him, holding him close and rocking him in my arms. *“I’ll be with you. I’ll be there for you always, always and always.”*

Today’s first reading tells of the covenant God made with Abraham: “You will be my people, and I will be your God.” The covenant is a commitment to relationship, at once a promise and an invitation. “The Lord remembers his covenant forever,” the psalmist tells us. God is holding us in his heart constantly! He is present with us always.

How do we remember God and consciously, lovingly hold him in our hearts? The psalmist gives us a suggestion: “Recall the wondrous deeds he has wrought.” What are the wondrous deeds God has wrought in your life? What prompts you to remember them?

One day toward the end of last summer, I watched Tarzan again. As the credits were rolling, “You’ll Be in My Heart” began to play and for old times’ sake, I ran to find my teddy bear, picked him up, and danced with him. When the song ended, I began to cry, overwhelmed by a flood of memories of God’s love in my life. I was filled with gratitude. God had been there always, and is there still, singing over me, and over each one of us, *“You’ll be here in my heart, always.”*

Valerie Kisselback ’15

MARCH 27 | FRIDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

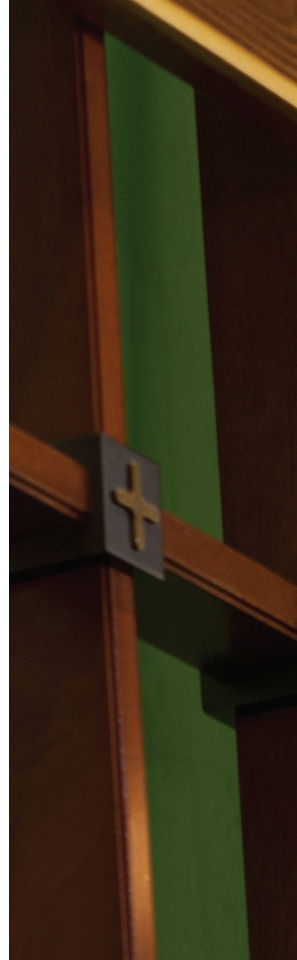
Jer 20:10-13; Ps 18; John 10:31-42

The readings for today come just a few days before the beginning of Holy Week. It is a time when we honor and celebrate Jesus’ tremendous act of love. In order to prepare us for the week ahead, the readings for today remind us to never abandon our trust in God.

I am sure that many of you reading this are blessed to have friends and family by your side that encourage and support every decision that you make and who will love you always. However, not everyone whom we meet shares this same love. Jeremiah describes this as “friends ... on the watch for any misstep.” These “friends” are looking for the opportunity to take advantage of our failures. In today’s gospel account, Jesus similarly focuses on how our words may be used against us, for they may be considered “blasphemy” or contrary to the popular belief of our friends. These people want us to be filled with doubt, fear, and uncertainty.

Still, there is hope. For as long as we hold on to our trust in God, nothing and no one can break us. Knowing and believing in this gives us the strength to keep moving forward. As we head into Holy Week, let us never abandon our trust in God whose actions are always based in love.

Nelson Sinchi ’12





MARCH 28 | SATURDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And Jesus did come.

Professor Jonathan Mulrooney

English

MARCH 29 | PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD’S PASSION

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

This reflection was written in November 2014.

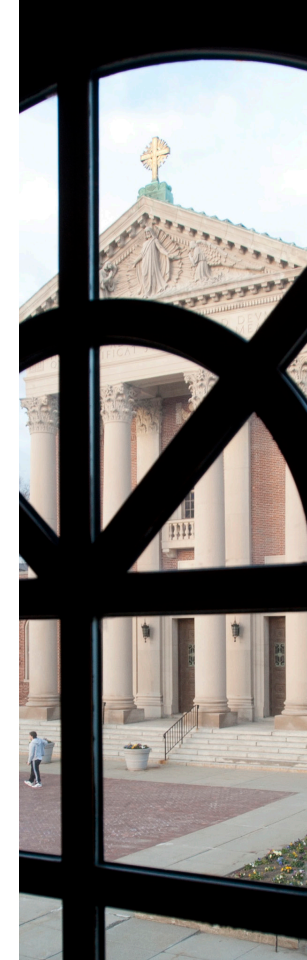
Sometimes we need to be carried. So observed poet Mary Oliver in her poem, “The Poet Thinks About the Donkey.” After coming across Oliver’s poem, in which she reflects on the donkey that carried Jesus into Jerusalem, I have found myself thinking a lot about who and what carries me as I anticipate my own experiences of the cross.

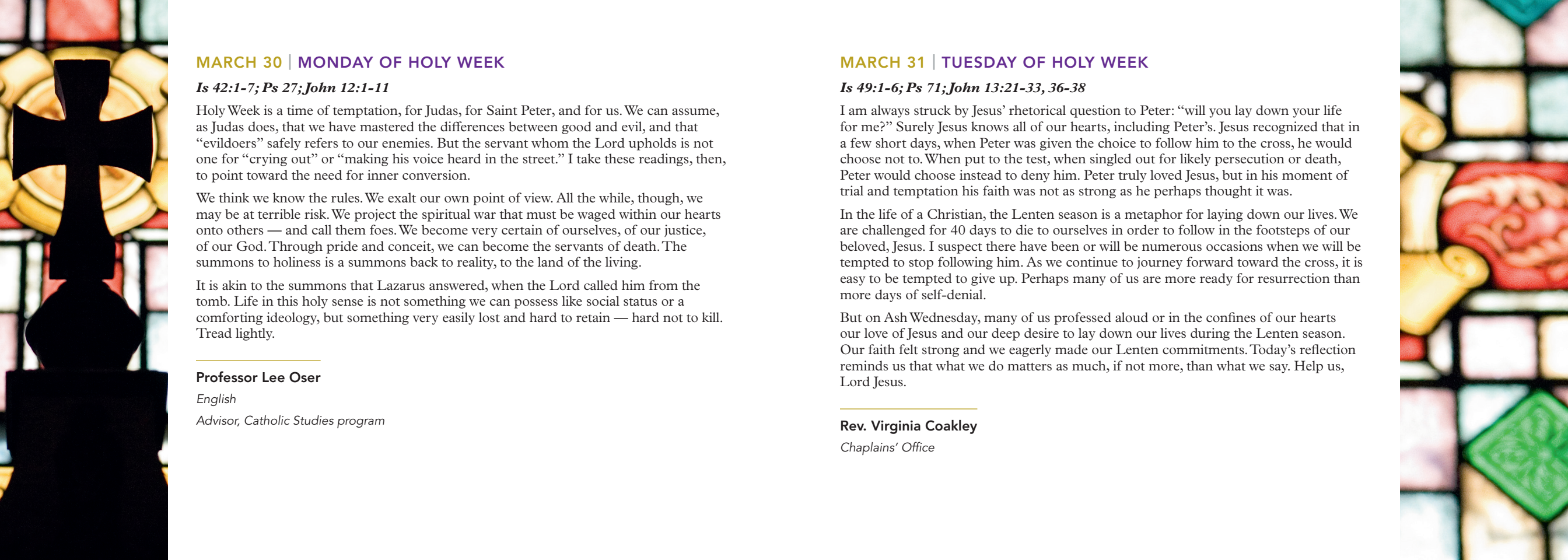
As my family approaches the bone marrow transplant of my 17-year-old son Matthew, I know we each need to be carried. A bone marrow transplant is an experience of death and resurrection. The chemo that precedes the transplant is one where a poorly functioning immune system is killed off to make space for a new one: donated in order to take root and grow. We know that Matthew desperately needs the new life that our daughter Sarah’s bone marrow will give him. However, as we attend preparatory doctors’ appointments leading up to Matt’s admission to Children’s Hospital, sometimes the growing heaviness inside me makes it difficult to move forward. Yet move forward I do, aware of being carried by my husband Chris, our four children, and countless loved ones at Holy Cross and beyond.

By allowing ourselves to be carried, we recall Jesus who, too, was carried. Jesus, who knew fear and pain, feels our fear and pain. He also enables us to trust that, in this and every moment, God’s steadfast promise of new life remains.

Marybeth Kearns-Barrett ’84

Chaplain’s Office





MARCH 30 | MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

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

Holy Week is a time of temptation, for Judas, for Saint Peter, and for us. We can assume, as Judas does, that we have mastered the differences between good and evil, and that “evildoers” safely refers to our enemies. But the servant whom the Lord upholds is not one for “crying out” or “making his voice heard in the street.” I take these readings, then, to point toward the need for inner conversion.

We think we know the rules. We exalt our own point of view. All the while, though, we may be at terrible risk. We project the spiritual war that must be waged within our hearts onto others — and call them foes. We become very certain of ourselves, of our justice, of our God. Through pride and conceit, we can become the servants of death. The summons to holiness is a summons back to reality, to the land of the living.

It is akin to the summons that Lazarus answered, when the Lord called him from the tomb. Life in this holy sense is not something we can possess like social status or a comforting ideology, but something very easily lost and hard to retain — hard not to kill. Tread lightly.

Professor Lee Oser

English

Advisor, Catholic Studies program

MARCH 31 | TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

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

I am always struck by Jesus’ rhetorical question to Peter: “will you lay down your life for me?” Surely Jesus knows all of our hearts, including Peter’s. Jesus recognized that in a few short days, when Peter was given the choice to follow him to the cross, he would choose not to. When put to the test, when singled out for likely persecution or death, Peter would choose instead to deny him. Peter truly loved Jesus, but in his moment of trial and temptation his faith was not as strong as he perhaps thought it was.

In the life of a Christian, the Lenten season is a metaphor for laying down our lives. We are challenged for 40 days to die to ourselves in order to follow in the footsteps of our beloved, Jesus. I suspect there have been or will be numerous occasions when we will be tempted to stop following him. As we continue to journey forward toward the cross, it is easy to be tempted to give up. Perhaps many of us are more ready for resurrection than more days of self-denial.

But on Ash Wednesday, many of us professed aloud or in the confines of our hearts our love of Jesus and our deep desire to lay down our lives during the Lenten season. Our faith felt strong and we eagerly made our Lenten commitments. Today’s reflection reminds us that what we do matters as much, if not more, than what we say. Help us, Lord Jesus.

Rev. Virginia Coakley

Chaplains’ Office



APRIL 1 | WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

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

We sat in Kimball that night, just the two of us, reflecting on how difficult it had been to make friends freshmen year. It was refreshing to talk to someone who knew exactly what I was going through. However, as I looked around at the tables full of people, I felt a twinge of embarrassment run through me. Everyone else seemed to have so many friends, while our table felt so empty.

After that night, something strange happened. Whenever I looked at my friend I no longer saw her; I saw a reflection of myself: a girl who was fragile and afraid of being alone. I began to resent my friend because each time we talked, she only reminded me of my insecurities. So instead of facing reality, I ran from it. I stopped answering all of my friend's messages and I even avoided eye contact when I saw her. Little did I know that losing her would only make me feel more lost. In shutting her out of my life, I not only betrayed her, I betrayed myself.

When I read today's gospel, I looked at Judas as pure evil. How could someone sell out another so easily? And yet, I betray others all of the time without even realizing it. I neglect a friend, I do not make time for someone, I forget what matters: that God is calling me to a life of greater appreciation for the wonderful gifts he has bestowed on me — including others — that I neglect far too often.

Mary Cunningham '17

APRIL 2 | HOLY THURSDAY

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

As a priest, I have participated in foot-washings numerous times and it always feels a bit awkward. I guess it is supposed to be, much as it was during that first time for Peter. However, my image of the ritual changed dramatically when, soon after his election, Pope Francis entered a juvenile detention center in Rome on Holy Thursday and, veering from papal tradition, got down on his knees and washed the feet of young adult men and women prisoners, two of whom were Muslim. Like much of the world, this shocked me, and this action helped me to connect with the real spirit behind the ritual: a call to humble service.

Though I haven't washed any feet in prison, I often hear confessions at the Worcester County Jail. I find the inmates so filled with remorse, so broken, and yet, so appreciative that someone would come to listen to them. When I hear someone describe their life as broken and battered, it almost feels as intimate as washing another's feet. It's intimate because as I listen to their stories I become aware of my own brokenness and imperfections; we're both vulnerable in these moments. Still, I am confident that through God's Spirit of healing and wholeness, the both of us there — priest and penitent — can be mended.

Rev. John Savard, S.J.

Rector, Jesuit Community



APRIL 3 | GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

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

Each year as we reach the end of the Lenten season and hear the various scripture accounts of the Passion, I find myself trying to imagine the scene. I see the disciples who are so fearful that they deny knowledge of Christ. I imagine the onlookers along the route to Golgotha who are drawn in curiosity to the spectacle or the soldiers charged with carrying out the execution or the criminals hung on either side of Jesus. I wonder — who would I be in this scene? Or perhaps more importantly — who have I been when confronted with the suffering and crucified Christ in my time and place?

A couple of years ago I was in El Salvador having a conversation with a group of women who operate a shelter and daycare center in a part of San Salvador that is rife with gang violence. These women were the sisters, cousins and friends of some who had been killed by the military during the civil war. One member of our group asked them — “How do you go on? What gives you hope?” One of the women replied, “Our brothers, fathers, cousins and friends were killed simply because they had given themselves to our community in love. In response to this love, what else can we do?”

I pray for this grace, the grace to remain and to respond to the love embodied in the cross with hope, gratitude and love.

Margaret Freije

Vice President for Academic Affairs & Dean of the College

APRIL 4 | HOLY SATURDAY

Gen 1:1-2:2; Ps 104; Gen 22:1-18; Ps 16; Exod 14:15-15:18; Rom 6:3-11; Mark 16:1-7

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

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

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

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

John Mahoney

Chair, Board of Trustees



APRIL 5 | EASTER SUNDAY – THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Ps 118; 1 Cor 5:6b-8; John 20:1-9

The sun was setting on a warm November afternoon while the janitor quietly washed the rough floor of the *Divina Providencia* chapel. An elderly sister sat praying at the back while I slipped into a pew in the front. My eyes sought and quickly found the raised letters affixed to the wall which proclaimed: “On this altar Monsignor Oscar Romero offered his life to God for his people.” While I couldn’t reconcile that afternoon’s tranquility with the violence of an assassination 34 years before, I sensed in a rush of inner certainty a confirming grace that the resurrection is real and Oscar Romero was right. “If they kill me,” he said a few weeks before his death, “I shall arise in the Salvadoran People. ... I offer my blood to God for the redemption and resurrection of El Salvador.”

The next day I was concelebrating at a Eucharist in San Salvador’s Cathedral crypt downtown. There weren’t enough seats for all the concelebrants and I was privileged to stand next to Romero’s grave. After communion, I watched as streams of Salvadorans, along with many foreign visitors, approached his tomb. We all seemed to be asking God for the same grace: that the spirit of this faithful follower of Jesus would enliven and give courage to our own discipleship. Truly, the stone rejected had become the cornerstone and the resurrected Christ lives in us.

Rev. Philip L. Boroughs, S.J.

President of the College

SEQUENCE FROM EASTER SUNDAY

Christians, to the Paschal Victim

Offer your thankful praises!

A Lamb the sheep redeems;

Christ, who only is sinless,

Reconciles sinners to the Father.

Death and life have contended in that combat stupendous:

The Prince of life, who died, reigns immortal.

Speak, Mary, declaring

What you saw, wayfaring.

“The tomb of Christ, who is living,

The glory of Jesus’ resurrection;

bright angels attesting,

The shroud and napkin resting.

Yes, Christ my hope is arisen;

to Galilee he goes before you.”

Christ indeed from death is risen, our new life obtaining.

Have mercy, victor King, ever reigning!

Amen. Alleluia.





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