

College of the Holy Cross

CrossWorks

Office of Mission Publications

Office of Mission

2-2016

Return to Me: Lenten Reflections from Holy Cross (2016)

Office of Mission, College of the Holy Cross

Follow this and additional works at: https://crossworks.holycross.edu/mission_pub



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Office of Mission, College of the Holy Cross, "Return to Me: Lenten Reflections from Holy Cross (2016)" (2016). *Office of Mission Publications*. 4.
https://crossworks.holycross.edu/mission_pub/4

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Mission at CrossWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Office of Mission Publications by an authorized administrator of CrossWorks.



RETURN TO ME
Lenten Reflections
from Holy Cross | 2016

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

Joel 2:12

EACH YEAR ON ASH WEDNESDAY, THE PROPHET JOEL OFFERS US BOTH A CHALLENGE AND AN INVITATION: TO RETURN THE LOVE WITH WHICH WE WERE FIRST LOVED.

This year, this challenge and invitation are made within a unique context. Pope Francis has declared 2016 as an Extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy. In his letter making this declaration, he calls Jesus Christ “the face of the Father’s mercy” and names mercy as the bridge that connects us to God, the bridge that opens our hearts to “being loved forever despite our sinfulness.” And then he adds: “The season of Lent during this Jubilee Year should also be lived more intensely as a privileged moment to celebrate and experience God’s mercy.”





It is our hope that this resource, *Return to Me: Lenten Reflections from Holy Cross, 2016*, will assist you as, in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, you contemplate not just God's acts of mercy but your own.

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

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

To subscribe to daily emails from *Return To Me* throughout Lent, please visit our website:
www.holycross.edu/returntome.

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

Rev. William R. Campbell, S.J. '87
Vice President for Mission

Micala Smith '16
Return to Me intern



FEBRUARY 10 | ASH WEDNESDAY

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

“I have a question,” piped the little voice from the back seat. “Ok, what is it?” I replied, holding my breath hoping that I knew the answer. “Was the surgery my fault? Did I do something wrong to cause it to happen?”

This challenging question ‘why do bad things happen’ was asked by our 7-year-old son. Kieran was born with severe bilateral clubfeet and was recovering from both a difficult relapse and a surgery that limited his mobility for months. And now we were ‘supposed’ to know the answer.

While we don’t know the reason why things happen, especially ‘bad’ things, what we do know and what we can trust is beautifully revealed by the prophet Joel: “Even now, says the Lord, return to me. ...” Return to a tender, merciful God who is “slow to anger, rich in kindness and relenting in punishment.”

Even now, when things seem confusing and overwhelming, when a 7 year old asks ‘why,’ we, with faith in a loving and merciful God, can return to a place of trust. We cannot give an answer as to why ‘bad’ things happen, but we can share our faith and trust in a God who will accompany us during these challenging times.

The God to whom we can turn and return is one of tenderness and mercy who excludes no one from this love. As we begin this Lenten journey together, let us turn toward and maybe even return to our God.

Martin Kelly and Megan Fox-Kelly '99

Associate Chaplains, Director of Service and Social Justice, and Director of Retreat Programs (respectively)

FEBRUARY 11 | THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

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

Senior year in college is full of choices — homework or party? Graduate school or work force? But rarely do we consider whether the decisions we make bring us closer to God and align us more with God's will.

Jesus also had choices to make. He chose to give up his life for our sins. He challenges us to follow him, and those who choose to walk his path know that they are called to make similar sacrifices with their own lives. Today's readings highlight the permanent nature of this call, for our Psalm tells those who follow the Lord to do so "day and night." Those who choose Christ are asked to fully dedicate their lives to him, striving ever in motion toward the Lord.

Easier said than done! With 21 years of life under my belt, I can recall a number of selfish and stupid choices I've made that are not in accord with this greater purpose. But that is part of the daily challenge a disciple of Christ experiences. We must not let our fear of falling on our face deter us from taking up that cross. We know that the Lord smiles upon those who follow him; he calls on us to choose faith and dedicate our lives to him. In losing a life dictated by worldly pleasures and desires, we gain eternal life with Christ. So, what might I choose? How might my daily choices reflect and reaffirm this everlasting choice?

Byron Udegbe '16

Co-President of the Student Government Association





FEBRUARY 12 | FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

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

Some individual practices get an energy and focus of their own. We have morning routines, favorite ways to exercise, or even recurring holiday rituals. These serve us to work quickly or offer convenient enjoyment — but certainly don't capture our potential for transcendence or human imagination. Imagine how holidays change when you have a new family member or live in a completely different culture.

Jesus takes the Hebrew practice of fasting and changes the paradigm. With cleverness, he introduces the word 'bridegroom' and dramatically changes our point of view. The disciples replace the accustomed asceticism with a devotion of listening, imitation, and capacity to marvel as companions of Jesus. In *Training in Christianity*, Soren Kierkegaard suggested that "everyone for his own part must learn from the beginning, beginning always at the same point as every other man who is contemporary with Christ, practicing it in the situation of contemporaneusness."

What ways this Lent can I allow myself to notice the charismatic presence and absence of our Savior? I often use multiple paintings of Jesus to assist with spiritual direction. El Greco's *Christ Bearing the Cross* portrays a Jesus in the turmoil of suffering — but whose eyes are filled with hope and love. What instances of Christ's preaching and miracles are distant and unclear to us? We can pray with these scenes and ask God to be moved with the same turbulent emotions as his disciples.

When we fast, we align our spirits with one we deeply miss, but whose person is still intensely vivid for us.

Brett McLaughlin, S.J. '04

FEBRUARY 13 | SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

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

Each Lent, my partner and I host a Friday Lenten Simple Supper series at our home. It is one of our favorite traditions, and this year will be our sixth. We make a pot of vegetarian soup each week and, depending on the numbers, we invite others to bring a second or third pot. Others volunteer to bring bread or a salad to add to the mix. Dessert often makes an appearance, too. There have been weeks with just four people and weeks when we outgrow our 8-foot dining room table. Regardless of the numbers or the menu, old friends and new friends gather for a simple meal that reminds us of the many gifts we have in each other.

I love today's Gospel image of Levi's "great banquet" for Jesus, with a house full of all kinds of people. It is a reminder of the power of eating and drinking together at a table where all are welcome. It is a place of sharing. It is a place of relationship. It is a place of redemption. Our Simple Suppers are an opportunity to draw closer to each other and to God as we prepare for Easter Sunday.

Who is at your table during this Lenten season? And at whose table are you?

Heather Johnson '06

Director, Teacher Education Program





FEBRUARY 14 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Deut 26:4-10; Ps 91; Rom 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13

What did you give up for Lent? Four days into the season, I wonder how it is going. Is the lid still on the cookie jar? Will you resist the Valentine's Day chocolate your colleague brings to the office today? What about that resolution to "curb" your language or do a good deed daily?

There is no lack of temptation to *give up* during Lent. I feel we enter Lent as if we are contestants on *American Ninja Warrior*, spending six weeks running an obstacle course of spiritual challenges — but to what end? Solely to prove to ourselves how strong we are resisting the temptation to *give in*?

Lent is a journey of spiritual transformation. It requires rigor, but it also requires a willingness to put ourselves in God's hands. To *give in*.

During Jesus' time in the wilderness, he fasts and reflects, being tempted three times by the devil. And three times he rejects these temptations, rebuking the devil, confident in God's providence. He *gives in* to God.

Lent asks us hard questions about our spiritual lives. Today's readings provide a road map for answering these questions. They give us encouragement to understand that Lent is a time to recognize something *done in us* versus something *we have done*. Lent is a time when it's actually okay to *give in* and reflect on the ways God is trying to touch our lives.

Tracy Barlok P'19

Vice President for Advancement

FEBRUARY 15 | MONDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

In today's Gospel Jesus asks us to review our lives from the standpoint of the Last Judgment. This sobering change in perspective allows us to see whether we are choosing the prison of Hell or the communion of Heaven.

C.S. Lewis wrote that Hell is “every shutting up of the creature within the dungeon of its own mind,” that is, the rejection of others in favor of selfish illusions. “I was hungry and you gave me no food. . . .” When we refuse to see our neighbor, we close our eyes to the presence of Christ and remain in the darkness of our shuttered hearts. Hell emerges when only the “I” exists, when I am an ego incarcerated in a dying soul.

Heaven, however, is *liberation*, an escape from a selfish prison through the outwardly directed love of God and neighbor: “For I was thirsty and you gave me drink. . . .” Jesus gave us the way out through his self-emptying and his rising to new life. We in turn empty our lives and find life by incarnating love through the corporal and spiritual acts of mercy.

At the end of my life, will I see the joyful communion of heaven or a confining reflection of myself? At the beginning of Lent, we take this perspective from the “end” to remind ourselves of what Jesus has done for us and how we are meant to live: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”

Rev. John Gavin, S.J.

Assistant Professor, Department of Religious Studies





FEBRUARY 16 | TUESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Is 55:10-11; Ps 34; Matt 6:7-16

Prayer. What is it? Is it a rote recitation of a mantra developed at an early age? Is it one's personal conversation with God during which we seek answers to the meaning of our lives?

I had never given much thought to the meaning of prayer until a very stressful and tumultuous period of my life some 35 years ago at age 42. After an emotionally painful confrontation with loved ones from which I left in a numb state of mind, I found myself in the rear pew of the church of my youth and in which I had been married, not knowing how I got there, the time of day nor the day of the week. The church was St. Matthew's.

I learned to pray that day. "I sought the Lord and He answered me and delivered me from my fears. The Lord is close to the broken hearted, and those who are crushed in spirit He saves." The Father knew what I needed before I asked. Trusting in God eased all the insecurities that negatively affected my life. Mathew 6 is my favorite chapter in scripture.

Prayer. What is it? I'm still learning but when I do pray I "go to my inner room, close the door and pray to the Father in secret." The best conversations between loved ones are held in private, and we are all loved unconditionally by the Father.

During Lent, we are reminded that getting through the tough times will point us toward the promises of God's kingdom.

Richard R. Delfino '60, P'87, '88

FEBRUARY 17 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

I have found that it is very easy to admit when you are right. Everyone enjoys being right. It's a lot harder to admit when you are wrong. Nobody likes being wrong.

This can be for a multitude of reasons. We may have to face up to our own shortcomings and weaknesses. We may have to admit that we acted in our own interests and not those of others. We may have to see that we have not lived up to the expectations of ourselves, others, and God.

Today's readings call us to repentance. Jonah calls the city of Nineveh to repent, and they receive salvation for doing so. Jesus does the same in the Gospel. It is a message for those listening, both now and then.

Repentance can be challenging. There is no doubt about that, but as we are reminded, God will always hear us and receive us into his grace. If we honestly and openly admit our shortcomings, God will always be there to listen. We just have to hear his call.

Anthony Yakely '16





FEBRUARY 18 | THURSDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

Being a sociologist of social movements means I am constantly contemplating two seemingly contradictory ideas. The first is that, as individuals, we are born into and live through social worlds with histories, natures, and sometimes great forms of conflict and suffering, much of which is beyond our individual control. And yet, how phenomenal, how great are the forms of social change we have also lived through, put into motion by individuals who dedicated their lives to making the world a better place.

Today's readings both remind us that spiritual insight is relative to the position we take when reflecting on our lives and inspire us to look at our sufferings anew, aware that a balancing of perspective can help us to reconcile our feelings of smallness with our potential for great transformation.

The prayer of Esther gives us a bird's eye view of how little we control in the world around us, while Esther's prayer also points us to the importance of what we can control, how we react to and participate in the events that shape our lives.

In contrast, the Gospel focuses in on this window of opportunity to give great amplification to the possibilities ever before us. We are called as individuals to be continually mindful of our potential for spiritual growth, beauty, and peace, and our own responsibility to live our lives in fulfillment of that call.

Selina Gallo-Cruz

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

FEBRUARY 19 | FRIDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

“Could today get any worse?” My day was filled with the nuisances of a busy life — an unwelcome work project, bickering kids, technology mishaps, traffic, lines. I was late. My husband, picking up our kids so I could attend a retreat for Holy Cross alumni, was also running late. I expressed my anger with anyone who had the misfortune of encountering me that day.

I entered the retreat focusing on these perceived injustices until I was guided through the Examen Prayer of St. Ignatius. I relived the previous day before, picturing it now through God’s “soft eyes.” I saw blessings: my health and that of my children, my helpful husband, my upbringing, education and intellect that allow me a challenging career, resources that allow me the luxuries of technology and time for self-reflection. I was overcome with gratitude for all God has given me.

St. Ignatius once said, “Ingratitude is one of the things most worthy of detestation ... out of all the evils and sins which can be imagined. It is a failure to recognize the good things, the graces, and the gifts received. It is the cause, beginning, and origin of evils and sins.” Mired in guilt, I remembered that God not only sees potential but wants that potential to be fulfilled, so he forgives and grants daily redemption. Perhaps God’s biggest gift is his short memory! Thank you, God! Thank you for your forgiveness of my ingratitude. “Could today get any better?”

Kimberly Stone '90

President, Holy Cross Alumni Association





FEBRUARY 20 | SATURDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

Our society is obsessed with perfection. Lifetimes are spent trying to capture the unattainable. Try as we might, we will fail; it is human nature to be imperfect. This is why the command to “be perfect” seems an impossible standard to uphold. Yet when God is asking for perfection, he is not asking for what so many in our society seek. Rather, Christ is commanding us to love in a way that is the opposite of human nature. He is asking us to love those who cause us the most pain. We find this difficult because we were created with hearts that are not insulated from life’s pain. So when we are hurt by others, it is easier to make them our enemy. This is our way, not God’s. God’s love is perfect. It is given even when refused. This type of love may seem impossible to imitate, yet our hearts are created in his image, providing us the possibility of doing so. Though we find it difficult to love unconditionally, we have the ability to overcome our nature. Christ is not saying we will not sin or stumble. Rather, he says we are blessed with the chance to love in a Godlike way. How might we turn our hearts to God so that we may emulate the perfect love we receive?

Anne Lord '16

FEBRUARY 21 | SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gen 15:5-12, 17-18; Ps 27; Phil 3:17-4:1; Luke 9:28b-36

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

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

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

Abe Ross '16

Holy Cross Organ Scholar





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

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

“Tend the flock in your midst.” Today the Church celebrates the feast of the Chair of Peter. Jesus chose Peter to be the rock of the Church. Peter, the first Pope, tended a flock scattered to the four winds by the Holy Spirit. His successor, Francis, tends a flock of more than 1 billion Catholics. Francis tends the flock through his public audiences, Angelus messages, *Urbi* and *Orbi* addresses, encyclical letters, Synods, consistories of Cardinals, pastoral visits, and travels throughout the globe. Francis is a shepherd who desires to smell like his sheep.

Each of us has a flock entrusted to us. We belong to families. We live in neighborhoods. We worship in parishes. We spend much of our daily lives in workplaces. We exercise in fitness centers. We discover in these settings the flocks God wants us to tend.

Each of us has an interior garden we are called to tend, cultivate, water, and fertilize. Lent invites us to interior renewal, to conversion of mind and heart, and to the traditional practices of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

We are challenged to tend to our families, our colleagues in the office, our neighbors, and our online communities. What a difference a smile can make, a handwritten note, a text message, a good deed, a kind word, and a thoughtful gesture. Tending to the flock in our midst and our interior gardens will prepare us for Easter and produce good fruit for the reign of God.

Rev. James Hayes, S.J. '72

Associate Chaplain, Director of Faith Formation

FEBRUARY 23 | TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

I believe Lent is the spirit's ultimate grounding mechanism.

Absent discernment, it is tempting to dismiss Matthew's rebuke of narcissism and hypocrisy as quaint, intended for a less sophisticated people of a more distant time and place. However, if we take a deep and honest look into our collective mirrors, Matthew's indictment proves as relevant as ever.

Princes of Sodom abound in today's selfie-inspired world of digital narcissism, yielding a long and viral tail of self-promoting, Twitter-obsessed modern-day Pharisees. And candor tells us that we, too, can act as a People of Gomorrah when, at times, we "preach but do not practice;" "perform works to be seen;" and "love places of honor at banquets."

We do so because we are human but, as Lent reminds us, we are also graced by forgiveness and redemption.

Isaiah directs us to put away our misdeeds, to cease doing evil and to learn to do good while the words of the Gospel acclamation say to cast away our crimes and make for ourselves a new heart and a new spirit — good advice and the perfect glide path for Lent's grounding process.

The runway clear, Matthew articulates the new paradigm wherein "the greatest among you must be your servant." Radical, yes, and brazenly liberating too. That said, Jesus imparts what, for me, is his most powerful and transformative admonition: "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Ego in check; spirit grounded. A message for the ages, especially ours.

Robert F. Moriarty '83

Member, Board of Trustees





FEBRUARY 24 | WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

I first encountered the prayer of St. Ignatius called the *Principle and Foundation* on the night I arrived to begin the *Spiritual Exercises* retreat in January of my junior year. I did not have clear expectations of what I would hear from God that week, but I did desire to feel more strongly that God was calling me to something. That first night, the *Principle and Foundation* left me more unsure of what God wanted from me. Our translation opened, “The goal of our life is to live with God forever. God, who loves us, gave us life. Our own response of love allows God’s life to flow into us without limit.”

How was I to respond to God’s love? How could my love for God ever equal that which God gives to me? And how would loving God direct me to action?

It was not until later in the week that I realized, our response to God’s love is not simply to love God back. It is to love *others* as God loves us. Today’s Gospel shows us how Christ loved. Jesus modeled humility, wanting not for glory or privilege but devoting himself to service and sacrifice. As the Son of Man gave “his life as a ransom for many,” so ought we. Jesus asks us to be generous and not jealous, to consider others before ourselves. In the coming weeks as we prepare to celebrate Christ’s greatest sacrifice, how might we follow Him, living out God’s love in service of others?

Cecelia Plaehn '16

Co-President, Student Government Association

FEBRUARY 25 | THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

Abraham's admonition expresses something more than a mere rejection of spectacle. It seems that when he says bodily resuscitation will prove no more effective a warning to the rich man's brothers than the law and the prophets, he is not simply affirming the persuasiveness of the scriptures over impressive displays. Rather, the implicit understanding is that Moses and the prophets have already spoken about the rising of the dead. Their words are as good, as real, and command as much assent as would a bodily resurrection.

The law is ordered toward and the prophets proclaim the salvation of humankind. When we read in Jeremiah that "more tortuous than all else is the human heart, beyond remedy; who can understand it? I, the LORD, alone probe the mind and test the heart," we see that God alone perceives the depth of our desires. We are made for God, and through all history God calls us to Himself.

The fulfillment of the law and the prophecies, our union with God, is manifested in the Incarnation. It is Jesus who tells us this parable, and in it he reveals a "negative image" of our salvation. The rich man, in choosing to ignore Lazarus' desperation, is turned entirely into himself. He is the antithesis of the perfect charity and self-emptying love of our Savior. He rejects the life that God calls us toward and that Jesus fulfills: a life of living for others that itself reflects the perfect love of the Trinity.

Steven Merola '16





FEBRUARY 26 | FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

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

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

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

John Milner '15

Member, Board of Trustees

FEBRUARY 27 | SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

I am one of three boys, and there were many instances of “controlled chaos” in my household growing up — wrestling matches in the living room, basketball games in the bedroom, hockey tournaments in the basement. My passion for becoming the MVP of my family existed in all aspects of my life, including seasons like Christmas. I was quick to compare the gifts Santa had left for me to those he left for my brothers, hoping I had the tallest stack.

Jesus tells us a parable about a man who gifts half of his estate to each of his two sons. The younger son leaves his family and “squanders his inheritance on a life of dissipation” while the older son honorably served his father. When the younger son returns, his father showers him with presents. The elder son quickly questions why he is not treated this way for staying loyal to his father.

I am tempted to compare myself to others in today’s society. Categories such as “republican,” “bisexual” or “lower socioeconomic status” reflect the diversity of our world, and such categories make it easier for us to judge one another. Today, I celebrate the wonder of Jesus’ birth instead of the number of gifts I receive under the tree at Christmas, and I remember that God is prodigious in his love and mercy.

This Lent, how might we expel the judgment of others and ourselves to fully embrace the loving presence of God? Let us “celebrate and rejoice” the many blessing we have as the prodigal father suggests.

Connor Zanini '17





FEBRUARY 28 | THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Exod 3:1-8a, 13-15; Ps 103; 1 Cor 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9

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

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

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

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

Sara Bovat '14

FEBRUARY 29 | MONDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

“Athirst is my soul for the living God. When shall I go to behold the face of God? “

This Lent, is my soul truly thirsting for the living God or am I — to use a coaching phrase — just “going through the motions?” I dislike it when players just go through the motions. Either play with passion and energy, giving 100 percent of yourself all the time, or don’t get on the court!

I remember being in church once and hearing the congregation sing the lyrics “Soon and very soon we are going to see the king, Alleluia Alleluia.” It was being sung in a monotone, lifeless, uninspiring way. The congregation was, disappointingly, just going through the motions. How sad.

Is your soul athirst for the living God this Lent, or are you just going through the motions? We do not know the time nor the place when we shall be called to behold the face of God. Will you be ready when God calls you Home?

A team that simply goes through the motions will not win. So, too, we who go through the motions during Lent will not rejoice fully in the ‘win’ of Christ’s Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Bill Gibbons

Head Coach, Women’s Basketball





MARCH 1 | TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

Do you remember learning about the gifts of the Holy Spirit? Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, fortitude, counsel, piety, and fear of the Lord. I recall my religion teacher, Sister Christina, explaining to my class how each gift of the Spirit can be used to help strengthen us in faith, especially as we prepared to make our Confirmation. But one gift in particular was confusing to me — fear of the Lord. If our God is all good and all loving, then why should I fear Him?

Today's readings bring that question to light. In the book of Daniel, Azariah comes before the Lord, praying, "...we fear you and we pray to you." Azariah does not have an offering or sacrifice to find favor with God, as was the custom in the Old Testament; and perhaps this is reason enough to fear the almighty and all-powerful Lord. Despite this, Azariah goes on to pray, "But with contrite heart and humble spirit let us be received. ... Do not let us be put to shame, but deal with us in your kindness and great mercy."

Fear of the Lord need not mean that we are afraid or scared of God, but rather that we have a certain respect for the power and greatness of God — a God whose love for us is so great that he sent his own son to die for us so that we may have eternal life, a God who forgives our sins as though they are but tiny droplets in the ocean of his mercy, a God who accepts us where we're at, welcoming our "contrite hearts and humble spirits."

Micala Smith '16

Return To Me Intern

MARCH 2 | WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

Emily Muldoon '16





MARCH 3 | THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

“Thus says the Lord: This is what I commanded my people. Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper.”

Unfortunately, wanting my way instead of yielding to God’s way has caused me needless frustration and robbed me of joy. Let me explain. After losing his job, there was an extended period of time when my husband was unemployed. I fretted, “Lord, we have two children, a car payment and an escalating mortgage. I don’t want to be poor!” But, God wanted me to turn to him — to fully surrender everything, every part of me and my material possessions to him. His clear message was — turn to me, trust me and not your bank account. It was not easy, and I would not want to repeat the experience. The lessons learned about God’s faithfulness were invaluable. We never missed a meal, were able to pay all of our bills and did not lose our house or car. God provided in amazing and concrete ways including unexpected tickets for special events, a donated snow blower when we desperately needed one, and numerous gifts of food and gift certificates.

May we listen for and follow God’s lead. May we be responsive to the changes the Holy Spirit is “nudging” us to make. May we thank God for his involvement in our lives each day. Through prayer, scripture reading, and fellowship with other believers, we more effectively discern God’s will. When God buffs off our rough edges, we learn more about Him.

Jane Reynolds, P’05, ’08

Executive Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students

MARCH 4 | FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

When we focus on immediate success and self-gratification, recognition of God's presence in our lives is weakened. Today's readings, however, help us acknowledge God's presence in our lives.

Falling and rising up again characterize much of our lives, but we often forget that God is present throughout everything. Moreover, we tend to overlook the various ways in which God speaks to us; through our daily conversations and encounters with family and friends, or even performing random acts of kindness.

In today's Gospel, Jesus presents the two greatest commandments: to love God with all of our minds, hearts and souls and to love one another as ourselves. What is it about these commandments that relates to our failures and successes in life?

I am convinced that God is love. In moments of desperation, when I feel that God is absent, I focus all my attention on love, where I find a deep, personal encounter with God.

This Lenten season, how might we reorient our busy lives in order to find God and express love to all those we encounter on a daily basis?

Anthony John '16





MARCH 5 | SATURDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

Today's readings draw our attention to the importance of listening. The Gospel parable is addressed to those "who were convinced of their own righteousness and [who] despised everyone else." How recognizable today! But the way forward is clear: make love, not sacrifice; embrace the world with a contrite spirit and humble heart. The acclamation that precedes the Gospel is especially germane: "If, today, you hear his voice, harden not your hearts." But what does this mean in our lives? In hard times? In a world so filled with fear and so torn by strife?

I am reminded of the "Presupposition" found in the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. There, Ignatius instructs us *not* to harden our hearts to other people, other ideas, other perspectives:

[I]t should be presupposed that every good Christian ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor's statement, than to condemn it. If one cannot interpret it favorably, one should ask how the other means it. If that meaning is wrong, one should correct the person with love; and if this is not enough, one should search out every appropriate means through which, by understanding the statement in a good way, it may be saved (*Spiritual Exercises* 22, trans. O'Brien).

In having the difficult conversations our times demand, how easy it is to condemn others. But the presupposition must be love: *to listen* — with a humble heart and an open mind. "For it is love that I desire. ..."

Daniel DiCenso '98

Assistant Professor, Department of Music

MARCH 6 | FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT *(Laetare Sunday)*

Jos 5:9a, 10-12; Ps 34; 2 Cor 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The Prodigal Son is perhaps the bible story I remember best from childhood. I'm the middle child of three, and I saw the parable as being about fairness. As a child, I sided with the outraged older brother and felt bad for him. I was appalled by the disrespectful brashness of the younger son, essentially treating his father as though he were already dead. Later, I realized that the older son was no better. He seemed to resent being with his father, awaiting his death to lay claim to his inheritance. There was no joy in their relationship. I felt sorry for the father, endlessly caring but lacking a loving relationship with his sons.

We always have the chance to change, the chance to start over. The younger son finally seemed poised to change his heart and enter into a loving relationship with his father. The story ends before we get a chance to see if, in response to his father's words and actions, the older son will undergo the same reflective awakening that moved his younger brother. It is this chance to be a new self, a better self, that gives us hope.

Fairness goes beyond simply getting an equal share. Fairness is allowing people to live their lives without judgment or expectation. The foundation for developing this kind of understanding rests in the relationships first forged in family. Rereading the parable now, I am reminded that I am blessed beyond measure. I am grateful and thankful to God that my three grown children enjoy spending time together as a family, sharing mutual respect and kindness.

Ron Jarret, P'08, '13

Professor, Department of Chemistry and Associate Dean of the College





MARCH 7 | MONDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

Recently, I was asked to describe what I thought happened to someone after they died — my dear friend, a mother who lost her daughter to an excruciatingly difficult battle with cancer, posed this question to me. When I replied that I believed that we would spend eternity in perfect harmony with God, she asked me how I knew that to be true. I don't, but I believe, just as the royal official believed in today's Gospel.

So many times in the gospels, we witness Jesus performing signs and miracles to help us believe. I take comfort in these gospels because I think Jesus is reaching out and inviting us to the eternal Jerusalem, but it is not always easy to get there, or to believe that this is what awaits us. As we see today, the royal official knew that Jesus could save his dying son. This belief was an act of faith, and Jesus shows us that this faith is a gift given to those who are open to it.

Given news headlines around the globe, we are challenged to see the hand of God at work in world events. In the face of these struggles, I take comfort in my faith and in the promise we hear in the first reading: “The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there will always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create.”

The New Jerusalem awaits all those who seek it.

Ann Marie Connolly '74, P'10

MARCH 8 | TUESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

In these readings, I see water as a metaphor for love. The Angel starts to measure the water, but Ezekiel quickly understands that measurement of something so vast is meaningless. The Angel shows Ezekiel the power of the water to nourish myriad plants and animals (which feed and heal the people), and even freshen the sea. And so it is with love: love is unmeasurably vast and underlies all that sustains and alleviates our suffering.

The power of love to heal directly is the theme of the Gospel reading. But the sick man is unable to reach the water for he is too weak to compete for a space with the others: he needs the help of someone, and Jesus provides that to him.

I believe that love heals and nourishes all. In this time of great bitterness and divisiveness, only love has the power to bring us together and heal our wounds. But, like Ezekiel, we need someone to show us the vastness and power of love. Like the sick man, we sometimes need someone to bring us to it and receive its healing powers. In my own life, love has been what has sustained me through difficult times, and I have often needed someone to show me the way. Fortunately, like water, love is everywhere, and a part of everything: it flows through us and is around us, sometimes disguised as blood in our veins or water vapor in the air, but, over time it has the power to shape something as large as a mountain and something as small as a heart.

Miles Cahill

Professor, Department of Economics and Accounting





MARCH 9 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

After a Holy Cross baseball game in 1964, I was walking through O’Kane Hall when I viewed a painting on display at the Student Art Show. It was called “Alpha and the Omega” and was inspired by the mystical vision of the French Jesuit Theihard de Chardin.

At the top of the painting, the Alpha point, the hands of God fashion the universe at the dawn of creation; on a field of black, the colors red, yellow, brown and white depict the diversity of human cultures and races in the world. At the center, a crucified Christ intervenes in the world, representing victory over death and his central role in unifying the universe. At the base of the painting, the Omega point, the Alpha and the Omega merge to depict the completion of God’s Eternal Plan. At this spiritual convergence, the living and the dead, redeemed by Christ, will be rejoined in the loving unity with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the “Divine Milieu.”

Little did I know in 1964, that a casual detour through O’Kane Hall would lead me to a lifelong guide to assist me in my understanding of the Trinity and God’s Eternal Plan. For as we read in today’s Gospel: “Amen, amen, I say to you, the Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for what he does, the Son will do also ... for the Father loves the Son.”

John M. Kerry '66, P'96

MARCH 10 | THURSDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

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

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

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

Yarlennys Villaman '14

Member, Board of Trustees





MARCH 11 | FRIDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

How difficult it is to know when you are despised. Perhaps not even despised, but simply judged or cast aside. It is easy to get the sense from others when they judge us; it's so easy that we often invent it! "I saw the look she gave me; she hates me!" I like to think of myself as a kind, warm, and loving person ... until I sense that someone doesn't like me. Then it all changes; the tables have turned. It is easy to be Christ-like when we are appreciated; but when I'm hated, when I'm subject to a judgment ... forget it.

So imagine what it must have been like to be in Jesus' position. He — who has offered and taught nothing but love as he ministers in Galilee — knows that he is despised and feared, that he is wanted dead. We speak of "innocent" victims, but what is innocence except not having done a particular thing? Jesus is not merely an innocent victim, he is the holy victim: he is goodness itself reviled, tortured, and crucified. Yet, Jesus offers in return an even greater flow of love, as if the quantity of love offered grows in proportion to the quantity of hate heaped on him.

How can I do the same? Is my wickedness blinding me? What obstructs my vision so that I can't see beyond my desire to be admired? What impedes my love? Identify it; name it; pretend to hold it in my hand. Will I allow this little thing to stand between God and me?

Rebecca Krier '09

Former Fenwick Scholar

MARCH 12 | SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

I teach the history of Europe, aware that the long history of human societies is marked by war and violent conflicts. The prophet Jeremiah speaks to the cause of human conflict: it is a story of suspicion and unexplained resentment against others and it speaks to the inexhaustible capacity of people to express their anger by excluding or blaming other groups for the problems in society.

Today's Psalm seems to suggest a solution: the Lord is our refuge and a model for us as Christians. To provide refuge for those who are persecuted is a moral person's responsibility. Sadly, this isn't a very popular solution to many in the political arena. Some argue that providing safe haven for those who seek refuge could expose us and make our own society unsafe. Nothing good can come out of Galilee, insist the guards and Pharisees. And many of the people we know would say that nothing good can come from a part of the world so long troubled by violence.

But how can we be satisfied and at peace when so many historical examples show the evil of such indifference, when those seeking refuge are "like the lion's prey to be torn to pieces"? This Gospel calls on to try to better understand, to replace the "malice of the wicked," and to do what we can to interrupt the cycle of distrust and violence, by helping those who are its victims.

Theresa McBride

Professor, Department of History





MARCH 13 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Isa 43:16-21; Ps 126; Phil 3:8-14; John 8:1-11

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

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

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

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

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

Joseph MacNeill '16

Fenwick Scholar

MARCH 14 | MONDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

In 1991, I visited Casa Buonarroti in Florence, Italy and happened upon an exhibit dedicated to the works of Artemisia Gentileschi, a Baroque painter. The paintings depicted several biblical scenes in which women are protagonists, including “Susanna and the Elders.” I left the museum with a print of Susanna, my namesake, had it framed and eventually hung it in my office on campus. The work’s dramatic beauty has caught the attention of many a student over the past 18 years.

Despite my fondness for the print and for the story, in which Daniel (also my husband’s name) defends Susanna and ultimately saves her life, I had never actually read the biblical verses until I was asked to write this reflection.

As I read the verses, I reflected first on those women, in the past and present, who have suffered injustice, brutality, and oppression for simply being female. But one sentence in the story turned my thoughts in a different direction: “Here I am about to die, though I have done none of the things with which these wicked men have charged me.” The sense of injustice and futility expressed in these words brought to mind the Black Lives Matter movement, born in response to the tension between African-American men and police in this country. Susanna’s story reminds us that people continue to be treated unjustly because of who they are and how they are perceived; that abuse of power leads to injustice, which, in turn, breeds hopelessness; and that Daniel’s courage is an example to all.

Susan Amatangelo

Associate Professor, Department of Modern Language and Coordinator of Italian





MARCH 15 | TUESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

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

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

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

Rev. Nicholas Desimone '04

Pastor, St. Mary's Parish (Uxbridge, Mass.)

MARCH 16 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

I did not think twice when I was asked to give a Lenten reflection. How hard could it be? All I had to do was read a few scripture passages and write a response. But I took one look at my assigned Gospel reading and immediately felt that I had made a terrible mistake. Truth? Freedom? How could I ever adequately address these terms? What did I even think of these terms? As I read on, my confusion and concern amplified until I was absolutely certain that I could never understand this excerpt from the Gospel of John. It was only when I felt completely paralyzed by my confusion that I recognized the similarities between myself and the individuals Jesus addresses in this passage. I, like them, did not quite understand the Word of God, and, as a result, found myself unable to respond to it.

I find it very easy to say that I believe. All it requires is the declaration of two words: “I believe.” It is, however, much more difficult to truly understand the implications of this declaration. Belief in Christ is a call to action. I cannot simply hear God’s words and wait for a miracle. I must seek to engage with and fully understand those words, so that I may act upon them and become a follower of Christ.

Emily Conn '16





MARCH 17 | THURSDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

Let's Make a Deal!

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

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

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

John Mullman '82, P'07

Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 18 | FRIDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

These days, we may feel terror on every side, fearful of the violence in our world. We may also feel that others are whispering, watching to see us stumble: professors waiting with red pens to grade papers; colleagues ready to pass judgment on a project. Are we wearing the latest clothes, doing the coolest things, hanging out with the right people? Seeking praise and avoiding ridicule weigh on us.

The prophet Jeremiah and the psalmist remind us that even in our darkest moments when we feel most vulnerable, God is with us, saving us. The poet Mary Oliver writes that being among trees saves her. She is saved each day by flowers or snowflakes, foxes or a Botticelli. What lifts you up? Who saves you each day?

A hot cup of morning coffee, sun glistening on snow, a call from a dear friend, an encouraging word from a teacher or mentor, sounds of your children sleeping peacefully or coming through the door at the end of the day, the wag of a dog's tail, a favorite piece of music, lines of a poem that spring from your memory, a smile from a stranger, a sunrise or sunset, a peaceful moment of prayer or contemplation ...

How might our perspective change if we attended more intentionally to these graced moments? How might we save someone today with our words, our presence, and by doing the good works, however small, of the children of God?

Mary M. Doyle Roche '90

Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies





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

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

Joseph, a faith-filled, honest, upright man is visited by an angel in his sleep. He is told in a dream to take his fiancée, Mary, as his wife, even though she is pregnant with a child that was not his. How could he be sure and trust that dream? Was God really communicating with him?

Sometimes when God reveals something to us, it does not seem possible nor is it very clear. Our initial response is probably not an immediate “yes.” But God waits patiently...

This story of Joseph brings to mind an important moment in my life at Holy Cross. About 18 years ago, the ministry position of Wedding Coordinator became open. My director and my colleagues encouraged me to apply for the position. My initial reaction was “no.” I belong to a religious congregation and am not married. What do I know about marriage? After much prayer, I decided to apply, sure that I would not get the job. Surprise! Here I am, still happily learning about love and the many similarities between religious and marriage vows.

Since God’s voice is not always clearly discernible, we need to attune our minds and hearts to the whisper of God’s voice, and to stay open to the angels sent our way to guide us.

Thank you, St. Joseph, for teaching us how to listen, how to trust, how to be aware of the many ways God uses to help us on our way.

Who and where are the guiding angels in your life?

Sr. Lucille Cormier, S.A.S.V.

Associate Chaplain, Wedding Coordinator

MARCH 20 | PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Luke 19:28-40; Isa 50:4-7; Ps 22; Phil 2:6-11; Luke 22:14-23:56

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

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

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

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

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

Vice President for Mission





MARCH 21 | MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

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

We are called to be servants, but for many of us, the nature of how we are called to serve is not always clear. Today's readings speak of the service of our Lord, "establishing justice, opening the eyes of the blind, bringing out prisoners ... those who live in darkness." But what are we to do? Are there living examples of service to inspire us? Are we an example to others?

My grandmother, Catherine Peet Joyce, was a wonderful example of living a life of service. In the homily given during her funeral Mass, the priest described her as the leader of a group of "special ops forces of the Catholic Church." She was among a group of women, The Legion of Mary, who committed time every week to prayer, to visiting the sick and the lonely, and who "scoured the streets looking to save souls and save lives for the glory of Christ and His Blessed Mother." Her faith was not a "sometimes" thing or a Sunday event. Rather, it was integrated into her very being.

Her life is an inspiration to many of us to find ways to serve and who strive to be an example to others. But as her aging friends and foot soldiers of the Legion dwindled, her private words one day to her pastor left a question and a challenge for us. She asked, "Father, who will do this after we are gone? Who will do this after we are gone?"

Thomas P. Joyce, Jr. '82

Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 22 | TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

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

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

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

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

Marian Blawie '16





MARCH 23 | WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

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

“One of you will betray me.” Imagine the disciples’ surprise. The friends of Christ, privileged by their intimate relationship with Him, are accused of betrayal. Perhaps there were nervous reactions, gulps of wine, sideways glances or down-cast eyes and the desperate search for affirmation: “Surely, not I?” Judas betrays Christ for 30 pieces of silver. But, the insecurity of the apostles is a pointed reminder of our own complicity with sin. We all betray.

Was Judas lured by money? Some suggest Judas was gifted with numbers and finances. Our greatest gifts can also lead us to sin. *Surely, not I?* Not me, with my first-rate education, my work ethic or my tendency to stay fit. Yet, these very gifts (and more) are sometimes the factors that contribute to sin and imbalance in my life.

Or does Judas’ betrayal suggest his insistence on maintaining the status quo? Jesus understood the Prophet Isaiah’s encouragement to persist with love in the face of hardship, but Judas failed to grasp this motivation. Jesus’ prophetic teachings and unwavering solidarity with the poor threatened the prevailing power structure — a system that worked well for certain groups, but victimized and alienated many more.

Prophets also insist that we be self-critical. Judas’ sinful refusal to accept the social and religious changes that Jesus’ life demanded is instructive. Forming new habits and giving up what is comfortable is inconvenient, sometimes even wrenching. Which of my consumption patterns or attitudes may contribute to the victimization of others? How could the promise of Easter liberation motivate me to work toward freedom?

Mary King '95

MARCH 24 | HOLY THURSDAY

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

“Do this in remembrance of me.” Although I’ve heard this phrase thousands of times as a lifelong participant in Catholic liturgy, it strikes me as particularly significant in the Lenten season. Lent is a liturgical season of remembrance. As Christians we are called to remember the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and to reflect on how his life opens new possibilities for us in the present. Today’s Gospel gives us an important glimpse of what this new life looks like. Jesus, as “teacher” and “master,” engages in the humble service of washing the disciples’ feet.

More broadly, the relationship between remembrance and service is central to Christian liturgy. Liturgy (*leitourgia*) in the ancient Greek often is translated as “service.” On Holy Thursday we are called to perform liturgy in two ways. In worship, we give service to God by remembering the life of Jesus and by contemplating the events of the Last Supper. But, this divine service necessarily flows into the concrete service we give to others — particularly the “least of these” (as Jesus puts it in Matthew 25).

My prayer on this Holy Thursday is that we might respond to the invitation of these readings by witnessing to the unity of the love of God and the love of neighbor in our lives. In so doing we carry forward the legacy of St. Ignatius of Loyola as “contemplatives in action.”

Matthew Eggemeier

Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies





MARCH 25 | 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

“Crucify him!” I yelled with the crowds in response to Don Oscar, a well-known parishioner of the Hispanic Dolores Mission community. He had been tasked with playing Pontius Pilate that year in the re-enactment of the *Via Crucis* — the Way of the Cross.

Again, ‘Pilate’ asked: “Shall I crucify your king?” We replied, “Crucify him!”

Don Oscar swiftly ordered the ‘Centurions’ to begin the process of tying Don Jesús — dressed as Jesus — to the 12-foot cross that we had just finished processing throughout the neighborhood. This Guatemalan immigrant had already walked the majority of Boyle Heights barefoot, bearing this cross and being beaten by the crowds. He was covered in fake blood, and it was difficult to tell whether the look of exhaustion on his face was real or performed.

Knowing Don Jesús personally, knowing of the struggle his family had faced since arriving in this country, made my experience of this re-enactment of the Passion Story poignant. Don Jesús was of “one of those from whom people hide their faces.” As a result of his undocumented status, he was forgotten, “one held in no esteem,” one from whom people turn away.

We are called “to find God in all things.” As I reflect on the experience of “crucifying” Don Jesús, I am paying close attention not only to how I might be *finding* God but also how I might be *denying* God. How often am I like Peter who denies knowing Jesus? How often do I fail to see the face of Jesus in those who are forgotten? How often do I encounter the marginalized but then ignore them?

Karla Alvarado

Assistant Chaplain, Director of Domestic Immersion

MARCH 26 | HOLY SATURDAY

Gen 1:1-2:2; Ps 104; Gen 22:1-18; Ps 16; Exod 14:15-15:18; Rom 6:3-11; Luke 24:1-12

*God made the two great lights,
the greater one to govern the day,
and the lesser one to govern the night;
and he made the stars. Genesis 1:16*

As a physicist, I am intrigued by the entangled history of the Catholic Church and astronomy. But if you read my response to Genesis expecting some wisdom on how to reconcile religion and science, you will be disappointed.

Rather, I want to reflect on light and darkness. I don't seek the Deity in the days filled with joy, drenched in the light of the Sun. Indeed, it would be blinding to look heavenward then. But in times of despair and loss, I search longingly for some evidence of God. In the darkest of nights, I humbly turn my face to the sky and rejoice in the majesty of the distant galaxies. I do not feel insignificant; I feel exhilarated. I am *part of* this vast master plan of Creation —the infinities and eternities that are beyond the grasp of faith and reason.

Janine Shertzer

Distinguished Professor of Science, Department of Physics





MARCH 27 | EASTER SUNDAY – THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Ps 118; 1 Cor 5:6b-8; John 20:21-9

It has always intrigued me that on Easter Sunday our Gospel passage is not one of Jesus' post Resurrection appearances, but rather the visit of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John to the empty tomb. Their initial reaction to this discovery must have been total devastation. Not only has their friend and teacher suffered the cruel death of a common criminal, but now his tomb has been desecrated. Mary sees the stone removed from the entrance, Peter sees the burial cloths in one spot and the cloth that covered his head in another place, but the last to enter, John, sees a connection. If Jesus' body had been stolen, wouldn't it have been removed wrapped in its shroud? For John, then, emptiness gives way to possibility; puzzlement turns to hope, and faith will soon lead to an encounter with the risen Christ. Mary Magdalene's, Peter's and John's reactions move me to wonder in this Easter season: how will the risen Lord lead us from our own devastation, emptiness, or puzzlement into deeper faith and hope? And, how can Jesus' gift of deeper faith and hope become a gift for our troubled and suffering world?

Rev. Philip L. Boroughs, S.J.

President of the College





COLLEGE OF THE
Holy Cross

One College Street
Worcester, Massachusetts
01610