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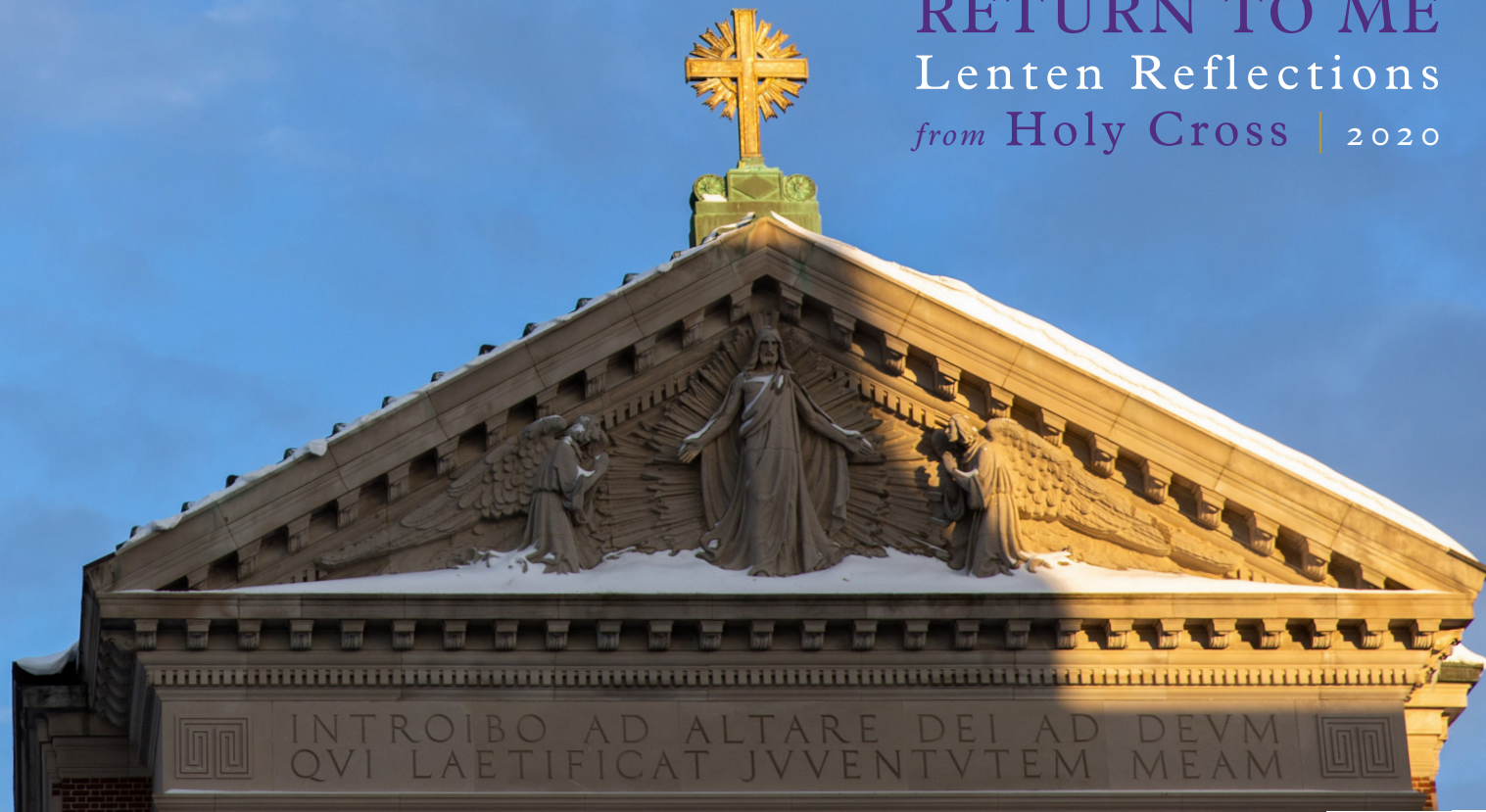
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RETURN TO ME
Lenten Reflections
from Holy Cross | 2020



COLLEGE OF THE
Holy Cross

One College Street
Worcester, Massachusetts
01610



INTROIBO AD ALTARE DEI AD DEVM
QVI LAETIFICAT IUVENTVTEM MEAM

Within these pages you will hear the 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 — personally reflect on the readings for the Mass of a given day. We hope that their own prayerful reflections will help you to pray more deeply during this Lenten season. We hope, too, that the reflections might help to serve 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, website administrators, and former coordinators of *Return to Me*. 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 the season of Lent, please visit our website: holycross.edu/returntome

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

Michelle Sterk Barrett

Director, Donelan Office of Community-Based Learning and 2020 Return to Me Coordinator

Michelle Sacco '21

2020 Return to Me Intern



FEBRUARY 26 | ASH WEDNESDAY

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

I was given the opportunity to reflect on four beautiful Biblical passages today. Yet just the first line of Joel suffices: “*Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning.*” Six months ago my son, Jairam (17), died in a mountain climbing accident. I have been mourning and weeping a lot. But I have not fasted. In fact, I have binged on the love so many have sent my way.

Two weeks after Jairam’s memorial I found myself before St. Ignatius’ meditation on the Two Standards: in a vast plain two “armies” face each other ready for battle. Under God’s standard (or flag) are so many whose love has sustained me in my darkest hour and whose examples have nourished my faith throughout the years. Under the opposing standard lie an army of temptations. The temptation of searching for “proof” of God through science; of evidence of life after death in accounts of near death experiences (NDEs); and of accepting that Jairam is no more just because his beautiful young body and gifted brain have turned to dust. For months I have stood in the middle of that plain, longing to join God’s standard, and yet incapable of doing so. Yet today, with ashes on my forehead, in humility and penance, I give thanks for the “community of saints” who have been steadfast in their prayers, accompanying me patiently as I return to God, to myself and to life.

Maria G. Rodrigues

Professor, Department of Political Science

FEBRUARY 27 | THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

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

Today’s reading presents the commandments, and our ability to grow closer in relationship with God through a set of choices: “*Today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and doom.*” While these competing choices appear evident, daily life can often muddle our decisions — presenting us with ambiguity and false gods to grapple with as we encounter decision after decision. For both of us, these false gods can take the form of self-doubt and distracting media outlets.

Toward the end of the reading, Moses offers us a resounding form of assurance in the face of this complex reality: “*Choose life, then, that you and your descendants may live, by loving the Lord your God.*” Choose life. In these two words, Moses nudges us towards an appreciation of what brings us joy and invites us to discover where God is present in our lives.

Complex decisions and false gods will likely never go away, and are only going to get more difficult and more prevalent as we move away from Mount St. James. With this in mind, Moses’ words still ring loud and clear. Amidst the confusion, discover where you feel God the most, and then: “*Choose life.*”

Christian Realbuto '20 and Caroline Babinski '20

Co-Presidents of the Student Government Association





FEBRUARY 28 | FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

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

On this first Friday after Ash Wednesday the readings focus on calling out others for their “wickedness” and fasting in a manner that pleases God. It reminds us of how we can all be human and flawed.

“Why do we fast, and you do not see it? Afflict ourselves, and you take no note of it?” It is sometimes difficult to avoid feeling that we have earned a reward in comparison with others. Through sacrifice, dedication, generosity, and hard work we might not expect anything in return; until we notice others that are being rewarded for far less. This can lead us to *“cry out full-throated and unsparingly.”* Who has not felt this way? In the first reading we are told that God wants us to fast in a particular way: by sharing our bread with the hungry, clothing the naked and freeing those who are oppressed.

During this Lenten season, how might we fast in ways that remembers others’ struggles and lets light *“break forth like the dawn?”*

Patrick Gemme

Sr. Technical Services Engineer, Information Technology Services

FEBRUARY 29 | SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

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

Every four years, there is one extra day, a leap year day, to keep our calendar aligned with the Earth’s movement around the sun. The additional day ensures that our days of darkness and our days of light are consistent from year to year.

There is Divinity in the darkness as well as the light, and the prophet Isaiah calls us to be that Divine light in the darkness. How can I do that? According to Isaiah, by removing the darkness of oppression, false accusation and malicious speech and replacing it with the light of bestowing bread on the hungry and satisfying the afflicted. I have an uncomfortable sense of being in darkness when I know that someone is falsely accused or maligned, or when I am confronted with oppression — homelessness, hunger, poverty, that may not affect me directly, but I know is causing the suffering of others. In the face of such overwhelming needs, it is easy to say that my little light will not make a difference in the world. But I need to remind myself that it will: acts of kindness and compassion are the Divine light shining in the darkness.

St. Ignatius of Loyola said “Love is shown more in deeds than in words.” On this leap year day, I am grateful for one more day this year to try to be a tiny little light, knowing I am part of a wider community also striving to be the Divine light in our world each day.

Kathleen Burgess (Hughes) '79 P12





MARCH 1 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7; Ps 51; Rom 5:12-19; Matt 4:1-11

Today's reading from the Gospel of Matthew presents Satan's trials and temptations of Christ: in the desert, the city and then on a mountain top. Christ withstands each test and resists each temptation. The passage is unforgettable and powerful in its depiction of Christ's wisdom. But what does it say to us? What can we take from this extraordinary encounter?

One thing to note here is that Christ's inaction – his holding back and resisting – is what distinguishes Him. His choice not to take any of the actions proposed by Satan lies at the heart of the passage. And so perhaps it is the restraint exhibited by Christ in this passage that we can try to model in our lives. Our moments of refraining from one thing or another can be some of our most constructive moments. In our day-to-day interactions, we may be our best selves, our most loving selves, when ready for opportunities to hold back, to resist an additional remark, to encourage others to take the lead.

Christ's celebrated show of prudence and restraint in Matthew's Gospel thus leads us to ask: When, in our actions and our words, can holding back be a way of moving things forward? How, in our relationships with others and in our communities, can restraint be loving and productive?

Timothy Joseph '98

Associate Professor, Department of Classics

MARCH 2 | MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

"Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am Holy." Initially when I read this sentence of Leviticus I felt inadequate. How can I be holy just in the way God is holy? However, the readings go on to explain how to be holy by doing justice to others and loving *"your neighbor as yourself."* We are to treat others with respect, love, and fairness, no matter the person.

Let this reading be a reminder that although we are sinners, we are still capable of striving to be holy just in the way God is. The best way to do this is through our treatment of others — take a moment today to ask yourself if your actions and attitudes towards others are holy in the way God is. God gives us the strength to respect and love others and be holy each day. Lent is the perfect time to slow down and evaluate how we treat others in order to become a more holy person.

Meghan Pfau '20





MARCH 3 | TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

Today's scriptures refresh the soul during this time of fasting. In the sixth chapter of Matthew, Jesus said, "*When you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face.*" How fitting that the psalmist's advice so beautifully intertwines with Christ: "*Look to him that you may be radiant with joy, and your faces may not blush...*"

As Isaiah stated, God's word will not go forth without having an impact. Meditating on scripture will certainly make a difference in our souls. In my experience, it is like a trip to the beach with the hope of getting an impressive summer tan. The forecast is good: no rain clouds. I pack my cooler and sunscreen then head to the sandy shores for some rays. After a few solid hours in the sun, I head home.

I shower up and look in the mirror to see the start of a ruddy anticipated tan. Nothing. Still the same pale old self. I ask myself disappointedly, "What's up with that?" Later that night, I wake up to burning sensations on my shoulders and back. I turn on the bathroom light, look into the mirror and see a boiled lobster! The sun's rays DID go forth and NOT return void!

That's how it is when we spend time exposing our heart, mind and soul to God's word. We may not notice anything at first, but with time, the result will certainly be reached: transformation, refreshment and a closer walk with Christ.

Jerry Maday P23

Director of Transportation

MARCH 4 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

Year after year, through our individual and ecclesial ritual observances, we are invited to join with the Church in communal acts of penance and remembrance during these forty days of Lent. The Ninevites, a foreign people who did not worship the Hebrew God, took a chance in listening to Jonah and together performed ritual actions of repentance. They humbly heeded his warning and placed their belief and trust in Jonah's God. One of the great gifts of Lent is remembering that we are not alone in our ongoing need for deeper conversion. It is good for us, as individuals and as a community of believers, to acknowledge our limits and need for change, to return to God in trust and open the doors of our stubbornly hard hearts to God's gracious love and mercy.

After the Ninevites were spared and God forgave their rampant injustice, Jonah went off and sulked. He was filled with resentment for God's eagerness to forgive the foreigners. One of the great challenges of Lent is to let go of our own resentment and accept the healing grace that God offers to all, even our worst enemies. Can we, as Jonah eventually did, grow in our acceptance and tolerance of the "other" who also long for God's mercy and kindness? Jesus, the one who is "*greater than Jonah,*" reveals God's loving mercy and makes it fully available to those who seek it with humble and contrite hearts.

Jacqueline Regan (McNiff) '83





MARCH 5 | THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Est c:12, 14-16, 23-25; Ps 138; Matt 7:7-12

Ask. Seek. Knock. I have personally never been a fan of prayers of petition. I have never thought that this kind of prayer best represents the nature of our relationship with God, or that we should be bargaining in prayer. Why, then, is Jesus encouraging us to ask in this passage? Doesn't God already know what we want?

I think Jesus is encouraging us to assume an appropriate sense of humility in the face of a merciful and all-powerful God. Rather than just assume that God knows what we want, we need to ask — to put our deepest desires into words. When we pray from a position of humility, we elevate our desires beyond the selfish and mundane (like a winning lottery ticket) and instead focus on those things which should be at the heart of a life filled with meaning and purpose.

And even after we ask God to help us fulfill those deep desires, Jesus encourages us to act — to knock. While our prayer may seem passive, God wants us to take action; to get outside our comfort zone and knock on that unopened door, not knowing who or what is on the other side.

What will you ask for today? What is it that you seek? What door do you need God's help opening?

John Mullman '82 P07
Member, Board of Trustees



MARCH 6 | FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

“Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”

As a high school student, I once heard a theologian visiting my parish describe the essence of Christianity as a “self-emptying gift” — an outpouring of love for God and the people around us. I am thankful now to attend Holy Cross, a college that constantly calls us to practice this sort of self-gift in the spirit of *magis*. But sometimes, in the rush of papers and tests and campus activities, I find myself forgetting what lies behind the *magis*, what lies behind the push to be and do more. Are my actions reconciled to God, reconciled to a tradition of love and understanding? Or are they simply reconciled to my own will, my own ego?

As the psalmist says today, *“If you, O Lord, mark iniquities, who can stand?”* In Lent, we are all called to reconciliation, to reflect on how our actions do or do not reconcile with God's will for our lives and to repent and make amends for the times we have failed to witness God's love to those around us. In this reconciliation, we have the opportunity to find more joy in our own acts of giving. We do not just give of ourselves; we unite ourselves to God and give of His gifts.

Paige Cohen '21



MARCH 7 | SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

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

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

There are few concepts more central to Christianity than loving your enemies. There is profound beauty in the idea of rising above anger and hatred to embrace the idea that, despite our differences, we are all human beings sharing a common world. In practice, though, it’s no doubt one of the hardest to live up to on a day-to-day basis. I believe that there is good in everyone, and I turn to my faith for the strength to get through highly charged situations and hard feelings to show love and respect for those around me. That does not mean it is always easy.

In today’s polarized world, even the term “enemy” has roared into everyday use with unprecedented frequency and intensity. Against this backdrop, I turn to another sentiment expressed in today’s readings. It is the statement that the heavenly Father *“makes his sun rise on the bad and the good and causes the rain to fall on the just and the unjust.”* It reminds me that even as we may express deep divides outwardly, in our hearts, we all have fears, dreams, moments of joy and moments of sadness. This Lenten season let us pray that, together, we find the strength to focus on our similarities, not our differences. Through this, we can make the most of the incredible gift that is our time together in this beautiful world.

Daniel Ricciardi '06
Investment Officer

MARCH 8 | SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 12:1-4a; Ps 33; 2 Tm 1:8b-10; Matt 17:1-9

Our faith tells us that we are loved into existence: that we are held in that love, sustained, nurtured and returned to the fullness of that love at the end of our pilgrimage here on earth.

The story of the Transfiguration reminds me that each and every one of us is on a journey in which we are to hear God say, again and again, *“Behold, you are my beloved child in whom I am well pleased.”* These are words of love, God’s love for us — words that give shape, direction, meaning and vibrancy to our lives and to who we are — leading us always more deeply into the life, love and heart of God.

While still confused and misunderstanding Jesus, three disciples in wonder and fear witness his transformation and hear a voice from the heavens say, *“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, listen to him.”* Jesus then touches them and tells them not to fear. When they raise their eyes, they are left with and see only Jesus.

With the eyes of our heart focused on Him along our own life journey – especially when the grip of fear, anxiety, doubt and even sin would throw us off the path — we, too, are to hear the words “You are my beloved child in whom I delight.” We need only let His love embrace every most hidden part of us to realize the ongoing transformation that makes us God’s beloved children.

Rev. Thomas D. McMurray, S.J.

*Member of the Holy Cross Jesuit Community
Director of Mission & Identity, Nativity School of Worcester*





MARCH 9 | MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

Today (as I write this) is the First Sunday of Advent, when Isaiah urges us to go to the “*mountain of the Lord*” so that He may “*teach us*” to “*walk in His paths.*” Fast forward to our Lenten reading, Daniel speaks of the Lord’s “*merciful covenant toward those who love you and observe your commandments.*” Despite our sins, the psalmist prays, “*Lord, do not deal with us according to our sins.*” Luke’s gospel provides direction as to how to “*walk in His paths,*” writing, “*the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.*” Quoting Jesus, he elaborates: “*Stop judging . . . Stop condemning. . . Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you.*”

What a timely and necessary message for us living in 2020. How many of us have increasingly judged, condemned, failed to forgive or to give in recent years? How many of us only hear, listen to and respect those who are like us, share our ideas, and belong to “us?” How many of us have unknowingly or unintentionally contributed to an increasingly divided society of “us” and “other,” determining who does or does not deserve the good treatment that Jesus recommends in Luke’s reading? Our task lies not simply in doing good to “us,” but in heeding the call to “*be merciful, just as your Father is merciful,*” to all, including anyone perceived as “other.” Only then we can move forward, together, toward the graces awaiting us in the Resurrection.

Susan Cunningham

Associate Director, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies
Lecturer, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

MARCH 10 | TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Is 1:10, 16-20; Ps 50; Ez 18:31; Matt 23:1-12

Today’s readings focus on the making of “*a new heart and a new spirit.*” They challenge us to view ourselves in a humble and honest way while recognizing our sinfulness. In the psalm, God tells us what He wants is not our sacrifices and burnt offerings, but our pureness and gratitude. For it is useless to cover our sins with offerings when we do not “*wash ourselves clean.*” When humans turn against God while hypocritically repeating God’s words, God questions: “*Why do you recite my statutes, and profess my covenant with your mouth?*”

In the Gospel, Jesus also criticizes the Scribes and the Pharisees for similar hypocrisy. He asks us to do and observe what the Scribes and the Pharisees tell us, but to not follow their example for “*they preach but they do not practice.*”

This is a tendency that any of us can fall into in our daily lives: not practicing the words that we preach. Today’s readings remind us of the danger of humans’ hubris and to constantly be aware of self-renewal, preparing a “*new heart and a new spirit.*”

Ani Zhu '22





MARCH 11 | WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

A common theme in today's readings is that Jeremiah, the psalmist and Jesus are each aware that the crowds are plotting against them. Jeremiah and the psalmist respond by asking the Lord to remember their devotion to him and to rescue them. While Jesus is not looking to be rescued, he is faced with the mother of the sons of Zebedee asking that her sons be given a place of honor in Heaven after his sacrifice. These readings raise the question: Do we too reach out in prayer with a sense of entitlement or when it is convenient like the mother in the Gospel, or is there is an opportunity to be more like Jeremiah and the psalmist to devote time every day for the Lord?

Further, while we are hopefully not worrying about plots to kill us like Jeremiah and the psalmist, we probably can relate to the statement by the crowd in the first reading, "*And so, let us destroy him by his own tongue; let us carefully note his every word.*" How often do we and those around us analyze the words of others trying to find fault? How might we instead take the opportunity during this Lenten season to look for the best in everyone?

Peter M. Zona '14

Director, Bookstore and Post Office Services

MARCH 12 | THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

I wake up early each day, go to my exercise class, come home and help with the kids and race off to work. Before you know it, I look at the clock and I am running late to get home and squeeze in "quality time" with my wife and kids before I close my eyes and do it again the next day. I think of today's Gospel and start scratching my head over my priorities and thinking how many times I walked by Lazarus that day and never took notice.

There is a long standing family statement that we use: no matter the challenge, we do not back down and instead shout "Not today!" I will not make this mistake again today and I will seek out Lazarus wherever he lives. I will look for him in my kitchen, in my neighborhood, at the gas station, I will look for him at the food store, the office and while walking through a parking lot...everywhere!

And I will not only think of the food he needs, I will provide him with the love we all yearn for. That might come in the form of a reassuring high-five for my daughter before she goes off to school, maybe it is an unexpected hug for my wife or a sincere smile and "thank you" for the bagger who packs my groceries. I pray that I will be there for others just as Jesus has been there for me, everywhere, anytime and without condition.

Mark Roman '92 P23





MARCH 13 | FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

I've come to believe that there is a remarkable amount of wisdom in the phrases we were taught as little children. Today's readings call to mind one such phrase: "Don't judge a book by its cover." In the first reading, we see Joseph, cloaked in a tunic, derided by his brothers as a "*master dreamer*" who deserves to be murdered or sold into servitude. In the Gospel, we are told that, "*The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.*"

Might the brothers have sat down and talked with Joseph instead? Perhaps they would have found their way to mutual understanding and a peaceful resolution. Might the builders have considered that they may have mistakenly cast aside a perfectly good stone in their search for a cornerstone? Maybe they would have realized their error before it was too late.

All too often, we seem to find ourselves and those around us judging one another too quickly or too harshly. We have all sometimes been the brothers and the builders. In those moments, we should pause and remember these verses...and the old adage we were taught as children. How many of us have opened books we didn't expect to enjoy, started reading and had our minds completely changed? How many of us have met people we didn't expect to get along with, started talking and ended up making a new friend?

Gregory Burnep '09

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science

MARCH 14 | SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

I forgot my homework. I missed a meeting. My friends are upset with me.

Every day I wake up and I make mistakes. Although tough to admit, it's most certainly true: mistakes are inevitable. Luckily for us, it is not the end of the world, because we are all imperfect and God knows this. It has taken me a long time to reach that conclusion and understand it in my heart. The love of God is like the love of a parent for their child. And while in the eyes of my parents, I have certainly made mistakes, I never doubt their love for me and their willingness to look past my imperfections. God's love is even more devoted.

In the Gospel today, Jesus tells the story of the Lost Son, a story of error and then redemption. We often tell ourselves "life will be better if I just skip this class, if I just avoid this confrontation, if I ignore this responsibility." In the story, the son returns and his father's joy is palpable. His son has returned to life, "*he was lost and now is found.*"

I imagine this is what God feels like when we ask for forgiveness: overjoyed, delighted, open-armed. The readings today remind us that God will always welcome us back no matter how long we have been away. What a comfort to know that through our imperfections and errors, we can always find a way back to God.

Olivia Hastie '22





MARCH 15 | THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Ex 17:3-7; Ps 95; Rom 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42

Just as the Israelites questioned Moses, at times I have similarly questioned God's intentions. One moment in particular stands out to me.

In 2010, I was driving with my sister from Las Vegas to Washington state for the Thanksgiving holiday. I was looking forward to seeing family and friends — especially my friend, Fr. Roger Gillis. Earlier that year Roger had been diagnosed with cancer and was in hospice care in West Seattle. Unfortunately, our plans to meet the Tuesday before Thanksgiving were cancelled when Seattle was hit by the biggest snowstorm in years. Knowing Roger was in his final days, I was disappointed that I lost my chance to say a final goodbye to my good friend.

After spending a wonderful holiday with family and friends in Seattle, we began our drive back the day after Thanksgiving. Not long into our journey home, we encountered car trouble that took us back to my parent's house. Frustrated and angry that we were delayed, we began to make alternate plans to get home.

What I could not initially see is that this “annoying” delay would give me the opportunity to see Roger one last time. The day I finally arrived back in Vegas was the day Roger passed away. Had we not had the car trouble, I would have missed my chance to say a final goodbye. In looking back on the events of that trip, I realize that God sometimes has a way of making things work out as they should, even when a situation initially leads to feelings of despair.

Patricia Ring

Registrar

MARCH 16 | MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

Sometimes the answer is right in front of us. In Kings, we have Namaan who is an Aramean soldier and in a position of privilege. He also has a disease — leprosy — that jeopardizes his position and standing. He is ready to do what it will take to get healed. He learns of the prophet Elisha and travels a great distance with his entourage seeking healing. As he arrives, Namaan gets angry that the prophet does not come out to greet him but instead sends a messenger with instructions. He then gets even angrier at the fact he is told to wash in the local river — he could have saved himself all of this travel and done this back near his home.

How often are we also blind to answers that are right before us and get distracted by the way we want or expect God to respond? Namaan is looking for actions and healing to come to him in a particular way. Then one of those in his company says “*If the prophet had told you to do something extraordinary, would you not have done it?*” It catches his attention and allows him to see that his opportunity for healing is simple and in plain sight. It may not come in the form that he wants or expects it. In this Lenten season, how might we have the eyes to see the opportunities that are right in front of us?

Rev. John H. Vaughn '82





MARCH 17 | TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

In order to truly understand today's reading from Daniel, we need to go back and look at the events before and after. Azariah, the man who arose from the fire to pray was one of three Jewish men who were cast into a furnace for refusing to pay homage to a nine-story obelisk commissioned by the king of Babylon. They were brought to the king and asked why they did not worship this object and were given an opportunity to reconsider. In the name of God, they did not.

In the world we live in, the temptations to deny God are great. How often have we heard peers deride our faith yet we remain silent? How often have we done things we know to be wrong, but have made excuses and expected God to understand and forgive? I know the answer in my case is, way too often. How often have we stood silent to preserve our relationships? How often have we denied what was right in order to preserve our livelihood or our comfort? Again, in my case, way too often.

Azariah and the other men had nothing to offer God but a *“contrite heart and humble spirit.”* They entrusted their fate to God and did not deny him when they could have easily been spared. It is my hope, that in investigating our faith in a much deeper way and then actually living the truths that we find, we will live fulfilling and meaningful lives in the eyes of God.

Jeff Oliver P22

Director of Strength and Conditioning, Department of Athletics



MARCH 18 | WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

Today's readings remind us that all of God's gifts are good. Further, we are called to act on what God gives us, where God puts us and what we see going on around us. Moses urges *“take possession of the land which the Lord...is giving you.”*

If there is one thing that I have come to learn in my time of endless opportunity here at Holy Cross, it is that God wants us to do more than just survive: He wants us to thrive. God made us for so much more than the worries we have about how we are going to get through the day, how we look or the test we didn't do so hot on. This land that God is giving us is the freedom to be who we are, so let us take possession of it!

It is okay that we do not have it all figured out because that is where God's perfect timing comes in. It is in times of transition, like our college years or the Lenten season, that God presents us with some of the greatest opportunities: new experiences and friendships, a renewed lifestyle and a time to reflect. It is on us, however, to fearlessly take hold of these gifts and pursue what God has willed for us. This Lenten season, let us continue to call on God, ask Him for clarity, be observant of His signs and trust that what He is making of our lives is part of His grand plan.

Ben Snuffer '22



**MARCH 19 | SOLEMNITY OF JOSEPH,
HUSBAND OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

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

In a homily on the Solemnity of St. Joseph in 1943, Alfred Delp, a German Jesuit priest who was executed by the Nazis in 1945, preached that the figure of St. Joseph held an important message for the Church and the world. Delp stated that in the midst of these troublesome times, the world needs a righteous person — one who was called by God, did God’s will and saw the world from God’s perspective for the sake of others. A righteous person, like Joseph, becomes an intersecting point for God’s love for others because he “is a rock, capable of being the starting-point of new settlements for people who have become homeless, who have been dragged into the turbulent water [of the time].” Delp remarks that his country has fallen into a terror because “we no longer have people who serve, rather we only have people who want to be like gods.” The striving to be like gods will only lead people to a bitter resignation. The one act that “makes one truly human is the surrender of one’s heart and the striving to make all hours of one’s existence and work into one great adoration.”

To this end, Delp’s words speaks to us this Lent. Ours is an age of anxiety and turbulence. On the Solemnity of St. Joseph, let us heed Delp’s exhortation to be people who desire to give themselves over to God’s call and exist in solidarity with the vulnerable.

Rev. Peter Nguyen, S.J.
Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 20 | FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

Am I worthy? Each of us wrestles with self-doubt. For some it is an occasional bout, for others it can be all consuming. Have we led a good life? Do we live by the commandments? Are we worthy of heaven? Behind these doubts is a fundamental fear of the unknown. It is fear that drives people to war, to hatred, to commit the very sins that could prevent our redemption.

Today’s reading provides the antidote to fear, giving us hope. When asked which of the commandments was most important, Jesus said: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.*”

While I know I am a sinner, I find hope in these teachings. I do love the Lord with all my heart and I do love my neighbor as myself. While I may never be perfect in the eyes of the Lord, like the scribe in today’s reading, I do understand these fundamentals. And like the scribe, I believe in Jesus’ reassuring words: “*You are not far from the Kingdom of God.*”

His word teaches that there is no need to wait for heaven. If we turn back to the Lord today we will be forgiven, basically giving us heaven on earth while we live. His word gives me hope, the antidote to fear, and gives me the strength to continue on in faith.

Jim Keyes '77
Member, Board of Trustees





MARCH 21 | SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

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

For me, one of the most unique aspects of Lent are the stational liturgies in Rome. The stational system was developed in late antiquity, and is one of the most ancient forms of communal Christian worship. The liturgies involve a service of worship — usually a Mass — where each day the Pope processes out to a different church to celebrate with the community.

Each year, on the Saturday of the Third Week of Lent, the Pope would celebrate Mass at the Church of Santa Susanna. One of the city's earliest churches, Santa Susanna was first a house (*domus ecclesiae*) where Christians would meet when the religion was prohibited by the Roman Emperor. It remains relatively small, and not known for its artistic reputation; the church is overshadowed by its neighbor, Santa Maria della Vittoria, which houses Bernini's exquisite statue of Theresa of Ávila. Santa Susanna is not a tourist destination; it is a working church, ancient and quintessential.

Regardless, Santa Susanna has persisted within the stational system for more than a millennium. Like the tax collector of the parable, it has remained steadfast and humble. Though I am attracted to beautiful art, I admire the functional images and design of a church like Susanna; and one where, through worship there, we are connected to the earliest practitioners. The church is a reminder that we are not made more glorious by flashy artworks or set apart by dramatic shows of worship, but rather through the enduring power of humble and communal devotion.

Meredith Fluke

Director, Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Art Gallery

MARCH 22 | FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

1 Sam 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Ps 23; Eph 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

In today's Gospel Jesus heals a blind man. Before the miracle, Jesus' disciples ask Him "*Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?*" Jesus replies: "*Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him.*" Then Jesus puts clay on the man's eyes and asks him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam.

Jesus, with his simple words and gentle touch, shows his great love and mercy for us. Jesus loves us immensely and calls us to follow Him and treat each other with love, compassion and without judgment. He also teaches us that by walking with Him in life, the work of God may be made visible through us too, if we let Him heal us.

In the readings Jesus also mentions: "*While I am in the world, I am the light of the world,*" meaning that if we come closer to Him, He not only opens our eyes, but He also lights up our path and deepens our faith.

In this Lenten season I pray for Jesus' gentle touch to our eyes, so that we can see and walk with Him as his disciples did, being "*light in the Lord.*"

Jimena Collingwood

Assistant Director, Office of Study Abroad





MARCH 23 | MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

“Thus says the Lord:

‘Lo, I am about to create new heavens and a new earth;

The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind.’...”

“What a great reading for a Monday!” This was my first thought upon reading this passage.

On Monday, refreshed by restful and reflective weekend, I begin a new work week with a renewed energy for my pursuits. The stresses and setbacks of last week are behind me. I have a new week ahead in which much still remains possible. Will there be challenges and setbacks this week? Certainly. But these setbacks and challenges will only be temporary and so my pursuits can still continue. While there are and have been goals I have failed to meet and relationships I may have damaged, weakened, or ignored in the past, this reading reminds that that all is in the past. My only option is to look forward and think about what I want to pursue, what relationships I want to build, strengthen or repair. Whether they be personal or professional, for my family or for my community, for myself or for my faith, today’s reading assures me that what I am pursuing is still possible because of what He has planned, for what He has planned for me will be forever.

Brian Duggan ‘96

Past President, Holy Cross Alumni Association

MARCH 24 | TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

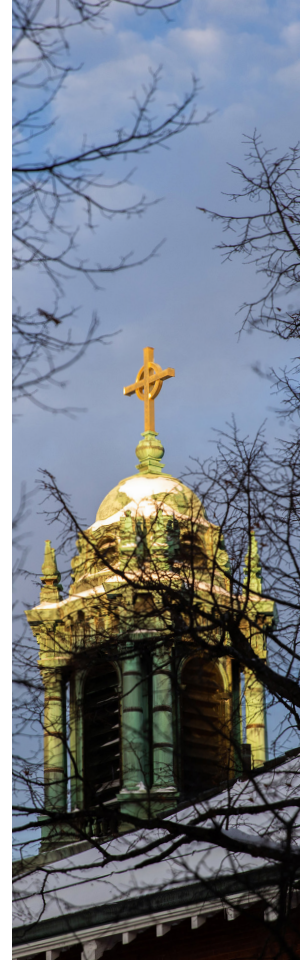
“Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live, and there shall be abundant fish, for wherever this water comes the sea shall be made fresh. Along both banks of the river, fruit trees of every kind shall grow;”

In reading this text we reflected on our own time spent outside. Upon reflection, we found that every day we are wading in a river of resources. The Earth is a God-given gift meant for humans to take care of and, in return, it supplies us with food, livelihood and a place to exist. When thinking about this, we agonize over the future of our existence here on Earth. Future generations will inherit the care of this planet from us, and with it the environmental impacts of the generations before them. It is imperative that we act now to better care for our Earth and its climate.

God created the Earth so beautifully that there are no mistakes. Each animal, landscape, river and tree has a purpose. We have a purpose. Inspired by the international climate strike movement and youth leaders such as Greta Thunberg, as well as the Jesuits’ Universal Apostolic Preferences, we ask everyone to hear this call to love and protect the natural world. It is our duty as children of God. It is our duty to protect our common home. In this Lenten season and beyond, how might you answer this call?

Emma Powell ‘20 and Fatima Oseida ‘20

SGA Co-Directors of Environmental Concerns





MARCH 25 | SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Senior Lecturer, Spanish Department
Director, Directed Independent Spanish Curriculum*

MARCH 26 | THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

Growing up my family had a regular Lenten practice of attending the Stations of the Cross. They were crowded events in our parish whether one attended the service on Friday afternoon (often for school students) or on Friday evening (for adults). For fourteen times a priest would lead us in the prayers with a steady rhythm of genuflection and standing. When the priest prayed, “We adore thee Lord and we bless thee” we would respond, “Because by thy Holy Cross thou has redeemed the world.” Regardless of age it was quite a workout. And at each station we would sing a verse of the traditional hymn *Stabat Mater*.

The Stations of the Cross, while often practiced, do not bring in the same crowds as they used to. Still I find that there is something profound when one engages in this rhythmic Lenten prayer. Indeed, the Stations invite us to imagine the incarnation, not in the birth of Jesus, but in His tortuous death. And through it all there stands his Mother, Mary.

Many years the refrain of *Stabat Mater* has stayed with me as I find myself drawn to a Lenten journey with Jesus and his sorrowful mother. What intimate and incarnate words they are:

“At the cross her station keeping,
Stood the mournful Mother weeping,
Close to Jesus to the last.”

Let us pray that our Lenten journeys may bring us closer into the intimate mystery of Jesus and His loving Mother.

Rev. C. Kevin Gillespie, S.J.

Member, Board of Trustees





MARCH 27 | FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

During the Easter season we celebrate both Jesus' divinity and Jesus' humanity. In today's reading, Jesus displays a human emotion that all can relate to: fear. John writes that Jesus indeed had fears; he did not wish to travel to Judea because he knew people were trying to kill him. Despite a trust in God and a knowledge of His own divinity, human fear still existed in Jesus.

Our faith is indeed one response to fear. Faith allows us to see hope and goodness despite practical realities. Too often in our lives, we let our fears dictate how we act and do not let our faith be open and on display. It is at this moment that Jesus has had enough — He listens to others questioning His divinity and finds the faith to speak out: *"I did not come on my own..."*

None of us are alone. In our darkest moments, God is always among us in our family, our friends and strangers, in the company we are blessed to keep. *"I know him because I am from him."* The faith to know where we are from and where we are going should be enough, but we all have doubts at times. We all have fear, including Jesus. But each day, we are indeed in good company. Let us never forget that company that God gave to us so unconditionally. And let us continually strive to return to those in fear the same company of faith.

Bill '93 and Sara Miller (Dodman) '93 P23

MARCH 28 | SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

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

"Does our law condemn a man before it first hears him and finds out what he is doing?"

While the other Pharisees bicker over the law and Jesus' teaching, Nicodemus reminds his peers that the law calls them to judge justly. It is difficult for the Sanhedrin to even contemplate listening to the words of Jesus the Galilean, especially considering the threat Jesus' teaching poses to their own authority. Earlier in the Gospel of John, Jesus implores his followers to *"Stop judging by appearances, but judge justly."* Unfortunately, Jesus himself did not always face a fair trial.

In order to promote justice in our world, it is important to judge justly as Jesus asked. Parents, teachers and mentors have implored us to withhold judgement on others, and they are right. But, judgement is an inalienable part of the human psyche. So then, if we must judge, how do we judge justly? Let us not stop short at simply withholding judgement on others based upon appearances. How can we move past that surface level? How can we truly listen to our peers and find out what they are doing, as Nicodemus implored? My grandfather always directed us to *"walk a mile in someone else's shoes."* In being empathetic to another's position, we can come to better understand the driving forces of their life. How might we show empathy to our friends and strangers, in hopes that we can walk along together and find deeper understanding before rushing to judgement?

Marty Murphy '20





MARCH 29 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Ez 37:12-14; Ps 130; Rom 8:8-11; John 11:1-45

I count my brother and sister among God's greatest gifts to me. Several years ago, Jeffrey Kluger wrote that siblings are the only people we may know, and who may know us, our entire lives, beginning to end. I was stunned, momentarily. One of my earliest, and most peaceful, memories is of lying next to my baby sister in a patch of sun beneath a window. We grow and change, but the traces of who we were and who we want to be are mixed together in ways that only someone who has known us for a long time can see, understand, challenge and appreciate. What a gift it is to have a loving sibling, to strive to be one.

When I read today's Gospel, I couldn't help but notice the repetition of the words "her brother" and "her sister." Lazarus was not just a man—he was Martha and Mary's brother. I was struck by the immense love Mary and Martha had for their brother—and how much this love affected Jesus, such that when he went to see Lazarus in the tomb, he, too, wept. The miracle Jesus offered is profound for so many reasons. But the most poignant part of the story on this read, for me, was the way that Jesus was moved by Martha and Mary's love for their brother—and how this love led them and their community to deeper faith.

What a deep gift from God all those we consider brothers and sisters are.

Kristina Reardon

Associate Director, Center for Writing



MARCH 30 | MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

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

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

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

Michelle A. Mondoux

Associate Professor, Department of Biology



MARCH 31 | TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

The readings for today call to mind the tensions of the Lenten season—even after the Lord has led the Israelites out of Egypt, their human fears overtake them and darken their freedom. On the one hand there is the promise—that the Lord will walk with them and be their God; on the other there is their all-too-human second guessing—why, then, don't we have more food and water, why, then, does the Lord seem to “hide his face?” How hard to wait in the darkness of what we cannot know. How hard to wait when what lies before us does not make sense from our human perspective. In Moses' last speeches, he reminds the Israelites that the choice before us is always one of life or death.

In John's gospel the Pharisees have unwittingly chosen death. Like the Israelites, the Pharisees are preoccupied by their own needs and desires. Like the disciples, they do not want to answer the question Christ poses: who do you say I am? John says many came to believe in him because of the way he spoke, which is to speak “*only what the Father taught me*” and with the voice of the Father. Now, towards the end of the Lenten season, may we hear that voice, which is the voice of the eternal in the darkness, the voice that Moses hears and Job hears in the Whirlwind. May we, too, hear that voice, and answer.

Robert Cording P06, 09, 10

Professor Emeritus, Department of English

APRIL 1 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Dan 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Dan 3:52-56; John 8:31-42

Often, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, our faith to God may be tested by others. Through the college experience, students may go through many hardships and trials that can make them feel like they are in a hot furnace and test their faith in God. Even when faced with these experiences in which we feel like we cannot escape, our most important asset is our faith in God. Just as he did with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, God will bring us out of what we believe to be the hot furnace through our faith. From these experiences we will learn more about not only ourselves but our relationship with God. In the end, it is how we respond to these life challenges, as well as our faith in God, that help us to continue moving forward and turn our hardships and difficulties into a more positive learning experience that will help serve others and strengthen our relationship with God.

Andrew Rolles '22





APRIL 2 | THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

In these times of uncertainty and adversity, we who are faithful believers are challenged to uphold and honor God's promises. God never fails in his promises. He is able and willing to fulfill His word if only we dare to trust Him.

Although God's promise as written in our scripture reading was specific to the covenant made with Abraham to "*father a host of nations,*" this covenant was realized and the promise fulfilled. Obedience and faithfulness were the assurances needed for completion.

In today's world of broken promises — by politicians, marketers, friends, colleagues and sometimes family — we are constantly faced with deceit and deception. But it is different with God's promises. What may seem daunting and impossible is always possible with God. Let us be guided by the story of Abraham. Let us be steadfast. Let us be patient. Let us be faithful. Let us believe his word.

In what ways are you standing on the promises of God? What problems are you facing? God's promises empower and sustain us through good times and bad. Are we solid enough in our faith to be followers? Can we be obedient and trust that his will is being done?

Through grace we are assured that his promise of forgiveness, salvation and the gift of eternal life is everlasting. In the refrain of an old church hymn "Standing on the promises I cannot fall, listening every moment to the spirit's call, resting in my Savior as my all is all...I'm standing on the promises of God."

Mable Millner

*Assoc. Dean of Students for Diversity and Inclusion;
Director of Multicultural Education (Retired)*

APRIL 3 | FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

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

In the gospel passage, Jesus explains that it is through His works that we can know that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. With these words, He shows us how we too might abide in Him. Each day I try to keep my heart open to see what opportunities God is placing in my life to do His work. Sometimes it has been difficult to discern. I often have to ask myself if this is something He is giving me or is it just my own idea or someone else's idea of what I should do.

I find I discern most clearly when I take the time to pray and then wait to see if He confirms a course of action for me. He knows my strengths and weaknesses. I rely on Him to support me in using those strengths to do His work and help me to learn and understand better through my weaknesses. My hope is that He knows I am consistently trying to do His work, and that He will forgive me when I fail to adequately do so. It is His love that sustains me to keep growing and moving forward.

Karen Todd

Administrative Assistant, Center for Interdisciplinary Studies





APRIL 4 | SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Ez 37:21-28; Jer 31:10-13; John 11:45-56

In today's responsorial psalm, we are reminded that, "*the Lord will guard us, as a shepherd guards his flock.*" The notion of God as a shepherd, standing guard and providing guidance, is a tremendous comfort, especially in times of sorrow or distress. Although my faith sometimes wavers, it is strongest at difficult times, when I am reminded that turning to God for guidance is a great relief.

As a scientist and a Catholic, I have found that my faith in God is occasionally called into question. Science and faith can seem to be at odds, as science requires reason, logic and the gathering of evidence to support or refute hypotheses (i.e., testable ideas), while faith in God requires what, to some, may seem like a suspension of reason and lack of hard evidence. Evidence of God surrounds us, however; we simply need to open our hearts to observe it. The evidence might be in a kind gesture, an act of charity, the forgiveness of a wrong, the beauty of nature, or the sense of comfort found in prayer.

This Lenten season, let us strive to open our hearts and attentively observe the evidence of God in and through the people and world around us.

Kelly Wolfe-Bellin

Director of Biology Labs and Lecturer, Department of Biology

APRIL 5 | PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Matt 21:1-11; Is 50:4-7; Ps 22; Phil 2:6-11; Matt 26:14—27:66

The liturgy on Palm Sunday begins with Jesus' joyous entrance into Jerusalem and ends with him dying on the cross, alone except for a group of faithful women looking on from a distance. In between, Jesus' closest disciples fell asleep three times as they prayed with him in Gethsemane, Judas betrayed him for thirty pieces of silver, Peter denied him repeatedly when questioned and Pilate yielded to an unruly crowd and ordered that Jesus be crucified.

How did we get from the enthusiastic celebration of Palm Sunday to the rejection, suffering and death of Good Friday? The crowds enjoyed the moment but lacked depth of conviction. The hearts of Jesus disciples were in the right place but they fled in fear. Judas betrayed Jesus for financial gain, while Peter followed Jesus until he thought that he might share his fate. Pilate, unnerved by the crowd, disavowed his responsibility and turned his back on the violence of the people and his soldiers.

As we reflect on our own discipleship, undoubtedly we can identify with the doubts, fears, weaknesses and betrayals of the various actors in today's readings. However, knowing how much we are loved by Jesus who entered so completely into our human condition, let us pray for the courage of those women who faithfully stood with him in his suffering and death; and like Jesus, let us pray that we will be given the courage we need to give ourselves in faithful love to those with whom we are called to walk on our shared journey of Faith.

Rev. Philip L. Boroughs, S.J.

President





APRIL 6 | MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

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

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom should I fear?

The LORD is my life’s refuge; of whom should I be afraid?”

At this point in my life I am often subjected to judgment. My professors judge my schoolwork and academic performance. My friends and classmates judge my social behavior and life choices. My parents judge my plans for the future. All this judgment has an effect on my confidence. I am not perfect and when I am reminded of my imperfections, my confidence is checked. Although difficult, this sort of judgment is beneficial; it makes me reconsider a certain aspect of my person and whether that aspect is something to be confident about. It has the effect of dismantling my misplaced confidence and challenging me to grow in the right places.

With respect to the most important and overarching aspect of my life, however, my confidence is unwavering. I am confident that by living my life by the guiding light of Christ I am doing right by myself and others. Despite my wavering confidence in certain less significant aspects of myself, I am firmly confident in who I am. Christ is my confidence!

Christ, I am proud to be Yours and not only chosen by You but even pleasing to You. I hope to remain worthy of Your boasting. Grant that, like Mary, I may not fail to recognize You.

I hope to always recognize and reflect Your light proudly.

Thomas Posillico '20

APRIL 7 | TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

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

Betrayal. Today’s Gospel reading, in which Jesus foretells Judas’ betrayal and Simon Peter’s denials, is a lesson for us to not judge others for their failure to live up to promises of faithfulness, but to pray for our own strength to live true to the people and principles of our own lives. None of us feels that we would ever be the betrayer. That is why betrayal is so devastating. It shows our weakness, a weakness that is contrary to how we see ourselves.

Do we have the strength to stay true in our life’s relationships? The first reading gives an answer. Isaiah says God called him from birth to be God’s weapon, hidden like a sword under a soldier’s arm or an arrow in a quiver. We are called by God to service and equipped with great strength — God’s strength. But with that strength, that weapon, the servant is called to great things. To be *“a light to the nations, that [God’s] salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”*

I pray for us all to be strong, in service to light and truth, for then we will be *“made glorious in the sight of the Lord”* and we will be witnesses to that light in each other. Isaiah’s words tell us to be a light to others — to live in the light with no compensation except God’s love. A servant is not powerless, but equipped with the tools to do great things.

Ellen Keohane '83

Chief Information Officer





APRIL 8 | WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

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

Today's Gospel brings us into the story of Judas' betrayal as we prepare for tomorrow's celebration of the Lord's Supper. However, it is the agony of Christ in the Garden, anticipating the suffering that is to come, that seems to loom large in today's psalms. I begin to quiet myself as I think of the many circumstances and fears from which I have uttered today's command: "*Lord, in your great love, answer me.*" It has often been a desperate cry in times when my faith was shaken by so much injustice and suffering in the world. My desire to fully know God's will and make sense of it all has often left me so fragile and lonely, even frustrated as I call out to a God who seems hopelessly beyond this place. Does God really answer?

And yet for all of the desolation that infuses these readings, they offer even more in the way of a spirited resolve. As the first reading reminds us, what God gives us through the person of Christ is nothing less than God's own way of seeing, hearing and responding to the world. In my own moments of doubt and fear, that will to listen with love and speak for and with "the weary" brings something far more than solace. To experience that desperation brings a will to enact, however partially, God's love for the world.

Justin Poché

Associate Professor, Department of History

APRIL 9 | HOLY THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

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

In 1977, looking onto the horizon of life after graduation from Holy Cross, I pondered the future that seemed vastly open with endless potential while also seasoned with a tinge of anxiety to choose the best next step. Growing up in an era of social unrest, the appeal and adventure of service through Peace Corps, VISTA or Jesuit Volunteer Corps appealed to me.

Looking at several choices, I was torn as to which to take. Two competed: Work with migrant farmers in the Appalachian region or teach in a poorly resourced high school in New Jersey. I sought counsel with Rev. Bob Manning, S.J. at Holy Cross. After carefully listening to my conflicting reasons for each, his wisdom was elegant in its clarity: Give from what you have been given. You have been given the gift of a good education. In the privilege of that gift you have developed your mind, your skills, your heart and character. There is a crying need in Newark. Serve from the gift you have been given.

To be of service to others, the metaphorical washing of feet today, is the ongoing miracle of that Holy Thursday night I now see every day through my work with the Ignatian Volunteer Corps. IVC is a Jesuit founded, lay service corps for people who in their retirement years wish to find fulfilling purpose and give from the riches of experience, education, professional careers and personal wisdom. They give from what they have been given and in doing so, discover a love that is beyond measure. Lives transform. Christ lives.

Mary McGinnity (Cahoon) '77





APRIL 10 | GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

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

In John's Gospel, Jesus' mother is never named and appears just twice: first, at the wedding feast at Cana, and again at the foot of the Cross. One, an occasion of great joy, the other of the greatest possible sorrow.

Standing with Jesus' mother is another unnamed person, called throughout the Gospel "the disciple Jesus loved." Christian tradition identifies this person as John the Evangelist. Yet a plausible explanation for his anonymity in the text is that John wants each one of us to imagine ourselves as the "beloved disciple." To see ourselves beholding Jesus' glory. To see ourselves drawn in close to Jesus with the greatest tenderness, reclining at his side.

And to hear Jesus' words as addressed to us here and now: "*Woman, here is your child... child, here is your mother.*" Theologians have pondered this gesture for centuries, often suggesting that Jesus wanted to make sure his mother would be "taken care of" after his death. With all due respect, the reverse is probably more likely: Jesus sees us at the foot of the Cross, and gives his mother to take care of us. No stronger person has walked this earth than Mary of Nazareth. We have no sorrow with which she cannot relate. There are no tears that we can cry – of pain or of joy – that she does not know. She is his mother. She is our mother.

Rev. Timothy W. O'Brien, S.J. '06

APRIL 11 | HOLY SATURDAY

Gn 1:1—2:2; Gn 22:1-18; Ex 14:15—15:1; Is 54:5-14; Is 55:1-11; Rom 6:3-11; Matt 28:1-10

There is something sacred and stirring about the predawn hour. The night sky slowly changes from sapphire blue to glowing orange at the horizon and it's as if the air holds its breath waiting for the sun to rise. A breeze kicks up and a new day is born. I remember sitting on the rocks of Narragansett on the Spiritual Exercises as a student, watching the sun come up over the ocean as the waves welcomed the new day and felt my spirit renewed. That same feeling returned one cold winter dawn eight years ago as I rocked my infant daughter after a sleepless night. Seeing the sunlight stream through her window and feeling her warm little body asleep, I felt restored.

I imagine that Mary and the women from today's Gospel felt that same sacred stirring as they approached the tomb, "*as the first day of the week was dawning,*" and found the Angel of the Lord. It is in the birth of a new day that they encounter the Risen Jesus, who invites them into action. Those sacred moments capture what Holy Saturday is all about for me — a dawning that brings new life. Tonight at the Easter Vigil, we light the Paschal candle and the light grows as we tell the story of Salvation History. God continues to create in our world, renewing and restoring the promise of light and life in Christ.

What sacred stirrings do you feel dawning within you today?

Crista Carrick Mahoney '02

Associate Chaplain, Office of the College Chaplains





APRIL 12 | EASTER SUNDAY – THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

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

*“For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
When Christ your life appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.”*

In the closing scene of Steven Spielberg’s 1998 WWII movie, “Saving Private Ryan,” Private James Ryan stands pensively before the tombstone of Capt. John Miller, who died leading a courageous band of soldiers charged with saving him from battle in Normandy. Ryan turns to his wife who is standing nearby and asks her, “Have I been a good man? Have I led a good life?” Ryan is recalling the final words of Captain Miller, who before he dies, asks that Ryan live a life worthy of the sacrifice that was made for him.

We celebrate today the Resurrection of the Lord, whose paschal sacrifice has saved each of us from sin and death. In the final contemplation of the Spiritual Exercises, St. Ignatius, like Captain Miller in the movie, invites each of us to make a total self-offering in response to the sacrifice that has been made for us. “Having seen the love and sacrifice offered for you by the Lord Jesus, can you now go forth to live your life as a worthy return of so great a love?”

It is in our response to this graced invitation, born out of the Resurrection of Jesus, that we find our peace, our joy and our life’s fulfillment.

Rev. Keith Muccino, S.J., M.D. '74

Associate Director, Health Professions Advising

“Even now, says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart...”

(JOEL 2:12A)

Each year on Ash Wednesday, the prophet Joel offers us this invitation and challenge to return to the Lord with our whole heart. In a world filled with constant distractions competing for our attention, Lent provides an opportunity to reprioritize. This year, this challenge and invitation are made in the context of the recently shared Universal Apostolic Preferences of the Society of Jesus. These preferences highlight four priorities in which we are all invited to take action with the Jesuits for the next decade: to show the way to God through the Spiritual Exercises and discernment; to walk with the poor, the outcasts of the world, those whose dignity has been violated, in a mission of reconciliation and justice; to accompany young people in the creation of a hope-filled future; to collaborate in the care of our common home. It is our hope that this resource, *Return to Me: Lenten Reflections from Holy Cross 2020* will help “show the way to God” for you and aid you in discerning how you might prioritize during the Lenten season and beyond.

