



**Lenten Reflections 2021
Our Lady of Good Hope
St. Bernadette**

February 17 Ash Wednesday

Mark 6: 1-4

*Take care not to perform righteous deeds
in order that people may see them;
otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.
When you give alms,
do not blow a trumpet before you,
as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets
to win the praise of others.
Amen, I say to you,
they have received their reward.
But when you give alms,
do not let your left hand know what your right is doing,
so that your almsgiving may be secret.
And your Father who sees in secret will repay you.*

Ashes... What were you once? A palm of victory, triumph, peace?
Did you fight surrender to the will of fire?
Were you still as heat undid you, merging with that all-consuming flame
leaving only dust behind?
Ashes... symbol of eternal life... what you were has not been lost;
you have been transformed; you have been fused forever
with the Fire of unending Love.

Ashes... Just as ashes on our foreheads have an unknown origin, they
are there to remind us that our good works, alms, and acts of kindness
should remain anonymous too. Sacrificing time and energy in love will
transform us, prepare us for unity with that all-embracing Love of the
Easter Mystery.

S. Pat Obremski, SSND

February 18
Psalm 40:5a

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

We are blessed that our God provides us with hope and assurance. When we hope in the Lord, all things are possible. When life is bleakest and we are challenged beyond our limit, we can turn to Him with hope and the knowledge that He is there for us.

As we enter this Lenten Season, let us be thankful for the hope He provides and let us share that hope and faith in our God with our families, friends, and community.

We are indeed truly blessed.

Carla Kohlschmidt

blessed

February 19
Isaiah 58: 1-9

*This, rather, is the fasting that I wish:
releasing those bound unjustly,
untying the thongs of the yoke;
Setting free the oppressed,
breaking every yoke;
Sharing your bread with the hungry,
sheltering the oppressed and the homeless;
Clothing the naked when you see them,
and not turning your back on your own.
Your Words are challenging and life giving, Lord. How can I put them
into practice?*

Will I give something to the man who stands on the corner and holds
the homeless sign?

Will I really examine what are my *needs* and what are my *wants* to
make wise decisions?

Do I include the homeless, the imprisoned, the "other" in my daily
prayer?

Lord, you continually call us to be aware of the daily realities of
injustice, hunger, prejudice, and to respond to the needs of the
poor. Help me love tenderly, to act justly and to walk humbly with
You and my neighbor.

Sr. Jane Mary Lorbiecki, SSND

February 20
Psalm 86:1-2

Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth.

Dear Lord may I not be bothered by the things of this world. For me to learn of your ways, I must forget and put aside my personal wants. In this Lenten time, I need humility in order to acknowledge your message to me.

Your way O lord is love. The love you have shown when you died for us, when you created this wonderful world for us to live, for your word presented in the Bible, and the traditions of the Church. I will make room in my heart for your love of me and accept it.

It is not enough to accept this love. It must be practiced. If I am to walk in your ways of love it must always be a part of me in all that I do. It cannot stop.

This truth of your love must be returned to you every day. I will take care of your world, and acknowledge your existence and love for me. I will treat all people as if they were your children. Yes God, I will humbly accept your and practice the love that you have shown me, not only during this Lenten time, but also as I walk in this truth in my journey of life.

Richard Krueger

February 21
Genesis 9: 12-15

"This is the sign that I am giving for all ages to come, of the covenant between me and you and every living creature with you: I set my bow in the clouds to serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth, and the bow appears in the clouds, I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you and all living beings, so that the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all mortal beings."

How do you feel when you see a rainbow?

Happiness, Excitement, Joy?

I especially like the ones that appear in the east. That means the rain has passed and cleansed the earth and the sun shines to brighten the sky. God's imagery of his covenant with Noah provides hope! God cleanses us in the waters of baptism. The light of a rainbow reminds us of the light of Christ. During our Lenten journey, Lord help us to turn away from our sins and to be a light to our family, friends, and community.

We pray in God's name.

Erin Epping

February 22
Psalm 23:1, 4

*The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want.
Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side
With your rod and your staff
that give me courage.*

In the Psalm we pray, "The Lord is my Shepherd: there is nothing I shall want..." but I do want...the Pandemic to be over, the sick healed, the caregivers rested, those who lost loved ones comforted, and vaccine available to all, rich and poor, around the world.

Dear Jesus, help us remember you told us "I am the Good Shepherd". You are always with us. You are always caring for us. Thank you...

Rita Nuener



February 23
Matthew 4:4

*One does not live on bread alone,
but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.*

Can a person survive with no food or water? How long can they survive? This is what Google says:

"One study in Archiv Fur Kriminologie concluded that you can't survive more than 8 to 21 days without food and water. People on their deathbed who are using very little energy may live only a few days or a few weeks without food and water. Water is much more essential to your body than food."

BUT - how long can we survive without God? There is nothing on Google to tell us that. I can't survive a day without God. Sometimes our lives get so caught up in everyday life that we forget to "listen" to God. In the silence, you can hear Him, and we will all be blessed with eternal life if we listen to His Words and follow what he is feeding us.

For this lent... let's really LISTEN to the Lord and what He is telling us! The world could use his food now, more than ever!

Mary Kucharski

February 24

Psalm 51: 12-13, 19

*A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.
A clean heart create for me, O God, and a steadfast spirit renew
within me. Cast me not out from your presence, and your Holy
Spirit take not from me.*

Psalm 51 speaks to the desires of our heart. Our heart represents our inner self. From our heart, flows the source of our soul. This is why the heart is so fundamentally important. When God is talking to us about our heart, He is talking about the best and truest part of who we are!

When we find ourselves troubled by the burdens of our soul, may we give those burdens to the Lord, knowing that He will take care of us. Let what we say and do come from the abundance of our desire and love to seek forgiveness for our sins.

Let what we say and do be guided by the Spirit which overflows with an abundance of grace through forgiveness. Let us always remember, that in spite of anything that we have ever done or may do, God is generous in His love for us. Let us always remember, that when we call upon God to heal our wounds, caused by all that takes us away from who we are meant to be, God is generous in His mercy.

In the words of Dr. Margaret Doroux, "Give me a clean heart, so I may serve thee. Lord fix my heart, so that I may be used by thee. For I'm not worthy of all of these blessings, give me a clean heart and I'll follow thee."

Blessings, The Halala-Vishudh Family

February 25
Esther C: 14-16

*Help me, who am alone and have no help but you,
for I am taking my life in my hand.
As a child I used to hear from the books of my forefathers
that you, O LORD, always free those who are pleasing to you.
Now help me, who am alone and have no one but you,
O LORD, my God.*

During this pandemic we are especially aware of the lonely, as we ourselves isolate in our own homes. Loneliness is suffered by many – the elderly, widows and widowers, single people, bullied children, residents in nursing homes... – not only during a pandemic, but every day.

Loving God, when we feel alone and afraid, help us to remember that you are near – that you are always with us. Help us to recognize you in our families, friends, neighbors, and fellow parishioners and know that we are not alone. Give us the compassion and kindness to reach out to the lonely – and give us the strength and courage to reach out to others for help when we feel alone.

A simple phone call can do wonders to lift one's spirit.

Penny Potter

February 26
Matthew 5:21-22

*You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.
But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother
will be liable to judgment,
and whoever says to his brother, Raqa,
will be answerable to the Sanhedrin,
and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna.*

This passage, which is part of the Sermon on the Mount, talks about anger – and how we treat one another in anger. Words are a powerful weapon, and Jesus warns us in this passage that anger leads to violence. *Raqa*, an Aramaic word, would be translated to “imbecile” or “idiot” in our language. During this Lenten season, take some time to reflect on the words you use, and as Jesus tells us, let us learn to settle our differences in peace and without words of anger and abuse against another.

Valerie Adamski

February 27

Matthew 4: 43-44

*"You have heard that it was said,
You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.
But I say to you, love your enemies,
and pray for those who persecute you,
that you may be children of your heavenly Father,
for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good,
and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust.
For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have?"*

Jesus on his way to Calvary was met with the kindness of Veronica wiping his face and Simon's help with the cross. He also encountered the insults and hatred of the crowd. Jesus's lament "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" shows His non-judgemental Love and Forgiveness of all of us.

Mike Jansen



February 28

Romans 8: 31b-32

Brothers and sisters:

If God is for us, who can be against us?

He who did not spare his own Son

but handed him over for us all,

how will he not also give us everything else along with him?

In loving God, we must understand that his love is never ending and he is always with us no matter what.

In giving his son to save us what do we do for him? We see so many in the bible who were willing to sacrifice for the love of God. Abraham was ready to give Isaac's life for God, but God saw the love that Abraham had for him so Isaac was spared. No one can understand what God gave up for us, the tears shed for his own loss. This is how much God is for us no matter what happens to us. He is always there for us, protecting, loving and welcoming us to be a part of his family. For we are his children.

Valeria Spinner Banks

March 1

Luke 6: 36-37a

Stop judging and you will not be judged.

Stop condemning and you will not be condemned.

Forgive and you will be forgiven.

Give and gifts will be given to you;

After a rough year of accidents then the virus this verse means more to me than ever. The people from my parish were there for me. They visited me in the hospital and rehab. One day three choir members and a staff person came about an hour apart each with a large Diet Coke from McDonalds for me. The calls and notes were lifesavers as were the rides to appointments and meals. We need to treat others as we want and need to be treated. Yes people say hurtful things or don't think the way we do but in the big scheme of life we need to forget, forgive and reach out to those in needs. God gives us the strength to do this but we need to listen.

Sandy Swanson

March 2

Matthew 23: 8-12

*As for you, do not be called 'Rabbi.'
You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers.
Call no one on earth your father;
you have but one Father in heaven.
Do not be called 'Master';
you have but one master, the Christ.
The greatest among you must be your servant.
Whoever exalts himself will be humbled;
but whoever humbles himself will be exalted."*

Humility is defined as freedom from pride or arrogance. It triggered Mary's quick response to Gabriel. It allowed Jesus to submit to persecution and death. Their humility was borne of a love of God and the willingness to surrender to His will.

Arrogance is borne of human pride – rooted in insecurity – fearful of our status in this world and a misplaced sense of self-gratification. Satan himself influences this world and tempts us to consider our own opinion more valuable and valid than God's – just as he did with Eve. We have been doing that for 10,000 years – so, how's that workin' out for us?

Ahhh ... free will. We can experience the insecurity of this world by yielding to it, or we can experience the peace of God by surrendering to His will – our Rabbi, Master and Father. Seems like a bit of an IQ test, don'tcha think?

PS. If you wonder why we are encouraged to call Catholic clergy "father", you can read about it at catholiceducation.org. Search on "Call No Man Father: Understanding Matthew 23:9". Form your own opinion.

Ron and Gail Mackewicz

March 3

Matthew 20: 26b-28

Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant;

whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.

Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus came as an example of someone who loves and serves others. He told us to love our enemies, bless them, do good to them and pray for them. If this enemy is hungry, we should give him food to eat; thirsty, give him water to drink; naked, find him clothes to wear. He washed his disciples' feet, as an act of love, humility, and service. He fed thousands. He walked to visit, heal the sick and dead. He led by serving and loved by serving. Jesus said if we have done it to the least of our brothers, we have done it to him.

Are we serving our family, friends and especially our enemies? It is far better to serve others than to expect to be served.

Peg and Mike Harloff

March 4

Psalm 1:3

Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.

He is like a tree

planted near running water,

That yields its fruit in due season,

and whose leaves never fade.

Whatever he does, prospers.

The beautiful imagery of a tree by a river is the key to the appeal and brilliance of this verse.

Sometimes it may seem as though the Word's persistent comparisons of people with trees are less apt than comparisons with animals would be. Trees lack mobility, body parts such as legs and heads, and anything even resembling free will. But what trees do have are roots. The concept of tree roots is especially valuable as something that teaches us about regeneration. Roots are a tangible representation of something that is intangible with us.

The tree stands by itself as a seemingly autonomous life form. But beneath the surface its roots invisibly form a connection with the moisture and the minerals that sustain it. The tree is beside the river, seemingly apart from it, but its roots join it to the source of its life.

All of us are similarly connected to the Lord as our source of life. But this connection is invisible, intangible, difficult to understand, and easy to deny or simply forget about. We are all seemingly autonomous, standing apart on our own, like a tree.

Anonymous

March 5

Matthew 21:44-46

*Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures:
The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
by the Lord has this been done,
and it is wonderful in our eyes?"*

*Therefore, I say to you,
the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you
and given to a people that will produce its fruit."
When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables,
they knew that he was speaking about them.
And although they were attempting to arrest him,
they feared the crowds, for they regarded him as a prophet.*

A number of years ago, I read a book entitled *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth* by Reza Aslan which highlighted how radically different Jesus' message was from the Jewish leadership of the time, and how his message challenged the norms and status of that leadership. The part of this reading that really speaks to me is Jesus' powerful statement to the chief priests and Pharisees. He is telling them that they are not following the will of God in their example and leadership, and that they will be cast aside if they don't change their ways. It also reminds us today that we should not be like the be like them: we need to be open to the Word of God and do good works.

Diane Govern

March 6
Micah 7:18-20

*Who is there like you, the God who removes guilt
and pardons sin for the remnant of his inheritance;
Who does not persist in anger forever,
but delights rather in clemency,
And will again have compassion on us,
treading underfoot our guilt?
You will cast into the depths of the sea all our sins;
You will show faithfulness to Jacob,
and grace to Abraham,
As you have sworn to our fathers
from days of old.*

The prophet Micah, after reminding the Israelites of their sinfulness and exhorting them to repentance, closes with a prayer for national restoration and a beautiful expression of trust in God's pardoning mercy.

We are reminded that Lent is a time of repentance for our sins and a time of grace to open ourselves to the image of God as loving and forgiving. We are invited to trust in our loving and merciful Lord. We are similarly challenged to be loving and forgiving in our daily relationships with those around us.

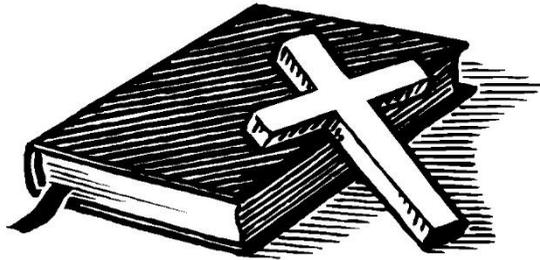
Peter M. Ruta

March 7
Psalm 19:8

*Lord, you have the words of everlasting life.
The law of the LORD is perfect,
refreshing the soul;
The decree of the LORD is trustworthy,
giving wisdom to the simple.*

It is not always easy to follow the word of God, but in trying we are getting closer to joy of an everlasting life. Be still, listen and follow the word. Your day will go better.

Lynn Reeves



March 8

Psalm 42:2; 43:3

*Athirst is my soul for the living God.
When shall I go and behold the face of God?
Send forth your light and your fidelity;
they shall lead me on
And bring me to your holy mountain,
to your dwelling-place.*

This Psalm reminds me of many trips I have taken. I love going out on the balcony of a cruise ship at night and watch the stars and the moon, their reflection on the water and the sound of the waves. I know God is there. The Fjords of Norway, I see God's face. Then there was Jerusalem and walking where Jesus walked. The sights and sounds of the beautiful earth is the face of God. Where have you seen his face?

Sandy Swanson

March 9

Psalm 25: 8-9

*Remember your mercies, O Lord.
Good and upright is the LORD;
thus he shows sinners the way.
He guides the humble to justice,
he teaches the humble his way.*

This Psalm verse seems to have been prophetically written for now. God has promised to guide us, along with all of our siblings in God's family, to deal with the multiple crises and resulting needs currently threatening us individually and collectively-locally and throughout Wisconsin, the USA and the world. I understand that a desperate need of someone any place in the world is a call for help to me and to us, as followers of Jesus. I trust in the power of prayer, even where there is no way to offer tangible aid. When the number and severity of the threats, affecting billions of people, feels overwhelming to me, this is a wake-up call to "Let Go, Let God" and to acknowledge my sinfulness, including thinking that somehow, I need to make a difference on my own. It reminds me that I need to pray for humility.

How does this Psalm verse speak to you?

Anne Buckley

March 10

Deuteronomy 4:5-9

"However, take care and be earnestly on your guard not to forget the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live, but teach them to your children and to your children's children."

These verses come from Deuteronomy when the Lord spoke to the Israelites commanding them to keep the ten commandments and to teach them to future generations.

Lord, during our Lenten journey let us turn to you to keep your commandments and to examine our consciences for the times we have failed. Let us attend a Reconciliation Service or to go to confession even if it has been a long time. Help us to set an example to our families by keeping and sharing our faith in you. We ask in Jesus' name.

Erin Epping

March 11

Psalm 95: 1, 6-7

If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;

let us kneel before the LORD who made us.

For he is our God,

and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

This reminds me of the passage in I Kings 19:11-13. In this passage, Elijah is told by the Lord to be prepared for God's 'passing by'. A strong wind...an earthquake...and a fire did not reveal God's presence. It was in the tiny, whispering sound that God was revealed. To hear this, requires a sensitive and listening heart.

God is also revealed in all that has been created, especially our very selves. Besides creating us, God continues to care for us as a shepherd guides his flock.

What we learn from this Lenten passage is that the only response we can give to God's gentle presence and care in our lives, is WORSHIP. *Come, let us bow down in worship, and kneel before the Lord who made us.*

Sandra Ann Weinke, SSND

March 12
Hosea 14:10

*Let him who is wise understand these things;
let him who is prudent know them.
Straight are the paths of the LORD,
in them the just walk,
but sinners stumble in them.*

The Lord's path is always straight It is when we vie off the path we lose our way to the Lord. Pay attention. Spend a bit of time listening to the Word of God.

Rejara Loudman



March 13
Luke 18:14

"I tell you, the latter went home justified, not the former; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

The lines in Luke 18:11-14 are about the Pharisee and the publican. In biblical times a publican was a tax collector reviled by other Jews for doing his job. His words in the temple allowed him to go home justified. That should mean his sins were forgiven.

I wonder if he continued to sin, could he be forgiven again, if he asked for mercy in the temple? And what of the Pharisee? Could he be forgiven (or exalted) if he changed his prayer "to asking for mercy"? He would have to change his reason for acting according to the Judaic laws (rules) at the time.

Mark G. Lipscomb Jr.

March 14
Ephesians 2: 4-7

*God, who is rich in mercy,
because of the great love he had for us,
even when we were dead in our transgressions,
brought us to life with Christ — by grace you have been saved —,
raised us up with him,
and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus,
that in the ages to come
He might show the immeasurable riches of his grace
in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

Because of his great love for us, Christ forgives our sins. His life was lived in kindness and mercy through his healing and compassion for those in need. He spent his whole life being Good News for the poor! To be kind to others just in daily life is to extend God's love and mercy to those around us. The Love of God we bring to others shines forth through simple acts of kindness and compassion. As Christians, we are "other Christs" in the world today.

Claudia Spaulding

March 15

Psalm 30: 1, 11-12

I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

"Hear, O LORD, and have pity on me;

O LORD, be my helper."

You changed my mourning into dancing;

O LORD, my God, forever will I give you thanks.

In today's fast paced world it is sometimes easy to feel overwhelmed with our day to day struggles. It's important for us to take a moment especially in this Lenten Season to remember that we are not alone and that Jesus has always been there as our greatest helper having made the ultimate sacrifice dying on the cross for us.

Anonymous

*Praise
the
Lord*

March 16
Ezekiel 47: 8-12

"This water flows into the eastern district down upon the Arabah, and empties into the sea, the salt waters, which it makes fresh. 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; their leaves shall not fade, nor their fruit fail. Every month they shall bear fresh fruit, for they shall be watered by the flow from the sanctuary. Their fruit shall serve for food, and their leaves for medicine."

Every living creature needs water for life. In early Spring I set up my rain barrel to gather liquid manna with which to water newly planted gardens. Life-giving and sustaining water fills the barrel as it flows off the roof of my home-temple. It refreshes withered earth to bring forth fruits and vegetables in abundance. In my mind's eye I see another garden--where the One waits for earthly death. It is accomplished--hung on a tree, death to save us all. Then: "Is he dead?" A well-aimed spear plunged into His side, through lungs and heart. And water flows, again. Eternal life-giving waters of mercy, grace, healing, forgiveness. An anointing by water and blood of all who wish everlasting life in and of the Spirit.

May the waters of my life flow to all I encounter--waters of faith, kindness, empathy, concern, peace, patience, joy, a listening heart. Most of all, love.

Josetta Berg

March 17

Psalm 145: 17-18

The Lord is gracious and merciful.

The LORD is just in all his ways

and holy in all his works.

The LORD is near to all who call upon him,

to all who call upon him in truth.

In these times of uncertainty, in our world, our country, our city, our homes and our hearts, this psalm is the reassurance that we need. It is a buoy in the storm. It is our true north star.

We may feel that our prayer is imperfect, our needs trivial, that we are a bother to the Lord. This psalm is all we need to hear, to encourage communicating with our Heavenly Father in whatever way we feel comfortable. Is it a rosary? Is it a novena? Is it communal prayer at Mass? Is it silence in our hearts? Is it conversational, as with a friend or family member? Whatever it may be, we are heard. Feel The Lord's grace, mercy, justice and nearness. And then "call upon him" again and again. He hears us.

You can take that to the bank.

Margie Kaczmarek

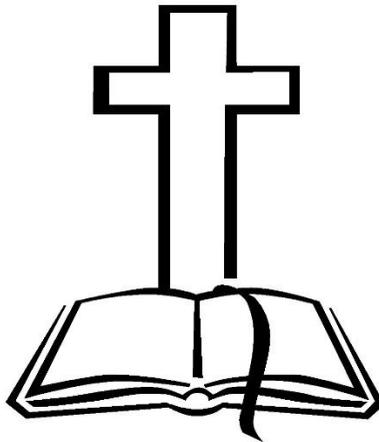
March 18

Psalm 106: 4, 21-22

*Remember us, O Lord, as you favor your people.
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.*

God gives us his grace or favor and it is our job to appreciate it and use it to our advantage in remaining in the goodness of our Lord.

Anonymous



**March 19 Solemnity of St. Joseph,
Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Matthew 1:20-21**

*The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said,
"Joseph, son of David,
do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home.
For it is through the Holy Spirit
that this child has been conceived in her.
She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus,
because he will save his people from their sins."*

St. Joseph was a very important person in the New Testament but appears very seldom in the scriptures. He was the earthly father of Jesus. He likely taught Jesus about Jewish and the carpentry trade.

Tradition tells more about him but nothing official. He was a kind simple person. He followed the law with a kind heart. His original plan was to quietly divorce Mary when he found she was pregnant- as was his right within Jewish law. Instead, he trusted in God and followed his request. He did what God – through angels in a dream – asked of him without question. Those dreams told him to go through with his marriage to Mary and later to take Mary and the child to Egypt to escape Herod. Yet he was a carpenter – a hard-working simple man. The lesson we can learn from him is that God asks all of us to do exceptional things – not just the rich, or famous or important.

St. Joseph also shows us that we need to do the right thing and always trust God when he asks us to do more. And just do it.

Tom Lieven

March 20

Jeremiah 11:18-20

*I knew their plot because the LORD informed me;
at that time you, O LORD, showed me their doings.
Yet I, like a trusting lamb led to slaughter,
had not realized that they were hatching plots against me:
"Let us destroy the tree in its vigor;
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
so that his name will be spoken no more."*

We need to keep our hearts and ears open to God as he protects us from all evil if we do.

Anonymous



March 21
John 12: 24-26

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there also will my servant be.

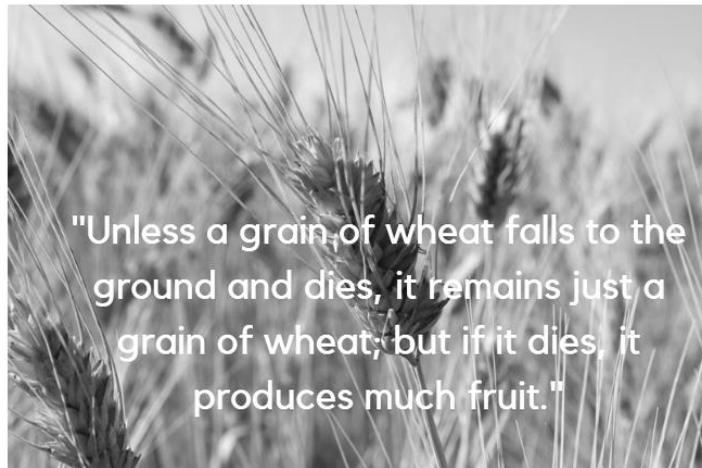
I confess that I had to read these verses over and over again and try to make sense of them. I finally went to the experts suggested by Google to see what they had to say about these passages and there were several differing opinions about what Jesus was saying to us in these passages.

One author suggests that in these verses Jesus was explaining why he was willing to face death. Just as a seed will never become a plant unless it "dies" and is "buried" so the death and burial of Jesus is necessary to His glorification. Before there can be resurrection power and fruitfulness, there must be death. This same author also suggests Jesus was saying that our earthly life should not be that important to us, except in that fact that we should freely give it up to God. Our life can be precious, but only because it is something that we give to Jesus. He goes on to suggest that that if we are Christians, we must follow Jesus' path of being "other-centered" and think about heaven centered-living,

These verses also describe the ministry of Jesus - he performed many miracles for people, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and even raising the dead. At the end of his ministry, however, Jesus is like the grain of wheat; he is very much alone and misunderstood, even though he was always physically surrounded by people. His ministry

will bear fruit through his death and resurrection, which will provide a new basis for faith. On another level, these words describe Christian life. Through faith, people die to an old life and enter a new life of service to God. It is in service to God that life comes to fruition. Jesus submitted everything, including his fears and his friends, to the will of God. It cost him his life, yet won him the harvest. Have you surrendered your life to God? If not, why not? Lent may be an excellent time to consider that option. Instead of giving something up for Lent - I pray to be better at surrendering to God's will and not so much to my own will and ways.

Linda Radder



March 22
Psalm 23: 3-4

Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

*He guides me in right paths
for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk in the dark valley
I fear no evil; for you are at my side*

*With your rod and your staff
that give me courage.*

"Considering all of the health, economic, leadership, and employment concerns that we have all been enduring these last many months, it is reassuring to know that God is right beside us leading the way to our salvation through His Son's death and resurrection. During this Lenten season, let us remember that Jesus is our only true hope of salvation."

George Quisno

March 23
Numbers 21: 7-9

*Then the people came to Moses and said,
"We have sinned in complaining against the LORD and you.
Pray the LORD to take the serpents away from us."
So Moses prayed for the people, and the LORD said to Moses,
"Make a saraph and mount it on a pole,
and whoever looks at it after being bitten will live."
Moses accordingly made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole,
and whenever anyone who had been bitten by a serpent
looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.*

After being rescued from slavery and torture in Egypt, the Israelites' were unhappy with Moses. They were ungrateful for their freedom. Doubt and anger were setting in. They were wandering for many days, not knowing where they were going and were concerned about food. Manna was not to their taste or satisfaction. So, to get them back on track, the LORD sent poisonous snakes among them. Many were bitten and died. This action straightened them up. They needed to trust in the LORD that he will give you what you really need. Additionally, be happy with what you have. Lent can be used as a time of reflection on the blessings you have received rather than dwelling on what you don't have.

Tom and Barb Langenohl

March 24
Luke 8:15

Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance.

To push through, hope-filled, has been a particular challenge. As a person who is directly impacted as one or more of those vulnerable groups, I find myself so focused on being careful. If you or a loved one has experienced long-term illness, you know the cycle of powerlessness, vulnerability, and surrender that accompanies it. One thing I have learned is that there is a sure-fire way to yield a harvest of hopefulness.

Living a Gospel life means reflecting on what pulls us through. Perseverance feels so much more possible for me with those gentle and responsive friends, I take my refuge.

Rachel Drotar

March 25 The Annunciation of the Lord
Luke 1: 30-33

*"Do not be afraid, Mary,
for you have found favor with God.
Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son,
and you shall name him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High,
and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father,
and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever,
and of his Kingdom there will be no end."*

The wondrous faith of a young girl, open to God's request, open to the unknown. Would you answer God's call if you knew that it may result in you being shunned by family and friends (pregnant and unmarried)? How open and strong are you?

Linda Ciao

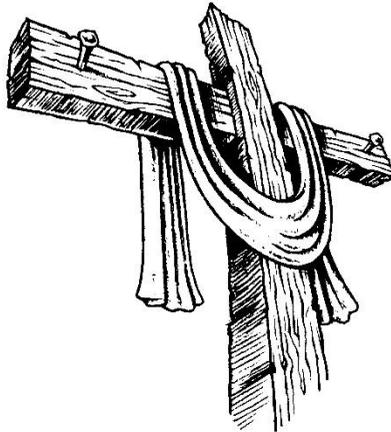


March 26
Psalm 18: 3-4

*In my distress I called upon the Lord, and he heard my voice.
My God, my rock of refuge,
my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold!
Praised be the LORD, I exclaim,
and I am safe from my enemies.*

Rock of my refuge is one of several descriptive names of God used in the Old Testament, especially the psalms. Our relationship with God is the safest place to be. It is not based on cowering fear but on trust and reliance.

Jeffery



March 27
Ezekiel 37:26

*I will make with them a covenant of peace;
it shall be an everlasting covenant with them,
and I will multiply them, and put my sanctuary among them
forever.*

How can you incorporate God's covenant of peace within your life? How can that covenant of peace then be multiplied to bestow grace and mercy to those you come into contact with throughout your life on a daily bases? Remember we are all God's children and we are called to be his disciples- being his disciple is to live the covenant of peace even in times of disagreement with one of God's children.

Suzanne Evans-Wright

March 28 Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord
Mark 11: 9-10

*Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out:
"Hosanna!*

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

*Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come!
Hosanna in the highest!"*

We begin to be aware of the public inter and power of Jesus' ministry among the "ordinary" people in the surrounding towns as they shout out their Hosannas. Like those villagers we sometimes openly "praise the Lord" and then reject His teachings by the way we treat others. When Jesus drives out the merchants in the Temple, He is instructing us to get our priorities in line with His teachings.

Sherry Moncher



March 29
Isaiah 42:4-7

*I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice,
I have grasped you by the hand;
I formed you, and set you
as a covenant of the people,
a light for the nations,
To open the eyes of the blind,
to bring out prisoners from confinement,
and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.*

God gave us Jesus as our Redeemer and promised release from all that holds us captive. Covenant implied mutual relationship. By our Baptismal Covenant, we are missioned to do what Jesus did.

Is there anyone I hold captive because I have not forgiven or received another's attempt to reconcile?

Where am I blind to see the Light of God's graces challenging me to accept "the other"?

How can I enter into this Holy Week if I am unable physically to be present for Mass and the Triduum?

Lord, we are in the beginning of Holy Week again. You are calling us to greater awareness *of* and action *for* the good of our neighbor, Church and world. In this holiest of weeks, let me walk with you and experience more deeply the meaning of our Covenant relationship.

Sr. Jane Mary Lorbiecki, SSND

March 30
Isaiah 49:6

*I will make you a light to the nations,
that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.*

Have you seen the light?

Christ is the light and by following this light we reach the salvation of God.

Are you the light also? Will others see God in your life acts, words, and deeds?

May we live the lives of God and be the light during this Lenten season.

Peter Gray

March 31
Isaiah 50:7-9

*The Lord GOD is my help,
therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint,
knowing that I shall not be put to shame.
He is near who upholds my right;
if anyone wishes to oppose me, let us appear together.
Who disputes my right?
Let him confront me.
See, the Lord GOD is my help;
who will prove me wrong?*

Sometimes, God's blessings come to us in mysterious ways; through pain and trouble. At such times I know God's goodness only through my TRUST in HIM. I don't need to understand why the pain and trouble are there, but I do need to trust that God is there, I simply need to call out His name and ask. He is an ever-present help in trouble. Certainly, my heart cries daily for the loss I have experienced of the person whom I gave birth to, helped to educate and know and love, with a strong hope to see that person return to me from the dark places in their mind. I TRUST GOD to take care of it all. Don't get me wrong, I fail. Often times I don't have a well-trained tongue, because I am too weary to be that person. But I do know that I have a loving Savior I can go to and ask for the forgiveness and courage during those times. I rely on the words "*See the Lord GOD is my help; who will prove me wrong?*" Prove me wrong, then you prove God is wrong. The interconnectedness which I have with our God is my lifeblood. When I am foolish and think I'm in charge, God is good to remind me of my role in His world.

Joan Kowalski

April 1 Holy Thursday
John 13:14-15

*So when he had washed their feet
and put his garments back on and reclined at table again,
he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you?
You call me 'teacher' and 'master and rightly so, for indeed I am.
If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet,
you ought to wash one another's feet.
I have given you a model to follow,
so that as I have done for you, you should also do."*

During the Eucharist we are called to be true and faithful disciples - to be another Christ. We are called to serve others as Jesus did - helping the poor, lifting up the downtrodden, releasing captives, healing the sick, challenging the causes of poverty and oppression, helping orphans and widows. This is the way to extend His presence and love in the world - through unselfish service.

It was not by chance that Jesus shocked his disciples during the Last Supper when He began to wash their feet. This was the work of a domestic servant and Peter refused until Jesus told him he could not be a disciple unless he accepted.

He gave them and us this example of discipleship. This is an important part of the Eucharist, it bonds us to Jesus and to each other in a commitment without asking for rewards.

Shay Cullen SSC

April 2 Good Friday

Psalm 31:6

Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.

Only in God will we find peace.

Helen R.

April 3 Holy Saturday

Genesis 1: 3-5

God said: Let there be light, and there was light.

God saw how good the light was.

God then separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night."

God gave us light and saw that it was good. He gave us darkness because he knew there would be dark times in our lives. During these dark times we need to reflect of the light to guide us through the darkness and unrest in our world. Please God lead us back to the light.

Dorothy Whittle

April 4 Easter Sunday
Psalm 118: 16-17, 24

*"The right hand of the LORD has struck with power;
the right hand of the LORD is exalted.
I shall not die, but live,
and declare the works of the LORD."
This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad.*

Psalm 118, a psalm of Thanksgiving, is the traditional psalm for Easter Sunday, and it will be repeated next Sunday to close out the Octave of Easter. Our forty-day journey of Lent has ended, and it is time to rejoice! Christ has risen, He has risen indeed! Alleluia!

Valerie Adamski

