



**2021 Lenten Reflections
from the Villanova Community**



Lent 2021 begins February 17, but in a way, it feels like Lent 2020 never ended. The fears, sorrows and injustices of last year have continued into this one. Why talk about entering the desert? people may ask. Did we ever leave it?

If we see this season as the gift that it is—a time to return to God, who, like the father of the prodigal son, is always watching for us, filled with compassion—then the desert will be a place of renewal, not cynicism; of conversion, not despair.

Here, angels will minister to us (see MK 1:13) and we to each other. Here, we will escape our false havens and find refuge in God (see PS 18:3). And here, we will be conformed to God's Son, who came "not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many" (MK 10:45).

Let us enter together, then. The joy of the Resurrection awaits!



We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 COR 5:20)

As we begin Lent with so much happening in the world and COVID-19 still raging, today is an invitation to breathe.

The air feels heavier this year. It feels as though there is much on our shoulders. The words that stand out to me in the Second Reading, from the letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians, are "working together, then..." They are a reminder that none of this can be done alone.

We cannot get through the pandemic without the amazing medical professionals and scientists working day and night. We cannot get through the days of working from home without support from colleagues, family members or pods that we find ourselves in.

Caring for each other has taken on new meaning in this past year. Working for the common good means something new as well and involves immense amounts of care and love. We are painfully aware, as we enter Lent, of examples of greed. Breathe in and recognize that goodness will prevail. Resurrection will come.

—**Kate Giancatarino**, Director, Center for Service & Social Justice

FEBRUARY 17 | ASH WEDNESDAY

JL 2:12–18 PS 51:3–6B, 12–14, 17 2 COR 5:20—6:2 MT 6:1–6, 16–18



Whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. (LK 9:24)

Yesterday, we heard “Repent and believe in the Gospel” as we received ashes. Today, Moses’ words can seem harsh, but he speaks to a people who have been wandering in the desert for 40 years. He urges them to “choose life” and reminds them of the covenant God made with them. Maybe we feel like we’ve been wandering in a desert. This Lent, how can we walk more closely with God? Perhaps the psalm has a suggestion for us: “Blessed are they who hope in the Lord” (40:5). When worries and fears overwhelm us, we can turn to God and tell Him about it. Receiving the sacraments, reading the Scriptures, allowing ourselves to be still or accompanying fellow pilgrims on this journey—these are all ways we can renew our hope in God when life threatens to crush it.

In Luke’s Gospel, Jesus’ words to follow him echo Moses’. Jesus says plainly, “The Son of Man must suffer greatly and be rejected ... and be killed and on the third day be raised” (9:22). Why would someone do that willingly? Why follow Christ? Moses explains, “For that will mean life for you” (DT 30:20). Choose life, then. By following Christ each day and renewing your hope in him, even and especially when faced with suffering, the life you save may be your own.

—Mary Grace Mangano ’14 CLAS

FEBRUARY 18 | THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

DT 30:15–20 PS 1:1–4, 6 LK 9:22–25



This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: ... Sharing your bread with the hungry. (IS 58:6-7)

Today's readings should come as a bit of a shock to the Church: Did we not just begin a season of fasting? And now God, through the prophet Isaiah, declares to us that our fasting is in vain! Abstaining from meat on Fridays or chocolate for 40 days does not mean much to God if we are not also "setting free the oppressed" and "sharing [our] bread with the hungry" (58:6–7). So long as our fasting does not lead us to die to our sinful self-seeking so that we might live with Christ in active love of neighbor, it is indeed in vain.

Rather, our fasting should place us in solidarity with Christ, and thereby with the poor and suffering, so that we might begin to desire what God desires. We fast also to free us from our disordered attachments to material pleasures, attachments that often contribute to the suffering of others. Let us recommit to the fasting that God wishes: the fast that unites us to Christ and commits us to the poor.

—Timothy Long '20 CLAS

FEBRUARY 19 | FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY
IS 58:1–9A PS 51:3–6B, 18–19 MT 9:14–15



You shall be like a watered garden. (IS 58:11)

Each of us has a light. Some of us hold a candle—an outward glow with which we lead, seeing the path forward, preventing falls in the darkness. For some of us, the light radiates from within—an open heart and a gentle hand with which to reach out, nurturing and warming. The world needs both lights to travel, thrive and be supported on life’s journey.

In today’s reading from Isaiah, we are urged to use our light for others. When we seek justice for others, our light shall rise in the darkness. We are assured that, by providing light, we “shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails” (58:11). We are gently promised that God will renew our strength when the light flickers.

We must trust in each other and in God. Reaching out, sharing the light we each possess and being present in the community are the ways forward. We all benefit as we share our light with and for others.

—**Suzanne Teleha**, Administrative Assistant, Center for Faith and Learning

FEBRUARY 20 | SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

IS 58:9B–14 PS 86:1–6 LK 5:27–32



I will recall the covenant I have made between me and you and all living beings. (GN 9:15)

Mark always keeps it simple. “Repent and believe in the gospel” (1:15). Right now, though, it seems like a particularly hard thing to do. The word “gospel” translates as “good news,” but after a year of a pandemic that has led to division and death; a year of heightened awareness of the sufferings and unjust killings of brown and black people in our country; and a year of war, especially in East Africa and the Middle East, it is hard to think about good news.

But God understands. Throughout scripture God acknowledges that this world is hard, suffering is abundant and sin is present. It is for these reasons that God sent his Son into this carnal world. God calls us to hope during Lent because He gives us this final promise—an opportunity for transformation—through Christ.

As an Augustinian community, we believe we are connected with one another. I ought to share in the suffering of my neighbor. My neighbor ought to share in my transformation toward goodness. Through this acknowledgment and through the Resurrection, we can be transformed, and the hope of peace and justice can be realized.

—**Joseph Citera**, Assistant Director for Campus Programs, Student Involvement

FEBRUARY 21 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

GN 9:8–15 PS 25:4–9 1 PT 3:18–22 MK 1:12–15



Tend the flock of God in your midst. (1 PT 5:2)

Today's feast celebrates the Chair of St. Peter—not the physical furniture but the office of the bishop of Rome, the pope. Let us consider the ways in which the readings and feast help us understand leadership in the Church.

The First Reading instructs the early Christian presbyters to “tend to the flock of God” (1 PT 5:2). The tone and message of this directive call to mind one of Pope Francis' 2013 homilies, in which he urged priests to “be shepherds with the smell of sheep,” to be people of encounter. He shares the same message in other documents and calls on all Christians to serve one another. If clergy and the larger Christian community all live from their common baptismal call (which is expressed in distinct ways), then both can flourish in service to the common good.

Who have been the shepherds in your faith development—priests, lay ministers, religious sisters and brothers, popes, family members, godparents, friends or other spiritual guides? Take some time today to extend gratitude through a prayer or message.

—**Michelle Sherman** '12 MA, Campus Minister for Retreats

FEBRUARY 22 | MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK (CHAIR OF PETER)

1 PT 5:1–4 PS 23:1–3A, 4–6 MT 16:13–19



Give us this day our daily bread. (MT 6:11)

The First Reading reminds us that we have an intimate part in God's plan of salvation, and Lent will help us on our journey. The Lord speaks of the rain and snow as the image of His message and promise. They come down from the heavens and "do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful" (IS 55:10).

Could God be speaking of you and me? I think so. We are instruments to water the earth—that is, to feed our friends, encourage our family, love our neighbor. What a privilege for each of us to be tools for God and to understand that we are a part of His plan for earthly salvation! His word "shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it" (v. 11).

As we hear in today's Gospel, the part we play includes forgiving our brothers and sisters. "If you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you" (MT 6:14). Such forgiveness is proven with Jesus' Passion and Resurrection, which we will mark in a mere 40 days.

—James P. Magee '75 CLAS

FEBRUARY 23 | TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK
IS 55:10–11 PS 34:4–7, 16–19 MT 6:7–15



A steadfast spirit renew within me. (PS 51:12)

Look closely at the first line of the First Reading: “The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time” (JON 3:1). Instead of listening to the Lord the first time, Jonah had tried to escape via boat. He encountered a storm, and the crew threw him off, and he was subsequently swallowed by a whale. It was after days of praying and repenting that the whale threw him up.

Jonah listened the second time. He traveled through Nineveh and warned the people of their evil ways and possible condemnation. Once Jonah spread the word, the entire city immediately heeded his warning. They stripped off their clothes, put on sackcloth, fasted and started praying.

Jonah took a little time to answer his call. The Ninevites, on the other hand, immediately listened to Jonah’s call to repent. As you reflect on this reading, consider Jonah and the Ninevites. Are you listening to your call? Are you repenting, praying and fasting in preparation for Easter?

—Maj. **Regina Thorp** '06 FCN, US Army

FEBRUARY 24 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK

JON 3:1–10 PS 51:3–4, 12–13, 18–19 LK 11:29–32



Seek and you will find. (MT 7:7)

God gives us whatever we ask for because He loves us unconditionally. In contrast, as the father of four school-aged daughters, if they really ask me for something, I make them work for it. The Wi-Fi password, a new car...chocolate? Pressures of health, job stability and finances make it hard to have a heart full of love and to answer the “asks” of my family.

How do you pray and ask God for something deep in your heart? Are you persistent in what you ask for, or do you give up after not getting results immediately? My 15-year-old daughter was born seven weeks early. I remember praying incessantly for her lungs and brain to be healthy. I asked my parents and anyone who would listen for this intention. Ultimately, my daughter made it through fine.

This Lent, seek God and ask for whatever is in your heart. We may not see it at the time, but God loves us and answers our prayers on His timeline because He loves us so much. All we need to do is ask.

—Leonard Velez '96 CLAS

FEBRUARY 25 | THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK

EST C:12, 14–16, 23–25 PS 138:1–3, 7C–8 MT 7:7–12



Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. (PS 130:1)

In today's Gospel, Jesus says to his disciples, "Whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment. ... Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (MT 5:22–23). Easier said than done, right?

Forgiveness can be tough; anger can fester and harden our hearts. So how do we do it? The prophet Ezekiel reminds us that God is able to forgive at a moment's notice: "If the wicked man turns away from all the sins he committed ... he shall surely live, he shall not die" (18:21). God can look beyond any wrongdoing someone has committed in the past to see the goodness that is in the person now.

How liberating it is to know that God's grace and forgiveness are right there when we seek them. During this Lenten season, may we more readily extend mercy and forgiveness toward those who cause us anger, harm and grief. May our hearts be open to seeing their goodness, even if they can't see it yet for themselves.

—**Judy Duroseau** '10 CLAS, '11 MA, Director, Regional and Class Engagement,
Alumni Relations

FEBRUARY 26 | FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK

EZ 18:21–28 PS 130:1–4, 5–8 MT 5:20–26



Blessed are they ... who walk in the law of the LORD. (PS 119:1)

The Church in her wisdom, especially during this solemn Lenten time, provides us with promptings to “hearken to God’s voice” (DT 26:17). Are we not so busy being busy that often we are not even aware of His ineffable love? He has made this agreement with us—“to raise you high in praise and renown and glory” (v. 19). Our directed response must be keeping His commandments, which in themselves are paramount to our being blessed: to love God with our entire hearts and our neighbor as ourselves.

When will we get around to doing this with our busy schedules? St. Paul says that now, not tomorrow, is a very acceptable time because now is the day of salvation (see 2 COR 6:2).

This Lent, may we become aware that fasting is not only giving something up but also lifting someone up. Our pride often makes things so heavy. May we trust more fully in Jesus’ love and mercy, so vividly depicted by His passion, and unselfishly, wholeheartedly go and do likewise. Jesus, I trust in you!

—**Vincent A. Parisi**, DDS, '54 CLAS

FEBRUARY 27 | SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK

DT 26:16–19 PS 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8 MT 5:43–48



It is good that we are here. (MK 9:5)

The transfiguration is a significant, private gift to the disciples Peter, James and John. After following their Master up a mountain (Can't you imagine that conversation? "Master, do we really have to climb this mountain? Won't you tell us why?"), they are rewarded with a beautiful vision and message: "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him" (MK 9:7). Truly, Jesus is the Son of God!

In our prayer life, it can sometimes feel like Jesus is leading us to places of his choosing, not ours. Following him up our own mountains requires faith, stamina and persistence. But when we reach the top, we have our own transformational moments when Jesus reveals to us wonderful gifts that can change us and change our relationship with him.

These disciples, I'm sure, never looked at Jesus in the same way after this day. In our own prayer life, may we go where we don't always want to go in order to see and know Jesus more deeply.

—**Brian McCaffrey '89 VSB**

FEBRUARY 28 | SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

GN 22:1-2, 9A, 10-13, 15-18 PS 116:10, 15-19 ROM 8:31B-34 MK 9:2-10



Give and gifts will be given to you. (LK 6:38)

Have you ever been given a gift that you knew you didn't deserve? Sometimes that gift comes in the form of people showing an outpouring of their love for you. That happened to me this fall. My family and I were in a difficult situation, and for two months members of my church family provided meals four times a week for us. I didn't have to think about what to fix. I didn't have to make one more decision, and the outpouring of grace and love was overwhelming.

When I remember this abundant love that was shown to me, I know that it is simply a grain of the forgiveness and mercy that God shows day after day to each of us. We are sinful people. We often want to hide our shortcomings. We find it hard to admit our mistakes, whether things we've done or things we haven't done. We would rather live as if we have it all together, all figured out. But God knows better. He knows our hearts and, in His love and mercy, doesn't deal with us according to what we deserve. Thanks be to God!

—Kristen Muse '20 MS

MARCH 1 | MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK

DN 9:4B-10 PS 79:8-9, 11, 13 LK 6:36-38



Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow. (IS 10:18)

“The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (MT 23: 11–12).

Through his words and actions, Jesus teaches us how to live God’s message of mercy, love and forgiveness. In today’s Gospel, we are called not to be “master” but “servant” to one another. We are called to help each other get to the heavenly banquet with Jesus showing us the way.

In contrast, the Pharisees do not practice what they teach. Jesus tells the people to listen to their words but not to follow their actions. The Pharisees are consumed with their position of authority and outward observances to the point that they cannot see the miraculous actions of Christ’s love and forgiveness. Jesus challenges us to move away from seeking exaltation to mirroring him and seeking to humbly move to action to serve others. In our pursuits to be loving and compassionate—especially toward those who challenge us—God will exalt us. Let’s ask ourselves: When do we have pharisee moments?

—Josephine Pastena P ’16

MARCH 2 | TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK

IS 1:10, 16–20 PS 50:8–9, 16BC–17, 21, 23 MT 23:1–12



Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant. (MT 20:27)

In today's Gospel, Jesus shares shocking news with the Twelve Apostles: In Jerusalem, he will be condemned, ridiculed, tortured and executed, and then "raised on the third day" (MT 20:19). If I were there, I hope I'd respond with empathy or by asking, "What do you mean, 'raised on the third day'?"

But I could easily respond as selfishly as the others in this passage. The mother of James and John, for instance, asks Jesus to grant her sons places of honor in his kingdom. And the other Apostles resent her bold request. None of them responds to or even acknowledges Jesus' message to them.

Jesus, however, gently teaches them, "Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave" (vv. 26–27).

As I journey through Lent, I pray that I will be mindful of others and their needs, that I will choose the common good over my own self-interest, and that, in doing so, I will grow closer to God.

—**Gerald Dierkes**, Access & Collections Coordinator, Stacks Maintenance,
Falvey Memorial Library

MARCH 3 | WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK

JER 18:18–20 PS 31:5–6, 14–16 MT 20:17–28



He is like a tree planted beside the waters. (JER 17:8)

In the First Reading, Jeremiah tells us that if we trust in the Lord and our hope is the Lord, then we are “like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream” (17:8). This image of roots stretching to water reminds us that Jesus is the living water. If we reach out to him in faith and trust, he will nourish and encourage us. Stretching is not always comfortable, but Jesus walks beside us as we wade out into the depths.

We also need to learn from the rich man in today’s Gospel who did not help the poor man Lazarus “lying at his door” (LK 16:20). I challenge each of us to place our hope in the Lord this Lent—to trust in Him and to stretch out our roots to help the Lazaruses in our midst, especially during this pandemic, when our health care workers, essential workers, the poor and homeless, and those who are sick and imprisoned most need our assistance.

—**Karen Victorino**, friend of Villanova

MARCH 4 | THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK
JER 17:5–10 PS 1:1–4, 6 LK 16:19–31



The Kingdom of God will be given to a people that will produce its fruit. (MT 21:43)

Lent is a time of reflection and penitence. It gives us the opportunity to consider the wrongdoings of our past and strengthen our faith as the joyful celebration of Easter approaches.

When we contemplate our past, it brings our notion of right and wrong into sharper focus. We can see that in today's reading from Genesis. Joseph's brothers intended to do him harm out of sheer jealousy, for "their father loved him best of all his sons" (GN 37:4), and not one of them objected to the plan. Selling him as a slave to the Ishmaelite traders eventually did save his life. Many years later, Joseph found the love inside himself to forgive his brothers, and he was able to reunite with his family.

It has been a long, hard year for the entire Villanova community. May we find the light within us during this Lenten season and be able to welcome Easter with open hearts and embrace the goodness in everyone.

—Dee Wiczorek '22 CPS

MARCH 5 | FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK

GN 37:3-4, 12-13A, 17B-28A PS 105:16-21 MT 21:33-43, 45-46



We must celebrate ...; he was lost and has been found. (LK 15:32)

I learned long ago that I am better at asking for forgiveness than I am at forgiving. Like the younger son in today's Gospel, I can easily come to my senses and see that humbling myself and admitting my mistake is the best course of action. As much as I like to be right, I can admit when I am wrong.

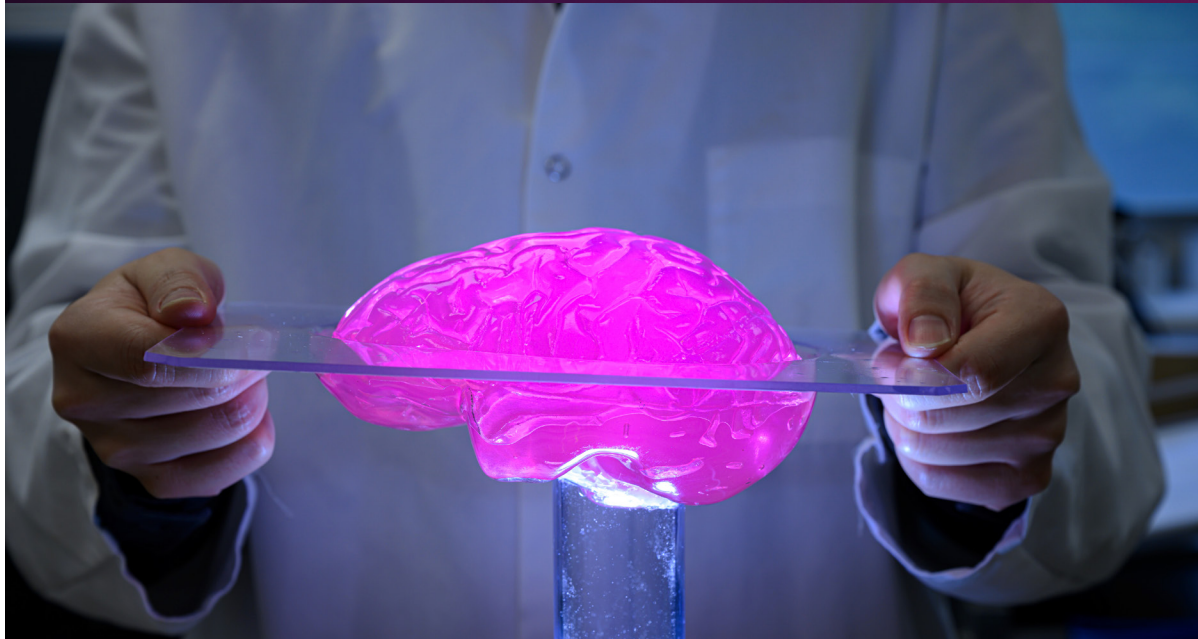
But when I am the one who is asked to forgive, I can become like the older brother who kept score of every good thing he had done to make sure he came out on top in the contest with his sibling. When I feel wronged, I can hold a grudge and be stingy with mercy.

But with God, there is no contest, and there is no scorecard. Keeping track of our brownie points and holding grudges destroys relationships. Compassion and mercy build community. God delights in clemency and invites us to do the same.

—**Madeline Bialecki '82 CLAS**

MARCH 6 | SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK

MI 7:14–15, 18–20 PS 103:1–4, 9–12 LK 15:1–3, 11–32



The foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom. (1 COR 1:25)

In today's Gospel, we encounter a side of Jesus not often seen—angry Jesus. “He made a whip out of cords and drove them all out of the temple area ... and he said, ‘Take these out of here, and stop making my Father’s house a marketplace’” (JN 2:15–16). This instance of heightened emotion is a beautiful glimpse into Jesus’ humanity. Let us not forget that Jesus is both human and divine—the hypostatic union. So often we get caught up in the divine that we forget the human side of Jesus.

As we travel through this Lenten season, we must not forget our own humanity. Jesus is our ultimate example; thus, we should turn to him and embody how he lived his humanity through good works. In the First Reading today from Exodus, we are reminded about the Ten Commandments. Let us combine these lessons of Jesus’ humanity and the teachings of the Commandments to strengthen our resolve as we pray, fast and give alms during this Lenten season.

—Siobhan Cooney '14 CLAS

MARCH 7 | THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR B)

EX 20:1–17 PS 19:8–11 1 COR 1:22–25 JN 2:13–25



Send forth your light and your fidelity. (PS 43:3)

Plagiarism: attributing to myself someone else's work. A temptation on a college campus, certainly, but a threat anywhere and anytime (Naaman, the proud nationalist, as well as the scribes and Pharisees). In fact, we all fall victim to this pernicious temptation.

The bottom line is that all is gift. God is bountiful, generous and forgiving. When it comes to the part you and I play in building up the reign of God, announced and inaugurated in today's Gospel passage, we tend to assume a protagonism that is hard to verify. We think we are doing this ourselves, when the very initiative and wherewithal come from God. But the praise, somehow, gets attributed to us, who are willing or unwitting collaborators in God's plan.

Jesus walked the walk and was rejected, not by the outcasts but by the insiders, the religious guardians. If we learn nothing else from this pandemic, let it be that we are healed and saved as a people, not as individuals or for what we do for God, but by what we recognize as God doing in us for the common good.

—The Rev. **Arthur Purcaro**, OSA, Assistant Vice President, Mission and Ministry

MARCH 8 | MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK

2 KGS 5:1–15B PS 42:2–3; 43:3–4 LK 4:24–30



Guide me in your truth and teach me. (PS 25:5)

In response to the perfection-conscious Peter, Christ challenges his listeners to strive for a forgiveness that seems beyond human capacity.

Forgiveness can be freeing. It can release us from anger, fear or pain and allow us to move forward. Even if forgiveness comes with benefits, we still struggle with it. It is often easier to nurse anger or resentment, even when we know that letting go will allow us to heal.

Forgiveness does not ask us to “get over it.” It is not covering our eyes to injustice or forgetting that harm was done. Nor does it mean that we should put ourselves in situations where we continue to be harmed. Forgiveness names the offense and expects that it will not be repeated.

Christ’s challenge is hard on good days, incomprehensible on bad ones. And we will probably fall short of the lofty “seventy-seven times” (MT 18:22). But we are called to try and emulate Christ’s example in the world, one difficult opportunity at a time.

—**Liz Remelius**, Program Coordinator, College of Professional Studies

MARCH 9 | TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK

DN 3:25, 34–43 PS 25:4–5B, 6, 7B–9 MT 18:21–35



Teach them to your children and to your children's children. (DT 4:9)

In today's Gospel, Jesus reminds his followers that he has come to fulfill the law, although perhaps not in the way they were expecting. Jesus taught his disciples to love God above all else and to love one another. He became human to model for us how to live, telling stories and acting in ways that demonstrated the meaning of God's law, and how to follow and accept it in our hearts.

During Lent, we can ask ourselves how we have been doing in terms of living according to God's commands. We can read and listen to the Gospels, thinking carefully about what God is saying to us and how we are to follow Him in our daily lives—in school, at work, with friends and in our families. We know that this is not always easy, but we can call upon the Holy Spirit to help us. And we can ask family, friends, roommates and coworkers to pray for and with us.

Lord, help me to follow your commands. Give me the strength to follow the path you have set for me.

—Mary Krikorian P '21

MARCH 10 | WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK

DT 4:1, 5-9 PS 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20 MT 5:17-19



The Kingdom of God has come upon you. (LK 11:20)

Today's First Reading warns us against hardening our hearts and stiffening our necks—that is, no longer looking or listening to the Lord. It is easy to slide into this habit. It can start simply as a manner of self-preservation or building a wall around one's heart and mind. I am guilty of this—especially when I am feeling overwhelmed, or the 24-hour news cycle becomes too much or I get stuck into thinking that things will never change. I become fraught that I don't have the right answers, and so I create this wonderful bubble of security.

However, the bubble is not my friend! It keeps me from friends and family. It keeps me from persevering and from serving others. This Lent, my focus is not on “what to give up,” as that has often been trivial and empty. My focus is to seek mindfulness and listen more to the Lord and those around me. I have to avoid creating the bubble and allow my heart and mind to soften up.

—**Meghan Petsko** '21 MA, Director, Graduate Tax Program

MARCH 11 | THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK

JER 7:23–28 PS 95:1–2, 6–9 LK 11:14–23



You shall love your neighbor as yourself. (MK 12:31)

It's far too easy in today's world to chase the favor of false idols—money, power, beauty, possessions. We invest our energy in these earthly concerns because it's more comfortable than heeding God's call to live a higher purpose. The farther we stray away from our faith, the harder it feels to come back to it. I've found myself in this position many times, including during the pandemic. Like me, you may have asked yourself: Is it too late?

Never.

The prophet Hosea reminds us that we can always return to the Lord, for He will “forgive all iniquity” and “love [us] freely” (14:3 and 5). That is the great gift of Jesus' sacrifice: No matter how many times we stumble in our faith journey, we will always be forgiven. We need only ask.

In this holy time, let us open ourselves to hear God's voice and strive to walk in His ways. It may not always be easy, but the most meaningful and important things never are.

—**Christine (Guerrini) Stackhouse** '09 CLAS, '17 MS, Digital Engagement Analyst,
Alumni Relations

MARCH 12 | FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK

HOS 14:2–10 PS 81:6C–11B, 14, 17 MK 12:28–34



The one who humbles himself will be exalted. (LK 18:14)

Competition is always part of life. From the time we are children, we experience it in activities, sports and friendships. In the workplace, we are always trying to be on top of our game.

However, today's Gospel reminds us to think instead about humility. As I reflected on this parable, I thought about being raised with fundamental rules, such as to always be kind to all, to do the best I can with integrity and a strong work ethic—and to be humble. When one is humble, one is free to not compare oneself with others, free to not be jealous or envious.

Lent gives us the time to reflect on our strengths and weaknesses. Are we like the Pharisee, reminding God of all that we do and glad that we are “not like the rest of humanity” (LK 18:11)? Or do we pray to God for the humility to recognize our sins? Let us embrace humility so that we can grow in spiritual awareness and have a deeper, more meaningful relationship with God.

—**Diane Brocchi** , Special Events Coordinator, External Relations,
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

MARCH 13 | SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK

HOS 6:1–6 PS 51:3–4, 18–21B LK 18:9–14



For we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus. (EPH 2:10)

Remember! Renew! Recommit! Rebuild! These are the commands we hear in today's readings.

Remember that God is compassionate, rich in mercy and kind. God loves us and gave us His Son. No matter what we have done, this does not change.

Renew your belief that by grace we have been saved through faith. It is not from us; it is a gift of God. It is not from works, so no one may boast.

Recommit to following the Law of the Lord—the law of love. Turn again to the light of truth, for whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that our works may be clearly seen as done in God.

Rebuild a world, a Church, a community, a family that God Loves. By your faith in action, strive to build the city of God here on earth, a kingdom of justice, love and peace for all God's children.

May the grace of God fill you with blessings during Lent and lead you to the celebration of His kingdom come at the feast of new life at Easter.

—The Rev. **Bernie Scianna**, OSA, PhD, Director, Fraternity and Sorority Life

MARCH 14 | FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR B)

2 CHR 36:14–16, 19–23 PS 137:1–6 EPH 2:4–10 JN 3:14–21



There shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create. (IS 65:18)

In today's readings, the Lord offers us a much-needed message of hope. Throughout this past year, many people have experienced pain and sorrow. Yet, as Psalm 30 reminds us, "At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing" (v. 6). Christ suffered and died for us, but on the third day he rose again. He has turned our "mourning into dancing" (v. 12) and our sorrow into joy.

As we navigate this Lenten journey, let us remember the joy that is to come. Let us wait in hope for the glory of the Resurrection and share this good news with everyone we encounter. God has prepared a place for us, a place where we can share in His joy throughout all eternity. Let us remember the promises of the Lord, and like the royal official in today's Gospel, let us believe that Christ will bring us the healing that we need.

—**Melanie Dudley** '16 MA, Assistant Director and Program Manager,
Eleanor H. McCullen Center for Law, Religion and Public Policy

MARCH 15 | MONDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK

IS 65:17–21 PS 30:2, 4–6, 11–12A, 13B JN 4:43–54



We fear not, though the earth be shaken. (PS 46:3)

“Do you want to be well?” I am often struck by the question that Jesus poses to the man in today’s Gospel. It is a question that seems unnecessary to ask. After all, he is noticeably sick—one among “a large number of ill, blind, lame, and crippled” (JN 5:3) found by a pool known for its healing powers. Yet Jesus assumes nothing about him; instead, he invites the man to speak for himself and share his story. His story matters to Jesus, not the one that others may have shared with him about the man, but his story alone, how he understands himself and who he understands himself to be.

In doing so, the man is able to hear and reflect on his own self-knowledge, and participate with Jesus in the healing process, noticing his own paralysis and the ways in which he had been stuck in his journey to health and wholeness.

The same is true for us. During Lent, let us consider how Jesus approaches us and asks us, “Do you want to be well?”

—The Rev. **Kevin M. DePrinzio**, OSA, PhD, Vice President, Mission and Ministry

MARCH 16 | TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK

EZ 47:1–9, 12 PS 46:2–3, 5–6, 8–9 JN 5:1–16



The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God. (JN 5:25)

Happy St. Patrick's Day!

On Ash Wednesday, we began our Lenten journey to prepare to renew our baptismal promises at Easter. This is the purpose of Lent—to prepare to renew our baptismal promises. We will publicly proclaim that we reject sin and the glamour of evil and refuse to be mastered by sin.

St. Patrick is an inspiration for us to overcome obstacles and be faithful to our baptismal promises. He was born in England. At sixteen, he was captured by Irish pirates and taken to Ireland as a slave. After six years, he escaped to go back to England, only to return to Ireland and convert the country from Celtic polytheism to Christianity.

By reflecting on St. Patrick's life and on the First Reading from Isaiah, which calls us to bring about the common good, rather than our own good, by freeing those imprisoned by addictions, helping those in darkness see light and working toward the goal of eliminating hunger, may we be aided in preparing to renew our baptismal promises.

—The Rev. **Bill Waters**, OSA, '68 MA

MARCH 17 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK

IS 49:8–15 PS 145:8–9, 13C–14, 17–18 JN 5:17–30



These works that I perform testify ... that the Father has sent me. (JN 5:36)

In the reading from Exodus, we hear Moses implore God not to punish His people despite the fact that they deserve God's wrath for worshipping idols and turning away from God. So, God agrees, thereby giving them another chance.

How many times do we seek additional chances, and God has been gracious enough to give them to us? When have we put other things first? How many times have we forgotten to start each day with gratitude for all God has given us?

These are challenging times, and it is easy for us to have lost our way, to have joined in with the negativity, to have put our own wants ahead of what is good for all, especially those who are different from us. And yet, what does God do now? He continues to give us hope, each and every day. He sent His son, Jesus. In the Gospel, Jesus reminds us that he is here for us. It is our job to accept him, to put our faith and trust in him, knowing that he is bigger than all of our problems. He brings us hope, if only we believe.

—**Joyce E. A. Russell**, PhD, The Helen and William O'Toole Dean,
Villanova School of Business

MARCH 18 | THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK
EX 32:7–14 PS 106:19–23 JN 5:31–47



ARDENTISSIMA
CARITATE
SUMME
CONSPICUUS

Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever. (2 SM 7:16)

A friend of mine always refers to herself as “God’s babysitter.” She has a keen awareness that while her children may bear a resemblance to her, they are indeed children of God placed in her care.

Though Joseph may not have been the biological father of Jesus, today’s readings very much establish that there’s no question he is Jesus’ father, even in the eyes of the Lord. The First Reading talks about God’s promise that the Savior will descend from the house of David. In Matthew’s Gospel, the angel of the Lord addresses Joseph as the “son of David” (1:20)—indicating that Jesus’ genealogy is traced through Joseph, his adoptive father.

The fact that the Scripture goes into such detail to establish Jesus as the son of Joseph suggests to me that the inheritance of faith they’re talking about has more to do with relationships than genetics. When God presents us with the opportunity to play a positive role in the lives of one of His children, do we take it?

—**Colleen Donnelly**, Assistant Director of Constituent Publications,
University Communication and Marketing

MARCH 19 | SOLEMNITY OF ST. JOSEPH

2 SM 7:4–5A, 12–14A, 16 PS 89:2–5, 27, 29 ROM 4:13, 16–18, 22 MT 1:16, 18–21, 24A



O LORD, my God, in you I take refuge. (PS 7:2)

The first time nurses geared me up to offer the sacrament of the sick to a COVID-19 patient, I thought about the possibility of being infected. Although this thought was momentary, it was real, human and scary. It was a defining moment that required trusting like the lamb and joining, as God's agent, the front liners in the battle against the virus.

This experience is nothing compared with the perennial conflict the followers of Christ must deal with: knowing the difficulty of the task at hand and the reality of success, which is based on faith. In today's Gospel, the crowds are divided on the question of Jesus' authority. Imagine what was going on in the minds of his disciples. They believed Jesus, but they had no guarantee that they would change the world. They probably considered jumping ship several times.

Some of us who began the Lenten journey with great hopes of spiritual fruitfulness are getting choked by competing interests. May we find refuge in God, who shields our heart from doubts and all that attacks our faith in God's providence.

—The Rev. **Deji Dada** '20 MS

MARCH 20 | SATURDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK

JER 11:18–20 PS 7:2–3, 9B–12 JN 7:40–53



Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. (JN 12:24)

Jeremiah prophesies about a new covenant in which the Lord will plant His law within His people and write it upon their hearts. All, from greatest to least, will know the Lord. To truly know the Lord means not only having His law in our mind and on our lips, but having it in our very essence—in our heart. When the law of the Lord is in our heart, we instinctively act with justice, compassion, mercy and love. Love of God and neighbor become truly intertwined; we build up the common good.

During this last part of Lent, let us take time for some “heart health.” Let us pray that our hearts will not be hardened when we hear the call to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Let us pray for a change of heart, for the grace to turn away from our sins and be faithful to the Gospel. And let us ask God to create a clean heart within us, free from sin and guilt, renewed in spirit.

—**John Bangert** '76 CLAS

MARCH 21 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (YEAR B)

JER 31:31–34 PS 51:3–4, 12–15 HEB 5:7–9 JN 12:20–33



The LORD ... refreshes my soul. (PS: 23:3)

Like Susanna in the First Reading, have you ever been falsely accused of something? Or, perhaps, you've felt misrepresented, but you know in your heart that God knows the truth? Or, like the woman caught in adultery in John's Gospel, you have been punished unrelentingly by yourself and others for your sins?

Humans have a tendency to condemn others because it makes them feel more just and righteous. Yet what Jesus teaches us in today's Gospel is that all of us are sinful, and therefore, we have no right to judge. God rewards the faithful, yes, but God also gives us grace and greets us with loving mercy so that our sin may be converted into freedom.

As today's psalm reminds us, God is always by our side, even when it feels like we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death. No matter how bad things get, whether we are the sinner or the one who casts the stone, we are lovingly invited to begin again, without judgment or condemnation. What joy!

—**Jennifer A. Joyce**, PhD, Associate Director, Center for Irish Studies;
Associate Teaching Professor, Augustine and Culture Seminar Program

MARCH 22 | MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK
DN 13:41C–62 PS 23:1–6 JN 8:1–11



When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I AM. (JN 8:28)

Do you ever wonder what God wants you to do? Moses prayed, and then he listened. He asked God to help him save his people from deadly snakes, and God told him to build a staff with a bronze serpent. Moses did, and the people who looked at it did not die from snakebites.

How did Jesus know what to do? Jesus tells the Pharisees that he is doing the will of God and that his thoughts are God's thoughts. Even as Jesus faces death, he knows that the Father "has not left me alone, because I always do what is pleasing to him" (JN 8:29).

How do we know what God wants of us? The answer seems to be to ask, listen and have faith that God will never leave us alone. Scientists have created a vaccine in record time. Health care workers have found ways to heal or comfort the dying. Maybe God is the voice that motivates us to use our gifts for the sake of others, to do what is right no matter what the pressure and to maintain hope in a pandemic because we are never alone.

—**Noreen Cameron**, Director, Service Learning, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

MARCH 23 | TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK

NM 21:4–9 PS 102:2–3, 16–21 JN 8:21–30



Blessed are you in the firmament of heaven. (DN 3:56)

The drama of today's First Reading is the stuff of box-office-smashing movies. There's fire and fidelity, an evil king and muscle-bound lackeys, and it all wraps up with a miracle and a conversion moment. This is the kind of scripture reading that emboldens unbelievers to embrace the faith. Behold, the God who conquers all! God who is with you in the midst of burning flames and protects you from the man who does evil to you. God of the impossible! God with whom you can triumph!

And yes. God is with us in the fire, or the pandemic or the headline-making event.

But God is also with us in the softer moments when we are presented with the choice to deny Him. In the quotidian moments of sin, of impatience or careless judgment, in self-righteousness, or in the quiet we want to keep when we know we should speak up. In these moments, Christ stands by us, inviting us to choose his way. Here, too, is the God with whom we can triumph.

—**Chesley Turner** '05 CLAS, '19 MS, Director, Center for Church Management

MARCH 24 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK

DN 3:14–20, 91–92, 95 DN 3:52–56 JN 8:31–42



The virgin shall be with child and bear a son. (IS 7:14)

It's interesting how today's date in the Lenten season is the Annunciation of the Lord, considering we usually think about the angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary during Advent. These two seasons lead up to the most important times of the liturgical year, so I enjoy how today combines both.

Fiat, Villanova's Catholic women's group, which allows me to grow in Marian sisterhood, was founded on the famous verse in today's Gospel: "Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word'" (LK 1:38). The psalm perfectly explains her sentiments: "To do your will, O my God, is my delight, and your law is within my heart!" (40:9).

We know in our hearts when we aren't living out our lives for the Lord. Doing something we think might make us happy can end up hurting our relationship with God. I challenge us this Lent to say yes to what God asks of us, even if it's not the easy thing to do.

—**Angelica Tiffany Garcia** '22 COE

MARCH 25 | SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD
IS 7:10–14; 8:10 PS 40:7–11 HEB 10:4–10 LK 1:26–38



The LORD is with me, like a mighty champion. (JER 20:11)

Our three teens, my wife and I were shaken. We had just lived through another day when we witnessed not only thousands of deaths from COVID and more civil and political unrest, but also acts of violence and terrorism in our nation's capital. We went to bed shocked, confused and scared.

I visited each of our children to say goodnight and reassure them. The Holy Spirit inspired me to share two things I know are true: Despite what evil we see and what bad things happen, good always wins in the end; and God is a God of mercy and justice. We will all have to stand before the Creator and account for our choices.

As I read today's Scripture passages, I heard those reminders from the Lord. Despite what challenges we face, what pain and suffering we endure, or what hurt others inflict, good always wins in the end, and justice will prevail.

So let us endure. Let us remain steadfast in our commitment to the good we can do, knowing that, like Jeremiah, the psalmist and the early disciples, we will soon again praise the Lord, our rock, our fortress, our deliverer.

—**Matthew Manion**, Professor of Practice, Management and Operations

MARCH 26 | FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK

JER 20:10–13 PS 18:2–7 JN 10:31–42



I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (EZ 37:27)

It's a distressing time we live in. An "us vs. them" mentality has been so pervasive in the media and in society. We're right, they're wrong. We're virtuous, they're evil. How do we repair such deep wounds and start to heal? It's an overwhelming task, but one we must meet for the common good.

This is what God says: "Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms" (EZ 37:22). The Bible tells us of God's everlasting covenant of peace. As Christians, our faith calls for us to make a commitment to move from "us vs. them" to "you and me." When we surrender to God, we need to let go of fear, anger, selfishness, greed and resentment. "Cast away from you all the crimes you have committed, says the LORD, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit" (EZ 18:31).

Knowing that the Lord will guard us, as a shepherd guards his flock, may we have the courage to be truly meek and resist the hatred that dwells in our own hearts.

—**Megan Walsh-Boyle**, Staff Writer, University Communication and Marketing

MARCH 27 | SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK

EZ 37:21–28 JER 31:10–12D, 13 JN 11:45–56



He humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death. (PHIL 2:8)

Today we celebrate Jesus' triumphant arrival into Jerusalem, where he is cheered on by the crowd. We know that, in less than a week, everything will change for Jesus. He will no longer be celebrated but crucified.

How quickly things change for us too. Over the past year, we have experienced tremendous upheaval. A global pandemic. Horrific racial injustices. Political division and unrest. Too many loved ones lost. We may feel that we are wandering in a desert. It may be tempting for us to cry out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (MK 15:34).

At times like these, I am reminded of the poem "Footprints," which envisions how God carries us during our most difficult times. We are never abandoned. As we enter this Holy Week, let us remember that, during life's challenges, God is forever with us and carries us when we are most in need. In big and small ways, God reveals Himself to us every day, reminding us that we are never alone.

—**Lisa J. Rodrigues**, PhD, Associate Professor, Geography and the Environment

MARCH 28 | PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

IS 50:4-7 PS 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24 PHIL 2:6-11 MK 14:1-15:47



I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice. (IS 42:6)

Today's readings remind me of the freedom and love found in the Incarnate Word. Isaiah proclaims God's victory of giving sight to the blind and freeing prisoners. The psalmist celebrates God as his light and salvation. In John's Gospel, Mary anoints Jesus with oil, and Jesus reminds the household that his followers must continue his ministry when he is no longer there.

Brothers and sisters, as Christians—as Christ's disciples—we are his hands and feet on earth. We cannot blind ourselves to the injustices that occur around us. Nor can we ignore God's call to continue sharing his freeing, loving Word with those whose spirits are impoverished, aching for Jesus' healing salve.

We are beacons of Christ's light. Thus, let us strive to fight the good fight daily, to work for God's love, peace and justice in the here and now. Let us allow God to use our gifts, talents and discipleship to exude His healing light to the suffering among us now.

—**Francesca M. Medora**, Graduate Student, Theology

MARCH 29 | MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

IS 42:1–7 PS 27:1–3, 13–14 JN 12:1–11



You have taught me from my youth. (PS 71:17)

Today's readings are difficult. There is much to comprehend. They challenge us to be courageous—something that can be hard for us to do. The Gospel, in particular, tells a story of heartbreak and betrayal. Yet, at the same time, they offer us the key to our salvation.

Like the “servant of the Lord” in Isaiah, we have been called by name from our mother’s womb, and our reward and recompense are with the Lord. We are to become a light to the nations. As the psalmist reminds us, our strength is from God, our rock and our fortress, in whom we trust. The Lord is the source of our justice and our salvation.

However, much like Peter in the Gospel, at times we falter—well intentioned, perhaps, but we fall short. The cock crows. But God never gives up on us. Time infinitum, the Lord extends a hand and calls us back to take refuge. We are God’s children. Jesus goes ahead to prepare a place for us. “Now is the Son of Man glorified” (JN 13:31), and courageously we will proclaim his wondrous deeds.

—**James F. Trainer**, PhD, Associate Vice President and Executive Director,
Strategic Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

MARCH 30 | TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

IS 49:1–6 PS 71:1–2–4A, 5–6B, 15, 17 JN 13:21–33, 36–38



The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue. (IS 50:4)

The announcement must have stunned them. The Twelve are enjoying the Passover meal with Jesus when suddenly he says, "One of you will betray me." Bodies freeze. Hearts pound. "Surely it is not I, Lord?" each asks (MT 26:21–22).

Had I been in the room, I'd be incredulous too. For me, denial is often the first step on the painful but liberating path to confession and absolution. Confronted by the ugliness of a personal or social sin, my first reaction is, "I can't have done that!" The Pilates of our world may wash their hands of the defenseless; the Peters may lie to avoid being involved; the Judases may sell out their friends to move up. But surely not I, Lord? "You have said so," Jesus answers (v. 25).

As we enter these holiest of days, may we hear our Redeemer inviting us to own our sins and then lay them at the foot of his cross. God gives us the grace to know the truth and be set free.

—**Suzi Wentzel** '14 MA, Director, Research and Planning, Mission and Ministry

MARCH 31 | WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

IS 50:4–9A PS 69:8–10, 21–22, 31, 33–34 MT 26:14–25



*Son though he was,
he learned obedience
from what he suffered;
and when he was made
perfect, he became the
source of eternal salvation
for all who obey him.
(HEB 5:8–9)*





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