



2/16/21

Dear *A Heart Renewed* Subscribers,

Welcome to the Jesuit School of Theology's online daily prayer experience for Lent: *A Heart Renewed*.

In the days to follow, you will receive an email with both a link to the Scripture readings of the day and a reflection on those readings. The reflections will be written by the students, faculty, staff, and alumni of the Jesuit School of Theology, a graduate school of Santa Clara University, as well as by faculty and staff from other schools, offices, and centers of distinction at Santa Clara University.

These daily reflections invite you to a retreat-like experience. They are a concrete way to honor the Lenten discipline of prayer. Find some quiet in your day to review the readings and the accompanying reflection. Let the reflection inspire your own praying and thinking. You might journal about what you are experiencing and learning. Ultimately, our goal is to know Jesus Christ more deeply, so that we can become Christ's mercy and compassion in the world.

At JST, we pay attention to the wider world where our prayer meets people's needs. If the Spirit moves you, bring to your prayer what you experience in the very ordinary routines of daily life and what you read in the news. We can ask: *Where do we find God in our experiences? How do we respond?*

Lent's journey is not a private experience. First of all, the Lord walks with each of us, offering divine friendship to each of us uniquely. Moreover, we make this retreat together. Thousands of people in the wider Santa Clara community unite in prayer with a common desire to grow in faith, hope, and love. You might wish to reach out to a friend to share your experiences through the weeks.

St. Ignatius of Loyola insisted that the most important spiritual disposition as we begin a retreat is generosity, a largeness of heart that is open to God's creativity and activity in our lives. Signing up for this online retreat underscores the generosity of spirit and time that you now offer.

In our Lord,

Joseph G. Mueller, S.J.
Dean
Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

Ash Wednesday - Feb 17

Joel 2:12-18; Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

The prophet Joel calls us to express together communal sorrow before God and to ask for divine help out of the predicament of our individual sins and those of our church. Although the pandemic keeps us from assembling as we would like, we can share, through these Lenten reflections and prayers, our common call to God for the grace of repentance and of reconciliation with the Lord. According to St. Paul, this grace aims to make us expressions of God's righteousness by bringing us to share in the person of Christ Jesus. Jesus, the Holy One of God, became sin so that we could share in God's righteousness through him. Jesus' way was not to commit sin but to live with those who sin and who suffer from sin, to experience their sufferings and deprivations, to see their pain as his problem. In Christ Jesus, then, we become the righteousness of God by rending our hearts at the evil we and others perpetrate, at the suffering that we and others cause and experience. This heart torn to pieces weeps in prayer to God, wants to suffer in a bodily way—for example, in fasting—to express its grief, and commits to treating others' pain as our problem to be addressed with empathy, tact, and the effective help of the needy that Christ calls alms in today's Gospel. After a year or more of living with the pandemic and with newly obvious reminders of how racial justice eludes us, we might recoil at a summons to tear our hearts with suffering. But Christ is not so much calling us to suffer as he is inviting us to let his Spirit make our shared suffering a path to resurrection, which we will celebrate at Easter.



God of love, in your goodness, send out your Spirit to renew us in Christ your Son, so that we can face with Jesus the sin and suffering within us and around us and so walk with him the path that leads to the glory of life renewed in and for you.

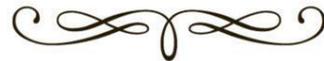
Joe Mueller, S.J., is Dean of the Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday - Feb 18

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6; Luke 9:22-25

In order to truly experience life in Christ, we will have to allow some things in our lives to die: our carnal passions; our inclination toward self-centeredness; our unwillingness to forgive others, etc. Everything we can think of that places distance between the call of God upon our lives to live righteously and holy will have to die, as we are to focus our worship on God and God alone. We are moral agents with free will to make choices about our lives, and God wants us to always make choices for the common good. Which means we have to continuously develop an appetite for righteousness; the righteousness of God. Why, because our hope is ultimately in God: “Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.”

And let’s not be discouraged in well-doing. Yes, there may be some suffering we endure as we give ourselves over to the Lord, dying to ourselves, living unto Christ, but we should be overjoyed to know that after suffering, there is salvation; after trial and tribulation, there is triumph and victory; after persecution, there is peace. In order to truly live unto and into Christ, we must learn how to die, for after this good death, we will experience abundant life; true life.



“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world, yet lose or forfeit himself?” – The Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

Medene Presley is a fourth year Master of Divinity student at the Jesuit School of Theology.

Friday after Ash Wednesday- Feb 19

Isaiah 58:1-9a; Psalm 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19; Matthew 9:14-15

In this Lenten season, we are reminded and called again to commit ourselves to God not only through deeds but also with our hearts. The prophet Isaiah reminds the people of Jerusalem and community of believers that our sacrifice to God is best expressed not in any physical offering but in how we treat the people around us: how we share our food with those who are hungry, how we give shelter to those who seek refuge, and how we stand firm against injustice. *This* is the measure of our devotion that grants us a deeper relationship with God and creation, where our light will pour forth like the dawn, secure in the protective presence of the Lord. May we honor God's call to offer ourselves willingly and joyfully to anyone who seeks our help, opening the gates of our heart wide to the poor and the hungry, to the Christ in our midst.



O Lord, may you humble our hearts so that our fasting is transformed into a sharing of food, our prayers into comforting the sorrowful. Grant us the strength to reach out in love to our neighbor, and to recognize you in the face of everyone we meet. Through compassion and true prayer, may our offerings bring us ever closer to you. Amen.

Cathleen Chopra-McGowan received her PhD in Hebrew Bible from the University of Chicago in 2019 and is currently an assistant professor in the Religious Studies Department at Santa Clara University.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday- Feb 20

[Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalm 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6; Luke 5:27-32](#)

I wonder if that phrase has ever been inscribed on a gravestone: repairer of the breach. It strikes me as a great testament to any person who has worked for reconciliation and healing. Could others describe us this way? If we're not repairing any breaches, are we even standing in the breach? It seems to me that our nation and world is full of people lamenting the divisions among us while staying safely on one side, gazing at the other side from a distance.

In the first reading today, Isaiah is clear that God asks us to be active participants in the healing and reconciliation of the world. Maybe I can't understand how people in my church or neighborhood or workplace voted "for the other guy/gal" in the last election. But how might God be calling me to stand in the breach - or better yet, repair the breach - between myself and a family member who voted for the other candidate? How can I hope for an end to political divisiveness on a grand level if I'm not willing to stay in respectful conversation with a loved one? Or how can I wish for others to overcome their fear, judgement, or stereotypes of another race, religion, or gender if I'm not willing to initiate a relationship with a neighbor different from me?

It is normal for us to be discouraged by the gloom of current circumstances, but Isaiah tells us that there are things we can do to hasten the coming of the light. While praying for healing, we can focus on repairing the breaches in our own lives. How do we still contribute to oppression? When do we still speak unkind words? Who are the hungry or afflicted in our daily lives whom we can feed? What are the concrete actions we can take today to be a repairer of the breach?



Ask God to open your heart to help you recognize where you might be called to be a repairer of the breach. Speak to God about what you need to be able to take courageous action.

Ann Naffziger (MDiv 2002, MABL 2003) is a spiritual director and the Associate Director of The Pastoral Center, a small pastoral publishing company based in Alameda, CA.

First Sunday of Lent - Feb 21

Genesis 9:8-15; Psalm 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15

In today's first reading from Genesis, the word 'covenant' appears five times in seven lines. As I was reading, I was struck by this emphasis. I asked myself, *what do covenants have to do with me; what are covenants in today's world?* Through reflection, I decided that a covenant is an agreement, where all involved are held accountable for their role in that agreement. I then started wondering what covenants I have in my life. I found myself moving beyond the obvious agreements: my marriage, my work contract, etc., to those that I consider less formal covenants. *What is my covenant with the earth? How do we mutually care for one another? What is the covenant I make with the rest of humanity? How do we uphold dignity and empower all those in our communities? What covenant do I have with God? How does God engage with me and how do I engage with God? And finally, I considered how do I situate myself with those who have had their covenants broken by others or who I have broken covenants with? What does that process of restorative justice really look like in my community or in myself?* I invite you to consider these questions for yourself. What are the commitments you have or have not made to God, to others, to the earth? How do you honor and lift up relationships in your life and in your community? How do you reach out to those with whom relationships have been broken or denied?



Creator God, thank you for the invitation to be in relationship with one another, with you, and with the earth. We pray for the guidance, resiliency, and humility to pour love and compassion into these relationships and to search for the areas where love and compassion are lacking. Help us bring forgiveness, acknowledgment, and healing where it is needed. Amen.

Anna Ricci is the Program Director for Immersions at the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education.

Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter, Apostle - Feb 22

1 Peter 5:1-4; Psalm 23:1-3a, 4, 5, 6; Matthew 16:13-19

Today's scriptures invite us into a deeper relationship with God and God's people. Psalm 23 reminds us that God is our shepherd, while Peter exhorts us to "tend the flock of God." These readings inspire us to trust God, rest in God's ever-present love, and share this love with everyone. Even though we might "walk in the dark valley," "the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail," and in service to others, we may have a "share in the glory to be revealed."

God's Word gives us "repose in verdant pastures", and God's "restful waters" refresh us. Although our world may go through challenging times, our "cup overflows", and such trials allow God's eternal glory to shine even brighter.

Today's passages remind us that God is with us, and they encourage us to help others right here, right now. We can share the hope and joy that God has given to us with the rest of the world that needs God so much right now. This time of pandemic, social distancing, and unpredictable change can be an opportunity for us to retreat closer unto God's love and strengthen our faith. Let us pause to give thanks for the blessings we have, stop and smell the roses through our face masks, and smile! God is doing a new thing in us. Hallelujah!



Dear God, you have blessed me beyond measure, my cup runneth over, and I give you thanks for your great glory. Thank you for today, dear God. Please help me to be a blessing to everyone I meet, whether near or far, online or in person, for the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Albert D. Honegan received his Master of Arts in Biblical Languages from JST and the GTU in 2020 and is currently teaching Spanish in the Bay Area while planning to pursue doctoral studies.

Tuesday of the First Week of Lent - Feb 23

Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19; Matthew 6:7-15

A Profound Prayer So Simply Stated

Today, Matthew reminds us how Jesus taught his disciples to pray. No need to babble for our daily bread; after all, God knows our needs better than we do. So much so, that Isaiah tells us that the Lord's fruitful rains and heavenly snows seed the earth, providing our bread in all of its sustenance. David in Psalm 34 calls us to look to the Lord with joy and without fear, for God hears the poor, has eyes for the just, and is close to the brokenhearted.

The *Lord's Prayer* was more than a visitor in our home. My widowed mother taught it to my brother and me at a young age. She recited it with my dad as the ambulance approached on his final day. She ensured that its presence was a daily companion, a reminder to forgive others, to do God's will, and to stay out of trouble. Not necessarily the easiest tasks as far as I was concerned.

The Lord teaches us our prayer. So simple and yet so profound. I believe some of these words were spoken among the prayers recited during the agony at Gethsemane and on the mountain after feeding the five thousand. In many ways, these words were the Son's prayer, said without the rush of daily distractions, the press of returning emails, or the rapid, rote recital of words often taken-for-granted.

Let us pray the *Lord's Prayer* in peace, in God's presence, and in a place void of worldly distractions. Let us pray it simply, asking for God's mercy and forgiveness, realizing we must forgive others, serve others, and love others. Let us be grateful for the bread, in all its forms, that we receive today.

And so with deep gratitude we pray,



Dear Lord, we love you, we trust you, we honor you. Help us in our simple way to see your profound love for us, to renew our hearts, and to do your will.

John Ottoboni is the Chief Operating Officer and Senior Legal Counsel and a graduate of Santa Clara University (class of 1969).

Wednesday of the First Week of Lent - Feb 24

Jonah 3:1-10; Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19; Luke 11:29-32

“The word of the LORD came to Jonah a *second* time.”

Indeed, when we meet Jonah in today’s reading it is the *second* time that God called him. You may recall, the first time God called him, Jonah didn’t want to answer. He delayed. He found excuses. Eventually a whale swallowed him and delivered him to the shores near Nineveh, the city to which God wanted him to preach repentance.

Through the ordeal in the belly of the beast Jonah was convinced! God’s call *was* worth answering. So he preached, with the urgency God intended. He called the people to repent. And, we are told, *in just one day* of preaching in that city, the King and all the people put on sackcloth -- a sign of being humbled, a sign of having a contrite heart, and an act of penance and intention to reform. So even if Jonah *had not at first* heard and heeded the urgency in God’s call, the people of Nineveh *certainly did* and urgently took action to put on, in heart and in deed, God’s values.

Do you answer God’s urgent calls? In whatever form, it’s a choice to actively reject evil and do good.

We can be deaf to God’s call, or fail to answer, for plenty of reasons: We don’t want *our plans* to be disrupted! We prioritize *self* first and others later. Despite good intentions, we procrastinate and fail to do the good we intend. We are just overwhelmed by life, feel alone and don’t know what we should do. We spin our wheels and go in circles. Whatever the reasons, remember what Jesus said about his call: “*my yoke is easy, my burden is light*” (Matthew 11:30). This Lent, let’s open our hearts to God’s call and answer without delay.



My Jesus, my love, be my companion! Speak to my heart, so I will be unafraid and freed from fear, selfishness and whatever else may cause me to close my ears and turn away. Make me your co-laborer in your mission of salvation for all the world, with a willing and joyful heart.

Brent Howitt Otto, S.J. is a Jesuit priest from Massachusetts. He graduated from JST with an M.Div (2014) and STL & Th.M. (2016). Currently Brent is a PhD candidate in South Asian History at UC Berkeley, where he teaches undergraduates and waits out the pandemic patiently to resume dissertation research abroad. Presently he also serves part-time in parish ministry and as a spiritual director.

Thursday of the First Week of Lent - Feb 25

Esther 12, 14-16, 23-25; Psalm 138:1-2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8; Matthew 7:7-12

“Ask and it will be given to you; search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you,” Jesus says (Mt 7:7), making it sound so easy. Just ask. God will respond. You will receive.

But figuring out what to ask for can be difficult.

When loved ones are sick or dying, for what should we ask? Life? Healing? A peaceful death? A chance to see a face one more time, squeeze a hand, whisper words of love and letting go? And as we come to understand the depth of systemic racism, for what should we ask? Movement beyond the blindness of bias? Institutional change? Reparations? Strength for the journey?

Responding can be just as complicated.

Jesus assures us that we should trust God to give us what we need. He insists, you “know how to give good gifts to your children,”-- bread, not stone; fish, not a snake (Mt. 7: 9-11). Yet, as a parent of three sons, a teacher, a colleague, a friend, I have often struggled to know what the people around me actually need. What is bread? What is stone?

Perhaps we can take inspiration from the bold, risk-taking Queen Esther, who grasped and asked for exactly what she needed and utilized well the gifts she received. With “persuasive words,” she deftly navigated political alliances, saving her people from death (Es. C: 22-24).

So, knowing the complications, and trusting that in prayer both our needs and God’s response will become clearer, we pray:



God of light and love, you desire our flourishing, and call us to enable the flourishing of others. “[T]urn our mourning into gladness and our sorrows into wholeness.” (Es. C: 25) Make us channels of your love, so that we, too, can give bread, not stone, to those who hunger.

Julie Hanlon Rubio is Professor of Christian Social Ethics at JST.

Friday of the First Week of Lent - Feb 26

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8; Matthew 5:20-26

During the English Catholic Emancipation in the nineteenth century, a Protestant writer in the *Times* recounted an encounter with a bishop on the streets of London. He noted that the man bore the dignity befitting his title in every way. That he carried his own luggage was the only clue he was not a prelate of the Church of England. The author made a point that helped bring about the Catholic Church's restoration: Catholic laity and clergy were well known for their willingness to work hard for the material welfare of others. If it meant carrying one's own baggage or ministering to the poor in the mean streets of London, Catholics could be counted on to "get their hands dirty" caring for others.

Jesus' rejoinder, "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven," makes clear our faith cannot survive on liturgy or worship alone. Unless we are committed to social justice, assisting the poor, caring for the enfeebled, being good stewards of our planet, and being intermediaries of peace, we are at risk of the same accusation.

Religion without prayerful worship is no different than a Non-government Organization (NGO), but liturgy without vigorous commitment to our world and its people has little meaning and its beauty is illusory. Lent is a time to reconsider our commitment to the greater community. Only through an examination of our groundedness in this world will the Easter celebration assume depth and meaning.

Have you noticed Pope Francis carries his own suitcase?



Father, may the observance of Lent deepen our commitment to those who cry out and may stewardship of Earth reflect the radiance of your Risen Son. Amen.

Nicholas Glisson completed his PhD at the Graduate Theological Union in 1997. He is Pastor at Saint Mary Magdalen Parish in North Berkeley and a member of the JST Board of Directors.

Saturday of the First Week of Lent - Feb 27

Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8; Matthew 5:43-48

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples: *love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*. Praying for our enemies is a challenging mandate to be sure, but I think perhaps Jesus has embedded an even deeper challenge here: don't just pray for your enemy, get to know them.

I keep a post-it on my desk with a quote from Brene Brown: "People are hard to hate close up, move in." I come back to it often when I'm struggling to locate the graces of patience or understanding.

Jesus is asking us in today's Gospel to move in. Prayer, in some ways, is the easy part. If I simply pray for my enemy, I can keep them at a distance. I can pray for my enemy without getting to know their name, the color of their eyes, or their favorite book. I can pray for my enemy without having to dismantle a single one of my preconceptions or biases.

But if I want to find a way to love my enemy in the way our heavenly father does, the way Jesus asks us to today, I have to move in. And when I move in, as Brene Brown says, it becomes much harder to hate my enemy. When I move in, I might learn about their struggle with addiction. When I move in, I might learn about the death of their sibling at a young age. When I move in, I might realize that they are not quick to judge but are simply afraid of being judged. When I move in, I will find myself face to face with a fellow human being, unable to walk away unchanged.



Compassionate God, in this Lenten season, help me to move in. Help me do more than pray for those who persecute me. Walk with me as I seek to love as you love, close up, face to face, human being to human being.

Erin Conway is a former high school Theology teacher and a 2nd year MTS student at the Jesuit School of Theology.

Second Sunday of Lent - Feb 28

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Psalm 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19; Romans 8:31b-34; Mark 9:2-10

This narrative, best known as “the Sacrifice of Isaac,” is one of the three main episodes of Abraham’s life, represented in art. It is called *Akedah* (“binding of Isaac”) in Jewish tradition. This troubling story creates a lot of suspense. God’s demand threatens the promise made to Abraham. The birth of Isaac marks the fulfillment of this promise. Here, this promise gravely comes under threat, paradoxically from the provider God, who asks a most improbable thing of his servant. The one who provides a long-awaited child is the same who orders its sacrifice. Another troubling aspect of this narrative is the character of Abraham, who knows everything with apparent certainty. Abraham lived with faith and obedience: “Here I am.” This narrative is a site of struggle. However, this story calls us to name and challenge unexpected and unfair tragedy. Human beings sometimes end up in impossibly tragic situations. Why are there innocent victims? Children almost killed by violence, illness, poverty? Where is the God of the promise? Let us cry and mourn about this tragedy. In the end, let us believe in the goodness of the Lord, a God who will provide. Let us look up and see God’s goodness and provision breaking into situations of despair. Abraham’s act of faith lies in Abraham’s ability to recognize God’s provision in ordinary life, especially in this challenging circumstance when Abraham experiences human vulnerability. In Jesus, God’s provision attains its climax. Through Jesus’s death, God ultimately fulfills the promise started in Abraham. Whatever brokenness we carry, Jesus bore it on the cross. This story prefigures the Passion of the beloved Son of God. Lent provides us a favorable time to go to the mountain. There, we get transformed by encountering God.



Jesus Christ, you are God’s everlasting provision for us. In you, we could see the eternal beauty at all times and circumstances. With your grace, each one of us can answer your call: “Here I am!” Endow us with the spirit of the audacity of the improbable. Amen!

Ablam A. Atsikin, S.J., is an STD’21 student at the Jesuit School of Theology

Monday of the Second Week in Lent - Mar 1

Daniel 9:4b-10; Psalm 79:8, 9, 11 and 13; Luke 6:36-38

Today's Gospel from Luke reminds us of the importance of maintaining right relationship, which can be an even greater challenge as we navigate spending time apart from others during the pandemic. When someone hurts us, it is easy to write them off as being not a true friend or having cruel intentions. Jesus' words remind us that we ought to forgive, condemn less, and be more merciful using God's example as our guide. What a task! Where do we even start? Perhaps it begins by forgiving ourselves, being less judgmental of ourselves when we make a mistake, so that when we are called on to suspend judgment or offer our forgiveness to another, it will be a bit easier. This has the potential to create a radical transformation within us and our relationships, as we try to forgive without any conditions. And when it gets hard to emulate these characteristics, which is inevitable, let us remember that Jesus says, "give and gifts will be given to you."



Merciful Lord, I pray for the grace to start small by offering forgiveness to someone who has hurt me or being less judgmental in my words and thoughts as I go about my day.

Alyse Hudock is the Campus Minister for Residence Life and Graduate Students at Santa Clara University.

Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent - Mar 2

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalm 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23; Matthew 23:1-12

In this gospel passage from Matthew, Jesus uses the scribes and pharisees as a foil so he can make clear how we need to be for ourselves and for others in God's realm. He describes the disingenuous behavior of the scribes and pharisees – preaching one thing and then behaving very differently. Some synonyms for this word help capture the underlying issue: hollow-hearted, false-hearted, double faced, and double dealing. We are all susceptible to this. It afflicts us individually, communally, and societally. This leads to experiences of futility, pointlessness, and meaninglessness.

The cure, if you will, for this is care – caring for ourselves and others, bringing Jesus' emphasis on love, mercy, and justice, to the forefront – making it the viewpoint from which we evaluate all laws and rules. There can be no duplicitousness here – only focused efforts toward justice, which involves restoration and right relationships, as well as the giving back of what was taken. In doing so, we all become one people, all sisters and brothers, of one mind and one heart, with God to guide us to the deep equality to which we are called.

The societal issues are often more visible than our personal issues. All of us have lost pieces of ourselves, some taken away, some given away, others hidden away, or forgotten about. We all need to be about the business of our personal restoration, since it is from our growing single heartedness that we are able to care, really care, for others and for the world.



In you and through you, O God of Many Names, do we find the way to bring all the pieces of ourselves and society into a creative oneness. May we be about the life-giving work that your Jesus gave us to do. Be with us, point out to us the many opportunities awaiting, needing, our care. May we strive to care for others and the world as you care for us.

Bede J Healey, OSB Cam, is a Camaldolese monk and Prior of Incarnation Monastery here in Berkeley. He is also a clinical psychologist and teaches about the intersection of psychology and spirituality.

Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent - Mar 3

Jeremiah 18:18-20; Psalm 31:5-6, 14, 15-16; Matthew 20:17-28

In today's Gospel, the mother of the sons of Zebedee seeks places of prestige for her sons with Jesus, right after Jesus foretells of his impending Passion. Her request seems rather tone-deaf to the condemnation and horrific death Jesus has just announced. Yet, the tension between the ways of the world and the ways of God is one that we all confront in our everyday lives. Saint Ignatius Loyola illustrates this tension in his meditation on las dos banderas or the two standards. He asks us to imagine a great battlefield where on one side the bandera de Lúcido, the standard of Satan, tempts us with its wealth, honor, and pride. Then, on the other side is the bandera de Cristo, the standard of Christ, which offers us poverty, contempt, and humility. Our call and challenge as followers of Christ is to remain steadfast under the bandera de Cristo.

Yet, Saint Ignatius' meditation makes us aware of how we are constantly faced with this tension between the pull towards each of these banderas. Our lives are often so full of busyness and distractions that many times we are unaware of which bandera is pulling us. In this Lenten season, we might do well to take some time to slow down and either begin or deepen our practice of the Ignatian Examen. When we take time to recognize God's presence in our lives, acknowledge that all that we have is gift from God, and attend to how we have either been pulled towards the bandera de Lúcido in desolation or towards the bandera de Cristo in consolation, then we can seek God's grace to overcome this tension, so that we might be more effective instruments of God's love and mercy in our world.



Come, Holy Spirit, and illuminate the ways in which I am pulled away from the standard of Christ, the ways that lead to a decrease in faith, hope, and love. Grant me the strength and desire to move always towards the standard of Christ, so that I might bear witness to Christ's compassion, humility, and loving service.

Kyle Shinseki, S.J. received his Licentiate in Sacred Theology from JST in 2019 and currently serves as Campus Minister for Faith Formation and Intercultural Ministry at Santa Clara University.

Thursday of the Second Week of Lent - Mar 4

Jeremiah 17:5-10; Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6; Luke 16:19-31

One of the striking things about today's story of Lazarus and the rich man is that we're not told that the rich man was particularly evil. He dressed nicely and ate well, neither of which would seem to make him deserving of the torment that would be his lot in the world to come. We have no reason to think the rich man cheated his creditors, kicked his dog, littered, or even treated Lazarus badly. He seems to not see Lazarus at all, and even in torment his only concern is for his own family, not for others who were suffering in this world as Lazarus had; he still cannot see Lazarus as a brother.

When we're told on Ash Wednesday to "turn away from sin and believe in the gospel," we might be tempted to think of sin as evil acts, the kind of thing that we can handily enumerate for confession. Instead, we might think of Lent as an invitation to refocus our moral vision. To believe in the gospel is to see the world through the prism of the Good News, in which the last will be first, and the rich, as Mary noted, will be sent away empty. Love of neighbor begins with noticing one's neighbor, seeing how the cruelties of this world fall more heavily on some than others, and to begin to rebalance the scales toward justice. Let our Lenten practice be one of paying attention, especially to those we've never quite managed to see as brothers and sisters before. Who are the Lazaruses right outside our gates?



Brother Jesus, this Lent help us to become people of gospel vision and gospel action. Heal us from indifference into the active love your gospel demands. We ask for your fiery Spirit to light our way, and we trust that when we see the poor, the disdained, the outcast as brothers and sisters, we catch a glimpse of your face.

Lisa Fullam is professor of moral theology at the Jesuit School of Theology

Friday of the Second Week of Lent - Mar 5

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Psalm 105:16-17, 18-19, 20-21; Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

You, I am sure, have experienced rejection in some way or another. Maybe you have been broken up with, or told you are too young or too old. Maybe you had siblings and classmates who would exclude you from things, or your own parents made you feel not good enough. Maybe, you even feel rejected when you offer someone something and they turn it down (disrespectfully or respectfully). From a deep seated sense of rejection to minor annoyances, the sense of rejection can lead you to anger and sadness and make you avoid certain situations. You may struggle to fall in love, take a new step in your life, or write and turn in papers for criticisms and grades.

In Genesis 37, Joseph is rejected by his brothers with the threat of death and sold into slavery. In Matthew 21:33-46, Jesus tells of his own rejection in the story of a king who sends his servants to his vineyards only to have the caretakers reject the servants over and over again—even killing some of them. In the end the king sends his son who they also rejected and murdered. It hits differently when you are rejected for who you are essentially; for something you cannot change. When I reflected on this, I could not help but tear up at the thought of my ancestors who were rejected, sold into slavery, lynched, and imprisoned, and those who still experience these very things just for being born a certain way. I carry that rejection in my blood, my skin and my spirit. I can imagine what it must be like for those who are rejected for their sexuality, gender and ability. Rejection stirs up in us cries for justice—but how? Both Jesus and Joseph exercised justice by loving, forgiving and leading those who rejected them—transforming their rejection into a *cornerstone* of mercy and salvation. Can we do the same? How?



Dear Lord, may your graces flow into our rejection. May we embrace the responsibility it carries. And may love be our ultimate justice, through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Dayne Malcolm S.J. is a Jesuit from Jamaica and recently ordained Deacon in his third year of the M.Div program at JST.

Saturday of the Second Week of Lent - Mar 6

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

From a house to a home

A while back, I asked my 10 year-old nephew, “what is the difference between a house and a home?” He pondered a few minutes and replied, “A house is what you buy; a home is what you build. A house is where you sleep; a home is where you rest. A house is where I talk with family and friends; a home is where I can trust myself with them.” These thoughts have come to me as I’ve contemplated the Gospel reading today.

From a house

In the story of the ‘Prodigal Son’, I’ve often wondered why the youngest son left the mansion. He seemed to have everything he wanted in the family estate. Yet, there was an urgency in his request, “Father, give me the share of your estate...” And only a few days after, he left for a “distant country.” Such an urgency begged for further inquiries, did it not? In what type of household he had been living? Where was mom? What kind of a father would give the children any kind of property without first asking this question? He did not seem to have any type of close relationship with his older brother. Perhaps, he left the house to look for a home.

A home, something built together

Upon hitting the bottom, the younger son, who had been looking for home where home cannot be found, awakened to a call to return to rebuild the relationship with his father beginning with a transparent and intimate confession. The older son, who had perhaps for the first time, courageously gave voice to his feelings of “anger and frustration.” The father who had been cold and distant actively took initiative to engage with his two sons openly shared his emotion of joy and assurance to them. In each of their own way, the three have begun mending their relationships and building a home for one another.

To my nephew, who is the next generation of Vietnamese American, no matter what struggles and difficulties he might have gone through, I hope and pray that he could confide in his uncle in building our home together.

During this Lenten season, what do you need to convert your spiritual house into a spiritual home?



*Lord, deeper make thy home in me
‘Til every room belong to Thee
That Thou might fully make me Thee
And so full rest Thou have in me*

Hung Pham, S.J. spent 7 years teaching Ignatian spirituality at JST and now serves as the provincial assistant for Formation of the Central South Province.

Third Sunday of Lent - Mar 7

Exodus 17:3-7; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42, 19b-26, 39a, 40-42

We live in a world of instant gratification. We have instant messaging, microwaves, cell phones, and curbside pickup. Even in the grocery stores, we have self-check-out lines. We don't have the patience to wait around, and we hate it. We want what we want, and we wanted it yesterday. As we know, there is no such thing as an instant-God.

We cannot ignore troubles, problems, trials, suffering, misfortunes, and evil. When going through tribulations, we naturally want our trials to be over and done with quickly. Simply put: tribulations have a way of getting our full attention. But we can shout with joy, knowing that what may have begun as tribulation works in us patience, especially when there's nothing we can do except wait on God. We have to learn to go through whatever is before us (the good and the bad) with joy, knowing that what the enemy may have intended for evil, God will use for our good. To God be the glory in the wait with the knowledge that, in the end, something good will come. That means the next time tribulation rears its ugly head; we need not worry because we know what God can do!



Dear Father, we thank You that no matter what is going on in our lives or the circumstances we are facing, we can go through it with joy and patience with full knowledge that You are with us. Through patience, we are being perfected in Your image. We trust You completely, knowing the love You have for us is shed abroad in our hearts, and no matter what comes along, we're more than conquerors through Christ. Amen.

Jasmine Allen is an Administrative Associate of JST Finance and Administration

Monday of the Third Week of Lent - Mar 8

2 Kings 5:1-15ab; Psalm 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4; Luke 4:24-30

Today we encounter a little Hebrew slave girl who loves without restriction! There is no evidence of a we/they dichotomy in her life. Her love, her circle of interest, extends beyond her enslavement. One desire pulses in her heart: to see her Aramaean master, Naaman, cured. Nothing hinders her.

Fast forward to 2021. Pope Francis, in writing *Fratelli Tutti*, calls us to live our prophetic call by choosing to clothe ourselves in universal fraternity, extending ourselves beyond ourselves and encompassing all our brothers and sisters. As we begin this 3rd week of Lent, this slave girl, living in adverse circumstances, shows us how to notice “real faces of love” and then act. Both are essential to loving fully.

Pause for a moment and mentally visualize the “real faces of love” in your life. Whom do you see? Who is missing? Is it the Congolese refugee recently resettled in your neighborhood, the sibling from whom you are estranged, the homeless man standing at the expressway exit, the woman on the news sentenced to life in prison, the disabled neighbor who has no transportation to get to a vaccine sight, the Honduran asylee pressing her face against the fence at the Juarez border, or the pleading eyes of a starving child from Rohingya? Who is included in your review? Missing? Cut out?

The slave girl exiled in Damascus is transparent in her compassionate love and acceptance. Today, we ask Jesus for the grace to expand our vision and forgive us for those whom we intentionally ignore or disregard.



God of Compassionate Love, whatever it takes, I entreat you to stretch my heart and the “real faces of love” in my life. Have mercy on me. Even though I have miles to go, I am ready to begin again. Grant me a heart like the heart of your Son, Jesus, always open to the whole world, seeking to bring about Your Reign. Amen.

Jacquelyn Gusdane, SND, JST Sabbatical Program, 2018 and Catholic Charities Migration & Refuge Services/Immigration Legal Services and The Refugee Response (TRR), Cleveland, OH (volunteer).

Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent - Mar 9

Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Psalm 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9; Matthew 18:21-35

Today's Gospel reading talks to us about the necessity, but also the very real difficulty and challenge of forgiveness in the Christian life. Jesus' story tells us that we all need God's forgiveness, but we are also called to forgive those who have hurt us, accepting that it will be difficult, and that there will be a cost.

Forgiving someone is never easy. Moved by compassion, the master in the story is willing to forgive the loan in its entirety- a choice that may cost him a lot. The Christian faith teaches us that Jesus was willing to undergo suffering and death on the cross to bring us the forgiveness of the Father. As Christians, we receive God's forgiveness through Jesus, but we are then called to forgive those who have sinned against us. As we see in the story, there are many who receive forgiveness, but are then unwilling to forgive those who have hurt them.

Forgiveness is more than just a feeling- it is a choice that we can make with the power of the Holy Spirit who is in us. This does not mean however that forgiveness is an intellectual exercise; as Jesus reminds us, we need to forgive from the heart, and that is much harder than just saying "I forgive", because we need to engage the emotional wounds that we carry deep within ourselves.

Ignatius spent a long time in the cave at Manresa praying for God's forgiveness. His writings reflect this experience and remind us of the need to work on ourselves so as to be worthy of God's forgiveness, but also to be able to extend it to others when we are called to do so.

As we try to deepen our life of prayer in Lent, we may recall another passage from the Gospels: "And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses" (Mark 11, 25).



God of love, send us your Holy Spirit, so that we can open our minds and our hearts to the riches of your forgiveness. Make us messengers of your compassion, so that we can forgive those who have hurt us and always be ready to start anew.

Thomas Cattoi teaches early Christian theology and interreligious dialogue at the Jesuit School of Theology.

Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent - Mar 10

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Psalm 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20; Matthew 5:17-19

Obedience in our faith life can sometimes feel like the opposite of what it means to be human. It may feel like an ask too demanding, constantly resisting the seduction of our temptations. The quiet, daily choices made to uphold a vow or commitment are not glorious; there is no standing ovation or medal to be won. These daily choices can sometimes be easy and monotonous, or at times harsh and dreadful. Moses reminds the people of Israel that the law was made to help them stay faithful to the covenant, that there is a redemptive quality to the practice of following the rules. The law was made to help them keep the relationship with God dynamic, active in their hearts and daily living. Though harsh and dreadful at times, the focus when keeping the commandments should not be on God more than the rules themselves or on our efforts. Jesus models this for us through his radical trust in God; the more he trusted God, the easier it was to accept the cup of sacrifice. He shows us that the daily efforts of obedience are in fact grace operating in our life here and now. The Church is our field hospital, as Pope Francis states, and in this time of Lent we draw in towards our faith community for healing. May we have the courage to reform our lives by surrendering to the One who invited us in this journey of discipleship.



Christ, our great teacher, may your deep love for God inspire us to draw deeper into relationship with you. Through our daily prayer and sacrifices, teach us how to live as God's chosen people and strengthen us to build the Reign of God. Amen.

Ana López received a Masters in Divinity from the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley in 2017 and now serves as the Director of Community Service and Social Justice at St. Ignatius College Prep in San Francisco, California.

Thursday of the Third Week of Lent - Mar 11

Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9; Luke 11:14-23

In today's first reading, the prophet Jeremiah stands at the Temple gate scolding the people of Judah. "This is the nation that does not listen to the voice of the LORD, its God" (Jer 7:28). Jeremiah prophesies against the social ills of the Hebrew people who have taken their relationships with God and one another for granted. Instead of turning toward God and caring for their neighbors, they have allowed themselves to be seduced into a false sense of security and superiority. They turned their backs, not only on God, but on the weaker and more vulnerable among them.

Nearly six hundred years later Jesus performs a miraculous exorcism of a mute man. Those who witness the event remain unconvinced. They level the accusation that Jesus' power comes not from God but from Satan. In his response Jesus invokes the prophetic power of Moses, "But if it is by the finger of God that I drive out demons, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Lk 11:20). The Gospel writers use healing miracles and exorcisms as devices to illustrate that the kingdom of God has arrived. Like those to whom Jeremiah preaches, the witnesses challenging Jesus are unable or unwilling to see the power of God in their midst. It is through God's power that the mute man was healed. Jesus' message is one of faith in God and strength in community.

Where has our society blinded itself to the goodness of the Lord? Where do we see evidence of the power of false gods in our time? Does the power of love not overcome the power of hate? If we turn to God as Jesus tells us; as Jeremiah tells us; will not our house be strengthened and our communities be made stronger? In this season of Lent, let us turn to God and one another and make our house stronger.



Almighty God, let your love shine brightly as a beacon whereby we might turn to you and one another to build up our community and realize your Kingdom in our day.

Eric Gregory MTS '20 is a teacher at the Loyola Academy, a Nativity school affiliated with Brophy College Preparatory in Phoenix, AZ.

Friday of the Third Week of Lent - Mar 12

Hosea 14:2-10; Psalm 81:6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14 and 17; Mark 12:28-34

This year for Lent I gave up the practice of doom scrolling. More specifically, I deleted the Facebook app from my phone. In doing so, I'm attempting to walk away from the echo chambers that have declared those who share my beliefs possess the cornerstone of truth. Moreover, I'm actively trying to deconstruct a lie that the echo chambers have pedaled and I, myself, at times have believed and even perpetuated: indelible lines have been drawn that separate me from my neighbor, with whom I disagree.

As I begin to imagine building a new paradigm I feel overwhelmed, paralyzed, and unsure how to proceed. Today's Gospel reading (Mark 12: 28-34) offers a useful starting point. Jesus was asked by a scribe, "which is the first of all commandments?" "First," he replies, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind" and second, "you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus's life, ministry, and teaching calls followers to cross seemingly irreconcilable lines. The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25-37) is my favorite example, and implores me to go and do likewise: pursue those outside of my echo chamber as beloved neighbors.



Call to mind Christ Jesus and prayerfully consider the following: What are the echo chambers in your life saying and how do they impact your relationship with God and others? What might God be inviting you to consider today? Who is your neighbor, and how can you pursue them with love?

Drew Roberts is the Assistant Dean of Enrollment Management and Marketing at the Jesuit School of Theology.

Saturday of the Third Week of Lent - Mar 13

Hosea 6:1-6; Psalm 51:3-4, 18-19, 20-21ab; Luke 18:9-14

Today, Jesus tells a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee approaches the Temple and congratulates himself at length for fasting and tithing. His piety rings false: self-praise stinks, and no incense can cover it up. The tax collector also approaches the Temple, but his piety contrasts starkly with the Pharisee's. Standing afar off with eyes downcast, he beats his breast and prays, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." Only one goes home justified.

This halfway point through our Lenten journey provides a good opportunity to check in on our piety. We started three weeks ago, perhaps encrusted with ash and full of self-sacrificial zeal. On the one hand, is the flame of our fervor burning brightly, or has it dwindled into embers? If the latter, we can stir it up again! We can feed the hearths of our hearts, enflaming them with Scripture, the Sacraments, and good works. And yes, that includes fasting and tithing. On the other, if that fervor continues unabated, who is its subject? Do we take the tax collector for our model, fully aware of our sinfulness and fully hopeful in God's loving mercy, or has the subject of our piety shifted, like that of the Pharisee's, to center ourselves? If the latter, we can refocus it! We have only to accept the Lord's invitation through this parable to examine our prayer, not to mention God's abundant grace. May that same Lord give us ears to hear the invitation and fertile hearts in which the grace might take root.



O God, direct our worship. By ourselves, it is mere dew that evaporates at first light. With Your help, may it instead soak in like rain, greening in us love and knowledge of You. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Fr. Brian Konzman, SJ, is a JST alumnus and MBA candidate at Columbia University.

Fourth Sunday of Lent - Mar 14

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Psalm 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21

In any other year, this reflection would focus on how we might rejoice on this Laetare Sunday. Yet in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, where it feels like we have been in a year-long Lenten season, the traditional call of Laetare Sunday to rejoice feels out of place. How are we to anticipate the joy of Easter when the transformation that Easter promises feels so far away?

Today's Gospel reading speaks to the relationship between light and darkness. Those of us JST alumni who look back fondly on Prof. Sandra Schneiders's "Gospel of John" seminar recall that light and darkness are key to interpreting the fourth Gospel. Today we read, "And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light, and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

As we mark the year-long experience of social isolation in the United States, perhaps the account of darkness is familiar. On this Laetare Sunday, we can take a moment to reflect on how we might come into the light. In what ways do we prefer darkness? How might we "come to the light" and move closer to God? The promise of our faith is that God continues to reveal Godself to us, inviting us to pursue light even when we may prefer the dark. On this Laetare Sunday, let us rejoice in a God that continues to invite us into the light.



God of Wisdom, you invite us to come to you as we are, continually offering yourself to us. Help us to recognize the light amidst the darkness, and more importantly, help us to be light within the darkness. We ask this through Jesus Christ, who came to bring light into the world.

Annie Selak, Ph.D., received her MDiv from JST in 2009. She currently serves as the Associate Director of the Women's Center at Georgetown University.

Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent - Mar 15

Isaiah 65:17-21; Psalm 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b; John 4:43-54

Today's Gospel story of the royal official pleading with Jesus him to heal his dying son is permeated with emotions so familiar to us. Who among us has not accompanied a loved one through a time of serious illness? Can you recall your prayerful petitions to God? While this account includes a miraculous cure of the son, the father's encounter with Jesus is graced in another way. It opens him to believe that, through Jesus, God is present to him and his community. His attitude reflects the spirit of our psalm response: *"I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me."*

Some years ago, my mother, who had been healthy all her life, was diagnosed with cancer. In the ensuing months, as she faced surgery, radiation and ever diminishing health, I prayed for her intensely. While my prayers for Mother did not result in a physical cure, I appreciated more that she was gifted with profound peace and that our family was gifted with acceptance. Her final weeks were graced with tender moments with each of us. I felt the impact of that psalm response: *"I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me."* Grief and despair were overcome with trust that God held my mother close. When I celebrated her Funeral Mass, I did so with great gratitude as I was so certain of life everlasting. That gift has stayed with me.

Perhaps my experience resonates with you. While I believe in miracles, and often pray for the physical healing of those who are ill, I'm also praying to trust that God is present to them as they most need, as well as with the community of love and support that surrounds them. May we all be able to proclaim: *"I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me."*



Lord Jesus, so much of your ministry was about healing in many forms. I come to you aware of the ways I need healing and our society needs healing. Gift me with the graces I need to live and act with trust and faith. May I praise you, grateful for the ways that you rescue me. Amen.

Jack Treacy, SJ, is an SCU and JST alumnus and serves as University Relations Chaplain at Santa Clara University.

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent - Mar 16

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; Psalm 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9; John 5:1-16

DO YOU WANT TO BE WELL
Of Trust and Healing

“Do you want to be well?”

That was the question our Lord asked the sick person. One would expect the direct and simple answer, from someone who has been sick for a long time, to have been:

“Yes, Sir, I want to be well.”

But the sick person did what most of us will do. He explained and gave a series of cogent reasons, why *“being well”* was out of reach. He was incapacitated, had no help, slow and therefore unable to get to the pool of Bethesda.

Dear friends in the Lord, we are deep into the season of Lent, wherein we are called in a special way to trust the Lord. We are asked by the Lord, *“Do we want to be well?”* Almost all of us have that particular struggle, difficulty, or fear that has held us down for days, months, and in some cases years.

In this season, God asks the question: *“Do you want to be well?”* We might, like the sick person, see all reasons to be discouraged. We might have all the human logic that explains why we might not be able to get well; but Jesus speaks to our hearts this season, asking us to trust in him, listen and follow his words to us: *“Rise, take up your mat, and walk.”*

It is a Divine Command that requires our response: our response in *listening*, our response in *acting* upon what the Lord continues to ask of us this season of Lent – one of which is to **TRUST**; trust in the Lord.

My dear friends in Christ, as we continue to journey onwards to the Lord, confronted by all forms of discouragements and fears; may we realize how limited our human explanations and fearful-concerns are, before the Lord who lovingly and continuously asks us: *“Do you want to be well?”*



As we respond in hope and trust, may the Lord strengthen our faith, now and always. AMEN.

Angelbert Chikere, STL, MDiv. is the Parochial Vicar at St. Lawrence the Martyr in Santa Clara and a JST Alumni (class of 2018).

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent - Mar 17

Isaiah 49:8-15; Psalm 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18; John 5:17-30

This week, for many of us, marks one year since the beginning of coronavirus lockdown, which began an extended time of learning to live with the unknown, of “sheltering in place,” and of wondering how long this time would last. For all too many it has been a time of affliction from illness, grief, and death. On a collective level it has revealed deep issues of unhealth in our society and on our planet. We might even call it a time of “exile”... at least from what we have known, assumed, and counted on as “normal.”

Into frayed spirits and a weary world come today’s words from the prophet Isaiah. How do we in our time hear the prophet’s words to our ancestors-in-exile? Depending on our circumstances, they may offer a balm, a challenge, a promise...or all three.

As balm, they offer comfort: “God has comforted the people and will have compassion on the suffering ones.” As challenge, they say to prisoners and to the imprisoned parts of ourselves and our world, “Come out”; and to those in darkness, “Show yourselves.” As promise for those feeling forsaken and forgotten, they remind us of God’s abiding presence: “Can a mother forget her infant? Even if she forgets, I will never forget you.”

Christians believe that, as scripture points out elsewhere, the Word of God is “alive and active.” (Heb. 4:12). As we recall the litany of events that we have experienced since last March, it is a good time to reflect on the prophet’s words of comfort, challenge and promise.

Which words and images in today’s reading reveal for you that the Word of God is alive and active at this time in your life and our world?



Faithful God, we trust you are always with us. At this time we pray especially for those who need comfort, those experiencing challenges, and those who feel forsaken or forgotten. Be with all of us as a loving mother who never forgets her children. Amen

Clare Ronzani’s work at SCU has included teaching courses in spirituality at JST and in the Graduate Program in Pastoral Ministries.

Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent - Mar 18

Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 106:19-20, 21-22, 23; John 5:31-47

I have streamed way too many shows during this pandemic.

I suppose it was a comfort while all the world was in crisis, but looking back, there were definitely more fruitful ways I could have spent my time. Certainly, there were days when my screen time should have been much lower and personal prayer time higher.

Whenever I read the passage from Exodus today, I am always shocked that the Israelites would turn away from God to worship a golden calf.

The psalmist puts it well: “They exchanged their glory for the image of a grass-eating bullock.”

Who would ever make such a trade?

But when I think about it, I am not much better. It is rather absurd that I spend several hours a week staring at a glowing screen for entertainment when there are activities that are much more spiritually fruitful.

Sometimes we feel lost in the desert, and all we want to do is close in on ourselves. Relying on a God that we cannot see or touch is just too hard, and so we turn away from the Lord and settle for different idols: mindless diversion, material comforts, a false sense of control.

And all the while, the God who desires to draw us into an unimaginable Love simply waits for us to come back. This is a God who keeps promises, even if they seem impossible to fulfill; a God who meets us in the desolation of the wilderness and wants to share with us the fullness of life and glory.

What are the idols that tempt you away from a covenantal relationship with God? How might you be invited to turn them aside this Lent and enter into deeper dependence on the Lord?



God of Love, only You can truly satisfy my heart. Give me the grace to cast aside my idols and give myself more fully to You.

Andrew Laguna is a JST alumnus and Jesuit priest. He is currently an associate pastor at Most Holy Trinity in San Jose and also serves as vocation promoter for the Bay Area/Sacramento.

Solemnity of Saint Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Mar 19

2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Psalm 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a; Luke 2:41-51a

The prophecy given to David by Nathan that God “will raise up your heir after you...who shall build a house for my name” was fulfilled in Solomon when he built the Jerusalem Temple. However, it was equally fulfilled in the life of Joseph – who was also an heir, a descendant of David – in a manner that has more practical implications for our practice of the faith. God who took on flesh and dwelt among us first found residence in the house of Joseph and became a member of his household. The house of Joseph became the first temple that God physically inhabited. Before Joseph accommodated God in his house, he first accommodated God in his heart exemplified by his humble and obedient acceptance and execution of the divine instruction through the angel to take Mary into his home without fear and to foster her Child.

Nathan’s prophecy needs to be fulfilled in our own time too. We know that the prophecy is expected to become fulfilled in our time and in us, because the responsorial psalm tells us that the Son of David lives forever, even now, and because Saint Paul reminds us that, by faith, we have become descendants of Abraham. And it is fulfilled each time we open our hearts to receive Christ in our fellow human beings and when we cultivate attitude of openness and inclusiveness and engage in positive actions on behalf of God in the world against all tendencies that seek to isolate and exclude people. The prophecy is fulfilled when we open our hearts and homes to receive God who is among us, especially in under-privileged children and others who desire homes and other forms of accommodation physically, emotionally or spiritually.



As we celebrate the feast day of Saint Joseph, may we be invited to ponder the outcome of his life, and through his intercession, obtain the graces we need to imitate his faith and follow in his footsteps, to open our hearts to receive and accommodate others just as he received and accommodated Jesus and Mary. Amen.

Chidube Joseph Chukwu, S.J. received his Master of Divinity (2018) and Licentiate in Sacred Theology/Master of Theology (2019) from JST and currently teaches at Saint Paul’s Major Seminary, and also serves as an associate priest-in-charge of Saint John Paul II Catholic Church in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent - Mar 20

Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 7:2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12; John 7:40-53

In today's readings, encounters with, around, and about God seethe with outrage and division. Jeremiah implores the deity to bring retribution down on his opponents. The Psalmist seeks shelter from adversaries behind the shield of divine retaliation. And, in John's Gospel, fears swirl into a scapegoating power-grab that will result in Jesus' lynching on Golgotha.

What light might today's readings shine on our own attempts to fit God and one another into our small categories and containers, particularly when we perceive security, others' or our own, as threatened?

Fight?

Flight?

Freeze?

Or...?

In celebration of National Women's History Month, we offer this little litany of a few American truth tellers and peace activists, who have opened for us fresh ways forward, in word and in deed:

Rosa Parks,

Ella Baker,

Dorothy Day,

Elise Boulding,

Rachel Carson,

Carrie Chapman Catt,

Dorothy Cotton,

Peace Pilgrim,

Samantha Smith,

Jane Addams,

Dorothy Marie Hennessey,

Mary Burnett Talbert,

Maya Angelou,

Ardeth Platte,

Coretta Scott King,

Women in Nonviolent Movements Everywhere,

Sowers of Social and Environmental Justice,

Prophetic Critics & Visionaries,

Guardians of Hope,
Advocates of Equality,
Challengers of the Status Quo,



Pray for us.

Carrie Rehak, Ph.D., Director of the Renewal Program and Field Ed Supervisor

Fifth Sunday of Lent Year B - Mar 21

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15; Hebrews 5:7-9; John 12:20-33

Corona pandemic has taught people who they are, and their need for God's mercy. It has created a deep longing for God in them especially after the months of lockdown. People longed for community worships and prayers but due to lockdown restrictions the normal way of religious worship was impossible. Even those away from families were forced to come back. During Corona lockdown, members of families spent their time together and it strengthened their family-ties. One could see neighbors reaching out to neighbors through acts of mercy such as providing dry ration to those in need; going out and helping others during the pandemic itself was a risk to one's own life—a way of dying to oneself.

Thus, 'suffering' in this world has its own importance. Jesus did not come to abolish suffering but through suffering gained new life for all humanity. Jesus said, "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." The pandemic created havoc in the whole world, but also brought people together. People, in turn realized the importance of one another and cooperated willingly and generously—that is the 'new covenant' written in the hearts of the people God talks about in the first reading.

Philip and Andrew led some people to Jesus. They became a guide for them to reach Jesus. Have we in this pandemic period helped anyone come closer to Jesus? Have we become mediators between Jesus and our brothers and sisters in any way who might be longing for Jesus? If not, this lent is an opportune time to meet Jesus. Only Jesus can save us from all the sufferings of the world.



Jesus, make us generous and courageous to meet our brothers and sisters who in any way are suffering. May we become a channel for them to meet Jesus in their sufferings. Amen.

Amit R. Lakra SJ, Alumni JST-SCU (Spring 2019), an Assistant parish priest at a Jesuit parish and a teacher in a primary English medium school in Rourkela, Odisha, India.

Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent - Mar 22

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62 or 13:41c-62; Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6; John 8:1-11

The one with no sin can throw the first stone.

The first reading and the gospel of today speak to us on the topic of lust. But if we pay close attention to the readings, it is not the human weakness or the sin of lust that plays a central part in the readings, but rather it is a profound and ultimately divine call to truth, justice, and mercy. One begins to wonder what Jesus was writing with his finger in the sand when everyone was eagerly waiting for an answer. A Jew would immediately understand what that gesture was all about. It was Jesus reminding the bystanders about Deuteronomy 9:10 where God did write the law with his finger. God's law was not about condemnation and hatred, but it was all about love, justice, and mercy. Daniel in the Old Testament and Jesus in the New Testament are the ones that embody this message of the deep compassion that God spoke about and which all of us are called to exemplify in our lives.



Lord Jesus, gives us the grace of love and mercy so that I might not judge or condemn people uncharitably. In this season of lent, please give us the grace to lend a listening ear to listen to the cries of people suffering from different kinds of ailments, those who are lonely and are in all types of distress.

Amen.

Alendro DaCosta, a Jesuit Scholastic, 1st-year M.Div. and STB student at JST.

Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent - Mar 23

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 102:2-3, 16-18, 19-21; John 8:21-30

This Lent is heavier than most. We are, as they say, experiencing “COVID-19 fatigue”. We are weak and vulnerable after a year of fear, paranoia, distrust, misinformation, and division. Today’s readings, however, invite us to consider the struggle the Israelites experienced in the desert alongside the challenges we face. Like any true period of testing, God desires to be close to us. In the first reading, we hear how Moses prays for the Israelites and carries their complaints on his shoulders even after they speak against him and God. The serpents that surround them threaten their survival and they know they are helpless to the forces of nature. Like a true leader, Moses does not dismiss their cries, but brings their fears to God. Moses models faithfulness and trust for the Israelites and they are given an opportunity to repent and keep their eyes focused on God at all times. The “bronze serpent mounted on a pole” acts as a physical, earthly sign of God’s healing presence among them, if only they keep their gaze focused on its restorative power, they will be saved.

As Christians, we believe it is Jesus who is our salvation. These passages from John’s Gospel are a challenge. I found myself rereading them because I want to feel what Jesus is saying. Jesus wants me to feel confident in who he is and the power that God has given him. Jesus desires that I realize he comes not to put himself above me, but to reveal to me the glory of God. If I focus myself on him and this building up of a new kingdom, then those sins which weigh on me are only part of my earthly journey. What awaits me is the promise of salvation.

It is good to cry out, it is good to express fear, and it is necessary to share that with God. That is our invitation this Lent. To go to God, to be with Jesus, and to center ourselves on the paschal mystery that approaches.



Loving God, Creator of the world, accompany us in our fears, ease our worried minds, and give our sweet bodies rest amidst this pandemic. We are weak and in need of care. Show us your mercy and everlasting love. Amen.

Stephanie Boccuzzi, M.Div.'19 works as a theology teacher at Xavier High School in Manhattan.

Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent - Mar 24

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Psalm Dn 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56; John 8:31-42

When confronted with danger, do we find ourselves drawing nearer to God, or pulling away? Today's readings offer us a contrast in approaches. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego face near-certain death by fiery furnace at the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar. All they need do is pull back from their faith in God for one moment and worship a golden stature to ensure their safety. Their refusal demonstrates utter dependence upon God in a time of danger. They not only survive their trial-by-fire, but exit the scene more fully immersed in the mystery of God.

In the Gospel, Jesus addresses his remarks to "those who believed in him." At one point, they must have been moved by an encounter with Jesus: a healing touch, a powerfully spoken word, or a tender gaze. How devastating, then, for Jesus to sense that these "disciples" are trying to kill him. We might imagine a reason for their change of heart: siding with the scribes and Pharisees would have offered security for them, much more so than casting their lot with an itinerant preacher.

This past year-plus has forced us to acknowledge that we too are in danger, whether from worldwide pandemic, racially-motivated murder, or raging wildfires. Do we find ourselves tempted to confront this danger on our own, or can we risk entrusting ourselves daily to the protection of the "God who can deliver" us from danger?



God,

You know well the dangers that threaten to overwhelm us. We feel at times powerless to stop them, and we find ourselves in great need of your protection. Deliver us from evil, God, not only temptation but also the very real dangers we face these days. Remind us, as you did Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that our lives are fully in your hands, and that we only need to trust you. Amen.

Dan Dixon, SJ is a Jesuit scholastic from the Midwest Province currently pursuing his Masters of Divinity degree from the Jesuit School of Theology.

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord - Mar 25

Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10; Psalm 40:7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 11; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

Nothing will be impossible for God. - Luke 1:37

In my thirty-six years hanging out on planet earth, I've noticed that quite a bit of time is spent praying about how *strong* and *powerful* God is. And while I would never claim that those terms are not analogically true about this mystery we call "God," I must admit something: in recent years, those descriptions of God just haven't helped my prayer. In fact, I have often found them downright harmful.

The more I have meditated on this strange mystery of enfleshment and enmeshment called *Incarnation* — the mystery that we have localized in the story told in today's Advent gospel story being proclaimed during the middle of Lent — the more I have realized that I don't want a god "out there" somewhere to intervene to fix all the world's problems. I don't even really want a god to fix my problems. Rather, these days I just want God to be right next to me; I just want God to be right next to us. Actually, not just next to us. I want God to be in it all with us — *enmeshed* with us, *weak* with us, *vulnerable* with us.

So, God, I/we really need you to be more a verb than a noun right now. With all the pain that is taking place around the world, we just want to know that the pain our neighbor is experiencing is pain that You are experiencing. Frankly, it would be really hard for us to really love you if it wasn't that way.

So, on this Solemnity of the Annunciation, a day when we profess that "nothing will be impossible for God," a day when we honor the way God is enmeshed in the fragile life process inside a human womb, perhaps we might consider honoring a little bit less of God's strength and a little bit more of God's weakness. And then maybe we can just hold each other.



Tony Cortese, SJ, is a Jesuit scholastic of the Jesuits West Province and Program Manager for Ignatian Spirituality at the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education here at Santa Clara University

Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent - Mar 26

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 18:2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7; John 10:31-42

The biblical narratives of today, present a confrontation between Jesus and the authorities. An ominous reality and potentially conflictful situation is unfolding. What initially began as a religious misunderstanding between Jesus and the religious authorities has now taken a turn for the worse. Jesus has become a prime subject and target for capital punishment. The authorities and some folks alike can no longer stand the call to repentance and reconciliation. As the wise adage warns us, reason is six-seventh of treason. On account of failure to reason with Jesus and his teachings, a scheme is hatched to arrest him, “but he escaped from their power” (John10:39b).

Isn't an existential paradox that throughout the course of human history, the fate of Jesus has often been the lot of many of God's children who call us to repentance and reconciliation? The religious authorities cannot stand the invitation to a better and higher way of relating with God, and kith and kin. They are stuck with a vertical perception of reality and are not open to a horizontal one. Positive change is indeed no easy feat to attain.

When we object to the invitation to growth towards new possibilities and higher horizons, we conversely recede into defending the status quo. And yet almost each day of our lives we are presented with new opportunities for growth towards the unlimited horizons. What is our disposition towards this invitation? Do we shoot the messenger or shoot the message? If we can't shoot the message, most likely the messenger is right.

Indeed, what a glaring contrast in dispositions between the authorities and the ordinary folk who approached Jesus and openly declared, “John performed no sign, but everything John said about this man was true.” And many there began to believe in him” (John 10:4-42).



Righteous and Holy God make us open to embrace the vast possibilities and opportunities for growth that you daily invite us towards. Free us of any resistance to responding to your gracious and generous invitation. May we be unafraid to embrace the spiritual movement to change.

Andrew Simpasa, S.J. is a Jesuit from Zambia-Malawi Province. He graduated from JST-SCU with STL & ThM (2020). Currently Andrew is Executive Director at Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre (KATC). KATC is involved in the promotion of sustainable organic agricultural methods, that is farming without use of chemicals and herbicides.

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent - Mar 27

Ezekiel 37:21-28; Jeremiah 31:10, 11-12abcd, 13; John 11:45-56

Today, Ezekiel reminds us that God is not a passerby. God is active in our lives. Ezekiel tells us “Thus says the Lord God: I will take the children of Israel...I will make them...I will deliver them...I will multiply them,” and through all this, “I will be their God and they shall be my people.” God is not passive. However, neither are we. And so, John reminds us today that, for better or worse, we have free will. As easy as it is today to judge the choices of those who stood by Jesus versus those who did not, John points out to us that many of those against Jesus were acting out of fear – fear of the retribution they’d face at the hands of the Romans if they supported Jesus. People were free to follow Jesus in the face of that fear, or to make choices based on that fear, ultimately leading to the execution of Jesus. We, as humans, are not passive pieces that God moves around on a gameboard. We are free to make our own choices and take our own actions. The convergence of these two – God’s actions and our actions – is the sweet spot. And Lent is the perfect time to find that sweet spot. I like to compare Lent to the time St. Ignatius spent in his cave in Manresa. Like St. Ignatius, we need to sit still and become more attuned to God’s active presence in our lives. We need to be open to receive God’s graces of compassion, strength, wisdom. This helps us to take actions that are more fully aligned with God’s desires. So, let us reflect: How is God active in my life? How do I discern my own actions to ensure they are aligned with God’s desires?



Loving God, inspire us to listen more closely to you and to see with new eyes your active presence in our lives. Guide us with your wisdom and courage to discern our own actions, so we may carry out your mission of love and mercy to bring about a more just world. Amen.

Karen Chambers is a JST alumna who is currently the Director of Campus Ministry and a Theology teacher at Verbum Dei High School in Los Angeles, a member school of the Cristo Rey Network.

Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion - Mar 28

Mark 11:1-10; John 12:12-16; Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1—15:47

In his compelling new history, *Men on Horseback: The Power of Charisma in the Age of Revolution*, David A. Bell examines five remarkable leaders of great rebellions between 1775 and 1820, including George Washington, Napoleon Bonaparte and Toussaint Louverture, who liberated Haiti and led the greatest slave revolt in history after Spartacus. He investigates the hero worship surrounding them and wants to know: *What do people desire from their leaders?*

This is a question we might consider as we begin Holy Week today. Palm Sunday commemorates the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem: an event mentioned in all four of the canonical gospels. Did he arrive like a handsome young general on a rearing horse pointing onward to victory? Not quite. Instead, Jesus makes his entrance in peace, riding a donkey, and not as a war-waging king sitting high on a stallion, nostrils flaring.

Paul knew the Philippians were tempted to think of God's leadership and power in an exalted way, and not in terms of humble service and endurance. Jesus was someone very different: a child born into poverty, in an obscure and oppressed corner of the world, who grew up learning a humble trade, waited humbly to start his ministry and who chose humble friends for his journey. Humble in the crowds he sought out, humble in his healing and his teaching. Humble in obedience. Humble in submission. Humble in death and in his rising from the dead.

Unlike Washington crossing the Delaware, Napoleon crossing the Alps or Bolivar crossing the High Andres, in this final week of Lent we await a leader who crosses the thresholds of our hearts peaceably and humbly, delivering the quiet good news of forgiveness, mercy and hope.



“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:29)

Joe Kraemer, SJ, is a scholastic of the Jesuits West Province currently in his second year of Masters of Divinity studies at JST.

Monday of Holy Week - Mar 29

Isaiah 42:1-7; Psalm 27:1, 2, 3, 13-14; John 12:1-11

On this Monday of Holy Week, as we prepare ourselves for the crucifixion on Friday, our readings call us to focus not on the world to come, but on the life available to us right now. The life we currently live, the earth we currently inhabit, the relationships and societal structures we currently build, matter deeply to God. Our eventual resurrection does not negate our experiences here on earth. Marilynne Robinson writes in *Gilead* that “I can’t believe that, when we have all been changed and put on incorruptibility, we will forget our fantastic condition of mortality and impermanence, the great bright dream of procreating and perishing that meant the whole world to us. In eternity this world will be Troy, I believe, and all that has passed here will be the epic of the universe, the ballad they sing in the streets. Because I don’t imagine any reality putting this one in the shade entirely, and I think piety forbids me to try.”

Our scripture today invites us to see both the beauty and pain in the world. The Psalm points us to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Isaiah reminds us that Jesus comes to not just bring eternal life, but also justice in the here and now. Our lives here on earth, filled with joy and sorrow and man-made inequalities and sufferings, are an intimate part of Holy Week. Our focus on Holy Week must be not just on the world to come, but also on enacting the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.



Christ Jesus, we recognize you as someone intimately concerned with our daily life. Help us to live in the here-and-now, even as we prepare for eternal life through you. Give us the eyes to see God’s goodness here on earth, and the hands to help bring about your justice. May remember that you came to invite us to greater life not just through resurrection, but through daily connection with others.

Brianna Deutsch is a ThM student residing in Berkeley, CA.

Tuesday of Holy Week - Mar 30

Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71:1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15 and 17; John 13:21-33, 36-38

Hearing the prophet Isaiah speak of sharp swords and polished arrows in the first reading reminded me of how kitchen knives should be kept sharp so they are not only more effective but safer for those who use them. He was speaking of the coming Messiah, whom we know now as Jesus, and how he was to come to bring the light of salvation to the ends of the earth. But this also applies to us in our lives of faith, that we should keep our relationship with God sharp and well honed, keenly aware of what leads us back to God and what could lead us astray.

The consequences of losing this edge can be seen very clearly in the gospel reading from John. Both Judas and Peter showed different ways in which our faith can be dulled by sin and selfish tendencies. Peter, ever the loyal disciple, was too caught up in his wanting to appear like the good disciple and made promises beyond his ability. His pride got the better of him and that dulled his ability to be a good witness. Judas allowed his greed to dominate his consciousness, leading to his betrayal of Jesus. Losing focus on the Lord dulls our faith, leading us to poor discernment and the possibility of decisions that run counter to our true desires as Christians. As we approach the Paschal Triduum, let us seek to sharpen our faith, focusing on God in all things so that we can better participate in bringing the Lord's salvation to the ends of the earth.



Lord, hone us in your love, that we may pare away all that hinders us from being close to you. Give us the grace of awareness of our humanity as well as the courage to turn to you always, so that we may celebrate more fully the feast of our salvation.

Stanley Goh, SJ is from Singapore and is an STL student at the Jesuit School of Theology.

Wednesday of Holy Week - Mar 31

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 69:8-10, 21-22, 31 and 33-34; Matthew 26:14-25

While the readings today tend to focus on blame, shame, suffering and betrayal they are also hopeful. “The Lord God has given me a well- trained tongue...he opens my ear... The Lord God is my help.” The Lord God has given me the tools to prepare me for whatever I may need to endure as long as I am aware of the gifts and use them wisely. It is up to me to exercise those gifts through daily prayer: the examen, where I reflect on the day and how well I used it to serve the Lord or what I need to clean up because I did not do as well as I could have; the process of discernment when faced with a difficult decision. The Lord is instructing me to use all my senses, not just my brain, not just my emotions. And in the Gospel, the Lord reminds me that preparation for what is coming includes others on this earth as well—again, I am not alone. The disciples ask Jesus “Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?” And Jesus replies “In your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples.”



Dear Lord, help me remember that it is up to me to prepare for all the joys and sorrows of life with active prayer and that I am not alone. You are with me as are my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Agnieszka Winkler is a member of the Board of Directors of the JST and a Trustee of Santa Clara University.

Holy Thursday - Apr 1

(Chrism Mass) Isaiah 61:1-3a, 6a, 8b-9; Psalm 89:21-22, 25 and 27; Revelation 1:5-8; Luke 4:16-21; (Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper) Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

Today, we launch a three-day liturgy culminating in the Easter Vigil by recalling Jesus' final Passover with his friends. The evening is bitter-sweet. Jesus knows that he had been turned in—by one of his own, no less—and that the authorities will soon be coming for him. Nonetheless, they share the meal and tell the ritual stories, break the bread and pass around the cup. Finally, they settle in for a final conversation.

What do you say when it is your last night with your friends? Jesus begins with an action. He takes off his outer garment, ties a towel around his waist, and proceeds to wash everyone's feet. Not at the beginning of the meal, when hygiene and hospitality would lead the host to provide water for washing, but at this junction, with this action, Jesus begins these final moments together.

Peter, we know, has to be convinced that Jesus should wash his feet. Jesus answers his objection: "Forget looking at it as you do. You'll get it later, but for now, let me do this—it's important."

After washing everyone's feet, Jesus reclines at his place again. "Do you get it?" he begins. "I am your teacher, as you say, but I do not stand on that status. You, too, do likewise."

Jesus will have a lot more words to say that evening, but let's stop here and ponder:

- Can I let Jesus wash my feet? What do I say to him? What does he say to me?
- And can I do likewise for others? Whose feet am I called to wash today?



Gracious Jesus, you turn aside our pious protestations and continually bless us by serving us. How strange and wonderful this is. But you are also showing us the way forward in these times: You ask us to let go of any status others might bestow on us. Be with us as we learn how to share your presence with others, especially those who have the least status and power, and to work tirelessly for their well-being.

Elizabeth Liebert, SNJM is an affiliated faculty member in Ignatian spirituality and spiritual director at JST and Professor Emerita of Spiritual Life at GTU member-school San Francisco Theological Seminary/University of Redlands.

Good Friday of the Lord's Passion - Apr 2

Isaiah 52:13—53:12; Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; Philippians 2:8-9; John 18:1—19:42

The Good Friday liturgy begins in silence, fittingly so. The ministers process down the aisle and do a remarkable deed: they prostrate themselves in the midst of the assembly's silence. I have always thought that not only the presider, but all the ministers - lectors, parish staff members, perhaps even members of the assembly - should all prostrate themselves in a generative silence. It is a profound act of handing oneself over to the Mystery, which Eastern Church writers call "the presence of God's gift of salvation that reveals and communicates itself."

But what does it reveal and communicate? The haunting responsorial psalm gives us a clue: In his sorrow, Jesus knows he is held: "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." This is a real surrender of memory, understanding and will, even though only the night before, in the Garden, Jesus begged the One who sent him to "take this cup from me, and yet . . ." And he weeps. Jesus is revealed as the Companion and Savior who knows our sorrows and shares our grief. And this year has had sorrows and grief enough to last a lifetime. Jesus does not back away. That is why this Friday is good.

"He was spurned and avoided by people, a person of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, one of those for whom people hide their faces, spurned, and we held him in no esteem.," Isaiah prophesies today, but ". . . upon him was the chastisement that makes us whole."

In light of Isaiah's words, I cannot forget the scene in John's Passion where Jesus' dear friend, Peter, is warming his hands over the fire – he who blustered about being there for his beloved, standing with him for better or worse, and who drew the sword to protect him in the garden. But here in the dark night, he sees Jesus crossing the portico, and he claims never to have known him. I can only imagine their eyes meeting by firelight in this great betrayal, a deeper wound for Jesus than Judas' kiss. Peter is us; Jesus is us. There is a great meeting of alienation and reconciliation here. Even there, love endures.

So before we see Peter running to the tomb on Sunday, perhaps this is the day to sit with the betrayal, our betrayals in life, humanity's betrayal of the earth, our betrayal of our common dignity as human persons. This is why the prostration says more than any words could describe. "Father, into your hands we commend our spirits." And the grace is, in that freedom to commend, we are embraced by the one who has 'been there and done that'. "What wondrous love is this, O my soul," we sing.



Lord God, give us the grace to stand at the cross and not run away. Let us silently vigil with the One who stays close to us in everything. 'By his wounds, we are healed.' Amen.

Paul Janowiak S.J. teaches liturgical and sacramental theology at JST.

Holy Saturday At the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter - Apr 3

[Genesis 1:1—2:2, 22:1-18, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Psalm 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35; 33:4-5, 6-7, 12-13, 20 and 22; Psalm 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11, 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13; Exodus 14:15-15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18; Isaiah 54:5-14, 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6, 55:1-11, 12:2-3, 4, 5-6; Baruch 3:9-15, 32--4:4; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23, 19:8, 9, 10, 11, 42:3, 5; 43:3, 4, 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19; Ezekiel 36:16-17a, 18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Mark 16:1-7](#)



Many years ago I saw a Byzantine / Eastern Christian view of the Resurrection of the Lord for the first time, in an icon of the Chora Monastery in Constantinople (Istanbul). Jesus seems to be descending into the dark prison of Hades (“descended into hell” in Apostles Creed), but also ascending. With one hand he is pulling up Adam, and with the other, Eve; they represent all “the just” who have been imprisoned there, and who have been awaiting this moment. The Greek word Anastasis, Resurrection / Raising up, stands at the top of the scene. I was struck by some differences from our Western Christian image of this event, where Jesus stands in front of an empty tomb, holding a banner, and in background are three women, angels, and perhaps a dazed soldier. The icon seems to convey more sense of (saving) action.

In the Anastasis Jesus descends on a saving mission, to bring up into light those just who have long been awaiting this moment. This view does not exactly represent the one found in any of the four Gospels, but picks up many biblical notions from the Old Testament (the Readings and Psalms of the Easter Vigil) and New Testament (especially in letters of Paul and Peter). For example, in the Responsorial Psalm after the reading of Isaiah 54:5-14, we might imagine those being raised to proclaim: “O LORD, you brought me up from the netherworld; you preserved me from among those going down into the pit. . . You changed my mourning into dancing . . . forever will I give you thanks” (Ps 30:4, 12a, 13d). What was true for them is promise for us: Jesus is raised in order to raise us up also.



Risen Jesus, teach us to trust that your Resurrection enfolds your desire to raise up all who stretch out our hands to you, especially victims of Covid-19. Thank you, Lord.

John Endres, S.J. is Professor Emeritus of Sacred Scripture (Old Testament) at JST.

Easter Sunday The Resurrection of the Lord - Apr 4

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Colossians 3:1-4; 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8; Victimae paschali laudes; John 20:1-9

In this morning's gospel, the beloved disciple peers into the dark, empty tomb, and that's enough: "He saw and believed" (Jn 20:8). The very first believer in the resurrection believed without seeing the Risen Christ. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe," Jesus tells Thomas later in the gospel (Jn 20:29).

The belief of the beloved disciple follows a logic of love and not the calculus of the world.

In the novel *Imagining Argentina* by Lawrence Thornton, which is set during the Dirty War in 1970s Buenos Aires, the main character Carlos discovers in his search for his wife Cecilia, who has been "disappeared" by the secret police, that he has imaginative powers that enable him to see the conditions of the victims of the police. His imagination gives him hope to carry on even in the worst circumstances.

When a character asks Carlos in the movie version, "Is that a conviction or a hope?" he responds, "I make no distinction between the two." Likewise, the believer in Christ Jesus proclaims to a suspicious world: I make no distinction between conviction and hope because I have experienced the love, the life, and the light of Christ Jesus.

The beloved disciple had no forensic evidence of the resurrection; he had something greater: love and hope based on that love. In his relationship with Jesus, he experienced a love so strong that death could not kill it. And the beloved disciple believed.

In these times as much as ever, the victory of God's love revealed in Christ Jesus over sin and death and division is something to believe in, to hope for, and to celebrate.



Blessed are you, Lord our God! Blessed are you, for you give us this day to celebrate the great victory feast of your Son, whose love conquers sin, death, and division. Give us the grace to be glad and rejoice in the salvation we receive in our friendship with Jesus. Amen.

Marty Connell, SJ, is an alumnus of JST and currently serves as the rector of the Jesuit Community at JST.

Closing Message to Subscribers - Apr 5

A blessedly happy Easter to all of you! The Lord Jesus is truly risen from the dead! By faith we know his victory over sin and death, even if our world seems as subject as ever to the corrosions and corruptions that would otherwise crush our hearts and cloud our minds. What, then, has changed after Christ's path on our earth, his sufferings, and his mysterious exaltation beyond our sight? Are we saved only in a hope that holds a mere promise of good things still to come in a future with no known date of arrival? No! When the resurrected Christ breathes on us and tells us to receive the Holy Spirit, those good things have already started to come. For Christ's Spirit heals our broken spirit with a hope we cannot come up with ourselves or hold onto with our own grip, no matter how firm. Jesus heals our sin-sick souls with a balm only he has patented. That balm is our faith in his resurrection, a faith that is the only vaccine against the universal pandemic that has raged since our first parents; God administers it to us every moment of every day. Because Christ has been raised, our hope in our resurrection and in the world's resurrection is sure like no other sure thing. This hope frees our hearts to care and to love because we know that, like Christ's, our love will not be wasted and those whom we love will not be thrown away in some forever trash pile. Jesus risen from the dead thus puts cynicism to death and so allows us to love with joy when we ache for our suffering world. We end up loving as God does and so start, here and now, living a divine life the glory of which will shine upon Christ's return. For God is love, and through our Easter faith and hope, we can live in the love that is God.



Glory and honor, wisdom and blessing to God and to the Lamb of God once slain yet standing up and living forever and ever!

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