

REFLECTIONS

for the SEASON of LENT

LUKE



EDGEWOOD COLLEGE 2023

Introduction

Blessings to you... and your family during this holy season as Christians throughout the world prepare the way to enter and accompany Christ in his passion, death, and resurrection.

This booklet is a collection of reflections from contributors throughout the college community and beyond. Each day's reflection includes a brief biblical text drawn from daily Lent Scripture readings selected for the Common Christian Lectionary. We hope these reflections provide roadmaps for reflection and contemplation for you during this year's observance of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter Sunday.

Let us pray that we all listen to God's Word, are open to God's mercy, and show compassion to all those around us, particularly the most vulnerable in our communities.

Peace of Christ,

Milton J. Bravo, Ph.D.
Vice President for Mission, Values, and Inclusion

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ASH WEDNESDAY _____ FEBRUARY 22, 2023

Joel 2:12-18. *Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God. For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment. Perhaps he will again relent and leave behind him a blessing, Offerings and libations for the LORD, your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion! proclaim a fast, call an assembly;*

Gather the people, notify the congregation; Assemble the elders, gather the children and the infants at the breast; Let the bridegroom quit his room and the bride her chamber. Between the porch and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep, And say, "Spare, O LORD, your people, and make not your heritage a reproach, with the nations ruling over them!"

Why should they say among the peoples, "Where is their God?" Then the LORD was stirred to concern for his land and took pity on his people.

Once again we go into the desert for 40 days to prepare ourselves for the Last Supper, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. In this reading we are reassured of God's infinite compassion, but we are warned to rend our hearts, not our garments. It's not about making a show of our contrition, but about genuinely opening our heart and making a sincere commitment to do better. Some make a Lenten sacrifice, giving up some small pleasure to keep them mindful of this commitment. Others introduce a new positive behavior—daily prayer, volunteering, an intentional act of kindness—as their way of opening their heart. Whatever Lenten commitment we make, we do so confident that God's love for us is unending.

Andrew Manion
President

THURSDAY _____ FEBRUARY 23

Deuteronomy 30:15-20. *Today I have set before you life and prosperity, death and doom. If you obey the commandments of the LORD, your God, which I enjoin on you today, loving him, and walking in his ways, and keeping his commandments, statutes and decrees, you will live and grow numerous, and the LORD, your God, will bless you in the land you are entering to occupy.*

If, however, you turn away your hearts and will not listen, but are led astray and adore and serve other gods, I tell you now that you will certainly perish; you will not have a long life on the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and occupy. I call heaven and earth today to witness against you: I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. Choose life, then, that you and your

descendants may live, by loving the LORD, your God, heeding his voice, and holding fast to him. For that will mean life for you, a long life for you to live on the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This chapter in Deuteronomy marks Moses' third and final address to the Israelites, where he is encouraging the Israelites to make a choice each day between life and death. To choose life in this time and place means to love God, to walk in God's ways, and to follow God's commandments, statutes, and decrees, whereas disobedience will lead to adversity and death.

The relevance of this passage today is that every day, we have inflection points where we make decisions about how to respond to a situation. With this comes the following question: what value system are we using to make those decisions? The values that guide Edgewood College are Truth, Compassion, Justice, Partnership, and Community. How do you live out these values in your life?

Mike Sweitzer-Beckman

Associate Vice President for Institutional Advancement

FRIDAY _____ FEBRUARY 24

Isaiah 58:1-9a. *Thus says the Lord GOD: Cry out full-throated and unsparingly, lift up your voice like a trumpet blast; Tell my people their wickedness, and the house of Jacob their sins. They seek me day after day, and desire to know my ways, Like a nation that has done what is just*

and not abandoned the law of their God; They ask me to declare what is due them, pleased to gain access to God. "Why do we fast, and you do not see it? afflict ourselves, and you take no note of it?" Lo, on your fast day you carry out your own pursuits and drive all your laborers.

Yes, your fast ends in quarreling and fighting, striking with wicked claw. Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high! Is this the manner of fasting I wish,

of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own.

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!

As I reflect on this scripture reading, I think of self-serving, false piety and hear a sort of wake-up call to embrace the exact opposite. As I relate these words to our campus, I see this call echoed in several of the values we see on the banners around our campus. Justice-our responsibility to ensure that there is fairness and equality in the social and economic opportunities for all in our community. I also see a call to partnership in this passage-a reminder to recognize the struggles of those around us and not pass by but actively work to walk alongside our peers to ensure that all needs are met together. This is a clear reminder to be genuine in our service to others and to listen and respond appropriately rather than blindly marching along, following traditions, doing what we think is right without bothering to see what is right.

Claire Mand, MA '18
Director of Student Life

SATURDAY _____ FEBRUARY 25

Isaiah 58:9b-14. *Thus says the LORD: If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday; Then the LORD will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land. He will renew your strength, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails. The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake, and the foundations from ages past you shall raise up; “Repairer of the breach,” they shall call you, “Restorer of ruined homesteads.” If you hold back your foot on the sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day; If you call the sabbath a delight, and the LORD’s holy day honorable; If you honor it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice-- Then you shall delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob, your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.*

Toward the end of these verses, the prophet calls attention to the virtue of disinterestedness or detachment. The pattern for this virtue is set by God’s creative activity, which is not accomplished out of need but for the pure delight of bringing into being that which will eventually become good, genuine, and beautiful. When our work is similarly governed by attention to these transcendental ideals rather than extrinsic considerations, we are said to be disinterested. We do what is important and timely in our endeavors, and we do it as it should be done. This detachment from lesser considerations opens a rich interior life crowned by a deep

strain of creativity that arises from pure selflessness. In this way we may be said to “delight in the Lord” because our efforts mirror, however imperfectly, the utter freedom and joyfulness of God’s own creative activity.

Jill Kirby

Professor of Religious Studies

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT _____ FEBRUARY 26

Matthew 4: 1-11. *At that time Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry. The tempter approached and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.” He said in reply, “It is written: One does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.” Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: He will command his angels concerning you and with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.” Jesus answered him, “Again it is written, You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.” Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, “All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me.” At this, Jesus said to him, “Get away, Satan! It is written: The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.” Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him*

It strikes me that Jesus prepared well for his challenge with the Accuser. He fasted in the desert for 40 days and 40 nights. He understood the strength that would come from contemplation in the desert silence, listening to the lessons of stars, small creatures, and open space. Without food, without the distractions of daily life, he could hear divine wisdom within and outside of himself. He was spiritually strengthened even as his body weakened. His first two temptations involved defending his identity from the Accuser, who claimed that Jesus wore a false face. Jesus’s practices left him resilient and unwavering. They allowed him to respond not with cunning, but with the truth, which is always larger than ego, or bodily health, or either/or distinctions. Jesus responded to Satan’s ill-conceived challenges, as he so often did to others, with perennial teachings.

Throughout these experiences with Satan, Jesus was able to stay true to the voice of Divine Love, which always seeks goodness, and always plants seeds, no matter how small, that open our hearts wider to the world and each other.

Rebecca Zambrano

Director of Online Learning

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18. *The LORD said to Moses, “Speak to the whole assembly of the children of Israel and tell them: Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy. “You shall not steal. You shall not lie or speak falsely to one another. You shall not swear falsely by my name, thus profaning the name of your God. I am the LORD. “You shall not defraud or rob your neighbor. You shall not withhold overnight the wages of your day laborer. You shall not curse the deaf, or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but you shall fear your God. I am the LORD. “You shall not act dishonestly in rendering judgment. Show neither partiality to the weak nor deference to the mighty, but judge your fellow men justly. You shall not go about spreading slander among your kin; nor shall you stand by idly when your neighbor’s life is at stake. I am the LORD. “You shall not bear hatred for your brother in your heart. Though you may have to reprove him, do not incur sin because of him. Take no revenge and cherish no grudge against your fellow countrymen. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”*

The path with the least resistance may seem easier, but that does not mean it is always the right one. If we are armed with love, faith, and God’s will, then there is no battle we cannot handle. Especially today, I enjoy that this passage pushes us to act accordingly with the Lord, speaking the truth, not holding judgments, and loving thy neighbor as yourself. We must continue or start to love one another without restraint and continue to be just in all hardships and encounters. I appreciate this reading; it made me consider our core values, partnership, justice, compassion, community, and truth. I am reminded that our values apply in many different ways in my everyday life.

Liza Hodge

Administrative Assistant to Vice President for Mission, Values, and Inclusion

Isaiah 55:10-11. *Thus says your God: Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down and do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful, giving seed to the one who sows and bread to the one who eats, so shall my word be that goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do my will, achieving the end for which I sent it.*

This passage reinforces the impactful and purposeful work of our Lord. There are explicit intentions with God’s word, and I have the perception of God being an action-oriented spirit in our lives. I take the meaning of this biblical passage as a challenge to make sure we achieve the intended outcomes the Lord has messaged to us; “achieving the end for which I sent it.”

God speaks metaphorically about the intention of rain being sent to achieve fertile and fruitful growth. Growth to me indicates life, and using the gifts we are given to achieve a full and complete life. It makes me think about “grass grows where it is watered.” With certainty, grass will grow when the soil is nourished. God’s word nourishes our soul, requiring me to accept these truths and apply actions in a meaningful way to ensure these gifts are accomplishing the intentions of God. Is my spiritual life growing and developing with the gifts given to me by God? Do I look for grass to be greener on the other side of the fence?

I find myself thinking: Do I receive the gifts God provides and take actions that achieve the end for which they are sent? I have what is needed for spiritual growth with the belief in God’s word and an understanding of the responsibility to take action and use these gifts.

Michael J. Meissen

Associate Director of Clinical Experiences and Accelerated Secondary Program Coordinator

WEDNESDAY _____ MARCH 1

Jonah 3:1-10. *The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time: “Set out for the great city of Nineveh, and announce to it the message that I will tell you.” So Jonah made ready and went to Nineveh, according to the LORD’s bidding. Now Nineveh was an enormously large city;*

it took three days to go through it. Jonah began his journey through the city, and had gone but a single day’s walk announcing, “Forty days more and Nineveh shall be destroyed,” when the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth. When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes. Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh, by decree of the king and his nobles: “Neither man nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. Man and beast shall be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God; every man shall turn from his evil way and from the violence he has in hand. Who knows, God may relent and forgive, and withhold his blazing wrath, so that we shall not perish.” When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil that he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out.

As I was reflecting on this passage, it reminded me of the story of Sodom & Gomorrah, how the people of those cities did not fear GOD and repented their evil ways; in turn, their cities were destroyed.

But the city of Nineveh did the opposite, they feared GOD and his wrath, so they repented and were saved. They learned to be humble and let go of their pride and selfishness. We, too, need to let go of our pride, selfishness, and ego and repent our sinfulness, and we will be rewarded with GOD's grace and love.

Linda Trent '00

THURSDAY _____ MARCH 2

Matthew 7:7-12. *Jesus said to his disciples: "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asked for a fish?"*

If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets."

Reflecting on today's gospel reading from Matthew, I can't help but wonder about the following questions. How do we approach the request when people come and ask for help? Is it with good intentions, or are we always wanting something in return? I'm also reflecting on who is asking the question, who is seeking and who is knocking. Who have I opened my doors to when they have come to me asking for assistance? Perhaps these are questions to reflect on during this day.

*Paola Hernandez
Political Science Major*

FRIDAY _____ MARCH 3

Matthew 5: 20-26. *Jesus said to his disciples: "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven. "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment. But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, Raqa, will be answerable to the Sanhedrin, and whoever says, 'You fool,' will be liable to fiery Gehenna. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there recall that your brother has anything against you, leave your gift there at the altar, go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court. Otherwise*

your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen, I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.”

Jesus tells us that we may not bring a gift to the altar unless we are reconciled with all those we have wronged or with whom we have a damaged relationship. He says this is as important as not killing other human beings. It is not about avoiding prison so much as it is about being honest with oneself about one’s own actions and attitudes and seeking forgiveness to mend relationships. Jesus is telling us that living a life of righteousness is not about the letter of the law but about the spirit of the law. In my life, the spirit of the law means I have a responsibility to engage in “Tikkun ha-Olam,” Hebrew for individual actions to repair the world. This means serving those who are disadvantaged, working for social justice, repairing relationships, and acting socially responsibly through charitable giving and acts of kindness

Janet McCord
Professor of Thanatology

SATURDAY _____ MARCH 4

Matthew 5:43-48. *Jesus said to his disciples: “You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what recompense will you have? Do not the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brothers and sisters only, what is unusual about that? Do not the pagans do the same? So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

What stands out in this passage is, “which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asked for a loaf of bread?” It makes me think of times when “stones” were given instead of a “loaf of bread” in people’s lives. It’s nice to have a God who will listen to your needs but also wants you to share that same compassion. I think this passage is saying that we need to be generous but also live by hope and faith. God wants us to feel comfortable depending on him for things because God will not give us “stones” or something sinister in return. In this Lenten season, it’s important to give that same compassion that God has given us to others, especially to those outside of our typical social circle.

Amana Komba
Campus Ministry Student Leader

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT _____ MARCH 5

Matthew 17: 1-9. *Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and do not be afraid.” And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone. As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, “Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”*

Do you ever pause and notice the views that nature freely bestows, whether it is from a mountain top, valley, desert, under bright rays of sunshine, or thick, cloudy skies? God provides daily inspiration by the beauty of nature. The voice of God to take care of our “Mother Earth” should ring in our ears, but perhaps when we see environmental destruction and global warming, we should “fall prostrate and be very much afraid.”

I wonder if Jesus, Moses and Elijah look down from the mountaintop today and discuss their vision for the future. And I wonder if Jesus, Peter, James, and John raise their eyes when they view the human destruction of this one planet that is our earthly home? And I wonder if citizens from all over the world realize the remarkable diverse environments we must enjoy.

Hopefully, we will open our eyes to this vision and beauty, and realize that we are all one family sharing one home. So, we’d better take care of our “Mother Earth.”

Diane Ballweg '75, MA '07

MONDAY _____ MARCH 6

Luke 6:36-38. *Jesus said to his disciples: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”*

During today’s Gospel, we’re reminded of the Sermon on the Mount. As we know, these words appear in some format in all three gospels, making it part of the triple

tradition—sharing similar content and structure in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In this passage known as “Judging Others,” I’m drawn to the word mercy as a human and divine action. We’re called to be merciful, as in to show human compassion to one another, to the most vulnerable in our communities. In doing so, we’re imitating God’s mercy, who is not presented to us as the Creator of the cosmos in this passage, but rather as a family member. How many times have we learned mercy through the actions of our loved ones? How many times have we experienced forgiveness from our loved ones? May these experiences foster in us a spirit of gratitude and a willingness to share the mercy and forgiveness we have received with others.

Milton Javier Bravo

Vice President for Mission, Values, and Inclusion

TUESDAY _____ MARCH 7

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20. *Hear the word of the LORD, princes of Sodom! Listen to the instruction of our God, people of Gomorrah! Wash yourselves clean! Put away your misdeeds from before my eyes; cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim: redress the wronged, hear the orphan’s plea, defend the widow. Come now, let us set things right, says the LORD: Though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow; Though they be crimson red, they may become white as wool. If you are willing, and obey, you shall eat the good things of the land; But if you refuse and resist, the sword shall consume you: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken!*

This passage from Isaiah challenges us to be just and do what is right according to the Lord. The line “learn to do good” caught my attention, making me wonder what it really means to do good. Do good for ourselves? Do good towards others? Goodness falls into all the five values that we, as an Edgewood community, believe in. Learning to do good is not easy, but it is achievable. The Lord tells us the ways in which we can do good in Isaiah’s passage.

Rosalia Johnson

Campus Ministry Student Leader

WEDNESDAY _____ MARCH 8

Psalms 31: 5-6, 15-16 *Save me, O Lord, in your kindness. You will free me from the snare they set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commend my spirit; you will redeem me, O LORD, O faithful God. I hear the whispers of the crowd, that frighten me from every side, as they consult together against me, plotting to take my life. But my trust is in you, O LORD; I say, “You are my God.” In your hands is my destiny; rescue me from the clutches of my enemies and my persecutors.*

“But my trust is in you, O Lord” really speaks to me.

We never know what can happen tomorrow, but God is always the one constant we can rely on. It is difficult to face the outside pressures and expectations in life, not to mention our own! This is especially true in a media-driven world.

But no matter what, I can trust in Him for comfort, I can trust in Him to listen, and I can trust in Him for guidance. Peace be with you in this Lenten season.

Max Nguyen, MBA '18
Gift Officer, Advancement Office

THURSDAY _____ MARCH 9

Jeremiah 17:5-10. *Thus says the LORD: Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth.*

Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: It fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; In the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit. More tortuous than all else is the human heart, beyond remedy; who can understand it? I, the LORD, alone probe the mind and test the heart, To reward everyone according to his ways, according to the merit of his deeds.

When the passage states, “cursed is the man who trusts in human beings”, it is referring to those on whom we are placing our trust on. If we decide to put God first in our lives, trusting God no matter the challenges or hurdles we face, we will be blessed. If we put our eyes on human beings instead of our powerful God, nothing good will come our way. If we decide to put our trust in God alone, we have peace, joy, and certainty that our God is doing something in our lives for good. God is the only one who is always there; he listens, gives security, and comfort, and never fails us.

Saira Ardon
Campus Ministry Student Leader

FRIDAY _____ MARCH 10

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a. *Israel loved Joseph best of all his sons, for he was the child of his old age; and he had made him a long tunic. When his brothers saw that their father loved him best of all his sons, they hated him so much that they would not even greet him. One day, when his brothers had gone to pasture their father's flocks at Shechem, Israel said to Joseph,*

“Your brothers, you know, are tending our flocks at Shechem. Get ready; I will send you to them.” So Joseph went after his brothers and caught up with them in Dothan. They noticed him from a distance, and before he came up to them, they plotted to kill him. They said to one another: “Here comes that master dreamer! Come on, let us kill him and throw him into one of the cisterns here; we could say that a wild beast devoured him. We shall then see what comes of his dreams.” When Reuben heard this, he tried to save him from their hands, saying, “We must not take his life. Instead of shedding blood,” he continued, “just throw him into that cistern there in the desert; but do not kill him outright.” His purpose was to rescue him from their hands and return him to his father. So when Joseph came up to them, they stripped him of the long tunic he had on; then they took him and threw him into the cistern, which was empty and dry.

They then sat down to their meal. Looking up, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, their camels laden with gum, balm and resin to be taken down to Egypt. Judah said to his brothers: “What is to be gained by killing our brother and concealing his blood? Rather, let us sell him to these Ishmaelites, instead of doing away with him ourselves. After all, he is our brother, our own flesh.” His brothers agreed. They sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver.

The next time envy threatens you, call to mind someone so secure in God’s love that he or she wholeheartedly celebrates others’ successes. Take a deep breath, remembering that God holds you, too, in the divine heart, and ask for a generous spirit.

Susan H. Swetnam

Daily Reflections for Lent, published by Liturgical Press

SATURDAY _____ MARCH 11

Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32. *Tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to listen to Jesus, but the Pharisees and scribes began to complain, saying, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So to them Jesus addressed this parable. “A man had two sons, and the younger son said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of your estate that should come to me.’ So the father divided the property between them. After a few days, the younger son collected all his belongings and set off to a distant country where he squandered his inheritance on a life of dissipation. When he had freely spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he found himself in dire need. So he hired himself out to one of the local citizens who sent him to his farm to tend the swine. And he longed to eat his fill of the pods on which the swine fed, but nobody gave him any. Coming to his senses he thought, ‘How many of my father’s hired workers have more than enough food to eat, but here am I, dying from hunger. I shall*

get up and go to my father and I shall say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as you would treat one of your hired workers."

In this passage, Jesus is confronted by the Pharisees for something he often did during his ministry – welcome sinners. The underlying assertion made by the Pharisees is that Jesus should instead prioritize those who are worthier of God's grace. Sadly, this assertion has outlived the Pharisees of Jesus' day. Romans 3:23 reminds us that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Our sin is the reason that Jesus reduced himself to human form and ultimately gave his life on the cross. During this season of Lent, instead of measuring our sin in comparison to those around us, may we focus on Jesus' sacrifice and the promise of the resurrection that we enjoy because of God's grace.

Paul Eggers

Vice President for Enrollment Management

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT _____ MARCH 12

Exodus 17: 3-7. *In those days, in their thirst for water, the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "Why did you ever make us leave Egypt? Was it just to have us die here of thirst with our children and our livestock?" So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? a little more and they will stone me!" The LORD answered Moses, "Go over there in front of the people, along with some of the elders of Israel, holding in your hand, as you go, the staff with which you struck the river. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in Horeb.*

Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink." This Moses did, in the presence of the elders of Israel. The place was called Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled there and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD in our midst or not?"

Regular routines can harden our hearts and close our ears and eyes in boredom, resentment, daydreaming. The next time you catch yourself not fully present in a "mundane" moment, resolve to look for gifts God might be offering.

Susan H. Swetnam

Daily Reflections for Lent, published by Liturgical Press

Psalm 42: 2, 3, 43: 3, 4. *Athirst is my soul for the living God. When shall I go and behold the face of God? As the hind longs for the running waters, so my soul longs for you, O God. Send forth your light and your fidelity; they shall lead me on and bring me to your holy mountain, to your dwelling-place. Then will I go into the altar of God, the God of my gladness and joy; Then will I give you thanks upon the harp, O God, my God!*

Few months ago... a popular YouTube travel channel showed an episode about Syria. A local guide of the YouTuber was a young woman who had grown up during the civil war. In one of the cities, where life was slowly emerging from the rubble, the crew met some street cats. Unexpectedly, the woman took out a small bag with cat food from her jacket. "I always carry some," – she replied to the puzzled YouTuber – "they also suffer like we all do here." Amidst all the destruction and poverty, God's light shone through her. Nothing heroic, indeed. But for most of his adult life Christ was unlike some Greek mythological hero. The Light of the World did carpentry work and surely brought great joy to those who did not have much. After all, history tells us that Nazareth was anything but an attractive and prosperous place...

Sergei Pavlov

Associate Professor, Music

Matthew 18:21-35. *Peter approached Jesus and asked him, "Lord, if my brother or sister sins against me, how often must I forgive them? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seventy times. That is why the Kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt. At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay back what you owe. Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt. Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?'*

Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt. So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives your brother from your heart.”

This reading is about forgiveness; we should not have a time limit or limitations on forgiving, but instead, we should forgive others as God has forgiven us. It also mentions “move with compassion,” which is one of our five values. “Each of us is created with inherent dignity and infinite value, equally worthy of care, respect, and compassion.” All of this makes me think of two other readings, one being the “Golden Rule,” “do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” and also The Lord’s Prayer, “forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

There will always be things in our lives that warrant forgiveness; we are no better than those around us, and whether it’s someone cutting you off in traffic, maybe someone saying something behind your back, or something bigger—everyone deserves to be forgiven as God has forgiven us.

Julie Ibinger

Assistant to the President

WEDNESDAY _____ MARCH 15

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9. *Moses spoke to the people and said: “Now, Israel, hear the statutes and decrees which I am teaching you to observe, that you may live, and may enter in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. Therefore, I teach you the statutes and decrees as the LORD, my God, has commanded me, that you may observe them in the land you are entering to occupy. Observe them carefully, for thus will you give evidence of your wisdom and intelligence to the nations, who will hear of all these statutes and say, ‘This great nation is truly a wise and intelligent people. ‘For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the LORD, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him? Or what great nation has statutes and decrees that are as just as this whole law which I am setting before you today? “However, take care and be earnestly on your guard not to forget the things which your own eyes have seen, nor let them slip from your memory as long as you live, but teach them to your children and to your children’s children.”*

Being God’s people is an important responsibility; hence why God asks Moses to teach the Israel Nation to follow God’s law. That way, the Israel nation can be considered wise and intelligent. God’s law is the behavior that is expected from us, which could be summarized as loving each other unconditionally and doing the right thing. However, the reality is that doing the right thing and loving each other

no matter what is not always the easiest route, and it can be very challenging for us, depending on the context of our situations. Yet, when we choose to do so, we are not only recognized and rewarded by God, but we also inspire others to follow our lead, and I think that's the most important element in becoming God's wise, intelligent, and compassionate nation.

Maria Chacin

Campus Ministry Student Leader

THURSDAY _____ MARCH 16

Jeremiah 7:23-28. *Thus says the LORD: This is what I commanded my people: Listen to my voice; then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper. But they obeyed not, nor did they pay heed. They walked in the hardness of their evil hearts and turned their backs, not their faces, to me. From the day that your fathers left the land of Egypt even to this day, I have sent you untiringly all my servants the prophets. Yet they have not obeyed me nor paid heed; they have stiffened their necks and done worse than their fathers. When you speak all these words to them, they will not listen to you either; when you call to them, they will not answer you. Say to them: This is the nation that does not listen to the voice of the LORD, its God, or take correction. Faithfulness has disappeared; the word itself is banished from their speech.*

Walking in the hardness of one's heart is a striking statement. However, the passage asserts they were walking in the hardness of their evil heart. We move from striking to terrible. This phrasing communicates compassionless people without a relationship to truth. God further describes them as unfaithful, with backs turned, stiff-necked, irreproachable, deaf, close-minded, uninterested, and uncaring. These are fruitless people whose bearings are bitter. And such a people cannot prosper if detached from life's Source and unable to exemplify grace, faithfulness, hope, goodness, patience, generosity, or love, which in all is enacting God in the present on earth. As budding abounds from seeds sown, I'd like to invite us to try a contemplative practice. Ask God to soften what could be hardened in your heart and the hearts of others so that faithfulness does not disappear and the word itself remains in your expression.

Shay Pollard

Campus Ministry Student Leader

Mark 12: 28-34. *One of the scribes came to Jesus and asked him, “Which is the first of all the commandments?” Jesus replied, “The first is this: Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone!*

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” The scribe said to him, “Well said, teacher. You are right in saying, He is One and there is no other than he. And to love him with all your heart, with all your understanding, with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that he answered with understanding, he said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And no one dared to ask him any more questions.

From this passage, it is heartwarming that love is the greatest and conquers all; Love consoles and heals the heart. It is my understanding that loving God comes with a lot of responsibility which we must carry out wholeheartedly. We are also called to love our neighbors the same way we love ourselves, doing unto people what we want to be done to us, those who we think are less deserving or deserve more which there is no such thing are all our neighbors deserve all as it is a commandment from the Lord whom we serve. Again, loving our neighbors is equivalent to loving God; if it is worth more than burnt offerings and sacrifices which was a sacred thing to do, then we know how important the commandment of love is.

Blessing Onyefulummo
Campus Ministry Student Leader

Luke 18: 9-14. *Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else. “Two people went up to the temple area to pray; one was a Pharisee and the other was a tax collector. The Pharisee took up his position and spoke this prayer to himself, ‘O God, I thank you that I am not like the rest of humanity — greedy, dishonest, adulterous — or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, and I pay tithes on my whole income.’ But the tax collector stood off at a distance and would not even raise his eyes to heaven but beat his breast and prayed, ‘O God, be merciful to me a sinner.’*

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

This scripture reminds me of the value of a community that respects and supports all members—regardless of strengths and weaknesses, past accomplishments or mistakes—for we all have value and dignity. As an Edgewood College community, this is reflected in our mission, where we commit to building a just and compassionate world. We should never look down upon those who are struggling but instead commit to strengthening them and helping them heal. I feel fortunate to serve and learn within a community that aims to embrace aspects of this verse in our everyday lives.

Matthew Sullivan

Interim Vice President for Student Development

4TH SUNDAY IN LENT _____ MARCH 19

Ephesians 5: 8-14. *Brothers and sisters: You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth. Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness; rather expose them, for it is shameful even to mention the things done by them in secret; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore, it says: “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”*

As I read this passage, my mind is drawn to the spectrum of worry and hope. God desires us to experience hope and to rest all our fears in God’s promise and care for us. Worry is a natural part of the human experience but often proves fruitless and causes us more strife than protection. When we share our anxieties with one another and God, they become visible; light can be shone on them and transform them into peace and hope for the future. We do not have to worry in isolation. By sharing these burdens, we enable ourselves to trust, hope, feel lighter, and be light for others.

Hollie McCrea Olson, MA '17, MS '22

Associate Director of Student Life

MONDAY _____ MARCH 20

Luke 2: 41-51a. *Each year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of*

the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, “Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety.” And he said to them, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.

This passage reminds us of Jesus’ divinity and not his humanity. He was chosen to find a way for our salvation and redemption. From an early age, he knew his path and took the opportunity to complete his task. While his parents did not understand completely, they understood his actions. We need to be mindful of all that Jesus has done for us throughout his life to assure our salvation as we walk the path of Lent and prepare for his sacrifice during Passover week. Our salvation is assured when he rises again at Easter.

*Mary Hoffman ’90
Senior Staff Accountant*

TUESDAY _____ MARCH 21

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12. *The angel asked me, “Have you seen this, son of man?”... Along the bank of the river I saw very many trees on both sides. He said to me, “This water flows into the eastern district down upon the Arabah, and empties into the sea, the salt waters, which it makes fresh. Wherever the river flows, every sort of living creature that can multiply shall live, and there shall be abundant fish, for wherever this water comes the sea shall be made fresh. Along both banks of the river, fruit trees of every kind shall grow; their leaves shall not fade, nor their fruit fail.”*

This passage brought a couple of questions to mind. At first, I couldn’t understand the reference to water and the importance of it creating life. I kept trying to find a deeper meaning but couldn’t stick with the thought of what it could mean. Then I searched the significance of water, and its biblical importance. Water is meant to be a gift from God that has the power to purify and destroy evil. Water has a large part to play in this passage. Purifying water, allowing life to flourish like plants and animals. It sort of all makes sense to me, the importance of water for not only us, but also the world around us.

*Marcial Martinez
Campus Ministry Student Leader*

Isaiah 49:8-15. *Thus says the LORD: In a time of favor I answer you, on the day of salvation I help you; and I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, To restore the land and allot the desolate heritages, Saying to the prisoners: Come out! To those in darkness: Show yourselves! Along the ways they shall find pasture, on every bare height shall their pastures be.*

They shall not hunger or thirst, nor shall the scorching wind or the sun strike them; For he who pities them leads them and guides them beside springs of water. I will cut a road through all my mountains, and make my highways level. See, some shall come from afar, others from the north and the west, and some from the land of Syene. Sing out, O heavens, and rejoice, O earth, break forth into song, you mountains. For the LORD comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted. But Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me." Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.

Isaiah tells us that when the time is ripe, prisoners will be set free. We think of Bryan Stevenson and his work with the Equal Justice initiative to represent people who have been illegally convicted, unfairly sentenced, or abused in prison; or Brittney Barnett and her book, *A Knock at Midnight*, describing work to obtain clemency for those with unjust sentences; what beautiful ways to embody our community with all people and bring compassionate purpose to the place where truth and justice intersect. Compassion can inspire action to release physical chains, and it can also soften the chains of our minds. A story is told of a Tibetan monk who spoke of facing danger upon his release from a Chinese prison. "What danger?" asked the Dalai Lama. "Of losing compassion toward my jailers," he replied. And what of the prisons in which we lock ourselves? What can you self-compassionately accept in yourself, paradoxically releasing its hold, tilling the soil for the day something new is ready to grow in you? This Lent, listen to your heart for the language of a wise and nurturing God to comfort and inspire you.

Julie Luecke

Associate Dean, School of Education

Exodus 32:7-14. *The LORD said to Moses, "Go down at once to your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt, for they have become depraved. They have soon turned aside from the way I pointed out to them, making for themselves a molten calf and worshiping it, sacrificing to it and crying out, 'This is your God, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt!'" The LORD said to Moses, "I see how stiff-necked this people is. Let me alone, then, that my wrath may blaze*

up against them to consume them. Then I will make of you a great nation.” But Moses implored the LORD, his God, saying, “Why, O LORD, should your wrath blaze up against your own people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with such great power and with so strong a hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘With evil intent he brought them out, that he might kill them in the mountains and exterminate them from the face of the earth’? Let your blazing wrath die down; relent in punishing your people. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and how you swore to them by your own self, saying, ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky; and all this land that I promised, I will give your descendants as their perpetual heritage.’” So the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people.

The journey through the desert is long and difficult. We are exhausted and want to give up or change our path. Who is the Moses in our lives that will advocate for us? Who do we choose to follow? Will they lead us to God or to a false idol? Lord, give us the strength to stay true to your path.

Carla Pool
Technology Specialist

FRIDAY _____ MARCH 24

Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22. *The wicked said among themselves, thinking not aright: “Let us beset the just one, because he is obnoxious to us; he sets himself against our doings, Reproaches us for transgressions of the law and charges us with violations of our training. He professes to have knowledge of God and styles himself a child of the LORD. To us he is the censure of our thoughts; merely to see him is a hardship for us, Because his life is not like that of others, and different are his ways. He judges us debased; he holds aloof from our paths as from things impure. He calls blest the destiny of the just and boasts that God is his Father. Let us see whether his words be true; let us find out what will happen to him. For if the just one be the son of God, he will defend him and deliver him from the hand of his foes. With revilement and torture let us put him to the test that we may have proof of his gentleness and try his patience.*

Let us condemn him to a shameful death; for according to his own words, God will take care of him.” These were their thoughts, but they erred; for their wickedness blinded them, and they knew not the hidden counsels of God; neither did they count on a recompense of holiness nor discern the innocent souls’ reward.

The next time you encounter a contemporary prophet whose advocacy for justice ruffles feathers, listen with an open heart, imagine one modest thing you can do to apply that message and do it.

Susan H. Swetnam

Daily Reflections for Lent, published by Liturgical Press

SATURDAY _____ **MARCH 25**

Luke 1: 26-38 *“The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his Kingdom there will be no end.” But Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?” And the angel said to her in reply, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God.” Mary said, “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.”*

Mary, a young girl of no status from the small village of Nazareth, is called, chosen, and overshadowed with God’s Spirit. Mary wasn’t a queen or had any royal status, she was just a innocent girl, yet God chose her to be the mother of our lord and savior. Mary’s role in the history of salvation is the purest example of obedience to the will of God. Instead of letting her fear overtake her at that moment, she put her trust and faith in God and said “yes,” we all need to follow in her footsteps and just say yes to God as well. The Lord is with each of us; we just need to put our fears to the side and trust God just like Mary did. Say yes to God this Lenten season, and let God’s Spirit overshadow us.

Emma El-Beri

Campus Ministry Student Leader

5TH SUNDAY IN LENT _____ MARCH 26

John 11: 1-45. *So Jesus, perturbed again, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay across it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the dead man's sister, said to him, "Lord, by now there will be a stench; he has been dead for four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believe you will see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus raised his eyes and said, "Father, I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me; but because of the crowd here I have said this, that they may believe that you sent me." And when he had said this, He cried out in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, tied hand and foot with burial bands, and his face was wrapped in a cloth. So Jesus said to them, "Untie him and let him go." Now many of the Jews who had come to Mary and seen what he had done began to believe in him.*

The story of Lazarus conveys a significant message to us: God has a power that is far greater than we can ever imagine. Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, not for His own gain, but so people would recognize God in their midst. Sometimes it is hard for us, myself included, to listen for, trust, and believe that God is always with us. This story reminds us when terrible things happen, such as the death of a loved one, that in our sadness there is hope, that God can help us see and know how to receive and then share God's love and healing with those around us, just like Jesus did.

Margaret Noreuil

Dean of the Henry Predolin School of Nursing, Business, and Health Sciences

MONDAY _____ MARCH 27

Psalm 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6. *Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; Beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side. He guides me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.*

You spread the table before me in the sight of my foes; You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side. Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for years to come. Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side.

Walking. A great way to stay active, and a great way to enjoy our natural world – except maybe for dark valleys. I have a small prayer that I say often, and in it, I ask for the ‘strength to do a good job of walking with you today, God’. This helps me keep top of mind the idea that God is always present to us, is at our side, guiding, giving us courage, and spreading the table before us.

Ed Taylor

Chief of Staff, and Chief Communications Officer

TUESDAY _____ MARCH 28

Numbers 21: 4-9. *From Mount Hor the children of Israel set out on the Red Sea road, to bypass the land of Edom. But with their patience worn out by the journey, the people complained against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no food or water? We are disgusted with this wretched food!”*

In punishment the LORD sent among the people saraph serpents, which bit the people so that many of them died. Then the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned in complaining against the LORD and you. Pray the LORD to take the serpents away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people, and the LORD said to Moses, “Make a saraph and mount it on a pole, and whoever looks at it after being bitten will live.” Moses accordingly made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever anyone who had been bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.

This passage has a lot going on! It includes the Israelites complaining against God, God’s punishment, their seeking forgiveness, and finally, their salvation. It seems like a summary of humankind’s relationship with God, culminating in Jesus’s death on the cross and our gift of eternal life.

Venomous snakes had not afflicted the Israelites in the desert up to the point where this reading starts. Yet, they took this mercy for granted and grumbled that God’s gifts were insufficient, which challenged God’s competency. I am like that, too; I complain a lot in my prayers and am slow to offer praise to God for how I receive everything I need and am protected from seen and unseen dangers. My goal for this Lent, and hopefully beyond, is to try harder not to grumble against God when things don’t go my way and to try to express greater gratitude for God’s care.

Stanley Winarski, MBA ’91

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-92, 95. King Nebuchadnezzar said: “Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you will not serve my god, or worship the golden statue that I set up? Be ready now to fall down and worship the statue I had made, whenever you hear the sound of the trumpet, flute, lyre, harp, psaltery, bagpipe, and all the other musical instruments; otherwise, you shall be instantly cast into the white-hot furnace; and who is the God who can deliver you out of my hands?” Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered King Nebuchadnezzar,

“There is no need for us to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If our God, whom we serve, can save us from the white-hot furnace and from your hands, O king, may he save us!

But even if he will not, know, O king, that we will not serve your god or worship the golden statue that you set up.” King Nebuchadnezzar’s face became livid with utter rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace to be heated seven times more than usual and had some of the strongest men in his army bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and cast them into the white-hot furnace. Nebuchadnezzar rose in haste and asked his nobles, “Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?” “Assuredly, O king,” they answered. “But,” he replied, “I see four men unfettered and unhurt, walking in the fire, and the fourth looks like a son of God.” Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, “Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who sent his angel to deliver the servants who trusted in him; they disobeyed the royal command and yielded their bodies rather than serve or worship any god except their own God.”

This dramatic biblical passage reminds us that, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, all believers find their faith in God being tested from time to time – in their everyday relationships at home, at school, at work, or in the community. These tests of faith present people with the choice of making decisions that serve God or that serve King Nebuchadnezzar’s ‘golden statue.’

Making decisions that serve God implies that as believers like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, “We will not worship the golden statue that you set up” and that “There is no need for us to defend ourselves before you in this matter.” Instead, our faith in God gives us the strength to make decisions that support God’s will. This biblical passage recalls the beautiful hymn Faith of our Fathers. “Faith of our Fathers, holy faith. We will be true to thee till death.”

Sandra Docter
Board of Trustees

THURSDAY _____ MARCH 30

Genesis 17:3-9. *When Abram prostrated himself, God spoke to him: “My covenant with you is this: you are to become the father of a host of nations. No longer shall you be called Abram; your name shall be Abraham, for I am making you the father of a host of nations. I will render you exceedingly fertile; I will make nations of you; kings shall stem from you. I will maintain my covenant with you and your descendants after you throughout the ages as an everlasting pact, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you the land in which you are now staying, the whole land of Canaan, as a permanent possession; and I will be their God.” God also said to Abraham: “On your part, you and your descendants after you must keep my covenant throughout the ages.”*

In Genesis 17:3-9, God makes a covenant with Abraham. A covenant is a promise that God will not abandon us and will continue to pursue a relationship with us even though we are separated from him through sin. This Lenten season is a reminder that we should reflect on our relationship with God but also on our relationships with others. Relationships are important as they help us connect with people that we can count on to rejoice with us when things are good and to help us out when things seem to be falling apart. It is easy to get angry when a relationship is falling apart and give up instead of trying to work through issues. Instead we can use God’s example of forgiveness and incorporate that into our relationships when things are difficult. We need to be intentional about maintaining and building relationships. How do we reflect God’s love in our relationships? Can people around you see this commitment?

Linda Wilder ’11, MA ’15
Executive Assistant, Office of Academic Affairs

FRIDAY _____ MARCH 31

Psalms 18:2-7. *In my distress I called upon the Lord, and he heard my voice. I love you, O LORD, my strength, O LORD, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer. My God, my rock of refuge, my shield, the horn of my salvation, my stronghold! Praised be the LORD, I exclaim, and I am safe from my enemies. The breakers of death surged round about me, the destroying floods overwhelmed me; The cords of the nether world enmeshed me, the snares of death overtook me. In my distress I called upon the LORD and cried out to my God; From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears.*

In this Psalm, the line “In my distress, I called upon the Lord, and he heard my voice” reminds us that we have God and his son Jesus as our refuge and shield. David declared that God was his strength. It is a comfort to us today as we have the reassurance and relief of knowing that we have the communion of saints, our

mother Mary, and her son Jesus Christ to help us through our distress. We hear people say, “I am going through something now.” The key is to keep going and not stagnate in our distress. We are empowered during our difficult times by our Catholic faith to have comfort and hope as we pray through our hard times. In the end, we can find joy and peace after our journey through distress. The last lines tell us that as we cry out, God hears us.

Karen Arnold '90

SATURDAY _____ APRIL 1

Ezekiel 37:21-28. *Thus says the Lord GOD: I will take the children of Israel from among the nations to which they have come and gather them from all sides to bring them back to their land. I will make them one nation upon the land, in the mountains of Israel, and there shall be one prince for them all. Never again shall they be two nations, and never again shall they be divided into two kingdoms. No longer shall they defile themselves with their idols, their abominations, and all their transgressions. I will deliver them from all their sins of apostasy, and cleanse them so that they may be my people and I may be their God. My servant David shall be prince over them, and there shall be one shepherd for them all; they shall live by my statutes and carefully observe my decrees. They shall live on the land that I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where their fathers lived; they shall live on it forever, they, and their children, and their children's children, with my servant David their prince forever. I will make with them a covenant of peace; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will multiply them, and put my sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling shall be with them; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Thus, the nations shall know that it is I, the LORD, who make Israel holy, when my sanctuary shall be set up among them forever.*

While this passage may be bifurcated—on the one hand, commanding uniformity through oppression and, on the other, a covenant of peace—we might consider the ways in which these two opposites are enacted in our lives. The danger of uniformity and oppression is sprung upon the reader. “No longer shall they defile themselves with their idols, their abominations, and all their transgressions. I will ... cleanse them...” At the same time, there is a hope of harmony: “never again shall they be divided...I will make with them a covenant of peace...” So, we might ask ourselves, where can we find the hope of unity and peace, and simultaneously where do we need to root out or guard against oppression and uniformity? Similarly, we might also ask ourselves when does peace look like silence and acquiescence, and when do peace and the quest for an authentic community require the cleansing of our own transgressions?

Suzanne Otte Allen, Ed.D. '14
Associate Dean and Senior Lecturer School of Education

Isaiah 50:4-7. The Lord GOD has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back. I gave my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who plucked my beard; my face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced; I have set my face like flint, knowing that I shall not be put to shame.

This passage is an awakening of the senses – an awakening of our potential while He joins us on the path of suffering. We endure pain, make sacrifices, and show restraint. We are resilient – we do not waver - with God by our side. We are also reminded that “the Lord GOD is my help.” He knew the path would be painful and did not turn back. With determination, confidence, and strength, and in the name of God, we face our challenges with courage and resilience. We overcome as He overcame — no turning back – no regrets.

Katie Vesperman '99

Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Isaiah 42:1-7. Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, Upon whom I have put my Spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations, Not crying out, not shouting, not making his voice heard in the street. A bruised reed he shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench, Until he establishes justice on the earth; the coastlands will wait for his teaching. Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spreads out the earth with its crops, Who gives breath to its people and spirit to those who walk on it: I, the LORD, have called you for the victory of justice, I have grasped you by the hand; I formed you, and set you as a covenant of the people, a light for the nations. To open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness.

In this passage, we are being challenged to not only stand up for justice, but to persevere when our efforts seem in vain or when things get dangerous. How much am I willing to sacrifice to bringing forth justice? Am I really expected to give my life for it? That is a scary thought! Yet, here we are reassured that God will be with us as we go through the hard times of bringing forth justice. To let go and truly believe is our constant challenge. It truly is faith at its finest. This Creator, who formed everything, the one who gives us each precious breath we take reassures us here that we are not alone. God will take us by the hand and give us the strength to persevere. In this way, we have the strength to bring forth justice.

Kasey DeWitt '90, MA '09

Student Success Advisor

Isaiah 49:1-6. *Hear me, O islands, listen, O distant peoples. The LORD called me from birth, from my mother's womb he gave me my name. He made of me a sharp-edged sword and concealed me in the shadow of his arm. He made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me. You are my servant, he said to me, Israel, through whom I show my glory. Though I thought I had toiled in vain, and for nothing, uselessly, spent my strength, Yet my reward is with the LORD, my recompense is with my God. For now the LORD has spoken who formed me as his servant from the womb, That Jacob may be brought back to him and Israel gathered to him; And I am made glorious in the sight of the LORD, and my God is now my strength! It is too little, he says, for you to be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the survivors of Israel; I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.*

Isaiah's choice of words conjures images of strength and might. Arrows and swords are instruments that require an unflinching courage most of us do not possess. But the servant in Isaiah's prophecy lived a life of humility, teaching, service to the poor, and sacrifice. This humble servant became the sharp-edged sword, the polished arrow that would become a light to the nations. Humility, teaching, service to the poor, and sacrifice are instruments within our means. We all have what it takes to become a light to the nations so that God's salvation may reach the ends of the earth.

Kevin Biller

Associate Professor of Economics

Matthew 26:14-25. *One of the Twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" They paid him thirty pieces of silver, and from that time on he looked for an opportunity to hand him over. On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples approached Jesus and said, "Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The teacher says, "My appointed time draws near; in your house I shall celebrate the Passover with my disciples. "The disciples then did as Jesus had ordered, and prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he reclined at table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me." Deeply distressed at this, they began to say to him one after another, "Surely it is not I, Lord?" He said in reply, "He who has dipped his hand into the dish with me is the one who will betray me. The Son of Man indeed goes, as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born. "Then Judas, his betrayer, said in reply, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" He answered, "You have said so."*

It's likely that in the past someone has risked standing up to authority on your behalf. Research one of these honored mothers/fathers - whether a family member, social activist, or saint - and light candles for them during the Easter season. Write a note of appreciation to a living advocate of righteousness.

Susan H. Swetnam

Daily Reflections for Lent, published by Liturgical Press

HOLY THURSDAY _____ APRIL 6

John 13:1-15. *Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean." After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord-and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.*

In today's reading, Jesus challenges us "to wash one another's feet." How many times have I failed to care for others? I think about calling my friend, who has only three months to live, but I do not. What would I say? I was silent when a dinner companion used a stigmatizing word to describe people living with mental health challenges. This Scripture passage reminds us that Jesus has given us "a model to follow." He loves unconditionally, renews hope, advocates for justice, serves humbly, and forgives faults. When I telephone my dying friend tomorrow, I will remember God is inviting me to be present in the moment and simply listen. When I speak up against discrimination, I will remember God is committed to dignity and equality for all people. On this Holy Thursday, may we hear and respond to God's call to serve and love one another.

Kitty Barry '77

GOOD FRIDAY _____ APRIL 7

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9. *Brothers and sisters: Since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help. In the days when Christ was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

For quite a while, I've been teaching myself Spanish, but I'm never sure I am getting it right until I am somehow tested. Before that, I may have been speaking in perfect Spanish, but I don't know if it is perfect until my skill is tested. In today's reading, we hear that Jesus "learned obedience through what he suffered." Does that mean he was disobedient before? No, but it does mean that his obedience to God, while faithful throughout his life, was not yet "tested." It was his loving actions that put him on the cross, and he refused to run from the cost of those actions. On this Good Friday, we remember Jesus in his humanity, who "offered up loud cries and tears to the One able to save him from death" not to escape the pain of death, but to embrace death, making him our tested and true high priest.

Colleen Settles, O.P., '71

HOLY SATURDAY _____ APRIL 8

Genesis 1:1-2: 2. *In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. God saw how good the light was. God then separated the light from the darkness. God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." Thus evening came, and morning followed—the first day. Then God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other." And so it happened: God made the dome, and it separated the water above the dome from the water below it. God called the dome "the sky." Evening came, and morning followed—the second day. Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear." And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin, and the dry land*

appeared. God called the dry land “the earth, “and the basin of the water he called “the sea.” God saw how good it was. Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it.” And so it happened: the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it.

God saw how good it was. Evening came, and morning followed—the third day. Then God said:

“Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the fixed times, the days and the years, and serve as luminaries in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth.” And so it happened: God made the two great lights, the greater one to govern the day, and the lesser one to govern the night; and he made the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky, to shed light upon the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw how good it was. Evening came, and morning followed—the fourth day. Then God said, “Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky.” And so it happened: God created the great sea monsters and all kinds of swimming creatures with which the water teems, and all kinds of winged birds. God saw how good it was, and God blessed them, saying, “Be fertile, multiply, and fill the water of the seas; and let the birds multiply on the earth.” Evening came, and morning followed—the fifth day. Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth all kinds of living creatures: cattle, creeping things, and wild animals of all kinds. “And so it happened: God made all kinds of wild animals, all kinds of cattle, and all kinds of creeping things of the earth. God saw how good it was. Then God said: “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.” God created man in his image; in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying:

“Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.” God also said: “See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food.” And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth and all their array were completed. Since on the seventh day God was finished with the work he had been doing, he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had undertaken.

Our insistence that each human being is an image of God should not make us overlook the fact that each creature has its own purpose. None is superfluous. The entire material universe speaks of God's love, God's boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God (¶ 84).

The universe unfolds in God, who fills it completely. Hence, there is a mystical meaning to be found in a leaf, in a mountain trail, in a dewdrop, in a poor person's face. The ideal is not only to pass from the exterior to the interior to discover the action of God in the soul, but also to discover God in all things (¶ 233).

*Pope Francis, Laudato Si'—On Care for Our Common Home
(Encyclical, 2015)*

EASTER SUNDAY _____ APRIL 9

John 20: 1-9. *On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.*

One can only imagine the disorientation of Mary of Magdala and her companions. Their beloved Jesus had just been crucified after a rapid succession of events. Jesus, who lived and preached love, inclusion, justice, and mercy, was dead. Was Jesus wrong, and will hate, division, injustice, and judgment continue to prevail? Their lives had been turned completely upside down. Still stunned and perhaps sleep deprived, they venture out before sunrise to the tomb. They see the stone removed, and Mary runs. In the midst of the upheaval and disorientation, there is something deep inside her that prompts her to immediate action. There is hope! Although the events of our world can be disorienting, do we stay attuned to those core Truths deep inside of us so that we too are ready to spring into action when the opportunity presents itself to allow love, inclusion, justice, and mercy to shine?

Ben '01 & Jess Wiederholt '99

Thank you

for sharing this Lent Journey with us.

We are so glad you have taken this Lenten journey with us into a landscape of reflection, thoughtful study, and action on behalf of others. For it is in the way that we show mercy to others that we experience God's mercy in our life. For it is in the way we love our neighbor that we find and love God. This journey, the journey of life, is one we share together. We hope these reflections and the community we share together encourage you further on.

Thank you to all who have contributed reflections for this Season of Lent. May Our Lady of Guadalupe continue to intercede for us. God bless.

Peace, Dominican Life and Mission

Layout: Liza R. Hodge

Design: Rae Senarighi

Copyediting: Ed Taylor



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