

LENT 2021



DAILY REFLECTION BOOKLET

Art by Christine Nguyen

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Lenten Schedule

Ash Wednesday 2/17

Medical Campus: Mass at 12:00pm in Moore Auditorium,
Confessions at 11:00am and individual ashes in Danforth
Chapel, 9:00-11:00am

Pharmacy School: Mass 12:45, ARB 304 & 305

Mass at the CSC: 8:00am, 12:00pm, 5:30pm, CSC Chapel

Palm Sunday 3/28 Mass: 11:00am and 4:30pm,
CSC Chapel

Holy Thursday 4/1 Mass: 7:00pm, CSC Chapel

Good Friday 4/2 Service: 7:00pm, CSC Chapel

Easter Vigil 4/3 Mass: 7:30pm, CSC Chapel

Easter 4/4 Mass: 9:30am and 11:30am, CSC Chapel

Weekly Ongoing Events

Sundays:

Mass: 11:00am and 4:30pm, CSC Chapel

Mondays:

Adoration with Confession: 2:00-4:00pm, CSC Chapel

Tuesdays:

Mass: 5:15pm, CSC chapel

RCIA: Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults:

7:00-8:30pm CSC Social Hall

Wednesdays:

Adoration with Confession: 7:00-8:00pm, CSC Chapel

Mass: 8:00pm, CSC Chapel

Thursdays:

Therapeutic Thursdays, 5:30pm (Yoga, Coloring w/Kelsey, etc)

Fridays:

Mass: 3:00pm, CSC Chapel

Special Events

Following in the Footsteps of Jesus: A Lenten Virtual Immersion Experience

Every Friday: 3:30 – 5:30pm Feb 19, Feb 26, Mar 5, Mar 12, Mar 19
Pray, learn, reflect and act on issues of justice.

Each week we will discuss a different topic.

This is a Zoom event. Contact Julia at murphy@washucsc.org for more information.

LGBTQ+ Soul

3/1, 3/15, 3/29 6:30pm, CSC Chapel

Busy Student Retreats

2/21-2/26 & 3/21- 3/26, woytek@washucsc.org to sign up

Lenten Student Wellness Retreat

3/2, 10:00am - 3/3, noon. vandyken@washucsc.org for more info

CSC Studies in Catholicism 5-Week Series

Wednesdays in Lent, 5:30-6:45pm, CSC Chapel. Grab and Go dinner afterwards

Confession Marathon

3/23 4:00pm-midnight

Stations of the Cross

3/26 at 3:00pm, Zoom

Class of 2021 Endings and Beginnings

4/7 TBD

A Note from the Director of Ministry:

Pope Francis declared this a special “Year of St. Joseph.” As we move into Lent 2021, St. Joseph actually might be just what we need to make this Lent less defined by a pandemic and more defined by hope and goodness.

When I reflect on St. Joseph and Pope Francis’ Apostolic Letter declaring the “Year of St. Joseph,” there are two things that stick out to me about St. Joseph that can aid our Lenten journey this year: tenderness and courage. During these unique times we need more tenderness and courage. Courage to build unity by discovering goodness in those around us and tenderness to ease the pain so many of us are feeling.

This Lent, as a community, let us encourage each other to take the courageous step of being tender to ourselves by reaching out to God.

Through **Fasting**, may we courageously let go of things in our life that sow division. Just as St. Joseph courageously protected his family in the Flight to Egypt, may we protect our dignity and the dignity of others by refraining from negativity on social media or tearing down those whom we disagree with. May we increase our tenderness in relationships and encounters with others by focusing on the goodness in each other. Let that be the building block for change in our world.

Through **Prayer**, courageously choosing to take time out of your day to prioritize time with God and yourself. As St. Joseph took care of his family tenderly, may you allow God to

be tender toward you in these difficult times. God's tenderness is available to us through the Eucharist at Mass by nourishing us and through healing in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Perhaps this Lent tenderness to yourself could mean attending Mass once a week (in person or virtual). It may be the vaccine you need for the sufferings of your soul these days.

Through **Almsgiving**, courageously standing up for those who are in need the most, because, just like St. Joseph's choice to take in Mary and her son Jesus, it is the right thing to do. During Lent extend a tender hand to those around you who may be experiencing loneliness or suffering from the challenges of this pandemic. Hand write a letter to an elderly relative or to a peer who might just need a little pick me up.

It is an act of courage to choose relationship with God and that act of courage is choosing to be tender to yourself and the world around you.

St. Joseph Pray for us to be courageously tender this Lent!

Troy Woytek
Director of Ministry

Online Resources:

United States Catholic Conference of Bishops:

<http://www.usccb.org/bible/index.cfm>

Catholic Student Center at WashU: <http://washucsc.org>

Creighton University Spirituality Resources:

<http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/>

Archdiocese of St. Louis: <http://archstl.org/>

Dynamic Catholic- Best Lent Ever:

<http://dynamiccatholic.com/bestlentever/#signup>

Word on Fire, Bishop Barron: <https://www.lentreflections.com/>

Word Among us - Daily Meditations: <https://wau.org/>

Loyola Press – Ignatian Spirituality:

<https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/liturgical-year/lent>

Center for Action and Contemplation – Daily Meditations:

<https://cac.org/sign-up/>

Introduction

Members of the CSC Community,

Greetings, and welcome to the 2021 Lenten Reflection Booklet!

This booklet contains student and alumni reflections that will offer you diverse perspectives, questions, and prayers surrounding each Scripture reading as you reflect and repent this Lenten season.

Lent is inherently introspective in nature, but it's a spiritual journey we do not need to walk alone (or on Zoom!). Catholic community is an integral part of our faith, and during this difficult time of uncertainty and isolation, surrounding ourselves with the wisdom and insights of others can open our eyes to new ways of understanding God's love and becoming more robust believers in Him. Keep an open mind; who knows what an undergraduate's musings can teach you!

Thank you to all the students who graciously wrote a reflection. Have a blessed Lent and a happy Easter!

John Biziorek, 2020 CSU Spiritual Chair

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH, 2021

ASH WEDNESDAY
FASTING & ABSTINENCE

Jl 2:12-18

Ps 51:3-4, 5-6^{AB}, 12-13, 14 AND 17

2 Cor 5:20 – 6:2

Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

“For gracious and merciful is he, slow to anger, rich in kindness, and relenting in punishment.” In this Lenten reading, God’s everlasting mercy and love for His creation is on full display. Joel’s prophecy to the nation of Israel had just been fulfilled; in response to Israel’s widespread avarice and sloth, a series of locust attacks were unleashed upon the land, ravaging every crop in sight. Four different locust waves decimated literally every piece of greenery and grain in sight. Israel knew they were messed up. In response to this series of unfortunate events, the entire nation fasted and cried out to the Lord, repenting; seeing this, God took pity on his people and returned prosperity to the land.

The power of God’s forgiveness and redemption is truly awe-inspiring, isn’t it? The Israelites were constantly disregarding Moses’ Covenant with God, but with a unified display of genuine penance, God forgave their countless misdeeds; His mercy and grace are available to all those who seek it with an open and vulnerable heart. Countless stories throughout the Bible exemplify the same theme: no matter who you have become or what you have done, it is never too late to turn from your life of sin and find God, live a righteous life, and enjoy eternity in paradise. Believe in Jesus Christ, continue to repent, and you will be redeemed for eternal salvation.

John Biziorek, Wash U., Arts and Science, Class of 2022

Dt 30:15-20

Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 AND 6

Lk 9:22-25

Today's readings ask us to hope in the Lord, even in our times of distress. It's easy to trust and worship the Lord when all is going well, when you're not trying to survive a semester in a global pandemic with no breaks. But the challenge that we are presented as Catholics each and every day is to find God even amid our suffering. During my junior year of high school, my uncle passed away from a complicated battle with stage four colon cancer. His death has taught me so many lessons, the most important of which being that everyone is carrying their own cross and silently grieving. How many times a day do we pass others, not even thinking twice about the challenges they are facing? The classmate who hasn't been talking as much, the homeless person on the street that you pass on the way to work each day, the friend who lost a grandparent a few weeks ago. Everyone around you is silently fighting a battle of their own whether or not they are affirmed and supported each day for doing so: the loss of a loved one, a mental health crisis, the struggle to make ends meet, and then some. In a time surrounded by so much suffering, I challenge you to go easy on those around you this Lenten season, to sit with your friends who are silently grieving, and to make a more conscious effort to pray for others. Where are you finding God amid your grief?

Christine Nguyen, Wash U., Business, Class of 2022

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH, 2021

ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT

Jer 20:10-13

Ps 18:2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7

Jn 10:31-42

I'm not going to lie, I had to read this passage several times before I truly understood what it meant, but once I did, I realized just how profoundly applicable the message was to our modern-day society. In the midst of the global pandemic, which unfortunately doesn't appear to have a close end in sight, I have found it slightly harder to feel closer to God and His teachings on a regular basis. So it was definitely a nice change of pace to be able to really hone in on one of His readings and ponder what it could mean for my life and for the lives of others.

As we know, there isn't a lack of injustice that plagues our world. Although the level of advocacy and activism for some of these injustices seem to be on the rise, especially in the past couple of decades. There is still much work to be done before we as a collective society start to feel any level of contentment with our circumstances. People are suffering all around the world. If I am being honest, I forget that every now and then in my daily prayers, and I doubt I am alone on this front. How can we claim to be righteous individuals truly worthy of God's grace if we are not doing all we can to support each other? More people than we would care to admit act as if they deserve everything for doing the bare minimum, and that simply is not right. The sheer level of inhumane exploitation that is condoned on a yearly basis doesn't get the attention it deserves, and this passage reminds us that we should always strive to be the best versions of ourselves. I am positive that this reading acts as a much-needed wake up call for many, myself included.

I am thankful for being reminded that there is always a way we can improve ourselves and our world.

Miguel Campos, Wash U, Arts and Sciences, Class of 2022

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20TH, 2021

Is 58:9b-14

Ps 86:1-2, 3-4, 5-6

Lk 5:27-32

To keep holy the Sabbath Day--seems like a pretty easy commandment to follow, right? I show up to Mass every Sunday. I even dress up, most of the time. But in today's first reading, God reminds us that to keep our Sunday a holy day requires more than just blindly following through on a habit. It requires a transformed and intentional attitude.

In the first reading, we are called not only to be vigilant in our practices on the Sabbath, but to enjoy it, to "call the Sabbath a delight". It is a day of self-sacrifice, perhaps of giving up what I may want to do on a "day off" so that I can intentionally develop my relationship with God. When I seek my joy, peace, and purpose outside of my immediate interests, I worship *Him* and not my Google calendar, Zoom commitments, or procrastinated assignments. This blessed rest, a true surrender, is what fuels our souls, our entire lives even, and sheds clarity where we may have been clouded in confusion.

It is very easy to make excuses and very difficult to do what we know is right, especially for ourselves, and especially at the expense of success or progress in our current activities. When Jesus called him, Levi left everything, his entire life behind to rejoice in the Messiah. Like Levi, I do not need to be perfect to surrender, rest, and rejoice, but I do need to be willing to be transformed. So tomorrow--take a nap, go on a walk, tune off from social media. Sit down, close your eyes, and just talk to God in prayer. Then, put on your Sunday clothes and go to Mass. Rejoice in this well-needed rest.

Maria Schmeer, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2024

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21ST, 2021

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 9:8-15

Ps 25:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 Pt 3:18-22

Mk 1:12-15

Today's first reading stresses an important fact that we need not forget: if we do what God asks of us during our numbered days on Earth, we will be rewarded and granted eternal life with Him in Heaven. My sophomore year of high school, I came across a similar reading in religion class, which conveyed this same message. My teacher presented a very practical analogy to drive home this point, which I would like to share today. Would you rather live 100 years on Earth as the richest, most powerful, most honored royalty, free to do whatever you please whenever you please, whatever your senses desire, but when you die spend the rest of eternity in the fires of hell, in pain, agony, despair, regret? Or would you rather spend 100 years on Earth humbly serving the Lord, doing His will and not your own, denying temptations, making the difficult, but right decisions, knowing that after your work on Earth is done, you will spend the rest of eternity in Heaven with God, not knowing pain, agony, despair, regret, but only peace, love, joy, gratitude? Take some time to reflect what you would choose, and what it would look like in your everyday life.

In today's Gospel, Jesus challenges a tax collector named Levi to leave his sinful ways and follow Him. Without hesitation, Levi

abandons his worldly pleasures, wealth, and power and follows Jesus. Jesus says to us, "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners." We are all sinners in need of God's grace. Jesus is here to call us to Him, encourage us to turn away from sin and temptation, and shower us with His love and mercy. We are called to be like Levi, to have the faith to do what God desires. What can you do today to choose God's will over your own? What is just 100 years of service when compared to eternity in Heaven with God?

Vyto Staniskis, WashU, Computer Science and Business,
Class of 2024

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND, 2021

FEAST OF THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER, APOSTLE

1 Pt 5:1-4

Ps 23:1-3a,4-6

Mt 16:13-19

Writing a Lenten Reflection is difficult for me. Doubts swirl in my head that remind me that I could be a better follower of Jesus. I could love more deeply and I could believe more deeply. Often, we do not talk about doubt as much as we should, or even at all. I want you to know that doubt is not a failure. If you are doubting, you are thinking. And if you are thinking, you have not given up. Understanding and believing matters to you and God can feel that.

I'm positive that Peter had doubts about running the Catholic Church. Even leaders lose faith in themselves sometimes. But strong leaders ask for help. Peter never led God's people alone and Jesus reminds us in the first reading to never even try to lead alone. Leading with love and forgiveness, as Jesus did, builds a supportive community that stands with us. Our communities will reassure us even when our doubts threaten to crush us.

Doubt makes me vulnerable, and that scares me. But what scares me more is inauthenticity. Lying to myself is truly giving up. I challenge you to forgive yourself for your doubts. Sit in the uncomfortableness and breathe. Jesus does not need you to be perfect, He needs you to be *resilient*. To forgive others you must first forgive yourself. And to love others, you must first love yourself.

Anna Riek, Wash U., Business, Class of 2023

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD, 2021

Is 55:10-11

Ps 34:4-5, 6-7, 16-17, 18-19

Mt 6:7-15

This past year was incredibly unprecedented. Covid-19 has completely changed our way of life, maybe forever. All of us are upset about something. Some of us are upset at individuals or groups of people who refuse to abide by state or local COVID guidelines, designed to keep us all safe. Some of us are upset at these state and local governments for instituting these guidelines in the first place. Some of us are upset that we cannot have our classes in person while some of us are upset that we cannot see family, friends, and loved ones as often as we would have liked. But at the end of the day, we must all forgive these people.

In the Gospel reading, Mt 6:7-15, it says

If you forgive men their transgressions,
Your heavenly Father will forgive you.
But if you do not forgive me,
Neither will your Father forgive your transgressions

None of us are without sin. We must practice forgiveness if we are to get through this pandemic together.

Andrew Wessel, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2021

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH, 2021

Jon 3:1-10

Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19

Lk 11:29-32

In today's reading we hear a passage from James discussing wisdom and understanding, two gifts of the Holy Spirit. James emphasizes that these gifts are from God, and as such are meant to be used to promote peace and mercy, not selfishness. I believe this reading emphasizes that God gives us freedom of choice; we can do what we want with what we have.

However, in accompaniment with that choice, God gives us the tools to do what is right: wisdom to act with purity and gentleness and understanding to be sincere and honest. He even tells us that if we act in accordance with those gifts, we will find and create peace and righteousness. We need, therefore, to act how he intended us to, using that wisdom to lead humble lives, lifting others up, and creating a loving environment for all. Not only is this the right thing to do (God is telling us to do so directly), but we will also be rewarded with inner joy and peace.

Mauricio Santamarina, Wash U., Business, Class of 2023

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 25TH, 2021

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25

Ps 138: 1-2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8

Mt 7:7-12

I don't want to sound like the typical dude, but sometimes I find it hard to ask questions. When I find myself feeling this way, it usually is in two strains. The first is that I don't want to feel like I am dependent on someone else. I don't want to admit that I don't know. I have probably internalized asking questions like this as a sign of weakness. The second is that I just don't think my request is important enough. There are lots more troubles in the world than whatever little drama I'm going through.

Our readings today remind me, and hopefully you, that God desires us to ask God for what we need (even if God knows it already). These needs may be big, like Queen Esther, or quite inconsequential, like a kid asking for an egg. We are not recriminated as failure for our question. We are not punished for our wants. We are promised that God will listen, and God will respond. God desires to give us what we truly need to be fully who God calls us to be.

If God gives good things to those who ask, then the question becomes am I asking the right questions and am I seeking the right things and am I knocking on the right doors?

Michael Schreiner, Campus Minister

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26TH, 2021

ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT

Ez 18:21-28

Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8

Mt 5:20-26

Those who challenged Jesus asked, “Which is the greatest commandment?” And we well know his answer: Love God with all of your ability and love your neighbor as yourself. While these appear to be two separate edicts, the reality is that you cannot truly achieve the former without the latter. We are called to love our fellow men, enter into a relationship with them, and--through those relationships--glorify God.

Given a world where our focus is oriented towards competitiveness, we begin to see others as our enemies instead of our brothers, we refuse them the grace and forgiveness that we ourselves would want to receive, and we judge their souls and character without much of the mercy with which we hope God will judge ours. When we fail to live out this commandment from Christ, we are devaluing one of the most wonderful gifts that God has given to us: community. By denying forgiveness and mercy to others, we are often refusing to acknowledge their dignity, which exists independent of their many supposed imperfections or shortcomings.

No matter how silly, misguided, or downright wrong we consider others to be, and despite the disappointment and frustration they may sometimes bring, all men are created and loved by God, and through this they are worthy of our respect and love too. And when we are not filling our hearts with love of God and one another, we are opening them to selfishness, pride, and even hatred.

Alayna Mickles, Wash U, Arts and Sciences, 2023

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27TH, 2021

Dt 26:16-19

Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8

Mt 5:43-48

When I try and explain Catholicism to my friends, I tell them that there are two fundamental concepts to the faith: love and forgiveness. In today's Gospel, Jesus says, "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." This line is one that I've always remembered and recognized and held up as one of the most important lines in the Bible. However, it seems that the enemies who you love are the ones that can hurt you the most. It feels like your love can give them power over you. It is easier to hate someone because it places a layer of separation between you and them that keeps you safe. It is much harder to give someone love because it feels like you are inviting more hurt. Love does not have to be a dramatic outpouring of affection. It can exist with and through distance and separation. Sometimes the best way to love someone, or to love yourself, is to put up a barrier. If distance is needed, try building that barrier out of love rather than hate. Hate leads to fear and anger and sadness and conflict. Love might not give you power, but it can give you peace and resolution.

As for the final line of the Gospel, "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect," try replacing the word "perfect" with one that fits you better. You will not be perfect. But, you *can* be loving, forgiving, good, generous, comforting, fierce, or loyal. How do *you* want to be like God?

Angela Gormley, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2023

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH, 2021

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Ps 116:10, 15, 16-17, 18-19

Rom 8:31b-34

Mk 9:2-10

“Listen to him.”

This is what the voice of God says on the mountaintop to Peter, James and John. Sometimes when we read a passage at Church, we get a snippet and it helps to read a little bit before or after to get the whole picture.

Just before in Chapter 8, Jesus both predicts his Passion for the first time and tells his disciples, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel’s will save it.”

These are tough messages to hear. So, God tells the disciples to listen. I don’t know about you, but there are times when I need to hear things a couple of times before it sinks in.

This Lent let us try to listen better; to wade through the distractions of life to hear the voice of Jesus, calling us into relationship with him and sending us into the world as his disciples.

Michael Schreiner, Campus Minister

Dn 9:4b-10

Ps 79:8, 9, 11 and 13

Lk 6:36-38

In today's Gospel we hear "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven." This is something we see in action even now. We are often quick to judge and condemn others, who are different than us. We judge what we do not understand. It sometimes is unintentional. It is something that does not happen all the time, if it did, we would be pretty evil. We are all unique and have different gifts and talents. Some people are more intelligent, more athletic or can write better to name a few. In this passage God reminds us that we need to stop judging others because we ourselves are also being judged. We are all created in the image and likeness of God.

In high school, I was judged on my appearance. Every day I left school with a different name. A lot of the kids, I did not even know. The name calling only got worse as the years went on. I did not have many friends at the time, so being judged by my peers hurt. But as the passage reminds us "forgive and you will be forgiven". It took some time for me to forgive them, but after a powerful encounter with the Lord during Adoration, I realized I needed to let the hurt go and forgive them. Ever since then, I have felt much more peace in my life. During your prayer time today, I want you to think about a time where you judged someone, or someone judged you.

Eric Starrs, Intern

Is 1:10, 16-20

Ps 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23

Mt 23:1-12

“Come now, let us set things right, says the LORD.”

In today’s first reading, we are called to listen to the Lord and “learn to do good.” God gives us a series of actions to perform to aid us in this learning process, telling us to “wash yourselves clean” and “redress the wronged.” Learning to do good involves action on our part, a collaboration between us and God. The Lord calls on us to work with him to “set things right.” These words remind us that the Spirit flows in us, and that we are the Body of Christ. We must be part of the effort to do good in this world. “Come now, let us set things right” is a call to action for us, a battle cry, an invitation to work with our God.

Our Gospel reading for today again reinforces the importance of action over empty rhetoric. Jesus gives us the example of the Pharisees, instructing us to “do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice.” Too often, I have fallen into the same trap as the Pharisees. As an Academic Mentor teaching my mentees effective ways to study for their classes and prepare for exams, I sometimes fail to follow my own advice. Spiritually, I have a good idea what I *should* be doing – praying daily, giving my time to others and sharing my talents and resources. However, knowing what I should be doing is not enough. Our God is a god of action. To know this, we only have to look at the cross. We too, in this season of Lent are called to be people of action. To “learn to do good,” we must be willing to put in the study time!

Amanda Arbuckle, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2021

Jer 18:18-20

Ps 31:5-6, 14, 15-16

Mt 20:17-28

The Gospel for today is a particularly important one. First, Jesus warns the disciples of his impending betrayal and crucifixion. But then, He goes on to describe what makes a truly great person deserving of sitting beside Him. Jesus explains that it is not authority nor power lorded over others which makes one great, but rather the willingness to serve and to put others first. I think this is really important to remember, especially being young adults discerning and pursuing different careers and goals. Money, stability, and security are all good things, but remembering what is at the heart of why we do things is even more important. "Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." This indicates how giving Jesus was; He literally came to be in order to give His life for others. Jesus invites us to live the same way He did -- with a servant's heart, giving from a place of love, kindness, and generosity. Sometimes it can be hard to be giving and to put others before ourselves, and carrying that intention with us every day does not come quickly or easily. So let's start small and start now. Let's each try and do something kind for another person today -- not for praise or out of a feeling of obligation, but out of the generosity of our hearts and a desire to be more like Christ.

Sawyer Whelan, Intern

THURSDAY, MARCH 4TH, 2021

Jer 17:5-10
Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4 and 6
Lk 16:19-31

This gospel is one of messages. God sends us messages every day, but they often glide right past us. The ability to receive God's messages is a practice. It's a muscle we must exercise through regular reflection, prayer, gratitude. Despite Lazarus' misery, he was able to find God's messages. He practiced the skill every day. Perhaps God was in the soft touch of the dogs' fur, or the cool relief of the dogs' tongue on his sores. Unfortunately, the rich man was blind to God's messages. Relying on his decadent comforts for daily satisfaction, his muscles that connected him to God were weak. Realizing his own mistakes too late, he asks God to send the happily dead Lazarus as a messenger to warn his brothers. Through God's refusal, we learn that if one cannot see God's messages riddled throughout everyday life, neither will one be equipped to see them in the miracle of a dead man delivering the news of salvation. The difference isn't how the messages is delivered. It's the recipient. We either see God in our lives or ignore the divine presence. It's not as easy as flipping a switch or putting on our God-glasses. We must cultivate a daily practice of strengthening our connection to God. Somedays finding God will be harder. Other days, the messages will not be what we were hoping for. Through the practice of prayer, we open ourselves fully to the abundance of God's messages that are written across the pages of our lives.

Mattie Gottbrath, Wash U., Alumni, Arts and Sciences,
Class of 2018

FRIDAY, MARCH 5TH, 2021

Gn 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a

Ps 105:16-17, 18-19, 20-21

Mt 21:33-43, 45-46

Today's readings draw parallels with their dark themes. We begin with Joseph whose brothers debate killing him, throwing him in a cistern, and finally settle on selling him for twenty silver pieces due to their envy. Next we have the parable where Jesus subtweets the Pharisees by telling them a story of wicked tenants who, because of their greed, kill the master's servants and son in hopes of obtaining the master's inheritance. These stories draw the mind back to the very beginning of Genesis when Cain kills Abel due to his jealousy, and for today's reflection I would like to explore the impact of jealousy on our daily lives.

As humans we all have moments where we get angry, greedy, deceitful, and prideful but I find that the hardest emotion to deal with is jealousy because it combines all of these elements into one feeling. Jealousy can lead us to do things we thought ourselves incapable of doing, and the scriptures show this when these brothers spill each other's blood. One might even begin to see Cain or Joseph's brothers as monsters, but we have to remember that before anything else they were born human and they were born brothers. Lent is a time of purification, and in order to do this we have to take that hard look at the jealous part of ourselves. By acknowledging any jealousies that we might have we can begin towards preparing ourselves for the coming of Christ and receive the master's son better than his tenants did.

Noah Maguigad, Wash U., Engineering, Class of 2023

Mi 7:14-15, 18-20

Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12

Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

This gospel is a story that is quite familiar to many of us. Time and time again I hear about the son who demanded his inheritance and then left his father, only to come back when he had spent every cent. Each time I interpret the reading the same way. Just as the father rejoiced and received his son, Christ will rejoice and receive us no matter how far away we have strayed from him.

This passage was shared with me when I was the farthest I had ever been in my relationship with Christ and I struggled deeply with what it meant to me to follow Christ and receive his love. I was told that what is so wonderful about this story are the many ways it has been read. Today's passage opens up with the Pharisees and scribes scorning Jesus for welcoming sinners, an introduction I had never heard before. Sometimes I hear the story and the second brother's anger was never made known. These are details that someone needed to hear and that remind others of their reason for faith. I needed to hear that Christ will receive me, like the father received his son, no matter how far I have strayed from him. Others may need to be reminded that like the second son, they already have all that Christ has given them. In Christ's love, there is something for everyone, no matter where you are in your relationship with him.

Jenny Nguyen, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2024

SUNDAY, MARCH 7TH, 2021

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Ex 20:1-17

Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 11.

1 Cor 1:22-25

Jn 2:13-25

Examining the first reading and gospel together points me to one thing: priorities. More specifically, placing God as the first and main priority. He has created us (His temples) for worship and devotion to Him, yet our flesh is often tempted to either stray from Him or abide by His commands with selfish intentions. Fortunately, we have been given God's inspired word and commandments as a guide. But make no mistake, His commandments are not there to restrict us for the sake of limiting our free will. Rather, they are there to ensure that our actions and lives point back to Him. Let everything we do point to Him and His glory alone.

Eka Jose, Wash U., Arts and Science, 2021

MONDAY, MARCH 8TH, 2021

2 Kgs 5:1-15ab

PS 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4

Lk 4:24-30

In today's Gospel, Jesus is driven out of the synagogue by His own people. These are His neighbors, the people who watched Him grow up, and yet they are so angered by Jesus saying that they are not necessarily favored by God that they drive Him out of the synagogue and attempt to kill Him. This is a powerful, striking Gospel from which we can draw a two-part message. First, God is universal, and His love is universal. Regardless of where someone comes from or what they believe in, God loves them. We cannot assume that God loves us more because we are followers of Him; instead, it is our duty to live in His love and show His love to others.

Secondly, this Gospel makes it clear that Jesus was not always adored by all – and His work was not easy. He shared radical views about charity, justice, and peace without worrying about what authorities or even His friends and family would say. We must also take risks as Jesus did, standing up for what we know is right regardless of what our friends and family may think. We must proclaim and live out the universality of God's love, strong in the knowledge that God is with us.

Lent is almost halfway over. Take some time today to think about how you can show God's universal love to others, and pray to God for peace and guidance against any resistance you may receive.

Kate Flynn, Wash U., Arts & Sciences, Class of 2024

TUESDAY, MARCH 9TH, 2021

Dn 3:25, 34-43

Ps 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9

Mt 18:21-35

Today's first reading describes how Naaman, a foreigner, was sent to Israel to be healed of his leprosy by Elisha the prophet. But, when Elisha tells him to wash in the Jordan, he wants to go home without even trying it, as this was not the response he expected. His servants must convince him to wash and be healed. I think this passage gives us a chance to reflect on our prayers and how they are answered. If we pray and ask God to help us with something in life, there is a certain answer that we expect. We expect to suddenly win the game, or witness the healing, or feel the strength that we had asked for. If God responds in any other way, our natural reaction may be to feel anger like Naaman.

This passage reminds us to be more patient. God's answer to our prayers may not be exactly what we were expecting. Nonetheless, He loves us, and we need to trust that His path and His response are correct. If we run away like Naaman almost did, we might miss out on the reward.

Will Carter, Wash U., Arts and Science, Class of 2023

Dt 4:1, 5-9

PS 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20

Mt 5:17-19

Who comes to mind when you think of the greatest person in the world?

In the gospel today Jesus teaches on the law saying, “Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. In truth I tell you, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, is to disappear from the Law until all its purpose is achieved. Therefore, anyone who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of Heaven; but the person who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of Heaven.”

This is the gospel for today in entirety, and when reflecting on this verse we should call to mind what it means to be lawful. Although this passage is rich with nuance, my interpretation is that Jesus is calling us to live by our ideals as Christians. Going back to the question asked at the beginning, whoever comes to mind is often someone who follows the teaching of the Lord to the fullest. The greatest person in the world, whoever you might think of, is someone who is truly virtuous according to your concept of morality. Jesus teaches this important lesson to us today because we are all called to obey the law, because it is in our best interest to do so. If we believe that our god is a god of all good things why do we so often think of his commandments

as burdens? It is because we are often led astray by temptations that may have the illusion of happiness, but never results in true happiness or true satisfaction. The next time you might be drawn towards temptations especially when thinking about your Lenten resolution, know that you made this Lenten resolution for a very good reason and know you will be more satisfied by the ability to avoid temptation than to give into the temptation by indulging.

Ian McWilliams, Wash U., Architecture, Class of 2022

THURSDAY, MARCH 11TH, 2021

Jer 7:23-28

Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Lk 11:14-23

It is a struggle to be consistent in our faithfulness to God. The readings today show us that even when seeing the Lord drive out demons, people still have a hard time believing in the power of God. When I am challenged, one of the first questions I ask is why. There are certainly times in our lives, difficulties that we endure, or even emotions that we consistently feel, where we do not see any sign or inkling that tells us God is there with us. When we undergo hardship, we often have a difficult time seeing the way that God is working in our lives or having faith that He is even working at all. These readings encourage us to walk with God and consistently have faith in Him, not turning our backs to Him and hardening our hearts when things don't go our way but standing even closer with Him and giving Him our hearts. Consistency is the key to maintain our faithfulness to God, a simple acknowledgement of His presence every day can be so powerful.

This reading reminds us that God is our rock. Saying "Jesus, I trust in you" can be that simple acknowledgement of His presence. It is imperative that we walk with Jesus and have faith that He is performing both good and bad in our lives for

our own sake. Lent is a time of sacrifice, temptation, and challenge. During Lent, we are tested, and if things don't go right, we blame God and turn our backs to Him. This season is a time to make an effort to go against our habits, and these readings are the encouragement we need to remain strong in our faith to God, and have hope that He is working in our lives.

Avery Dunn, Wash U., Engineering, Class of 2023

FRIDAY, MARCH 12TH, 2021

ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT

Hos 14:2-10

Ps 81:6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14 and 17

Mk 12:28-34

Today we hear Jesus speak of the two greatest commandments, “You shall LOVE the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength...You shall LOVE your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.” I am amazed at how simple and similar the greatest rules in our faith can be stated. It all comes down to love.

Life is better with love. Love is the foundation for every long-lasting relationship. It is at the root of being a faithful follower of Christ, but what does it mean to love? What loving actions can we carry out in order to show this love, rather than simply stating it? Just like everything else in life, one must practice loving in order to love well. Lent is a great time to start.

Love is putting everything towards God and our neighbors and holding nothing back. It is a constant, intentional pursuit to grow closer towards one another through caring, supporting, listening, challenging, and learning. In order to love God, one must also love thy neighbor as well. Love does not mean life will always be easy, but it will always be worth it. You are always worthy of love.

Nate Ostdieck, Wash U., Engineering, Class of 2021

Hos 6:1-6

Ps 51:3-4, 18-19, 20-21ab

Lk 18:9-14

What is it that we are offering this Lent? What is it that we are giving up?

During the Lenten season, we might sometimes get caught up in the tradition of giving something up – sweets, social media, Netflix, and the list can go on. But what's the point of making these types of sacrifices if today's first reading and Psalms are saying that God does not want "sacrifice." I believe these readings call us to reflect on the type of sacrifices we offer and the sincere intentions we have when we offer them. What's the point of a sacrifice if we have not forgiven that person that offended us, that friend, sibling, or relative? What's the point of giving something up if today we have not made any effort to love more, to understand those that think or act differently than us? What's a sacrifice if we do it for tradition, for self-gratification, or self-exaltation like the prayer of the Pharisee in the Gospel? What's the value in a sacrifice that only fulfills a personal need (e.g., losing calories) and does not involve nor affects others around us. What's a sacrifice if it is not grounded or rooted in what God really wants, honest, sincere "love and forgiveness," "For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice..." "It is mercy I desire, and not sacrifice." So...what is it that we are offering this Lent? What is it that we are sacrificing?

David Balmaceda, Wash U., Doctoral Student, Arts & Sciences,
Class of 2023

SUNDAY, MARCH 14TH, 2021

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
LAETARE (REJOICE) SUNDAY

(Scrutiny Readings)

1 Sm 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6.

Eph 5:8-14

Jn 9:1-41

Today is the fourth Sunday of Lent. It is also March 14th, written 3/14, which has an additional, secular meaning. If you were an American student who had the fortune (or misfortune) of studying mathematics at any point in the last couple decades, you've probably heard the name – Pi Day. In a way, it's a celebration of education, of the pursuit of knowledge – in a way, bringing at least some light to see the world with.

Today's reading from the Gospel of John also talks a lot about light. It says: "And this is the verdict that the light came into the world, but people preferred darkness to light, because their works were evil...But whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God".

What message can we glean from this? Perhaps, it is that we must continue our pursuit of good – of light – wherever we go. Our efforts to spread truth and do good cannot be confined to Sundays or to the church building, but must continue in our education as well.

Walter Treat, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2022

Is 65:17-21

Ps 30:2 and 4, 5-6, 11-12a and 13b

Jn 4:43-54

Today's readings allow us to focus on believing without seeing. In the first reading, the Lord celebrates all the good He will make of Jerusalem. He carries a positive energy throughout His creation – one in which the old live out a lifetime, and the young celebrate life. Without initially seeing how His creation plays out, the Lord believes there is good in the world.

In today's Gospel according to John, Jesus heals an official's son. Jesus says to the official, "Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe;" however, the official believed the word of Jesus when He told him his son would live. The official believed in Jesus without seeing the result and kept his faith in the Lord. The official's son was alive and well, and the official realized that his son began to heal the minute that Jesus said, "Go; your son will live."

Today's readings demonstrate how crisis can be both danger and opportunity. Within this opportunity, faith becomes our invitation to step away from what we can physically see, hear, and touch. Having faith allows us to leap into the darkness, knowing that the Lord will protect us and eventually bring us back into the light. This Lent, let us focus our hearts and minds on believing without seeing, so that we too, like the official from the Gospel, may be carried by the Lord.

Erin Flynn, Wash U., Engineering, Class of 2022

TUESDAY, MARCH 16TH, 2021

Ez 47:1-9, 12

Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9

Jn 5:1-16

When reflecting on the Gospel, I am reminded of the struggles and pains that Jesus went through for us. Within the reading today, we encounter a man who has been ill for thirty-eight years and when the man tells Jesus that no one has “put him into the pool where water is stirred up,” Jesus tells him to “Rise, take up your mat, and walk.” The man immediately does that, and later tells the Jews that Jesus was the one who cured him. And the last line of the Gospel tells us these exact words: “Therefore, the Jews began to persecute Jesus because he did this on a Sabbath.” While Jesus may have performed a miracle by curing him, He is punished because of the fourth commandment. It reminds me that if the act and the intention is good, then sometimes it is necessary to break rules and stigma that may surround the situation. Jesus knew not only the law of the Sabbath, but the consequences of breaking that law. He knew that the Pharisees had been trying to find ways to persecute and undermine Him, that would endanger his life and yet, He performed the miracle anyway because it was the right thing to do.

Gaby Mendoza, Wash U., Arts and Science, Class of 2024

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17TH, 2021

FEAST OF ST. PATRICK

Is 49:8-15

Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18

Jn 5:17-30

The idea of pursuing the will of someone else can seem undesirable. As humans it is our natural instinct to want to pursue our own desires and will. This passage is not to say that we must abandon our will and blindly follow God, but it is challenging us to do something more. God gave us the gift of Free Will, and this gift allows us to make our own choices, but it also allows us to love. One cannot be forced to love, it must be a choice. This passage is challenging us to use our free will to find what God wants for us, love. If we follow the path of loving one another as Jesus did, we can use our free will to achieve eternal happiness.

Benjamin Gaffney, Wash U., Alumni, Business, Class of 2020

THURSDAY, MARCH 18TH, 2021

Ex 32:7-14

Ps 106:19-20, 21-22, 23

Jn 5:31-47

As we continue our Lenten practices, God invites us to look for His presence in unexpected ways. When we search for signs of God's work in our lives, it is easy for us to rely on our expectations of God. It is difficult to trust in His will, as we all have our own vision of how God works. We struggle to cast out our image of God's plan to allow Him to reveal Himself in the way He chooses. He may reveal himself in those we deem broken and weak, not necessarily in the form of the perfect person we often strive to be during Lent. God is far greater than those He works through. Today, Jesus urges us to see God in one another. He calls out those of us who do not see God's work in action through the people in our lives. In these last couple weeks of Lent, God is inviting us to be open and attentive to His revelation. Who is God working through in our lives? Where might we be overlooking his presence?

Mary Kate Charles, Wash U., Sam Fox, Class of 2024

FRIDAY, MARCH 19TH, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH

ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT

2 Sam 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16

Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27, 29

Rm 4:13, 16-18, 22

Mt 1:16, 18-21, 24a

The ordinary is beautiful.

Today, we celebrate the feast of St. Joseph and there is a lot we can learn from him about what it means to thrive in the ordinary. Think about living life in a pandemic, especially during its early days where we were just settling into the “new normal”.

For me, it more or less mirrors what life might have looked like in Nazareth. You have a routine that you stick to every day, there is that occasional thrill or rush of excitement, you have that close circle of family and friends you get to connect with every day, and that’s pretty much it. Some might argue that it is dull or boring even.

Yet at the same time, there’s hidden beauty and truth waiting to be seized and shared with the world. One universal truth that I think we need to be reminded of is that “we are not alone and we are loved”.

Joseph lived an ordinary life as a discreet, constant presence of encouragement. He didn't seek any credit or recognition. I can safely assume that he dedicated his life to loving others well. I like to think that Joseph constantly reminded Jesus of how loved He is the same way our Heavenly Father reminds us. God often comes to us in ways that we'd least expect.

Love is found in something as simple as a "Hi, how are you?" It is found in the smile of someone special (whether it's in person or over a zoom call), it's found in the morning light that we wake up with, it's in the gentle breeze and rustle of the leaves on a walk through Forest Park.

It's everywhere.

It's ordinary and it's beautiful.

To find God in all things is to fall deeper and deeper in love
with Him.

So fall in love and stay in love.

St. Joseph, pray for us.

Scott Nguyen, UHSP, Class of 2022

SATURDAY, MARCH 20TH, 2021

Jer 11:18-20

Ps 7:2-3, 9bc-10, 11-12

Jn 7:40-53

Although today's gospel talks about division, it is powerful how it also exemplifies a shared awe of the work of Jesus. The crowd in the passage was divided, unsure whether to trust Jesus as the one. I found it particularly interesting how the guards answer to the Pharisees, "never before has anyone spoken like this man," when asked why they did not arrest Jesus. Even amidst the disagreement and uncertainty that came over the people during this time, it was hard for many to deny that something about Jesus was so unique and it elicited a deep respect from most. I think oftentimes we can get so caught up in our own worlds and lose the almost child-like excitement that comes with learning about the work of Jesus. I've often found myself taking certain things for granted and becoming numb to the beautiful mystery that is God. It requires an active effort, and it is well worth it, to wake up to the way Jesus is working in our lives. We may not always agree or fully understand, like those described in today's gospel, but the important thing is to not close ourselves off and instead continue to pursue that closeness.

Clarissa Gaona Romero, Wash U., Arts & Sciences,
Class of 2023

SUNDAY, MARCH 21ST, 2021

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jer 31:31-34

Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15.

Heb 5:7-9

Jn 12:20-33

Sin is, unfortunately, a part of every one of our experiences and it is a daily challenge to turn toward God, not away. The passages on this day of Lent address this challenge in their description of God's new covenant with all of humanity. After God delivered the Israelites from Egypt they broke their Covenant. Despite turning their backs many times from God, God still loved the Israelites and gave them His grace. Therefore, a new covenant was formed expanding to all people. God sent His only son down to earth in order to form this new covenant. Jesus then died at the cross in order to draw everyone to His covenant and forgive all sins. Despite the great sins, God always listens and forgives. Our sin can feel overwhelming and can seem to be our only acts. It may seem that we are always making mistakes and turning from God and life (particularly during COVID) can be overwhelming and consuming. Yet these passages remind us that God's grace will always be greater than any travail in our life. Sin does not have to consume us, God's grace can instead. Therefore, it is essential, particularly in the days of Lent, to allow God to fill our lives through prayer, and community.

Owen Reinhart, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2024

Dn 13: 1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62

Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

Jn 8:1-11

Will compassion stop you in your tracks?

Being part of a mob, a movement motivated by rage, or adding comments to a fiery online forum is a lot like a train barreling down on tracks that cannot easily stop.

What does it take to stop that train of angry, vengeful energy? Susanna in the first reading and the prostitute in the Gospel are like any person in our modern day that we dismiss or try to cancel out because of something we don't like. Daniel and Jesus both show us the antidote to the divisive energy of our country these days, compassion. That isn't some major breakthrough of a thought though. I'm sure most people if you asked them when they aren't fired up about something would say compassion is a good thing and something we should all strive for more of. Yet, where does that sentiment go when we doom scroll on social media (like WashU Reddit) or fire up our base of like minded peers to cancel out someone or something? The real lesson that Daniel and Jesus teach us today is how we conjure up that compassion in the midst of tension. Space. Creating a space for reflection and prayer, where we can quiet the shouts of our emotions or those around us, lets in the possibility for God's compassionate voice. Both Daniel and Jesus created enough space in their lives to hear the voice of God so that compassion was possible. It is easier to follow the mob or cancel someone out, what is truly courageous and radical is to look someone in the eyes with compassion and say, I don't condemn you and let's fix this together.

Troy Woytek, CSC Director of Ministry

TUESDAY, MARCH 23RD, 2021

Nm 21:4-9

Ps 102:2-3, 16-18, 19-21

Jn 8:21-30

After months of arduous travel, the Israelites had become exhausted and hungry; in these circumstances, they lost faith in God and Moses, beginning to complain. The people were tired of the long journey they were on, and this reminds me of the COVID-19 trials and tribulations we all have endured this year. Social distancing and stay-at-home orders have all made us isolated and mentally exhausted, and it has been so extremely difficult to refrain from seeing family and friends during Thanksgiving and Christmas. We too have begun to lose patience with and complain against God, and more importantly, with each other. With your husbands, wives and kids working or studying from home, tempers may have flared and arguments probably unfolded.

More so, when we see someone not wearing a mask, do we give them the benefit of the doubt? Or do we assume that they care little for the general well-being and health of others? Like the Israelites, we have been forced out of our comfort zones, and this has led to a lack of compassion and empathy for our fellow humans. In response to these feelings, offer your frustrations and lack of patience with others to the Lord; ask Him to help you remember that these are trying times and uncharted waters for everyone. Patience is a virtue, so unlike the Israelites, make sure to remain grounded and practice it. Pray and look to Jesus.

John Biziorek, Wash U., Arts and Science, Class of 2022

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 24TH, 2021

Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95

Dn 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56

Jn 8:31-42

In today's gospel Jesus describes how the Jews desired to kill Him because they could not accept the truth of His words and His proclamation as the Son of God. So often, fear and anxiety cloud our perception of truth and can lead us to act irrationally. We shield ourselves from novel, potentially life-altering truths in an attempt to protect the ignorance and comfort we have established in our current way of life. On both the feast day of Oscar Romero and the United Nations International Day for the Right to Truth Concerning Human Rights Violations, I am left to ponder how violence often stems from an inability to see the truths before us and recognize our own misconceptions. Let this quote below by Oscar Romero be a challenge to each one of us to reflect upon the ways that violence, racism, discrimination, and hatred all stem from the inability to recognize the fundamental truths about the dignity of every human life. I encourage you to take a moment to consider the ways that you can combat the structures that perpetuate violence in our society by seeking out truth and promoting equity in your community.

"I will not tire of declaring that if we really want an effective end to violence we must remove the violence that lies at the root of all violence: structural violence, social injustice, exclusion of citizens from the management of the country, repression. All this is what constitutes the primal cause, from which the rest flows naturally."

Irene Hamlin, Wash U., Arts & Sciences, Class of 2021

THURSDAY, MARCH 25TH, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Is 7:10-14; 8:10

Ps 40:7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 11

Heb 10:4-10

Lk 1:26-38

In today's Gospel, Mary exemplifies great faith and trust in the Lord. Once Mary learns she will conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit, she changes her response from a gentle question to a bold statement. Mary says, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." This is true humility- submitting herself to God. She set aside her human reasoning and obediently accepted this mystery from God that changed every aspect of her life moving forward. In this moment, she could not understand what being the mother of God would bring: joy, awe, wonder, encouragement, worry, suffering, and witnessing the torturous death of her child.

If Mary can give her fiat (her yes to the Lord) even though she could not understand what this yes would entail, then we can find comfort and ask for her intercession as we discern what yesses God is asking of us. This may be opportunities that are presented to us, or perhaps a nudge in our conscience to do something. By saying "yes" we are not only being obedient to God, but we could also set in motion the ongoing work that God is doing in our lives. How can you be a handmaid through your commitments and not only serve God but be of service to others? How will you use your faith and trust in the Lord to respond "yes" to God?

Teagan McNamara, Wash U., Graduate Student Occupational Therapy, Class of 2021

FRIDAY, MARCH 26TH, 2021

ABSTINENCE FROM MEAT

Jer 20:10-13

Ps 18:2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7

Jn 10:31-42

Sometimes it feels like we are teetering on the balance beam of life. We are afraid to misstep and stumble. We fear other people's judgments if we are not perfect. In the First Reading, these feelings are perfectly depicted in the speaker's worry about their persecutors' whisperings and persecutions.

I particularly like the wording of "But the LORD is with me, like a mighty champion: my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph. In their failure they will be put to utter shame". Notice how the passage makes it clear that since *the LORD* is present, the persecutors will not succeed. It is not through *us alone* that our persecutors will fall, but through God's support. There is also an evident contrast in how each person of the passage experiences failure. Since the persecutor is not acting with compassion and love, their failure causes them to be put to utter shame. However – and this is important – if you live in a Christ-like manner and entrust your heart to God, when you experience failure, you should not suffer utter shame.

Falling short of our goals or letting people down is not fun, but it is a natural part of being human. Our challenge is how we react to that failure, how we treat others, and how we reach out to God. Let us reflect upon our actions and see where we can grow closer with our faith during this time of Lent.

Natasha Kuklis, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2023

SATURDAY, MARCH 27TH, 2021

Ez 37:21-28

Jer 31:10, 11-12abcd, 13

Jn 11:45-56

When we reflect on the events of the past year, it can be easy to feel an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and uncertainty. Even now, as vaccines are being distributed, the devastation of the pandemic continues to dominate the media, making us feel as though we will never truly regain a sense of normalcy in our lives. I think that is why today's first reading is so comforting:

"I shall set my sanctuary among them forever. I shall make my home above them; I shall be their God, and they will be my people"
Ezekiel 37:26-27

I remember hearing this reading last year when schools were just starting to shut down and case numbers were starting to spike. There is comfort in knowing that we are never truly alone, and, as we prepared to go into lockdown last year on March 27th, this was the message that needed to be shared. However, this year, it should serve as a reminder of the strength of the human spirit and the power of God's plan. Even when we feel most isolated, we should remember that God has set his sanctuary among us forever. Even when we feel as though life will never be the same again, we should remember that we are God's people-- called to trust him. Lord, help us to remain steadfast in our trust and find solace knowing that you want only the best for us. When life gets rough, guide us back to your loving embrace and remind us that your sanctuary is eternal.

Kristy Allen, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2024

SUNDAY, MARCH 28TH, 2021

PALM SUNDAY

Mk 11:1-10 (procession)

Is 50:4-7

Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24.

Phil 2:6-11

Mk 14:1- 15:47

Palm Sunday offers us a unique opportunity to pray twice! We have both the opening Gospel and the regularly timed Gospel to reflect on this week. As Jesus enters the city, they lay palm branches at the donkey's hooves. What are you laying down for Jesus this Holy Week? How are you preparing to encounter Jesus through the special times we will have together this week? Maybe you have set aside special time to pray. Maybe you have decided to fast one or two days. Or maybe it's something entirely different. Whatever it may be, know that Jesus sees you in that and wants to draw closer to you.

Moving into Jesus' time of the Passion, we see His Passover meal, His prayer in the Garden, and His death. That's a lot for one Gospel reading! However, we get to see Jesus in His prime, when He breaks the bread and institutes the first Mass. We get to see Jesus in His most intimate, in the prayer time with His Heavenly Father. We also get to see Jesus in His most triumphant, when He died for you and me. When are the moments when you're in your prime? Your most intimate? Your most triumphant? How can you invite Jesus into each of those moments? Pray with those and ask Jesus to show you how you can be more like Him within them.

Kelsey van Dyken, Intern

MONDAY, MARCH 29TH, 2021

Is 42:1-7

Ps 27:1, 2, 3, 13-14

Jn 12:1-11

In the gospel reading for today, we hear the story of Martha, Lazarus, and Mary welcoming Jesus and his disciples into their home. Mary, as a sign of great devotion and honor of her Lord, anoints his feet with expensive oil and wipes it with her own hair. For some context, the oil would be worth around \$20,000 in today's currency, which not surprisingly garners the judgement of the disciples, notably Judas Iscariot, who questions her motives. While Judas may see Mary's act of hospitality and generosity as a waste, this gospel challenges us to ask ourselves how much we would give to show our devotion to God. Mary's selfless act is her way of showing Jesus that He is worthy of all she is and all she has, humbling herself before Him in a selfless act of love. This gospel, through Mary's example, teaches us that selfless devotion to our Lord can be costly, whether that be in relinquishing our desire for material things, or giving up relationships or friendships which cause us to question God's worth in our lives, or even putting our reputations on the line to stand up for what we believe in. We are also challenged to recognize that truly selfless devotion stems from personal love and gratitude of the graces we receive from God, not in the expectation that we can earn His love in return, but that it is freely given to us. Lastly, Mary's boldness in choosing to anoint her Lord in front of the disciples is a call for us to turn our devotion into action.

What things do you give up for Christ? What do you sacrifice for your devotion to God?

Brianna Barkocy, Wash U., Graduate Student Occupational Therapy, Class of 2021

Tuesday, March 30th, 2021

Is 49:1-6

Ps 71:1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15 and 17

Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

This passage makes me reflect on my purpose in God's great plan. God speaks to us as polished arrows in his quiver, and reflects on us as greater than servants, but lights to lead nations. God thinks so very highly of us, and it is easy to shrink from the task set out before us and believe we are not capable of being lights to anyone.

The daunting nature of these great responsibilities is addressed, however, in this same reading. The Lord wants us to know that spending your strength trying to fulfill God's plan for you is all he asks - so long as you have done God's works to the best of your ability, the Lord believes you are glorious in his eyes.

As we go through life accomplishing and failing, the question of our purpose continues to strike my mind. No matter how much I accomplish, or how much I fail, I will always wonder if I am fulfilling the plan God had set out in mind. In this passage, I believe, God is telling us that so long as we keep Him in the forefront of our minds, and follow His direction, we are fulfilling the plan God has set out for us.

Jacob Hallady-Glynn, Wash U., Alumni, Business, Class of 2020

Wednesday, March 31st, 2021

Is 50:4-9a

Ps 69:8-10, 21-22, 31 and 33-34

Mt 26:14-25

There are two options for the verse we proclaim before the Gospel; both begin with the acclamation, "Hail to you, our King!" This may seem like a curious choice considering that Holy Week begins tomorrow and the Feast of Christ the King won't conclude the liturgical year until November. Yet, the theme of Christ's kingship recurs throughout Holy Week.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem with a king's welcome. In today's Gospel, Judas conspires with the chief priests to hand over his Lord and King. Tomorrow, he will betray this same Lord with a kiss, setting off a course of events that will end with Jesus crowned with thorns, scorned in a purple robe, and crucified beneath a sign labelling him the King of the Jews. In the midst of this mockery and betrayal, an unlikely believer, the 'good thief', will see Jesus with the eyes of faith and ask the Lord to remember him when Jesus comes into His kingdom.

After 2,000 years, we benefit from hindsight, assured of Christ's kingship, knowing that the Cross leads to Resurrection. And still, there are times we resemble Judas (in our fear, desperation, and selfishness) and times we resemble the good thief (in our faith, hope, and love). As we proclaim today, "Hail to you, our King!", we recommit to Him as believers. We ask God to enter our hearts with a king's welcome, and we prepare to journey with Him on His way to the cross.

Stephen Barany, Wash U., Graduate Student Sam Fox

Thursday, April 1st, 2021

Chrism Mass

Is 61:1-3a, 6a, 8b-9

Ps 89:21-22, 25 and 27

Rv 1:5-8

Lk 4:16-21

This Mass is celebrated once a year on the morning of Holy Thursday at the Cathedral in each diocese. During the Mass, the local bishop will bless the oil of catechumens, the oil of the sick, and the oil of chrism (only the bishop may do this blessing). We use the first for adult catechumens and infants, the second for anointing the sick, and the sacred oil of chrism for baptism, confirmation, the ordination of priests, and the consecration of altars. In recent years, this Mass has also acknowledged the ministry of priests. It invites them to renew their commitment of service and to receive the prayers and support of the people. The Chrism Mass will be celebrated at 10 am at the Cathedral Basilica on Holy Thursday here in St. Louis and all are welcome to attend this ancient tradition.

Thursday, April 1st, 2021
Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper
7:00pm @ CSC

Ex 12: 1-8, 11-14

Ps 116:12-13,15-16c, 17-18

1 Cor 11:23-26

Jn 13: 1-15

It can be hard to serve our fellow man. Sometimes they are like Judas, and we know that they do not have our interests in mind. Sometimes they can be like Peter and refuse your help and love. Or they can be like Peter and take your love too aggressively. Do you find yourself refusing people your love for the issues that they have with you? Are you hesitant to help offer your help to people who ask too much? Do you only love and support the people that fit within your idea of being deserving of love and service? Our job as Christians is to serve and love them all no matter how difficult they make it. We must live out our love for our fellow man no matter whether they make it hard or easy. Jesus sacrificed himself for us all, and we should seek to emulate his example. Consider today how you decide to help people and reflect on how you love your fellow people.

Kane Koubsky, Wash U., Business, Class of 2021

Friday, April 2nd, 2021
Good Friday Service 7:00pm @ CSC
Fasting and Abstinence

Is 52:13 – 53:12

Ps 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25

Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Jn 18:1 – 19:42

Why is Good Friday called “Good”? That was my big question when going through these readings. There is no immediate or obvious answer either. In these readings, Jesus is betrayed by Judas, denied three times by Simon Peter, held on trial, and ultimately crucified. How are any of these actions remotely good so as to mark the day as GOOD Friday?

Honestly, I really struggled with understanding this. I don’t know why I haven’t thought of these questions before, but, perhaps, I thought they were too obvious. But how can a question be so straightforward and, yet, have no straightforward answer? It wasn’t until I read the passages a couple more times that I began to understand what is meant by Good Friday. On my first reading, I was looking at it from the totally wrong perspective. I was looking at the events as an outside observer, rather than from Jesus’s view. Jesus knew everything that would happen; he had to die, so to save the rest of the world from our sins. Jesus paid the ultimate price out of love for us. This triumph of love over sin is ultimately what makes Good Friday good to me.

So, on this day of Jesus’s death, remember the bad, the ugly, and the struggles, so that we may come to appreciate and understand the good, the beautiful, and the triumphs. Because within those hard times, there is good and love, even though it might be hard to find at first.

Richie Hofstra, Wash U., Arts and Sciences, Class of 2022

Saturday, April 3rd, 2021

Holy Saturday Easter Vigil Mass, 7:30pm @ CSC

Gn 1:1 – 2:2 or 1:1, 26-31a, Responsorial: Ps 104:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12, 13-14, 24, 35

Gn 22:1-18 or 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18, Responsorial: Ps 16:5, 8-11

Ex 14:15 – 15:1, Responsorial: Ex 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18

Is 54:5-14, Responsorial: Ps 30: 2, 4-6, 11-13

Is 55:1-11, Responsorial: Is 12: 2-3, 4-6

Bar 3: 9-15, 32 – 4:4, Responsorial: Ps 19: 8-11

Ez 36:16-17a, 18-28, Responsorial: Ps 42:3, 5; 43:3-4

Rom 6: 3-11, Responsorial: Ps 118: 1-2, 16-17, 22-23

Mk 16:1-7

How often do we skip over Holy Saturday? We sorrowfully reflect on the passion and death of Christ on Good Friday, and we rejoice in his Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

But where does that leave us on Holy Saturday?

Holy Saturday is uncomfortable. It's the liminal, or in-between space. Theologian Dr. Shelly Rambo, in her book *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, argues that as Christians, we must take a deeper look at Holy Saturday when we think about human suffering. If Jesus died a brutal, human death on Friday, then he lay dead on Saturday. Not the trauma itself, but the aftermath, while the wound is still fresh, but before the redemption occurs.

How many of us are in that between space? That space after a difficult loss or setback occurs, before the redemption of healing.

Christianity does not promise us a life without suffering- Jesus himself suffered immensely. The Church doesn't teach that God causes our suffering, but it does teach that Jesus, who experienced real, human pain, stands with us in the depths of our sorrow, even when it seems like no one else can understand or empathize with what we're going through.

Today, if you find yourself spiritually in the "Holy Saturday" space, know that Jesus has been there, and is with you always.

Julia Murphy, Intern

Sunday, April 4th, 2021

Easter Sunday, 9:30am & 11:30am @ CSC

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Col 3:1-4 / I Cor 5:6b-8

Jn 20:1-9 / Mk 16:1-7 / Lk 24:13-35

When I was a kid, Easter didn't mean much; sure, my parents would take me to Mass, but I was more in it for the candy in my basket and the egg hunts that inevitably led to more candy. Even now that I am in college, I don't know that I know the meaning behind Easter; I know it is the day Jesus rose from the dead. But what does that mean beyond the awe-inspiring truth that He died for our sins so that we may truly live? This passage has one phrase that particularly stands out to me: "He commissioned us to preach to the people." So that is what Easter is about – spreading His name; such a simple testament that holds so much power. It always seems like as Catholics, we have this massive responsibility, but it boils down to spreading His name. Sounds easier than it actually is, but it makes sense that is what Easter means – another point to proclaim our mission as Catholics.

Audrey Ulfers, Wash U., Class of 2022

*The
Catholic Student Union
would like to wish
you a very
Blessed Easter Season!*