



RETURN TO ME
Lenten Reflections
from Holy Cross | 2017

LENT

invites us
to be open
to the

GRACES

of

SPRING

“In like a lion and out like a lamb” is a bit of folksy wisdom we here in New England traditionally apply to the weather around us. When the month of March begins, we typically remain gripped by the harsh threats of winter. But by the time March ends, we have usually welcomed at least hints of the impending graces of spring.

This year, the Church’s Lenten journey begins alongside the progressing month of March. Might this folksy weather wisdom apply not only to our temporal journey but also to our spiritual one? In its own way, Lent invites us to let go of the grip of those things that chill and freeze our relationships with God and one another while inviting us to those that give them warmth. Lent invites us to be open to the graces of spring.

It is our hope that this resource, *Return to Me: Lenten Reflections from Holy Cross, 2017*, will assist you on your journey.

Within these pages you will read the unique voices of many people from within the Holy Cross community: faculty, staff, students, alumni, administrators, members of the Board of Trustees, benefactors of the College and Jesuits. Each contributor reflects on the readings prescribed for the Mass of a given day, and while we hope that their own prayerful reflections help you to pray, we hope, too, that the reflections contained herein might also help serve for you as a bridge to the College where faith is nourished and character is formed.

Preparing this Lenten reflection booklet and its accompanying digital format involves many members of our community: writers, editors, photographers, graphic designers, printers and website administrators. To each of these people—too many to name here—we offer our profound thanks.

To subscribe to daily emails from *Return To Me* throughout Lent, please visit our website: **<http://www.holycross.edu/returntome>**

Be assured of our prayers during the season as we journey to Easter.

Rev. William R. Campbell, S.J. '87
Vice President for Mission

Ms. Mary Cunningham '17
Return to Me intern





MARCH 1 | ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2:12-18; Ps 51; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; Matt 6:1-6, 16-18

The prophet Joel writes: “*Even now says the Lord, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, weeping and mourning.*” Forty years ago, I spent a summer studying in Peru. One day, I visited the three historic churches on the Plaza de Armas in Cusco. In one of them, behind the main altar, I came across a life-sized tableau of the Crucifixion: Jesus hanging on the cross flanked by statues of Mary and John. In front of the statue of Mary stood a humbly dressed woman pouring out her soul to Our Lady with abundant tears. Twice in the minute or less that I was there, I saw her turn toward Jesus and shake her clenched fist at him. Although I couldn’t understand her dialect, I quietly withdrew not wanting to intrude.

As I left the church, my emotions quickly moved from surprise to mild shock and then to admiration. In her grief, this woman seemed to be sharing her fears, her worries and her deep suffering with Mary, while at the same time venting her frustration, disappointment and anger at Jesus. I left that church feeling graced by her freedom and trust that Jesus could bear her suffering *and* her anger — the burdens of her whole heart. As our “turning” begins this Lent, let us entrust our whole hearts to the Lord, believing that Jesus will hear with compassion our burdens, our frustrations and even our anger. Then, let us wait silently to hear what He has to say to us in response.

Rev. Philip L. Boroughs, S.J.

President

MARCH 2 | THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Deut 30:15-20; Ps 1; Luke 9:22-25

Jesus poses an important question to his followers: “*What profit is there to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself?*” For me, the answer seems easier said than done. As members of the Holy Cross, Worcester, United States, and global communities, we must take up our individual crosses and follow Christ.

For some of my classmates, this might mean taking on bold tasks like post-graduate volunteering or a fellowship. But for me, it starts with the littlest of things. Too often I get caught up in the minutiae of student life — I am accustomed to saying “Oh, if I spend 30 more minutes on exam prep, I’ll ace it and end up with an A- in the class that will lead to the dream job” or “No, sorry Mom, I can’t call, I’ve got mounds of work to do.”

Christ challenges me today to take a step back to reflect on greater experiences outside of the minutiae I so often bury myself in: How have I found God today? How have I proactively lived out the commandments? How have I been a person with and for others? Building the Kingdom of God does demand hard work, but I am called to break out of the ordinary and truly discern what it means to be a follower of Christ and take up my own personal cross.

Mark “Max” Lies ‘17





MARCH 3 | FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Isa 58:1-9a; Ps 51; Matt 9:14-14

My dad gave up drinking for Lent each year. I grew up thinking that everybody called soda water with lime a “Lenten Special.” But when he got older, he retired the gesture. A cocktail of meds for gout and cholesterol and mood stabilizers in the fight against dementia filled his cup instead.

My dad made his mark on his world through generosity. He fed us, clothed us and carried us when we least deserved it. He fed the stranger and greeted both liars and cheaters with kindness. He knew that this love giving shape to his life, and all of the misfits within it, was born of Jesus.

But his greatest love was for my mother. He loved her whole-heartedly. And her love for him in return humbled him. At my mother’s wake, the line parted to allow the Cardinal to walk directly to my dad. With his staff in one hand and his other hand gripping my dad’s shoulder, he turned so that they both faced my mum. He bent close to my dad and whispered: “She was a beautiful woman, Jac. A beautiful person.” My dad bowed his head. The Cardinal’s hat tipped a little closer as he added playfully: “How did she end up with you?” The crowd saw only shoulders rise and fall, an armed embrace. But I saw their faces, and they were laughing through the tears.

Can wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them?

Elizabeth Alvarez (Dunn) '98

MARCH 4 | SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Isa 58:9b-14; Ps 86; Luke 5:27-32

Our days are filled with the choices we make. Many of these choices are inconsequential and trivial and we make them with little thought or consideration. This can lead us to a habit of applying this approach to all the choices we make. But after each day, we should ask if the culmination of the choices we have made have led us to walk in the truth that is Jesus Christ.

The Pharisees questioned Jesus' choice to eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners. We find out that Jesus made this choice deliberately to save those that most needed saving. We need to ask if we choose to spend too much time with those who think and act as we do, and, therefore we have little understanding and/or empathy for those who do not.

The first reading asks us to make the choice to remove oppression, false accusation and malicious speech from our midst. It asks us to choose to bestow our bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted. It asks us to choose to honor the Sabbath by not being selfish and by not only seeking our own interests. These are demanding choices that are easy to avoid or neglect. For us to walk in Christ's truth, we need to be fully cognizant of each choice we make and of its consequences. The freedom to choose to live that way or not is God's greatest gift to us.

Frank Vellaccio

Senior Vice President





MARCH 5 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Gen 2:7-9, 3:1-7; Ps 51; Rom 5:12-19; Matt 4:1-11

As I read the scripture for today, my mind wandered in several different directions. In the reading from Genesis, we are reminded that we are God's creation — quite a large concept! In our contemporary society, many confess to a general feeling of separation, focusing, sadly, on our differences instead of on what we share in common. These verses from Genesis bring me to a place of solidarity and common ground: what we have is that we were all created by God, and our human qualities are what can bring us together. Our fragile state in this world is what connects us all, and connects us to this beautiful earth that God has created for us to live in and enjoy.

As I go through my day, I will challenge myself through my actions and thoughts to move in the direction of humility and gratitude. Can I appreciate and respect the natural beauty of our earth and each individual person? We all exist under the light of God's love for us and, yes, we are all sinners. That, too, is part of our human story, and admitting it is surely plenty for one day's prayerful reflection.

Lindsay Jackson

Head Coach, Field Hockey

MARCH 6 | MONDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Lev 19: 1-2, 11-18; Ps 19; Matt 25: 31-46

Many in and outside the Catholic Church perceive the Church as having too many rules, or that belonging to the Church can be reduced simply to meeting a moral checklist. The words of today's Psalm, however, tell us what is really at the core of our faith: "*Your Words are Spirit and Life.*" God's words, the words of God the Father, are the true foundation for the way we live. In other words, the moral decrees of the Church are not arbitrary; they have their roots in the very Word of God. By listening to and abiding by this Word of God, found most fully in Jesus Christ, we are saved.

Mercy finds a home in this Word. In fact, Jesus challenges us to what our tradition calls the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. If we are "hearers" of the Word, we must also be "doers" of the Word. Therefore, the Gospel reading today is one we want to remember always: "*For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.*" This First Week of Lent gives us an opportunity to acknowledge with renewed hearts that "*Your Words are Spirit and Life*" and to spread this divine love by joyfully following it in our own lives.

Brooke Tranten '17





MARCH 7 | TUESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Is 55:10-11; Ps 34; Matt 6:7-16

Ah, the madness of March! From the often-wearisome weather to the unpredictability of college basketball, our plans and hopes at times disintegrate before our eyes. How are we to stay on course with our constant academic and social duties in the midst of such tumult?

Isaiah and Matthew present us with useful guidance for navigating our too often turbulent lives. First, Isaiah reminds us that the storms of March, both literally and figuratively, are part of God's plan for us, and that God's plan will come to fruition. Matthew follows with advice from Jesus for living lives in sync with God's plan. First, set aside those plans and duties and recognize that God knows our needs better than we do. Hence, rather than recite a litany of our hardships, we are better served by placing ourselves, and our lives and loved ones, in God's hands. In God's embrace, we ask only to receive what God knows we need most — including, always, forgiveness, especially for our reticence to forgive others.

Jesus weaves his advice into a prayer we can say everyday: the Lord's Prayer. Praying this simple prayer regularly provides us with the stability and insight we seek — coming to know where and how Jesus is for us in the seeming chaos of our lives, and becoming more like Jesus in our ability to forgive as He forgives us.

If we follow this advice from Jesus, who knows, even the snowy mountains of Worcester winter may seem as mere mole hills in the Spring of the Resurrection!

Rev. Kevin FitzGerald, S.J.

Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 8 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

Jonah 3:1-10; Ps 51; Luke 11:29-32

Growing up, I was never able to make a major decision until I saw a sign that it was the “right” thing to do. These perceived signs ranged from finding a lucky penny on the street to hearing my favorite song come on the radio the moment I got in the car. I figured that it was in these coincidences that God was communicating with me. Have you ever looked for a sign only to be disappointed when one didn’t come?

In today’s passage from Luke’s Gospel, Jesus rebukes the members of the crowd who demand signs because they are not satisfied by His presence alone. In response, Jesus hearkens back to the Book of Jonah proclaiming: “*This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah.*” There’s a commonality between the signs that the members of the crowd were seeking and those I used to look for — they’re all external and self-serving. How often might we disregard the signs that are internal? The Holy Spirit works in and through us, yet we may be too absorbed by what is happening around us that we fail to notice what is happening within ourselves.

This Lent, let us turn away from our search for passing signs and instead take heart in the greatest, most transcendent sign of all — the Resurrection.

Courtney Esteves '19





MARCH 9 | THURSDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Esth C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Ps 138; Matt 7:7-12

In Matthew's Gospel, we are given the Golden Rule: "*Do to others whatever you would have them do to you.*" We all know this well, and in its most basic form we can apply the Golden Rule to many actions that we do every day: holding a door for someone, saying "please" and "thank you," being courteous to other drivers on the road, etc. But taking the Golden Rule a step further, it may do us all well to apply it to our expectations of others.

Daily, we encounter multiple views and opinions on a variety of social and political topics. Often, these views can run counter to our own. When this happens, our automatic reaction is generally to defend ourselves mixed with a desire to prove what is contradictory wrong. However, if our expectation of others is to listen to what we believe is right, we also need to take a step back and listen to what it is that others may believe is right.

By taking this step back and considering the other side, we maintain an open mind, which is the first step to productive dialogue. If our expectation is for others to have an open mind about our own views, then it will be beneficial for all if we are to apply the Golden Rule and consider the views of others.

How might I maintain an open mind to inspire productive dialogue today?

Bryan DiMare '06

President, Holy Cross Alumni Association

MARCH 10 | FRIDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Ezek 18:21-28; Ps 130; Matt 5:20-26

“Always make new mistakes.” - Esther Dyson

This quote reminds me of a thoughtful leader I had early in my career, who encouraged curiosity. She understood that in order to tap one’s fullest potential, curiosity and a willingness to wrestle with ideas needed to be encouraged. The “knowing” needed to be internalized. Only then, once the concept had been fully grasped, could the next step towards growth be fully realized through informed risk taking, which might result in making “new mistakes.”

During Lent, we are reminded that being a disciple of Christ is not transactional. It is not a matter of memorizing and mechanically following codes of behavior, as the scribes and Pharisees did. Instead, we are asked to open our hearts and our minds, to engage with our faith, to ask ourselves and God the hard questions. We are asked to take an active role in the formation of our faith so that we might more fully grasp what it means to be a follower of Christ. Only then can we grow in our faith, allowing our hearts, minds and actions to become more fully integrated. In this way, we are able to make for ourselves “*a new heart and a new spirit.*” The beauty of this invitation from God is that we are promised grace and redemption for the journey, allowing us to be vulnerable before God, explore our shortcomings and seek new ways to live more fully in faith. It seems to me that God welcomes new mistakes as an indication that we are engaged in our faith journey and are open to growth and to change.

Kerri Saucier

Director of Campaign Management and Advancement Operations, Office of Advancement





MARCH 11 | SATURDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Deut 26:16-19; Ps 119; Matt 5:43-48

“*So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” How can we make sense of Jesus’ words to his disciples at the end of today’s Gospel? Isn’t this asking a little too much of us? Moses speaks to the Israelites in the first reading about the agreement God makes with them and with us, their descendants in faith. If we understand perfection as a resulting mission, a contractual demand of us from God, we sinners can feel hopelessly unworthy. My struggle to maintain my Lenten commitments, let alone my struggle to love my enemies, shows how far I stand from perfection.

But our relationship with God is so much more than a contract: it is imbued with a love stronger than we can imagine. God is deeply in love with you, deeply in love with me and deeply in love with his creation, and He wants nothing more than for us to be with him for eternity. Jesus’ “*be perfect*” is not a command but a call. In today’s Gospel, Jesus invites us home to live in communion with God, where we cannot help but be made perfect. But with such a great (and permanent) invitation, saying “yes” must be a daily effort. By loving our enemies and observing the law of the Lord, we make this reaffirmation to God: not that we are perfect like Him, but that we look forward to the day His eternal love can make us so.

Dan Apadula '17

MARCH 12 | SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gen 12:1-4a; Ps 33; 2 Tim 1:8b-10; Matt 17:1-9

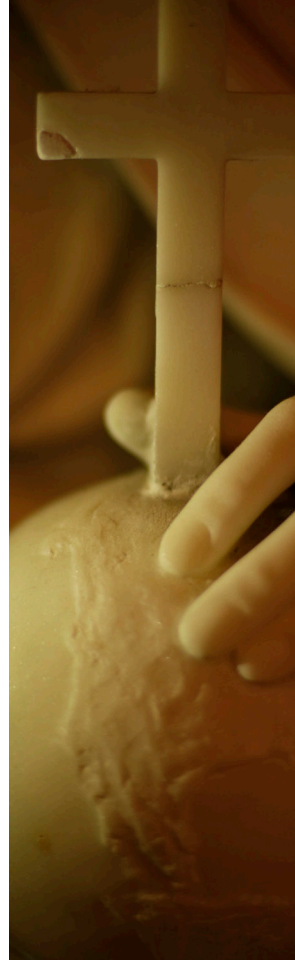
After Abram's father died, God instructed Abram: "*Leave your own country behind you, and your own people, and go to the land I will guide you to.*" And so began his journey, based in pure faith. At 75 years of age, Abram packed his family, gathered his friends, and left his home and all that had been familiar to him because he *believed* in God's promise.

While I see myself as a person of faith and I often turn to Him in gratitude, I do not always think to go to Him when help or clarity is needed. When faced with a challenge, I first examine what I can do, how I can affect change, and what I think the next best step would be. It's taken me a lifetime to trust what can happen when I remember to take the first step with Him.

Not long ago, I took a blind leap of faith, heading down whatever path He laid out for me, and suddenly I found myself leaving my home, my job and my friends to start over somewhere new. But as I let go and *believed* that He would lead me to the right path, doors immediately opened and blessings came into my life that I couldn't have imagined. And I was amazed again, and incredibly grateful, for His grace, His steadfast love and His infinite wisdom.

Kristi M. Jongeling

Director of Donor Relations, Office of Advancement





MARCH 13 | MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Dan 9:4b-10; Ps 79; Luke 6:36-38

In today's high speed world of demanding jobs, overwhelming information dumps and non-stop social media contacts, it is easy to forget the few basic actions that God expects of us: thanking Him for His many blessings, asking for His forgiveness, and praying that He will help us and our loved ones. Daniel, the young Jewish leader taken captive to Babylonia, did exactly that, and survived through God's favor and his own wise instincts.

Today's Gospel also invites us not to forget a few basic actions that God expects of us. Jesus says to those around him: "*Stop judging and you will not be judged, stop condemning and you will not be condemned, forgive and you will be forgiven.*" Given today's national political climate, perhaps we would all do well to recall these commands of Jesus. If we disagree with friends and family, let us do so with respect, and without personal judgments or condemnation. More importantly, as we approach the Passion of Good Friday, let us reflect on the small gestures of good we can do, even for those with whom we disagree: make a phone call to a distant relative, send an e-mail to a long lost friend, show a kindness to someone in the community. In this way, we can serve Jesus, others and ourselves.

John P Switzer '62

Director, Holy Cross Alumni Association and Holy Cross Club of Cape Cod

MARCH 14 | TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Isa 1:10, 16-20; Ps 50; Matt 23:1-12

Jesus condemns those who preach but do not practice and who do things for recognition and praise. Today, we live in a world dominated by social media, a phenomenon that, much like the Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day, requires — demands even — attention from others in the form of likes, retweets, comments, and followers. I have a love-hate relationship with social media. I love that it allows me to connect with old friends and new acquaintances, sharing stories with them. But I hate how I feel compelled to tell “my” world all of the places I’ve traveled, all the races I’ve run, all the friends I have. I hate wondering if these things really happened when I don’t post about them.

Jesus says of the scribes and Pharisees: “*All their works are performed to be seen.... They love places of honor at banquets [and] seats of honor in synagogues...*” And then he urges his actual, real-life followers to avoid these practices. He asks them to remember that God already knows what they’re doing and how they’re acting. There is no need to tout their accomplishments or brag about their honors.

Is today’s Gospel calling me to a deeper humility in my life? Perhaps God is calling me to make more room for Him and less room for Facebook posts and tweets. Perhaps the next time I have an urge to share a perfect photo or an incredible feat, I will recall these words, “*Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*”

Mary Beth Cashman '05

Director, Teacher Education Program





MARCH 15 | WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Jer 18:18-20; Ps 31; Matt 20:17-28

If you wish to be great, then serve others. It is a powerful and simple message. The world all around us says we should strive to be the best we can be and reach greatness. Greatness takes many forms in our culture — money, fame, status, professional achievements, etc. But we rarely see service as reaching the same level.

And yet we see in today's scripture, Jesus proclaims service is the greatest calling: *"Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave..."* In a time when Jesus knows danger awaits him in Jerusalem, he is not concerned with his own trials and tribulations. Instead, he offers a clear message to his followers — serve and help others: *"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."*

When obstacles are present on my life, do I think of others or do I think of myself? Do I remember to serve others in challenging times? It is easy for me to be selfish with my own trials and tribulations, but to be a follower of Jesus means to think outside my own world. It is a powerful reminder in my daily life. No matter the challenges and obstacles ahead, I am called to keep service at the center of my journey.

Joseph Kennedy

Assistant Coach, Men's Basketball

MARCH 16 | THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Jer 17:5-10; Ps 1; Luke 16:19-31

Today's readings offer rather stark imagery of life and death, the wicked and the just, suffering and prosperity. The message is quite simple: the one who trusts in the Lord will have the fullness of life, while the one who turns away from the Lord will be condemned to suffering: "*Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord.*"

The message of the first reading could not be any clearer — the Lord rewards the faithful. This theme carries through to the Gospel story of the rich man and Lazarus: the one who puts his faith and trust in the Lord is received into Heaven.

Beyond this primary message of faithfulness and trust, what else can we learn from the story of the rich man and Lazarus? Jesus talks frequently about loving one's neighbor and caring for the poor — ideals that the rich man ignored. In my life, do I act more like the rich man or more like Lazarus? If I act like the rich man, who are the Lazarus' that I ignore? Lazarus could be a friend, a family member, a co-worker, a homeless person, a refugee, or an addict. Lazarus is ever-present in our world today. In this season of Lent, may I reach out to and pray for those on the margins, those quietly suffering nearby me.

Jack Green '16





MARCH 17 | FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Gen 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Ps 105; Matt 21:33-43, 45-46

Lent is a time of spiritual growth. Our lives are busy, often overwhelmingly. It can be challenging to rise above the distractions of our routines to focus on God's ultimate loving sacrifice. During Lent, reminders of God's generosity call us to reflect on how we can strengthen our relationships with Him and each other.

The parable found in today's Gospel illustrates God's trust, patience, and generosity: in it, a landlord creates a vineyard, but the tenants repeatedly take advantage of his goodwill. In our relationship with God, we are endowed with free will and are imperfect tenants, yet He is constantly forgiving and calling on us to be our best.

God has called on us to be stewards of His vineyard. He has given us abundant resources and talents to help us succeed, yet with the temptations of everyday life it is easy to lose focus. This season I call on myself to reflect and be inspired by His word, asking: Am I using the gifts I have been given in service of others? Am I aware of and open to the inspiration of the world around me? Am I laboring for the Lord with joyful hope and confidence of His victory?

Dorothy Hauver

Vice President for Administration and Finance/Treasurer

MARCH 18 | SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Mic 7:14-15, 18-20; Ps 103; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

During a particularly troubling time in my spiritual life, I found myself sitting in the confessional before the Lord and confessing, yet again, to the same sin that continually drew me away from Him. There, I brought my failures before the Lord and was blessed with the best confession I had ever experienced.

Admittedly, the thought of entering the confessional sometimes fills me with anxiety; it demands humility of self, the facing of one's actions and the recognition that the person that I am striving to be has not yet been fully realized. Making an honest confession requires that we recognize that our failures hurt not only ourselves but also our relationship with God and with those around us. It also requires that we forgive ourselves as we embrace the compassionate forgiveness of God.

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells a familiar parable sometimes known as the Prodigal Father. I like to think that this is how Jesus actually knew God the Father — as one who unconditionally loves and forgives. Today's Gospel shows that our God is loving, continually welcoming all of us home. He calls us all to enter back into a relationship with Him, and He eagerly awaits our return. When we decide to come back, He runs out to the gates and excitedly meets us with joyful celebration. Are we willing to meet Him there?

Brian SanGiacomo '18





MARCH 19 | THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Exod 17:3-7; Ps 95; Rom 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42

“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst.”

I can easily imagine that I am the Samaritan woman. I can feel the heat of the day as I go about my daily chores and meet the weary traveler at Jacob’s well. He is a stranger, and I recognize that he is of a different religion and region. He has no vessel to retrieve water, so he asks me for a drink. As I offer the drink, he engages me in conversation. I want to go about my day. I’ve done my good deed of the day, but the stranger reveals that he knows who I am, and that he knows of my sins. Despite all of my failings, he promises me that I can have eternal life.

How do I respond to this invitation? Do I fully accept Jesus? Will I return to my people and herald his coming as the Samaritan woman does? Am I merely in awe of his knowledge, or is my heart truly open to his love?

I am reminded in this Lenten season that I am a sinner, and that despite my failings, Jesus meets me where I am. I know that I am, and have always been, loved. This love is the only thing that can quench my thirst. How will I share this gift of forgiveness and love?

Paul Irish

Associate Dean of Students, Division of Student Affairs

MARCH 20 | SOLEMNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH, HUSBAND OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY *(Patron Saint of the Society of Jesus)*

2 Sam 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Ps 89; Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22; Matt 1:16, 18-21, 24a

While these readings help me to understand how the prophecy of David is realized through the birth of Christ, I find myself thinking more about contingencies of love expressed in the Gospel — the fate of Mary’s life and the endurance of patriarchy. We are aware from this passage that her life (and Jesus’) hangs in the balance with Joseph’s decision. Will he divorce her? Will she suffer “shame” and perhaps be stoned to death? While we know from elsewhere that Mary may feel “exalted” to bear God’s son, we also know that she needs protection.

The story of Jesus’ birth brings us intimately in touch with the vulnerability of women in our own time when violence against women is still far too common and where the use of crude words and idioms testify to the durable hold of sexism.

With Joseph’s model, we learn how to lead by doing what is right. Joseph is not rash — he loves Mary. Even before the Angel’s visitation, he is “*unwilling to expose her to shame.*” He is courageous and faithful, willing to buck social conventions and the Mosaic law to defend his faith and his love for Mary. And as we know from other stories, Joseph daily acts out his love for Jesus, Mary and God, as father, husband and servant. What I learn from Joseph is that to do what is right is risky and requires persistence. To do what is right is never tested once. To do what is right is something that we have to practice daily with love and faith.

Mary Conley

Associate Professor and Chair, Department of History





MARCH 21 | TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Dn 3:25, 34-43; Ps 25; Matt 18:21-35

“We have in our day no prince, prophet, or leader, no burnt offering, sacrifice, oblation, or incense, no place to offer first fruits, to find favor with you. But with contrite heart and humble spirit let us be received.”

The feeling of not having anything to offer is a humbling one. When I look at my parents, who consistently give above and beyond the call for me, my goals, and my future, it is the same feeling I get. The feeling of wanting to do more to favor those who have blessed and sustained you yet not being able to. I’m a college senior in debt with no job (currently) who can only give my *“contrite heart and humble spirit”* to my family for all that they’ve done for me. And yet, they always graciously accept my gratitude and continue to help me because they, in all senses of the word, love me. It is the same with God and his everlasting love for us.

In some way, shape or form, I’m sure every one of us has felt something similar in their own lives to the sentiments expressed in Azariah’s prayer. There’s an Azariah in all of us.

Ameer Philips '17

MARCH 22 | WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Deut 4:1, 5-9; Ps 147; Matt 5:17-19

“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.”

As a father and as a teacher, I hear this passage as a call to action. It is my responsibility in my home and in my classroom to disseminate what my parents and mentors have passed down. There are hard won lessons, and knowledge that needs to be shared, or it is lost.

One of the challenges in life is trying to figure out how exactly to teach others what you have learned. Some lessons are effectively taught simply by sharing them. For others, it is important to let a child or student have the opportunity to try on their own, and potentially fail. When I think deeply about this passage, I also realize that not everything I have seen or learned should actually be passed down. As a professor at a Jesuit college, I work with students who are in a period in their life where there is often tremendous growth. I love watching them mature over four years as they are exposed to a wide variety of new ideas and lessons. Discerning the best approach is not always easy, and I find Lent is a good time to slow down and make more room in my life for quiet contemplation of just what exactly I am hoping to teach my children and my students.

Joshua Farrell

Thomas E. D'Ambra Associate Professor of Chemistry





MARCH 23 | THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Jer 7:23-28; Ps 95; Joel 2:12-13; Luke 11:14-23

“Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, for I am gracious and merciful.”

I always find the season of Lent difficult to engage with fully. As a kid it was easy; what were you going to “sacrifice” — candy or soda? The challenge of sacrifice made the period of waiting pass more quickly, with the added reward of indulgence at the end. As an adult, it is the waiting itself that has become the sacrifice, an intentional acknowledgement of Lent as a period in which to slow down, and be more attentive.

The readings today remind us that God is always trying to speak to us, if only we would listen. In Jeremiah, it was a warning of what may befall us if we ignore His voice for too long, while Luke’s gospel draws a clear line in the sand — you are with me or against me. But in this group of readings, it is the Gospel acclamation from Joel that holds the most weight for me. In this Lenten period, this invitation to return each day and listen anew, regardless of success or failure the previous day, makes it a commitment worth practicing.

Bridget Campolettano (Cass) '10

Manager of Integrated Marketing, College Marketing and Communications

MARCH 24 | FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Hos 14:2-10; Ps 81; Mark 12:28-34

The prophet Hosea speaks for God — inviting all of Israel to return to Him and to ask for His forgiveness since Assyria will not be able to save them. He ensures them that He will “*heal their defection...will love them freely; for my wrath is turned away from them.*” Today’s “invitation” reminds us once again of the fact that God has been and always will be there for us during times of triumph, but also during times of tribulation — even when we are on the verge of doubting Him.

Whenever I find myself celebrating a certain accomplishment, I always turn to God and thank Him for helping me to succeed. Sometimes turning to God is difficult to do when things aren’t necessarily going in the right direction, because I’m constantly questioning why I’ve been put in those situations. However, I always remind myself that I will prevail if I continue to lean into the same faith, that things will get better. This is the same message that God reminded the people of Israel, and it is the same message that He reminds us all: “*straight are the paths of the Lord*” and “*in them the just walk, but sinners stumble in them.*” It is important that we all remember to remain on this path and trust in the Lord, even during times when we are in pain. Only He can save us.

Adrian Cacho '19





MARCH 25 | SOLEMNITY OF THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE LORD

Isa 7:10-14; 8:10; Ps 40; Heb 10:4-10; Lk 1:26-38

Today's Gospel reveals to us the power of faith and the limitless possibilities of utilizing that faith in a world in which the Lord is present. The promise of extraordinary results can only be enhanced by placing trust in a power which is intangible yet produces tangible outcomes. It is that dichotomy, a belief in the word of the Lord coupled with a humanly personal result, which is at the center of the Gospel reading.

The simple phrase, "*How can this be,*" evokes the unknowing, the questioning and the uncertain Mary. By the end of the Gospel we see the faith-centered, knowing Mary: "*May it be done to me according to your word.*" The will of the Lord is accomplished through the faith of the Lord's servant, Mary — in believing there are endless possibilities.

This is the ultimate demonstration of faith, the faith of unlimited potential. It provides a road map for what may be accomplished by possessing faith and making it an inherent part of our daily lives.

Michael C. Trimboli '72

MARCH 26 | SUNDAY FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT (LAETERE SUNDAY)

1 Sam 16:1b, 6-7, 10-31a; Ps 23; Eph 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

“Don’t ask us. Ask him!”

The parents of a man who had been born blind were frightened when the authorities asked them to explain how their son’s eyes had been opened. It was the Sabbath when no work was to be done. If they acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, then they could be expelled from the synagogue. So, they ducked the question, saying their son was old enough to answer for himself: *“Ask him!”*

The son, however, was courageous. Presumably, he faced the same consequences for disobeying authority as his parents. Yet, when twice questioned by the same authorities, he spoke the truth of his experience in plain language. Jesus had made clay, anointed his eyes, and then instructed him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. And he could see. The man refused to be baited into a debate about whether Jesus had sinned in breaking the Sabbath and later worshipped Jesus, saying: *“I do believe, Lord.”* Perhaps his awe of and gratitude for the miracle of sight gave him courage.

This makes me wonder: from where do I draw courage? How often do I, like the parents in this story, deflect difficult questions or feel relieved when I can let someone else navigate a challenging situation? For what am I so grateful that I would speak the truth of it even if it meant disobeying authority?

Christina Bi Chen

Director of Academic Services and Learning Resources and International Student Advisor





MARCH 27 | MONDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Isa 65:17-21; Ps 30; John 4:43-54

I recall a “Faith and Reason” philosophy course I took. At the final exam, the Jesuit professor asked: “How do we remain faithful when so many terrible things happen in the world?”

We are daily challenged by what we see in the world. It’s easy to get discouraged when we hear dreadful news of our sisters and brothers suffering in this world. How do we remain faithful with the seeming lack of positive signs? How do we come together as women and men for others to heal our world?

“At nightfall, weeping enters in, but with the dawn, rejoicing... You changed my mourning into dancing; O Lord, my God, forever will I give you thanks.” These words remind me of a dark time during my spiritual journey. Thirteen years ago, a dear friend passed away. The loss of a friend, especially at a young age, is never easy, and my ability to process his death challenged my faith. After much personal exploration, I recognized the need to pay attention to the opportunities, both great and small, to be present in all my relationships and interactions. I learned to move from regret and despair to being present and welcoming of His Spirit into my life more readily.

I honor my friend’s memory by not regretting what could have been but by cherishing what was. By remaining faithful during even the lowest moments of our lives, we can be overwhelmingly hopeful in God’s purpose. For God creates *“Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight... They shall live in the houses they build, and eat the fruit for the vineyards they plant.”*

Francine Rosado-Cruz '94

Member, Board of Trustees

MARCH 28 | TUESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Ezek 47:1-9, 12; Ps 46; John 5:1-16

Today's readings sum up how my own life seems at times. I have had ups and downs and feel like I have been on a roller coaster ride. Reflecting on all of the obstacles before me, I trek onward striving to follow the path of God, aware, as the psalmist prays, that, "*God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in distress. Therefore, we fear not...*"

I believe that all happens for a reason and that there is much more to be done. Belief and prayer have gotten me through a lot of times, and I know they will continue to play a big role in my life moving forward. All of the outside interferences and distractions cannot obscure my faith, and I remain grateful for it. Sharing, giving thanks and looking toward the new day are some of the practices of my everyday life. Wherever there is darkness, I try to bring light. Wherever there is hopelessness, I try to bring hope. Wherever there is sadness, I try to bring joy.

I try to reflect on how much more I could do and not what I have left undone, how I can help others to pick up their mat and walk. It pleases me to see someone happier and more content than me. Since I do not know what someone else is carrying as a burden, I try not to judge anyone. Instead, I dedicate my life to helping others and enriching the lives of those around me. This is a Lenten challenge for all of us.

Philippe Telemaque

Interlibrary Loan Assistant





MARCH 29 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Isa 49:8-15; Ps 145; John 5:17-30

“The doctor says I’m very healthy for my age. Well, except for the cancer, of course.”

This was one of Dad’s favorite jokes after his diagnosis. Less than two years after losing Mom to the same disease, we didn’t think it was very funny. I’m sure he didn’t either. But Dad feigned a brave good humor for our sake, and we laughed along for his.

Sometimes, the known is worse than the unknown. This time we knew what to fear. We knew about clinical trials (not eligible), wonder drugs (not a candidate), and hospice (not yet). Faced with so much knowing, Dad did a remarkable thing. He rented a home in the Outer Banks and planned a family vacation.

All twenty-seven of us went. When Dad was not feeling well, he would stay in his room with the windows open looking at the ocean and listening to games and laughter by the pool. When well, he would play his ukulele and sing. The trip was joyful, stressful, and deeply moving.

We returned home on a Friday. Dad died early that Sunday morning — a few hours after receiving Last Rites. Dad’s final gift to us was not the vacation but its lesson. By bringing us together in joy and sorrow one last time, Dad was teaching us how to die. Today’s Gospel makes me think of Dad, and of this lesson: “*For the Father loves the Son and shows him everything that he himself does, and he will show him greater works than these, so that you may be amazed.*”

Kathleen Moylan (Mahoney) '87, in memory of Edward L. Mahoney '62

MARCH 30 | THURSDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Exod 32: 7-14; Ps 106; John 5:31-47

“Returning to God” is another way of expressing the commitment to “conversion”—something all of us are constantly, repeatedly called to do by the Scriptures. As the Gospels and Pope Francis remind us, we are all sinners and as such are the daily recipients of the grace inviting us to return to God.

Like the Hebrews in the reading from the Book of Exodus, we often are guilty of kneeling before the idols of our own making. For them the golden calf was a symbol of life and strength, but it could offer neither. For us and our contemporaries, the idols are often greed, fame, unloving sex, materialism, racism, etc. They are as useless to our lives and eternal salvation as was the calf fashioned by Aaron, Moses’ brother, for the Hebrews who kept forgetting all God had done in rescuing them from a certain death in Egypt. We too often forget the blessings which have accompanied us. “Returning to God” is a holy remembering which reconnects us with the source of all that is good and beautiful in our lives.

Deborah Paquette

Assistant Director of Human Resources/Employment





MARCH 31 | FRIDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Wis 2:1a, 12-22; Ps 34; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

I remember from a very young age being dragged to Mass every Sunday against my will. Week after week, I would think to myself, “When I grow up, I’m never going to Mass again.” It didn’t make sense why Mass was so important until I reached junior year of high school. During the daily 45-minute drive to school, I would often drive in silence and just reflect. The time I spent in silence combined with one very influential religion teacher slowly made me realize how God was working in my life every day.

The first reading today is a good reminder that God won’t always speak to us in a very direct fashion and it takes deeper thought to truly understand sometimes what He is trying to communicate and to not let the wickedness in our lives blind us. Similarly, in the Gospel we see the immense faith that Jesus had in his Father, and, like Jesus, we must not be afraid to take on challenges and do things that might lead us to trouble because the Lord will always be there to guide our way.

In our lives, particularly in the college environment, it is easy to drift away from God and not want to look to Him for help. We should never be afraid to come back to the Lord. His arms are always going to be open to us. The Lord will always deliver us from our struggles, even when we inflict them upon ourselves. Remember to take just a few minutes each day to reflect on what the Lord has given us and He will never guide us astray.

Joshua Watson '20

APRIL 1 | SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Jer 11:18-20; Ps 7; John 7:40-53

In today's Gospel, the chief priests and Pharisees reject the idea that the Messiah could come from Galilee, even though Jesus speaks God's message. The Pharisees are rigid in their expectations of who the Christ should be.

These verses from John's Gospel touch on something I have been reflecting on in my own life — the frustration and anxiety of gripping too tightly to expectations and judgment. When we cling too tightly to our expectations of how our life, experiences, or people we encounter “ought to be,” we experience suffering and uneasiness, and in turn, we close ourselves off to wonderful possibilities. Often it is a need for a sense of control and fear of uncertainty that confines us. Instead, a practice of loosening our grip and being open to uncertainty and alternatives, although initially unsettling, is actually liberating and brings ease to the mind. It is an imperfect practice to live a life where we change the “should” in our inner narrative to “could” instead. The Pharisees said the Christ *should* not come from Galilee, but what if instead they considered that the humble, kind man, speaking God's message *could* be the messiah? Perhaps their hearts and minds would be touched and their lives would be changed.

Karen Ober

Associate Professor, Department of Biology





APRIL 2 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Ez 37:12-14; Ps 130; Rom 8:8-11; John 11:1-45

I am struck by Martha's statement, which borders on a desperate question. "*Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*" How many times have I made a similar request of God: if you had been here, wouldn't this suffering have been avoided? Sometimes it's easier to think God is completely absent in suffering rather than to acknowledge that He has been present throughout all of it. After all, for centuries people have battled with the concept of an all-powerful, all-loving God who can coexist with the abundance of suffering in the world. In my own life that is a question I still struggle to answer. And just like Martha, as I have watched my family members suffer from illness, I am tempted to say that God was not there for it. But I have come to learn that despite what I have thought, God has been there throughout my pain.

Upon reflection I find an abundance of God's acts of love just at the moments when I struggled to find him most. I feel less angry that God did not completely remove the suffering. Instead, I'm filled with gratitude for the many ways I was comforted in difficult times. I am increasingly aware that through the love of my family and friends God was my most loyal supporter, my kindest comfort and my most inspiring strength.

Sarah Barrett '18

APRIL 3 | MONDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Dan 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Ps 23; John 8:1-11

While we live in a society where we strive for and have an expectation of universal justice, the story of Susanna illustrates that justice is not always possible in our fallen world. Susanna, faced with a situation where sin conspires to destroy her, righteously seeks justice from the only perfect judge. Her faith in the Lord never wavers.

Daniel is divinely inspired by the Lord to remedy Susanna's unscrupulous conviction, setting an example for the proper use of authority and the prayerful consideration of testimony. Daniel, in examining the wicked judges, indicates that they have condemned themselves in the sight of the Lord by their false witness. The community in turn condemns the judges justly to the same unjust fate they had prepared for Susanna.

From this story and other episodes from the Old Testament, our culture has internalized many truths, which are expressed in our language and art, some even inked into our national currency and etched onto our public buildings. They remind us that while we trust in divine providence, we must be orderly in our actions, prayerful in our deliberation, and hold authority to a high standard of accountability.

There will be no perfection of justice until the return of Our Lord and our own redemption into His Kingdom. Like Susanna we must be unwavering in our faith. Like Daniel we must be forever vigilant and open to His inspiration.

Richard Nickle

Senior Technical Services Engineer, Information Technology Services





APRIL 4 | TUESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Num 21:4-9; Ps 102; John 8:21-30

“Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no food or water?”

This brings to mind a recent conversation with my grandmother about a lesson she learned from her cousin. She had encountered a challenge of sorts, and in a moment of self-pity implored of her cousin, “Why me?” Her cousin immediately responded, “Why not?” This frank answer caught my grandmother by surprise. After all she was a “good person.” She went to church regularly, lovingly raised her children according to the Catholic faith and tried to abide by God’s word in all that she did. What had she done to deserve such difficulty?

My grandmother’s cousin was reminding her that she was not above facing trials and tribulations, as the children of Israel learned. After all, God wouldn’t give her anything she couldn’t handle. I have come to learn that lesson through her. When I am faced with a challenge, rather than cry out against it, I am called to maintain faith and trust in Him, not to lose my patience. Instead, I am to ask: *“Oh Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come to you.”* As the children of Israel looked to the bronze serpent, so, too, must we always look to God. God is always there, in whatever desert I may find myself.

Catherine “Kelly” O’Neil Knight ‘02

APRIL 5 | WEDNESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Dan 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Dan 3; John 8:31-42

When we are faced with trials and tribulations that are presented as being beyond our control, we must hold tight to our faith just as did Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. Their strong faith and their unwillingness to deny their trust in God resulted in them being cast into a fiery furnace. However, that same faith in God's deliverance carried them through the furnace. To believe in deliverance while enduring trials and tribulations is to possess unwavering faith.

I, too, have been cast into life's fiery furnace of troubling times. I've weathered trials that were aimed to destroy my way of faith and belief in deliverance by God. I've faced my share of temptations of compromising my beliefs to conform to external forces that would have left me in defeat. With my spirit clenched tightly to the hand that created all, I found rescue. I found my faith undefeated in the midst of troubling times. My deliverance by God from my fiery furnace has allowed for me to live by my life's mantra: "Faith and fear do not occupy the same space."

For me, you cannot possess some of one and a lot of the other, because within your heart there is not enough room to store both. Therefore, I choose faith in deliverance, in hope, in redemption, in rescue, and in refuge. Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who were forced into furnace by King Nebuchadnezzar, I too, when faced with adversity, choose to hold fast to faith, for nothing is impossible with God.

Marcellis Perkins '19





APRIL 6 | THURSDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Gen 17:3-9; Ps 105; John 8:51-59

“Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? Or the prophets, who died? Who do you make yourself out to be?” One can imagine the interior smile that must have played across Jesus’ mind as He responded to this question. Clearly, He was not taken aback by the incredulity and scorn elicited by His promise of everlasting life for those who kept His word. Rather, His response, *“Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM”*, replete with the echo of Yahweh’s words to Moses from the burning bush, communicated extraordinary self-assurance and theological authority. Boldly facing down His inquisitors, Jesus asserts His identification, His consubstantiality as it were, with God.

In this face-off with the authorities we catch a glimpse of the intense union between Jesus and God. Despite mockery and the threat of violence, Jesus refuses to temper His teaching. He does not equivocate nor does He attempt to placate those who confront Him. Jesus’ integrity and courage come from the sure and certain knowledge that God is standing with Him and that God will go with Him, as the psalmist says, *“through the valley of the shadow of death.”*

In this interaction, Jesus models what it looks like to “fear not.” Rooted in the certainty of God’s faithful presence, we are able to meet the challenges and the difficulties life places in our way. Today’s Gospel reminds us that the question the scribes and the Pharisees flung at Jesus is one that ultimately each of us must answer when we come face to face with God. Who do I make myself out to be?

Sr. Barbara Rogers, R.S.C.J.

Headmistress, Newton Country Day School of the Sacred Heart; Member, Board of Trustees

APRIL 7 | FRIDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Jer 20:10-13; Ps 18; John 10:31-42

There is something about pineapple on a pizza that I find truly delicious. However, when I try ordering pineapple on a pizza at a party with my friends, I too often find myself surrounded by leers, jeers, scowls of disgust, and a slew of eye rolls at the very thought of placing the words “pineapple” and “pizza” in such neighboring proximity. Usually, I concede to choosing a less daring flavor to ease the tension my taste buds created, but I cannot help feeling a sense of isolation, as if my friends now think less of me for admitting a small, yet genuine truth of who I am.

Our readings today illustrate a similar, albeit much more hostile, situation that Jesus and Jeremiah found themselves in when speaking truths as messengers of God. What is important to reflect upon is that Jeremiah and Jesus found inner strength to overcome and escape their aggressors through their relationship with God.

As Christians, it is important for us to remember that the Lord can be both our rock and refuge. Through our faith, we have the ability to live as messengers of God. Let's not be afraid to share our faith and be disciples for others. Perhaps people may never believe pineapple and pizza go well together, but they might begin to believe in Him through our sincere demonstrations of faith and Christian integrity.

Steven Riley

Director of Bands





APRIL 8 | SATURDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Ez 37:21-28; Jer 32; John 11:45-56

I am a man of two nations. The first is a nation of memories – it remains hidden behind the borders of the past, where my father dwells. It is a nation of creeds and lessons. “*Que seas unos de los buenos,*” he said. “*Porque de los mal ay demasiados.*” A nation of aunts, uncles, cousins, sons, daughters, and strangers gathered together to escape lands without even five loaves or two fish. A nation of expired visas, asylum applications, and undercover hope. A nation gathered together by one man willing to perish that his nation might live. Cancer, aged 58.

We built the second nation on the long sighs of both relief and nostalgia, both longer than the wait for bread or the edge of a machete. We built a nation divided between two others – one the ghost of a perilous longing for places we longed to escape and the second a cold welcome from a city on a hill we long to share. My mother still lives in this nation of both here and there. Her success has an accent.

Today, I find myself in a third nation, strangely familiar, one of promised walls and foreseeable registries. Again, we fear being scattered, divided between being both here in person but not here on paper. We remember what is to be the dispersed children of God, forced back to the regions of the desert. Yet, we know He is coming to our feast. That we will feast. We know our mourning will turn to joy, that our sorrows will gladden. After all, we have been here before. We have known divided nations, and we will again find our sanctuary.

Jorge Santos

Assistant Professor, Department of English

APRIL 9 | PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Isa 50:4-7; Ps 22; Phil 2:6-11; Matt 26:14-27:66

When I reflect upon the current state of our nation and world, I sometimes feel despair begin to creep in. Hate crimes are on the rise. The gap between rich and poor continues to widen. The planet is overheating. Harassment and persecution remain real and constant threats for many because of their skin color, gender, immigration status, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs. The world feels dangerous, broken, and uncertain.

Imagine the despair and bewilderment that the disciples in today's Gospel must have experienced. From beginning to end, the Passion tells of the devastation that can result from human weakness and cruelty. Judas sells Jesus out to the chief priests. The disciples fail to keep watch in the garden. Peter denies knowing Jesus not once, but three times. Even Jesus, tortured, humiliated and left to die on the cross, cries out in anguish: "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*"

Sometimes it may feel as though darkness threatens to consume us, that our world is coming to an end. This is nothing new for Jesus. He knows heartbreak, chaos, and desolation. I need to remind myself of this truth each time I feel those waves of anxiety and despair wash over me. Jesus is with me, with you, with this nation and world, suffering in solidarity with the broken, the marginalized, the grief-stricken, the impoverished, the fearful. Do I welcome his companionship? And how can I, like Jesus, empty myself to be a companion to others who suffer?

Emily Rauer Davis '99

Assistant Chaplain, Assistant Director of Liturgy





APRIL 10 | MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Isa 42:1-7; Ps 27; John 12:1-11

There is a book that the Vatican Patrons of the Arts Office puts out each year. The book has pictures of gorgeous works of art and important historical artifacts. Listed next to those works is the price of restoring or preserving the item pictured on the page. Gorgeous vases, paintings by Raphael and Michelangelo, statues by Donatello and the Romans, with a neat price tag next to them. It is easy to thumb through the book while looking for the most exotic item with the largest price tag, but it's much harder to know the value of what is pictured without actually standing in front of the object in real life.

We've all heard the expression that someone can "know the price of everything and the value of nothing." Those well-intentioned price tags, while important for raising money, miss the point altogether in the end, and so does Judas in the Gospel today. Judas looks at the precious oil and sees only its price. Jesus, however, sees that filled and flowing jar as the full and final over pouring of God's love and mercy for the woman in the passage, and he knows that mercy and love are priceless. In these final days of Lent, as we look towards the cross, can I immerse myself in that same priceless oil of mercy, and love?

Rev. Michael Rogers, S.J. '02

Assistant Chaplain

APRIL 11 | TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Isa 49:1-6; Ps 71; John 13:21-33, 36-38

Today's readings prompt three words to my mind: friendship, betrayal and forgiveness. A seemingly odd combination, all eliciting strong emotional and spiritual responses, and each embedded in the story of Judas. Calling someone a friend is the most intimate investment of trust and confidence shared with another individual. Friendships are not easily formed. Judas was a friend and follower of Jesus. How heartbreaking and dispassionate for Judas to have exploited his friendship with Jesus by his act of deceit and deception.

Yet in the midst of this betrayal, Jesus responded by calling Judas "*friend*," offering the ultimate act of forgiveness. I am not sure how many of us could be so lenient, understanding, and compassionate. Are we solid enough in our faith to be merciful? Would we be able to suspend self-judgment as we asked ourselves "how could I have been so foolish? naïve? gullible?" Built up bitterness and anger destroy our ability to trust, love, and be joyful. When we offer forgiveness, we free ourselves from negativity, and pain which serve to break our spirits, question our wisdom, and threaten our sense of faithfulness.

To be followers of Jesus we are called to "*...love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.*" Christ teaches and compels us to face life's wrongdoings with unconditional love, universal understanding and enduring grace. Let us strive each day to be worthy of the forgiveness offered to us from the cross.

Mable Millner

Associate Dean of Students for Diversity and Inclusion, Director of Multicultural Education, Division of Student Affairs





APRIL 12 | WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Isa 50:4-9a; Ps 69; Matt 26:14-25

When Jesus said at that fateful Passover Dinner, “*one of you will betray me*” and all said, “*surely it is not I, Lord,*” we must realize now that He absolutely knew what was coming. And, He was ready for it.

Today’s world is full of twists and turns that sometime lead to tragedies, some of which are deadly. In fact, we live in a world of natural and man-made events ranging from earthquakes and tornadoes to aircraft crashes and wars. But we must still prepare as Christ did and be ready for whatever happens.

I think our best preparation is to believe in God’s mercy to challenge us, but also to provide us the strength to deal with any situation we may encounter. Because He created us with our own strengths and weaknesses, we must recognize that “The Lord God is my help; who will prove me wrong?” That faith will serve us well, always. Lent’s review of Christ’s Passion for our salvation provides an excellent time to remember that.

Lt. Col. Christopher J. Hoppin USAF (Ret) '64

APRIL 13 | HOLY THURSDAY

Exod 12:1-8, 11-14; Ps 116; 1 Cor 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

We are seniors, and it is easy for us to get caught up in the excitement and anxiety of our final year at Holy Cross. Application deadlines, executive board positions, challenging seminars, and our upcoming graduation overwhelm our thoughts and in some cases even shroud us from the relationships that brought us here. Knowing how far we've come, it's important to reflect on the people that have helped us – and who continue to help us — feel confident and at home here on “the hill.”

The love from our friends, professors, mentors, and others give us the permission to be passionate members of the Holy Cross community. So many people in the Holy Cross community have embraced us, supported us, and helped us to grow. Today's readings remind us that in order to serve and love one another fully, we must first humble ourselves. Perhaps the best way we can remain humble is by recalling those patient teachers that washed our feet, and helped us become more capable and thoughtful. It is our responsibility to overcome the temptation of a self-centered senior year, and kneel down to wash the feet of others.

Emily Breakell '17 and Ed DeLuca '17

Co-Chairs, Student Government Association





APRIL 14 | GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Isa 52:13-53:12; Ps 31; Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42

I grew up with five brothers and sisters, and we often found ourselves getting into trouble: someone tracked mud into the house after the floors had just been cleaned, someone wanted to stay out playing with the neighbors instead of coming home for dinner, or someone snuck an extra helping of some of my mother's famous Italian cookies (could you blame us?!). At the time, I did not realize how selfish we were being. There was a complete disregard for the person who had to clean up the mud, for the family we delayed from eating, for those deprived of eating the biscotti. What can this little anecdote reveal?

According to my dear friend and theologian, Don Maldari, S.J., Good Friday provides the opportunities to make us, with all our shortcomings and frailties, whole.

The essence of Good Friday is sacrifice, derived from the Latin *sacrum* and *facere*; that is, to make holy. Interestingly, "holy" is integrally related to "whole" and, Good Friday offers those of us who are not, the possibility of becoming whole. We are led beyond selfishness and sin, and called to a life of altruistic love. Jesus invites people to die with him, beginning with baptism and culminating in physical death, in order to rise with him to participation in the life of the Trinity. Jesus offers the sacrifice and is the sacrifice, which makes us whole. That's the essence and beauty of Good Friday.

Linda M. LeMura, Ph.D.

President of Le Moyne College; Member, Board of Trustees

APRIL 15 | HOLY SATURDAY

Gen 1:1-2:2; Ps 104; Gen 22:1-18; Ps 16; Exod 14:15-15:18; Rom 6:3-11; Matt 28:1-10

Sitting in a candle-lit Mary Chapel a number of years ago during Easter Vigil, I was struck by the transition from our Lenten journey to the Easter Season through our broad and extensive number of readings today. I find that they are perfectly bookended: from God creating the world, in essence saving it from being a “*wasteland... covered the abyss*” to God saving humanity by having His only son die and rise on the third day.

During the Easter Vigil service, we fully welcome new members to the Catholic faith and to our community through the sacrament of baptism. But it’s also a time when we renew our own baptismal promises. We have spiritually prepared during Lent for today, a day of rebirth and new beginnings, and are reminded of God’s mercy, salvation and deep and infinite love for us through the resurrection story.

As we close our Lenten journey, this reminder and renewal need not and should not take place only during this season. We are called on each and every day of the year to “return to me.”

Christian Santillo '06

Associate Director for Web Communications, College Marketing and Communications





APRIL 16 | EASTER SUNDAY — THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Ps 118; Col 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

What unexpected, life changing experiences for our ancestors in faith we find in the Gospel accounts for this Easter Day. Mary Magdalene goes to anoint the body of her Rabbi, to be close to Him even in the tomb, and her world is turned upside down. Instead of finding Jesus' body, the Lord of Life finds her, speaks to her, and draws her into His own mission. The disciples — certainly friends, perhaps a married couple — on the way to Emmaus, were seeking to make sense of all that 'had happened in Jerusalem,' to 'find,' understand, the Teacher they remember — and instead of their finding him, He finds them — on the road, in the Scripture, in the meal. And yet, perhaps it is not surprising that the Lord would be present to someone living out the work of Mercy. Or when the stranger is accepted and invited to a meal in the hospitality that is so much challenged in our contemporary world.

I returned to Holy Cross to assume my current role last summer, and in these first months back, I have been treated to this same hospitality, and I have seen merciful care for many, including my Jesuit brothers, who have been ill or otherwise in need. In these and many other ways, we, like those first disciples, have sought to Return to the Lord, to find Him anew. And the wonder-filled experience is that this Easter Day, it is the Lord Who has 'Returned' to find us and draw us into His Risen Life!

Rev. James Stormes, S.J. (ex) '69

Rector, Holy Cross Jesuit Community



This image, as well as the cover image, were taken at the Thomas P. Joyce '59 Contemplative Center, which opened in West Boylston, Mass. in September, 2016.



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