



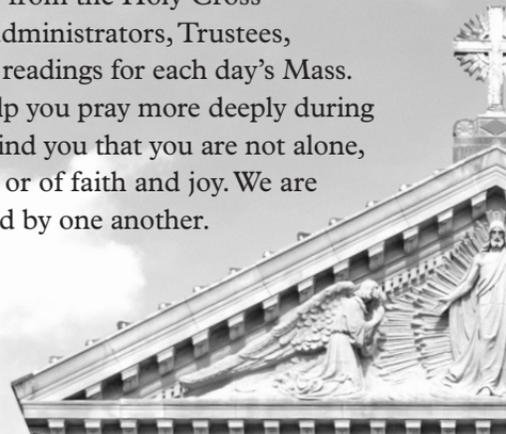
RETURN TO ME
Lenten Reflections
from Holy Cross | 2023

*Gather the
people,
notify the
congregation;
Assemble the
elders, gather
the children
and the
infants at
the breast*

JOEL 2:16

As we begin this Lent, we reflect with these words of the prophet Joel. They remind us that we do not go through the journey of Lent (or of life) alone. Rather, we travel with companions. Often in the “Return To Me” series, a theme naturally arises among the reflections. This year, our contributors show a keen awareness of those who have traveled the path before us. This is fitting as we honor the 50th anniversary of coeducation at Holy Cross. We sought to acknowledge this milestone by inviting alumni/ae from those transitional years on the Hill to write for this year’s Return to Me. But many of the other reflections echo the same theme: we are part of something larger than ourselves, and in remembering those who have walked ahead of us—at Holy Cross and elsewhere—we draw strength for our journey and hope that we will offer the same for others.

In these pages you will encounter many voices from the Holy Cross community—faculty, staff, students, alumni, administrators, Trustees, benefactors, and Jesuits—as they reflect on the readings for each day’s Mass. We hope that these prayerful reflections will help you pray more deeply during the Lenten season. We hope, too, that they remind you that you are not alone, whether in moments of doubt and desolation, or of faith and joy. We are accompanied by a loving and merciful God, and by one another.



We hope, too, that the reflections and images in this year's collection will serve as your bridge to Holy Cross, where faith is nourished and character is formed.

As always, the preparation of this series, in print and online, involves many members of our community: writers and artists, editors, graphic designers, website administrators, and former coordinators of "Return to Me". To each of these people, and many others, we offer profound thanks.

To receive daily emails from "Return to Me" throughout Lent, please visit our website: holycross.edu/returntome

Be assured of our prayers for renewal as we journey toward Easter together.

Crista Mahoney '02
"Return To Me" Editor

Rev. Timothy W. O'Brien, S.J. '06
Associate Vice President for Mission





FEBRUARY 22 | ASH WEDNESDAY

Jl 2:12-18; Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 12-13, 14 and 17; 2 Cor 5:20-6:2; Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Once again, we arrive at the beginning of Lent, the holiest time of year for us. As always, I'm caught off guard and more than partially distracted by the pressures of daily life, including work, family and many other admittedly less important endeavors. In our fast moving lives, it is often hard to think ahead four, much less 40, days or to even consider dedicating more time to anything, much less adding time daily for prayer and performing good deeds.

And yet, today's readings are incredibly rich and offer several moving invitations for us over the next nearly six weeks to draw us into those 40 days. In the first reading and psalm, we are reminded of our need to seek the Lord's mercy and his ability to forgive us any and all failings. Somehow, I still find it both hard to ask for forgiveness and admit that I regularly sin and to understand that God has already forgiven all my sins (and those that will come). Today's gospel calls for us to pray, fast, give alms and perform good deeds in secret, without seeking praise. In the "me" centered society in which we live, where we are often asked "what have you done for me lately?," this is a particular challenge. Nonetheless, the invitation is clear and the promise is eternal.

In this holy season of Lent, may we experience God's infinite mercy and find time to do good things in ways that only God sees.

Helen Boucher '86

Chair, Board of Trustees

FEBRUARY 23 | THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Dt 30:15-20; Ps 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6; Lk 9:22-25

In today's reading, Moses reminds us that our life is in God's abundant grace. God extends an invitation to choose life by choosing to be in relationship with God, a relationship of mutuality that helps us be aware of the abundant graces given to us. Even if we don't respond to the invitation, we will still have these gifts because God's love is unconditional and does not withhold, but it will be more fulfilling if we know where these graces come from.

Choosing life and choosing God are simultaneous. This act of choosing is the ultimate grace, one that bestows a self-giving gift upon those who recognize and return God's love to the world. It grounds us in the knowledge that we must live for others just as much as we live for God. The pursuit of a relationship with one another is how we uphold a relationship with God, whose love mediates itself through others and through creation.

I have struggled to envision what a relationship with God looks like, especially as crises of injustice and environmental degradation dampen my faith in where God is in this world. My time with the Agape Community during the Spring Break Immersion Program, however, called me to locate God in the people I met and in nature. Choosing to see life and dignity in all living and nonliving things became an invitation to choose God, a reminder that echoes Moses' message that there are always creative ways to enter into this relationship when we are ready to embrace it.

Colleen Shortell '23





FEBRUARY 24 | FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Is 58:1-9a; Ps 51:3-4, 5-6ab, 18-19; Mt 9:14-15

As senior year quickly passes me by, I realize I have done a lot of self-comparing to peers and friends, striving to be the smartest or wittiest. I have also spent a lot of time on my own, working hard to stay on top of assignments and maintaining my responsibilities within leadership roles. With Holy Cross-level rigor, it is very easy to become wrapped up in my own present moment, concerned with all that I need to get done to keep myself afloat. But I know I am not the only one in this community struggling with comparison and responsibilities.

We have been created in the image and likeness of God's agapic, never-ending love. The Christian life is a journey in which love is the most important virtue. We learn through the actions of Jesus, most importantly the way he did not turn his back on his community, how we ought to live lives of love and community not only during Lent, but throughout the year. Yes, my assignments and responsibilities are pressing. Yet this Lent provides an opportunity for us as a part of the Holy Cross community to really check in not just with ourselves, but with those around us; to love as Jesus did.

Claire Tobin '23

FEBRUARY 25 | SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

Is 58:9b-14; Ps 86:1-6; Lk 5:27-32

Today's readings, when viewed independently, seem to address different audiences with distinct messages. In the first reading, Isaiah speaks to God's reward for those who have the wherewithal to remove malicious speech from their midst, to feed the hungry, to satisfy the afflicted, and call the sabbath a delight; then the "light shall rise for [them] in the darkness" and God will be with them. In the psalm, the speaker describes himself as afflicted and poor and beseeches the Lord to have mercy on him. In the gospel reading, Luke describes Jesus as ignoring the privileged while dining with the tax collectors because "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners." How do we see ourselves in these readings and follow their message?

When they are read separately, adherence to their various messages can seem difficult. Isaiah offers rewards to the righteous: those who feed the hungry, satisfy the afflicted, honor the sabbath, and avoid seeking your own interests and speaking malicious words. Today's psalm is one of supplication from someone poor and afflicted, but in today's world a humble entreaty is not common. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus is questioned for dining with tax collectors. Perhaps the key is in the verse and response in today's psalm, "For you, O LORD, are good and forgiving, abounding in kindness to all who call upon you" and "Teach me your way, O LORD, that I may walk in your truth." We can be reminded of a path of humility – letting go of personal slights and being attentive to the needs of others will ultimately "gladden the soul of your servant."

Mary Ellen Eagan '75





FEBRUARY 26 | FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 2:7-9; 3:1-7; Ps 51:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17; Rom 5:12-19; Mt 4:1-11

In today's gospel, we hear about the three temptations faced by Jesus. Jesus must have struggled to overcome these temptations. In our daily lives, we also face many temptations. It can be helpful to remember that Jesus' success in not falling into the trap of Satan may not have been as neat and clean as it has been depicted.

The first temptation to convert stones into bread is one we face almost every day: the basic needs of our survival. But Jesus did not take the easy path to satisfy himself. In our actions, both the end and the means have to be just and proper. The second temptation, falling from the parapet of the temple and letting the angels catch him, is spectacular and it comes from the need to be wo/men of name and fame. Jesus shuns any such attempts for approval, admiration and applause. The third temptation is about usurping power and exercising control over others by obtaining all kingdoms of the earth. Jesus was aware of another power within himself: the power of love.

Sometimes we can feel scared of temptations, which is why we say "lead us not into temptation" in the Lord's Prayer. But temptations can make us strong if we abide in Jesus because, even if we fall, we can be assured that we will rise up with the strength of Jesus. This Lent, let us pray that we grow in awareness of the various needs within us and how they are obstacles to our personal salvation.

Rev. Tomy Nishaant, S.J.

Visiting International Jesuit Fellow

FEBRUARY 27 | MONDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Lv 19:1-2, 11-18; Ps 19:8, 9, 10, 15; Mt 25:31-46

“Whatever you did for these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”

God’s invitation to us in today’s readings is clear: we are drawn outwards to the margins, or as Karl Rahner, S.J., famously encourages, “to break out of the narrow circle of self.” We are invited to see God in our “brother,” whether in a close friend or family member or simply a stranger I’m passing on the street. In doing this, God welcomes us to see and love him in all corners and reaches of life.

I needn’t look far to see God’s invitations in my life. I see them at work, where we support men in addiction recovery as they get back on their feet. The other day, a new resident walked into the office and asked whether anyone had a belt, as he was in need of one. Within five minutes, three senior residents, all of whom arrived to treatment with only the clothes on their backs, had come to the office to offer the young man one of their belts. God invites! I see invitations within my family, where we recently said our goodbyes to my great-aunt, who spent the final years of her life battling Parkinson’s and mixed dementia. Towards the end, she could no longer recognize us but could still smile and squeeze my hand tight as anything. God invites!

Today, may we break out of our “circle of self” and love as God loves; outwards, towards the margins and without reservations, knowing that God invites!

Christine Church '20





FEBRUARY 28 | TUESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Is 55:10-11; Ps 34:4-7, 16-19; Mt 6:7-15

As we approach graduation this spring, it sometimes becomes easier to take on the role of the driver of my life and fall into the trap of becoming my own master. However, the truth of knowing who created me (God), who died for me (Jesus), and who is leading my everyday life (Holy Spirit), takes out the burden of aiming for a perfection that I will never become. It rather makes it clear that my life is better when it is ordered by the Lord and not my fears of an uncertain future.

Throughout my journey here at Holy Cross, I can attest to how faithful God is. Using the authority of God's word has been one of the most powerful gifts to fight against discouragement, feelings of inadequacy and loss of purpose. The word of God has been very useful not only for the physical provision, but for spiritual, financial and professional efforts. Living out the truth that regardless of not knowing how my future will unfold, I at least know who created me and who is writing my story with me. God said that his words do not return void, but will accomplish his will. I believe that the purpose God has for my life will manifest as I trust him as my Lord and Savior every day.

Josephine Kalondji '23

MARCH 1 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Jon 3:1-10; Ps 51:3-4, 12-13, 18-19; Lk 11:29-32

In today's gospel reading, Jesus speaks about failing to appreciate the divine in our midst. A few chapters later, in Luke 19:44, he will speak with sorrow about the disastrous consequences that can occur when we "fail to recognize the time of [our] visitation." In our Catholic understanding of Scripture, Jesus isn't only talking to a particular audience in a specific time and place, but to us. In my reading, Jesus' words call us to gratitude. We cannot fail to recognize the way God is with us when we cultivate a practice of thankfulness.

Being thankful enchants the world, and if you're creative, no experience is too small or quotidian (there is even a Jewish thanksgiving blessing, the Asher Yatzar, to be recited upon finishing up in the bathroom). I am reminded of the fifth joyful mystery of the Rosary, the finding of Jesus in the Temple. We pray this every Monday, when it can be hard to get motivated for the looming responsibilities of the week, and on Saturday, when we can take stock of all the ways we've responded to the good and bad the past six days have brought us. In this mystery, we're invited to meditate on St. Joseph and Mary's joy at discovering the child Jesus, after searching frantically for him for three days. The fruit of praying the mystery is "joy in finding Jesus." What if we viewed the inconveniences, challenges and tedium of the day-to-day as an invitation to recognize that we are in the presence of "something greater"?

Maggie MacFarland Phillips '08





MARCH 2 | THURSDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Est C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Ps 138:1-2ab, 2cde-3, 7c-8; Mt 7:7-12

Go ahead and ask God.

When I was little, my grandparents had blueberry bushes in a fenced area in their yard. The freedom to pick them and to eat them right away was a gift. As I savored the blueberries once, my grandmother asked, “Laura, do you like the blueberries?” As if it wasn’t obvious, I assured her that I did. She said if I wanted more, I only had to ask God—to pray. Wow! Awesome! I got right to it! My grandmother taught me wisely, and she was a wonderful witness in my life.

I love the thread that links today’s readings—an invitation to grow in prayer through witnesses and to trust in God’s closeness. This invitation tugs at me and moves me. Esther calls out to the “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob,” and recalls that her ancestors have called upon God, as well. God showed up for them, and they were granted freedom. She then moves to her concrete ask for help. Our psalmist then assures us that God answers cries for help. Here the Lord we turn to is one who hears us, has kindness and truth, builds up our strength and saves. In our gospel reading, Jesus tells us to ask, and we will receive.

This Lent, how can we remember our ancestors, ask God for help and greater freedom, and claim the words of the psalmist as our own in gratitude for answered prayers along our journey?

Go ahead and ask God. You’ll be satisfied with blueberries and more!

Laura Marcucio '99

MARCH 3 | FRIDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Ez 18:21-28; Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8; Mt 5:20-26

Sometimes I take up Jesus' call to "surpassing holiness" as a gripping personal challenge. It's an exciting idea, to be known as just and righteous, to be "better than the best," to be on the way to the reign of God here and now! Before I get too carried away, though, Jesus says some other things, about settling my debts or ending up in prison, "paying the last penny." The prophet Ezekiel even talks about dying because of my sin. I'd rather skip over these parts.

But they're true. The ways in which I really do turn aside from God, all too often – away from peace into anger, away from vision into petty obsessions and confusion, away from hope toward worry and anxiety, away from love into self-indulgence – all these things diminish me. They pull me away from the joy of life that I revel in at my best moments. My sin does lead me toward death, not because God wants to punish me, but because I turn away from what I need to flourish.

In the end, it's today's Psalm 130 that rescues me: "With the LORD is kindness and plenteous redemption." I'm not holy. God is holy. Love, hope, joy, life all fill me when I am immersed in God's holiness. So, it turns out my best moments are not when I'm impressed with my own righteousness, but when, as the psalm says, "My soul waits for the LORD more than sentinels wait for the dawn."

Rev. Bill Clark, S.J.

Associate Professor of Religious Studies





MARCH 4 | SATURDAY OF THE FIRST WEEK OF LENT

Dt 26:16-19; Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8; Mt 5:43-48

Each Lent, I take stock of my life. Of course, reviewing the Ten Commandments, and how well (or not!) I am able to observe them, comes to mind. Today's readings are a great reminder of how we are intended to behave as God's people. Moses spoke to the people, saying "This day the LORD, your God commands you to observe these statutes and decrees." In the gospel, Jesus challenges us further. We are told to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. God is asking me not to do an easy thing, but a most difficult one. How can I love those who hurt me? How can I love the ones that persecute people and destroy lives? I need to see beyond the attitude of only loving those who love me.

As I have been meditating on this directive to love my enemies and pray for them, the Our Father, the prayer given to us directly from Jesus, keeps coming to mind. When I pray, I am asking God to forgive me my trespasses as I forgive those who trespass against me. I am asking him for mercy and forgiveness for not obeying the commandments. I am also being asked to offer mercy, love and unconditional forgiveness to those who have hurt me. I am asked to be a compassionate person and to behave like Jesus. This is a struggle for me, but, with God's grace and support, I can try, each day, to walk in the law of the Lord.

Anne Reilly Ziaja '78

MARCH 5 | SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

Gn 12:1-4a; Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22; 2 Tm 1:8b-10; Mt 17:1-9

During this Lenten season we prepare for the sorrow of Jesus' passion and the joy of his resurrection. We pray for the grace of letting go of sorrow and for faith to sustain us through the darkest of nights. Just as the transfiguration of Jesus shone a light as bright as the sun on Peter, James and John, we trust that the sun will rise tomorrow and we will be illuminated by God's grace.

The simple psalm response today, "LORD, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you," asks us to have faith. I recall St. Ignatius' *Suscipe* prayer, where we are asked to surrender and return all that we have and all that we are to the Lord, trusting that all we need is his love and grace. Just as St. Ignatius left his sword before Our Lady of Montserrat, I ask myself what do I need to leave behind and return to the Lord to be illuminated by the warmth of his love and grace this season?

Paul Irish

Associate Dean of Students





MARCH 6 | MONDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Dn 9:4b-10; Ps 79:8, 9, 11 and 13; Lk 6:36-38

I often find myself saying to my children “if someone did that to you, how would that make you feel?” and there is usually a sheepish response of “bad” – a single word that captures the complexity of their feelings and actions! It is completely natural in child development to be unable to see from another’s perspective. On the other hand, children can be more willing to see another perspective when they can relate it to their own experience. They can be open to empathy and compassion in ways to which adults have hardened themselves over years of experiences and challenges.

In Luke’s Gospel today, Jesus says to his disciples, “Stop judging and you will not be judged...forgive and you will be forgiven.” During Lent, I often think of Mary. Although portrayed as meek and mild during Advent, Lent shows us a mother with unbelievable resilience, grit and determination. She walks with her child through a period of turmoil and change, bearing witness to the judgment of others, betrayal and violence. Although unable to hear her voice, we can see a mother who is willing not to judge, but instead forgives and seeks compassion, and who, with incredible heartbreak, allows her son to die to save others. I believe that Mary is the epitome of all that Jesus seeks to explain to his disciples in today’s gospel.

During this season, how can we seek the openness of a child to see others through a lens of compassion? Although we experience the pain and heartache of our own challenges, how can we, like Mary, lean into being a person who is present to the pain and suffering of others through forgiveness?

Susan (Kelly) Benzie '02

MARCH 7 | TUESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Is 1:10, 16-20; Ps 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21 and 23; Mt 23:1-12

In the second week of Lent, it is fitting that Isaiah discusses justice. The past few years have been tumultuous. Through months of lockdown and an even longer period of relearning how to live in community with others, the world has seen the fight for justice arise far too many times. We fight in memory of those who cannot any longer, such as George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Mahsa Amini, and we fight so the next generation does not have to.

Just as our Jesuit values teach us here at Holy Cross, Isaiah challenges each of us to “make justice your aim.” As a child of the technology era, where sometimes it feels like the entire world is in my hand, it can be overwhelming to center justice in my everyday life. At times, the battles feel neverending, and in some ways they are. However, we can each fight the good fight in small ways every day. During Lent, when we are each challenged to sacrifice something meaningful to us, I encourage you to sacrifice a bit of your time each day. Instead of spending time on your phone or watching your favorite TV show, find a way to center justice in your life – in whatever way that may look for you.

It helps me to remember that countless individuals at some point centered justice in their life to get me to where I am today. During Lent, we can pay homage to those before us by giving the gift of justice to the next generation.

Anna Parker '23

Co-President, Student Government Association





MARCH 8 | WEDNESDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Jer 18:18-20; Ps 31:5-6, 14, 15-16; Mt 20:17-28

“What do you wish?” Today’s gospel passage from Matthew features these words on the lips of Jesus as a parent approaches asking a so-called favor for two of her children. In a way, this short interrogation of the mother of the sons of Zebedee is a microcosm of all of salvation history. The question is essentially before our first parents in Genesis chapter 3, when they inaugurate the sin of pride. In Exodus, it could be presented over and over again, especially as the pilgrims revel around a false image of God created to affirm their impatience. Corrupt wishes are also evident in the plot against Jeremiah from today’s first reading.

Imagining this story in our own day, Jesus’ words can be equally piercing as we too grapple with the temptation to ask for favors that are not really favors at all. What is it that we wish? Often, what I wish for is not too far off from what that mother wanted nearly two thousand years ago: an easy way forward, a route to comfort without much effort required. Perhaps you have had a similar experience on occasion? But our Lord confronts us as he did that devoted mother: to follow him is to embrace humility, for he came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many – and to seek that path is truly a favor worth requesting.

Matt Prochilo

Leadership Giving Officer, Office of Advancement

MARCH 9 | THURSDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

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

In 2013, our church, International Faith Outreach Ministry, was looking to purchase a place of our own for worship. We found one going for \$600,000, but we only had \$400,000. There were two other bidders. When the highest bidder won, my pastor and some board leaders gave up hope on this building because they thought we had lost the property for good. I encouraged them to trust in the Lord and not just lean on their own understanding. Even though we were the lowest bidders and it seemed like we had already lost, I believed that the building was meant for us. I sat down with the pastor and the rest of the building committee members and reminded them of what our Lord says about having faith the size of a mustard seed. As the reading from Jeremiah says today: “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD.”

God is always faithful, we just have to put our trust in him. Both bidders who were higher than us pulled out of the deal. The owner was left with us. We were able to purchase the building at our offer of \$400,000. It is always good to put our trust in God, and commit all our needs to him. God will act, even if we don't always see the way or understand how. Sometimes we can't just put our trust in other human beings, or lean on our own understanding. Put it all in God and you won't be disappointed. Put your trust in him, and give thanks in all circumstances.

Armstrong Lidonde

Operations Assistant, Facilities





MARCH 10 | **FRIDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT**

Gn 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Ps 105:16-17, 18-19, 20-21; Mt 21:33-43, 45-46

In this reading Joseph's brothers decide to kill him based on jealousy and envy. However, Reuben convinces them to throw Joseph into a cistern, thus sparing his life. But greed overtakes the brothers when they see the opportunity to sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites.

Have you ever allowed your emotions to dictate your actions? Have you ever heard or seen something that inspired great jealousy, greed and envy? When our sensibilities are swept away in a wave of emotions, our reactions are immediate and often misguided. Our emotions, not our minds, rule our actions.

During this season of Lent, let us practice mindfulness. Allow thoughtful gratitude and compassion to guide our actions. Take time to reflect upon all that we have, not all that we want. Family, friends and good health are the only pieces of silver we need.

Kathy Taylor Connolly '77

MARCH 11 | SATURDAY OF THE SECOND WEEK OF LENT

Mic 7:14-15, 18-20; Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 9-10, 11-12; Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

We are all called to be shepherds of our inheritance. As we reflect today, let us consider our flock to be the children. They are our hope, our posterity and our treasure. The only way to care for this inheritance is through nourishment, love and forgiveness.

Restorative justice is a non-punitive approach to harm reduction. When people make choices that do not reflect their best selves, restorative justice calls to show them a way back. People, and especially children, deserve a clear and loving path to harmony. Unfortunately, many of us do not do our part to light the path. Our collective familiarity with punitive systems, like the older son in today's parable, dismisses forgiveness. Like the older son, we incline towards a zero-sum framework of rewards and punishment. We reject leniency and forgiveness, let alone celebration. Today, Jesus is wrestling this framework from us. Jesus wants us to shower our inheritance in an abundance of love. The younger son must be forgiven, yes, but the older son must be involved and uplifted through this process. It is easy to set a feast. It is much harder to, in the process, adore the older son enough that he welcomes a seat at the table. In tending his inheritance, and being with his father, the older brother knows the subtle gifts of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is the one to show his brother the way.

All children, older and younger, deserve to know that their life is worthy of delight and strong enough to delight in others, no matter the mistakes they make. Join me this Lenten season and celebrate forgiveness. Our children deserve nothing less.





MARCH 12 | THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Ex 17:3-7; Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9; Rom 5:1-2, 5-8; Jn 4:5-42

The readings for the third Sunday of Lent are littered with images of thirst. In the first reading from Exodus, the people are angry with Moses, thirsting for water. Distraught, Moses cries out to the Lord, asking for help. The Lord instructs him to strike the river with his staff and stands near Moses as he does so. The motif of thirst returns in the gospel, with the story of the Samaritan woman. Jesus sits down for rest, asking the Samaritan woman for water. Jesus tells her “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst,” signaling that she can but give him ordinary water, while Jesus has water of everlasting life.

In both readings, perhaps what we notice most readily is that people are in need, thirsting for life-sustaining materials. Taking a deeper look at these readings reveals a deeper image of accompaniment. Like a shadow, God is present in the background, standing alongside Moses as he strikes the river and Jesus stands alongside the Samaritan woman as he reveals to her that he is the Messiah. In my own life, I have cried out to the Lord for help, safety and relief. Like Moses and the Samaritan woman, I too, thirst for life-sustaining materials to quell the trials and sufferings in my life. Like Jesus telling the Samaritan woman only his water can permanently quench thirst, he offers us this same invitation to realize that in Christ alone, our soul is nourished.

Eve Schwartz '22

MARCH 13 | MONDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

2 Kgs 5:1-15ab; Ps 42:2, 3; 43:3, 4; Lk 4:24-30

I am a cradle Catholic. I have spent my entire life in Catholic schools. I have practiced countless devotions and attended Mass for as long as I can remember. Yet, today's readings remind us how inclusive God's love is. Naaman, a Syrian army commander, did not practice the Jewish faith, but God healed Naaman through the prophet Elisha, and he came to believe. The story invites us to consider: who does God love, and why does God love them?

Sometimes when I see people who are not living a very Christian life receiving the life-giving love of Christ, a love which cures them of their wounds, I admit that I can get jealous! It certainly made the people of Jesus' time jealous. When Jesus reminded them of the story of Naaman the Syrian being healed, they wanted to hurl Jesus down a hill! Why should someone less pious receive the love of God? Perhaps we need to remember who it is we worship. The God we see in today's readings is a God who never stops searching for us, a God who longs to heal us from our own leprosy. Jesus recounting Naaman's story reminds us that our faith is meant to be shared with all, especially those on the margins. God does not love people based on their devotional ability alone. God does not love me because I am a cradle Catholic. God loves us simply because we exist, created in God's own image. That should give us all some much-needed relief this Lenten season.

Marco Spataro '23





MARCH 14 | TUESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Dan 3:25, 34-43; Ps 25:4-5ab, 6 and 7bc, 8-9; Mt 18:21-35

The exchange between Peter and Jesus in today's gospel always makes me pause. It invites me to reflect upon my own behavior. "Peter approached Jesus and asked him, 'Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.'"

We are called to forgive over and over and over again, be it a loved one who hurts us, or a friend who betrays us or a stranger who cuts us off on the highway. And in that act of forgiveness, we are the ones who experience freedom. I am reminded of the prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Calcutta: "People are often unreasonable, irrational and self-centered. Forgive them anyway...Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway. In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway" (excerpts from "Do It Anyway" prayer attributed to St. Teresa of Calcutta).

In my ministry as a hospice chaplain, I have witnessed the peace that comes when those at the end of life have an opportunity to seek and/or receive forgiveness from a loved one. The simple words "I forgive you" or "I'm sorry" bring closure and God's healing grace. But it also reminds me we shouldn't wait until we are facing death to offer forgiveness – "not seven but seventy-seven times."

Sarah (Smyth) Clancey '79

MARCH 15 | WEDNESDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Dt 4:1, 5-9; Ps 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20; Mt 5:17-19

In today's readings, Moses directs the Israelites to go and live on with the gifts he has taught them; to push through hardships with the knowledge that God has given them through Moses. Although Moses may not be able to see what lies ahead for the Israelites, he is confident in their ability to withstand adversity.

Through my role on SGA, I am constantly laying the groundwork for things I will not see as end results. I only have a year doing this job, and it can be quite intimidating to want to accomplish everything in that short amount of time. However, I often remind myself that the overall goal is to help my fellow students. I can start conversations, shift ideas and try to plant seeds for greater change that will benefit the Holy Cross community. My time at the College has affirmed the idea that seemingly small steps taken by individuals can usher in waves of change. If I have learned one thing as co-president, it is that change takes time, and it has been a challenge to learn how to accept that. Yet, that emphasizes even more the importance of making those small steps, applying what others have taught me, and teaching the next generation of Holy Cross what I have learned. As the first reading says: "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." Memories and lessons will live on far beyond our time. This Lent, how can we spread our mission, push forward change as much as we can, knowing that memories live on and inspire generations to come?

Erin Reinhart '23

Co-President, Student Government Association





MARCH 16 | THURSDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Jer 7:23-28; Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9; Lk 11:14-23

When I arrived at Holy Cross 50 years ago as a first-year student, I remember a conversation with some friends in our residence hall about how strange it would be when the century turned, the year 2000, and we'd be very old (in our 40s!). Little did we know that only by God's grace would we still be here in 2023.

Jeremiah eerily foresaw my next 50 years – times of not heeding the voice of God, giving in to ambition and scrambling to eke out a place in my field. But the verse before the gospel today from Joel reminds us that life has so many beautiful moments when God reaches us and softens our hearts, and it is never too late to listen. We can and should sing God's praises often as we go through life, even if those moments can seem few and far between. Never take family, friends and good health for granted; instead thank God for them.

The Gospel of Luke has great meaning for me. So many times I found myself in the presence of criticism in my field due to prejudices, while part of my job was to criticize the work of others. Evil turns its face towards us on many occasions and often it is much more comfortable to let it all go than to act. But we should ask ourselves: since God has allowed us to grow this old (whatever age we are), how can we gather and not scatter? How can we speak up for justice on every occasion?

Jane Hawkins '76

MARCH 17 | FRIDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Hos 14:2-10; Ps 81:6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14, 17; Mk 12:28-34

The first time I saw “the great commandment” in the gospels, I was pleasantly surprised to see Jesus responding with the first words of Torah that every Jew learns as we begin our religious education.

שמע ישראל “Shema Yisrael! Hear O Israel!”

That was the beginning of my interest in interfaith dialogue, which should lead us to mutual respect. Knowing that we have common roots provides a basis from which we can also explore our differences without leading to conflict. In fact, while we learn more about “the other,” we deepen our self-understanding. That is what happened during my undergraduate years at Holy Cross. The Lenten text for today also says, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” In order to love your neighbor, you must first learn about them. The spiritual ambience of Holy Cross values and respects diverse identities. It encouraged me to explore and embrace who I am. In learning about my neighbor, I also learned to love that part of myself that is my religion, my people, my identity: I am a Jew.

Today I am convinced that if it were not for my unique undergraduate experience, finding myself as the only Jewish student, I might not have become a rabbi. Indeed, I was not the only Jew there. Wherever I looked I saw the image of a fellow Jew from long ago, Jesus, who knew and recited the words I say every day:

שמע ישראל “Shema Yisrael! Hear O Israel!”

Rabbi Norman M. Cohen '72

In Hoc Signo Award Recipient, 2019





MARCH 18 | SATURDAY OF THE THIRD WEEK OF LENT

Hos 6:1-6; Ps 51:3-4, 18-19, 20-21ab; Lk 18:9-14

Today's readings provide us a clear and timeless vision of what we should aim towards in our actions: love, mercy and humility. Though these words were originally written long ago, this vision is particularly poignant in our current polarized and uncertain times. When the political discourse that surrounds us can feel toxic, and it can feel as if we are drowning in a sea of tragic events, these readings give us a vision of how to move forward step by step in hope: Spread love where we can to counter darkness that exists in the world. Provide mercy by offering compassion to those who have wronged us and those who have been wronged by society. Approach situations with humility by recognizing that our gifts are not of our own making and are intended to be shared humbly in service to the common good. At Holy Cross, we are fortunate to be surrounded by many people who aim to follow this vision and provide a model of how this is possible. Imagine what a different world it would be if all were to prioritize love, mercy and humility. How could this lessen the divisions that exist? How could this help heal the pain and suffering that surround us? How could this help build the beloved community as the example of Jesus and the gospels call us to do?

Michelle Sterk Barrett

Director, J.D. Power Center for Liberal Arts in the World

MARCH 19 | FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

1 Sam 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a; Ps 23: 1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6; Eph 5:8-14; Jn 9:1-41

“Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth.”

The message from this week’s readings reminded me of two of my favorite quotes that I have hanging on the wall in my office. They are, “Be the energy you want to attract” and “Stay close to people who feel like sunshine.”

We all have the ability to produce light in the way we live, the words we say and the love we offer one another. When we treat others with respect, conduct ourselves with dignity and grace, and seek truth and understanding, the light within us shines. It can brighten any darkness we encounter. Others are naturally attracted to the warmth, energy and positivity we share.

In a similar way, we reflect and absorb the energy of those we surround ourselves with. When someone is a source of light, they can inspire, motivate, encourage, and lift us up in love and friendship. Their presence feels like warm sunshine.

When others are negative or hurtful, and we act in harmony with them, we condone their behavior and mirror their energy. This is why it is so important to choose carefully those we surround ourselves with. “Take no part in the fruitless works of darkness: rather expose them.” How can we let our own light shine brighter to extinguish other’s darkness?

I think about the solar lights that line the walkway to my house. When they are exposed to bright light all day long, they illuminate my path and shine brilliantly. The more sunlight they absorb, the more they light up the darkness at night. In contrast, when they are exposed to rain, snow or stormy weather, they barely sparkle and remain dim. We all need light in our life. The more we share our own, the more we will attract others to that light.

Joy LaGrutta

Assistant Director, Office of Student Wellness Education





MARCH 20 | **SOLEMNITY OF SAINT JOSEPH,
SPOUSE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

2 Sam 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Ps 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 and 29; Rom 4:13, 16-18, 22; Mt 1:16, 18-21, 24a

I doubt the Nazarenes would have known that the guy working on the roof of their house would be the saint we honor today. How could they have known of Joseph's tremendous faith, that he trusted his dreams were instructions from God? Abiding by his faith, Joseph took Mary into his home and withstood the hardship of uprooting his family to Egypt. He did not need anyone's admiration. He quietly did what was right.

Reflecting on my four years as a student and, now, as an employee at Holy Cross, I think about Joseph. When I first came to campus, I looked up to those whose names are etched on plaques and trophies, and the names that are hanging from the rafters in Luth. I still admire those people, who have gone on to do wonderful things. But four years later, through a pandemic and graduation from the College (twice now, the Class of 2022 has been dispersed across the country and the world), I remember, admire and want to celebrate those who live by Joseph's example.

There may not be any reward for being the one who single-handedly keeps the student organization functioning, for those that scrape their plates in Kimball or for being the friend everyone turns to for support in their time of need. The only motivation must be a commitment to do what is right. Though their names may not be etched anywhere, their legacy defines what Holy Cross is and ought to be.

Patrick Connell '22

Alumni Relations Fellow, Office of Advancement

MARCH 21 | TUESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Ez 47:1-9, 12; Ps 46:2-3, 5-6, 8-9; Jn 5:1-16

The first reading today urges us to see God in nature – in the waters that flow from the temple, in the trees that grow on their shores, and in the fruit and medicines that those trees provide. I am struck by the specificity of the passage in describing the path of the water leading to the east and the thousands of cubits that the angel measures as Ezekiel wades in deeper and deeper. We, like Ezekiel, are being asked to pay close attention and to notice so that we might appreciate God's gifts; they can be both inspiring and frightening. As I teach young Holy Cross students about chemistry, I hope to convey that our job as scientists is also to notice and to be awestruck. We must measure and analyze carefully so that we can see clearly. Discoveries arise from the unexpected, and we will miss them if we're not paying attention. What new medicine might we miss if we fail to notice the leaves on the trees? The angel in the reading today reminds me to be more attentive in all aspects of my life. By looking for God in all things we might find healing.

Christine Hagan

Assistant Professor of Chemistry





MARCH 22 | **WEDNESDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT**

Is 49:8-15; Ps 145:8-9, 13cd-14, 17-18; Jn 5:17-30

In today's gospel, John shows us that Jesus' identity as the Son of both God and Man rests entirely on his love for and admiration of God, his Father. Jesus recognizes the example his parent has set for him, saying "the Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for what he does, the Son will do also."

Today's psalm highlights God's grace and mercy. My own father, Bob Gillespie, class of 1968, was the most merciful person I have ever met. He, like God, was "slow to anger and of great kindness." Since he passed away in July, I have spent a lot of time considering the gifts he gave me. Perhaps the most important has been the unconditional love, generosity, and mercy he showed to me and my siblings. My father always looked for, and always found, the best in people. Any compassion and care I offer to my own children or to the students I teach comes directly from the model my dad gave to me.

Today's readings remind me that, like Jesus, "I cannot do anything on my own." They lead me to consider more carefully how I honor the legacy of my father. Do I act with compassion and mercy? Am I generous and patient? Just as Jesus learned grace and mercy from his Father, I learned anything I know about selfless compassion from mine.

Kelly (Gillespie) Joseph '99

MARCH 23 | THURSDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Ex 32:7-14; Ps 106:19-20, 21-22, 23; Jn 5:31-47

I have a terrible memory. I am constantly asking my friends and family to remind me of something or write something down for me. Because of my terrible memory, I am constantly thinking about remembering. I am not remembering, of course, but I am thinking about remembering, at least. It seems to me that remembering is a kind of loving. You show your loved ones that they matter to you by remembering them, by keeping them with you in your heart. Thus we turn to today's reading.

Memory plays a central role in today's Old Testament reading. When the people of Israel make and worship the golden calf, they say that it was the calf that brought them out of Egypt. When Moses asks God to forgive the people, he does so by asking God to "remember [God's] servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, and how [God] swore to them." God thus lets go of his anger. In both instances, memory is connected to love. Israel's failure to love is a misremembering. In contrast, God's love is a remembering. Just like God, we also show love by remembering. This is why we ask God to remember the Church and to remember all our loved ones who have passed away during Mass. With these prayers, we connect our own loving memory with God's.

This Lent, how can we imitate God in the Exodus reading? How can we love those around us, even when they hurt us? How can we forgive wrongs? How can we remember?

Christopher McCormick '23





MARCH 24 | FRIDAY OF THE FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

Wis 2:1a, 12-22; Ps 34:17-18, 19-20, 21 and 23; Jn 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

At the end of eighth grade, I spoke at a very prestigious event. Not something trivial like a TED Talk or Nobel Prize acceptance ceremony. No, something more important. It was eighth grade graduation. I spoke of the “superpower” of forgiveness, defining it as “the ability to let go of something negative that was done to you even if the other person doesn’t apologize or admit their guilt.” A strong starting definition, but certainly not all-encompassing. It was only after my speech, when my CCD teacher told me how proud she was, that I realized I just gave a homily at a public school.

Today’s psalm reminds us of God’s forgiveness, similar to my definition, but adding the crucial part that I omitted: love. God loves us as “He watches over all his bones; not one of them shall be broken.” God wants to forgive us. He actively wants us to, when broken, “[take] refuge in him.” In a few weeks, we will hear of Jesus dying on the cross. God’s sacrifice of his only Son is a manifestation of his forgiveness; a reminder to not simply let go of wrongs done against us, but actively love the people who committed them – not to simply strive for those we have wronged to let go of our faults, but earn back their love. This Lent, let us allow forgiveness to break open our hearts, allowing us to adopt our own small form of God’s “superpower” of forgiving.

Edwin Ryan '25

MARCH 25 | 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

“Today is the beginning of our Salvation...”

The Feast of the Annunciation and Greek Independence Day share the same date despite differences in the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox church calendars. When we celebrate vespers on March 24th and Divine Liturgy on the 25th at the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Norfolk, Va., members of the surrounding Orthodox churches come together to celebrate our church’s feast day. I always become emotional singing the Major Hymn of the Annunciation as I recall celebrations in my old church, which burnt down in 1983, and think of the Panayia’s (Mother of God in Greek) faith and bravery.

In preparation for this holiday, Greek school students memorize poems for recitation. Growing up, my annual poems were independence-themed, while my sister recited the Annunciation poem for years. I cannot recall any of my poems, yet, I know Joanna’s poem by heart, and every year during our March 25th phone call, we recite it together and I say it again to myself while driving to and from church. “Many many years ago, before the birth of Christ, Panayia went to church, in order to pray...” (It sounds much better in Greek when it rhymes).

Especially today, I am amazed by the courage of Panayia who was not afraid of Gabriel’s news or of placing her future in God’s hands; truly she is a champion. “...As Gabriel announced the coming Grace. Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos: Rejoice, O Full of Grace, The Lord is with You.”

Capt. Karen Tsiantas '87, USN (Ret)





MARCH 26 | FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Ez 37:12-14; Ps 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8; Rom 8:8-11; Jn 11:1-45

Today's gospel recounts the resurrection of Lazarus. On the surface, the miracle seems to be the action of Jesus bringing Lazarus back to life. For me, the magic of the story comes with a closer examination, specifically the sacrifice Jesus makes to go to Mary and Martha, and eventually to Lazarus. When Jesus hears of Lazarus' illness, he tells his disciples they will return to Judea. The disciples question him, asking why Jesus would return to a place where the people wanted to stone him. Jesus dismisses this, sharing that he will go anyway, despite the danger the situation poses to him. This "anyway," this sacrifice, is a powerful representation of accompaniment – when we are in darkness, in grief, we can find companionship from God, even if that companionship means God must make herself vulnerable. In this way, God becomes vulnerable with us, mirroring our vulnerability in order to validate, protect and uplift our vulnerability.

Just after my college mentor, Kim, passed away, I knelt at her coffin at the wake and was overcome with unbearable sadness. I rose up from my knees and ran outside to find a place to breathe. I ended up running into the arms of one of my professors. Instead of trying to calm me down, my professor wept with me. She became vulnerable to validate me, and, together, we resurrected ourselves from our grief. Yes, the life that emerges from resurrection is incredible, but so too are the sacrifices made to sit together in darkness.

Isabelle Jenkins '10

Director, Donelan Office of Community-Based Learning

MARCH 27 | MONDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Dan 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Ps 23:1-3A, 3b-4, 5, 6; Jn 8:1-11

I think these readings capture something essential about our human nature – our desire for clarity rather than ambiguity. We want to know – is this person or group of people good or bad? Are they on our side or not? Are they also worthy of love and redemption? This type of tribal thinking, which helped our ancestors survive, has become problematic in our globalized society.

In the first reading from Daniel, we see two elders sentenced to death for accusing an innocent woman of adultery. They bore false witness, breaking God's commandment as passed down through Moses, and were sentenced to death for their abuse of power. Done and done.

And then we meet Jesus in the Gospel of John, being questioned by a mob about to stone an adulterous woman to death. Surely this woman, caught in the very act of sin, deserves such a punishment as she has broken Moses' law?

And yet...

Jesus does not agree. Jesus, the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament, teaches us that God is more interested in the restoration of our relationships – with ourselves, one another and God – than God is in our suffering. Our merciful God, who loves us beyond sin, reason, measure and laws, sent Jesus to teach us about the unconditional nature of God's love.

Most of all, this story reminds us that we are never out of chances with God so long as we are never out of love.

Sarah Fontaine-Lipke '08

Wedding Coordinator, Chaplain





MARCH 28 | TUESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Num 21:4-9; Ps 102:2-3, 16-18, 19-21; Jn 8:21-30

When I reach this point during Lent, I feel like the people of Israel did in the desert after escaping Egypt. I'm tired of the burden of my sacrifices and feel like the end of Lent is still far away. Like the psalmist, I long for the Lord to hear my prayer and appear in glory to end our period of penance. It's easy for us to get stuck in our own world and forget what Lent is about. Lent is time for renewal. We can take stock of our lives and find the places that we need to make space for God. It's a time to slow down and reflect on how we find God in all things.

During this part of Lent, I am anxious for it to be over and the practices that I have followed during Lent can become tiresome. I try to remind myself of the advice of one of my Jesuit mentors. He reminds me to stay in the present even when I want to get through the present to a better time. It is important to be fully in the moment and not look forward to what will be. We will miss the grace of the moment if we do. Every day brings an opportunity to embrace what God gives us.

In today's gospel, Jesus reminds us that he is from the Father and like us he is anxious for the future. He reflects on what is to come and reminds himself that he is doing the Father's will. His time will come, and he embraces his present. As we work towards Easter, let's renew our commitment to use the remaining days of Lent to redouble our efforts to find God's place in our lives. What gift is God offering us Today?

John Mahoney '73, P13, P00

In Hoc Signo Award Recipient, 2022

MARCH 29 | WEDNESDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Dan 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; Dan 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56; Jn 8:31-42

Each Sunday as I attend Mass at Christ the King Parish on the University of Rhode Island campus, I listen to our pastor talk about the ever-mounting difficulties throughout the world and within our local community. One can only see the horrors in Ukraine, the strong divisions in the United States, the ruthless violence on our campuses and in our cities, and the anti-gay and anti-Semitic dialogue even within our own Church. Our pastor continues to remind us that our focus must be on a complete trust in God and reliance upon his love to maintain our daily voyage and to understand our long-term goal of union with him. It is like the story of Noah; we must trust in God as we board his ship.

As we recently gathered for our 50th reunion from Holy Cross, I could only feel that trust in God that had been nurtured so many years ago at a time that had its own difficulties with racial injustice and the terror of the Vietnam War. In the first reading today, the power of that trust was seen as God sent his angel to deliver the servants who yielded their bodies rather than worship any other god.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus uses the strong words of trying to kill him in the context of not trusting him and listening to what he had heard from the Father. “But you are trying to kill me, because my word has no room among you.” Being a descendant of Abraham is not enough as we move forward each day. During this last week of Lent, how can we not only listen to, but hear how the love and trust of God will steer us?

Richard J. Kenny '72, P01





MARCH 30 | THURSDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Gn 17:3-9; Ps 105:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; Jn 8:51-59

Do I really believe what God promises? Do we?

God promises the ninety-nine-year-old Abram prosperity that he doesn't have: children and land of his own, in fantastic abundance. Abraham (now renamed) laughs at God. Impossible. The promise is too much.

Jesus promises his fellow Jews that whoever hears God's word will receive something no person, not even Abraham, ever has: eternal life. Jesus' hearers accuse him of being possessed by demons; they argue with Jesus. Impossible. The promise is too much.

We could charge Abraham, and likewise Jesus' skeptical audience, with unbelief, implicitly holding ourselves out to be better than them. But we're not. Our belief wavers when the promise seems too much.

I write this reflection the day of my friend Dave's funeral. He died unexpectedly. Like me, he was forty-one years old, a professor and a father. Now this young man is gone. Prosperity? Land? Eternal life? Can I really believe God's promises? Impossible. I fall down and laugh. I argue with Jesus.

It's worth reflecting today whether I really believe God's promises; if I don't, we can't. But we must.

Abraham realized that God was in control; prosperity came. Jesus' critics worried, rightly, that Jesus was assuming the control that is God's alone. He wasn't; Jesus' Father raised him to eternal life, and promised everyone the same. How can I recognize today that God is in control, in ways I can't imagine, that God remembers God's promises, even when it seems impossible?

Peter Joseph Fritz

Associate Professor of Religious Studies

MARCH 31 | FRIDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Jer 20:10-13; Ps 18:2-3a, 3bc-4, 5-6, 7; Jn 10:31-42

In today's first reading, the prophet Jeremiah tells us that, "All those who were my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine. Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail, and take our vengeance on him." How prescient of the events leading to the Crucifixion. How often in our own lives have we been called upon to make a difficult or unpopular choice? How often have we gone with the crowd, simply because it was the easiest path? Are we prepared to stand with Jesus on the side of what is right and just?

John's Gospel also reminds us of how those who were against Jesus made false accusations against him, which led to the crucifixion. As I read these passages, I asked myself where I stand in relation to what I am called to do? Do my actions reflect deeds rooted in love? Have I entrusted by heart and my actions to God's work? How do I respond when I close my heart to what Jesus is asking of me? The opportunity to reflect on all these questions is the greatest gift of our Lenten journey.

Today, let us ask for his grace to show our love for him through our actions...to stand for what is right and be the person that he needs us to be in a world that so needs his love.

Ann Marie (Reilly) Connolly '74, P10





APRIL 1 | SATURDAY OF THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

Ez 37:21-28; Jer 31:10, 11-12abcd, 13; Jn 11:45-56

Uncertainty permeates today's readings. Ezekiel and Jeremiah respond to the fears of the Jewish people, whose exile into Babylon led them to doubt God's promise of land and, more foundationally, their very identity as God's covenantal people. John's Gospel tells us that some people began to believe in Jesus, while others question whether he will show up for their Passover celebration. Still others seem unsure, so they consult the Jewish leaders, who themselves do not know how to respond to Jesus's "many signs" – an uncertainty that is understandable given that they have just seen Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead.

As we today face uncertainty too, whether in our personal lives or in our world, today's readings offer us hope. Ezekiel relays God's promises to gather the scattered, heal divisions, establish peace and restore the people. Jeremiah narrates celebration: merriment, dancing and joy will replace sorrowful mourning.

The basis of this hope, of course, is our God, who does not guarantee us easy lives devoid of challenge but instead promises – whether through the covenant with the Jewish people or through Jesus Christ – to be with us, even (and especially!) amidst the uncertainty of our lives.

May we find in the God who finds in us a "dwelling" (as Ezekiel puts it) the courage, faith, hope and love to respond to that uncertainty, to continue our Lenten journey toward Easter Sunday, and to live into its promises that resurrection awaits, life prevails over death, and love triumphs over all.

Peter K. Fay

Visiting Instructor of Religious Studies

APRIL 2 | PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

Mt 21:1-11; Is 50:4-7; Ps 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24; Phil 2:6-11; Mt 26:14—27:66

St. Ignatius believed that God speaks to us through our imagination. Ignatian contemplation is prayer using our imagination to visualize ourselves in a gospel scene, and then listening to God speak to us.

One Holy Week, I imagined standing a short distance with the women who remained with Jesus. The ground was rocky, dirty and dusty. I could see Jesus' body hanging on the cross, with a man crucified to his right and another to his left. There was the suffocating smell of blood and near death in the air. There was wailing, deep wailing of wrenching pain as the women watched the life blood, literally, flow out of the body of Jesus. Jesus was laboring for breath. It was the moment when Jesus "gave up his spirit" that has stayed with me. I had this empty, vacuous feeling in the pit of my stomach, reminding me of the Calvaries in my own life when I experienced the death of loved ones – my parents, my relatives, my Holy Cross friends. What would come next? I felt lost. The light appeared to be gone.

Palm Sunday prepares our hearts for this most solemn and sacred week. As we walk through this week, sit with Jesus at Calvary. Jesus knows that we all have our own Calvaries, walking paths of grief, disappointment or hurt. We know now what the women at the cross came to learn: we are never alone on that path. Christ, the healer, is always with us.

Kathleen (Hughes) Burgess '79, P12





APRIL 3 | MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Is 42:1-7; Ps 27:1, 2, 3, 13-14; Jn 12:1-11

The past couple of years have been difficult for us all. We have had to deal with the death of friends and family, difficult financial times, isolation, personal illness, racism, a tumultuous political environment and more. Today the psalmist tells us that “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid.” The Scripture serves as a reminder that through trials and tribulations, the Lord will be our light during the darkest times and will give us the strength to deal with whatever falls before us. What a blessing. The readings also remind us not to be stingy in the way we honor Jesus, even when others may find it extravagant, as the disciples did when Mary anointed Jesus’ feet with costly perfume.

My family has suffered many losses in the past year, many hardships, and there have been many moments when we have thought things would not get better. My mother always reminds us to keep our hearts and minds focused on God’s promise and plan. This Lenten season, be still and know that God has not abandoned you and will restore you to be a blessing.

Tomicka Wagstaff

Vice Provost and Associate Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

APRIL 4 | TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Is 49:1-6; Ps 71:1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15, 17; Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

My parents both grew up in Buffalo, N.Y. Every December, our family drove from Long Island to Buffalo to spend a week visiting extended family and savoring chicken wings. During each winter visit, mom and dad insisted that Buffalo gets a bad reputation for its lake effect snow. It wasn't until November 18, 2022, when I personally felt the impact of a real Buffalo snow storm.

A family reunion had been planned in Buffalo. Cousins, aunts and uncles had arranged to travel from California, Ohio, and all over the Northeast. However, a text came through five days before the gathering: a winter storm was expected – lake effect snow. The storm could be sizable. We should all monitor the weather. And wouldn't you know it, each day the forecast affirmed that snow totals could be historic. Travel would be impossible; our planned family reunion would have to be canceled.

We could never have predicted what happened next. What began as feelings of disappointment morphed into purposeful connection. Our shared text thread proved to be a beautiful line of communication as we maintained contact throughout the storm. We were a family unit prayerfully surrounding those who experienced up to 77 inches of snow (for real!).

We will all experience significant storms – impaired relationships, disease, weather phenomena – and yet our faith reassures us that the Lord is “our rock,” “our refuge,” “our hope.” He knows the purpose of our struggle, and he will sustain us. “O LORD... I will sing of your salvation.”

Mairéad (Sullivan) Orpen '02





APRIL 5 | WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

Is 50:4-9a; Ps 69:8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34; Mt 26:14-25

Wednesday of Holy Week is often called “Spy Wednesday” because on this day one of the apostles, Judas Iscariot, closely observed Jesus in order to hand him over to his enemies. It can draw us closer to the Lord to reflect that, like us, he experienced disappointment and even betrayal from his friends. But how do we react when people let us down or try to cut us out of their lives? Does it embitter me or lead me to distance myself, not just from the person who hurt me, but in other relationships as well? Or can I find God’s presence in these painful moments?

In today’s first reading, we have an example of how God is there in the midst of our brokenness. Through a figure known as the “Suffering Servant” – which Christians have often read as a prefiguring of Jesus Christ – the prophet Isaiah shows us someone who has endured opposition and even violence, yet whose faith in God is as strong as ever: “Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear... The Lord GOD is my help, therefore I am not disgraced...I shall not be put to shame...” By accepting suffering without bitterness, the “Suffering Servant” receives a share in God’s wisdom and holiness. For each of us, the cross toward which Jesus is journeying on Friday is an invitation to take up our own cross and to join our suffering to that of the Lord.

Rev. Andrew J. Garavel, S.J.

Superior, Jesuit Community, College of the Holy Cross

APRIL 6 | HOLY THURSDAY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Ex 12:1-8, 11-14; Ps 116:12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18; 1 Cor 11:23-26; Jn 13:1-15

My parents instilled in me early on that education, when used intentionally, held the potential to be a tool for liberation. It was what fueled the sacrifices that allowed for my family to migrate to the United States. Last semester I had the opportunity to take a course called “Catholic Mission in Education” with Professor Danielle Poche, where I delved deeper into Catholic intellectual tradition. The teachings of thinkers like Paulo Freire, who used Catholic faith as fuel for conscientization and the evolution of humankind, tattooed my spirit with hope and passion to be a woman whose every step forward be a prayer of gratitude for Christ consciousness in generations of my family.

Today’s gospel resonated with me as I reflected on my journey growing up in the Dominican Republic, where life was deeply rooted in the Catholic value of community, to then being at Holy Cross, which has given me space and tools to redefine and heal my relationship with God. “If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do.” It feels as if my feet have been washed every step I’ve taken and every step my ancestors took to help get me here.

I aspire to become an educator who reminds those longing to be free that their feet hold the memory of the path to liberation. Writer bell hooks said “love is as love does”. On this Holy Thursday, how can we do for and with others what was done for us in love?

Ashley Rodriguez Lantigua '23





APRIL 7 | GOOD FRIDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION

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

Somebody once told me, “Being a mother means learning to live with your heart outside your body.” This has certainly been true of my own experience as a mother of four and grandmother of two, though mothers aren’t the only ones to know this reality. Created as we are in the image of the God of love, all of us are invited to love in ways that present us with the gift of living with our hearts outside our bodies.

While there are an abundance of moments when living with my heart outside my body invites me into extraordinary joy and delight, this is not always the case. When I read the verse in the reading from Hebrews for today, “In the days when Christ was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears.” I am brought to my own personal Good Fridays, times when my prayers, loud cries and tears expressed the fear, grief and heartache I have felt in the face of my children’s suffering.

And, once again, I am drawn to this Christ who cries, is afraid, and feels abandoned, and to the God who is like a mother learning to live with her heart outside her body.

Marybeth Kearns-Barrett '84, P18, P14, P13

Director, Office of the College Chaplains

APRIL 8 | HOLY SATURDAY

Gn 1:1-2:2; Gn 22:1-18; Ex 14:15-15:1; Is 54:5-14; Is 55:1-11; Rom 6:3-11; Mt 28:1-10

When I was a senior at Holy Cross, my great aunt passed away during the Christmas season. I remember feeling so many things at the same time and reaching out to a trusted chaplain, who reflected back to me: “It seems like you are caught between Christmas joy and Good Friday pain.”

Holy Saturday reminds me of this feeling of being caught between joy and pain, death and life. The gospel depicts the angel descending “like lightning” (a fearful image) with a cloak “white as snow” (a peaceful or holy one). The guards are scared (almost to death!), but the angel turns to the women with reassurance: “Do not be afraid!” “Fearful yet overjoyed,” Mary Magdalene and the other Mary run off to share the good news with the disciples, when suddenly “Jesus met them on their way and greeted them.”

We have all experienced these in-between or both/and moments. I am in the midst of one now, awaiting news about a family member’s health, feeling a familiar mix of fear and hope, anticipation and anxiety, gratitude and sadness. All of these things are true at the same time. What a miracle and a mess to be human! Today’s gospel is an invitation to turn toward the in-between and the complexities of life, rather than turning away. And it is a powerful reminder that, even in the toughest, messiest of times, we will be met on our way by a God who knows us and calls us by name.

Meghan Griffiths '04





**APRIL 9 | EASTER SUNDAY –
THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD**

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Ps 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Col 3:1-4; Jn 20:1-9

There's an old saying: Those who sing pray twice. The psalms are meant to be sung. When you sing, you sense the power of the words. Psalm 118 always strikes me because it sends up such glorious themes of the Lord striking with power, the Lord being exalted and the Lord being life. He lifts us from above.

As a boy, I remember the first time I sang those words. I was a new cantor at the Shrine of St. Jude Catholic Church in Rockville, Md. I was incredibly nervous being in front of such a large parish – the sanctuary was huge – but as I sang, I felt the power of the psalm with me. Afterward, people came up to thank me for being a young person singing in church. Looking back, I know we all felt uplifted, revived in a way that really maps some of the themes of the psalm. I, we, felt hope and connection to the concept of resurrection and life. The sense of Christ's resurrection as “the stone which the builders rejected” that became the cornerstone is powerful. This notion that the weak, the meek, the outcast are now the foundation of God's plan for our future.

Life is a gift. We don't always know the path that we will follow, but at its foundation, God is granting us hope and power. We can take that hope, we can take that power, we can move forward and we can do great things if we are rooted in faith. We can trust in God's provident care and rejoice in it. The power of sharing our gifts and being willing to open ourselves up to the power of sharing, of giving, is a way that reflects what Christ did for us in that moment.

Vincent D. Rougeau

President



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