

SLUH LENTEN REFLECTIONS 2015

Wednesday, February 18: Ash Wednesday

First Reading: Joel 2:12-18

Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2

Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

I never liked Ash Wednesday when I was growing up. Couldn't eat, had to go to church, then I had to walk around with ashes on my forehead. I'd been marked, but I was never quite sure why.

A number of years ago I learned that ashes as a spiritual practice go way back, even before Jesus' time. Certain Jewish repentance rituals involved getting dressed in sackcloth (itchy clothing) and then getting immersed in ashes. The idea was that to become new, you needed to die a death of sorts – a visceral reminder that the end is indeed coming – and it helped people repent and change their lives.

What is it that you need to “die to?” In today's Gospel, Jesus makes clear whatever it is, it doesn't need to be showy. Rather, Jesus even indicates that doing something of real meaning may perhaps even be done “in secret.” What might it be like to give up your favorite video game for Lent, and thus making some space for prayer? What might it be like to turn the cell phone off during dinner, or leaving it on silent when you're having a conversation with your friends or parents? What might it be like to stop competing with your siblings and classmates? Or what might it be like to eat more slowly so that you can savor each meal and feel more gratitude for all the hands that got that food from the earth to your table?

Lord, as we are marked with ashes again this year, as we willingly die to some part of ourselves, help us to trust in the Paschal Mystery: that from death, new life will come.

Mr. Diego Navarro
Theology Department

Thursday, February 19: Thursday after Ash Wednesday

First Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

Gospel: Luke 9:22-25

Jesus delivers a crucial part of our faith in today's Gospel: we will suffer, but the promise of heaven awaits. This reading also sends us the fundamental teachings of Lent. Christ calls us to follow his example and take up our crosses every day in order to truly be called his followers, to sacrifice our comfort for the promise of greater good.

God made us to love and live with him in eternal happiness in heaven; the world we live in is only temporary. God knows the world we live in is full of harm and suffering, which is why he sent Jesus to die for us. God gave us a way to deal with the pain of suffering so that we can come to know, follow, and serve him. Once we love and trust him, despite all the pain and suffering we experience, we can truly appreciate his presence and fill our humanly desires with the Infinite.

Jesus says that to lose our life means to bear our own cross. The way to bear your cross is to embrace your own talents and gifts, and accept the pain that comes along with it. Don't be obsessed with materials of this world or being who you think people want you to be, because you weren't made for that. Look at yourself honestly and ask: what does God want to do with me? How can I do that? An honest answer to this question takes a lot of courage.

The answers don't always come easily. Prayer never hurt no one. Even if you don't "feel anything," pray everyday and ask God what you can do bear your own cross. Most importantly, place trust in God along the way.

I'm going to go out on a limb and say that chocolate is one of the top five things given up every Lent. It may seem trivial to give up chocolate or something similar, but it's a good way to try and imitate Christ in our lives. For whenever our sacrifice brings us more aware of God at work in us, our struggle and suffering can be united with Christ's. Sometimes it feels like a tired tradition, but we urge us as a community to reinvigorate this practice in our individual lives and strive to find Christ in our sacrifices, big or small.

Will Martel and Manny de Legarreta, '16
Junior Pastoral Team

Friday, February 20: Friday after Ash Wednesday

First Reading: Isaiah 58:1-9A

Gospel: Matthew 9:14-15

In today's first reading, God says that the house of Jacob should be reminded of their sins. The same reminder should sometimes be told to us. But despite our sinfulness, God forgives us and gives us grace to live in his love. Although God will always forgive, we must realize what we do against him, and this is why it's good for us to be reminded.

Our sins, by definition, shatter a part of our relationship with God. Repeated offenses break more and more, and we may sin so much that eventually our relationship with God may hang by a thread. God may forgive us no matter what we do, but both venial and mortal sins are devastating to our relationship with God. To combat our sins against God, there are actions that we can take to help heal those broken bridges. Fasting is one of those actions. As both the first reading and Gospel indicate, fasting heals.

That is one of the main aspects of Lent, and fasting from meat on Fridays isn't the only fasting that we do. When we give something up, we fast. Lent gives us a great opportunity to spiritually clean in our lives, a "spring cleaning" of the soul from the dirt and grime of sin. Even after Lent is over, we shouldn't stop that cleaning. It should remain in our lives, minds, and souls for days, weeks, months, and years to come.

In the Gospel, we once again see contrast between the Pharisees and Jesus. The Pharisees may have valued tradition and the Old Testament ways, but Jesus was the Son of God, the renewer, redeemer, the fulfillment of the Old Testament. In his own analogy, Jesus is the bridegroom. The wife is the Church, and Jesus' union to the Church is seen through his words.

In Lent, we prepare for what is to come. What is said in the first reading gets reiterated here: we are doing a spiritual cleaning by fasting. Fasting not only forces us to better manage our temptations, but it also heals us throughout Lent. The healing factor prepares us for Easter, where Jesus wins our salvation.

And that's the exciting part about it! We should be excited for what happens during Lent because Easter immediately follows. Celebrate your weaknesses and find joy in your sins; for in them resides the presence of God.

Sam Chechik and Joe Laughlin, '17
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Saturday, February 21: Saturday after Ash Wednesday

First Reading: Isaiah 58: 9A-14

Gospel: Luke 5:27-32

In the First Reading, Isaiah proclaims to the people that if they stop their foul ways of language, malice, and oppression, then God will again bless them as his people and guide the Israelites throughout their trials.

Like the Israelites, we should learn to stop our bad habits and control our language towards one another. Bad language and bullying are huge problems today, and often we just stand there and watch as things grow worse and worse. If we can all take a step this Lenten season to check ourselves and even say something to our friends about stopping these things when they come up, then little by little we can improve things.

Because it won't be easy, God will be there to help us every step of the way, just as he helped the Israelites through all the unfaithful displays they put on in the desert. He calls all of us to repent during Lent, and checking how we treat others is a good place to start.

In the Gospel, Jesus calls Levi to come and follow him. Jesus then eats with sinners and tax collectors, and says that he has called the sinners to repent, as well.

During Lent, we strive to repent like these sinners. We can always take our sins to God and he will be there for us. We need to show that we are truly sorry and we want to improve ourselves. Also, we should strive to follow God no matter what, just like Levi does in this Gospel. It can sometimes be hard for us because we have a test to study for or a game that day, and we sometimes feel like there is no time for God. During Lent, we should strive to do everything for God. Do our sports, academics, drama, and all activities for the greater glory of God.

God has called us, especially during the season of Lent, to repent our sins and ask for forgiveness. God has given us a chance to renew ourselves again, as he always does. Let us strive to improve upon our spiritual lives and make God a more focal part of our lives during Lent.

Max Kriegshauser and Riley McEnery, '18
Freshman Pastoral Team

Sunday, February 22: First Sunday of Lent

First Reading: Genesis 9:8-15

Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22

Gospel: Mark 1:12-15

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert, and he remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan.
MK 1:12

Mark is a man of few words, but there are actually two more he used in this passage: “at once.” Jesus had just been baptized in the Jordan. As he rose from the water, he’d been given a benediction by the Father and received grace from the Holy Spirit. Here was God’s Son and this was the beginning.

At once the Spirit drove Jesus out into the desert and the confrontation with evil began. How long had the devil been waiting there in anticipation? Had he come out that morning, knowing that Jesus was on his way? Or had he been there since the child Jesus was found in the temple, since Bethlehem, since his own fall from grace? And now here was the Son of God, a mortal being! Vulnerable at last!

Jesus remained in the desert for forty days, tempted by Satan. For forty days and forty nights the battle raged; the demon from hell against Jesus. Jesus in flesh and blood that needed, desired and feared all of the things that we do. But through it all he remained faithful.

Mark doesn’t tell us what the temptations were. He doesn’t need to; we know them all too well. But in his gospel, Luke tells us that “*when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.*” And after it was over, the angels came and ministered to Jesus.

This Lent, as I journey through my own desert, may I be ever mindful that God is at my side. He understands my struggles and forgives my failings. May I truly follow Jesus’ call to repent and believe in the gospel.

Mary Fischer
Business Office

Monday, February 23: Monday of the First Week of Lent

First Reading: Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

I've always considered myself a rules guy—maybe it just comes from me being a mathematician. So, you would think I would like the reading from Leviticus that is a list of dos and don'ts.

I find myself more attracted, however, to the responsorial psalm that states, "Your words, Lord, are spirit and life." It's easy in the first reading to skip over the key to the whole reading "Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy." That sets the tone for the rules that follow, the rules that are spirit and life. It's more than a list of rules; it's like a guidebook for following the Lord, for loving one's neighbor as oneself. It can be read as a manual for holiness.

The Gospel can read as a list of prescriptions as well, yet Jesus is more subtle in what He is requiring us to do. I think the significant idea is in the question, "When did we SEE you. . .?" We have to be awake, to be in tune, to be aware, of those around us who are hungry and thirsty, naked and ill, in prison and a stranger. Jesus can be found in everyone, but how hard do we look and see, search for Him in others?

Let us take this Lent as an opportunity to seek Jesus in all we meet, especially those at the margins of society. May we truly see.

Mr. Craig Hannick
Math Department

Tuesday, February 24: Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-11

Gospel: Matthew 6:7-15

To reiterate this Gospel, Jesus is talking to his disciples, and he's saying not to pray absent-mindedly. He then instructs them (and us today) how to pray, saying what is now our "Our Father." Finally, at the end of the Gospel, Jesus reminds us that to be true servants of God, we must be willing to cooperate with and forgive one another.

Jesus is saying something spectacular here, and I think we ought to look further into the "Our Father." This prayer thanks God for all he's done, but then we ask him for a bit more (our daily "bread", or needs), as well as for forgiveness for our sins. We then make a promise to God to forgive others and stay away from sin so long as he keeps us on the right path.

Do we take these words seriously and forgive others in our community for their mistakes? This could involve anything in our lives, ranging from something as small as getting that demerit you really didn't deserve or as major to the major local stories that have dominated our news over the past six months. We may have different opinions on these sensitive topics and how they should be handled, but in the midst of it all we cannot lose track of the individual God-given humanity of each and every person involved. Forgiveness, not fear, is what the world needs to see more. Often, we don't realize the impact of a threat, an insult, or even just a simple lie in retaliation for something. Cover up sin with love and forgiveness, not more sin.

Spread the love today, guys. Have a beautiful day. Make someone happy, and I promise you'll receive happiness in return.

Trevor Scott '17

Sophomore Pastoral Team

Wednesday, February 25: Wednesday of the First Week of Lent

First Reading: Jonah 3:1-10

Gospel: Luke 11:29-32

The themes of today's readings are clear: sin and repentance.

The first reading recalls Jonah's travels through Nineveh. Jonah proclaims that the city had forty days to repent or they would be destroyed. The king of Nineveh fears God and commands his kingdom to repent. After dressing in sackcloth and fasting, inhabitants of the city are saved. This story of sin and threats, followed by repentance and forgiveness, is very common in the Old Testament. Although the destructive theme recurs in the Gospel when Jesus says that the "queen of the south" will come and condemn the people, this time God himself has come down to plead with his people for change.

In the Gospel, Jesus reproaches his audience for their unrepentance and their evils. He compares this generation of people to the Ninevites of the the story of Jonah in the first reading. Yet Jesus is telling the crowds that the Ninevites repented when a prophet as troubled as Jonah told them of their doom. The people Jesus is addressing are unrepentant, even when there "is something greater here." How bold of Jesus to put the Israelites, God's chosen people, a rank under the Ninevites, a sinning, pagan Assyrian city?

I feel like this Gospel is a mix of things. This is Jesus stirring up the crowds, making them more inclined to listen, and at the same time, him preaching about repentance. For us, in an age when we, too, sin, we must consider that today, Jesus is very much alive and calling us to repent. We are called to repentance every day, and repentance can take on many forms. This Lent, let us remember Jesus's direct call to action, and let us move closer to Him.

Together, the readings show the change from "the old ways" of God's anger, to the "new ways" of forgiveness, which we see in Jesus in the Gospel.

Liam Cler and Luke Thibodeau, '16
Junior Pastoral Team

Thursday, February 26: Thursday of the First Week of Lent

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

Gospel: Matthew 7:7-12

In today's gospel reading from Matthew, Jesus talks to his disciples about giving to others. He proclaims that you should do the same for others as they have done for you, and if you are not giving to those who support you, why would God give you what you ask for?

During this Lenten Season, I think we should all try to give more back to the people who have cared for and supported us, such as our family, friends, and teachers. We should ask ourselves, "what would we do without those who aid us in our everyday lives?" Think about how you can indeed be a man for others and give back to the ones who gave to you.

Also, let us reflect upon how we can open the doors to God throughout Lent. The Lord is always open and listening to us, ready with his love and support. Therefore, throughout Lent, let's remember to take some time out of our day and offer it back to God.

Joe Weber '18

Freshman Pastoral Team

Friday, February 27: Friday of the First Week of Lent

First Reading: Ezekiel 18:21-28

Gospel: Matthew 5:20-26

Sin makes us dead. That was our fate before God sent his son into our world. We were covered in the chains of sin, lost, and left to wallow in fear, anxiety, and other iniquity. The world was “crying out of the depths to God.”

When we start to sink deeper in our situations or become overwhelmed by the storms we face, Jesus goes even deeper, becoming the bedrock and foundation of hope upon which we can stand. He reminds us that there’s always a “bottom” to all of our problems and that He’s there to lift us back up.

Bearing the entire world’s sin with Him along the road to Calvary, he took our shame, our fear, worries, and anxieties. His last words on the cross were “It. Is. Finished.” The old is over and done with. Jesus is doing something new for us, with us, and through us. He’s calling us to a future of hope. In order to rise into this future of hope, there’s a “dying,” a sacrifice that needs to happen. Lent leads us to this season of sacrifice.

What are the things in our lives that draw us away from truly following and trusting in God? Do I struggle with stress? Anxiety? Fear? Addiction? Is there something materialistic that’s drawing me away from fully engaging in my faith? Or maybe ask yourself these questions: Is there something I can sacrifice in order to better myself and also to help people around me? Am I able to sacrifice my time, energy, and effort in order to see to the needs of others?

For many of us, when we make sacrifices, there seems to be a “hole” in our lives that needs filling. But as Christians, we believe that we’ll find that “fulfillment” and “wholeness” in Jesus. (“My soul waits for the LORD”) In Jesus, we will indeed find new life. As Psalms 118:17 says, “I shall not die, but live to proclaim the wondrous deeds of God.”

My prayer for us this Lenten season is that we may be able to freely give of ourselves to others, to give up and turn away from whatever draws away from God, and that we may be fully open to the “life-giving” works of God, trusting in Him with everything that we are.

Scott Nguyen, ‘15
Senior Pastoral Team

Saturday, February 28: Saturday of the First Week of Lent

First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:16-19

Gospel: Matthew 5:43-48

As much as we might be fascinated by the possibility, there's a lot about Jesus of Nazareth we'll never know: Who were his best friends when he was a kid? Did he break any bones? What was his moment embarrassing moment as an adolescent? What did he think of his boss at work before he decided to quit and pursue a gig as an itinerant preacher? All of that is lost to us forever.

But even across 2,000 years it's amazing what we *can* know. He spent the majority of his waking hours outdoors and was very observant about the plants, animals and weather of his day. That quality of rigorous observation extended to other people: he was fascinated by their behavior and inner motivations. And he obviously turned that intense, examining, reflective eye upon his own heart and mind.

But underneath it all, it is indisputable that Jesus of Nazareth was relentlessly searching for God. He had read and reread the Jewish scriptures, not only committing many of his favorite passages to memory, but returning to those passages over and over again to penetrate them to their inner depths. And he would have known, likely by heart, today's passage from Deuteronomy.

Set in the dramatic context of a nation leaving the formative desert experience behind to enter into a more settled agrarian and commercial life, the book is our most ancient biblical text and is at the red-hot center of what God was saying to Israel. Roughly translated, the message was this:

"You're about to walk into something very new, but don't forget the wisdom I've placed in your mind and heart out here in the wilderness. We need each other if we're going to build a new and better future. You're going to be tempted to forget me, but I love you and despite all that is to come, that won't ever change."

And so, Jesus of Nazareth took long walks into the hills to try not to forget. He battled intensely with that terrible human temptation to think that it was all about what *he* needed, what *he* knew, what *he* could do on his own, rather than remembering that it was all about *love*, which is to say, all about *us*, together, in *one Spirit*. That was the point of most of the stories he told—tales of faith blossoming unexpectedly from the tiny mustard seed and spectacular virtue practiced by heretics like the Samaritan. It was the message of the Gospel stories like our passage today, stories told about him after he was gone: God's radical acceptance of sinners and our obligation to do the same, the spiritual potential of a traitor turned back to goodness, and the still shocking *command*—no mere suggestion!— to love one's enemies.

Lent is an opportunity for us to remember these challenging, loving truths from the desert wilderness. Jesus himself had to read and reread, learn and relearn them. They will be difficult lessons, because we have forgotten. Many voices in this "promised land" of plenty will tell us that it is all about us. The Jesus we can meet and come to know better this Lent, extends a hand as friend and guide. Let us follow him together.

Mr. Jim Linhares

Assistant Principal for Mission

Sunday, March 1: Second Sunday of Lent

First Reading: Genesis 22:1-2, 9A, 10-13, 15-18

Second Reading: Romans 8:31B-34

Gospel: Mark 9:2-10

There are any number of themes within these readings, but after several starts-and-stops, I landed on this line.

God called out to Abraham.

How do we respond to God's call?

One of the messages of today's readings is, I think, to remind us that the call of God is from someone who loves us. Even in the instance of God asking Abraham for the unthinkable, regardless of what God is asking of us, that request comes from a place of love. Just as Isaac was Abraham's beloved son and Jesus is God's beloved son, we too are God's beloved children.

Believing this wholeheartedly can be hard to feel because we don't get hugs from God or presents from Him on our birthday. Knowing this love relies on faith and seeing God in the world around us – in particular, we can get a sense of God's love for us in the love we have for those closest to us.

During this season of Lent, we are called by God to examine those things that are clutter in our life and serve as obstacles to a deeper relationship with God. May we all feel a deeper sense of love from God and be a beacon of love for others during these holy days.

John Penilla, '99

Associate Director of Annual Giving

Monday, March 2: Monday of the Second Week of Lent

First Reading: Daniel 9:4B-10

Gospel: Luke 6:36-38

One of the main foci of Lent is repentance. This is why the Sacrament of Reconciliation is so prominently “advertised,” if you will, during this season of the Liturgical Year. We are called during Lent to bring all of our shortcomings, flaws and mistakes to God so that He may rid us of them in preparation for the glory of Easter.

Today’s readings speak of repentance and forgiveness. The first reading narrows in on the forgiveness and compassion of God. For the early part of the Israelites’ history, they believed that God was wrathful and would punish the wicked. However, over time, the Israelites came to realize that God is a loving God. Therefore, they can ask Him for forgiveness. This reading is exactly that: a confession to God. The Israelites, just like us and the rest of humanity, “have sinned, been wicked and done evil.” They go on to list all of their shortcomings, denials, injustices, and other sins to God, completely pouring out their heart to him. Their confession is a perfect example of how we must handle the sacrament of Reconciliation and the season of Lent. We must come before God and offer our imperfectness to Him. The key that the reading emphasizes is that God loves us and never stops forgiving us. This is something we often forget. Therefore, as we continue through Lent, and whenever we enter a confessional, remember that we are not coming to beg a spiteful God for forgiveness. He has already forgiven us. In Lent and in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, all we need to do is accept it.

In the Gospel, the roles change a bit. Jesus tells us to “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” Sometimes, like in the first reading, we all need forgiveness. But sometimes we’re the ones who need to forgive. When we judge and condemn others, we are also judged and condemned. The Gospel is very reminiscent of the Golden Rule. Jesus is telling us to love and forgive others so that we ourselves might be loved and forgiven. How we act determines the quality of our relationships, especially our relationship with God. So, by not judging, not condemning, giving and forgiving, we in turn receive great reward from others and from God. The season of Lent serves as a time for us to remember to love as Jesus loved, for when we do, we reap the reward of heaven.

Peter Volmert '15

Senior Pastoral Team

Tuesday, March 3: Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent

First Reading: Isaiah 1:10, 16-20

Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12

In the First Reading, Isaiah preaches to the princes of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah. He warns them to put away their evil doings and wash themselves of their sins. He tells them that as scarlet as their sins may be, they may become white and pure as wool once again through repentance. Yet, if they renounce God and continue their evil ways, the Lord will smite them with his sword, for God has warned them.

During Lent, we come to find that our lives need improvement. Or, we are told that our lives need improvement, yet do not make the changes that have been suggested. It is very important that we, as students, faculty, and staff at St. Louis University High School, continue to be open to ways that God and other people in our lives may be leading us.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees. He says that they are obsessed with their authority and put the attention on themselves, instead of God. Jesus tells the people to “observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example.” We often hear the phrases “talking the talk” and “walking the walk.” Think about it. How are you a leader? Do you give orders, or show by your example? Although both are important and appropriate at certain times, we should use the latter whenever possible.

These two readings give a complex message, yet a very simple one at the same time. We must wash our souls clean and as “pure as wool.” As humans we naturally sin and must ask God for forgiveness. As we repent and promise to never do evil again, we must set a good example. Today, show someone Jesus. Let’s go out of our way to make him proud.

Luke Wilmes and Matthew Stauder, ‘18
Freshman Pastoral Team

Wednesday, March 4: Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent

First Reading: Jeremiah 18:18-20

Gospel: Matthew 20:17-28

“The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as ransom for many.”

Reading the last line of today’s Gospel, I was struck. We can apply Matthew’s words to our daily lives in many ways. It is so easy to want and pray for things to make our lives easier, or to expect our lives to instantly be better by simply asking without putting forth any effort. I thought to myself: what would we do when asked to serve and not just be served?

So many people serve us in so many ways, from the smallest of tasks to the greatest of sacrifices. I read this and think of so many young people like my uncle Henry who gave their lives to ensure the freedom of others in World War II. He went off to war no older than our seniors and died defending his country. He never complained and was more worried about his family than he was himself. I am reminded of the nurses and doctors who cared for my child all day and night as if he was their own. So many people do exceptional things every day in ordinary jobs and ways, yet they embody what Christ asked and never ask for reward.

Once, on my way to the hospital to visit my son, I stopped at Starbucks. When I got to the window the car in front of me had paid for my coffee. I really wish I could have thanked that person in front of me. Let them know that that random act of kindness was appreciated. That person didn’t need to hear my thanks or my story; I made their day simply by being there for them to do something good.

I, too, will pay it forward, especially during Lent. Instead of giving something up, I am going to do something for others without thanks or reward. Hold the door open, thank the person who does so much to make your life easier, give to the less fortunate and know that serving others is a far greater “thank you” than hearing the actual words.

Cortney Schraut
Library

Thursday, March 5: Thursday of the Second Week of Lent

First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-10

Gospel: Luke 16:19-31

“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD.”

To what do we give our trust? Today, there are many things that people want us to trust in: ads on television, money, the newest iPhone, new and fancy clothes. Our world is full of things that people trust in to make ourselves happy. But do they? Are the rich happy with what they have or do they always want more? Many times, if you look closely, those who are rich are always looking to make more money. What does this mean? It means they are not satisfied with what they have. They know something else is missing in their lives, but it cannot be filled with money and riches.

The first reading carries a metaphor of a tree that plants itself by a stream that allows it to bear good fruit and keep its green leaves. We are the trees and Jesus is the water. Those that trust in Him and put their hearts in Him will flourish and find happiness. That isn't to say that they don't have money or a nice car. However, they understand their ultimate source of happiness is in God, not the materialistic gains of this world.

What kind of person are we? Are we the ones who always desire more, never happy with what we receive? Or are we the ones who are happy with what we receive because we know it comes from the Lord and are thankful for that?

With the Gospel, Jesus uses the story of the rich man and Lazarus to teach us to help the least among us, those whose sores have not yet healed. Jesus' truth is that we cannot claim to be his followers as long as we ignore his teaching of love and compassion to the least in favor of pursuing our own luxuries and pride. And, as Jesus promises us, ignorance of this message is no good excuse.

Tim Juergens, Daniel Lally, & Dan Walsh, '16
Junior Pastoral Team

Friday, March 6: Friday of the Second Week of Lent

First Reading: Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13A, 17B-28A

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

The Gospel of Matthew is revered by some as the most important of the four Gospels. It connects the person of Jesus to his Jewish heritage and contains all the important elements of the early church, beginning with the miraculous birth of Jesus and concluding with the story of the Last Supper.

In chapter 21 we read of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. This Gospel is a reminder that we must appreciate what we have been given, for it can all be taken away as easily as it was given.

Vineyards are a recurring theme throughout the Bible. Often, Jesus is referenced as the vine and his people as the branches. The landowner created a fertile resource and trusted his tenants with the preservation and development. Sound familiar? As the wishes of the landowner were ignored, his true patience and compassion resonated in the sending of not only more servants but also his very own son; i.e., the Messiah.

The Kingdom of God belongs in the hands of those who will not only appreciate its beauty, but who will take full advantage of its harvest. The reference to the rejected stone becoming the cornerstone is a reminder that even when the outlook is bleak, the future still holds many opportunities for prosperity.

St. Ignatius said it best; "Above all, remember that God looks for solid virtues in us, such as patience, humility, obedience, abnegation of your own will - that is, the good will to serve Him and our neighbor in Him. His providence allows us other devotions only insofar as He sees that they are useful to us."

Tim Wells '99
Alumnus

Saturday, March 7: Saturday of the Second Week of Lent

First Reading: Micah 7:14-15, 18-20

Gospel: Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The first reading talks about the protection that God bestows on us, being the only God who forgives and does not stay angry forever. This might sound odd to us today who believe in the one God, but in the cultural moment of this reading, this idea of the one God was revolutionary.

Today, we have to remember that God still forgives us completely. There is no reason for us to be scared. Though we all may sin and feel afraid of the the forces of this world, we know that God forgives and saves us. I know I am not completely free of sin and that I have my faults. But the good news is that God still loves me unconditionally, just as he does everyone else.

Today's gospel reading is the famous reading of the the Prodigal Son. We've heard the story before. The son asks for all of his inheritance from his father and goes off and wastes it in a life of sin. When he realizes the horrible thing he has done, he immediately regrets his decision and goes back to his father and begs for his forgiveness. His loving father immediately forgives him and, overwhelmed with happiness, throws a feast for the return of his son.

Just as the father forgives his son's sins even after he made a terrible decision, God our father also forgives us of all our transgressions. He always is there for us, ready to take us back with loving arms. God never forgets about us and when we turn away from him, he is just waiting for us to ask for forgiveness so that he can lovingly forgive us and accept us back into his arms. God cares for us so much that no matter how bad something is that we do, he is always there, ready to forgive and throw a feast—just like the prodigal son's father.

Thomas Leeker and Joseph Reznikov, '17

Sophomore Pastoral Team

Sunday, March 8: Third Sunday of Lent

First Reading: Exodus 20: 1-17

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:22-25

Gospel: John 2:13-25

Most of us have learned about the Ten Commandments. Despite this, we often forget about them throughout our day. Usually that's okay: most people don't struggle with killing someone or stealing. Even with the many interpretations of these commandments, such as "killing a personality" or depriving someone of happiness, it's typically pretty easy to avoid seriously hurting someone. Despite the Law's goodness, we almost always see it as restrictive. However, it isn't only meant to dissuade sin-- it also encourages us to do good. We don't have to do grand, powerful things, although we should always try live the magis, by asking how we might seek the will of God in a deeper way. Throughout this year we've made a lot of steps in this direction. When we all came together as a school to talk about racism and Ferguson, we showed our care for people and determination to make this world better. Through the comfort of each other about Connor Lewis, we were unified. Every day we must strive for this: to love and support one another.

In this letter, Paul tells the Corinthians that when they preach they should "offer the gospel free of charge" and that "if [someone preaches] the gospel, [it] is no reason for [them] to boast."

At first, this seems very unusual. Paul, an Apostle and one of the most powerful and well-known speakers of his time, is telling us that we should try to stay away from taking recognition for being a good Christian and spreading the Word of God. It's impossible to do something good and not want to have someone know that you have done well. It's part of human nature! So how then should we go about preaching? With humility. Like the parable of the man who prayed in private instead of in the streets, we should try to keep our focus on God instead of our fortune.

In today's Gospel passage, "zeal for [God's] house" consumes Christ as He sternly rebukes merchants and overturns tables. I, like many of us upon first hearing this passage, was surprised by this passion. We usually consider Jesus to be mild-mannered and calm, given His loving words and actions in other parts of the Gospel. Yet Jesus' anger in this situation is just. Perhaps the shock comes not from an act that seems uncharacteristic but rather from a misconception of what peace truly is. I suspect that few people who give it a bit of serious thought would regard peacemaking as weak or passive. But often we forget what I heard on the Teach-In last November and what leaders like Dr. King and Ghandi knew: peace is strong, and peace is dangerous to hate and injustice. I feel Christ within me when I consider the injustices happening near and far and feel the passion and the inspiration to do something bold, something that challenges, something that will help build lasting peace.

Salvatore Vitellaro, Kevin Gerstner, and Edward Gartner, '17
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Monday, March 9: Monday of the Third Week of Lent

First Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-15AB

Gospel: Luke 4:23-30

In the first reading today, we learn of a man, Naaman, who was cleansed of his leprosy in the Jordan River. Naaman was a man in search of God. By believing what a prophet told him, he was able to cure himself of his lifelong disease. Naaman sought God, and found healing in the cleansing waters of the Jordan.

The Responsorial Psalm continues the theme introduced in the first reading.

“Athirst is my soul for the living God. When shall I go and behold the face of God?”

We must search for the living God in our life, just like Naaman. The Israelites had a desire to find God in their lives as is shown in the last line of the Psalm:

“When shall I go and behold the face of God?”

The Israelites set an example for us. One of the basic principles of a Jesuit education is to find God in all things. By finding God in even the smallest things, we behold the face of God. Searching for God does not require a pilgrimage to the Jordan, as shown by Naaman. It requires a pilgrimage into our hearts; a chance to truly see and understand the living God in our lives.

In the Gospel, Jesus returns to the story of Naaman. He tells the crowd gathered around him that there were many lepers in the time of Elisha, but God sent Elisha to Naaman- a foreigner from Syria. Likewise, there were many widows in the time of Elijah, yet God sent Elijah to a woman, a foreigner from Zidon. In both instances occurring after the prophets had been rejected in their hometown, Israel.

In both of these instances God sent one of his prophets to *foreigners*. This story reminds of the parable of the Good Samaritan. The priest did not help the poor, beaten man. The Levite did not help the man. But the Samaritan, the one hated by the Jews, bandaged him up and took him into his home.

Jesus is letting it be known that everyone is welcome in the Kingdom of God, nobody gets forgotten. In this season of Lent, let us remember those that are often looked down upon in society. Let us remember the poor and homeless - the people who can't give up chocolate for Lent because they have no food. The children who are unable to give up video games because they have no TV, or home for that matter. Let us open our arms to everyone as Elisha and Elijah did.

John Burke and James Pollard, '18
Freshman Pastoral Team

Tuesday, March 10: Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

First Reading: Daniel 3:25, 34-43

Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35

As a Catholic, the question I am always asked during Lent is, “What are you giving up this year?” There are your typical answers – chocolate, candy, some other favorite food item, Facebook, Instagram, etc. Then there are your not so typical answers – a boy in my grade school class once claimed to have given up bathing for Lent. Thankfully that only lasted a few days before his mother forced him to return to his normal hygiene habits. In my twenty-some-odd Lenten seasons, I regularly find myself questioning the point of my sacrifices. How is not eating that brownie going to strengthen my relationship with Christ? I am not positive I see the connection. If I am not wasting time on social media during Lent, am I using that time to pray and grow in my faith? Not usually.

The Gospel today offers an alternative solution to the tradition of “giving up” things for Lent. Peter asks Jesus if it is enough to forgive seven times, to which Jesus replies that we should forgive not seven times, but seventy-seven times (or seventy times seven times, depending on the translation you use). Either way, Jesus is really telling us that we should *always* forgive those that sin against us. As we continue this season of Lent, we can work to let go of grudges and bitterness, forgive those that offend us, and be gracious and merciful to those who normally cause us stress. By striving to act this way, we can work towards becoming more like Jesus, in whose image we were created. As the Psalm today says, “Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths.” And so let us ask Jesus to give us the strength this Lent to learn to forgive our brothers and sisters just as He continually forgives us.

Tracy Lyons

Math Department

Wednesday, March 11: Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent

First Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9

Gospel: Matthew 5:17-19

Today, Moses speaks to the Israelites traveling through Egypt. He encourages them to hear and listen to the Lord in their journey to the holy land. He reminds them that they are a “truly wise and intelligent people” who are lucky to have a God that loves them so much. Moses reminds the Israelites of God’s power, challenging them to preserve the faith, “guard(ing) not to forget the things which (their) own eyes have seen,” and then to pass it on.

His challenge speaks of our responsibility to help others grow closer to God. To do this, we build community. We form relationships with others that are meaningful and based on truth, faith, and love, even though there will be bumps along the way. Once we have built a community, we use it to bring ourselves closer to God and to follow where he may lead us.

The second job of the community is to serve and build up others. We need to bring the whole community to God, not just ourselves. We bring along the stragglers and trust the help of others, being vulnerable to their love. Realizing all the great things God does for us, we pass it on to others, which will in turn help us grow closer to him.

The Gospel emphasizes the importance of God’s law. Although some of Jesus’ time may have believed that he came to replace the Old Testament law, Jesus refutes this. Instead, Jesus came to fulfill the law by challenging us all to not only obey God’s law but to teach and lead others in following them as well.

Moreover, God gives us rules so we can reach heaven and be in union with him. He would not steer us on the wrong path. God sends Jesus to deliver this message for our own good. Not only is he asking us to follow the rules but also to spread it. We need to help others succeed and find God’s grace as well. That is God’s message to us. He tells us the way to do this is help each other and follow the commandments he has provided for us and we will be able to succeed.

Patrick Schuler, Sergio Goodwin, and Matthew Jansen, ‘16
Junior Pastoral Team

Thursday, March 12: Thursday of the Third Week of Lent

First Reading: Jeremiah 7:23-28

Gospel: Luke 11:14-23

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

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

I'm always struck by today's familiar Psalm when I hear it at Church. Harden not my heart? I'm at Church! I'm not the one He needs to worry about! If I heard God's voice, of course I wouldn't harden my heart! I would rejoice and be glad and freak out...but in a good way.

That's easy to say. But, upon further thought...

What if God's voice said something I didn't like?

What if He called me to do something that wasn't so easy?

What if God told me I was wrong?

If this happened, I'm guessing it wouldn't be my heart that would be the problem. Rather, I think I would emulate my toddler-aged children and pretend my ears stopped working.

Being a follower of Christ is an all-in proposition that asks us to avoid that selective hearing and be a follower and believer – not *if* it becomes difficult but especially *when* it becomes difficult. This is a daunting task set before us!

Thankfully we are given some extra encouragement in the *Verse Before the Gospel*. I don't read it as an invitation to not try. In particular, the words "Even now" and "return" are glaring to me. God is accepting of us in our full humanity, weak and failing. This isn't an excuse to not try to be ever-faithful to Him; rather, it is an invitation to come back to Him after we try but inevitably stumble. It is this love that sustains us through the difficulty of our faith.

During this Lenten season, I pray for a willingness to accept what God has put before me – the good and the bad – and pray in thanksgiving for His loving mercy.

John M. Penilla '99

Friday, March 13: Friday of the Third Week of Lent

First Reading: Hosea 14:2-10

Gospel: Mark 12:28-34

The First Reading and Responsorial Psalm for today reflect a powerful, involved God who seems to be reaching out to us. Hosea writes that the Lord is the only one who can save and redeem the Israelites. He will love, heal, and defend his chosen people and he wants us to hear his voice. In the end, the reading focuses on the individual making the right choice and following the way of the Lord.

The Responsorial Psalm pictures God as a protector and active deity who uses heavenly powers to rescue and speak to His people. In the final verse, He says that the Israelites will hear his voice and follow his leading hand. He asks us to simply recognize him for who he is. Personally, I mostly see God through the little things in life, as some might call them. That isn't to say that God doesn't act in large ways, it's just that he can more commonly be found in the simpler joys of life sometimes.

In the Gospel, when asked what the greatest commandment is, Jesus answers by first saying we must love God fully and give ourselves to Him and Him alone. The second commandment, he continues, is to love your neighbor as yourself.

When I think of the first commandment, I think of how many things get in the way of us and God: homework, social life, sports, scholarship deadlines, theater rehearsals, club meetings, dances...the list goes on and on. Despite all of these difficulties, we can still love God in the ways Jesus teaches us to, and that is by simply taking a second and noticing God. Once you start to consciously see his presence, whether it be through trying to love other people more this Lent, simply remembering to take a second and be grateful for what God has given you, or recognizing His presence in the simple joys of life, loving God is no longer as immense a challenge. Loving God, in fact, can become second nature to us.

Joel Wilper and Thomas Lally, '15
Senior Pastoral Team

Saturday, March 14: Saturday of the Third Week of Lent

First Reading: Hosea 6:1-6

Gospel: Luke 18:9-14

We've probably all been the Pharisee in today's Gospel at one time in our lives--making a grand show of our faith, or at the very least having the impression that lengthy, formal prayers are somehow superior to true conversations with God. The main idea of today's Gospel is that both the Pharisee and the tax collector are sinners, yet only the tax collector admits it. The Pharisee makes a mistake that we buy into a lot: that if we "fast twice a week and pay tithes on our incomes" then we will make up for our human flaws. This is not so. Rather, we should try to be like the tax collector, taking little moments of the day to speak to God. His prayer is not gaudy. It is humble and genuine. The tax collector's prayer is deeply personal. In our own lives, we could pray in the hallways during a passing period with our arms full of books, on the drive to school in the morning, or during a workout. As long as we are humble and honest with God like the tax collector, our prayers will reach Him far better.

During this Lenten season, we might be making a Lenten promise such as giving up candy or helping out around the house. Although these promises are made with good intentions, they easily become a show of who is willing to do the hardest thing this Lent. Why not take Jesus' advice in today's parable and try to perform our Lenten promises humbly? Maybe add a new Lenten Promise: to pray informally once or twice a day.

Ethan McIntyre and Cade Dernlan, '16

Sunday, March 15: Fourth Sunday of Lent

[First Reading: 2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23](#)

[Second Reading: Ephesians 2:4-10](#)

[Gospel: John 3:14-21](#)

Today in the Gospel, Jesus was talking to Nicodemus and he said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life."

Jesus then explained to Nicodemus why God had sent Jesus into the world. God sent Jesus so that the world may be saved through him, and so that whoever believes in him will be saved. Jesus was sent as the light so that those who do good things go towards the light and those who do bad things go away from the light.

For us, Lent should be a time to reflect on whether we are going towards or away from the light in what we say, think, and do. We say that we should dedicate all of our thoughts, words, and actions to God. Today, attempt to use some of your conversations, actions, and thoughts for the greater glory of God, which is to lead others to Christ, who is the light. When you encounter someone you are not on great terms with, make an attempt to say something that would draw you and the other person towards God. In your actions, try to make the conscious choice to do something more than normal, more than just doing things mindlessly. If we could all just dedicate some, or even just a couple, of our thoughts, words, and actions, to God, we would all be drawn to God like a moth to a flame. God sent Jesus into the world to save us, and if we dedicate some of what we do every day to him, that goal will be accomplished soon.

Liam Heffernan, '18
Freshman Pastoral Team

Monday, March 16: Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

First Reading: Isaiah 65:17-21

Gospel: John 4:43-54

New Heavens. A New Earth.

When I read the words of the prophet Isaiah, I feel confident that I am in the hands of a poet—with a poet’s imagination, a poet’s compassion, and a poet’s rhetorical skill. He speaks about the future, about the new earth, but his vision has perhaps more to teach us about the old earth and the lamentable present: the sound of weeping, the sound of crying, the infant who survives but a few days. This is where the prophet lives, surrounded by the outcry of those who suffer. And as a man of faith, he knows the great poetry of faith that has come before him. He returns to the first thing that we are told about God: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” And as he tries to hold his trust in this divine creativity side by side with his awareness of the suffering of the world he lives in, he hears a voice that emerges from the welter of human pain and speaks of new heavens and a new earth, a new creation that is about to come into being. This voice says not just, “Let there be…” but also, “There shall no longer be…” Let there be light and delight. There shall no longer be sorrow and tears.

Just as Isaiah the prophet and poet looks to the writers of the past to inspire his vision of a new Jerusalem coming into being even in the midst of the old, so the prophets and poets who have come after him have stood in the midst of their own broken cities and looked back to Isaiah’s words for a new vision of what could be. When Rome was sacked by Visigoths, Augustine wrote *The City of God*. When the civil wars of thirteenth century Florence drove Dante into exile, he wrote his *Divine Comedy* about a pilgrimage to the eternal city. Witnessing the the earliest signs of what ravages the industrial revolution and its “dark Satanic Mills” would bring to London, William Blake wrote, “I will not cease from Mental Fight, / Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand: / Till we have built Jerusalem, / In England’s green & pleasant Land.”

And what about us—we who live in our own divided city? We are a school that is named for the city in which it stands—the city from which we draw life from and the city which we serve. Do we hear—perhaps a little more clearly than we did this time last year—the sound of weeping in the streets of this unfinished Jerusalem of ours? Does it hurt us just a little more to know how many of the lives around us will end too soon? If so, then perhaps we are learning something of Isaiah’s compassion—fine tuning our attentiveness to the sufferings of a broken world. And what would we see if we looked upon our city with a prophet’s imagination? What would a *new* Saint Louis look like and how might this school help bring it about? Perhaps we should look to our artists to show us the way—artists like the ones who painted murals on the plywood boarding up businesses in Ferguson and on South Grand. Perhaps we should be cultivating a little of the artist in each of us—or the musician, the dancer, the actor, the poet—the part of us that is capable of doing something new. It seems to me that Isaiah is telling us that the God who created us is still in the business of creativity, and that we are called to join in the work: the building of houses, the planting of vineyards, investments in the old earth that will make it new.

Mr. Terry Quinn
English Department

Tuesday, March 17: Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

First Reading: Ezekiel 47: 1-9, 12

Gospel: John 5:1-16

“Do you want to be well?” Jesus’ question to the crippled man in today’s Gospel seems like a strange one. Of course he wants to be well! He’s been lying there sick for 38 years!

Jesus heals the man. But his question is a good one for us to ask ourselves: do I want to be healed? Do I really want to get up off my mat and live a new life? It takes courage, courage like that of St. Patrick, whose feast we celebrate today. Following Jesus requires that we give up everything else. He warned the newly healed man, “Do not sin any more.” The last time I went to Confession, the priest said to me, “I absolve you from these and all the sins of your past life.” I thought to myself, “No, Father, it’s ‘the past sins of your life.’” But no; he really meant “of your past life.” That means I’m starting on a new life! Today! Lent is a time for us to turn from our mat of habitual crippling sins, and that’s challenging. But, as the psalm says, God is our “ever-present help in distress.” So don’t be afraid to be healed: just ask Jesus.

Thomas Hogan, ‘15

Wednesday, March 18: Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

First Reading: Isaiah 49:8-15

Gospel: John 5:17-30

In this Gospel passage, Jesus is under fire from the Jews. They want to kill him because, by calling God his Father, he made Himself equal to God.

Jesus' response is fascinating, and one that may be difficult for us to embrace given the individualistic, egotistical, self-serving, me-first society.

Everything that he does he does because of his Father. He cannot do it alone. As a father of four and a surrogate father of over a thousand, I find this both scary and exciting. I have the ability and the responsibility, to shape the lives of my children and my students. The difference is that God is doing amazing things like raising the dead. I am a sinner. I am flawed. How can I come close to emulating God's plan? How can I be a positive influence in my children's lives and in the lives of my students?

Jesus spells it out very clearly. His message is difficult to ignore. "Hear my word."
"Hear the voice." "Those who hear will live." "Hear his voice."

I need to open my ears and listen. I need to stop talking. I need to stop doing. I need to listen. I am not alone. Jesus admits he cannot do it alone. If he can't, I certainly can't. We are in this together. I need to put myself out there, vulnerable and willing to follow God's plan.

Opening myself up to hearing the word of Jesus and recognizing my weaknesses will allow me to best serve my children and my students. This is a daunting prospect, made easier having the comfort in knowing that Jesus is with me every step of the way.

Dr. Brock Kesterson
Assistant Principal for Student Life

Thursday, March 19: Solemnity of St. Joseph, Husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:4-5A, 12-14A, 16

Second Reading: Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22

Gospel: Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24A

In the first two readings, we clearly see God's role as a father. When I look at the relationship I have with my dad, I see that the times we are happiest are when we are both living selflessly for the other. God the Father is always giving completely of himself—he even gave his only Son to save us. So, we rely on him just like children rely on their father. This allows us to cry, “Abba,” which literally means “Dada,” like a toddler would call out to his dad. God has given us so much and we often forget to say thank you. Today, try to think of at least two things that you are truly thankful for, one for your father and one for God the father. Sometime this week, bring it up directly with both of them in a conversation.

When I think of St. Joseph, the word “father” does naturally come to mind. However, the Gospel reading from the Feast of the Solemnity of St. Joseph tells the story of Joseph not as the earthly father of Christ, but as Mary's husband and as a Man of God before Jesus was even born.

Whenever we need to make a difficult decision, St. Joseph is an excellent model to follow. He was very unsure about marrying Mary once he found out she was pregnant, but after thinking and praying about it, he decided to trust God's plan. Like Joseph, we are called to be people of faith in our daily lives. We can identify with Joseph easily because he, like us, was an average human. Like us, he had doubts and struggles. But through his faith in God and his love for Mary, he was able to overcome these doubts and even become a saint. God may not call us to be the foster father of the Messiah, but in smaller ways He does ask us to trust in His plan.

Evan Gorman and Jacob Price, '17
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Friday, March 20: Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

First Reading: Wisdom 2:1A, 12-22

Gospel: John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

In today's First Reading, we hear “the wicked” discussing torturing a man who believes in God. They believe that if they torture this man, then God would come and save him. The Old Testament is full of stories like this where pagans hurt, shame, and insult those who believe in God. Yet the man had so much trust in God that he would die for Him. In our world today I feel that we have gotten away from that trust in God. Lent is a perfect time to regain that trust. In Lent, we sacrifice our favorite things or make a vow to do something everyday to show our love for God. Lent is also a perfect time to cleanse our soul from all of the sins we have committed. The pagans in the reading didn't feel remorse for what they did to the man. It is time for us to recognize the bad we have done in our lives and confess it to our Lord so that it can help us find eternal life in Heaven.

Danny Favazza, '18

Saturday, March 21: Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Jeremiah 11:18-20](#)

[Gospel: John 7:40-53](#)

In the first reading, Jeremiah is thanking God for his love, care, and protection. God knows everything, and with his knowledge he protected Jeremiah from danger that he himself did not even know about. Just as God protected Jeremiah and got vengeance on those who plotted against him, God will protect us too. He has a plan for us, and even if we cannot figure it out, we know that he loves and cares for us, and everything will work out in the end. As Jeremiah says, “You have entrusted my cause.” God has also entrusted all of our causes too. He is always with us, always keeping watch and protecting us, and Jeremiah lets us know that God’s presence in our lives is not only an incredible relationship of love, but is an eternal, everlasting, and unbreakable bond.

The Gospel this week talks about the divisions among the people in the crowd talking about Jesus. Many times we can have opposing beliefs on any number of beliefs, whether the differences arise over sports, or maybe art or music, or even religious stances. We must be reminded throughout this Lenten season that in Christ we find Infinite Truth. All questions and differences are resolved through Him. And even though we can certainly get lost on the path to answers, we must reflect on and pray to God for help in our search.

Additionally, Lent is a time of waiting. Before making any rash or hasty decisions, we should consider what Nicodemus says in the Gospel: “Does our law condemn a man before it first hears him and finds out what he is doing?” Just as the Pharisees would arrest Jesus before even hearing him, we must consider that some of our actions may seem equally rash and foolish. A theme that pops up a lot during Lent is one of patience, or self-discipline—most apparent in our fast and the decision to give something up. We must be equally steadfast in our decision-making during Lent, and truly think to what Lent is all about.

Joseph Schultz, Nick Messina, and Chris Weingart, ‘16
Junior Pastoral Team

Sunday, March 22: Fifth Sunday of Lent

[First Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34](#)

[Second Reading: Hebrews 5:7-9](#)

[Gospel: John 12:20-33](#)

Today's scripture passages gracefully guide us to an awareness of the beauty, the immensity, and the perfection of God's gift to us in the form of Jesus. I cannot do justice to these readings save to share a few thoughts that may serve as starting points for your own personal contemplation.

I will make a new covenant...I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts... All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the LORD, for I will forgive their evildoing and remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34)

Have mercy on me, O God, in your goodness; in the greatness of your compassion wipe out my offense. (Psalm 51:3)

A new covenant, a new law - this is something much more than a set of dos-and-don'ts. It is the goodness and spirit of God as revealed in Christ. Justin, Irenaeus and Aquinas each equated Christ with the Greek notion of *logos* – the word, the truth. The law is the *logos*, the truth of this vast universe in which we live and of the One who creates it. The Truth walked this very earth in the Incarnate Jesus. The truth is that *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life (John 3:16)*.

And why will this covenant exceed where the other failed? Because God is now God-man. Therein He shows us He knows the challenge of being human. He participates in the joy and suffering present in humanity. He rubs flesh and breaks bread with us, forgives' our missteps, tells us to do the same; and (if we allow Him) He permeates our being and breathes life into our lungs and fire into our hearts. If we truly surrender to this Jesus who came to dwell in us, we are therein so moved as to want nothing more than to live AMDG. The effect is not that we succeed in eliminating our tendencies but that, along with God, we forgive ourselves and find a way to maneuver around them so as to, in some small way, mirror Him.

Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. – Hebrews 5:8-9

“I am troubled now. Yet what should I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But it was for this purpose that I came to this hour.” – John 12:27

Did you ever wonder why, after healing someone, Jesus often admonishes that person to “tell no one”? Here St. Paul explains the rationale for this messianic secret – that man accept Christ not as superhuman but as God now human and humbly dwelling amongst us. The ingeniousness and the perfection of redemption has as its essential requirement that Jesus experience all aspects of humanity – and particularly the total injustice of His passion. The requirement stems from the fact that this is what we too must face. From the experience of the humbled and obediently surrendering Christ, we can have faith and hope that, in our own experience of suffering and death and perceived abandonment, like Him we will find joy of rising above it. The power of His redemptive act is that He acted not out of His divine nature. Instead, through His surrender to His Father, he fulfilled the potential of His human nature and merged it into oneness with His divinity. We have a similar potential, to rise and share not just in the humanity of Jesus but slowly, progressively in his divinity.

“Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.”

“This voice did not come for my sake but for yours. Now is the time of judgment on this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to myself.” – John 12:28, 30-32

“Now” is the time for judgment. We live always in the “now”. There really is nothing but “now”. Instead of *giving up* something, for the remainder of Lent consider *giving* something - that most precious possession of now. Give “now” over to God. In pondering the scriptures of this season, open yourself to Him. Be silent and hear Him whisper to you. Then when He enters the quiet of your soul, resume your effort to set the world on fire - now!

Stephen Hutchison ‘68
Alumnus

Monday, March 23: Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62](#)

[Gospel: John 8:1-11](#)

I was one of 29 students who traveled with the SLUH Students for Life to Washington, D.C. in January to join the national March for Life. As a part of the pro-life activities surrounding the event, we scheduled a meeting with Senator Roy Blunt to discuss issues of human life. When he opened the floor for us to ask him questions, One of the SLUH students very quickly and eagerly asked for his thoughts on the death penalty. Blunt gave a very short, hasty response, saying, “The Pope and I would disagree on this one, but I think if you read the Bible, you find that it’s very pro-death penalty.” He then quickly declared that it was time for a group picture and ended our meeting.

I almost don’t need to point out that the readings of today prove that the Bible is anything but pro-death penalty. In the story about the rape of and false accusation against Susanna, we see a prime example of the risk that capital punishment may take innocent life.

Innocence, however, is by no means an entitlement to the right to life. Even of those who are guilty, the verse before the gospel reads: “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, says the Lord, but rather in his conversion, that he may live.” Death snuffs out the possibility for good coming out of evil. Jesus takes this mentality one step further in the gospel when he points out the prideful scribes Pharisees that they cannot judge what sin forfeits the right to life, for they themselves are sinful. No action makes us unworthy of the life God has given.

Admittedly, reading these passages reminds me that just a few years ago, I myself was pro-death penalty. It took learning and openness for me to change this view, to accept the Church’s teaching that the death penalty is only permissible if it is necessary for public safety, which in today’s age, it never is.

So, when I look at these readings for today, I don’t just remember the importance of human life. I am also reminded of one of the purposes of Lent. Lent is not a time for mourning or sadness. It is a call to conversion. The Christian life is one that requires constant conversion, and that constant conversion is a constant striving to do better in all things: issues of human life, the ways we treat others, the ways we pray and view God. Lent reminds us that we are always called to do more, to do better, for God.

Joe Slama, ‘15

Tuesday, March 24: Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

First Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

Gospel: John 8:21-30

In the first reading, Moses and the Israelites are struggling to survive in the desert. The people complain to Moses of having wretched food and water and blame God for their suffering. The Lord sends a punishment to the Israelites of saraph serpents which attack the Israelites, killing those who are bitten. Moses prays to the Lord asking forgiveness for his people. The Lord directs Moses to impale a serpent on a stake and if an infected Israelite was to look upon the stake, the person would be healed and live.

In our life we have been given countless blessings by God such as food, water, a home, and an education. The Israelites did not praise God for supplying them with food and water, but they complained that the food was wretched. This teaches us that in our own lives, especially during this Lenten season, we should thank God for all he has given us.

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks to the Pharisees about how he will be going away to a place where they will be unable to follow him. The Pharisees, confused and doubtful, think about what they have been told and fail to understand what Jesus is saying, which is that he will soon be going to heaven. Jesus goes on to say that they will be unable to follow because they are wrapped up in their sins and restates that he is God's son. Others listening in the crowd of people believe in his message and begin to follow him.

We can have two different responses to Jesus's call in our own lives. As an example of a poor reaction, the Pharisees turn away and cannot see what is being explained to them. We also get a good example: hearing the words of Jesus and following him, like the other onlookers in the gospel.

During Lent, let us pray that we are open-hearted and open-minded to God working in our lives.

Andrew Hohenberger and Philip Cibulka, '17
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Wednesday, March 25: Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

[First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10](#)

[Second Reading: Hebrews 10:4-10](#)

[Gospel: Luke 1:26-38](#)

In all of these readings, I'm struck by the human struggle to understand God's will and power, and how in the end it doesn't matter if we comprehend God - His will prevails.

The first and second readings set the stage for the Gospel, but in both there is a lack of understanding about God's power. In the first reading, King Ahaz is told to ask God for a sign, but he refrains from doing so, saying, "I will not tempt the Lord." Whether it be out of piety or arrogance, the King's refusal to ask God for help highlights the chasm between his sense of control and God's real control.

When Mary is told by the angel Gabriel that she will bear a son, she too has difficulty comprehending God's will and power, questioning "how can this be, for I have no relations with a man?" The angel confirms that it is true, and as if to further prove his point, informs Mary that her cousin Elizabeth, "called barren," is also pregnant. Gabriel concludes, "for nothing will be impossible for God."

In light of these readings, we might ask ourselves: Where do I struggle to comprehend God's will and power?

- Am I angry at God because a loved one is sick or in pain? Have I lost someone close to me and failed to see God's will in this loss?
- Am I frustrated with someone and think "they'll never change"? Or is it I who needs changing?
- Am I overwhelmed by the tasks in front of me - a mountain of work, a difficult practice or rehearsal, a game I'm not sure we can win - and fail to believe that God's power will help me through?
- Am I boastful of a recent success - a good grade, a big win, a successful performance - and take all the credit for myself?

Lord, help me to remember that Your will and power are at work in all things in my life, and that nothing is impossible for You.

Amen.

John Moran

Principal

Thursday, March 26: Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Genesis 17:3-9](#)

[Gospel: John 8:51-59](#)

In today's gospel, Jesus tells his listeners that anyone who obeys his word will live forever. His listeners, though, counter that Abraham did not live forever, yet he obeyed God's word. They challenge him to explain himself. Is Jesus making himself better than Abraham? Jesus eventually answers them by saying, "Before Abraham came to be, I AM."

During this Lenten season, let us reflect on some of the mysteries of our great and powerful God. God is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He is here with us now and always will be. This awesome mystery is expressed in this gospel when Jesus identifies himself as I AM, the name God provides for himself to Moses in the Old Testament. Jesus says that those who follow the word of God will live forever. This means that it's important for us to read the word of God so that we can follow it and live forever. As teens we sometimes test our faith and question it.

Let us remember that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; even more profoundly, Jesus is our friend whom we can always trust and depend on.

Let us pray during these final days of Lent to be open to God's word in the Bible and to discover God's word in our everyday lives through our friends, family, and our teachers.

Finally, let us also try to be open to God's grace and his presence in our lives. God is constantly trying to get our attention. All we have to do is slow down our busy lives for a moment and listen.

Matt Copland and Jack Schweizer, '18
Freshman Pastoral Team

Friday, March 27: Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Jeremiah 20: 10-13](#)

[Gospel: John 10:31-42](#)

From the Responsorial Psalm: “The cords of the nether world enmeshed me, the snares of death overtook me.”

A few months ago, I had an experience that I hadn’t discussed with anyone. I told a friend about it recently, as I asked for his opinion in writing about it in this Lenten reflection.

It was night, and I was in bed thinking about the events of the day and replaying them in my mind. Nothing stood out about the day; just regular work activities that I used to form a mental checklist of to-do’s for the next day. As I often do, I prayed through the list and the people involved. This night, as I felt myself drifting from a state of prayer to one of sleep, a sensation unlike any I’ve experienced startled me. A chilling presence drew near to me, and I trembled, overcome by dread, fear, and torment. My spirit instantly knew: death is here.

I cried out to the Lord. How could this be? Was death here for me? For someone in my family? I prayed His protection over my husband and my children. Confused and frightened, I begged Him to fill my heart and mind with His comfort and peace. Have mercy on me, Lord! Gradually, the fear subsided and gave way to contemplation. I no longer felt choked by “the cords of the nether world” (an apt description) but curious and wanting. What do you require of me, Lord? Am I ready to meet you? I meditated and listened. I acknowledged that He could do with me what He willed, and I found solace in surrender. I knew then that death would leave alone that night, but the Lord got my attention. He requires all of me. Not just what I do, but how. And why. Every part of me (and you), all for His glory, to radiate His love and light.

Melissa Jones, CFRE
Director of Advancement

Saturday, March 28: Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Ezekiel 37 21-28](#)

[Gospel: John 11: 45-56](#)

Our relationship to God is exactly that: a relationship.

Over and over in the first reading, we are reminded that we are God's people and he is our God. He has made an "everlasting covenant of peace" with us, and promised to put his sanctuary among us forever.

This might be the most reassuring thing I've heard in a while. As mortals, our relationships to teachers and friends and everybody we interact with can be tough to navigate. One of the two parties has a likelihood to make a mistake. God, on the other hand, repeats this message of a rock-solid promise to always be there. And the best part is that the person on the other side of this relationship is God. He can't mess it up.

In the Gospel, we see the chief priests growing fearful of Roman suppression, so they come up with only one solution: Kill Jesus. All of these men were afraid for their own lives and they feared the news of Jesus's signs would spread to Rome which would lead their involvement. This Gospel marks the beginning of the plot to kill Jesus, all because of an irrational choice and fear. It shows the grave consequences of unjustified decisions.

Next time you need to make a decision, pray to God to help guide you to the best choice. Because of our strong relationship with God, He will always be willing to listen to whatever comes your way.

Jimmy Reddy and Thomas Nowak, '16
Junior Pastoral Team

Sunday, March 29: Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

[Procession with Palms - Gospel: Mark 11:1-10](#)

[First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7](#)

[Second Reading: Philippians 2:6-11](#)

[Gospel: Mark 14:1 - 15:47](#)

Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

They all condemned him as deserving to die. Some began to spit on him. They blindfolded him and struck him and said to him, "Prophecy!" And the guards greeted him with blows.

I have never been quite sure how to feel on Palm Sunday. On one hand, there is a spirit of celebration on today's feast. Many churches commemorate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem by symbolically passing out palms and processing into the Church amidst joyful music. Before the procession, we hear the Gospel reading proclaimed: Jesus is hailed as king while the people lay cloaks and palms at his feet. At no other point in the Gospels do the crowds get closer to understanding the true identity of Jesus. For a brief moment, it seems that all is well.

But this exultation is soon shattered by the proclamation of the Gospel. Literally minutes after the story of Jesus' procession, we hear the Passion account. The elation of the day is replaced by the sober feeling of disappointment and sadness as we hear about betrayal, abandonment, injustice, slander, torture, dehumanization, and death.

Every year, I ask myself the same questions: How could the crowds demand crucifixion only days after they hailed Jesus as king? How could their faith be so weak? How could they not understand? How could they be so fickle?

But then I wonder: am I really that different than the crowds? I would like to think my faith is surely stronger than that of the crowds, but a deeper self-examination may show otherwise.

It's easy to praise God when it's a beautiful day, I ace the test, someone compliments my work, my relative's surgery goes well, or everything goes according to plan. But how quickly my faith can waver as soon as I am pushed, challenged, or made uncomfortable in some way. What happens when it's been gray and rainy for the past week, when I bomb the test, when someone criticizes or calls me out, when complications arise in the surgery, when I lose control? Do I still praise God? Or, like the crowds in the gospels today, do I lose heart and condemn my own God?

Lord, as we approach your Passion, give us the strength to follow you when our crosses are heavy, when we are confused and lost, when it seems that darkness is all around. Grant us the grace to trust fully in you.

Michael Schonhoff
Campus Ministry and Theology Department

Monday, March 30: Monday of Holy Week

[First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-7](#)

[Gospel: John 12:1-11](#)

When I read this gospel, I'm drawn to Judas and his question:

“Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days’ wages and given to the poor?”

I think the question is a good one. As someone who values simplicity, I find myself agreeing with the question – couldn't there be another way to anoint and honor Jesus, one that's not so expensive? Oil that could be sold for three hundred days' wages seems a bit excessive, doesn't it? Then the extra money could be given to those in need.

I'm also reminded that Jesus knows where Judas is coming from here. Judas isn't coming from a place of true empathy and compassion for the poor, and so I think Jesus responds in a specific way. It's easy to be on the outside and make judgments about decisions others are making – I struggle with that. At times I can look at choices others make and jump to similar questions that Judas asks. And many times it comes from a judgmental place, not a compassionate one. I don't think Jesus is insinuating that we should never question another's choice or offer constructive criticism to anyone. Rather, we need to be aware of where those feelings and questions are coming from within ourselves. Are they coming from a place of compassion and empathy or of judgment and jealousy?

That last line that Jesus says to Judas - “you do not always have me” - is also an important one to me. More than just inferring that Jesus won't be around much longer, I wonder if he's telling Judas that he doesn't always have the best of intentions. So, next time I'm in a judgmental place, I'll ask myself, “Do I have Jesus right now?”

Mr. Nick Ehlman, '99

Campus Ministry and Math Department

Tuesday, March 31: Tuesday of Holy Week

[First Reading: Isaiah 49:1-6](#)

[Gospel: John 13:21-33, 36-38](#)

“Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times.”

How many times in our lives do we deny Jesus and not realize that we are doing so? The most obvious way to deny Jesus is to deny that we believe, but there are many other less obvious ways that we may deny Jesus.

Last summer, in the midst of a St. Louis heat wave, our air conditioner stopped working. I was almost eight months pregnant which compounded the misery. We did our best to keep the doors closed and the cold air in, but it was a sweaty, uncomfortably sleepless night. As I lay awake, I couldn't help but think of those who lived regularly on the street or in a building without heating or cooling. How often do I take for granted the modern conveniences I am afforded on a regular basis? Why does it take a loss of comfort to remind us what we are blessed with? When we don't appreciate the things that we have in our lives, we deny Jesus. Betrayal number one.

I have a former co-worker who is unmarried without children and lives alone. Because all of her family and close friends live out of town she often invites co-workers to get together for dinner. For many reasons I found myself dodging her invitations. The one dinner I went to was drawn out; spent listening to the woman's list of many ailments. I found myself consumed with the list of tasks I needed to accomplish before the next day rather than engaged in conversation. Recently, this woman contacted me and asked if we could get together. I sputtered a few lame excuses to try to get out of it. When I got home that evening and complained to my husband that she had asked me to dinner again, his reply surprised me. "She's just lonely and needs someone to talk to," he said, "Indulge her." It had not occurred to me that with very little effort, I could offer this woman the attention and companionship that she craves. When we ignore someone who needs us, we deny Jesus. Betrayal number two.

St. Louis is known for its age-old question, "Where'd you go to high school?" When we ask this question, we are not only trying to find common ground with a person but we are also making assumptions about them based on their response. My family is not from St. Louis so when I applied to high school during my eighth grade year I had not even heard of many of the private schools let alone be aware of the stereotypes associated with each school. However, it was big at that time to throw around the term "first choice only." As in, such and such school only considers those students who list them as their first choice. I remember gossiping with some friends about how a classmate of ours got accepted to a particular school and saying, "She must not be smart enough to get into _____ because _____ is a second choice school." It never occurred to me that this particular school could have been her first choice for a variety of other reasons. When we make assumptions about a person and pass judgment especially in a gossipy manner, we deny Jesus. Betrayal number three.

We may deny Jesus when we don't appreciate the things that we have in our lives, when we ignore someone who needs us, or when we make assumptions about others. What are the ways that you turn from Jesus, and how can you start acknowledging him more this Easter week?

Mrs. Simonie Anzalone
Campus Minister and Dance Teacher

Wednesday, April 1: Wednesday of Holy Week

[First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9A](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 26: 14-25](#)

Today is one of those days that strikes me as getting short shrift. Even though it's smack-dab in the middle of Holy Week, Wednesday has no catchy name like many of the other days of this week. It's just...Wednesday. But I don't think it is a day that should quickly be forgotten.

In addition to getting a beautiful reminder from Isaiah about God's involvement in our lives (seriously: read over that and try to not be comforted!), I find it to be an important day of preparation for the days ahead.

Rather than being three separate days, each with their own meaning, the Church teaches that the coming Triduum is actually one continuous liturgy. Beginning with the Thursday evening liturgy and continuing through evening prayer on Sunday, the 72-hour Triduum commemorates Jesus' life, suffering, death, and resurrection—the events by which he won our salvation. If you've never been to services on all three nights consecutively, give it a shot. We miss out on the incredible depth of symbolism of the Triduum liturgy if we just go to church on Easter. If we haven't experienced and prayed with the death on Friday, our experience of the resurrection mightn't pack the same punch.

Today, though, is the “calm before the storm” – the last moment to check ourselves and ready our hearts and minds before the incredible story of our faith plays out. On days like today, preparation is the norm. If the St. Louis Cardinals play in a playoff game, I don't just sit down at the first pitch and watch. Ahead of time, I make sure the TV is working, that I have ample snacks, and that the viewing areas is comfortably arranged for the people I am inviting over.

So, as we pray with the words of Scripture on this day, I invite us all to reflect on the ways in which we are prepared to enter in to this wonderful mystery that awaits us. Are you ready?

Brian Gilmore '02

Campus Ministry and Theology Department

Thursday, April 2: Holy Thursday - Evening Mass of the Last Supper

[First Reading: Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14](#)

[Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#)

[Gospel: John 13:1-15](#)

At the last supper, Jesus gives himself to the disciples as a sacrifice, reminiscent of the Passover lamb. The whole of his life is summed up in this sacred moment at the table in the upper room: he will now give away all that he had been given. Once he has instituted this sacramental memorial of himself, all that remains is to fulfill the offering and submit to the cruel death his enemies were plotting. Yet in a real way, the offering happened already on Holy Thursday.

The Eucharist is Jesus' self-gift to his Father and to us – and to make this clear, he also washed the feet of the Apostles. This famous and evocative scene is meant to teach, without any doubt, that the purpose of his life has always been self-gift. If we are to be his followers, this must be our purpose also.

Yet we have a fear that, if we give away what we have, we will be left empty. It is a reasonable fear. If I have an apple and I give it away, I will not have anything anymore. This is basic math.

There is more to it though. The proof is the life of Jesus. When Jesus pours out his whole life, his whole divinity and every last drop of his blood, what results – the Church – is an explosion of life and joy, forgiveness, peace and holiness that had never happened before in human history.

So on this Holy Thursday, let us pay close attention to the truth that Jesus' self-gift teaches us: the most profound joys in this life come only by giving fully of ourselves, even to the point that we fear being left empty. Let us consider how and where in our own lives we are being called to give ourselves in a Eucharistic offering. And let us pray for the faith to know that, when we have given all we have, God will provide even more than we ever imagined.

Mr. Tim Kieras, SJ
Foreign Language Department

Friday, April 3: Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

[First Reading: Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12](#)

[Second Reading: Hebrews 4: 14-16; 5:7-9](#)

[Gospel: John 18:1 - 19:42](#)

Have you ever noticed in the story of the crucifixion how so many people want to help Jesus but just can't bring themselves to do it? They're all too scared of the consequences.

When Christ needs a friend the most, Peter can't bring himself to stand up for Jesus. He flakes and denies Christ. He just can't do it. The consequences of helping seem too terrifying.

Pontius Pilate is hesitant to condemn the Lord, so he does everything he can to get Jesus out of it—everything except the one thing that would actually work: refusing to execute Christ. But Pilate is too scared to do that. He wants to be popular.

Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Christ only in secret, finally has the courage to come forth and show that he is Christ's follower. But by then, it's too late. Jesus is already dead. Peter, Pilate, and Joseph couldn't stand up for Christ, and now something terrible has happened.

Not too terrible for God, though. Amazingly, God takes this horrible event and transforms it. God takes the tragic consequence of humanity's paltry response to Jesus and turns it into our salvation. And thank God for that! We're so weak. I know I am. I want to do the right thing, yet so often, despite what seems to be my best effort, I fail. But somehow God can transform even those failures.

If I make today all about my sin and how I've failed the Lord, though, I'm missing the point! The crucifixion is not about my sin; it's about the Lord's overwhelmingly powerful love. Jesus is so crazy about us that there's nothing we can do—even killing him—that will keep his love from winning. We're weak, but he is infinitely strong. Pretty cool, huh? I guess that's why we call it Good Friday.

Mr. Chris Kellerman, S.J.

Campus Ministry and Theology Department

Saturday, April 4: Holy Saturday at the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter

[Readings for Holy Saturday at the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter](#)

“You seek Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified. He has been raised, he is not here. Behold the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.’”
(Mark 16:6-7)

We join Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, in receiving the message of the angel: Yes, behold the place where they laid him, *but do not linger! Go!* Tell the disciples; tell the world! This is the Good News; this is our hope! Life, not death, has the last word! This is our identity, into which we have been baptized, as Paul says in the Letter to the Romans.

But how often do we actually live as if this were true? Don’t we often think and act as if Christ were still in the tomb? I think that again and again we find ourselves lingering at the tomb. Pain, anxiety, suffering and death seem to consistently overshadow or even drown out God’s promise. A cursory look at our lives and the world appears to confirm this: loneliness, excessive workloads, racism, widening economic disparity, apathy towards the plight of the poor, disease, and yes, even violence committed in the name of God.

The thing is, lingering at the tomb appears easier, more comfortable. There are no demands on us. It is easy to look at the world, see only crucifixion and seek refuge from having to deal with it in the comfort of our living rooms. If social media and instantaneous news bring us closer to harsh realities, they also give us outlets to escape from them. But don’t we end up becoming restless? Out of touch with reality? Irritated by any interruption of our “perfect” world? To linger at the tomb today is to bury our heads in the sand and forsake reality; but it is also to deny that Christ has redeemed and is redeeming *all of* reality. And it is to reject our invitation to join Christ in this sacred work of redemption.

It is more challenging to leave the tomb and seek the Risen Lord in the world around us and in our lives. And when we find him, it takes courage (and grace!) to proclaim the Good News that he has been raised and that we find our hope in him, especially when it will most likely come across as naive foolishness.

But this is the challenge of Holy Saturday. This day tells us exactly *where* we are: in an in-between time, when the certainty of God’s victory is not always obvious. And it tells us *who* we are: we are the people who dare to proclaim Jesus Christ, crucified *and* Risen, in the face of all uncertainty. This is our hope; this is our faith.

So let us behold the place where they have laid him, but only if we leave at once to make haste for Galilee, where we will see him, as he told us.

Mr. Dan Finucane, ‘06
Campus Ministry and Theology Department

Sunday, April 5: The Resurrection of the Lord

[First Reading: Acts 10:34A, 37-43](#)

[Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-4](#)

[Gospel: John 20:1-9](#)

“O Necessary Sin of Adam!... O Happy Fault!...” These words from the Easter Proclamation, sung during the Easter Vigil, strike us at first hearing as strange and paradoxical. How could our faults ever be deemed happy, after all? But the Easter proclamation continues: “...that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!”

During the Lenten season and Holy Week we look at the cross, we look at our sins and so often do not move beyond these. But God does! These are not the end of the story. These are again occasions for God to show the depths of His love: *“For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son, so that all who believe in Him may not die but may have eternal life!”*

I am not perfect! I sin. And yet God says: *You are precious and I love you!* God’s love enters into our lives once again and says: I will raise you up to new life, just as I have raised up my Son from death to the glory of the resurrection.

This is why Paul is so insistent that unless Christ is raised from the dead our faith and our hope are empty and vain. For what is the message of Jesus?

In all of his healings, his miracles, his interactions with sinners, his raising others from death, his discussions with the Pharisees Jesus is proclaiming his message – and that message is: There is nothing more powerful than God’s love. The resurrection of Jesus is the Father’s ratification and seal of that message.

Do I believe this? Or do I still believe something in me cannot be healed, forgiven, changed, overcome by this love?

Yes, there is an absolute – God’s love! It could overcome death in Jesus; it can overcome all death in me.

My faults are indeed happy; they remind me both of my need for God’s healing love and the promise of that love given in the cross and resurrection of Jesus.

Happy Easter! All of what you have hoped and longed for is yours! Alleluia!

The Reverend Father Jim Burshek, S.J.

Theology Department, Superior of SLUH Jesuit Community