



SPIRITUAL *renewal* FROM VICE TO VIRTUE

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL 2023

LETTER *from the* RECTOR



The Rev. Dr. Christopher A. Beeley
Rector, Church *of the* Incarnation

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This Lent we begin a new season of the Church Year and an exciting new season at Incarnation. Our focus as a community will be on how we are growing in Christ and coming to know the power of God's Holy Spirit.

On Sunday mornings, we will gather at 10:20 am to study the wisdom of the Christian Tradition on how we can grow from vices to virtues in the Christian life. The clergy have put together this helpful devotional guide for our meditations throughout the week.

I invite you "to the observance of a holy Lent," and I pray that the Spirit will quicken our hearts and shape us more and more into the image of Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

In Christ's love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Beeley" followed by a cross symbol. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Christopher +

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:1-2

WHAT IS LENT ALL ABOUT ANYWAY?

Oftentimes, discussion of virtues and vices can become a shorthand for simply “becoming a better person,” a kind of bootstrapped morality that assures us that if we try our hardest and really put our minds to it, we can make ourselves “good people.” But the beating heart of the Christian faith is not what we can do or have done, but what God has done for us and in us through Jesus Christ. Christian spiritual practices and disciplines take their start from this truth: We have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us. And the life we now live in the flesh we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us (Gal. 2:20). Notice the use of the passive voice in our theme verse on the facing page from Romans. Paul does not say “transform yourself” but “be transformed.” It is God who transforms us, who gives us the mind of Christ to discern his will, and who enables us by the power of the Holy Spirit to live lives pleasing to him. Our job is to offer ourselves and our lives to God, to live out each day the reality of our baptism, that we have been crucified and raised with Christ.

Lent is an opportunity to refocus ourselves on the cruciform life of Jesus Christ, to join him in the desert, as it were, and to live by the power of the Spirit. It is a time to prayerfully examine our lives, to meditate on the Scriptures, to practice penitence, to adopt new disciplines, and to grow in holiness. At the same time, this is the work of God the Holy Spirit in and through us; it is living outside of ourselves. It is Christ’s death and resurrection taking place in our own lives!

HOW DO I USE THIS DEVOTIONAL?

We have designed this devotional for you as an aid in this process. The Scriptures, prayers, and reflections for Ash Wednesday and the days leading up to the First Sunday in Lent are chosen to help you prepare your heart and mind for walking through the vices and virtues we’ll be learning about with Dr. Beeley in our parish-wide Sunday School class during Lent. Following these preparatory Scriptures, the materials provided for each day of the six weeks of Lent specifically concern one of the deadly sins or “evil thoughts” as early Christian masters of spirituality like Evagrius of Pontus and John Cassian often called them. Each week will begin with a prologue, which includes a discussion of the vice, a discipline or practice for combatting it, and a virtue or positive character trait which counteracts the sin in question. The devotional will serve to guide our self-examination, to provide an aid for confession and penitence, and to encourage spiritual practices that foster growth in holiness and love of God.

We invite you to join us in the observance of a holy Lent, and pray that God will continue the work he has begun in you, conforming you more and more to the image of his Son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

ASH WEDNESDAY

February 22, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalms 51:1-4a, 10-12, 16-17

READ

Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from punishment. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent and leave a blessing behind him, a grain offering and a drink offering for the LORD your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her canopy.

Joel 2:12-17

REFLECT

Are you willing and ready to open your heart to God? What does returning to God look like for you this Lent?

RESPOND

Almighty and everlasting God, who hates nothing that you have made and forgives the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

February 23, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalms 51:1-4a, 10-12, 16-17

READ

Since therefore it remains open for some to enter it and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, again he sets a certain day—"today"—saying through David much later, in the words already quoted, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later about another day. So then, a Sabbath rest still remains for the people of God, for those who enter God's rest also rest from their labors as God did from his. Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs. Indeed, the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.

Hebrews 4:6-13

REFLECT

Is your heart hardened? What if the Word made its way into your heart today? What might happen?

RESPOND

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FRIDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

February 24, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalms 51:1-4a, 10-12, 16-17

READ

Therefore prepare your minds for action; discipline yourselves; set all your hope on the grace that Jesus Christ will bring you when he is revealed. Like obedient children, do not be conformed to the desires that you formerly had in ignorance. Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct; for it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.' If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. For 'All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord endures for ever.' That word is the good news that was announced to you.

1 Peter 1:13-25

REFLECT

Where is God calling you to greater discipline and obedience in your life? Which desires need to be purified by the grace of Jesus?

RESPOND

Support us, O Lord, with your gracious favor through the fast we have begun; that as we observe it by bodily self-denial, so we may fulfill it with inner sincerity of heart; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE SATURDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

February 25, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit. For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalms 51:1-4a, 10-12, 16-17

READ

One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

Mark 12:28-34

REFLECT

How does Jesus fulfill the greatest commandments? What difference does that make for you?

RESPOND

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully look upon our infirmities, and in all our dangers and necessities stretch forth your right hand to help and defend us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

LENT 1: From Gluttony to Contentment Through Fasting

Deadly Sin: **GLUTTONY**



The great fourth century Christian Monk Evagrius of Pontus saw the spiritual battle against gluttony as the most basic conflict of the Christian life of holiness. Of all the deadly sins or “evil thoughts,” as Evagrius often called them, an unbridled desire for food is perhaps the one we encounter most often and most viscerally. In our modern American context, even amongst Christians, abstinence or self-control around food is seldom seen as an important element of Christian spirituality.

While there is much to say about combatting gluttony, we should note that the principle problem with gluttony is not the desire for food itself, which is of course natural to our embodied existence, but the disordered desire for food. As Thomas Aquinas wrote, “it is a case of gluttony only when a person knowingly exceeds the measure in eating, from a desire for the pleasures of the palate.” We live in a society that seems to actively encourage this desire at every turn, and to counteract it with equally

unhealthy patterns of dieting and deprivation. How, then, to reorder our desires in such a difficult context? The discipline of fasting is a central practice in the struggle, wherein we regulate our intake of food, actively choosing not to fulfill all our desires and to rely on God for strength in the midst of our weakness. And this practice need not be limited to food. For some, fasting from food can be detrimental to physical health, or can wrongly spiritualize an already unhealthy or harmful relationship toward food, such as an eating disorder. The goal of fasting is not deprivation for its own sake, but is growth in reliance on God, the giver of all good gifts. We can therefore benefit from fasting from anything in our lives for which we have a disordered desire. One might consider a social media fast, a fast from alcohol, a fast from television, or a fast from regular patterns of cellphone use. All of these are aimed at the healing of our desires and the reordering of our hearts toward God.

As you reflect on the gluttonous areas of your own life through the Scriptures, questions, and prayers provided this week, ask God to stoke up a renewed passion for him in your life, that he might be the one true desire of your heart.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

From Gluttony to Contentment Through Fasting

February 26, 2023

REJOICE

The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed. He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel. The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always accuse, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far he removes our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion for his children, so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him. For he knows how we were made; he remembers that we are dust.

Psalms 103:6-14

READ

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am." If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The Lord will guide you continually and satisfy your needs in parched places and make your bones strong, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Isaiah 58:6-12

REFLECT

What help do you want from the Lord? What guidance do you desire? What repair do you hope for?

RESPOND

Almighty God, whose blessed Son was led by the Spirit to be tempted by Satan: Come quickly to help us who are assaulted by many temptations; as you know the weaknesses of each of us, let each one find you mighty to save; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE MONDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

From Gluttony to Contentment Through Fasting

February 27, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror. My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O LORD—how long? Turn, O LORD, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.

Psalm 6:1-4

READ

Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Philippians 3:17-21

REFLECT

How have you made your “belly” your god? Which desires in your life take the place of your desire for God? How can awaiting our Savior redirect your desires this week?

RESPOND

Almighty and everlasting God, mercifully increase in us your gifts of holy discipline, in almsgiving, prayer, and fasting; that our lives may be directed to the fulfilling of your most gracious will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE TUESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

From Gluttony to Contentment Through Fasting

February 28, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror. My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O LORD—how long? Turn, O LORD, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.

Psalm 6:1-4

READ

And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Matthew 6:16-18

REFLECT

What are the secret things in you that only God sees?

RESPOND

Grant to your people, Lord, grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and with pure hearts and minds to follow you, the only true God; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE WEDNESDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

From Gluttony to Contentment Through Fasting

March 1, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror. My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O LORD—how long? Turn, O LORD, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.

Psalms 6:1-4

READ

Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. The clothes on your back did not wear out, and your feet did not swell these forty years. Therefore keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you.

Deuteronomy 8:2-4, 6-10

REFLECT

What is the longing, yearning, emptiness in you that only the Lord can satisfy?

RESPOND

Bless us, O God, in this holy season, in which our hearts seek your help and healing; and so purify us by your discipline that we may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE THURSDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

From Gluttony to Contentment Through Fasting

March 2, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror. My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O LORD—how long? Turn, O LORD, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.

Psalms 6:1-4

READ

The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they hurried there on foot from all the towns and arrived ahead of them. As he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things. When it grew late, his disciples came to him and said, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is now very late; send them away so that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy something for themselves to eat.” But he answered them, “You give them something to eat.” They said to him, “Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give it to them to eat?” And he said to them, “How many loaves have you? Go and see.” When they had found out, they said, “Five, and two fish.” Then he ordered them to get all the people to sit down in groups on the green grass. So they sat down in groups of hundreds and of fifties. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to set before the people, and he divided the two fish among them all. And all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish. Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men.

Mark 6:30-44

REFLECT

What is the Lord teaching you today? How is Jesus feeding you?

RESPOND

Strengthen us, O Lord, by your grace, that in your might we may overcome all spiritual enemies, and with pure hearts serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FRIDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

From Gluttony to Contentment Through Fasting

March 3, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror. My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O LORD—how long? Turn, O LORD, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.

Psalm 6:1-4

READ

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."'

Matthew 4:1-4

REFLECT

How have you been fed by God's Word in the past? How do you hope God's Word will sustain you in the future?

RESPOND

Lord Christ, our eternal Redeemer, grant us such fellowship in your sufferings that, filled with your Holy Spirit, we may subdue the flesh to the spirit, and the spirit to you, and at the last attain to the glory of your resurrection; who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE SATURDAY IN THE FIRST WEEK IN LENT

From Gluttony to Contentment Through Fasting

March 4, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; O LORD, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror. My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O LORD—how long? Turn, O LORD, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.

Psalm 6:1-4

READ

Owe no one anything, except to love one another, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone; the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Romans 13:8-14

REFLECT

What does it look like for you to put on the Lord Jesus Christ?

RESPOND

O God, by your Word you marvelously carry out the work of reconciliation: Grant that in our Lenten fast we may be devoted to you with all our hearts, and united with one another in prayer and holy love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

LENT 2: From Lust to Chastity Through Lifting Our Eyes

Deadly Sin: LUST



Along with gluttony, early monks called lust “a passion of the body,” which plays on natural human desires or appetites, stoking a disordered desire for sexual pleasure not tethered in any way to its proper end.

Just as eating and drinking are natural goods for individuals, things necessary for the nourishment of the body, so too is sexual intercourse a natural good for humanity. Sex is, after all, the means by which we carry on our collective existence through procreation. But sexual desire, like hunger, can easily become disordered, severed from the context in which God intends it, namely the bonds and boundaries of marriage. Quickly thereafter it becomes a serious spiritual problem. In our heavily sexualized culture where even things like dental work are marketed with sex appeal (perhaps you’ve seen the “sexy teeth” billboards all over Dallas), and with access to pornography and illicit relationships easier now than at any time in human history, the struggle against lust can often be paired with temptation to despair.

Thanks be to God that victory over sin comes not from ourselves, but through Christ Jesus

(Rom. 7:24-25). So how, by God’s grace, can we work toward the virtue of chastity (which takes its name from “chastising” illicit sexual desire)? The spiritual masters recommend all sorts of different practices, including bodily discipline through fasting and manual labor. Yet, as the fourth century monk John Cassian notes, “bodily fasting is not enough...it must be accompanied by contrition of heart, intense prayer to God, [and] frequent meditation on the Scriptures.”

All of these practices aim to lift our eyes from those things which cause temptation and lead to lust, and to fix them on the source of all that is lovely, Jesus Christ. As Paul warns the Corinthians, “shun sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18). Flee temptation immediately and turn your mind toward whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8). Practice chastity by lifting your eyes to the author and perfecter of our faith. For in the end, our bodies are not our own, not ours to choose and use as we please. We belong, body and soul, to God, who created us and bought us back with the price of his own life.

Pray this week that God will give you the grace and courage to redirect your gaze, to fix your eyes upon him, and to desire the One who alone can fulfill the longing in our hearts.

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

From Lust to Chastity Through Lifting Our Eyes

March 5, 2023

REJOICE

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit. While I kept silent, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord. Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Psalms 32:1-7, 10-11

READ

What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may increase? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we were buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, so we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal bodies, so that you obey their desires. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

Romans 6:1-14

REFLECT

What does newness of life look like? What makes it possible?

RESPOND

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE MONDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

From Lust to Chastity Through Lifting Our Eyes

March 6, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me; take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Psalm 31:1-5

READ

"All things are permitted for me," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are permitted for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food," and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is meant not for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Should I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that whoever is united to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, "The two shall be one flesh." But anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun sexual immorality! Every sin that a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against the body itself. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

REFLECT

How does Jesus glorify God in his body? How can you?

RESPOND

Let your Spirit, O Lord, come into the midst of us to wash us with the pure water of repentance, and prepare us to be always a living sacrifice to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE TUESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

From Lust to Chastity Through Lifting Our Eyes

March 7, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me; take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Psalms 31:1-5

READ

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

REFLECT

What wounds do you need Jesus to heal? How is the Spirit making you more holy?

RESPOND

O God, you willed to redeem us from all iniquity by your Son: Deliver us when we are tempted to regard sin without abhorrence, and let the virtue of his passion come between us and our mortal enemy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE WEDNESDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

From Lust to Chastity Through Lifting Our Eyes

March 8, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me; take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Psalm 31:1-5

READ

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Matthew 5:27-30

REFLECT

What sin in you needs to be torn out and thrown away? How will you live without it?

RESPOND

O God, you so loved the world that you gave your only- begotten Son to reconcile earth with Heaven: Grant that we, loving you above all things, may love our friends in you, and our enemies for your sake; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE THURSDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

From Lust to Chastity Through Lifting our Eyes

March 9, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me; take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Psalm 31:1-5

READ

Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world, for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God abide forever.

1 John 2:15-17

REFLECT

What do you love? Do you know that the Lord loves you?

RESPOND

O Lord, strong and mighty, Lord of hosts and King of glory: Cleanse our hearts from sin, keep our hands pure, and turn our minds from what is passing away so that at the last we may stand in your holy place and receive your blessing; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FRIDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

From Lust to Chastity Through Lifting our Eyes

March 10, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me; take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Psalms 31:1-5

READ

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As for the things that you have learned and received and heard and noticed in me, do them, and the God of peace will be with you.

Philippians 4:8-9

REFLECT

What is true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, excellent, and praiseworthy about Jesus?

RESPOND

Grant, O Lord, that as your Son Jesus Christ prayed for his enemies on the cross, so we may have grace to forgive those who wrongfully or scornfully use us, that we ourselves may be able to receive your forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE SATURDAY IN THE SECOND WEEK IN LENT

From Lust to Chastity Through Lifting our Eyes

March 11, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge; do not let me ever be put to shame; in your righteousness deliver me. Incline your ear to me; rescue me speedily. Be a rock of refuge for me, a strong fortress to save me. You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me; take me out of the net that is hidden for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

Psalms 31:1-5

READ

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:16-24

REFLECT

What is gratifying about living by the Spirit? What do you think God desires for you?

RESPOND

Grant, most merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace, that they may be cleansed from all their sins, and serve you with a quiet mind; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

LENT 3: From Greed to Generosity Through Gratitude

Deadly Sin: **GREED**



On the sliding scale of sins, if there is such a thing, we might be tempted to place greed on the lower, less consequential end. Yet, Scripture reminds us that greed—or the love of money and worldly possessions—is actually the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). It is a gripping hunger that serves as a gateway to a whole host of sins. We see its marks all around us. Governments hoard resources while its citizens go hungry. Corporations exploit farmers and factory workers in developing countries. This reality is nothing new; we are confronted by the same narrative in the daily news and the Old Testament prophets alike. But this vice is not reserved to the powerful or the ruling class. In countless ways, greed masquerades itself and nudges us toward actions that suit our own selfish ends, too. Self-aggrandizement, the over-accumulation of wealth, the desire for bigger and better things all cause attachment to worldly possessions. We become numb to the cries of others as we listen to our own selfish desires. They keep us from seeing the world through the eyes of Jesus and embodying him to a greedy world.

Two practices can help reorder our lives away from greed—thankfulness and generosity.

Greed fundamentally means that you are not content with what you have; that discontent fuels your drive for more. In contrast, practices of thankfulness encourage an entirely different posture; they train you in contentment. Simple disciplines like listing ten things you are thankful for each day can rewire your brain toward that end. The second practice is generosity. This practice yields the opposite of greed, too—instead of gathering more and more for yourself, you end up with less and less as you offer your excess to others in need. St. Basil of Caesarea famously put it like this: “Where are your storehouses? They’re in the stomach of the poor.” Of course, St. Basil had a specific form of generosity in mind, but this practice can happen in any number of ways—by giving food to the beggar on the street, by tithing your income to the church, or by regularly donating possessions to clothe and furnish those being released from prison. Most wonderfully of all, when we engage in these acts of generosity, we are ministering to Christ himself (Matthew 25:40).

As you take stock of your life, how does greed manifest in your thoughts or actions? What are the things that you clutch too closely or desire to possess too strongly? As you reflect, ask God for wisdom on how to properly understand these desires and transform them into opportunities for thankfulness and generosity instead.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

From Greed to Generosity Through Gratitude

March 12, 2023

REJOICE

I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

Psalms 121

READ

Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it, but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

1 Timothy 6:6-10

REFLECT

What makes for happiness? For a good life?

RESPOND

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE MONDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

From Greed to Generosity Through Gratitude

March 13, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me. But it is for you, O Lord, that I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.

Psalm 38:1-4, 15, 17-18, 21-22

READ

A certain ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not commit adultery. You shall not murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and mother.’” He replied, “I have kept all these since my youth.” When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” But when he heard this, he became sad, for he was very rich. Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Those who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?” He replied, “What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.” Then Peter said, “Look, we have left our homes and followed you.” And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not get back very much more in this age and in the age to come eternal life.”

Luke 18:18-30

REFLECT

What is Jesus asking you to give up, give away, or leave behind in order to follow Him?

RESPOND

Look upon the heart-felt desires of your humble servants, Almighty God, and stretch forth the right hand of your majesty to be our defense against all our enemies; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE TUESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

From Greed to Generosity Through Gratitude

March 14, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me. But it is for you, O Lord, that I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.

Psalm 38:1-4, 15, 17-18, 21-22

READ

He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

Mark 12:41-44

REFLECT

What things are the hardest for you to trust with the Lord?

RESPOND

O Lord, we ask you mercifully to hear us; grant that we, to whom you have given a fervent desire to pray, may, by your mighty aid, be defended and comforted in all dangers and adversities; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE WEDNESDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

From Greed to Generosity Through Gratitude

March 15, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me. But it is for you, O Lord, that I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.

Psalms 38:1-4, 15, 17-18, 21-22

READ

Let mutual affection continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them, those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me? Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:1-8

REFLECT

What makes you afraid? What help or solace can Jesus provide for you?

RESPOND

Give ear to our prayers, O Lord, and direct the way of your servants in safety under your protection, that, amid all the changes of our earthly pilgrimage, we may be guarded by your mighty aid; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE THURSDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

From Greed to Generosity Through Gratitude

March 16, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me. But it is for you, O Lord, that I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.

Psalm 38:1-4, 15, 17-18, 21-22

READ

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not regretfully or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, "He scatters abroad; he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever. He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us, for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your partnership with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

2 Corinthians 9:6-15

REFLECT

What gifts do you have to give? What generosity do you have to offer?

RESPOND

Keep watch over your Church, O Lord, with your unfailing love; since it is grounded in human weakness and cannot maintain itself without your aid, protect it from all danger, and keep it in the way of salvation; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FRIDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

From Greed to Generosity Through Gratitude

March 17, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me. But it is for you, O Lord, that I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.

Psalm 38:1-4, 15, 17-18, 21-22

READ

Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me and between your herders and my herders, for we are kindred. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left." Lot looked about him and saw that the plain of the Jordan was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. So Lot chose for himself all the plain of the Jordan, and Lot journeyed eastward, and they separated from each other. Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the plain and moved his tent as far as Sodom. Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD. The LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Raise your eyes now, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. Rise up, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you." So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the LORD.

Genesis 13:8-18

REFLECT

Are God's promises trustworthy? What promises of God are you (not) trusting?

RESPOND

Grant us, O Lord our Strength, to have a true love of your holy Name; that, trusting in your grace, we may fear no earthly evil, nor fix our hearts on earthly goods, but may rejoice in your full salvation; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE SATURDAY IN THE THIRD WEEK IN LENT

From Greed to Generosity Through Gratitude

March 18, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me. But it is for you, O Lord, that I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever with me. I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. Do not forsake me, O Lord; O my God, do not be far from me; make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation.

Psalms 38:1-4, 15, 17-18, 21-22

READ

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

Matthew 6:19-24

REFLECT

Where is your heart? Where is your treasure? Whom do you serve?

RESPOND

O God, you know us to be set in the midst of so many and great dangers, that by reason of the frailty of our nature we cannot always stand upright: Grant us such strength and protection as may support us in all dangers, and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

LENT 4: From Despair to Hope Through Lifting Our Eyes

Deadly Sin: **DESPAIR**



Grief is not a sin. Grief is part of the blessed life of this age when directed toward God. Jesus says, “Blessed are all who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Mt. 5:4). Christians grieve as those who have hope; we openly lament to God about sin and suffering because he forgives sin and resurrects bodies. We bring this grief to a compassionate God who comforts us with his promise to make all things new. Despair, however, is to grieve for the wrong reasons and without hope in God’s comfort. The one who falls to despair has a disordered and idealized expectation from life, such that when adversities come, this person succumbs to cynicism and sloth – a life without hope or purpose. For example, the one who values esteem above all else will experience despair when dishonor comes.

However, the humble person will welcome critique and dishonor as a familiar friend and opportunity to grow in holiness. We overcome this vice by the practice of examining our expectations in light of the promises of God. Examining our expectations can be a difficult task because our hearts are deceptive. We must dig into our hearts, reflect upon our pain and seek out the entitlement of our expectations. We must then examine these expectations in the light of God’s promises and reattach ourselves to God and his word. Jesus said, “In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (Jn. 16:33). Jesus assures us that we will experience pain in this life. But he also assures us that in Christ, God will recycle our pain in the joy of his victory over sin and death. This promise of final victory over sin and death births hope in the lives of the saints. When we re-examine our expectations in light of God’s promises, we will exhibit the virtue of hope; and Christian hope will not disappoint.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

From Despair to Hope Through Hearing God's Promises

March 19, 2023

REJOICE

Come, let us sing to the LORD, let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving and raise a loud shout to him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the caverns of the earth, and the heights of the hills are his also. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands have molded the dry land. Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, and kneel before the LORD our Maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice! Harden not your hearts, as your hearts, as your forebears did in the wilderness, at Meribah, and on that day at Massah, when they tempted me. They put me to the test, though they had seen my works. Forty years long I detested that generation and said, “This people are wayward in their hearts; they do not know my ways.” So I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter into my rest.”

Psalms 95

READ

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not driven to despair, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, always carrying around in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For we who are living are always being handed over to death for Jesus's sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us but life in you. But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and therefore we also speak, because we know that the one who raised Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and will present us with you in his presence. Indeed, everything is for your sake, so that grace, when it has extended to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God. So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For our slight, momentary affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen, for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:7-18

REFLECT

How is the life of Jesus made visible in you?

RESPOND

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE MONDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

From Despair to Hope Through Hearing God's Promises

March 20, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

Psalms 25:1-7, 16-18

READ

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Romans 5:1-8

REFLECT

What hope do you have in Jesus?

RESPOND

O Lord our God, in your holy Sacraments you have given us a foretaste of the good things of your kingdom: Direct us, we pray, in the way that leads to eternal life, that we may come to appear before you in that place of light where you dwell for ever with your saints; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE TUESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

From Despair to Hope Through Hearing God's Promises

March 21, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

Psalms 25:1-7, 16-18

READ

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Romans 8:18-25

REFLECT

What is the glory to be revealed? Why hope in Jesus for it?

RESPOND

O God, with you is the well of life, and in your light we see light: Quench our thirst with living water and flood our darkened minds with heavenly light; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE WEDNESDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

From Despair to Hope Through Hearing God's Promises

March 22, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

Psalms 25:1-7, 16-18

READ

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. I wait for the LORD; my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Psalms 130

REFLECT

What are you waiting on the Lord to do? What has He already done for you in Jesus?

RESPOND

O Lord our God, you sustained your ancient people in the wilderness with bread from heaven: Feed now your pilgrim flock with the food that endures to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE THURSDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

From Despair to Hope Through Hearing God's Promises

March 23, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

Psalms 25:1-7, 16-18

READ

The thought of my affliction and my homelessness is wormwood and gall! My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me. But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.

Lamentations 3:19-25

REFLECT

What mercies are new to you today? How has the Lord been faithful to you?

RESPOND

Almighty and most merciful God, drive from us all weakness of body, mind, and spirit; that, being restored to wholeness, we may with free hearts become what you intend us to be and accomplish what you want us to do; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FRIDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

From Despair to Hope Through Hearing God's Promises

March 24, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

Psalm 25:1-7, 16-18

READ

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, "Where is your God?" These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: how I went with the throng and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your torrents; all your waves and your billows have gone over me. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

Psalm 42:1-8

REFLECT

Is your soul cast down or disquieted? What help is Jesus to you?

RESPOND

O God, you have given us the Good News of your abounding love in your Son Jesus Christ: So fill our hearts with thankfulness that we may rejoice to proclaim the good tidings we have received; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE SATURDAY IN THE FOURTH WEEK IN LENT

From Despair to Hope Through Hearing God's Promises

March 25, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust; do not let me be put to shame; do not let my enemies exult over me. Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame; let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long. Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD! For your name's sake, O LORD, pardon my guilt, for it is great. Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. Relieve the troubles of my heart, and bring me out of my distress. Consider my affliction and my trouble, and forgive all my sins.

Psalms 25:1-7, 16-18

READ

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

REFLECT

How is Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith? What joy was set before him through the cross?

RESPOND

Mercifully hear our prayers, O Lord, and spare all those who confess their sins to you; that those whose consciences are accused by sin may, by your merciful pardon, be absolved; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

LENT 5: From Wrath to Forbearance Through Service

Deadly Sin: **WRATH**



Saint John Cassian was a fourth century monk and theologian celebrated for his mystical writings. In his treatise, “The Monastic Institutes: On the Training of a Monk and The Eight Deadly Sins,” Cassian specifically addresses wrath, one of the eight vices. Wrath,

or anger, is an intense emotional response to a perceived provocation, injury or threat. Wrath is associated with an inclination toward sin and separation from God. Cassian characterizes it as a “most pernicious disease of the soul.” We’ve all felt angry. We can become furious to the point of acting foolishly and sinfully. There will be occasions when we are mistreated by others. While it is a natural reaction to be angered by this, we must stay vigilant to not become overly consumed by our emotions. We are warned in the Book of Psalms, “Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.” (37:8). In Ephesians 4:31, Paul writes, “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.”

What the Bible teaches, and what we must understand, is how to cultivate the virtue of forbearance, or to become “slow to anger” (James 1:19). Wrath festers in isolation. Maybe you have had the experience of wanting to “stay mad” at someone by refusing to speak to them.

Or perhaps you’ve experienced the difficulty of “staying mad” when you spend time around the person who wronged you or even around other people. These common scenarios hint at the reality that community can combat anger. It is for this reason that service to others can be such an effective practice for developing forbearance and battling wrath. Being around other people, putting their interests before your own, and refusing to allow yourself the space to ruminate on angry thoughts can be a salve for the angry soul.

God works in us the fruits of the spirit including—kindness, goodness, and self-control. Giving of our time and resources to help others becomes a joy and not a burden. God rouses us to a high calling. He calls us to rise above the ordinary. He expects so much of us because of who we are. We are his children, created in his image. The story is told about a conversation between the wife of a very prominent government official and her teenage daughter. The daughter was preparing to go partying with friends and her mom entreated her to be careful. The young woman responded, “You don’t have to worry, Mom. I wouldn’t do anything that would embarrass Dad.” In other words, this young woman knew who her father was and what he represented. Her father was someone special, and that made her special. And so it is that God says, I have created you in my own image. Now live as if you were my child—because you are.

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

From Wrath to Forbearance Through Service

March 26, 2023

REJOICE

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever. Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress; he led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.

Psalm 107:1-9

READ

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, enslaved and free, but Christ is all and in all! Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:5-17

REFLECT

How has the Lord forgiven you? Is there forgiveness for you to offer someone else?

RESPOND

Almighty God, you alone can bring into order the unruly wills and affections of sinners: Grant your people grace to love what you command and desire what you promise; that, among the swift and varied changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed where true joys are to be found; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE MONDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

From Wrath to Forbearance Through Service

March 27, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. I wait for the LORD; my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Psalm 130

READ

You must understand this, my beloved brothers and sisters: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, for human anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. But be doers of the word and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing. If any think they are religious and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James 1:19-27

REFLECT

What is blessed about being a doer of the Word? What might that look like in your own life?

RESPOND

Be gracious to your people, we ask you, O Lord, that they, repenting day by day of the things that displease you, may be more and more filled with love of you and of your commandments, and, being supported by your grace in this life, may come to the full enjoyment of eternal life in your everlasting kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE TUESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

From Wrath to Forbearance Through Service

March 28, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. I wait for the LORD; my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Psalms 130

READ

“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder,’ and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment, and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council, and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Matthew 5:21-26

REFLECT

Where in your life is God’s reconciliation needed? How can the grace of Jesus bring about that repair?

RESPOND

Almighty God, through the incarnate Word you have caused us to be born anew of an imperishable and eternal seed: Look with compassion upon those who are being prepared for Holy Baptism, and grant that they may be built as living stones into a spiritual temple acceptable to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE WEDNESDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

From Wrath to Forbearance Through Service

March 29, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. I wait for the LORD; my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Psalms 130

READ

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.” Instead, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink, for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Romans 12:9-21

REFLECT

What is good and beautiful and true about life in Jesus Christ?

RESPOND

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, renew in us the gifts of your mercy; increase our faith, strengthen our hope, enlighten our understanding, widen our charity, and make us ready to serve you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE THURSDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

From Wrath to Forbearance Through Service

March 30, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. I wait for the LORD; my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Psalm 130

READ

So then, putting away falsehood, let each of you speak the truth with your neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not make room for the devil. Those who steal must give up stealing; rather, let them labor, doing good work with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. Let no evil talk come out of your mouths but only what is good for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

Ephesians 4:25-32

REFLECT

What makes you angry? Have you ever voiced your anger to God?

RESPOND

O God, you have called us to be your children and have promised that those who suffer with Christ will be heirs with him of your glory: Arm us with such trust in him that we may ask no rest from his demands and have no fear in his service; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

THE FRIDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

From Wrath to Forbearance Through Service

March 31, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. I wait for the LORD; my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Psalm 130

READ

Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, "I have produced a man with the help of the LORD." Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the LORD an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. The LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it."

Genesis 4:1-7

REFLECT

What sin lurks at your door? How has Jesus mastered it?

RESPOND

O Lord, you relieve our necessity out of the abundance of your great riches: Grant that we may accept with joy the salvation you bestow and manifest it to all the world by the quality of our lives; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

THE SATURDAY IN THE FIFTH WEEK IN LENT

From Wrath to Forbearance Through Service

April 1, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications! If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you, so that you may be revered. I wait for the LORD; my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is great power to redeem. It is he who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

Psalm 130

READ

They raised their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and everything in them, it is you who said by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant: 'Why did the gentiles rage and the peoples imagine vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers have gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah.' "For in this city, in fact, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and the peoples of Israel, gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. And now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all boldness, while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness.

Acts 4:24b-31

REFLECT

What bold witness might the Holy Spirit have for you to speak in the name of Jesus?

RESPOND

O Lord, in your goodness you bestow abundant graces on your elect: Look with favor, we entreat you, upon those who in these Lenten days are being prepared for Holy Baptism, and grant them the help of your protection; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

HOLY WEEK: From Pride to Humility Through Praise

Deadly Sin: **PRIDE**



The liturgy for Good Friday reminds us that in the drama of Holy Week, we play the role of those who cry out from the crowd with a loud voice, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Even those who, like Peter, believe with all of their heart that they will follow Jesus even unto death either abandon or betray him. Nobody follows Jesus to the cross. Still, he goes there for us. This is how we know that God loves us: because Jesus dies for us, on our behalf. He humbles himself and remains faithful to the very end.

Humility and pride make little sense apart from this story of Christ’s passion, and we see this especially during the Lenten season. For Christians, the heart of pride is that disposition of the self that sets our hearts against Jesus and the grace of God; that aspect of our character devastated by sin and driven by fear, shame, and guilt, which leads us to abandon and

betray God so that we can save ourselves at all costs. While humility—genuine humility—belongs only to God in Christ. Surely, that is what makes humility so difficult to embrace. To aspire to it on our own is to misunderstand it. Humility comes to us only as a gift, given in love, by the grace of Jesus Christ, and received through faith.

We do not make it; we share in it by the Spirit. For this reason, practicing humility begins and ends with the praise of God. In worshipping Jesus, we open our hearts towards God, offering our lives back to the one who gives us life. As Christians, our hope is that in offering the gift of our lives back to God, we will discover through faith that only God’s love can give us life, and by the Spirit that gives Jesus new life, that we will freely partake of the love of God freely in our own lives, sharing the new life of the Gospel with the world no matter the cost.

And so, the question for us this Holy Week is this: What will it look like for you to journey to the cross? What new life has God given to you in Jesus Christ?

PALM SUNDAY

From Pride to Humility Through Praise

April 2, 2023

REJOICE

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever! Out of my distress I called on the LORD; the LORD answered me and set me in a broad place. With the LORD on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me? The LORD is on my side to help me; I shall look in triumph on those who hate me. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to put confidence in mortals. It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to put confidence in princes. I shall not die, but I shall live and recount the deeds of the LORD.

Psalms 118:1, 5-9, 17

READ

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

John 12:20-26

REFLECT

What potential future might have to die for you to follow Jesus? What new life is gained by serving Him?

RESPOND

Almighty and everlasting God, who, of your tender love towards mankind, has sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon him our flesh, and to suffer death upon the Cross, that all mankind should follow the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his patience, and also be made partakers of his resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

From Pride to Humility Through Praise

April 3, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. For the enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, making me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. I remember the days of old; I think about all your deeds; I meditate on the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me, or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

Psalms 143:1-8

READ

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, "Come, let us make bricks and fire them thoroughly." And they had brick for stone and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the LORD said, "Look, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech." So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth, and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.

Genesis 11:1-9

REFLECT

What do you want to say to the Lord today?

RESPOND

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy, but first, he suffered pain and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

From Pride to Humility Through Praise

April 4, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. For the enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, making me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. I remember the days of old; I think about all your deeds; I meditate on the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me, or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

Psalm 143:1-8

READ

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man; I will question you, and you shall declare to me. “Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? “Or who shut in the sea with doors when it burst out from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling band, and prescribed bounds for it, and set bars and doors, and said, ‘Thus far shall you come and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped?’ Then Job answered the Lord: “I know that you can do all things and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. ‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’ Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me that I did not know. ‘Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.’ I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job 38:1-11; 42:1-6

REFLECT

Why do you think the Lord draws Job’s attention to creation? What is important about being a creature?

RESPOND

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son, you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life: Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ, that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

From Pride to Humility Through Praise

April 5, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. For the enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, making me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. I remember the days of old; I think about all your deeds; I meditate on the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me, or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

Psalm 143:1-8

READ

O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time on and forevermore.

Psalm 131

REFLECT

Can you calm and quiet your soul?

RESPOND

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

From Pride to Humility Through Praise

April 6, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. For the enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, making me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. I remember the days of old; I think about all your deeds; I meditate on the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me, or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

Psalm 143:1-8

READ

Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The devil had already decided that Judas son of Simon Iscariot would betray Jesus. And during supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from supper, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"

John 13:1-9

REFLECT

What was Jesus doing when he washed the disciples' feet? What share do you have with him?

RESPOND

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

From Pride to Humility Through Praise

April 7, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. For the enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, making me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. I remember the days of old; I think about all your deeds; I meditate on the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me, or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

Psalms 143:1-8

READ

If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness. And being found in appearance as a human, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 2:1-11

REFLECT

How can you have the same mind and love as Jesus Christ?

RESPOND

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

HOLY SATURDAY

From Pride to Humility Through Praise

April 8, 2023

Begin in silence

REPENT

Hear my prayer, O Lord; give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness; answer me in your righteousness. Do not enter into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. For the enemy has pursued me, crushing my life to the ground, making me sit in darkness like those long dead. Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. I remember the days of old; I think about all your deeds; I meditate on the works of your hands. I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. Answer me quickly, O Lord; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me, or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit. Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

Psalm 143:1-8

READ

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to abolish things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. In contrast, God is why you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1:18, 21-31

REFLECT

What wisdom has Christ fashioned in you this Lent? What wisdom do you still hope to discover?

RESPOND

O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of your dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day and rise with him to newness of life; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

SCHEDULE *for* HOLY WEEK
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