



ST. VINCENT'S CATHEDRAL

2012

LENTEN

DEVOTIONS

PRAYER, MEDITATION & STUDY

MAKING JESUS CHRIST KNOWN IN ALL THAT WE DO



The Season of Lent is a time of preparation to help us to enter into once again the story of Jesus Christ during that first Holy Week. The spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and study are the tools we are given to use to make that preparation effective.

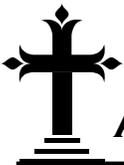
During Holy Week, we hear again with fresh ears the triumphal entry of our Lord, the New Passover meal in the Upper Room, and the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In prayer, meditation, and study of God's Word, we can each prepare ourselves for a truly "Holy" Week.

The meditations in this book have been prepared prayerfully by different members, friends, and the clergy of St. Vincent's. I pray that these words will speak to your heart and help you in the observance of a holy Lent as well.

If you would like to provide a copy of these devotions to family or friends, please contact the parish office for additional copies.

The Very Reverend Ryan Reed
Dean of St. Vincent's Cathedral
Bedford, Texas



ASH WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND

COMPARED TO JESUS

"I thank thee that I am not like other men." Luke 18:11

All of us have the tendency to compare ourselves to others – either favorably or unfavorably. Am I smarter than he is? Am I more successful than she is? More popular, or better looking, or whatever than this or that person? Sometimes such comparisons lead to a sense of superiority and sometimes to a feeling of inferiority. We're better than some and worse than others.

This sort of comparison is what's going on as the Pharisee prays in the temple and looks down upon the sinful tax collector. He thanks God that he is more pious, more generous and more obedient than other men are. He takes pride in himself, for he is better than others. But God is not impressed by his self-righteousness. Instead, God justifies the poor sinful man who recognizes his need for God's forgiveness and mercy. This is the clear biblical pattern: God lifts up the lowly and the humble, and He puts down the mighty and the proud.

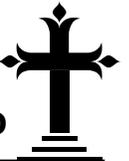
Rather than comparing ourselves to each other, we are meant to compare ourselves to Jesus. He is the pattern and standard for our behavior and attitudes, for He is God Incarnate. In Him, we see perfect love in action. Jesus is the measure for our self-evaluation and comparison. In Him we see what love looks like in interacting with others, and love is the standard of God's evaluation of you and me.

"Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right." (I Cor. 13:4-6) That's what Jesus is like. How are we by comparison?

"Lord, make us humble and loving servants. Help us to see the goodness in others and to love them as you love them. Take away from us pride and self-righteousness, and fill our hearts with love for Jesus and for others each day. Amen."

The Rt. Rev. Jack Leo Iker
Bishop of Fort Worth

Psalms 32, 143. Jonah 3:1-4:11. Hebrews 12:1-14. Luke 18:9-14.



*"Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it on my own. But one thing I do:
forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."
Philippians 3: 13, 14*

How many of us have done things in the past that we wish we could take back? Probably all of us.

In Paul's message to the Philippians we are reminded that we should forget the past and be "straining forward to what lies ahead" in the "upward call of God in Christ Jesus." We have all made errors in our lives. All too often we find ourselves focusing on those things that we could have done right or at least better. This scripture reminds us that the past is past, and we must live for our current and future relationship with Jesus.

We go to church each week, participate in the Eucharist, praise our Lord, and ask forgiveness for our sins. In our prayers we try to focus on giving thanks to God for all that He has given us. He gave us His only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ who made the ultimate sacrifice of his life on the cross so that we can overcome our sinful ways. This gives us the opportunity and the obligation to look forward in all we do. We must live for the future and strive for a life filled with the love of Christ.

"Dear God, we praise you for your glory and your love. We thank you for all you have given us. Especially, we thank you for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We give thanks for our church, the clergy, and the many wonderful people that make it home. Lord, please forgive us for our past sins and help us in our eternal quest for peace and love of Jesus Christ. Amen."

Jake & Jean Hart



FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24TH

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arise; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they are not of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 1 John 2:18-20.

Coke or Pepsi? Or, are you okay with just drinking a grocery store cola? After all, it's just a dark colored, bubbly drink, right? I find that people are usually one or the other: A Coke Drinker or Pepsi Drinker– but very few openly admit that it really doesn't matter. Plus I don't think the Coca-Cola and Pepsico companies would spend millions of dollars each year to have us believing that their product is just a drink.

Okay, you're right. John isn't talking about cola beverages in this chapter. But he is talking about knowing what is the real thing when it comes to our belief in Jesus as The One True Savior. And interestingly enough, I think he has us looking at this from inside the congregation. "they went out from us, but they were not really of us." Obviously some of 'us' in the church left. While we don't know why, what we do know is that in leaving the church they proved not to be true believers. It wasn't that they lost their faith – turns out, they didn't really have it in the first place!

But I see another message here in this passage. I think John is trying to help us understand the individual responsibility we have as being a member – or, more specifically an active member of a congregation. True, each Sunday we enjoy being with each other – but beyond the surface, we have a responsibility to each other as members in the same group of believers tied together in union with Christ our Lord. Helping each other walk in the Light. Tied together.

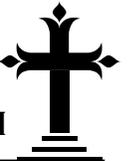
I had a friend in college that was the son of a preacher down on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. When Hurricane Camille came through Gulf Port, his family made the decision to stay. And they decided they would stay in the sanctuary of the church. His father tied the entire family together with a rope, placing the strongest swimmers on the outside, the younger, not as strong, on the inside. They storm hit, and hit hard with waves and wind ripping through their church. So many people died in that storm, swept away into the night. Yet this family, tied together, survived.

Are we tied together?

Bless the ties that bind our hearts in Christian love Oh Lord, and keep us ever close to your Truth.

Susan Elliot Merrill

Psalm 33, 80. 1 Samuel 12:1-5. 1 Samuel 16:1-13. 1 John 2:18-25. Acts 20:17-35.



"I can do all things in him who strengthens me"

"Not that I complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in him who strengthens me."

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, [4 : 10 – 20], Paul charges us to find contentment here on earth, to keep things in perspective, and ultimately to remain keenly fixed on what really matters. I have had many times in my life where my mood was a direct reflection of my present situation. This self inflicted "emotional myopia" or nearsightedness often causes my mood to be completely controlled by any immediate success, failure, or situation, regardless of how trivial or fleeting it may be, while completely ignoring what is truly important. Undoubtedly it is the result of being much too focused on earthly concerns, and completely defocused on the ultimate goal.

The challenge that Paul makes for all of us to is learn to find contentment in every earthly circumstance, and to keep things in perspective. We must constantly remind ourselves that our individual circumstance does not play a critical role in achieving eternal life. Our ultimate goal should be the same as Paul's; to achieve eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. If we focus on anything else, or let the everyday to day distractions rule our lives, we are likely to never find true contentment. This myopic approach will likely cause us to miss both our short term earthly goals, as well as the ultimate, long term eternal goal.

The ability to overcome our near-sightedness in facing our day-to-day challenges and struggles is based on Paul's reminder to all of us. It is essential to remember that we can overcome any earthly challenge by putting complete faith in our Lord, minimizing any earthly concerns that can distract or defocus us from our ultimate purpose on earth. At the end of Paul's letter, he writes, "**And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus**". This thought alone should help us remain well fixed on what is truly important, knowing that we can do anything in our Lord who strengthens us.

"Dear Lord: Please help us to remember our purpose here on earth, and to keep in perspective those things which are essential and those which are trivial. During those times when we become defocused with our day-to-day trials and tribulations, remind us of our ultimate goal to achieve eternal life through your Son Jesus Christ. By remembering to put our complete faith in your love and guidance, help us to take your hand and lead us through our walk here on earth, so that ultimately we can one day walk with your Son our Savior Jesus Christ in Heaven. For we know that we can do all things through you who strengthens us. We pray this in your name. AMEN."

Mark Jeffers

Psalm 20, 32, 42, 43. Ezekiel 39:21-29. Philippians 4:10-20. John 17:20-26



"I have come as light in the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness." John 12:46

When I was a young camp director I never carried a flashlight or lantern when out in the woods camping. The trail always seem to "glow" a bit for me and I could find my way. It used to drive my counselors nutz that I could suddenly be present in their camp unit, and they never had seen my light or heard my footsteps. I could go all over camp and find my way just fine. Occasionally I would have "close encounters" with the local wildlife. But nothing that would startle me enough to carry a flashlight the next night out on the trail.

Well, things have changed! One thing I learned this past summer being back as a camp director for the first time in 12 years. I have always known that things are bigger in Texas – but darker? Maybe it's true.

It was past midnight the first week of camp, and I was leaving the camp office and headed up to my small stone cabin in the woods. The office lights were off, and I stopped for just a moment on the porch to allow my eyes to adjust. There was no moon, and the sky was filled with stars. Absolutely beautiful. I was caught up in the beauty and thinking how many stars Abraham must have seen when he looked into the sky.

I wasn't far up the trail, when suddenly a very loud snort broke the night's silence. I flew out of my skin and reached for my pocket. No light. I had to admit, I did not say "eeegads" or "Oh My" at that moment. I was stopped dead in my tracks. I could smell the "beast" and he was close to me. He snorted a second time as another warning that I was too close, and I did not move. Slowly my eyes began to focus on the outline of a large buck standing about 3 feet from me. In my typical fashion of adding humor to an unpleasant situation, I seemed to recall saying something like, "I don't suppose you have a flashlight? I've left mine behind for the evening...."

Earthly darkness is dark. But Jesus speaks about a darker darkness – the spiritual darkness of our souls.

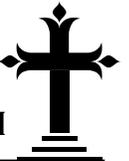
John begins his Gospel with "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Though not in today's readings, Psalm 119 reads "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet." So it is by God's Word that our trail is lit. With His Word - Jesus - in our hearts, our spiritual walk is lit.

How is your walk today? Are you ready to go out into the world, and is God's Light with you as you go?

"Lord, encourage me to store your Word in my heart so I am ready. Open up time in my day so I have no excuses not to spend time with you. Prepare me to walk the trail you have laid out for me and keep your Light ever constant along the way. Amen."

Susan Elliott Merrill

Psalm 63:1-11, 98, 103. Daniel 9:3-10. Hebrews 2:10-18. John 12:44-50.



*"For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent" 1 Corinthians 1:19*

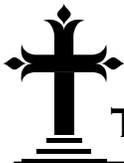
The verses (18-21) which include verse 19 is saying that the world considers some people to be wise. However, these wise people cannot use their human nature, their human wisdom to fully understand the ways of God. The wise referred here think that the message about a crucified Messiah is foolish and nonsense. They want God to act in ways that appear to be wise and powerful to them. However, God saves those who are willing to trust in him.

This is similar to what we are seeing in today's world. Often those who believe they have great wisdom talk of how true believers are narrow minded and unable to see the world as it really is in their eyes. We hear of some spiritual leaders, who consider themselves wise, doubt the true message of Salvation, not necessarily denying the crucified and risen Savior (although some have) but denying that Christ is the only way to Salvation and eternal life, that there may be other ways to enter the Kingdom of God. The verse says "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise". God will overthrow human centered wisdom. He does not depend on human ingenuity. All of us as humans are tempted to operate on ingenuity with God. If we are to disregard God's Word in finding solutions to our problems, then we have a fundamental spiritual problem. God saves souls by special revelation of His Word and the person of Jesus Christ. He does not join other worldviews or opinion polls in doing so. He does not ask counsel from human wisdom.

"Dear Lord, We ask you to fill us with the knowledge of Thy will through spiritual wisdom and understanding, not of human wisdom. We pray this so that we may live a life worthy of you and please you in every way. Help us, Lord, to grow in knowledge of you by the reading and meditation of your Word; strengthen us with all power according to your might so that we have endurance and patience. Amen."

David Johnson
Verger, St. Vincent's Cathedral

Psalm 41, 44, 52. Genesis 37:1-11. 1 Corinthians 1:1-19. Mark 1:1-13.



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28TH

*"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God,
it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save those that believe."
1 Corinthians 1:21*

When I think of wisdom, I think of my grandfather. As I leaf through the pages of his well-worn Bible, I am aware of where that wisdom came from. This was his operating manual for dealing with life's trials and tribulations.

I used the King James Version for this passage, because my grandfather felt the other translations were somewhat lacking. I found the Living Bible translation helped me to understand the meaning a little better...

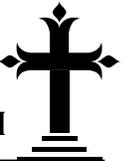
"For God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never find God through human brilliance, and then he stepped in and saved all those who believed his message, which the world calls foolish and silly."
1 Corinthians 1:21

In my younger days, my grandfather once asked me, "Where was Moses when the lights were turned out?" The first thing that came to mind was Charleston Heston as Moses in the movie, "The Ten Commandments", when he inflicted the plague of darkness on the Egyptians. I give up, where was Moses? My grandfather laughed and said, "he was...in the dark!" Not only did my grandfather possess wisdom, but a great sense of humor.

"Lord, we pray for your wisdom to guide us. Let us not be led astray by the wisdom of the world. Amen."

Paul Herrbold
Retired Pilot

Psalm 45, 47, 48. Genesis 37:12-24. 1 Corinthians 1:20-31. Mark 1:14-28.



TEMPTATION

*"Though the cords of the wicked ensnare me, I do not forget your law."
Psalm 119:61*

Temptation is all around us, and it seems to grow stronger every day. We find ourselves relentlessly bombarded by the media, movies, television, and in the music being produced today. The message we hear and see is that it is all right for us to say, do, and think however we choose. If we are not careful, we can easily be caught up in the snares of this life. As Christians, we know better because we have God's laws to guide us.

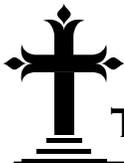
Others would have us believe that God's laws hold us back – that we are prevented from enjoying life. However, we learn that God's laws protect us, not hinder us. God gave us the law as a guide for our lives. To that end, we should never forget God's law.

Fortunately, the law is written down for us. We only have to pick up the Holy Bible and read it whenever we feel the need. If ever in doubt, pick up the nearest copy of the Bible and refresh your memory about the law.

"Father in Heaven, we ask that you give us the strength to resist all temptations. Help us to always remember that your laws protect us and guide us. Keep our minds fresh with your words that we may always praise you for your loving kindness. AMEN."

Ken Monk
Head of St. Vincent's School

Psalms 49, 53, 119:49-72. Genesis 37:25-36. 1 Corinthians 2:1-13. Mark 1:29-45.



THURSDAY, MARCH 1ST

OUR BEST GIFT

And when they could not get near him...they removed the roof...and let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." ...and immediately Jesus perceiving...they questioned him..."But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins", he said to the paralytic "Rise, take up your pallet and go home". And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all. Mark 2:1-12

In this world, we easily forget that God gives us the best possible gift. Jesus demonstrated his view of the best gift by forgiving the paralytic's sins. Yet to prove his authority, he also gave a gift of physical healing to him.

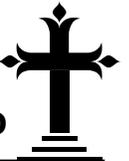
As humans, we always want the "best gift" for ourselves. What we keep forgetting is that the best from God is our forgiveness. We are always sending pleas in prayers for things of this world, a job, a healing, help for the family, more money, etc. God knows those are not the best gift and not what we need, but what we want. Our own view of trouble is one of the Earth and not of Heaven.

Parents know the difference between "want and need" for their children. We are God's children. When will **we** learn what to value more and hold dear in our lives?

"Most merciful Father, help us to value your forgiveness as the best gift of all. We get so caught up in our world with what we want in life. Our best gift is always from you and it is spiritual. Help us to learn the value of a spiritual gift. It will always be what we need. Thank you very much for our forgiveness. Amen."

Marilyn Keith
Teacher

Psalm 19, 45, 50, 59, 60. Genesis 39:1-23. I Corinthians 2:14-3:15. Mark 2:1-12.



REMEMBER THAT YOU FIRST BELONG TO GOD AND GOD ALONE

*Surely you know that you are Gods temple, where the spirit of God dwells in you...
The temple of God is Holy, therefore you are Holy. 1 Corinthians 3:16-23.*

I chose 1 Corinthians 3:16-23 from the selected readings for today. This passage called to me because it is so easy for me to get caught up in the worldly things that tend to shift my focus from the Lord. I think we all have such fast paced schedules, numerous activities, daily chores and endless little details of life that we struggle to find a balance, and often I feel overwhelmed, tired and unaccomplished. I can't count the many times this has pulled my mind, body and soul from doing my Father's will. For me this leads me to feel I have let others down, not given my all or simply given up. But every day I manage to stop and pray, usually in Chapel every morning at school, and with God's help this brings my focus back to what is truly meaningful, I am reminded that I don't just belong to Christ for these few minutes every morning, or for an hour on Sunday. I belong to Him at all times. If my focus is to do everything to glorify His name, and I am a temple unto the Lord, then it gives me hope, purpose and meaning to those seemingly endless daily duties. If I remember that every task has the potential to bring someone, including myself, closer to the Father, that is when I find fulfillment in doing that task, however small. I pray to remember that any small part of the day is part of His will and that I can be an instrument in God's plan. It is that fulfillment that sustains me toward another day.

"Most merciful Father we pray that today you would help us remember that we are a temple unto you and that we are filled with your Holy Spirit. That by you alone we are able to do your will within our lives in this world that can often pull us away from you. Remind us that everything we do and say could potentially cause us to damage your Holy temple, but by keeping your temple Holy we are in you and you in us. In the glory of your name sustain us through your ever present mercy. Amen."

Kris Dickey
Teacher, St. Vincent's School

Psalm 40, 52, 54, 95. Genesis 41:1-23. 1 Corinthians 3:16-23. Mark 2:13-22.



ERR ON THE SIDE OF MERCY

"Then Jesus asked them, 'Which is lawful on the Sabbath; to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?' " Mark 3:4

In the Gospel reading for today, the Pharisees were looking for ways to condemn Jesus, and after He healed a man's shriveled hand on the Sabbath, the Pharisees began to plot how they would kill Him. As Jesus was healing the man, He knew that people were judging him according to the law, and he chose to have mercy on the crippled man anyway.

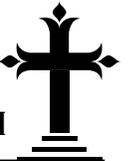
A musician friend of mine wrote a song entitled, "Err on the Side of Mercy" which encourages us to choose mercy when we find ourselves in a situation that calls for us to apply either God's law or the Gospel. It amazes me how often God brings that quote to my mind.

It is so much easier and "natural" to judge people based on what the situation looks like on the surface (at least it is for me). Sometimes we almost have to go outside of ourselves to find mercy and compassion in our hearts. Fortunately, God, through the Holy Spirit, has given us just that. It is up to us to choose to use the mercy and love that God has given us.

"Gracious Father, be with us as we struggle daily in our slow, slow journey to be more like your Son. Help us to have hearts full of love and mercy toward one another, offering kindness and compassion instead of selfishness and judgment. Amen."

Jacque Ridgway
Paralegal

Psalms 55, 138, 139:1-23. Genesis 41:1-13. 1 Corinthians 4:1-7. Mark 2: 23-3:6.



³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. ⁶ We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. ⁷ For one who has died has been set free from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. ¹⁰ For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. ¹¹ So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. ¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. ¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. ¹⁴ For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. *Romans 6: 3-14 from ESV*

This passage is the summary of the hope of all Christians and an exhortation to come closer to God by living in a manner that is pleasing to Him.

God, who is omnipotent, constant, righteous, just, and loving, created us for himself. And furthermore, He created us in His own image...and He loved us so much He gave us our own free will. The ability to guide ourselves to our own satisfaction. The choice to love, honor, and obey Him or not. Mankind, myself included, has fallen short of His expectations. Of course, with free will comes total responsibility. If humans are guided only by their instincts (like dogs and cats) then nature or some other malady can be blamed for wrong outcomes. But if we can choose...

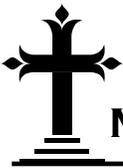
God sent through Moses a set of fundamental rules to live by that are pleasing to Him. Since mankind was still not doing very well, the Ten Commandments were followed by God's perfect example, Jesus, the Christ. Jesus came to show us by His life and through His teachings how to make our choices, how to live our lives. We are still falling short of God's expectations. And God, who is also RIGHTEOUS and JUST, will require an accounting at the time of judgment from each of us.

But God, who is also Loving, and who loves us... gave us a pathway through the certain separation from Him that we all face. In John 14:6 Jesus says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me". Jesus freely gave himself on the cross to atone for all our sins and shortcomings. We must believe that Jesus is our salvation and must do all that we can to live our lives in his honor.

"Father in heaven, You have graciously granted us a pathway through Jesus Christ to salvation and eternal life with you. Grant us also the wisdom to recognize and accept this gift and the strength and will to love and honor You with our lives well lived. Amen".

Steven Schooling
Engineer

Psalm 8, 24, 29, 84. Genesis 41:14-45. Romans 6:3-14. John 5:19-24.



MONDAY, MARCH 5TH

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

During these days of Lent, as you read all four of these passages, my overview is only a small part of what you may discover.

In these uncertain times, we focus on God's Word, which gives to us stepping stones of assurance, hope, and faith. How fortunate we are in having Bishop Iker, Our Dean, and our Priests, who help us on our journey. Even the music of our services and the hymns which we sing bring us close to God and His Word.

The Psalmist implores us to ask for God's mercy. We desperately need it all the time. Many things render us afraid and unable to cope with whatever arises. But the Psalmist reminds us that his heart is fixed. He has put his trust in God. He will walk before God in the land of the living.

The Genesis reading tells us of Joseph in Egypt. During the good years, he stored the grain and planned for the famine that was to come. We need to store the spiritual grain for the years to come, for famine will surely come.

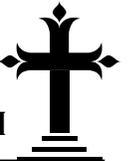
In Mark's Gospel, Jesus calls the apostles. He also speaks to us to follow Him. We need His instructions, just as the disciples did. In Verse 14, the Bible uses the word "ordained." The Greek verb is better rendered "appointed," literally "he made." The purpose was twofold: that they should be with Him for companionship and training, and that they may go out to preach and cast out demons.

This leads us to what Paul says to the cantankerous Corinthians. He reminds them that he did not bring them into life through good advice but through the good news found in the gospel. He concludes with a challenge, not only for them but for all of us. Which shall it be, the rod of discipline or love and the spirit of meekness? Our answer lies with us.

"Oh Lord, our God, we ask You for Your mercy and guidance as we continue our journey through life. The good and the bad, the joy and the sorrow are experiences which each of us has. Both the young and the old have things happen which constantly challenge us. May our hearts be fixed upon Thee, so that we may be strong of faith. This we ask in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen."

James Moore
Retired Minister

Psalm 56, 57, 58. Genesis 41:46-57. 1 Corinthians 4:8-21. Mark 3:7- 19a. (KJV)



St. Paul writes to the Corinthian church, "It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and of a kind that is not found even among pagans; for a man is living with his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you."

For the benefit of the both the man's soul as well as for the health of the Body of Christ in Corinth, St. Paul is telling the church that they must remove him from their fellowship. First, St. Paul's thought is that if the man is turned over to Satan through ex-communication, that he may realize what he is missing, repent and return to the fellowship of the Church. Second, if the sinful behavior is allowed to continue without any accountability it will destroy the community of believers there, and it will undermine the witness of the Gospel in their community.

The image I had when reading the passage from 1 Corinthians was of a surgeon, cutting out cancerous tissue, in order to save the rest of the body. The presence of sin resided within the Corinthian Church through the immoral behavior of this man. St. Paul was saying that radical steps had to be taken in order to protect that which God wants to be holy; that is His Church. I often wonder what become of this man. Did he repent or did he remain dead in sins, cutoff from the Communion of the Church? I guess the important questions is, will I repent?

During the Season of Lent, we need to recognize that sin resides inside each of our hearts. And in order to become more holy, as God desires, we need to ask God to "cut out", or remove that sin which breaks our fellowship with God and with another. In Lent, we are asked to examine ourselves, and when we find sin, repent, and seek God's forgiveness. We are reminded in Lent that God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God is the "chief" surgeon who is willing to cut away that which destroys our souls so that what remains may be healthy and life giving. This Lent, turn to God, confess your sins, and receive the healing that Jesus has come to offer.

"O God, show me the ways in which I failed you and those around me. Help me to see my sins and turn from them. Allow me to embrace the forgiveness that your Son has come to offer that I might be drawn closer to you and to those I love. All for the purpose of bringing glory to your Name. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Dean Reed

Psalm 61, 62, 68:1-36. Genesis 42:1-17. 1Corinthians 5:1-8. Mark 3:19b-35.



*He told them "the secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you.
But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that,
They may be ever seeing but never perceiving,
And ever hearing but never understanding,
Otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"
Mark 4:11-12*

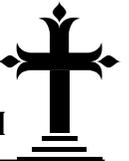
"To make Jesus Christ known in all that we do;" this is St. Vincent's mission statement and can be viewed on the front page of its website. When we compare this mission statement with Jesus' words from the passage above "the secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you," the two phrases should set a road map for our daily path. We are asked to emulate God and his conventions in everything that we do and everywhere we go so that through us, those who are "on the outside" as Jesus says will be exposed to God's love. It sounds simple enough to do, but the reality of it is an altogether different situation.

Being a witness for Jesus' love doesn't have to be a complicated evangelic campaign. We have the ability to witness the majesty of God's kingdom in each action we take. 2 Thessalonians 3:8-9 states; "we worked night and day, laboring and toiling...We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow." Loving others and taking care of ourselves is a precious duty and one that God expects of us. Praying, loving others, and being healthy, allows God to permeate our souls. When other people see how we take care of others and ourselves, both in body and spirit, we are modeling the behavior that God expects of us. When other people see the blessings in our lives, the happiness in our souls, they want to know how to achieve the same.

This observance creates the opportunity to communicate our walk with Jesus to them. An opening can occur for us to speak with them about the life with Jesus that we lead, and to help them understand how they can accept Christ's love and forgiveness and fuel their souls. All this can happen without ever consciously looking for someone to whom we can witness. Of course, for me, the simple act of living a Godly life is constantly hampered by temptation: I'm too tired to work out, that beef burrito looks so good, and I don't make time to pray. Jesus wants us to persevere through these temptations and return to him when we have failed. We are able to persevere because we have been given the secret of the kingdom of God. We can't bring everyone we meet to God, but imagine how wonderful it would be to touch just one person and lead them to the forgiveness of our Heavenly Father? In this, we are making Jesus Christ known in all that we do.

Scot Richardson

Psalm 72, 119:73-96. Genesis 42:18-28. 1 Corinthians 5:9-6:8. Mark 4:1-20.



PARABLES

*With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it.
Mark 4:33*

Webster calls a parable, "a short, simple story, usually of an occurrence of a familiar kind, from which a moral or religious lesson may be drawn."

Jesus was teaching to large crowds to proclaim the good news. He was using parables to speak the word to them as they were able to hear it.

Most of us know the stories and songs of today's readings. The story is of the lamp needing to be placed on a light stand, not under a bushel basket. For a light to be seen, it needs to be in open area. The song that plays in my head is "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine... Hide it under a bush, oh no! I'm going to let it shine".

The parable of the scattered seed that brings the grain, though the farmer did not know how it germinates, he knew the grain was an essential support of life for man and animals. Another tune floats – "we plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land, but it is fed and watered by God's almighty hand" and that of "harvest home."

We serve God by shining our light so that others might know the source of our strength – Jesus. Daily while with our families, at work, in stores or parking lots, kindnesses we extend to others plant signs of Christ's love. When given the chance to open our protective shells and share the good news of Christ in our lives, we are scattering seeds.

"Dear Lord, help us open our eyes for times we can put into action or share our stories of how your love saves us. Empower us to share the good news. Amen."

Susan Frey
Secretary

Psalm 71, 72, 74. Genesis 42:29-38. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. Mark 4:21-34.



On that day, when evening had come, Jesus said to the disciples, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?" And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?" Mark 4: 35-41

Every now and then we are all drawn out of our comfort zone. The ebb and flow of our lives is interrupted by various problems that confront us and must be dealt with in order to resume a calmer, peaceful life. The manner in which we deal with these problems indicates a lot about us and our faith in Jesus to bring us through to the other side.

The disciples certainly panicked when they were being thrown about in the boat by the storm, even though Jesus was in the boat with them. They were having doubts that Jesus even cared about them. How strong was their faith during this encounter? How strong is our faith when we experience difficult times? Hopefully, we are not just calling on our Lord during the bad times. We need to remember that He is with us at ALL times.

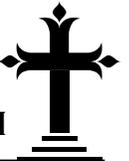
During our Lenten journey, let us strive to deepen our faith in God and come to realize that He is always there for us. Our trials will become easier to face if we meet them with unwavering faith and draw strength from our loving God who will guide us through. As a priest once advised, we must stay in the boat and God will guide us safely to the shore.

Let us pray:

"Almighty God, we praise you for your perfect love on the Cross for our salvation. Grant your gift of inner peace and joy to all who call on your name with faith and love. Help our faith to be unwavering in all of life's trials and tribulations. In Jesus name we pray. Amen."

Harriet Wade

Psalm 69:1-68, 73, 95. Genesis 43:1-15. 1 Corinthians 7:1-9. Mark 4:35-41.



WAIT PATIENTLY FOR THE LORD

*And when [Jesus] was come into the ship,
he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.
Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him,
Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee,
and hath had compassion on thee. Mark 5:18-19*

The famous story of the Gaderene demoniac has been used by great preachers in teachings and sermons to teach us how Jesus had authority over men and spirits, to heal the tormented, and to vanquish evil. The skeptics and enemies of the Gospel have tried to use it to convince us that the modern world is wiser than the men of the 1st Century, or even to impeach Christ as no respecter of other men's property. It is a dramatic episode, whatever way you look at it, with the poor madman, the unclean spirits frightened in turn, cowering before the authority of the Son of God.

But after the man has been rescued, and the swine plunged to a watery grave, banishing the spirits back to their punishment, what happens? Jesus goes on his way, and the man who has been cured wants to come with him. But Jesus tells him to go home to his friends and family, those who had seen his troubles, and tell them what the Lord had done for him, and how the Lord had compassion on him. As Psalm 27:18 says, "O tarry and await the LORD's pleasure; be strong and he shall comfort your heart; wait patiently for the LORD."

When the worries of our daily life press in, and we feel frightened, or depressed, or self-destructive, we are often quick to tell our troubles to those who surround us. Well, Jesus can cast out all those troubles. And when He has refreshed us, so that we are "clothed and in our right mind," those same people need to hear about the good things that have happened, and who it was that did them for us.

"Heavenly Father, Deliver us from the troubles and insanities of life. Give us a tongue to tell all that surround us what great things the Lord has done for us. Help us to wait patiently for you, that you may comfort our hearts. AMEN."

Charles M. Gatlin, Jr.
Technical Editor, Cantor

Psalm 23, 27, 75, 76. Genesis 43:16-34. 1 Corinthians 7:10-24. Mark 5:1-20.



SUNDAY, MARCH 11TH

VISIONS OF THE END TIMES

"...the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." -- St. John 5: 28b-29, RSV

The resurrection of the just and the unjust is mentioned several times in the Bible. The final chapter of the Book of Daniel gives a vivid prophecy of the last judgment. In St. Matthew 25: 31-46, Jesus gives an elaborate account of it, ending with "as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me. And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

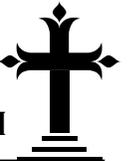
One of the most arresting depictions of the last judgment is the sculpture on the façade of the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Wells, England. The entire façade depicts the moment after the last trumpet has sounded: Christ reigns in glory, surrounded by saints and apostles; in niches throughout the façade, we see carvings of coffins opened and people rising out of them!

I first saw this cathedral in summer of 1995, an unusually hot and dry summer. Dotted over the vast green in front of the cathedral were rectangles of dead grass -- evidence of shallow soil. The tour guide explained that there were stone vaults not far below the surface, containing many coffins. The façade was designed so that when the last trumpet sounded, the souls arising from the graves would see the foretelling of their resurrection on the front of the cathedral.

"Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for the saving grace of your Son, and pray that with your mercy and forgiveness, we may at the last be counted among the just. Amen."

Barbara Burton
Music Director Emeritus

Psalms 34, 93, 96. Genesis 44: 1-17. Romans 8: 1-10. John 5: 25-29.



MAKE IT RIGHT WITH GOD

*Sayeth the Lord: "Why do you make a tumult and weep?
The child is not dead but sleeping." Mark 5:39.*

In the Book of Genesis, the sons of Jacob seek grain in Egypt during a time of famine. The sons of Jacob find themselves before an Egyptian administrator who, unbeknownst to them, is none other than their brother Joseph whom they sold into slavery years before. What a dilemma for the brothers of Joseph! They are confronted with their guilt as Joseph puts their honesty to the test. At the story's climax, brother Judah offers himself into slavery in place of the youngest brother, Benjamin. Joseph is moved by this act of redemptive sacrifice, reveals his true identity, and forgives them: "Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them..." (Genesis 45:14-15)

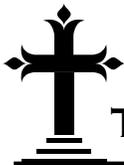
Such is one of many great stories of sin and forgiveness in the Holy Bible. Participation in Lenten devotion is a means of preparing ourselves to repent for our sins. All of them. Even the quiet ones, seemingly forgotten in the past. For God makes sure that we encounter "Josephs" in our life to keep us honest in confronting our sins. It is during Lent that we may adopt a sense of urgency in being honest with God and actively repenting for all our sins.

In the Holy Gospel according to Mark, the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ typifies this sense of urgency. Confronted with a twelve-year-old girl who had died, Our Lord declares that she is merely sleeping. "Taking her by the hand He said to her, 'Talitha cumi'; which means, "Little girl, I say to you arise." And immediately the girl got up and walked..." (Mark 5:41-42) Hence, God promises us renewed life. Repentant, we are forgiven of our sins. But we must actively participate by repenting. Are you asleep? If so, awaken to the love of Christ this day.

*"Restore us, O Lord God of hosts! Let thy face shine, that we may be saved! AMEN."
(Psalm 80:19)*

Warren T. Jackson
Psychologist

Psalm 77, 79, 80. Genesis 44:18-34. 1 Corinthians 7:25-31. Mark 5:21-43.



TUESDAY, MARCH 13TH

REPENTANCE AND HEALING

*"So they went out and proclaimed that people should repent.
And they cast out many demons and anointed with oil
many who were sick and healed them." Mark 6:12-13*

This is the Bible passage where Jesus sent out his disciples two by two without baggage or encumbrances to preach and to heal. I know I often get distracted in this story by the details of what they were not to take along and how they were to move on if people refused to hear them and to shake off the dust of their sandals against them. By then I have forgotten completely what it was they were to proclaim.

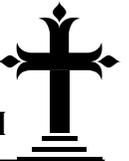
Refocusing after this distraction is much like the work of keeping a good Lent. We must not be detoured by dwelling on what we have given up for Lent or what we took on so as to fill up the space left by what we give up. All of this worry just keeps us from thinking about the main objective: to grow closer to God and to pattern our lives after Jesus. Usually that means laying down the extra baggage of our strong-willfulness and sins.

The way to accomplish this is to acknowledge our sins, to ask forgiveness, and to intend to change from now on. Then we have to accept God's gift of reconciliation through faith and belief in His power. The fruit of repentance and reconciliation to God is good spiritual health. The disciples were so empowered by the force of preaching repentance that they were able to cast out demons and heal actual sicknesses. We see this action today through the healing ministry of the Church through the sacraments of Confession and Unction, and by the work of the Order of St. Luke. We can see it also through changes in ourselves when we repent and ask for healing through faith. That is the true purpose for our Lenten journey.

"Almighty God, who empowered Thy disciples to preach repentance and to heal the lame, blind, the possessed and sick, Grant us the will to repent of our sins and the faith to accept wholeness and health, through the sending of Thy Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Robert Boyer
Library Administrator, retired

Psalm 78. Genesis 45:1-15. I Corinthians 7:32-40. Mark 6:1-13.



THE WORD OF GOD

This is the third year Susan Frey has asked me to assist with the Lenten Booklet at St. Vincent's Cathedral. It is the same process every year, I get the readings and sit down with my Bible. I read the first, the second, the third and finally the Gospel reading looking for obvious inspiration. This year the Gospel reading in Mark told of the beheading of John the Baptist and I thought this is the obvious choice and will be a cinch to write a few paragraphs on. The Holy Spirit, as always, had another choice. The same as last year, it is the reading from Psalms that kept drawing me back to it.

Please get your Bible and open to Psalms 119 and look at verses 101, 105 and 107. Each of these verses makes a reference to God's word. Verse 101 speaks of obedience to God's word, verse 105 declares God's word is a light for the path, and verse 107 asks for a renewal of life according to God's word. Now look at verse 81 which reads, "My soul faints with longing for your salvation, but I have put my hope in your word." Finally look at verse 114 which reads "You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word."

These verses point me to the beautiful prologue of John which begins,

- (1)"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God.
- (2)He was with God in the beginning.
- (3)Through him all things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made.
- (4)In him was life, and that life was the light of men.
- (5) The light shines in the darkness,.....(12) Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God"

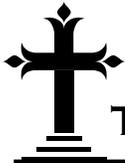
Are these pleas from our early psalmist subtly crying to God the Son as well as God the Father? Look at the repetition of words, "word", "life" and "light". Look at the psalmist longing for salvation and putting his hope in the word. Isn't our own hope for salvation in the "Word"? I wonder if I will someday meet this early psalmist in heaven.

"Dear Lord and heavenly Father,

Just as the early psalmist, I put my trust and hope for peace and salvation in your Word, I thank you, Father, that you have revealed to me your Son, my risen Lord, Jesus, as your Word. Please use me to make your Word, your Son, my Savior known to others. Amen."

Linda Littlefield
Retail Management

Psalm 119:97-120. Genesis 45:16-28. 1 Corinthians 8:1-13. Mark 6:13-29.



THURSDAY, MARCH 15TH

*And he said to them "Come away to yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while."
Mark 6:31*

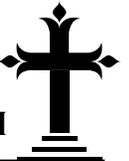
Lent calls us to rest and reflection, just as Jesus ask of the apostles after they returned from the mission where they had gone out two by two. It was Jesus desire that the twelve reflect what was taking place in their life, but something happened on the way; they were interrupted by five thousand hungry people. One of the most famous events of their lives took place, the story of the fishes and loaves.

During our Lenten period of intended study and thought, we are often forced away by the real life actions and activities of those around us. We need to be able to allow these interruptions to be used to feed those around us who have needs, and still return and continue with our Lenten intentions. Remember, Jesus was tired and needed a break from regular activities, but he had compassion and took care of those around him, then took rest. During this Lenten season we need to remember that Jesus has compassion for us and allow him to feed our souls.

"Dear Heavenly Father, teach me to allow all the circumstances of this Lenten period to reflect on you and your Son, in whose Holy Name we pray, Amen."

Thom and Jan Murrell

*Psalm 42, 43, 83, 85, 86. Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34. 1 Corinthians 9:1-15.
Mark 6:30-46.*



"He was about to pass by them, but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.' Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened."
Mark 6:49-52

It was a very bad situation and the disciples were in "very deep water." Jesus had just finished praying on a mountainside just above the Sea of Galilee after feeding the 5000. Jesus came down afterward to the shore to observe that the boat in which He had sent the disciples on ahead of him was in trouble. He literally walked out over the water to them to help. Yet they couldn't believe their eyes and their minds reacted with terror at the sight of Jesus, who they recognized, walking on the water. Why?

The disciples had just a few hours before witnessed one of the greatest miracles of Jesus' time, turning five loaves and two fishes into a feast for 5000 with enough for twelve basketfuls of leftovers. The disciples had not "understood" the miracle that had just happened. Their hearts were "hardened."

Two thousand years later, we still have the same problem the disciples had; only with us we have few, if any, excuses. The case of Jesus' divinity has been made quite clear. The disciples' hardness of heart can, to some extent, be forgiven because of the uniqueness of their situation. After all, here was a human being that they had walked and talked with over the months preceding. Yet they understandably had difficulty processing in their own minds the nature of what was really unfolding before their own eyes and that they were being made an integral part of His plan. Jesus, not having much time on this earth, was really quite patient with his disciples. Isn't that the case with us as well? We mortals think we are sooo smart sometimes. We let our minds override what our hearts tell us. We too are part of Jesus' plan in our everyday lives and have our own discipleship that we are called to live out. We also are not just mere mortals, but real live spirits. What is it that we must listen with our hearts to understand instead of our minds to doubt? Will we accept it on a daily basis or will our hearts be hardened as well?

"Lord, it is our prayer that our hearts will always be open to the Spirit and listen to the calling of what our Lord and Savior asks us to do throughout our day, each and every day. Amen."

Don Bendure – Struggling spirit

Psalms 95, 88, 91, 92. Genesis 47:1-26. I Corinthians 9: 16-27. Mark 6:47-56.



HOPE IN TIMES OF TEMPTATION

"But God is faithful...with the temptation (He) will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it." -1 Corinthians 10:13

The structure of this passage is a microcosm of redemptive history. Verses 1-4 recall Eden in how God gave food, drink, and even His own presence in the cloud, to His people to draw them near to himself. But as with the Fall, verses 5-12 describe Israel's willful sin and the divine punishment they earned. And in verse 13 St. Paul reminds us that God has provided a way out—we are no longer enslaved to sin nature, but through Christ we are free to choose **not** to sin in the face of temptation.

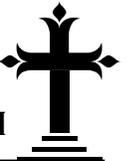
This verse, 10:13, is a beacon of encouragement that shines for us on this often dark journey called the mortification of sin. **This verse is worth memorizing.** Temptation will come, but we are not alone. Our sin nature is strong, but there is hope. Hope not only in Jesus' ultimate conquest of sin and death, but hope in the promise that with every specific season of temptation, we may resist with God's help. As Luther said, "And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God has willed His truth to triumph through us." Today we fight, we struggle with temptation. Tomorrow, God promises, complete victory over sin will be ours through Christ Jesus. This Lent, in this season of spiritual training, let each of us rejoin combat against sin in our lives. And let us stand on God's promise that he will go before us and sustain us in the battle.

"Oh Lord assist me, that I may continually labor to overcome my fallen nature, to correspond with your grace, to keep all your commandments, and to work out my salvation."

—from St. Augustine's Prayer Book

Brooks Higginbotham
Flight Instructor

Psalms 87, 90, 136. Genesis 47:27-48:7. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13. Mark 7:1-23.



OUR MISSION

*"May God give us his blessing,
and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe of him."
Psalm 67:7*

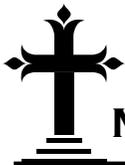
Reflecting on this verse from Psalm 67, I keep thinking about our vision statement at St. Vincent's: 'To make Jesus Christ known in all that we do.' If we (as individuals and corporately as the St. Vincent's community) live out this vision statement by keeping our minds set on God and the importance of spreading the gospel, we will do our part to bring the psalmist's words to fruition.

Our call is very simple: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). Our mission fields may vary: some of us may be called to witness to our own families and friends, some may be called to witness in the workplace, while others may be called to short or long term mission in the local community, or throughout the United States and abroad. The important factor is that we are all called to spread the gospel wherever God has placed us.

In order to prepare ourselves for this work, we must continually seek the presence of God in our lives. We can hear His call to us more readily when we spend time worshipping Him, reading and meditating on His word, and serving and ministering to those who He placed in our lives. If we will continue to focus our lives on spreading the gospel through worship, study, and service; we will make Jesus Christ known in all that we do.

"Lord, help us to keep our hearts and minds set on you, so that we can be examples of your life and peace in the world. Amen."

Rick and Liz Ward
Physical Therapist
College Professor



MONDAY, MARCH 19TH

ST. JOSEPH'S DAY

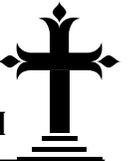
The Biblical story of Joseph begins abruptly and ends without fanfare. Joseph comes into the Gospel story out of no where as Mary's betrothed and nothing more is said about him after Jesus is twelve years old. Scripture provides no "back story" at all for Joseph beyond telling us he was a worker in wood, and yet he played a pivotal role in the salvation of the world. He was, apparently, simply a "righteous man" going about his normal life when God called him to nurture and protect the Word made flesh and his mother. And yet Joseph answered that divine call, although no doubt well-aware that shame and hardship would surely follow for him and those entrusted to his care.

Like Joseph, you and I can never know when we will be called upon by God to show love to another person, to care for those who have no one else, to take risks in the name of His Kingdom, or even to suffer shame in the eyes of the broader world if that will further God's plan for the world. Indeed, Scripture makes it plain that we are all called daily to just such things.

And yet all too often we fail to heed that call. Lent is a time to recognize where we have come up short of the kind of devotion to the will of God that Joseph displayed. It is a season of cleansing and healing, a time of preparation to better fit us to be servants of the Living God of the kind Joseph was. May God inspire us through the story of this humble righteous man to become risk-takers for the Kingdom and love-givers to His people on earth, paying no heed to either the costs or the rewards such service might accrue.

The Rev. Randall W. Foster

*Psalm 34, 132. Isaiah 63:7-16. 2 Chronicles 6:12-17. Matthew 1:18-25.
Ephesians 3:14-21.*



*In the following directives I have no praise for you,
for your meetings do more harm than good.
I Corinthians 11:17*

Corinth in the first century was a major port city with a constant flow of people and goods passing from East and West and North and South. It was a very cosmopolitan city with an affluent upper class that enjoyed many luxuries and lived well.

The Church in Corinth was troubled by divisions. In today's verses St. Paul is addressing the divisions of wealth. The Church consisted of both well to do and poorer members. Many being immature in their understanding of the faith carried the class distinctions with them into the Eucharist thereby bringing shame on those who had little. St. Paul finds this behavior appalling and cautions the Corinthians about eating the bread and drinking the wine in an unworthy manner and bringing the guilt of the body and blood of the Lord upon themselves.

The Eucharist is a special gift from God to us and it is something that we do as a community. We remember what Christ sacrificed for us and that we the Church are his body in the world. The body cannot be divided. Five years ago we experience the welcoming environment of St. Vincent's first hand. I hope that everyone who walks in the doors can feel that same warmth and acceptance.

"Dear Lord help us to always see those around us, especially in Church, as your children. Don't let us erect any partitions. We don't want to be doing more harm than good. Amen."

Tom & Maria McDaniel
Mechanical Designer
Registered Nurse

Psalm 94, 95, 97, 99, 100. Genesis 49:29-50:14. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Mark 8:1-10.



WHO AM I?

*"There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.
There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.
There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.
Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good."
1 Corinthians 12:4-7*

In chapter 12 of 1st Corinthians, Paul talks about spiritual gifts that we all have and goes on to list many of them. God has given each of us many and varied talents or gifts, and they are not limited to the ones Paul listed. How often, though, do we use them for the "common good?" Have we developed those gifts during our lifetime that God has given us and used them in his service?

Jesus once asked his disciples, "Who do they say that I am?" What if this question was asked of the community beyond St. Vincent's about us? What would the response be? What if this was asked of our neighbors, our co-workers, our social network, or just people we encounter every day? Do we use the gifts that God has given us to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ beyond the boundaries of our church community? There is the old saying that if we were called to account and accused of being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict us?

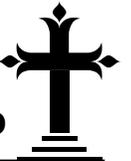
In one of the talks in the Kairos Prison Ministry retreat, there is drawn a distinction between being "a Christian", and "BEING Christian". We are labeled as "a Christian", because that is what we are. "Being Christian" is an action. It is a lifestyle that we should exhibit in ALL areas of our life because we have the love of Christ in our hearts and we are called by Him to share the love of Christ with others. Is this easy? No. Jesus, himself, said it would not be easy. Just like anything else, we have to practice our faith and use those God-given talents and gifts in the community in order to be more comfortable doing so.

We encourage the inmate pilgrims at our retreats to manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit in their daily life in the prison because THEY may be the only "Bible" other inmates will ever read. Do others see the love of Christ in the conduct of our daily lives?

"Dear Lord, be with us daily. Help us to ever increase in the knowledge of your love and presence in our lives. Help us to be a beacon of your love in a dark and lonely world. Amen."

Larry Jones
Air Traffic Control Instructor

Psalms 101, 109:1-30, 119:121-144. Genesis 50:15-26. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11. Mark 8:11-26.



*"But the children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly,
multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them."
Exodus 1:7*

Why were the children of Israel in Egypt? Joseph had brought them because of the abundance of food, prosperity, his position of influence, and his need for reconciliation. How long ago was it that Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery? This shows the abundance of God's love with the forgiveness of the children of Israel and rescuing them from famine by means accomplished through Egyptians - not God's elect. Where else in history do we see Israel welcomed with open arms to a land of peace and prosperity?

This lasts only one generation when a new Pharaoh who did not know Joseph sees his country overrun with foreigners. (I find this alarmingly similar to conversations that take place in our political environment.) But what's a Pharaoh to do? When enslavement does not impede the Hebrew population explosion, how about killing first born sons? How does God handle this brutal and ugly development? The midwives feared God and did not obey Pharaoh and the Hebrew women would give birth before the midwives would arrive. Out of all this, Moses emerged as God's provision for the future of His people. Then later in a way only God could manage, He ups the ante and the Egyptians are punished by their own methods when their first born male children and beasts are killed. But God's elect are protected as the angel of death passes over their homes. God spares the first born sons of the children of Israel, just as he spared Abraham's first born son. However, God did not hold back His only Son in the matter of the remission of our sins.

God is steadfast in his love even when things are bad. He will always provide, even if we do not understand his help. We must always be listening with open and faithful hearts.

"Almighty God, who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves; Keep us both outwardly in our bodies, and inwardly in our souls; that we may be defended from all adversaries which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

Andy Schast
Choir Member

Psalm 69:1-38, 73. Exodus 1:6-22. 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. Mark 8:27-9:1.



FRIDAY, MARCH 23RD

CHRISTIAN LOVE AND THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS - I CORINTHIANS 12:27-13:3

Paul has been talking to a group arguing about who has better spiritual gifts, especially concerning speaking in tongues. Some think they are better than others because they speak in tongues, while others cannot. Without those who can interpret, speaking in tongues only build up, or perhaps, "puff up" the individual. Paul puts it back into perspective as he explains the various gifts and their importance to the Body of Christ.

The gifts are enumerated, indicating an order of importance. First, apostles; second, prophets; and third, teachers. These are the higher or greater gifts because they reach farther to build up the church. We are encouraged to seek the higher gifts. In doing so, we strive to grow and become more than we are today with the hope of becoming who God created us to be. Miracles, healing, helping, administration, and tongues (speaking or interpretation), as well as many others, are good and helpful, and beneficial, however, they don't impact the church as much as the first three.

Every gift is important and can be used for God's Glory. We must decide how to use the gifts we have, and to what degree. We fool ourselves if we think we can get by with works...just doing, without putting our hearts into our efforts. We are not human DOINGS, but human BEINGS. If we take on a project and hope for recognition, it is not love that motivates us; but self-love. God knows our abilities far more than we do. He desires that we give ourselves away in love, and in doing so, become more human, and, at the same time, more Christ-like.

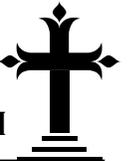
It takes all of us, with our many gifts, talents and interests, to BE the body of Christ, by coming together in community, building up one another, and serving others as the hands and feet, eyes, ears and mouth of Our Lord, here on earth. Our actions, our knowledge, even our very selves; those things about us we "pride" ourselves in or --who we THINK we are-- are worthless...unless we have true, God-given love. We may exhaust ourselves in our doing for others, or in our studies to know more, or even sacrificing ourselves for some cause. But if we don't have love, and do not exercise those gifts in love, there is no benefit to us--or the Body of Christ--and there is no growth in us. Love is growing in those things that build up; and absent when focused on ourselves or our misguided efforts to tear down. What comes across our path in the day to day experiences of our lives gives us opportunities not only to give in love but to grow in love as a result of giving ourselves to God and others.

We cannot give love if we do not have love...and how do we know we have it.? The well-known chapter of 1 Corinthians 13, tells us what is love and what is not. While it is easy to become comfortable with scriptures familiar to us, it is most valuable to look deeper; to seek out the meaning we may have missed...or perhaps misunderstood. It is interesting to sort out what love is and is not. The Fruits of the Spirit show us the essence of love. What love is not, resemble the Seven Deadly Sins (and maybe more than seven!) Take a few moments to measure where you see yourself and where you would like to be. Take note of those things that need extra effort.

"Almighty Triune God, you have given us life, specific gifts and abilities to use in this life. Help us to recognize the gifts we have been given. Provide the opportunities where we may use your gifts for the building up and encouragement of your Body, the Church. May we fulfill our part as members of your Body with the Fruit of your Spirit, so that we may grow in love. Help us to offer ourselves to your service in love, ever growing closer to you, your Church, and to each other. In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we ask of you to guard and guide us. AMEN."

Cindy Crook

Psalm 95, 102, 17:1-32. Exodus 2:1-22. 1 Corinthians 12:27-13:3. Mark 9:2-13



THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE

*"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."
1 Corinthians 13:13 (King James Version)*

Today's reading is a guide for imitating the grace of God in the midst of difficult circumstances. Little did Paul know that what he intended for the church in Corinth is a timeless guide for our daily choices. God's decision to sacrifice his only son so that we may live with him forever is the greatest charitable act of our lifetime. Do we give our time and money in helping those in need only when others are watching? We may have the best of intentions, but charity is meant to serve others for their benefit rather than ours. Loving human beings shows God a respect for his creation. Paul reminds us, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1)."

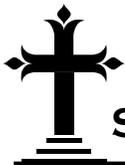
Are we able to overlook the inconveniences of the world and reframe our opportunities to show love? We are reminded in Paul's writings that "Charity suffereth long, and is kind: charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up (1 Corinthians 13:4)." Unlike God's jealousy, a protection of what belongs to him, envy is wanting what does not belong to us. It is easy to curse the one who advances in the position over us, but love and charity can help to overcome an internal sadness and replace it with joy for our fellow human being. If God has unconditionally given us grace, we can do the same by not surrendering to adverse circumstances.

Developing an awareness of God's love comes with maturity. The focus on worldly possessions is not unlike the childish state that allows tastes, pleasures and pursuits to become a superficial happiness. Luckily, love does not become rusty and faded with time because it never ends. Our adult reaction to everyday circumstances is an opportunity to bask in the presence of God, look beyond this world and set our sights on heaven. During the process, we replace the infantile language of possessing with the language of giving. "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things (1 Corinthians 13:11)."

"Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for inspiring me to love others through the written Word. You graciously reveal yourself to me every day through mercy, love, and care. Please give me the strength to make the choices you desire me to make. Amen".

Sherry Heiser
Guidance Counselor

Psalm 33, 107:33-43, 108:1-13. Exodus 2:223-3:15. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13. Mark 9:14-29.



THE ANNUNCIATION

According to the calendar of the Church Year, on March 25th, the church celebrates the feast of the Annunciation – the day Mary was visited by angel Gabriel whose bearing the news and the charge of bearing God’s son.

Although this feast falls within the Lenten season, the church always pauses to reflect back on how it all started. Indeed it is quite appropriate that the feast of Annunciation falls on this day, which is exactly 9 months to Christmas day – Jesus’ birthday. However, the main intention of observing the Annunciation feast is not about initiating a count- down to Christmas day, instead it is an opportunity to reflect particularly on God’s continued attempts to win humanity back unto him which finally led to the appointment of Mary to be the medium for God’s assumption of human flesh – the Incarnation, as a demonstration of how low He was willing to descend in order to win us back to himself.

As we reflect on the discourse between Gabriel and Mary, there are a couple of highlights worth mentioning: First of all, as a girl who grew up in a culture that celebrates and rewards virginity and was looking forward to her marriage to Joseph, Mary could have delved on the dictates of her community to turn down the angelic request. Instead she whole-heartedly embraced the message and status quo would not stand in her way in her genuine attempt to do God’s will.

Secondly, I am always amazed by Mary’s response “let it be unto me as thou hast said” – a deliberate act of total surrender to God’s will and allowing God’s way to be done unto her.

Thirdly, Mary’s words “I am the Lord’s handmaiden” are also striking to me because it is not common to see ourselves as the Lord’s handmaid – especially when it comes to choosing between doing what we want and what God wants us to do. By offering herself Mary becomes the perfect example of faithfulness that not only listens but obeys and surrenders to God’s will. It is indeed in recognition and appreciation of Mary’s readiness to answer God’s call that the Mother’s Union chose her as their patron saint whose feast they also celebrate on this day.

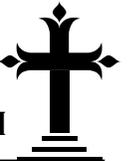
Just like Mary, this Lenten season provides us with a fresh opportunity to ponder unto the messages we hear on a daily basis and sift those which might be coming from God himself bidding us come and participate as bearers of the good news especially to those yet to know him. In this busy lifestyle where our surroundings dictate our lives, it is easier to spend the precious but usually brief moment of our prayer time, simply talking to God and not offering any time for silence, in order to let God speak and/or answer back to us.

Just like Mary and also the young Samuel of old, we must be more than ready to utter those words “let it be unto me as thou hast said” and/or “speak Lord for thy servant heareth” respectively. Upon receiving our charge, therefore, we must be ready and willing to execute the charge without grumbling. Perhaps this Lent could provide you a fresh opportunity to answer God’s call of being the bearer of the Good News of Salvation – and it could even be in an area you have never imagined.

“O God, who willed that your Word should take on the reality of human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, grant, we pray, that we, who confess our Redeemer to be God and man, may merit to become partakers even in his divine nature. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. +Amen.”

Father John Kalimi
Assistant at St. Vincent’s and Vicar of the African Fellowship

Psalm 85, 87, 110:1-7, 132. Isaiah 52:7-12. Wisdom 9:1-12. Hebrews 2:5-10. John 1:9-14.



LISTEN TO YOUR TEACHERS

"And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who [should be] the greatest. And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, [the same] shall be last of all, and servant of all. And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." Mark 9: 33-37 [KJV]

The passages for today in the ninth chapter of Mark portray several instances of Jesus teaching his disciples. The portions that I can personally relate to the most, address the need for a Christian to put the needs of others first. However, I'd like to you to consider not a particular lesson, but the fact that the twelve required lessons.

The disciples' overt attempt to claim precedence over one another seems a bit petty when isolated this way. From our vantage, you'd think that this group of men would behave better. They are acting more like a rock star's entourage than future leaders who will themselves become teachers of God's word. Their understanding of the messiah's purpose, and their role in fulfilling it, is limited at this time.

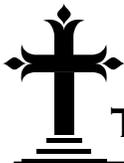
I don't really understand the culture of this time, but the passage clearly indicates that they dodged acknowledging the discussion. This evasiveness leaves an impression of immaturity. The men had to grow into their roles as disciples over time, as they digested lessons and remarkable experiences with Jesus. The twelve had the potential to carry God's word to the world, but true understanding took instruction and time. Even with the best instructor.

I've characterized myself as "theologically challenged" on more than one occasion. Clearly, it takes time, participation and effort to fully grasp God's message. Feeling his love, thankfully, is much easier.

"Dear Lord, please help us understand the messages that you have left for us in your church and the Bible. Give us the patience to participate in the church and study your words as we grow in discipleship. AMEN."

Bob Thornton
Database Architect

Psalm 31, 35. Exodus 4:10-31. 1 Corinthians 14:1-19. Mark 9:30-4.



CAN SALT LOSE ITS SALTINESS?

And Jesus said: "Salt is good, but if salt loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another". Mark 9:50

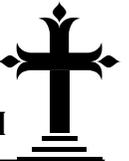
What is Jesus talking about? Sodium chloride is one of the three or four most stable compounds in the world!! Salt is well... salty, it's just not scientifically possible for it to lose its saltiness **or can it?** Jesus, as he often did, was speaking metaphorically. (Note the "if") The salt that people had in those days was not the highly refined salt that we have today. It was a rock salt. Very similar to the salt we use in making ice cream or the kind we throw down on our sidewalks to melt ice and to provide traction. The salt that Jesus speaks of had impurities of gypsum and carnalities in it. So it was important for the salt to be processed correctly or it would have poor taste and it would be useless, fit only for walking on. Since we as Christians, are called to be the *salt* of the earth, it is important that we keep the impurities of our lives, our sinful nature, from ruining God's purpose for us. We as the salt can lose our flavor and worse cause others to stumble because of it. That is simply not acceptable to God; we are not called to be lukewarm Christians. We are called to be on our guard, stand firm in the faith, to be courageous and strong.

In the Old Testament, sacrifices to the Lord were required to have salt sprinkled on them before they were presented as an offering to the Him. We can present ourselves to the Lord, as a living sacrifice acceptable to Him only because of Jesus Christ.

"Almighty God, unto whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord Amen!"

Veronica Phillpot
Quality Technician for Dannon Yogurt

Psalm 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127. Exodus 5:1-6:1. 1 Corinthians 14:20-33a, 39-40. Mark 9:42-50.



But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ towards God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6

Fragrance from knowing God... aroma of Christ...letters of the spirit written on tablets of human hearts. These are certainly beautiful imageries in these passages from Paul to the Corinthians.

Take a moment and contrast some similar modern images we may find in conflict; the sweet smell of success, a taste for the good life, a nose for money, self-made man, write your own ticket. Many modern images, icons, idols are images of death to the spirit, not a fragrance of life to life as Paul illustrates to the Corinthians.

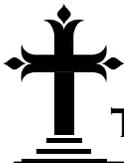
This passage from 2 Corinthians serves to remind me that there are many influences at work on us every day. They attack our senses and alter our perceptions, and they alter the perception that others hold of us as well. Paul is saying that we are not sufficient of ourselves we are only sufficient through Christ. The aroma of the Spirit lives in those whose hearts contain the knowledge of God and it permeates those who open their senses to its presence.

God opens your mouth to speak but your meaning is not shaped by your mind or the writings of your hand. Others perceive you in terms of the light they sense within you and your commendation comes from Him. God also must also open the heart of one who may hear you. It is not a one way proposition and neither event is controlled only by man. Pentecost shows us the ability of God to make himself heard to all no matter what barrier exists to the senses.

"Dear Father please impart to us the knowledge and love found in your Son Jesus Christ so that others may sense the good that is written in our hearts by You. Help us show your holy presence not just with our lips but in our lives. Protect us from the distorted influences of vanity and deception and from those who would keep us from the good we can accomplish only through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

Joe Graber
Sales Executive

Psalm 119:145-176,128, 129, 130. Exodus 7:8-24. 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:6. Mark 10:1-16.



THURSDAY, MARCH 29TH

*"...we Christians have no veil over our faces;
we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord.
And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us,
we become more and more like Him."
2 Corinthians 3:18*

Paul reminds us that Moses continued to wear the veil over his face for the remainder of his life, even though the "shine of God" had diminished on his face. The splendor of the Law delivered by Moses to the Israelites would still lead to death. Today, the 10 Commandments are still a guide to strive for in our daily lives in each moment that we are tempted to sin. But our sins will keep us away from eternal life in the Kingdom of God.

Our only salvation comes from our Lord, the progeny of David, the Son of God and His sacrifice for us on the cross. It is only God's grace, if we accept, that allows us to be the bright reflection of the glory of the Lord.

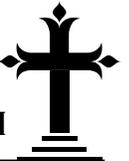
As we discipline ourselves to follow Christ, He in us completes our transformation to become more and more in His likeness. Focusing on being a servant to God and others, we find our possessions no longer possessing us. Our riches on earth become less important and lose their hold over our lives. We find more trust in the Lord and can humble ourselves before God and others. We feel more protected from evil and can live confidently knowing the Holy Spirit will guide and direct us in this life.

Our Father,

"Hear my cry, for I am very low. Rescue me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me. Bring me out of prison, so that I can thank you. The godly will rejoice with me for all of your help." Ps 142:6-7

Mike and Nancy Lee Staggs

Psalms 131,132, 133, 140, 142. Exodus 7:25-8:19. 2 Corinthians 3:7-18, Mark 10: 17-31.



MAYBE THE OLD TESTAMENT GUYS HAD IT RIGHT AFER ALL, OR DID THEY?

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and stand before Pharaoh, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let my people go, that they may serve me." Exodus 9:13

'And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.'" Mark 10:35-37

As Christians living after Christ with the New Testament as our guide, sometimes I think we miss the greatness of the Old Testament leaders. The contrast between Moses in Exodus and the sons of Zebedee in Mark is amazing. How is it that these men who have walked with Jesus could ask for such a blessing, while Moses responded to God's call faithfully? There are other such contrasts as Abraham being asked to kill Isaac and Peter denying Jesus 3 times.

But then I think of Moses breaking the stone tablets and Abraham's son Ishmael. Obviously the Old Testament Leaders were not perfect!

The point I get out of this is not to take for granted our weakness as Christians. Be vigilant for God but be humble for self. Listen for God's call and respond. While we are washed in the blood of Jesus, this does not guarantee that we will walk with Christ. We receive the body and blood of Christ each week in the sacraments, but again are we walking with Christ. In the above lessons, James and John were literally walking with Christ, but were they spiritually walking with Christ?

"Oh Lord let me not take for granted the challenges of walking with you. Amen."

Tom Parham, Jr.
Engineer, Bell Helicopter

Psalm 22, 95, 141, 143:1-12. Exodus 9:13-35. 2 Corinthians 4:1-12. Mark 10:32-45.



SATURDAY, MARCH 31ST

Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.
2 Corinthians 4:16-18

As we approach the end of Lent and look forward to Palm Sunday, Holy Week and the Sacred Triduum, I find that this short verse from St. Paul's letter to the church at Corinth to be of great comfort and of great joy.

As with any journey, at least any spiritual journey, I think we begin with focusing on the physical journey, the giving up, the addition of discipline, the giving of alms. However, as we progress we get to that point within the journey in which we begin to focus on the spiritual, the inner journey. Am I growing towards a closer relationship with our Lord? Am I able to truly know the will of Him, who is my Savior? Am I even going in the correct direction? And although we may not get or realize the answers to the greater spiritual questions, this epistle of St. Paul tells us that the momentary affliction, this momentary time of unknowing is actually leading us, or as he says it "preparing " us for glory (which is beyond our knowing and beyond all comparison.

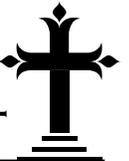
So as we prepare to sing Hosanna to the King of David and then to turn around and shout "Crucify Him" let us not be discouraged, but let us take heart and be renewed every day as we continue our journey for those things that are not seen, unseen, not transient but eternal. Thanks be to God who has given us all things eternal and how will continue to guide us at every step along our way to Him, who is our hope, our salvation and our God.

Let us pray:

"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."

Deacon Kerwin Wade

Psalm 42, 43, 137:1-9, 144. Exodus 10:21-11:8. 2 Corinthians 4:13-18. Mark 10:46-52.



1 Timothy 6 Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Since the beginning of this year we have had services in which baptisms, confirmations, reaffirmation of baptismal vows, receptions into the Anglican Church and opportunities to renew our own baptismal vows occurred. Each time one or more individuals confessed that Jesus Christ is Lord. As the early Christians did, we too, continue to this day making our confessions in front of many witnesses. In some ways these were “showy” events. We had our best clothes on, much music and incense, gifts given and pictures taken. An exciting time for many.

It reminds me on this Palm Sunday of the crowds of disciples who came out to see Jesus come riding in on the colt of an ass. Palms and garments were strewn for him to ride on and over. An exciting time with much hope and eagerness for the people. But what was Jesus’ response? We read in Luke 19:41 And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace!”

It certainly gives me pause. Not only am I to confess that Jesus is Lord, but I am to live it out. To do the things which make for peace. That is to do the things that uphold my confession of faith. How do I fight the good fight? By prayer, worship, helping others, examining myself, admitting to my sins, reading the Scriptures, etc. Thankfully we have been called to this. We are not alone for the Holy Trinity is with us. We have been given witnesses to help us in our fight of faith.

“Jesus, we thank you for the gift of eternal life. By your Spirit you called us to a new and eternal life. This Lent may we keep our hearts and minds on you and contemplate all that you have given us. Amen.”

Lenore Rothman
Physician Assistant

Psalm 24, 29, 103. Zechariah 9:9-11, 12:9:11-13:1-9. Timothy 6:12-16. Luke 19:41-48.



MONDAY, APRIL 2ND

COMFORT IN GOD - 2 Corinthians 1:1-7

*"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort," -2 Corinthians 1:3*

As I first read today's passage it felt very familiar to me because it reminded me of a silent prayer I say every Sunday at church. Before I leave I always ask for God's love to fill my heart to overflowing so that it may shine through me for others to see. I have always felt that is the best way to share the love of Jesus Christ with others, not by telling them, but by showing them. This sentiment is precisely what Paul and Timothy were telling the church in Corinth. Be comforted through God and Christ so that you may comfort others.

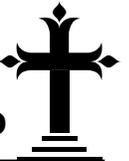
Even in our busy lives most of us are quick to offer a hand for support to a friend in need. More importantly, though, do we accept God's hand of support that he offers to us daily? I know that I am guilty of not always letting God support and comfort me. I look for strength and support from myself, family, friends, or other means, but oftentimes forget to look to God. In doing so, I don't always have the strength I need to help others because I have not let God first comfort me.

I think this is a good habit to try and make during this Lenten season, always look to God for comfort first and foremost. Allow ourselves to be filled with his comfort so that it overflows within us creating strength, patience and a contented heart.

"Dear Lord, help me always to look to you first for comfort and strength that it may overflow within me and make me a worthy disciple able to help lead others to your love and salvation. Amen."

Kathleen Siek
Stay at Home Mom

Psalms 51:1-20, 69:1-23. Lamentations 1:1-2, 6-12. 2 Corinthians 1:1-7. Mark 11:12-25



A BURDEN OF HOPE: DECLARING DELIVERANCE IN THE FACE OF DEFEAT

*"...For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and He will deliver us. On Him we have set our hope that He will deliver us again."
2 Corinthians 2:8-10.*

In certain seasons of our lives, I think we can all relate to feeling "so utterly burdened... that we despaired of life itself." You may be in that season now where, despite the hopeful air of spring, full of the promise of resurrection, you feel utterly hopeless. Whether that burden is an incurable illness, a private struggle, or even consequences of some action that you have committed, winter lingers in your soul and you feel as if you have received a sentence of death upon your life. Through human eyes, we cannot foresee a solution; however, from eternity's looking glass a different scene emerges. You see, God knows that—left to ourselves—we will rely on ourselves, attempting to ease ourselves of our burdens in ways that He never intended. Thus, a burden is often given to the child of God, not that he may be rid of it in his own strength, but rather that by carrying it he learns to trust his Lord even unto a seeming death.

"Ah, but what hope is there in that?" you may ask. Beloved, God is in the business of resurrection, but He cannot resurrect something that is not dead. We may feel the burden we may be bearing is a "sentence of death" upon our lives, but Paul commands us to "rely not on ourselves but on God who *raises the dead*." When we carry a burden that is "*beyond* our strength," the burden will eventually overcome its bearer, and thus we are found underneath its load, defined by defeat, and left for dead. *That* is when our Lord comes, kneels down and gently removes the burden from the back of His world-worn child, and breathes into him the breath of life. Now, his child walks on in resurrected victory, conformed a little more into the image of Christ. You see, we can never learn to trust without tears; never can we know deliverance without having known defeat; never can we cling to our Father's promises to us with the absence of pain. Our burdens are given to us in order that we may know the power of the promise: "He *will deliver* us." Why? It's simple, because "On *Him* we have set our *hope*." Perhaps this year, *you* are carrying a burden beyond your strength. For many of us, Lent is a time to give up something, so I ask you: would you give up your burden to the One who can bear it? Relinquish control, rely on Him, and walk on in victory, knowing that the promise of resurrection is yours. He who promised is faithful, and He will surely do it. Thanks be to God!

"Father, I know that nothing comes to me that does not pass through your hands first, so I choose to rely on You, trusting that you are working all things for my good because I have set my hope in You. I give you my burden, and ask that you enable me to live a life of resurrection that declares your promise. I ask this through Christ my Lord: the Strength of my life, the Savior of my soul, and the Strong Tower of my deliverance. Amen."

Bryant Matheu
Seminarian

Psalm 6, 12, 94. Lamentations 1:17-22. 2 Corinthians 1:8-22. Mark 11:27-33.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 4TH

Have you not read this Scripture: *"The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?"* Mark 12:10-11

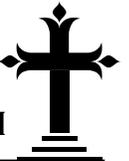
I have found it marvelous indeed that the Lord has 'selected' a faulty person like me to be his servant. Every day I feel thankful for that Grace, and the many blessings of this life, but without God's presence it would all be meaningless. Lent is a time where I strive more rigorously to be worthy of being the servant He wishes us to be, a time to reflect daily on the sacrifice that our Savior made in coming among us, a time to try to renew a 'right spirit in me'. Without that focus, without constant renewal and effort, the pressures of our society gradually wear away my commitment to Jesus, and keeping myself in the Grace of God is a constant challenge.

Reading something from the Bible daily helps, and the added discipline during Lent is also bolstering. During this season, I also make it a point to tell others why I am changing my normal behavior (usually changing my eating/drinking behavior is my 'discipline' for Lent), and it is often surprising to both me and the people I work with, finding fellow believers among my customers, and giving me the opportunity to explain why Lent is meaningful.

I pray that I can continue to be a solid stone for my Lord.

Tom Bauch
IT Specialist

Psalm 55, 74. Lamentations 2:1-9. 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11. Mark 12:1-11.



Lamentations of Jeremiah: 2:10-12

*The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have cast dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the maidens of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground. **11** My eyes are spent with weeping; my soul is in tumult; my heart is poured out in grief because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because infants and babes faint in the streets of the city. **12** They cry to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine?"*

*St. Marks Gospel 14: 22-24 **22** And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." **23** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. **24** And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.*

These two readings are appointed for this day, the first day of the Sacred Triduum, which includes Good Friday and the Great Vigil of Easter. In the first reading, we have Jeremiah lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem. This book dates back to about 586 B.C. The second reading is an account of the institution of the Holy Eucharist by St. Mark, and is clearly a response to the lamentations.

I am struck by this and remember in the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary that we have those prophetic words that "with God all things are possible." We recall once again that in the Word made flesh, Jesus our Lord, we have the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies. And today we will celebrate the institution of the Holy Eucharist and also the washing of the disciples' feet. Christ is then the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the author of the New. For with God all things are possible.

We are called upon to do likewise. To love our neighbors as ourselves and to love the Lord our God with all our Hearts, Minds and Souls. We have come to that time in which all things come to completion. We look to the altar, to Great High Priest, and we know that all things are completed and that all things are possible by Him, and with Him and in Him. Thanks be to God.

"Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, did institute the Sacrament of his Body and Blood : Mercifully grant that we may thankfully receive the same in remembrance of him who in these holy mysteries giveth us a pledge of life eternal, the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who now liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen."

Deacon Kerwin Wade

Psalm 102, 142, 143. Lamentations 2:10-18. 1 Corinthians 10:14-17, 11:27-32. Mark 14:12-25.



GOOD FRIDAY, APRIL 6TH

RANSOMED

"... knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." 1 Peter 1:18-19

It is ironic that Peter, in writing here to the new Christians, explains that they have been ransomed from the "futile ways of their forefathers," meaning the Old Testament attempts to erase sin through sacrificing the blood of animals, and yet he equates Christ to the perfect blood sacrifice, like that of a spotless lamb offered in those very practices. The blood, back then, was considered the life force of a creature. When you drain the blood out of an animal, it dies. That is why the dietary laws required that all the blood should be drained from livestock or poultry being prepared for food. That is why the early Christians were forbidden to eat food from animals that were strangled as well as food that had been offered to idols. The blood of a strangled animal would still be in the carcass. In a proper sacrifice, the blood would be soaked into the ground so that it was completely turned over to God by the one making the offering. The blood of Jesus spilled and soaked into the wood of the cross is more than a "type" or primal example of an Old Testament payment for past wrongs done. It is important to focus on the importance of the ransom.

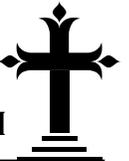
Often we hear about kidnappings and ransoms in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. This ancient practice is alive and well in our own time just on a secular level, but on the spiritual level the enslavement of our souls manifests itself in all sorts of ways ranging from petty envy, grumbling, swearing, cowardice, and laziness to the pride of arrogance, theft, and downright malicious acts. The murder of a person's reputation is just as cruel as the murder of his body.

The Crucifixion is God's way of canceling out sin, pushing the re-start button, reconciling us to himself, nullifying the curse of The Fall, and paying the price for us because He loves us. There is no material commodity that is valuable enough to do this. I firmly believe that when I am imprisoned in my own sin and guilt, it is only Jesus who can ransom me and bring me back to Himself. The enormous price he pays is the very blood of the Incarnate God we just finished celebrating at Christmas. What a mystery. What a blessing. We should all fall on our faces and thank him in faith and love.

"Almighty God, who stretched out your arms on the cross to bring all unto yourself, grant us the grace to accept the price you offer for our ransom, that we may be strengthened by your body, washed by your blood, and joined to your spirit for everlasting life, through Jesus Christ your son, our Lord. Amen."

Robert Boyer
Library Administrator, retired

Psalm 22, 40:1-10, 54, 95. Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-33. 1 Peter 1:10-20. John 13:36-38, John 19:38-42.



TO SEEK HIM IN HIS TEMPLE

*"One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple." Psalms 27:4*

Oh, to have the confidence in the LORD like King David to proclaim "Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear" (Psalm 27:3)! King David, who expresses this and other examples of unwavering confidence in the LORD in Psalms 27, reveals that his greatest desire is to live in God's presence each day of his life.

King David goes on to very poetically clarify his intention to worship the LORD by gazing "on the beauty of the LORD" and states that he will "seek him in his temple". It is the use of the phrase "seek him in his temple" that receives more meditation below.

The commentaries point out that the use of "house of the LORD" and "his temple" could refer to the tabernacle in Gibeon, or the sanctuary that housed the Ark of the Covenant, or even the temple that his son Solomon would build. The word temple likely was used to mean "the presence of the LORD".

We have the benefit of the New Testament and can draw upon the passage, "Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Besides paralleling the Psalms passage and giving us better insight into what King David was saying, the passage in 1 Corinthians reminds us that we have the benefit of God's presence in our lives through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. **We have available to us what King David desired.** So do you seek out to hear the Holy Spirit? Do you sanctify your body so that you have a place to find the Holy Spirit? How do you gaze on the Beauty of the LORD? It is this through this relationship that we can also have unwavering confidence like King David's.

"Most Holy and Blessed LORD, You are worthy to be praised. We thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. We pray that you through the power of the Holy Spirit you will draw us in to a closer relationship with you and give us unwavering confidence to do thy will. Amen."

Mark Cleveland
Corporate Real Estate

Psalm 27, 88, 95. Lamentations 3:37-58. Hebrews 4:1-16. Romans 8:1-11



EASTER DAY

One of the more moving stories about the Communist crackdown in Russia took place in a gymnasium as Communist leaders gathered together community leaders from a town. The political officer went on for an hour about the benefit of Communism and how atheism was not only necessary for a healthy state, but how believing in God was foolish. After an hour of atheist propaganda, the officer sat down. One small man from the town, came up on the stage and merely, "He is risen", to which a thunderous reply echoed through the gym, "The Lord is risen indeed".

We are told that sometime in the early morning hours of that first Easter Sunday, the tomb was opened up as the stone in front of the tomb was rolled away. What had been the lifeless body of Jesus Christ, killed on Good Friday, was now the Risen Jesus Christ, raised to life by the power of God.

Because of the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, more than just the tomb was opened up. Because Jesus lives, He can open our hearts to the living God. By turning to Him for forgiveness and trusting in Him as Savior, we can begin to discover the Risen Life, the true life: what God intended for us to have in creation.

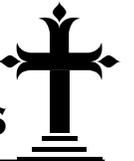
Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has opened the way for us to receive eternal life. He has opened the way for us to be at peace with Him and one another, and to enter back into Eden, where we can one day see God face to face and live.

Easter is about hope. With the message of an angel that Jesus was in fact alive, the world began to hope again. That hope lives on through the proclamation of the Gospel, through the breaking of bread in the Eucharist, and through sharing in the Risen Life of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Alleluia, He is Risen. The Lord is Risen indeed. Alleluia.

The Very Reverend Ryan Reed
Dean of St. Vincent's Cathedral

Psalm 113, 114, 118, 148, 149, 150 Exodus 12:1-14. Isaiah 51:9-11. John 1:1-18, 20:19-23. Luke 24:13-35





2012 LENTEN SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

STATIONS OF THE CROSS

Our regular schedule of daily services is offered throughout Lent in addition to Stations of the Cross. The nursery is available.

DATE	SPEAKER	LENTEN MEAL
Friday, February 24th 6:00 p.m.	Stations of the Cross Only	
Friday, March 2nd 6:00 p.m.	The Rt. Rev. Jack L. Iker, D.D., SSC III, Bishop of Fort Worth	Provided by St. Vincent's Cathedral Choir
Friday, March 9th 6:00 p.m.	The Rev. Ronald Drummond St. Stephens', Hurst	Provided by St. Vincent's Women's Fellowship
Friday, March 16th 6:00 p.m.	The Rev. Alan Horton St. Peter and St. Paul's, Arlington	Provided by St. Vincent's Anglican Youth
Friday, March 23rd 6:00 p.m.	The Rev. Andrew Petta St. Barnabas, Fort Worth	Provided by St. Vincent's Mission Team
Friday, March 30th 6:00 p.m.	The Rev. Mark Polley Christ the Redeemer, Fort Worth	Provided by St. Vincent's Vestry

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

The nursery is available for all services during Holy Week.

Monday, April 2nd 7:00 p.m.	Holy Eucharist
Tuesday, April 3rd 10:30 a.m.	Mass of Collegiality
Tuesday, April 3rd 7:00 p.m.	Holy Eucharist
Wednesday, April 4th 7:00 p.m.	Holy Eucharist
Thursday, April 5th 7:30 p.m.	Maundy Thursday Service
Friday, April 6th 7:30 p.m.	Good Friday Liturgy
Saturday, April 7th Sunset (approximately 8:00 p.m.)	Easter Vigil
Sunday, April 8th 7:30 a.m., 9:00 a.m. and 11:30 a.m.	Easter Sunday- Holy Eucharist

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