

# “BREAKTHROUGH LENT”

By The Rev. Laurie Garramone



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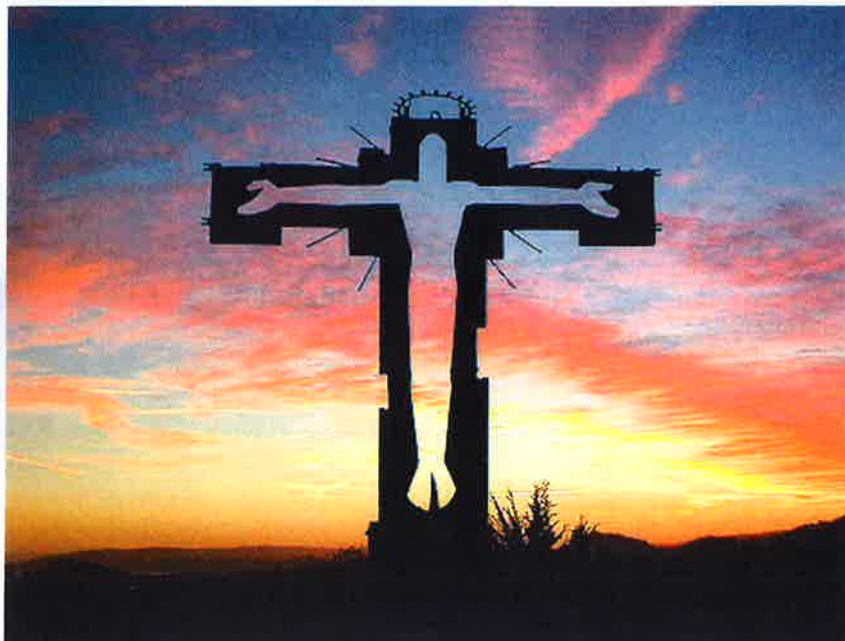
When people talk about the God-shaped space in their lives, they usually refer to a kind of hole or space in our hearts that only God can fill. However, for years, I’ve been deeply connected to another sort of God-shaped space: the space found in the ‘breakthrough cross’ pictured in this article.

When visiting the Spiritual Life Center, the Healing Chapel on campus features a large, wooden cross in the window behind the altar. The cut-out shape of Jesus’ body is centered within the cross itself, like a ‘Jesus window’. I call it a ‘breakthrough cross’, although I don’t know if that’s the right term. The cross embodies both the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus in the same image, providing a perfect Lenten icon. We are able to clearly recognize the crucified Christ, and yet hear the angel’s words at the tomb on the first Easter morning: Jesus is not there; he is risen!

This breakthrough cross frames the world. Just sitting in the Chapel at the Healing Center, we can look through the cross and see the day’s weather: brilliant blue skies or teeming rain or gathering clouds. The opposite hillside where the convent sits is framed by the cross. Occasionally, birds fly past or a wandering butterfly meanders by. Seeing our world framed by Jesus provides focus and meaning to ordinary events and reminds us of the closeness of God.

As Christians, we are called to see our world through this Jesus-shaped space, to look at everything as being framed by the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus: our lives, our actions, our thoughts. When we enter the season of Lent, our hope is that whatever disciplines we choose, whatever prayers we say, or whatever programs we attend might help us have a breakthrough, or new understanding of who Jesus is, what he did for us and who we are as his children. We may need to break through our own laziness and work hard at Lenten disciplines, or break through

demanding work schedules to find time for devotion to God. Some of us have to break through old patterns to find new ways of both spiritual and physical health in order to grow closer to God.



Framing our world through the Jesus-shaped cross gives us the opportunity to see everything differently. In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul writes this: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you." The breakthrough cross offers us another way of seeing, and it is a stark reminder of the kingdom work to which we are called. Can we frame our everyday work and worship with the impression and image of Jesus, even when he isn't seen by others?

The Jesus-shaped window through which we see the world can disturb our souls as we focus on those things God wants us to see and wrestle with: Who is my neighbor? How do I provide the right help to people who need it? Even the simplest decisions in our lives can be framed this way: What should I watch on my TV/computer/phone? What images push God out of the center of my world? How do I spend my money? How can I reconcile with my brother or sister? We will be challenged if we allow our vision to be focused and framed by the image of Jesus on the cross.

Many years ago, with this image in my head, I bought a small necklace with a breakthrough cross on it. This year part of my Lenten discipline is to wear the tiny breakthrough cross every day. I want to be reminded

to see differently and to think differently because of how Jesus helps me change my perspective from 'me-centered' to Christ-centered.

However, I experienced another breakthrough as I wrote this—when I wear that small cross, visible against my clothing, others will see me through the cross as well! The space where his body is outlined is filled by my body as the cross rests against my chest. So when people meet me, they should expect to be meeting the risen Christ through me as well.

John Piper, Christian writer, said, very simply: "Seeing is a gift," referring to the earlier Ephesians verse. If we are honest, we know we are both distracted and distractible, but the breakthrough cross, the image of Christ both crucified and resurrected, may help focus our attention, our hearts and our lives on the most essential truths and the greatest example of love we will ever know. The great physician Luke said this in his gospel: "Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light".

Receive the gift of seeing the world differently during Lent this year, and let God frame everything you see with his image.

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