NOW IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME
AN INVITATION FROM THE PRESIDENT

Tradition.

Christians look to the traditions of repentance, prayer and service to prepare for the great feast of Easter Sunday. “Prepare the way of the Lord!” cries Isaiah (Is40:3) “make straight the path.” Eight centuries later, these words echoed in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke as they describe the message repeated by John the Baptist.

Just as they relied on tradition, we too should look back on the traditions and sacrifices made by all who came before us. Do we honor the blood and tears of those who lived with grievous injustice, but still carried their faith in God? Do we thank our Lord and Savior for the gift of life in God; for our courageous ancestors whose faith sustained them while they fought for freedom and a better life for all?

A common term used in these Covid-19 pandemic times is “pivot.” Lent is time set aside to give us the opportunity to re-examine our lives, recognize, not only the great sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross, but the sacrifices of all those whose faith helped create the society where we find ourselves, and acknowledge ways we need to “pivot” to prepare the way of the Lord.

This Lenten season, I invite all members of the Carlow University community to join me in this annual “pivot” opportunity. How can we serve one another? Who has been forgotten? Can we find ways to repent for our shortcomings by honestly looking at the privileges we are afforded, as well as to recognize those who have been left out? Join with me in prayer and action this Lenten season and together we can bring the Light of Christ making this a world more just and welcoming place for all humankind.

Kathy W. Humphrey, PhD
President, Carlow University
Faith. Isn’t that what Lent is all about?

As we follow the daily readings, you’ll come to know stories of God’s promises and the covenants made binding us to God, tales of hardship and betrayal, persecution. People were enslaved, displaced, and still they believed. Generation after generation they held on to the faith that a Savior was coming. They knew the Savior would come...someday.

Our Christian Scriptures lead us through the struggles of the early Church, their doubts, persecution, martyrdom. The Gospels paint the picture of the public ministry of Christ as He was revealed. The doubts of the apostles and those who witnessed the miracles were real. This was not the deliverer they envisioned. But their faith saw them through.

We face challenges of racism, poverty, loneliness, abandonment. Covid-19 enters its third year of taking lives, disrupting commerce, isolating us from loved ones. Do we cling to our faith to help us through?

Lenten prayers, sacrifices, and almsgiving support us as we grow in faith. As we journey together, let us help one another keep the faith. And may we finish this Lenten journey filled with the love and light of Christ so that we can pass the faith on to those who come after us.

**Siobhan K. De Witt, MA**
**Campus Ministry**
The Lenten weeks of reflection are upon us, do not roll into them lightly. The wisdom of the Scriptures urges us, pleads with us, do not accept the grace of God in vain.

Do not accept the grace of this season of faith in vain. Rather, go into the inner chambers of your heart, be still, be quiet, pause each day, look, listen, breathe.

Rest into a moment.

Sense the grace of God as this Mystery speaks to you of love and call. Listen for the questions that the Spirit has for you, for us, in a world that sometimes feels like it is coming unglued. Remember, there is more than this to the drama and wonder of creation.

Render your heart open to the movement of a living, loving Spirit, who is with us even in our sinfulness, perpetually calling us to let go and let God, while paradoxically demanding that we stretch toward love, and examine when we fail to do so, personally, and collectively.

Dr. Mary-Paula Cancienne, RSM, PhD
Conference for Mercy Higher Education
“…Blessed are they who hope in the Lord…”

No matter what, there is always the Lord. Given the Lord’s sacrifice for us, we should be especially mindful during the Lent season of just how blessed we are in having Him in our lives. When we have faith in the Lord, there is always hope.

Staying on the right path in life means following the way of Jesus, our Lord. We can be very fruitful in doing so but flopping when we go off track. We all have flaws and make mistakes, but we can grow and learn. The Lord is always there to give us hope and guidance along the way, and that is why the Lord’s hopeful are blessed.

Arlene F. Howard, ’16
In the first reading, the people are asking why when they fast and afflict themselves does the Lord takes no note of it. They are told that the fasting he wishes to see is the helping and caring for others, which will distribute greater good into the world compared to not feeding themselves for a day. He says that if they change their ways of fasting, that their wounds shall be healed, and they will receive the glory of God. This reading tells me that instead of focusing on ourselves to reach fulfillment, that we should be focusing on giving to others who need help the most. We will better ourselves more and will be rewarded and recognized for how we have treated and given to others instead of what we have done for ourselves.

Sarah Blackstone
Respiratory Care, 2023
As in many Catholic families, we were encouraged as children to consider what we would “give up” for Lent. In our private little worlds, forsaking things like candy or going to the movies proved to be significant challenges. However, today the prophet Isaiah clearly challenges us as adults to go beyond ourselves, to engage in actions which contribute to making the world a better place for others.

During this Lenten season consider Isaiah’s invitation. Say positive things about others. Work at restoring broken relationships in family and community. Begin to see differences among us as blessings rather than threats. Take time for God, listening in silence and paying attention to what is happening around you and in the world. Give from your heart. Isaiah promises us that actions such as these will be abundantly rewarded.

_Sister Rita Harasiuk, RSM, ’73_
Because of the world we live in today, it is easy to think that once we make a mistake, we are done for. When we fall into temptations, instead of showing ourselves forgiveness, we decide to journey farther into the ‘pit’ and give up.

Like we show forgiveness to others, we must show forgiveness to ourselves like our Father shows forgiveness to us. It is easy to remember that God is with us in the best of times, but harder to remember when it is the worst of times. We may think that God has closed the door on us, but we need to remember the scripture says, “No one who believes in Him will be put to shame.” (Rom 10:11) That door, no matter how we may perceive it, is always wide open for us to enter.

No matter what tribulations we go through, as long as we believe, we will be saved.

**Atalia Pleskovitch**  
**Biology, 2024**
I love the taste of fresh honey on a piece of toast on a rainy morning. The sweetness is so sweet; a gulp of milk soothes my taste buds. God’s Word is much like the sweetness of honey. God tells us that His Word is pure, radiant, and sweeter than honey. If we take time to listen to what God is telling us we will be able to follow and spread His Word, according to His intent. During this time, ask God to guide your words to be the sweetness in someone else’s life like God’s sweet Words guide you in your life.

Krista Burdett, ’18
I grew up in a small coal mining town in Pennsylvania. Food was an important part of our lives. We “fed” our neighbors whenever the snow or rain fell, or, as the sun shone. This means simply that we celebrated sharing food, mourned lost loved ones while sharing food, comforted those who were ill by sharing food.

Providing sustenance to others is an act of mercy during their suffering, a simple act of kindness when they are ill, or a gift to help celebrate special moments. God’s word “feeds us”; it comes alive through our actions and our service to others.

Cynthia Busin Nicola, EdD
Department of Business Management, Accounting and Ethics
Even now, says the LORD,
Return to ME with your whole heart
For I AM gracious and merciful.
— Adapted from Joel 2:12,13

LORD, grant we, by The Power of YOUR HOLY SPIRIT, submit to YOUR WORD! JESUS, we praise YOU and rejoice to take upon ourselves the Yoke of YOUR New and Better Covenant received by faith, not in ourselves or our deeds, but, in The POWER of YOUR BLOOD, shed for all persons, for the purposes of personal purification and forgiveness from even the worst, most inconceivable sins.

Thank YOU, JESUS, that YOUR New Covenant decrees and guarantees intimate relationship now and eternal relationship with YOU! YOU Alone Provide This WAY, TRUTH and LIFE! Thank YOU forever JESUS that YOU take away the sin of the entire world! Not by our religion, nor our repeated sacrifices, nor any kind of work, but by Faith in YOU, WHO guarantee complete forgiveness by This New Covenant in YOUR BLOOD, Atonement for our every sin. May we receive and draw near to YOU, Personal SAVIOR, as heirs of eternal life with revelation through YOUR WORD, in JESUS’ NAME, AMEN!

Anna Marie Del Duca, ’06
“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. (Mt 7:7)

Do we trust God enough to ask for what we really need? Or do we do everything on our own? God can do great things in our lives when we are trusting. How do we become more open to God this Lent? Invite God more deeply into your day and life through greater awareness of God’s presence in the moment as you walk from your car and breath in fresh air, as we savor a nourishing lunch, or as you trust that God will give you the wisdom and words for a difficult conversation, test or meeting. When we recognize God’s presence throughout our day, we will grow in awareness and gratitude for all that we have received which comes from our gracious God. Then, we will know that our God gives us all that we need without our even asking.

Sister Michele Schroack, RSM
Vocation Minister
Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130:1—7abc; Matthew 5:20-26

March 11, 2022

FIRST FRIDAY OF LENT

This reading talks about living life while turning away from sin. The reading does not talk about living a sin-free life. It can be difficult to understand that trying to do what is right in our minds, may not always be the correct way to act. In this sense, it’s important to keep God involved in all aspects of our lives to ensure not only are we trying to avoid sin, but also not using our own selfish judgement to determine how to act because it may not always be the way God intended.

Sarah Lenkner
Nursing, 2022
“Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48)

I could hardly imagine a more impossibly difficult command. If I can’t drive 20 minutes to work without grumbling at the pickup that cuts me off, how am I supposed to achieve perfection — even divine perfection? Thankfully, the perfection of which Jesus speaks isn’t a moral exactitude. Indeed, the word “perfection” hardly captures what Jesus is up to. Rather, the word “teleios” — poorly translated as perfection — comes from the word the Greek word for “end” or “goal.” It doesn’t represent a person free of mistakes, but rather one who achieves maturity by constantly striving toward the right goal.

When we love our enemies, Jesus tells us, we become the children of God. But we are not tasked with merely remaining children forever. We are instead charged with attaining a maturity of love. We do this by not only loving those who love us, caring not only for our kin and our neighbors. To be perfect, as God is perfect, is to continually expand our sphere of love and concern; to open our boundaries to the unlovable, to the forgotten, to the loathed and the ignored. Let us strive together toward that end.

Justin Pearl, PhD
Atkins Center for Ethics

Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8; Matthew 5:43-48

March 12, 2022

FIRST SATURDAY OF LENT
Peter, John, and James were overwhelmed when they saw Jesus transformed in dazzling white clothes and conversing with Moses and Elijah and then heard a voice telling them to listen to God’s son, Jesus. I find this idea overwhelming as well, even though the church reminds us of the words every year. God’s grandeur becomes more approachable to us when it is tempered by God’s mercy and His reassurances to us.

This is when the psalms come in to comfort us. In today’s psalms we are reminded that we need not be fearful for the Lord is our light and salvation. He is our refuge, strength, and helper. We are to be stouthearted and wait for the Lord with courage. I remember how often St. Pope John Paul II would remind us about courage. I found that comforting. I still need to be reminded for our times are tumultuous today and we are concerned about the pandemic and political strife in our country and the world.

In all of this struggle the Lord offers us salvation and rescue, and our church offers a community of faith and mercy. May all of us, during this Lenten journey, find peace as we open our hearts to others and rejoice in Jesus’ resurrection. Jesus is our hope for the future.

Rauda Salkauskas Gelazis RN, PhD, Ret., ’63
Forgiving is against our natural human impulse toward the desire for justification and vindication. We have but to think of how many neighbors stop speaking over slights that they’ve likely since forgotten the source of, or the many instances of hot-headedness and violence that we witness almost daily with incomprehension. Even families suffer estrangements. But God does require us to forgive, and His promise to forgive holds before us a perfect model. We fall short of perfection and even just adequacy every moment of lives, yet God forgives us.

The most outstanding witness in my lifetime came from the families of those slain in the Mother Emmanuel Church killing in 2015. Many family members offered forgiveness to the murderer, and many said that their faith required it. Some said that forgiving the killer was necessary for themselves so that they could walk freely in faith.

Doralee E. Brooks, MEd, MFA, ’15
During this season of solemn reflection, we often turn our thoughts toward our wrongdoings in the past year. Even the most virtuous among us will recall, undoubtedly, a litany of bad decisions and harmful actions. But rather than wallow in shame or self-pity, we find hope for redemption in Isaiah’s gentle yet compelling call:

*Come now, let us set things right.* (Is. 1:18)

When have we taken our blessings for granted?

*Come now, let us set things right.*

Whom have we offended with thoughtless words or deeds?

*Come now, let us set things right.*

What obligations to our family, community, and world have we forsaken?

*Come now, let us set things right.*

How have we missed the mark?

*Come now, let us set things right.*

Through seeking forgiveness and recommitting ourselves to justice, we are made like new, ready to make better choices and rediscover the joy of doing good.

Ben Pilcher, ’16

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalm 50:8-9, 16bc-17, 21, 23; Matthew 23:1-12

March 15, 2022

SECOND TUESDAY OF LENT
WHO YOU GONNA CALL?
Have you ever been in a situation when you are working on something you strongly believe in and you know what you are doing is right, but everyone is against what you are doing? There is no support, and everyone is opposed or hostile towards your efforts.

Who You Gonna Call? When your enemy plots against you?
Who You Gonna Call? When you encounter obstacles that prevent you from accomplishing your goals?
Who you Gonna Call? When you need someone to help you out?
Who You Gonna Call? When you cry out for help?
Who You Gonna Call? When you need rescued from trouble?

As Jeremiah did, we must display tremendous faithfulness and courage when faced with discouragement and opposition. Understanding that, you can always call on the Lord. It is important that we give praise and thanksgiving for our Lord and Savior. We must trust in the Lord always.

WHO YOU GONNA CALL? CALL ON THE LORD!

Betsy Hunt
Disability Services
“Just as from the heavens the rain and snow come down And do not return there till they have watered the earth, making it fertile and fruitful” (IS 55:10-11)

For my reflection, this is the line that resonated with me the most. To me, this line is saying that rain and snow and negative things all come from the same place, God and heaven, but they have a purpose for coming which is to help things grow and thrive more so. I feel like this is saying that in order to grow, you must go through things that are going to test you and push you, but ultimately will make you a better person. I feel like this is a really relevant reading especially with COVID and having to go through the pandemic.

Madeline Canel, ’20
Master’s in Professional Counseling/Student Affairs 2022
Mailroom
“Remember the marvels the Lord has done” is our psalm refrain for today. Today’s epistle from Genesis tells of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers — after a debate about how to get rid of him. Our Gospel is the parable of the landowner sending his servants, and finally, his son, to collect the rent. Each is killed trying to collect the rightful fees. Both are disturbing stories. Why then are we told to remember the marvels the Lord has done?

Our psalm reminds us that no matter how bad the situation around us seems to be, God can turn all things to good. We know years later, Joseph saved Egypt and his family from starvation. The parable comes to life with the twist of Jesus, the Son, conquering death.

What better time for us to “Remember the marvels the Lord has done.”

Penny Parker
Staff
Forever……. The word is repeated eleven times in today’s readings. In this world, nothing lasts forever. All things change; be they good things or bad things. All things come to an end. Generations are born, and live, and die, and then, new generations come. Depending on their current circumstances, some are frightened by change while others look hopefully towards it. But God's ways are not our ways, and He shares with us the promise that His ways are forever. From His promises to Abraham, to David, and to Joseph, God has confirmed His love for us and His commitment in Christ Jesus, that He was and is and always will be with us…… forever.

Laure King Valentine, ’88
God and Moses had an amazing “heart to heart” conversation by way of “the burning bush.” Moses is told, “remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.” The sacred name of God is revealed ~ “I AM.”

A few years ago, I visited Saint Vartan Armenian Cathedral in New York City. At the Sunday Divine Liturgy, I noticed that the priest was wearing slippers instead of shoes. At the Eucharistic Prayer, he slipped them off and stood barefoot at the altar! The priest showed us that we were on “holy ground” as he pronounced Jesus’ words at the Last Supper.

Let us be more aware of the most personal and powerful way that Jesus Christ — fully divine and fully human — is present in the Eucharist. Come let us adore and be overcome with Eucharistic amazement! What may be revealed to you?

Rev. Steven M. Palsa MDiv, MA
Chaplain
The theme that ties these three readings together for me is the need we all have for God.

In the first reading, Naaman seeks a cure for his leprosy in a foreign land, from a foreign prophet — Elisha of Israel. And leaves cured, proclaiming that there is no God but the God of Israel.

In the gospel, Jesus names Naaman as well as other “foreigners” in Old Testament history who are helped by God through the Prophets.

In Psalm 42, one of my favorites, an existential cry is heard as the psalmist seeks the living God, and wonders when they shall see the face of God.

All three readings remind us of the need for God’s presence in our lives. Sometimes, it begins as a personal need — a cure for Naaman, survival for the widow in famine. But the psalm shows that we all feel the deeper need in our soul for the living God.

Karen McDowell, MAT
The Campus Laboratory School of Carlow University
It’s sometimes hard to believe that the terrifying Judge of the Old Testament is the same God that descends as a fragile infant to live among us in complete love. But he is, and we see this when we realize that God’s judgment doesn’t come from vengeance, but from a desire for His people to remember what life without Him is like. He has waited as we fumble around in search of that thing that will satisfy our hearts, watching us search everywhere but Him. When I read this passage, I imagine God reaching out to me with tears in his eyes and saying, “I’m right here. I’ve been here all along.”

Today, prayerfully consider how some of the things in your life may be God’s merciful judgment calling you back. Are you feeling overwhelmed? Are things just not going the way you planned? If so, how might you meet Him in that place?

God’s judgment isn’t always punishment. Sometimes, He is just trying to get our attention and remind us that He is here, He is waiting, and there is no better time than now for us to return to Him with our whole heart.

Cori Murray
Master’s Secondary Education, 2021
“Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven…” (MT 5:18)

The past decade has been rife with misinformation, anti-intellectualism, and an increased reliance on completely subjective approaches to reality. What resonates with me from this passage is that it is a great reminder that we do not exist in vacuum, singularly alone. We exist with and among others and impact them whether we intend to or not. When rules and truth are set aside or we cave to ignorance, the impact is not only on us but those around us. We must always remain mindful of the messages our words and actions convey. To seek the truth and defend it always is one of our highest callings.

Aimee Zellers, PhD
College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Business Management, Accounting, and Ethics, Philosophy
In reflecting on Jeremiah speaking of hearing the Lord’s voice and listening, there are so many times that we all hear one another but fail to listen. Today’s world is constantly busy. Social media has taken us from a contemplative place in our hearts to a place of instant gratification. I thought of slowing down and taking the time to not only hear God’s voice but to hear God’s voice in the voice of others. In appreciating the moments we have to interact with one another, let us truly listen and be mindful of the gift of listening.

Linda Coleman
HUB, Office of the Registrar
The initiative was God’s.

Mary certainly hadn’t devised this plan for salvation. Who could have imagined an undertaking so preposterously ambitious, through a means so preposterously ordinary?

No doubt Mary had her own plans for improving the world, even if only through a loving life with Joseph. What if she had been so caught up in those future designs that she missed the angel entirely? (Who knows what subtle or not-so-subtle form Gabriel took that day?)

Instead: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.” (LK 1: 38) This is not the epiphany of a person awed into obedience. It is the daily mantra of a woman whose humble, attentive faith far preceded the angel’s arrival, and perhaps even allowed her to notice it — a woman who knew that only God’s plans would truly magnify.

Yes, the initiative was God’s. It still is. Are we listening?

Steve Calme, PhD
College of Arts and Science, Theology
Mercy Associate
Facebook. Twitter. Snapchat. TikTok. Sneakers. Handbags. Cars. Clothes. Jewelry. Tattoos. Like the Pharisee, we often get caught up in our individualistic and materialistic culture. We think more is better. We allow these distractions to keep us from seeing our own faults, yet we are quick to judge others around us. Rather than working to improve ourselves we turn to our materialism and individualism. In the end, we are all sinners. This Lent is a time that we can take the opportunity to humble ourselves, like the tax collector, to experience God’s mercy if we let him into our hearts.

Julia Cavallo, Ed.D.
Conference for Mercy Higher Education
I always feel like the new year brings hope into our lives. With hope, it’s important to remember to run YOUR race. At times it may seem like you’re doing all the right things in life but can’t catch a break, while others are excelling at life. It may even feel like people are being rewarded with things they don’t deserve. We must stay in our own lane and never get tired of doing the right thing. Sometimes the morally correct way won’t be easy, and it might feel unfair, but standing in faith that you are living through the spirit of God and allowing Him to flow through you is a blessing. So as this Lenten season continues, stay focused on God’s plan for you and don’t let the path of other’s derail your journey.

Charlynn Moore
Social Work, 2023
These readings bring joy and hope to me when I read them because I feel my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is alive in me and I pray that He is alive in all of you. His miracles that He performed made others well just by their faith in Him. Hear the Good News! When Jesus Christ returns there will be a new Heaven and a new earth. “The things of the past shall not be remembered or come to mind. Instead, there will be rejoicing and happiness in what I create.”

Michael Day
Facilities, Housekeeping
A God of Impossibilities

In these times we can certainly look around and think to ourselves, “God are you not with us? You are the Great Healer, with one touch you can Heal the Land. How long O’ God must we continue to dwell in a land filled with divisiveness, sickness, injustice and sufferings?” We have all had to pause and reflect on our Faith in such perilous times. It is during such times that we must go beyond what we are able to see with the naked eye and meditate on the Scriptures which offer God’s People many promises as in Psalms 46:1-3. It is not until we are tested that we are able to tap into the deeper depths of our faith that allows us to Believe and Trust Him even when all around us tells otherwise.

In the Book of John, Jesus encounters a man that has been physically afflicted most of his life. Jesus challenges him to go beyond what he has grown to believe of himself based on his disabilities and to “pick up his own mat and walk.” This man had come to believe that he was unable to move beyond his condition. Many of us may have come to a place of helplessness and hopelessness. YET, we must believe in the Promises of God, the God of Impossibilities.

Ayeshah Bulls, MSPC ’20
If we are humble and sincere, God will finish in us the work He has begun. He never refuses His grace to those who ask it.

— Catherine McAuley

Catherine McAuley
Familiar instructions of Rev. Mother McAuley: Foundress of the Institute of the Religious Sisters of Mercy
Dublin, Ireland, January 1, 1888, p. 148
“God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life.” (Jn:3:16)

We’re in the midst of a pandemic, that we thought couldn’t last one more month, one more year. Friends, families, countries argue about how best to keep safe. Some of us are still separated from our families. It’s natural during these times to think God has abandoned His people. However, there is much to rejoice over and in the world. People have come together, helped each other in the smallest, yet meaningful ways. These are the little things that get us through. Focus on these little moments, and pay them forward. Be the light for someone else.

Nicole Ravas, MFA, ’20
Academic Affairs
When it is difficult to understand what scripture is telling me, I often turn to a different translation. Here is a more modern translation of today’s Psalm. May it bring you hope.

Is anyone crying for help? GOD is listening, ready to rescue you.

If your heart is broken, you’ll find GOD right there; if you’re kicked in the gut, he’ll help you catch your breath.

Disciples so often get into trouble; still, GOD is there every time.

He’s your bodyguard, shielding every bone; not even a finger gets broken.

The wicked commit slow suicide; they waste their lives hating the good.

GOD pays for each slave’s freedom; no one who runs to him loses out.

*The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*
Eugene H. Peterson, 2002, Editor
In today’s Gospel, we see the people’s reactions to Jesus. Some say Jesus is the prophet; others, the Christ; and others want to arrest Him.

What divisive words did this man speak? He said, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me!” These are words of comfort, an invitation to follow. “Never before has anyone spoken like this man,” say the guards.

But Jesus also instructed: “Do not keep judging according to appearances; let your judgment be according to what is right.” (Jn 7:24) We glimpse how we must strive to follow Jesus, asking: What is right; what is truth; how to love and forgive; how to be honest, fair, and generous? We must live the Word at home, with friends, with enemies, on the highway, in the workplace, in our politics, in our hearts, on our mother Earth. It is very difficult. Jesus says in the Verse: “Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance.” (Lk 8:15).

Stella Smetanka (Mericli), ’70
Radical Solidarity

How many times have we been asked to “put ourselves in the other’s shoes?” Today’s Gospel passage is asking us to do this even when it is inconvenient, uncomfortable, and even counter cultural.

I can think of many times that friends or family have loved me unconditionally, even when they would apparently have every right to condemn me. I hope each of us can think of moments where this has happened to them. Today, let’s reflect on those moments with gratitude and ask for the gift of being able to remember them when we want to condemn others.

There will be times where condemning someone will not only feel natural but will be in line with social norms. Let’s ask for the grace to hear Jesus’ voice in the face of these situations saying to us, “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone.”

Kate O’Brien
Center for Mercy Heritage and Service, Mercy Service

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126:1-6, 12-15; Phillipians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11

April 3, 2022
FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT
Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance. (Lk 8:15)

Trust, follow, love Jesus, as he loves us. As I reflect on this beautiful verse, I am reminded of prayers that were left unanswered. The prayers that I begged Jesus to listen to but did not have an open heart to understand the greed I was asking for. My heart was not open or generous, I wanted what I thought I should have, without being grateful or loving towards Jesus.

Now when I pray, I listen. I listen to the silence and begin with a generous heart. I ask Jesus for his help to open my heart and to understand that if my prayers are not answered in the way that I want them to be, that it is okay, it is fine, it is the way it should be.

Teaching third graders at Sunday school helped me to slow down, to remember that we are not perfect because we believe in God, that we learn to have a generous heart. We learn to be kind, we learn to worship only one God, and most importantly we make mistakes and are forgiven. During our silent prayers at Sunday school, I asked my third graders to listen and to open their heart to Jesus and to love.

Erin Boyles
Student Affairs
The seed is the word of God; Christ is the sower; all who come to him will live forever. (Jn 8:28)

John 8:28 is the scripture reading that resonated with me the most. Jesus said He does nothing on his own saying only what God taught him. Jesus also said that He always does what is pleasing to God, so He is never alone. This reminds me that if we believe and do what is pleasing to God, being kind and merciful, we are, and will never, be alone.

Julie M. Gaul, MS, MBA ’10
Athletics, Wellness and Fitness Services
In the first reading, I am very impressed with the faith that the three men showed by not bowing down to the culture of the king, who wanted the three of them to worship him and the idol that was made for the people to worship. The king proposed they worship his created idol or be burned to death in the white-hot fiery furnace. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not cave into the king’s demands and were thrown into the furnace. What happened next, is because of their strong faith. The king observed them walking around in the furnace, untouched by the flame but he also observed a fourth figure in the furnace. The fourth figure was sent by God to protect them because of their faith and devotion to Him. So, I propose to you, to have a strong faith that Jesus Christ came to save us from the fires of hell.

Kenneth J. Ference
Communication Officer
Amen, amen I say to you, before Abraham came to be, I AM. (Jn 8:58)

On this Fifth Thursday of Lent, the weakness of my past and the fears of our future with Covid-19 and changes in our world flooded my mind. I became overwhelmed. So, I begged the Holy Spirit to breathe in me that my thoughts may be holy. My thoughts began to focus on “My name is I AM.” Jesus was speaking, when you worry about things and sit with mistakes and fears, it is hard. I am not there. My name is not “I was.”

When I think about the future problems it is also very hard. I am not there either. My name is not “I will be.”

But when you ponder in the quiet space away from technology and worries, it is not overwhelming. I am here. “My name is I AM.” Rest in me. So, this Lenten Season remember to be silent and listen to the awesome and powerful I AM.

Sister Patricia A. Skowronek, RSM
Today’s responsorial psalm offers supplication for God. “In my distress I called upon the Lord and He heard my voice.” (PS 18:7) Sometimes we all need the reminder that, in prayer, God is waiting for us. Let us not overcomplicate how we will pray to God, or what we will say. Truly, prayer does not need to be elaborate or long, but simply the humble practice of connecting to God. If coming back to prayer, perhaps try chanting the Taize hymn “O Lord hear my prayer, come and listen to me.” The Lord waits, and longs to hear our prayers.

Ruth Madden Foreman, DNP, RN, APRN, FNP-BC
College of Health and Wellness, Nursing
As a child, sitting with my great-grandmothers listening to their stories, a common phrase used was “my people.” “My people were brewers...”, “My father’s people lived in...,” The stories were funny, interesting, sad, wistful, probably exaggerated, but they gave me grounding. I was part of “a people.” I had history, reasons for traditions. That’s not a bad thing.

Society has become more transient, “our people” work, learn, worship, and even live with “those people,” who are not “my people.” But is that true?

Ezekiel tells us that God welcomes all and invites all to be His people. He draws people from all sides, delivers all from transgression and joins us together generation after generation as “one people” making a covenant of peace.

There is no “my people,” or “your people.” We are ALL God’s people. Can I grow closer to God and to “my people” by removing the barriers I have been conditioned to accept? Lord help me to recognize the uniqueness of each person as I honor them as my people too.

Siobhan K. De Witt, MA
Center for Mercy Heritage and Service, Campus Ministry
A man hangs on a cross. Wrongly accused, convicted and crucified. Despite the circumstances that have placed the Son of God in this position of cruelty and despair, the first words from the cross spoken by our Lord and Savior are “Father, forgive them…”

What a testament to the Love of God! With the power of the Almighty, Jesus Christ Son of Man and Son of God cries out “Father, forgive them…” Forgive, a word seldom used these days. How different our world would be if only we practiced the actions, the compassion, the love of forgiveness. We have been shown the very Love of God, and yet we fail daily to practice what we pray “…forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us…” Do we mean what we pray? Each time we pray the Lord’s prayer we tell God that we are forgiving those who have trespassed against us. Well, have we? Do we? This day our Lord rode triumphantly into Jerusalem to begin the path that will ultimately lead to our forgiveness of sins. Lest we forget, we are to “Forgive, as He has forgiven us…”

This week when you pray the Lord’s Prayer, begin to practice what we pray and truly forgive those who trespass against us. It is what we ask of God. Can it be any less for us?

Ralph Kilgore, Jr.
Facilities, Building Trades
The reading begins: “Here is my servant whom I uphold.” (IS 42:1) The servant does not cry out or shout in the streets. The servant just goes about doing the Lord’s work. The Lord upheld me as I (finally) completed my bachelor’s degree. The Lord upheld me through being widowed (twice), foreclosure, and losses of beloved family members. The Lord upholds me as I face cancer treatment.

A person often does not know when they are doing the Lord’s work. At a recent gathering, a former coworker told me that he never would have made it through his apprenticeship without my help. I do not recall the exact ways that I helped him, but the Lord had placed me where He needed me to be. Now, more than ever, the Lord guides me to where He needs me to be to do His work.

Bernard (Bernie) Lucaks, ’21
R. I will sing of your salvation.

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.
In your justice rescue me, and deliver me;
incline your ear to me, and save me.
R. I will sing of your salvation.

Be my rock of refuge,
a stronghold to give me safety,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
O my God, rescue me from the hand of the wicked.
R. I will sing of your salvation.

For you are my hope, O LORD;
my trust, O God, from my youth.
On you I depend from birth;
from my mother’s womb you are my strength.
R. I will sing of your salvation.

My mouth shall declare your justice,
day by day your salvation.
O God, you have taught me from my youth,
till the present I proclaim your wondrous deeds.
R. I will sing of your salvation.

Singing, in my eyes, is one most powerful things humans can do. In this verse of Psalms, we are urged to not only speak of what Jesus has done for us but to be so filled with thankfulness that it comes out of us as music. Reading these words, it is easy to let our eyes or mouth include a rhythm as we exalt our praise for salvation, for finding refuge, for having the safety in the hands of God.

Caitlin Way
Student Affairs
In today’s readings I am reminded of the pain inflicted by those who turn their backs on us, betray us, or seek to quiet us. Their betrayal is not easy to take. We, the accused, have no voice and stand silent. We are reminded of the good news to look towards the light, beyond our betrayers. If we can find our way back, we can find the source of life and love and not succumb to the false accusations and the pain of being ostracized. And so, as we pray and cry out for help to God who loves us and can lift us out of the darkness our enemies create, we are filled with light, love, and hope. Our cries are heard. Hate, in the end, no matter how dark, is defeated.

Sue Kreke Rumbaugh, MFA, ’09
Annie Dillard wrote in Teaching a Stone to Talk, “On the whole, I do not find Christians sufficiently sensible of conditions. Does anyone have the foggiest notion of what sort of power we so blithely invoke?... We should all be wearing crash helmets to church. Ushers should issue life preservers and signal flares; they should lash us to our pews.”

The celebration of the Lord’s Supper is one of those occasions when hard hats are appropriate. If we thought too long about the power of what we commemorate on this night, we might need to hold onto one another for dear life. Yet we gather to celebrate because we believe that, on this night, Jesus transformed bread and wine into his very body and blood. And he promised that we would always be assured of his presence — not only in the bread and wine but in one another as well. The gift of God’s continual presence requires, in return, that we reverence one another, each as a particular sign of God among us.

These final days approaching Easter carry us from this night with its promise of God’s ongoing presence to Easter Sunday and its manifestation that this promise is stronger than death — all requiring protective head gear! So hold on, and be ready to feel the earth moving under your feet as we begin to immerse ourselves in these days during which we commemorate God’s stunning love with all that it promises and demands.

Sister Sheila Carney, RSM  
Center for Mercy Heritage and Service
Jesus stood before the Jews on the steps of Pilate’s palace - beaten, slapped, flogged, crowned with thorns that pierced his head until blood streamed down his face, onto his robe.

Pilate asked the crowd, “What do you want me to do with him?”

Pilate was giving the long-enslaved Jews a choice - who did they want for their king? Caesar — the current Roman king — powerful, attractive, enslaver of the Jews? Or Jesus, the “forever King” — broken, despised, afflicted, so ugly that the people couldn’t even look at him.

“Crucify him!”

“But he is your King.”

“We have no king but Caesar.”

The Jews made their choice. We must make ours. Do we align ourselves with the powerful and beautiful who oppress us? Or the ugly and broken who sets us free? If we are repulsed when we see Jesus’ suffering, we must remember that it is the ugliness of our own sin that reflects back at us. Our sin made him repulsive. Only when we accept our ugliness, can we embrace Jesus’ power to heal us. Everybody has to choose.

“You gotta serve somebody. It may be the devil, or it may be the Lord, but you gotta serve somebody.” — Bob Dylan

Kate McConnell
Office of Career Development
The story of creation leading up to God creating man on the sixth day is a comforting story. Hearing this as a child, it put some ‘order’ into how things came into being, a seemingly sensible way of making the world as we know it. Reading again with careful eyes, I take note of the line, “God created man in his image,” and I paused. This time recognizing that I’ve always assumed something without much thought. In God’s image? How does he see us reflected in Him? What part of himself did he give to us or model for us? I try to always remind myself that God lives within all of us, but how powerful it becomes when I think that not only does he live in each of us, but he truly made us as a model of Him. An image.

Jennifer O’Toole, MA
Office of Career Development

April 16, 2022
EASTER VIGIL

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Jennifer O’Toole, MA
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EASTER VIGIL
Colossians 3:1-4 NIV

“...set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” When Paul wrote Colossians, he is telling us to open our mindset and our character to Christ above. Paul is reminding us that we need to look past our circumstances here on Earth, and we need to rely more on Christ. Without directly speaking it, Paul is guiding us on the pathway of leaving our worries with Jesus by “setting your mind on things above, not on earthy things.” This reminds us that no matter what is happening in our life, remember that Christ is with us now, when we pass, and especially when He comes again.

Andrew Pallus
Biology, Human Specialization, ’24
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