

Lent is a time to step back and reflect on our relationship with God and deepen our commitment to our faith. During this prayerful season, students and faculty members of Saint Viator have worked to offer their own reflections on the daily readings of Lent. We hope this will help you better focus on where you are and where you want to be in your faith journey.

With our busy schedules, it's important to take time for personal prayer, especially as we remember Christ's death and resurrection. We hope this reflection book enhances your experience of Lent.

Our theme for this year, "Step Up to the Plate", comes from our Lenten Campaign. This year we are raising money and collecting canned goods to donate to 5 local food pantries in our own community: CEDA (Community & Economic Development Association of Cook County), Catholic Charities in Des Plaines, HOPE Center in Palatine, St. Joseph Home for the Elderly in Palatine, and St. Edna Parish Food Pantry in Arlington Heights. Our goal is to collect 20,000 canned goods.

If you would like information about the Lenten campaign and ways to contribute, please contact the campus ministry office at Saint Viator.

May you be blessed with peace and grace this Lenten Season.

February 17, 2010—Sarah Balas

Jl 2:12-18

Mt 6:1-6, 16-18

Ash Wednesday begins Lent, the time of year we have to reflect. It's very different from Advent which is a time of preparation, excitement, and joy. Lent is the time we have to reflect on our own lives and really try to put Jesus's teaching into action in our own lives, whatever that means for us.

In Matthew's gospel (Mt.6; 1-6, 16-18) Jesus tells us to be good for the sake of being good people, not to try to impress Him or gain our way to Heaven. When we do something good for another, we are not supposed to go out and brag about how great we are, we've done something good for the day. That action cancels out the good that has been done. God sees everything we do, and He knows. So we don't have to worry about making sure that our kind deeds are acknowledged. What Jesus is trying to show us is that the reward we get for doing good is the feeling of *knowing* we've done that. And that should be reward enough.

February 18, 2010—Anonymous

Dt 30:15-20

Lk 9:22-25

The lesson I learned from the reading was simple: those who live lives based on good deeds, helping, caring, and loving will find inner peace and prosperity while those who worship false gods (materialism, pleasure, etc.) will never find the true happiness they are looking for. The reading stressed making good decisions over poor ones, wise over stupid. I've been told this too many times. At this point in my life, I know and fully understand right decisions versus wrong ones. The problem is that I am also fully aware when I am consciously choosing something that isn't the right choice, yet sometimes I do it anyway. Why? Because at the time it is what I'd rather do and because I don't feel I will be damned due to this single bad choice. I make myself believe that one bad decision isn't the end of the world and I'm not going to hell for it.

This reading is definitely telling me that judgment day is important and might be closer than I think. That ALL my decisions will be judged, that every single choice I made was going to be examined. The bad choices I made when I knew the choice was wrong were the worst because I freely chose them. Maybe I should rise above my present interests and inclinations and really think about what is best overall. Although I may do countless acts of kindness and generosity they still don't hide or cancel out the poor choices I make. Dt 30: 15-20 taught me that everything counts in the end, so make the smart choices now.

February 19, 2010—Jennie Michalik

Reading Is 58: 1-9a

Mt 9:14-15

In this first reading from Isaiah, the issue of fasting and sacrifice is brought into debate. We are asked what the true meaning behind fasting means, and how we are to respond to the call to fasting and sacrifice during Lent. We learn that the act of fasting is not one that should be focused towards ourselves; rather we should turn this time of Lent into a time for serving others and thinking of ways we can give back to others. As it says in the reading, if we give of ourselves and serve others rather than be served, “then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall be quickly healed.” Only then will our “wounds” of selfishness and self-centeredness be washed away so that we can better serve god, ourselves, and others.

February 20, 2010—George Theotokatos

Isaiah 58:9b-14

Luke 5:27-32

In this Gospel we see how God calls to us, he doesn't call to us only at a church or during a service opportunity, he calls to us always even when we don't expect it. Just as Jesus called to the tax collector to follow him, we are also called to follow God and be able to turn around and walk away from our sins, towards God. This passage shows us that in our lives when we are down on ourselves and think we are not worthy of grace, God is there to take us, and forgive us of our sins. This is a challenge, a challenge to see God, not only when we are happy but when we struggle and need guidance.

February 21, 2010—Mary Lanus

Dt 26:4-10

Lk 4:1-13

Are you ready for the test? Are you prepared for what God asks of you? We are all tested everyday. We should feel comfort that even Jesus was not exempt for the test. It is through the grace of God that Jesus is given the strength to renounce sin and temptation. He wanted to please his Father, and he trusted Him. Jesus knew his Father was there for him, especially in his weakest and darkest moments.

Do we want to please our Father? Do we trust him to carry us daily and in our darkest moments? Be ready, be prepared to answer God's test and say "yes" to his calling.

"Lord, help me see your calling and give me the strength to turn away from sin and temptation."

February 22, 2010—Samantha Ropski

1 Pt 5:1-4

Mt 16:13-19

In 1 Pt 5:1-4, God is calling His followers to proclaim the Gospel and actively practice our faith wholeheartedly. He asks His children to do this because they sincerely want to not because they feel that they have to in order to receive something in return. We are a part of God's flock, and we should be examples to all of how God wants us to act. Jesus is the Shepherd of the flock, the one who we follow with enthusiasm. The passage calls me to follow His laws and be an example of Him because I have a desire to do so, not a feeling of constraint. I want to be an active and eager follower of Christ all of the time, even when it may not be the most popular thing to do. The passage calls all of us to serve others and to act as Jesus, our almighty Shepherd, would want us to. We want to be a part of God's glory in heaven and on Earth, so we should show others our love for Jesus through our actions and our words. Christians are called to be an active part Jesus' flock. We are called to be willing examples of our faith on a daily basis. The way that we interact with others should reflect us living out our faith. Are you ready to challenge yourself by being an example of Christ? That is what He desires, that is what I desire and that is what we all should desire. I want to reveal Jesus through my actions, and as Christians we need to because one day "you will receive the unfading crown of glory" in heaven with our Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

February 23, 2010—Deb Scerbicke

Is 55:10-11

Mt 6:7-15

### The Power of God's Word

In Isaiah, the prophet reminds us as God's people of the mighty power of God's Word. Once spoken-- the Word of God does not return without bearing fruit. It does God's will and achieves the end for which God sent it. So God reminds us that all things amidst God's creation have purpose and will be used by God to bring about his Kingdom. How are we instruments of God? How do you allow you're self to be used as God's instrument?

Equally, Jesus reminds us that God already knows what we need before we ask. He teaches us to pray the Lord's Prayer—honor God, look for our daily needs to be met, forgive others, save us from those things that tempt us and lead us astray. How have we lived this prayer today—how have we honored God with our time and talents? Forgiven others who have wronged us? How has God saved us from those things that lead us astray?

The Power of God's Word always achieves the end for which God sent it. We are called to enter into the mystery of God's ways which are not our ways.

Deb Scerbicke

February 24, 2010—Fr. Corey Brost, CSV

Jon 3:1-10

Lk 11:29-32

Stop signs. Sometimes I'm not good at following them...*strictly*...

I slow down. I look. But sometimes I don't *quite* stop. And that has caused me some problems – near accidents and interesting conversations with the law.

We sometimes get so rushed in life that we miss or ignore important signs. And that's what Jesus is talking about in today's Gospel. He reminds the crowd that the people of Ninevah changed when Jonah preached in their town. He was their sign from God that they needed to change. They listened and that saved them.

God sends us signs when we need to change. Friends might warn us about a bad habit they see us forming. Family members might give us good advice that seems to go against our instincts. Our gut might tighten up when we think about doing something. Do we slow down enough to listen? Do we think about the message these signs are sending about our life?

Lent is the time to slow down and look for signs that we need to change. It is time to ask God and others we love if we should drop or add some habits in our lives. God wants a full life for us. Sometimes we need to "STOP" completely, think and pray or we'll miss it.

February 25, 2010—Emily Leazer

Est C:12, 14-16, 23-25

Mt 7:7-12

“Do unto others whatever you would have them do to you.” These words should mean something to everyone who reads them. Right here, God reveals one of his guidelines that we are called to follow. Words similar to those have been spread to all ages under the name of The Golden Rule. Earlier in the Gospel, Jesus tells us that if we ever need help, He will always be there for us, no matter what. Being a teenager, it helps to know that there is always someone I can go to. There are many changes and new experiences throughout highschool that I can always use a little help with. I always wonder what I can do in return to thank God. When I read this Gospel it occurred to me that I can give back by following what Jesus called us to do all along. “Do unto others whatever you would have them do to you.”

February 26, 2010—Clare Burke

Ez 18:21-28

Mt 5:20-26

Phrases such as “right and just,” virtuous deeds,” and “broken faith” stand out to me in this reading. Also, words such as “unfair,” “preserve,” and “life” are particularly captivating. This reading by the prophet Ezekiel gains power from its juxtaposition of the wicked and the virtuous, the just and the unfair, and the preservation versus the destruction of life. I believe that God is trying to tell me that life becomes difficult when one tries to change their heart, but in accepting a life of righteousness one ultimately accepts a life of beauty and grace—a life that God intends all of us to live if we can only forgive ourselves and remove ourselves from our sins. I think that God wants me to realize that there is a life beyond this one, and that my actions will determine who I am in the end. Thus, the good that I do in this life will be returned to me in my next life. This passage helps me to realize that God wants us to come to Him. God wants us to accept His gift of life and make His world a better place. God has a plan for me, and he will judge me when the time is right. In this reading I believe that God is challenging me to view life as a blessing. If all my life I did what was right in the Lord’s name and then I rejected Him at the end of my life, then I have truly not found life’s meaning. God directs me and helps me to be fair and just and co-creative. In Him all things are “right and just.”

February 27, 2010—Laura Walsh

Dt 26:16-19

Mt 5:43-48

“Love your enemy.” It’s a value most of us have been taught to follow since pre-school, but also one of the hardest for us to follow. God taught us not to treat others as they deserve, but as He wishes them to be treated. God gives everyone the same amount of love and kindness. He seeks our highest good and teaches us to seek the greatest good of others, even our enemies. Our love for others, even those who are ungrateful and selfish towards us, must be marked by the same kindness and mercy God shows us.

We say to ourselves, how can we possibly love our enemies? Everything is possible with God. When we put our trust in God, He will not let us down. He will be there to support us and love us as we work to follow His ways.

Through this gospel, Jesus is challenging us to look past the hatred that causes us to become enemies, and love others with the same love and compassion God shows to us.

February 28, 2010—Maura Wolfe

Gn 15:5-12, 17-18

Lk 9:28b-36

This Lent, through prayer and reflection, we can come to understand who God wants us to be. In the second reading, we learn that God wants us to be Christian leaders. We must join with others in imitating God. Often times we do not realize how much of an impact we have on others. Everyday we are given the opportunity to lead by example. We have the choice to make a positive impact on people. At the same time, there are many earthly possessions that take us away from this focus.

This reading is a reminder to us that our citizenship is in heaven; we are all children of God. In the gospel Jesus takes Peter, John and James to the top of a mountain where Jesus changed in appearance and His clothes became a dazzling white. Peter, John, and James hear a voice that says “This is my chosen son; listen to him”, but they did not tell anyone what they had seen. Many of us have can probably relate to this “mountain top experience” if we have gone on spiritual retreats, activities, or service trips. When we have these experiences we are able to realize how incredible God’s love is. Usually we never want them to end. However, the Church calls us to return to society and use what we have learned to help others on their own faith journey. It is important to know that the God on top of the mountain is the same God walking with us everyday.

March 1, 2010—Rachel Beletti

Dn 9:4b-10

Lk 6:36-38

When a high school student hears the words “Stop judging and you will not be judged,” they seem to nod their head in accordance and brush it off. The reality of the situation is, if judgments were removed from our world, the world would be a brighter place. It is nearly impossible for a person to walk by someone, whether it is a familiar face or a stranger, without critiquing them. Without even knowing a person, they have been unfairly judged.

Be merciful to others, as your Father has been to you. There is no room in a world filled with so much hate for additional wrongdoing. We are challenged to accept others using our own gifts. Each person (including you) has their own flaws. Instead of being persecuted for these flaws, we need to be accepted and loved for. Each person will stumble many times in life, and it is the duty of those around them to forgive them for any wrongs and pick them back up.

Jesus has been merciful to each and every person. He has provided for us in ways unimaginable. In return we are called to look beyond the hatred that blinds us from the beauty in each and every person.

Always lend your hand out for support and love, because there will always be someone on the other end looking for a hand to hold.

March 2, 2010—Claire Stewart

Is 1:10, 16-20

Mt 23:1-12

In today's reading, God calls us to be pure of spirit: "Cease doing evil; learn to do good. Make justice your aim." In God we can always find peace; He will cleanse us of our sins, we need only ask Him for forgiveness. He says, "though your sins be like scarlet, they may become white as snow." We are all human, no more, no less. When God created us, he chose to give us the gift of free will. This blessing, this sign of God's love and faith in us, can also be our downfall. In the world we live in, we can easily be consumed by sin. Everyday, we face many temptations. However, we cannot let these obstacles keep us from unity with God. He knows that we make mistakes. He understands us, especially in times of suffering and confusion. No matter what we do, He is always there. Even when we sin, He calls us back to Him, ready and willing to give us another chance. Whenever we turn away from sin and remain faithful to Him, we are rewarded immeasurably. But we cannot stay free from sin without His grace, help and guidance. Only in Him can we truly find peace.

March 3, 2010—Andrea Schneider

Jer 18:18-20

Mt 20:17-28

Jesus went up to Jerusalem with His disciples and told them that the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests. They will condemn Him to death, give Him to the Gentiles who will make fun of Him, whip Him, and crucify Him. He will be raised on the third day. A woman asked Jesus if her two sons could sit at His right and left hands in His kingdom. Jesus told her that they must drink from the same cup Jesus does, but the Father will fill the places at His right and left hands. People are not on earth to be served, like the chief priest, but to serve, like the Son of Man.

We must look at what cup Jesus hands us to drink every day. For some it may be physical suffering, for others it may be the difficulties of everyday life. We must remember that Jesus suffered and still lived to serve. Even when we suffer, we must be like the Son of Man and continue to serve everyone around us. We cannot be like the chief priest who expects others to serve him.

March 4, 2010—Bro. Rob Robertson

Jer 17:5-10

Lk 16:19-31

This gospel has always been one of my favorite and one of my most challenging Gospel stories. When I taught religion, the students quite often felt that they were made to feel guilty about coming from middle to upper class economic backgrounds. They sometimes felt that the Gospel stories were scolding them for “having money”. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus NEVER says there is anything wrong with being economically successful or “having money.” Jesus’ challenge to me, and all of us, is how am I sharing those resources with others who have not been so economically blessed.

I have ALWAYS been impressed by the generosity of the Saint Viator community when it is asked to contribute to the many opportunities we are given to help those in need. The Make-A-Change collection has raised tens of thousands of dollars over the years, the Lenten campaigns have successfully funded soup kitchens and built homes for the poor, and recently we were asked to support the people in the Viatorian ministries in Haiti who have been so devastated by the tragic earthquake.

At the same time, we all need to challenge ourselves to open our hearts to the causes that for some are not so easy to support such as:

- undocumented citizens who avoid social welfare for fear of deportation.
- the poor in our inner cities who are crushed by poverty and inadequate schools.
- those in need in countries where we are at war (ie. Iraq and Afghanistan).
- the poor in third world countries who are out of sight and out of mind to those of us in the affluent suburbs.
- minorities who we can so easily blame for making their own “problems”.

To me, that is the challenge this Lent. I will look for the causes that are not so easy to understand or support and find ways to help make a difference without judging the person in need. I will remember that wealth is not bad, but wealth brings with it certain responsibilities. And finally, I will commit myself to all who are in need, not just the popular causes or the ones that are easy. That will be my Lenten prayer and I challenge you to join me in this endeavor.

Bro. Rob Robertson, C.S.V.  
Saint Viator High School – school counselor

March 5, 2010—Taylor Benoit

Gn 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a

Mt 21:33-43, 45-46

The first passage is about Joseph and his brothers. His brothers come up with a plan to kill Joseph because they were jealous. Reuben, one of the brothers, tried to save Joseph by saying they should throw him into a pit and leave him there instead of killing him. His plan was to go back later and secretly save Joseph. The brothers instead sell Joseph.

This passage makes me think of times that I have gone along with something that deep down I knew was wrong. Reuben wanted to save his brother but was not brave enough to speak up against the other brothers. When someone is in a situation such as Reuben, it takes a lot of courage to stand up against the others but if you ask God to give you the strength to do what is right He will help you.

March 6, 2010—Ann Farrell

Mi 7:14-15, 18-20

Lk 15:1-3, 1-9

Micah:

Our God is a god of Presence.  
Always showing Himself in signs throughout history.

God can always be seen in my day if I want to see him.

Our God is a god of Forgiveness.  
Removing guilts, and granting pardon on the soul.

God will always forgive my sins if I seek atonement.

Our God is a god of Happiness.  
Never persisting in anger, delights in our joys.

God always wants the best for me, whether I recognize it or not.

Our God is a god sees into our very souls, the God of Abraham, who shepards his people through all hardships.

Our God is a god of Love for His people.

Luke:

Jesus tells us in the parable of the 'Prodigal Son' in so many words that God always keeps His arms open to children who have wandered away from Him. Note that children wander from Him. God will never wander from you; He wants to love you more than anything in the world. And every time, He, like the father in the parable, welcomes the lost children back with great joy and love. It is a matter of us to decide when to go back to God. The son in the parable decided that he needed his father when he saw how much he struggled without him. How true of life without God. Pray to God for strength to stay near Him in times of hardship and prosperity.

March 7, 2010—Allie Vitale

Ex 3:1-8a, 13-15

Lk 13:1-9

In the story of the Burning Bush, God appears to Moses in the strange form of a burning bush and asks him to take on a huge responsibility of helping all of the people in Egypt. Moses doesn't question God once; he immediately takes on this giant task. The only things he asks God are what God should be called and how he'll be able to pull off such a big request. Whatever God says, Moses believes and follows. I think we should all be more like Moses in our lives. Imagine: you're walking down the street and all the sudden you see a flaming dandelion and hear it calling your name. I'm sure most of us would steer clear of the fire in the first place. But hearing it call your name? Every single one of us would for sure think we're going insane. I know I would! But Moses just says "Here I am" and listens. He trusts God every step of the way, which is what we're being called to do. God might not be calling to us in the weird and obvious way of a burning plant, but he is calling us. All we have to do is listen and follow.

March 8, 2010—Colleen Dhamer

2 Kgs 5:1-15b

Lk 4:24-30

In 2 Kings Chapter 5 we are told the story about a man named Naaman, who wishes to be cured of his leprosy. After traveling to the King of Aram and not getting what he wanted Naaman traveled to the prophet Elisha to be cured. However Elisha also didn't give Naaman the answer he wanted. Instead of curing Naaman immediately Elisha told Naaman to go wash himself in the Jordan seven times and only then would he be cured. Naaman was upset because he wanted God, Himself, to come and cure him. Naaman, like many of us today, did not understand that God had answered his prayers, just not in the way that Naaman had wanted. Naaman's faith was challenged as he had to learn to believe that although he didn't get the answer that he had wanted God was with him, guiding him to believe that in time God makes all things right. God has a plan for each of us and although sometimes we may not agree with our plans we must learn to trust in God and know that He answers all of our prayers in one way or another. In a society with many rough times coming our way: jobs being lost, loved ones being taken from us, sickness affecting so many people, it is easy to believe that our prayers are going unanswered. So our challenge this Lent is to believe in our God as He is always there for us and most importantly believe in each other, that we can be there for one another in times of need and answer each other's prayers.

March 9, 2010—Steven Patzke

Dn 3:25, 34-43

Mt 18:21-35

Lent is a season for forgiveness. It is a chance to forgive others or even yourself. Take the opportunity to go to confession when you normally wouldn't. It may surprise you what you have been holding inside of you all this time. Forgiving others is no *easy* task. Jesus tells us here in Matthew's Gospel that we have the chance to forgive seven times seventy times. We really can forgive or be forgiven as many times as we like. Jesus may use seventy as his number because it was a major number in Jewish scripture and tradition. Make it a point this Lent to ask for forgiveness from others. Relationships can only become stronger from it. And only after you forgive can you truly open yourself up to love from others. At the end of the parable Jesus says that forgiveness must come from the heart. When it comes to relationships and forgiveness, a heart is not always judged by how much you love, but how much you are loved by others.

March 10, 2010 –Cathy Abrahamian

Dt 4:1, 5-9

Mt 5:17-19

*Rules, Rules, Rules....*my kids ask me why we have so many rules – on occasions they have even say that *“rules are meant to be broken.”* However, for the most part they respect the rules we place on each of them and try to follow them. Deep down I think they appreciate the rules, see value in them and follow them because they love us and want to please us.

The two readings today from the Old and New Testament focus on the laws (rules) of God and why we need them in our lives.

Many of us tend to view rules in a negative light....as things that keep us from having a little fun. But God’s intent for the law results from His deep love for us. The laws set up by God really have a number of purposes: **they give us boundaries to keep order in our world, they keep us safe from harm, they guide us on how to live a moral life, they can be used as a measurement of how well we are living a life that is pleasing to God and they show us where we have failed to live a good life.** As Christians, we should delight in His laws, follow them, and turn from every form of sin.

It is easy to say that we are going to obey the rules, but it is very hard to keep the commandments all the time. We use the excuse that we are human and are bound to fail.

But I think that Jesus is asking us to leave that *lame excuse* aside and step up to the challenge this Lent to live a life that is pleasing to Him. When we live according to God’s laws our lives are full of righteousness, holiness, peace, wisdom and joy. When we sin, we need to own up to our sin, ask for forgiveness, turn away from that sin and make a change. It is hard, but if we grow in our love for God, we will grow in our desire to please Him.

***“Dear Lord, help me today to delight in your laws and look at your commandments as a gift of love. Help me to grow in my love for You and give me the desire to turn away from sin and follow You without excuses. Guide me today so that all of my thoughts, words and actions are pleasing to You. Thank you for loving me and giving me boundaries. ”***

March 11, 2010—Connor Romenesko

Jer 7:23-28

Lk 11:14-23

The line “walk in all ways that I command you, so that you may prosper” stands out to me. This is a simple command that insures happiness and love but people feel the need to indulge and cannot follow God. These people believe that their path will lead them to prosperity and “stiffen their necks” to the lord. God is telling us that some have turned their heads and hardened their hearts but it is up to us to either follow the lord or walk with those with evil hearts. This passage challenges us to walk strong and follow God. We are called to work through those with hard hearts and no faith to promote the good teachings of the lord and the prosperity faith brings.

March 12, 2010—Tim Hogaboom

Hos 14:2-10

Mk 12:28-34

This passage from the Gospel of Mark has a very powerful message concerning our relationship with God and with the rest of humanity. When asked, “Which is the first of all the commandments?” by a scribe, Jesus not only answers him with a factual response, but also one of love and care. When Moses was originally given the Ten Commandments, the first commandment from God was “I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me.” This is the seemingly correct answer that Jesus was expected to give. However, He went on to say, “The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” The scribe replied that he understood from these commandments that loving God with all your heart, understanding and strength, as well as your neighbor as yourself, is worth far more than rituals completed to attempt to show faith.

In our world today, how easy is it to let “idols”, such as money and other pleasures, cloud our love for God and our neighbors? In our society, self-betterment is looked upon as extremely important- how much money you make, what kind of car you drive. This causes people to place gains and luxuries above God and to try to cheat and take from their neighbors in our world. If everyone were to love God with their whole self and show more love to their fellow humans, the world would become increasingly better as a whole. When we finally come to an understanding that our good works are worth more than personal luxuries, Jesus will tell us, also, that “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

March 13, 2010—Sarah Liedlich

Hos 6:1-6

Lk 18:9-14

Hosea:

To me, this passage represents the true saving power and love of God. It says that if each of us stand by the Lord, we will be rewarded. God loves us and saves us. I can say over and over how I know God loves us, but I don't believe that anyone can truly understand the love that God has for the human race. I think as Christian people we are responsible to love as people of faith. And by doing that, we need to make God proud of the way we live our lives.

Luke:

I think this passage is a much needed wake-up call to everyone who reads it. It represents that no one is perfect and to look in the mirror before we look at others. It is our responsibility as Christians and people to accept all no matter what their flaws are and forgive, accept and include them. We are not in a position to judge anyone. The saying that reminds me of this passage is, "Don't take the speck out of someone else's eye before you take the plank out of your own."

March 14, 2010—Kathy Gallagher

Jos 5:9a, 10-12

Lk 15:1-3, 11-32

In this Gospel, Jesus was preaching to tax collectors, and sinners and the Pharisees were upset and judging Him as a man who “welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

In verses 11-32, Jesus went on to tell the parable of the Prodigal Son, which is a story about forgiveness.

This story reminds me of 3 wonderful gifts God has given us. One is Roots—we are rooted in God’s love, no matter what we do, He loves us! Two is Wings—He has given us free will to go out and make our own mistakes. The third is Forgiveness—when we mess up (and we will, we are human), all we have to do is sincerely ask, and we are forgiven!

In this story, the younger son comes to his father and is truly sorry, and his father forgave him. On the other hand, the older son cannot see past his own selfish interests and is concerned that his brother got more than he did. “Why should HE get to eat the fatted calf when I have been loyal and done all the work?” Even though he already had all that his father owned, he could not see past his jealousy and be happy for his brother. Kind of like the Pharisees who could not see past their jealousy that Jesus was spending time with “sinners.”

I think this story calls us to put others first, as Jesus did. Love one another, be happy for one another, forgive one another and see the gifts that come back to us!

March 15, 2010— Betsy Fons

Is 65:17-21

Jn 4:43-54

When a high ranking official, probably from King Herod's court, heard of Jesus' preaching and miracles, he decided to seek Jesus out for an extraordinary favor.

It took a lot of courage for a high ranking court official to go in search of Jesus. He had to swallow his pride and put up with some ridicule from his friends. When he found him, Jesus seemed to put him off with a blunt statement that people would not believe unless they saw some kind of miracle or sign from heaven. Jesus likely said this to test the man to see if his faith was in earnest. If he turned away discouraged or irritated, he would seem to be insincere. Jesus, witnessing his faith, sent him home with the assurance that his prayer had been heard. It was probably not easy for this man to leave Jesus and go back home only with the assuring word that his son would be healed. Couldn't Jesus have come to this man's home and touched his dying child? The court official believed in Jesus and took him at his word without doubt or hesitation. He was ready to return home and face ridicule and laughter because he trusted in Jesus' word. God's mercy shows his generous love – a love that bends down in response to our misery and wretchedness.

Is there any area in your life where you need healing, pardon, change, and restoration? If you seek the Lord with trust and expectant faith, he will not disappoint you. He will meet you more than half way and give you what you need. The Lord Jesus never refused anyone who put their trust in him. Surrender your doubts and fears, your pride and guilt at his feet, and trust in his saving word and healing love.

"Lord Jesus, your love never fails and your mercy is unceasing. Give me the courage to surrender my stubborn pride, fear and doubts to your surpassing love, wisdom and knowledge. Make me strong in faith, persevering in hope, and constant in love."

March 16, 2010—Valerie Kiebala

Ez 47:1-9, 12

Jn 5:1-16

People often invent excuses or justifications as to why they have not, should not, or do not have time to help those who need it, whether those in need are the impoverished, disease-stricken, homeless, hungry, or lonely. We must step back and view life from a different perspective. Jesus healed a man, even when it caused him to be persecuted. Considering the law regarding the Sabbath at the time of Jesus, Jesus put his own safety in danger to help this man. Looking at our own lives from this perspective, no possible justification can excuse us from our obligation to others. In the passage, the man, who has been sick for thirty-eight years, has never had anyone help him into the healing pool. If anyone had stopped and helped him into the pool, his sickness may have been alleviated. But not one person took the time to help this man. This passage emphasizes the power of one person to impact another's life. With this power comes responsibility, a fact that many tend to neglect. This passage challenges me to be the person to help the man into the pool or even to stand up for Jesus when he was being persecuted for healing the man.

March 17, 2010—Tim Ivers

Is 49:8-15

Jn 5:17-30

As I read through Isaiah 49:8-15, one of my favorite E. E. Cummings poems comes to mind. “I Carry Your Heart” repeats a similar theme: “i carry your heart with me (i carry it in my heart) i am never without it (anywhere i go you go, my dear; ... and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)” The passage depicts God’s mercy and everlasting love reigning far and wide. Anywhere we go, God goes. God carries all of our hearts in His heart. John 5:17-30 follows a message explaining the worship of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. If we do not worship Jesus Christ, then we are not worshiping God, the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. As God loves each and every one of us, we must love others regardless of the struggle. God calls us to drop judgment and hatred and cover it with His forgiveness, mercy, and love.

I encourage readers to follow the Lectio Divina prayer method with these scriptures. Have a safe and happy Saint Patrick’s Day!

March 18, 2010—Colleen Kenyon

Ex 32:7-14

Jn 5:31-47

In Exodus 32:7-14, I believe God is speaking to our society as well as the people of Moses' time. In our world today, our society has become extremely materialistic and we tend to put our material items before God. We idolize the movie-stars, the designer clothes, and the hottest technology on the market, and sometimes we put God in the back seat. This passage helps us to see why we need to turn back to God. God is and always will be there whenever we need his help. But in order for God to answer our prayers we need to put God first in our lives and live his will on earth. This reading challenges us to go beyond the norm of our society and push ourselves to be Christian role models for others in our community.

March 19, 2010—Anonymous

2 Sm 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16

Lk 2:41-51a

Do you recognize your Father in heaven? Jesus went up to the temple for his first Passover at the dawn of his manhood (usually the age of twelve for Jewish males). It was at this key turning point in his earthly life that Jesus took the name "father" from Joseph and addressed it to God his Father in heaven. Just as the prophet Samuel heard the call of the Lord at a very young age, Jesus in his youth recognized that he has been given a call by his heavenly Father. His answer to his mother's anxious inquiry reveals his trusting faith and confident determination to pursue his heavenly Father's will. *Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?* While Jesus recognized his unique call, he, nonetheless, submitted himself with love and obedience to Joseph and Mary and waited for the time when his call would be fulfilled. Our Heavenly Father calls each of us to a unique task and mission in this life. We may not discover or understand it fully, but if we cooperate with God he will use us for his purpose and plan. With the call God gives grace -- grace to say "yes" to his will and grace to persevere through obstacles and trials. Do you recognize God's call on your life and do you trust in his grace?

"Lord, in love you have called me to live for your praise and glory. May I always find joy in your presence and trust in your grace and in your wisdom and plan for my life."

March 20, 2010—Rita King

Jer 11:18-20

Jn 7:40-53

In John's gospel we see a wide range of attitudes about Jesus. There are those who accept him as the messiah, a prophet and still those who continue to express confusion and amazement at His words and deeds.

In the reading we witness Nicodemus challenging those who want to accuse Jesus unfairly. I have always found Nicodemus to be one of the most interesting characters of John's gospel. He was a religious leader who sought enlightenment and thirsted for the truth Jesus revealed – yet he feared being publicly known as a follower. Nicodemus encounters this fear when he is asked if he too is a Galilean.

How like Nicodemus we can be in our faith journey. We long to be a true disciple and yet have difficulty, at times, standing up for our faith.

This Lent strive to be a disciple who reflects the truth of Jesus in your thoughts, in your words and in your deeds. Proclaim Jesus to be the messiah by the way you live your life.

March 21, 2010 – Brian Hansen

Is 43:16-21

Jn 8:1-11

There are people in school who can really get on my nerves and I can't stand them. They always have time to put me down, comment on what I say or do, or gossip about me. It's just one extra problem in which everyone like me has to deal with and it's a pain. However, there have also been times when the ones who hurt us screw up and make mistakes. We think of this as an opportunity to get back at them; payback for all the crap we had to take when we were bullied. Yet, Jesus' says, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone." This is such a powerful response when you actually think about it, however, it's true. We are all sinners and we have all made mistakes at one point in our lives. It's normal for a person to want to get back at someone who as caused pain in their life; however, this only adds more fuel to the fire of revenge. Revenge is a repeating cycle that will only leave a person feeling emptier inside and can cause problems for the community as well. During Lent, we are challenged to look at our lives and find ways in which we can change and live more like Christ would. So instead of trying to find ways to get back at those who hurt us, I challenge everyone this Lent instead to pray for those who hurt us. They are hurting as well and they do not realize that they are hurting others. We are all God's children and as Jason Mraz said, "And it's our God forsaken right to be loved." So I end this reflection by asking; are you are willing to turn the other cheek when someone hurts you?

March 22, 2010 – Kelly Travaglio

Dn 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62

Jn 8:12-20

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12 has a significant meaning to what we need to do in our lives. If we follow Jesus, no matter what comes our way will not seem as bad. Darkness comes at some point in all of our lives but having Jesus in our lives means hope. He is the guiding light that we must follow in order to hope and know we are not alone. I love the above passage because to me, it means that even if we feel like no one is there to carry us through, God is ALWAYS there. We might stumble but if we have faith that everything will be ok, we will make it through stronger than ever, with God carrying us the whole way. Jesus was sent to the world to be the savior and the light we must follow in order to have a life of happiness and love. This passage is challenging us all to follow God, even in what seems the darkest times of our lives. If we trust that He is the light of the world and the light of our lives, then we will understand what it means to be truly happy and prosperous in life.

March 23, 2010—Anonymous

Nm 21:4-9

Jn 8:21-30

Do you know the joy and freedom of living God's word? Freedom today usually means "freedom to do as I please". This notion of freedom, however, is all about us and what we want. Jesus offers his disciples true freedom -- freedom from the slavery of fear, the slavery of selfishness, and freedom from the fear of what others might think or say about us. The good news of the gospel is that Christ has set us free from these fears and from sin. How is this possible? Through the power of his Holy Spirit we can choose to walk in his way of love and holiness. A disciple is a follower and a listener. If we listen to the words of Jesus, with a humble and teachable spirit, he will give us the grace and the power to follow in his way of holiness. Ask the Lord to open your ears to his word that you may be attentive to his voice.

"Lord, write your words of love and truth upon my heart and make me a worthy disciple of your word."

March 24, 2010— Stephanie Schwarz

Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95

Jn 8:31-42

“If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

In this Gospel, Jesus says if we remain in God’s word, we will know the truth, and the truth will set us free. As Christians, we strive to live God’s word in our everyday lives. I’m reminded of the way we bless ourselves before we hear the Gospel... “Lord, may your word be in my mind, on my lips and in my heart.”

But what about those times when God is not in our thoughts, words and actions? Later in this passage, Jesus tells his disciples that they need to be set “free” from the sins that enslave them. It’s so easy to be distracted by homework, tests, sports, clubs—who or what things in our own lives keep us from God’s from believing, speaking and living God’s word?

Try to take this intentional, prayerful time during Lent to keep God in the forefront of all you do.

“Lord, may your word be in my mind, on my lips and in my heart.”

March 25, 2010—Chris Paoelleli

Is 7:10-14, 8:10

Lk 1:26-38

Today's first reading presents an unusual situation: God speaks to Ahaz and actually orders him to demand a sign. This divine "dare" may seem out of character for the God we know, but consider the context: Ahaz, an idol-worshipping king of Judah, was about to defend against a hostile invasion. By telling Ahaz to demand a sign, God was being bold—stepping headlong into the life of someone who didn't care enough and asserting not only His presence, but His continued love. "You ignore me, you disrespect me, you fail to prioritize me," God says, "and I'm here for you anyway." And the sign God eventually gives, of course, is the greatest sign in history—the promise of Jesus's birth, which will save not only the people of Israel, but anyone who chooses to follow Him.

*Dear God,*

*Though I hate to admit it, I often forget about You, convincing myself that I'm the only one I rely on. In good times and bad, I often don't look beyond the tip of my nose. Help me to know the limits of my humanity. Remind me that You are the author of my triumphs and my one true refuge in adversity. Dare me to put my trust in You. Amen.*

March 26, 2010—Anonymous

Jer 20:10-13

Jn 10:31-42

Why were the religious leaders so upset with Jesus that they wanted to kill him? They charged him with blasphemy because he claimed to be the Son of God and he made himself equal with God. The law of Moses laid down the death penalty for such a crime: "He who blasphemes the name of the LORD shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him" (Lev. 24:16). As they were picking up stones to hurl at Jesus, he met their attack with three arguments. The many good works that he did, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, and feeding the hungry -- demonstrated that they obviously came from God.

Jesus is the perfect teacher in that he does not base his claims on what he says but on what he does. The word of God is life and power to those who believe. Jesus shows us the way to walk the path of truth and holiness. And he anoints us with his power to live the gospel with joy and to be his witnesses in the world. Are you a doer of God's word, or a forgetful hearer only?

"Write upon my heart, O Lord, the lessons of your holy word, and grant that I may be a doer of your word, and not a forgetful hearer only."

March 27, 2010—Fr. Mick Egan

Ez 37:21-28

Jn 11:45-56

It's a powerful image to embrace, these words of the Lord God reported by the prophet Ezekiel.

***I will be your God—I am yours—and you will be my people—you are mine.***

These days of Lent give me the chance to see more clearly and experience more personally the truth of the prophet's message. With all of our human imperfections, with all the things that sometimes go wrong in life, with all the questions I might have, for all the moments I might feel alone and unable to face the circumstances of my life---

The message of Ezekiel is a great comfort to me. It reminds me of the promise of God—I am yours and, more importantly, you are mine. I will care for you, I will love you, I will not forget you, I will always be with you.

Lord, help me to use these days of Lent to embrace this truth and to discover the ways that you are with me always.

March 28, 2010—Nicole Schneider

Is 50:4-7

Lk 22:14—23:56

This reading in Isaiah stresses a message we really don't hear much in our lives: to be humble and meek. Our world today is full of competition and boasting, and along with this comes disappointment. The world tells us that if we don't do this to that, we aren't what we should be. It is in this mind that the "beatings, buffets, and spitting" come upon us. But Jesus tells us not to be afraid because the Lord GOD is our help, so we should not be disgraced. If we live as Jesus lived and are proud of what we do (and would make Him proud doing it), we should not fear the response of others. Instead, humbly continue in our service and actions no matter what else comes our way. Jesus is always right there protecting us, as we are reminded in this passage. Let them beat us -- sometimes the beaters just need a good example.

March 29, 2010—Danny Wolfe

Is 42:1-7

Jn 12:1-11

During this Lenten season, we are able to discover what God has called us to do through prayer and reflection. In this first reading, God is reminding us that He put us on this earth to spread His good news and to help those who are less fortunate than we are. Often times when we think about doing service and helping others, we feel that we have to do great things and help hundreds of people at once. However, by just helping one person a day, we are still doing what God has called us to do. God does not want us to do service just for the recognition from our peers. He wants us to do service because we want to and because we know it is right. God also states in this first reading that we are not called to judge people. God will be our judge. “A bruised reed shall not break, and a smoldering wick he shall not quench.” God tells us that even if we feel something or someone is wrong, we should not judge them. In God’s eyes, all are perfect, as He is the one who formed us in his image. This Lenten season let us remember this reading. Let us not forget what we are called to do. Let us help others and let God be the judge.

March 30, 2010—Mike Tubridy

Is 49:1-6

Jn 13:21-33, 36-38

During Lent I am drawn to reflect on how well I live out my call to discipleship. I am like Isaiah who spoke God's Word to Israel, or am I like Judas who got distracted by worldly enticements?

When I am like Isaiah I place my trust in God when faced with the daily struggles of life. Yet, most days I find myself distracted by the challenges of being a husband, parent, child and teacher. I get so caught up these events that I can lose sight of what is truly important; being loving and compassionate to those I encounter each day.

During Lent I am reminded to ask God for a more loving and compassionate heart. I am reminded to develop relationships rather than get caught up in the lure of worldly enticements.

Michael Tubridy

March 31, 2010—Tim Masterton

Is 50:4-9a

Mt 26:14-25

“The Lord God has given me a well-trained tongue, that I might know how to speak to the weary a word that will rouse them. Morning after morning he opens my ear that I may hear.”

The quote above is from the book of the prophet Isaiah and speaks directly to two important aspects of communication – speaking *and* listening. The prophet realizes that God has blessed him in a special way. Isaiah is a messenger of the Lord, called to bring His Word to all. It has been nearly three millennia since the time of Isaiah, but today, we still are not always receptive to God’s presence in our lives. Are there prophets in your life, messengers of God’s word, whose call you disregard?

With homework, social lives, and endless distractions a click or a text message away, we sometimes only hear the voice of our own wants and desires. Lent is a time that we physically mark as different. It begins with ashes on our foreheads, a mark of our awareness of our humanity and our belief in the Resurrection. We try to give to those most in need, while recognizing that our own interests and addictions, from Facebook to coffee, can block God’s prophetic message in our lives each and every day. What can you take from Lent into the Easter season and beyond, to make sure you are listening for God and helping to speak the Word to others?

April 1, 2010—Alex Nowakowski

Lord's Supper: Ex 12:1-8, 11-14; Ps 116

1Cor 11:23-26

Jn 13:1-15

In this Gospel, Jesus shows us the “full extent of his love.” He becomes an example to not only his friends, but his friend’s friends, and their families, because he showed an act of kindness. He stooped down to a servant’s level and washed the dirty feet of his friends, a job not fit for a usual king. Jesus shows us how important it is to be a good example to others. If we have authority or power, he wants us to use it to help and provide, not to banish and denounce. He washed his friends’ feet to show them how much he cared about them. He put himself in a lower position to help them bathe themselves, one of the simplest human needs. This reading challenges us to be people for others, to give of ourselves so that others can benefit from our giving. This reading is ultimately about Jesus’ love for his disciples, and in turn, the world.

April 2, 2010—Richard Hutyra

Is 52:13---53:12; Ps 31

Heb 4:14-16; 5:7-9

Jn 18:1----19:42

In today's society we tend to cringe at the mere thought of pain. Actions that bring even the least discomfort are avoided. What we fail to recognize is that most growth is a direct result of some painful experience in our life, whether we were the cause of it or not. Think about it. When was the last time you experienced tremendous growth? Physically, was it after lifting weights or running day after day for weeks on end? Academically, was it after studying extensively for a long exam? Emotionally, was it after the death of a close friend or family member? If growth comes from pain, then why are we so afraid of it? Pain is temporary.

In today's reading from Isaiah, we are reminded of the suffering endured by Christ. He was pierced, crushed, chastised, whipped, condemned, and killed for us. He endured this without word, though he was blameless. The reading also explains the rewards of the Lord's servant who follows faithfully even in the face of great adversity, "He shall prosper, he shall be raised high and greatly exalted... because of him kings shall stand speechless."

When you consider these words in the context of your life, have you learned something from the troubles you have endured? If the answer is yes, then why do you continue to fear pain or discomfort? The next time you struggle through something painfully, ask yourself, "What is this experience supposed to teach me? What am I supposed to learn?"

April 3, 2010—Mallory Hess & Emily Williams

Gn 1:1—2:2 [1:1, 26-31a]

Gn 22:1-18 [1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18]

Ex 14:15—15:1

Is 54:5-14

Is 55:1-11

Bar 3:9-15, 32—4:4

Ez 36:16-17a, 18-28

Rom 6:3-11

Lk 24:1-12

“God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27

Because we are made in God’s image, we are responsible for living out His message. God created each and every one of us as individuals with our own personal talents and strengths. Easter brings forth a time of reflection on Jesus’ life and mission. Jesus lived with a strong sense of compassion for all of God’s creation. He visited lepers and helped the poor. How can we today, take God’s message and live it out, using our unique talents and strengths, just as Jesus did?

April 4, 2010—Lizzy Greismaier

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

Lk 24:13-35

Today's reading in Acts has a simple message, but at times it is difficult for us to understand. Peter tells us God plays no favorites. We all have an equal opportunity to have our sins forgiven if only we ask. The difficult part for us is learning to ask for that forgiveness. If we truly believe and have faith, we can be forgiven. As this Lenten season comes to an end, let us reflect on our actions and pray for the courage to recognize our need for forgiveness. Through this, peacefulness can be restored.

