

Wednesday, February 10: Ash Wednesday

[First Reading: Joel 2:12-18](#)

[Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18](#)

Well, here we go again. And it seems a little early this year. But there should not be anything surprising to us about Lent. We know we set aside this time to reflect on our wilderness, as Jesus spent those forty days in the wilderness. What is our wilderness? What do we want to get out of Lent this year? At the end of the forty days, scripture tells us that Jesus was very hungry. What will we hunger for at the end of Lent?

If we follow the readings for today, we have a guide for Lent. The reading from Joel tells us about the mercy of God, ever present to us, but especially relevant during this Year of Mercy. God is inviting us to return to Him; it is such a dramatic return that we should blow a trumpet, proclaim a fast, and call the assembly. The Lord will be stirred to concern and have pity on us.

But it doesn't end there: We must acknowledge that we are sinners and are in need of the mercy of God. If we acknowledge our sinfulness, we have the hope that God will create in us a clean heart. Then, God will open our lips and we can proclaim his praise.

But it doesn't end there: We must become ambassadors for Christ. The ashes on our forehead make us that ambassador for Christ that we read about in the second reading for today. We can be that outward sign of mercy to those around us.

But it doesn't end there either: We must commit ourselves to prayer throughout Lent and for the rest of our lives. And we should stop blowing the trumpet. We should move to the inner room of our hearts where God dwells, and pray to our Father in secret. Today we need to hear His voice. And even though it's Lent, we should be ever joyful for the love of the Lord.

When should we start?

*Behold, now is a very acceptable time;
behold, now is the day of salvation.*

Mr. Craig Hannick
Math Department

Thursday, February 11: Thursday After Ash Wednesday

[First Reading: Deuteronomy 30:15-20](#)

[Gospel: Luke 9:22-25](#)

I often think of Lent as the time of the year for lowering ourselves, the time for making ourselves smaller in reverence to the Almighty God. When I was little, I would choose my Lenten sacrifice based on pleasure; I gave up things that I enjoyed a lot. I guess the idea that I was working under was that if I gave up something which made me happy, and in turn endured a small amount of suffering, I would be making myself less of a sinner and more humble, which was necessary if I wanted to experience the full glory of Easter.

I still thought that until a couple weeks ago. I was watching an episode of *The West Wing* (bear with me) and the characters were speaking about Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year for the Jews. What struck me from this episode was not the idea of Yom Kippur, but the day before Yom Kippur, Erev Yom Kippur. The idea of this day is that before we can atone with God, we must atone with the people around us. And when I thought about that idea in the context of Lent, this solemn part of the Liturgical Year became much more meaningful. Maybe in order to experience the fullness of the fulfillment of the Paschal mystery, to live out Easter more wholly, we have to atone with the people in our lives who have hurt us and whom we have hurt. Maybe we need, as Jesus says in today's Gospel, to take up our crosses with the people in our lives, to forgive and wipe clean the slates.

As it is just the beginning of Lent, I think I would benefit by starting off this year by making peace with the people in my life whom I have hurt, whom I have separated from myself. I think that if I do that first, I will be more able to spend this month focusing on God and my relationship with Him, because I know that needs a lot of work.

Jack Perryman '16
Senior Pastoral Team

Friday, February 12: Friday After Ash Wednesday

[First Reading: Isaiah 58:1-9A](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 9:14-15](#)

“For you are not pleased with sacrifices;
Should I offer a burnt offering, you would not accept it.
My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit.”
(Psalm 51:18-19)

Ten years ago as a senior in Mr. Garavaglia’s theology class I read a biography on the life of Saint Francis of Assisi. Part of Francis’ daily habit was to fast from a variety of life’s luxuries. He considered himself a humble little brother and nothing more. During his time, Francis’ extreme vocation drew admiration from a few people and scorn from many more.

History shows that Saint Francis of Assisi was undoubtedly a saint, but he was not a saint because he fasted, gave away all of his clothes, and begged alms to survive. *He was a saint because he gave away all of his heart.*

Today’s readings, like the life of Saint Francis, teach us about true fasting. To fast is not simply to give up Starbucks and Twitter. While those things are helpful they are not enough. To fast is to give over our hearts to God, warts and all.

Our God is a jealous God. He doesn’t want some of my heart; he wants the whole thing. The bad stuff buried deep inside? He wants that. Greed, apathy, anger, and pride? Those belong to God too. They do not embarrass God as much as us.

To fast from our sin is a much greater gift for God than we realize. The return is mercy, love, and happiness. The prophet Isaiah promises that when we properly fast, “then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed” (Isaiah 58:8).

In sacrificing our hearts this Lent may we know happiness. Knowing happiness, may we live as saints.

Mr. Sean Powers ‘05
Fine Arts Department

Saturday, February 13: Saturday After Ash Wednesday

[First Reading: Isaiah 58:9B-14](#)

[Gospel: Luke 5:27-32](#)

“If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech... then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.” (Isaiah 58: 9-10)

I interpret this part of today’s first reading as a call to limit the sometimes crippling effects of self-consciousness, to put out of our minds the negative words of others, a fear of what people will think of us when we live out the example of Jesus. As Mrs. Whitaker of the Fine Arts department has put it, we must close the “third eye” that seems to hover over us always. This is an eye that takes on a negative self-view that comes from ourselves as much as it does from others. More importantly, *what kind of person am I when I stand before God?*

The other line from Isaiah that stands out to me is, “Repairer of the breach, they shall call you.” Recently, doing Senior Project has made me think about the “breach” that may exist between those who have been born with some advantage in life and those separated by more extreme challenges of physical or mental illness. All of us, no matter who we are, are called to use the gifts we have to reach across to other people, bridging whatever gap may exist between us.

Finally, inspired by today’s Gospel, below is a copy of Caravaggio’s famous painting *The Calling of Saint Matthew*. May we prayerfully consider the ways Jesus calls us today.

Christopher Weingart ‘16
Senior Pastoral Team

Sunday, February 14: First Sunday of Lent

[First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:4-10](#)

[Second Reading: Romans 10:8-13](#)

[Gospel: Luke 4:1-13](#)

In the first reading, Moses speaks about our need for God. Moses refers to the “small household” of Israel that made its way to Egypt. This household eventually became a powerful and prosperous nation. In response, the Egyptians enslaved this nation, rendering them powerless. The Hebrews prayed to God to save them. God recognized that they were struggling, so through his mighty power, he brought the Israelites out of Egypt. God again made the Israelites prosperous, leading them into the Promised Land.

God invites us all to strengthen our households of faith throughout our life. However, we are often challenged along the way. This unavoidable roadblock is sin. Everybody turns their back on God sometimes. Sin alone is not what kills our relationship with God. The refusal to repent and learn from our mistakes and sins is what separates us. Just like in the first reading today, we can cry out to God and pray for forgiveness. And God will forgive us and love us unconditionally. That’s why it’s important to always seek forgiveness from God. After God makes our land of faith prosperous again, we offer up our sacrifices from the land in an attempt to not make the same mistakes that we have made in the past.

In today’s Gospel, Jesus deals with the notorious three temptations. In an effort to destroy our salvation, Satan tries to drive Jesus the Messiah off the path of God’s will. He tells Jesus to make himself food while he was starving in the desert, in other words, to use His supernatural powers for His own good. He offers Jesus power over all the Earth during a time when Jesus’ homeland was being torn apart by the Romans, if he only worship Satan. And, finally, he dares Jesus to throw himself from the top of the Temple and save himself in order to show the world that He is the Son of God, putting himself above God.

But Jesus resists these temptations and points instead to Scripture, saying that He can only do the will of the Father. Satan may not be tempting us like he tempted Jesus, but that doesn’t mean we are safe from the King of Lies.

Whenever we are tempted to use our talents for ourselves instead of others we are being told to make ourselves food in the desert. Whenever we find ourselves tempted to put another thing (i.e. a cell phone) in front of our relationship with God and others, we are being tempted to worship Satan for power. And, whenever we are tempted to undermine authority, disobey our parents or a teacher, we are being tempted to undermine God Himself.

To be Christlike is to obey the will of God, and, as Christians, we are called to be Christlike. So, this Lent, resist the temptations of the desert. Allow God to steer your life.

John Burke ‘18 and Riley McEnery ‘18
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Monday, February 15: Monday of the First Week of Lent

[First Reading: Leviticus 19: 1-2, 11-18](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46](#)

In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches us a very important lesson about loving our neighbor and taking responsibility for others. In this passage, there is a theme of separation. He divides humanity into two teams: the sheep and the goats.

The sheep are the ones who are given eternal life. Jesus states: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me."

The goats, on the other hand, were not so lucky. They did not feed the hungry, or give drink to the thirsty, or clothe the naked. They were given eternal punishment.

The beautiful thing about the sheep is that they didn't know their actions were going to gain them eternal reward. It was about the choices they made every day. They asked: "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?" He replied: "Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me."

Jesus tells us in detail how we can be sheep. Here at SLUH we are called to be men and women for and with others. We have plenty of opportunities to serve others. Take advantage of them. Get involved in community service. Pick up the trash you see left behind. Offer to help carry books or bags for someone who has an armful. Hold the door open for the person behind you. Shovel the snow for your neighbor. Pay for the person's meal in the car behind you in the drive-thru. Do good deeds.

I know what team I want to be on. I want to be a sheep.

Mrs. Mary Michalski
Counseling Department

Tuesday, February 16: Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

[First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-11](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 6:7-15](#)

"Look to Him that you may be radiant with joy." (Psalm 34)

First, as a science teacher, I appreciate Isaiah's shout-out to the water cycle. :) The recurring pattern of precipitation, evaporation, and condensation using the same teeny molecules is beautiful and provides evidence of a master plan.

In the Gospel, Jesus teaches us how to pray. The Our Father is my favorite prayer for several reasons: it comes directly from The Man Himself; it is simple and straightforward; and it contains the four words that summarize my worldview, "Thy will be done." God's will is going to be done. It is up to us to trust in its goodness.

But the Lord's Prayer also contains two lines I find very challenging.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." ... If God's forgiveness only reflects my own, I'm in trouble. Even when I am able to forgive, I rarely forget.

"Lead us not into temptation." ... Is this really what I want? I like my temptations — video games, fast food, podcasts, ... — and don't mind enough the venial sins of selfishness that sometimes come with them.

Every Mass, just after the Eucharistic Prayer, we say words that remind me of God's divinity, power, and eventual triumph. But I am also reminded of His love for me, His desire to give me what I need and forgive me what I don't. "[Our] Father knows what [we] need before [we] ask Him." But it still doesn't hurt to ask.

Mr. Paul Baudendistel '90
Science Department

Wednesday, February 17: Wednesday of the First Week of Lent

[First Reading: Jonah 3:1-10](#)

[Gospel: Luke 11:29-32](#)

In the first reading today, we hear about the story of Jonah. As the reading begins, we hear God telling Jonah for the second time to go and tell the city of Nineveh to repent. Jonah obeys God and travels to Nineveh. The people of Nineveh receive this message with openness and earnestly repent for their wrongdoings. In the Gospel, we hear Jesus say that just like Jonah “became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.”

It took a lot of courage for the Ninevites to own up to their mistakes and repent from their ways. This Lenten season is a chance for us to repent from our wrongdoings and fully accept God’s offer of love and mercy. We probably haven’t done anything bad enough to make God want to smite us from above, like he did with Nineveh. We are not necessarily being called to abstain from all food, wear sack clothes, or sit in ashes just to be protected from God’s wrath. But we have made mistakes (we're human, it's what we do) and God is always calling us back to him. Maybe he is calling us to give up that one thing we cannot live without or maybe it is simply taking five minutes in silence each day, away from all the distractions of life, to hear God better. Jesus told the crowd gathered in front of him that he is a sign for our generation. He is a symbol of love and faith that we should strive to imitate.

Dear God, help us to grow closer to you this season of Lent. Come enter our hearts and help us to be a sign for others, just as Jonah was for the Ninevites and Jesus was for his listeners and for us. Allow us to see and hear you in both the busyness of our days and in the silence of our nights. Amen.

Reed Milnor ‘19 and Paul Gillam ‘19
Freshman Pastoral Team

Thursday, February 18: Thursday of the First Week of Lent

[First Reading: Esther C:12, 14-16,23-25](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 7:7-12](#)

Ask and I shall receive, huh? If this worked the way I wanted it to, then I'd be asking for tuition money to put towards college and a new car to get there. Hearing this Gospel has always frustrated me. Because we all know that it's not as simple as just asking to get what we want. I never really looked for a bigger meaning in what Jesus was saying. As I've reflected upon it, I realize that the meaning of this passage is actually in the first reading for today, from the book of Esther.

The line that strikes me the most is: "Turn our mourning into gladness and our sorrows into wholeness." Esther says this prayer to God in a time of need. She shows us what Jesus meant when He said ask and you shall receive. When we ask for the graces we need from God, He will give them to us. What I mean is this: we ask to grow in virtue. Like my earlier example, instead of asking for tuition money to go to college, I ask for hope that regardless of money, God will provide. When we ask for what we truly need, God gives us just that.

The hardest thing to do in our experience of being human is entrusting our will to a higher being that we cannot even see. God desires to be intimate with us to the point that when we ask for His graces, His love, and His strength, He gives it to us. Attending a school like SLUH, going through the college application process, and keeping up with activities can really be challenging, and most of the time, it is stressful. That being said, I find comfort in the fact that God has a plan, and that when we ask about it, He'll show us.

My advice to you would be to not only pray and literally ask God, "What do you want from me?" but to also believe that He will tell you. I know that sometimes when I pray, I kind of believe God will hear me and answer my prayer. What we're called to do is pray, and live like that prayer has been answered. So go ahead, ask what God wants, and live your life as if God speaks to you in every moment. Ask and you shall receive.

Will Martel '16
Senior Pastoral Team

Friday, February 19: Friday of the First Week of Lent

[First Reading: Ezekiel 18:21-28](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 5:20-26](#)

“My soul waits for the Lord more than sentinels wait for the dawn.”

I’m intrigued these days by the idea of waiting for the Lord. So much of our lives as Christians is about seeking, which the Bible urges us to do in other places, but here in Psalm 103 we are instead called to wait.

Lent is traditionally and appropriately a time of special intention, a time to fold something new into our lives. Sometimes we add a new spiritual practice or some kind of community service to whatever routines have been shaping our days. Sometimes it’s more a matter of adding by subtracting. The tradition of giving something up for Lent seems intended not simply to take something away from our daily lives. The space left by the thing removed can become a crack, an opening through which light can shine.

These practices, whether adding or subtracting, are a way of seeking the Lord. On the face of it, however, they do not seem a way of waiting for the Lord. When we choose a Lenten discipline and strive to sustain it, this seems too active to be called waiting.

Like poetry, though, faith often speaks by paradox. If we offering our Lenten practices to God without expectation, if we enact them with pure trust, not checking every day to see if God is giving us some taste of divinity as reward for our devotion, if we infuse our seeking with the spirit of waiting, then perhaps we are going with Jesus out in the desert, withdrawing from the worldly expectations of cause and effect, of investment and return, that can infect even our piety. Then, perhaps, the darkness of Ash Wednesday becomes our dawn’s light, the deprivations of Lent become the joyous wedding banquet, and the death that comes at the end of these forty days might become our salvation.

Mr. Chuck Hussung
English Department

Saturday, February 20: Saturday of the First Week of Lent

[First Reading: Deuteronomy 26:16-19](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 5:43-48](#)

In the first reading today, we hear about Moses reminding the people of Israel about a couple things. The first thing is that the Lord is truly their God. Moses reminds them, as he does us, that there is no other God, except for the one true God. The second thing is to observe the statutes and decrees that the Lord gives them. God doesn't tell the people of Israel to merely observe these laws with their minds, but to observe them with their hearts and souls.

Each of us should be looking to do the same thing each day. If I follow God's laws in my mind, but neglect to internalize them in my heart and my soul, I will be unable to build a strong relationship with God. The only way I am able to build a strong relationship with God is by dedicating my heart and soul to Him and his laws.

Furthermore, God promises us that if we keep his commandments, then He will raise us in glory, and we will become a sacred people to the Lord. To follow God's commands, we must review our life and look to improve on any mistakes we might have made before. We must ask ourselves: when have I disobeyed God's commandments? Have I ever gone to confession to ask forgiveness for what I have done? Do I truly wish to follow God with all my heart and soul?

In today's Gospel, Jesus imparts a challenging law to us that we may not want to hear: love your enemies. My definition of an enemy is one who makes me upset or irritated, and there are definitely lots of those people in my life. These people I would much rather ignore and forget, but that is not what Jesus says: he says to *love* thine enemy. How might I ask God's help in my attempt to love my enemies today?

Matthew Stauder '18 and Steven Zak '18
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Sunday, February 21: Second Sunday of Lent

[First Reading: Genesis 15:5-12,17-18](#)

[Second Reading: Philippians 3:17 - 4:1](#)

[Gospel: Luke 9:28b-36](#)

In today's Gospel, Jesus brings Peter, James, and John up a mountain to pray. While there his clothes became dazzlingly white and his face changes in appearance. A cloud descends over the mountain and Elijah and Moses appear. God speaks and affirms Jesus as his son. This is known as the Transfiguration of Jesus. Jesus wants to show his most trusted disciples his true glory, and they do not want to leave. Jesus knows that he cannot stay on the mountain with his disciples. There is much work still to be done. He still has a duty to save all humankind, and his disciples have a duty to spread the good news to all people.

Coming into the second Sunday of Lent, some of our resolve in our resolutions and prayers for Lent may be beginning to deteriorate. But the second Sunday, the third Sunday, and the whole of Lent are just as important. This Gospel reading encourages us to stick with it. Jesus does not just bring Peter up the mountain; he also shows his true self to James and John. And not only to them, but he also showed each of his followers his true power as his risen self. Each of us is invited into the scene for rest and to gain strength to continue on. He knows that each of us has a duty on earth, and with the promise of eternal life with him, he gives us the the promise of viewing his true beauty.

Thomas Leeker '17
Junior Pastoral Team

Monday, February 22: Feast of the Chair of St. Peter, Apostle

[First Reading: 1 Peter 5:1-4](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 16:13-19](#)

Today is the Feast of the Chair of the Apostle, Peter. It is the day the Church commemorates Jesus choosing Peter to sit in His place and serve the whole Church as its leader. This feast—something I never knew of before I started writing this reflection—is right up my alley. Peter is my Confirmation Saint. Not only do I know about him, but I see him as a figure I can emulate—both in his failures and successes—by reading the Gospels.

Peter is a figure that was an example to his peers. He led the Church after Jesus's death and spread the good news of his Resurrection. Despite his failures - his denials of Jesus being paramount - Peter remains dedicated to the mission of Jesus through his words and deeds and spurs us to do the same.

Yet trying to seek and speak the truth sometimes requires sacrificing our own views, hopes, goals, and dreams for God. Having integrity and being honest every moment of our lives isn't possible—humans, as naturally imperfect beings, can't do that. But there is hope, so there is no need to give up.

Being “examples to the flock,” as the reading says, means that we must seek the truth before we speak it— we have to willingly go out and find the truth, and in that process, find God. And it will be a struggle, where we will feel broken—either physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually—until we find God's love and eventually learn to lead the flock. Many times, this means that we will fail along the way; yet even our failures, like Peter's, can lead to a deeper understanding of who God is.

Not only have I gone through this process at SLUH, but I have discovered a passion to deal with every single obstacle set before me. Not only do I have a desire to lead, but I recognize that I also have the mix of failures and successes that Peter did. That mix sends me forth to try and learn from failures and build on the successes.

Each of us has to lead with confidence and a sense of exploration, by dipping our toes in the chilling water to discover something amazing and new. This is what Peter does in the Gospel. He speaks the truth despite what others are saying or doing. This is the essence of seeking the truth: to willingly leave our comfort zones and discover that God will guide us.

Sam Chechik '17
Junior Pastoral Team

Tuesday, February 23: Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent

[First Reading: Isaiah 1:10,16-20](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 23:1-12](#)

In today's first reading, God tells the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to wash themselves clean, cease to do evil, and make justice their aim. In a somewhat similar fashion, Jesus addresses the Pharisees about their hypocritical ways, telling them that they should not simply say things for the sake of making themselves look good while forcing other people to do the work, but should instead work to give glory to God.

Likewise, today we often try to achieve goals for the sole purpose of being able to say we did it, not to make a reasonable impact on the world around us. Because this is often presented as a norm in society today, we can often be unaware that we are even doing it. However, through this reading, it can be seen that we are being called to do everything for the greater glory of God, to spread his word, and make an effort to make that positive impact on the world.

Zach Szatkowski '19 and Justin King '19
Freshman Pastoral Team

Wednesday, February 24: Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent

[First Reading: Jeremiah 18:18-20](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 20:17-28](#)

In the rather short First Reading, the people of Jerusalem have decided to plot against Jeremiah. Jeremiah laments this and is scared. He asks in his plea to God, “Must good be repaid with evil that they should dig a pit to take my own life?” Later, we see in today’s Gospel Jesus telling James and John’s (the “sons of Zebedee”) mother, Salome, that he has no decision as to whether they are the ones who should sit next to Jesus at his right and left. In other words, Jesus explains to Salome that status on earth does not determine status with Jesus in both this and the next life. Jesus goes on to say that “whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave.”

I think that the two quotes I cited from these readings connect to one message: we, as a people, are putting our own status over what really matters. We see it happening every day. Students cheat on tests to get a good grade. Sometimes the only thing heard in the hallways in the morning are the stressed out calls of students asking whether a certain teacher checks the homework. Activity periods are not filled with doing something truly productive but with students frantically struggling in the Commons to cram for a test. On the worst of days, SLUH can become a scene of people struggling to push each other down to get an extra foot up rather than lending our fellow students a hand. Obviously, the problems of Jesus’ time have transferred to here and now.

If you’re reading this in the morning before school starts, please aim today to give someone that hand. All too often we take advantage of others’ weaknesses or simply avoid dealing with things we might find uncomfortable. However, as Jesus says, “the first among you shall be your slave.” Put love above yourself, and not only will you make someone else’s day more fulfilled; you might just find that you’re having a really good day.

Trevor Scott ‘17
Junior Pastoral Team

Thursday, February 25: Thursday of the Second Week of Lent

[First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-10](#)

[Gospel: Luke 16:19-31](#)

In today's first reading from Jeremiah, the Lord issues a stiff challenge. If you trust in other human beings, you will be cursed, but if you put your faith in God, you will be blessed.

During this Lenten season, we should remember to keep our trust and hope in God through the hard times of stress, temptation, and sadness, as the Lord will help us stay strong and choose the right path. But we should do this through the good times, too! Today, maybe we can reflect on how we have kept our hope in God, through the good and the bad times, and how we can strengthen this relationship to be closer to him throughout these next few weeks. Take some time today to say a couple prayers to God, thanking him for the beautiful creations around you and asking him to help us keep him close in our daily lives.

In the Gospel, a rich man goes to Hell, and Lazarus, a poor man, goes to Heaven. The rich man begs God to change course and send him to Heaven, but God denies him entrance. The rich man never showed any compassion towards Lazarus, who used to lay outside the rich man's gates, longing for any scraps the rich man might be able to spare.

It is important to remember our duty to always treat others with the care and dignity they are afforded as human beings, and to truly strive to be men for others. It's not simply because of the rich man's wealth that he went to Hell, but it is instead because of his selfishness and unwillingness to share his wealth with others.

We are called to put others before ourselves, and as difficult as it might be, to not always make decisions that merely help us get what we want. We do not know the hour when the Lord is coming, so we must do our best to make sure we are indeed ready for when our Judgement Day arrives.

Joseph Weber '18 and Andrew Voras '18
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Friday, February 26: Friday of the Second Week of Lent

[First Reading: Genesis 37:3-4,12-13a,17b-28a](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 21:33-43,45-46](#)

It's easy to read today's Gospel with an image of an Old Testament God: a vengeful, wrathful God, a God to be feared. The early workers represent the prophets of Israel, who are not heeded by the Israelites. Then the Father sends his Son, who is killed by the tenants. The parable ends with the ominous warning, "He will put those wretched men to a wretched death." What are we to make of this? Where is the God of forgiveness, redemption, charity? Where is the salvation? Or are we just to add this to another sackcloth-and-ashes story of our Lenten suffering and misery? "Better give up something for Lent! Better not eat meat on Fridays or you'll burn in Hell!" What, indeed, should we take positively and joyfully from this story?

God has given us this world as our vineyard, to grow and cultivate, to nourish and enrich ourselves. What have we done with this earth? Have we taken care of it as we would a fine item which has been lent to it, or have we squandered and abused it and dreaded the day we'll be called to account for the way we have utilized our Father's land? As the proverb goes, "The Earth is not a gift from our parents, it is a loan from our children." So when the Son of Man calls us to account for how we have used the land, have we only concerned ourselves with monetary gain? Have we wasted the loan we have been given, irresponsibly taken advantage of the Landowner's generosity with us? Ask yourself: if called to account by the Father for how you have used the earth, would you avoid the conversation with his workers and heir, or could you honestly repay the debt you owe?

God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that he who believe in him shall not perish but have eternal life. Even after all we've done, God sends His Son to us. We may abuse his world, kill his representatives, ignore his entreaties, but God does not quit reaching out to us. He sends Jesus to deliver his message, Jesus to call us to be the children of God who we should be. And too often, we reject Christ as God's presence among us. If we do not literally kill Jesus, we ignore Jesus, reject Jesus, betray Jesus, deny Jesus, even as he is trying to get us to do what we know we should. Yet that Son whom we reject, shall on Easter become the cornerstone.

All through Lent, we reflect on the times we have rejected Jesus, but God holds out the promise that on Easter, Jesus will be held up as the cornerstone on which the entryway to Heaven will be built. All of salvation passes through that archway, and at the peak of that archway is the cornerstone, the Son the builders have rejected, the stone which is rolled away from the tomb. And today, we reflect on our sins, the times we have shunned the Son, but we also must be aware of the promise of salvation to come.

Mr. Frank Corley
Math Department

Saturday, February 27: Saturday of the Second Week of Lent

[First Reading: Micah 7:14-15,18-20](#)

[Gospel: Luke 15:1-3,11-32](#)

In the Gospel, Jesus uses the Parable of the Prodigal Son to retell a message of mercy and forgiveness. At the beginning of the story, the younger son asks his father, a wealthy farmer, for his portion of the family estate. He then sets off to distant lands and loses all of the money. The younger son realizes that he has made a mistake, and he returns home, asking his father for mercy and forgiveness. But the loving father has been waiting for him, so he takes his son back with open arms. When the older son hears that the younger son is receiving a giant feast, he grows jealous. He asks his father why he doesn't get a party when he has been loyal to him all along.

We all have our fair share of prodigal sons in our lives. Whether it's through a friend who lied to you, or a coworker who said something rude to you, Jesus tells us that we should always keep an open heart and be willing to forgive those who have wronged us. In this story, the father of the two sons represents God, who waits patiently with loving compassion to give to us when we return to him with humble hearts.

Who are you in this story? Are you the rebellious son, lost and far from God but attempting to change your ways? Are you the older son, who becomes jealous that he doesn't get a feast? Or are you the father, with someone asking you for your mercy?

Pope Francis declared this year as a year of mercy, but of course this concept of mercy traces back through Jesus. Jesus also tells us through this parable that even if we sin, it's never too late to turn back to God and ask for forgiveness.

God, please help me to be merciful to those who ask for my forgiveness, and please help me to be humble enough to ask for your mercy.

Jacob Reznikov '19 and Joe Mantych '19
Freshman Pastoral Team

Sunday, February 28: Third Sunday of Lent

[First Reading: Exodus 3:1-8a,13-15](#)

[Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-6,10-12](#)

[Gospel: Luke 13:1-9](#)

“It’s a leap of faith.”

Near the end of *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, the final trial before reaching the Holy Grail finds Indy standing on the edge of a giant chasm, with no path across.

He is shattered, having come so close to finishing his journey only to face an insurmountable task. After confusion, nervousness, and belief, with his hand over his heart, he closes his eyes and takes a step out into the great unknown, trusting it will all be okay.

Today’s First Reading today offers us a glimpse at the Leap of Faith required by Moses to become the servant of the Lord and to ultimately become the leader of the Israelites as they fled Egypt.

Moses spoke to a burning bush. A burning bush! Consider that for a moment. He didn’t even get an angel or a Biblical run-of-the-mill vision. He got a bush. On fire. It couldn’t have been easy for Moses to convince himself to follow instructions from a bush. And it surely wasn’t easy for the Israelites to hear the message (in fact, in Exodus 4 we learn that God gave Moses three signs to perform as proof of the conversation!).

While it may be creative imagery used by the author than historical fact to use a bush, it does serve as a reminder that our conversations and prayers with God are not easy. We cannot fire off a text or go visit God for a quick face-to-face chat. Rather, we’re asked to have faith that our prayers – quiet and spoken – are heard by Him, and that our needs will be met by our all-loving God.

We are a people of faith. Like Moses, we are called to leap. On this Third Sunday in Lent, I hope that God may give us all the strength to put our hands over our hearts, close our eyes, and take that step to a more loving, God-centered life.

Mr. John Penilla ‘99
Associate Director of Annual Giving

Monday, February 29: Monday of the Third Week of Lent

[First Reading: 2 Kings 5:1-15ab](#)

[Gospel: Luke 4:24-30](#)

“They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away.” (Luke 4:29-30)

Dripping with the human condition, today’s readings unsettle me. I cannot voluntarily enter them because I am already in them. I am the skeptic in these readings, the doubter, the complainer.

Scripture continually employs blindness and disease as allegories for spiritual darkness and isolation. I am no stranger to these afflictions. I keep seeking a special cure for them, something out of the ordinary that will take me away from the tension and mendacity that is so much a part of life. I am Naaman, disappointed that Elisha has no hand-wave cure for my problems. I am the crowd, focusing on finding something wrong, suspicious of the goodness and genuineness of those with whom I have any history. Like Naaman, I do not open myself to be cured. Like the crowd, I miss what is right here in front of me.

When speaking of Elisha, Jesus suggest that belief is so much easier at the onset of a relationship, the time before bias and predisposition settle in and blind me. I must stop being that way. I must heed the prophets of Christ and wash in the river. Those waters are muddy, very ordinary, save for the one who commands Naaman to wash there. They are like the words of Christ to the crowd and to me, words I have heard before, save that it is Jesus who is inviting me to listen and therein to find healing.

Naaman sees only a muddy river. Ah, but indeed Christ and His graces reside not only where life’s waters are clear. He stands amongst and within us. And yet, too often those chilling last lines of the gospel apply. I reject His way, ridding myself of His call to surrender, in favor of my own instinct for self-preservation. Christ “passed through the midst of them,” and He did so easily because He was invisible to a mob too busy wanting to destroy a man. Too frequently Jesus passes through me in the midst of my anger and despair and rejection, those many times when I succumb to crowd-like instincts instead of surrendering to His way.

He departs from those in the crowd, but only for a time. Boundlessly loving, He will return again...and again. That is the Good News, for He does the same for you and for me.

Stephen Hutchison ‘68

Tuesday, March 1: Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

[First Reading: Daniel 3:25.34-43](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 18:21-35](#)

When I see today's readings, I see a theme of mercy. This makes me wonder if these are the readings Pope Francis had in mind when he declared this to be a year of mercy! I like these readings because they address mercy from two sides. On the one hand, we see how God is merciful to us; on the other hand, we are invited to show that mercy and forgiveness to others.

In the Gospel, Jesus gives us an example of the kind of mercy and forgiveness that God offers to us. We are all sinners who can be forgiven, as long as we earnestly desire it. Through Jesus' sacrifice, God forgives all of our sins, not just the small ones. There are often times when we desire mercy and forgiveness for unexpected things that happen or for things that are out of our control. We might be late for something because of car trouble, or weather, and the authorities in our life may show us mercy. It's a small example, but I think we all understand that there are moments, big and small, where we desire mercy and forgiveness.

I think that is also what God is asking us to do for others, to ease the burden for them. Each of us is created in God's own image, and thus, we should forgive others like God does for us. For us, though, extending mercy is often a process. In our daily lives, we often have opportunities to show mercy to others, but we don't always do so. This might be because we don't "approve" or "condone" what they did to us. However, the truth of the matter is that we do not know what may be going on in someone else's heart and life. God knows these things, though, and he challenges us to extend forgiveness anyway. Forgiving someone is not easy, but God assures us that forgiveness is worth it in the end.

Sergio Goodwin '16
STUCO Pastoral Representative

Wednesday, March 2: Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent

[First Reading: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 5:17-19](#)

Exaggeration and manipulation of our words has seemingly become infused in our daily interactions. In a very real sense, some of us have become extremely good actors.

When reading today's Gospel, I could not help but think of the commandments that I twist so that I can convince myself that I am being an upright man of Christ. I fear that what has become second nature for me has become second nature for many people. Only by exaggerating facts in my stories, or by telling little lies to make a story more interesting, will I think my stories will be better received.

The stories of Jesus are so fascinating and enticing to read about because they speak of the truth, not of a skewed story of reality. A question we have to ask ourselves this Lent is whether our lives could be more Christ-like if we simply concern ourselves with being our true selves rather than manipulating our stories and segments of our lives in order that people see us as we would wish.

Let us pray that we give others the truth that God speaks about in the Gospel, the truth of ourselves so that others may know Him better.

Mr. Bradley Mueller
Alumni Service Corps, Science Department

Thursday, March 3: Thursday of the Third Week of Lent

[First Reading: Jeremiah 7:23-28](#)

[Gospel: Luke 11:14-23](#)

In today's first reading, Jeremiah describes the Israelites' failure in faith from the Israelites once they escaped Pharaoh in Egypt. Rather than paying attention to the words and teachings of God, they turned their backs on God and did what they wanted to do instead. In order to deal with this problem, God sent prophets to cleanse the people of their sins and bring them back to God. However, the prophets, despite their best efforts, failed to convert the Israelites.

In our lives as Christians, we must be careful to not act selfishly as the Israelites did. We have to avoid temptations that could push us away from God like selfishness and pride did to the Israelites. We must live by the example of the apostles in days of the early church, spreading God's Word to all no matter what the consequences might be.

Andrew Modder '17
Junior Pastoral Team

Friday, March 4: Friday of the Third Week of Lent

[First Reading: Hosea 14:2-10](#)

[Gospel: Mark 12:28-34](#)

*“To love him with all your heart,
with all your understanding,
with all your strength,
and to love your neighbor as yourself
is worth more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”*

I think many of us could name most or all of the corporal works of mercy: *feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, etc.* Sometimes, the corporal works of mercy are fun. Let's be honest—going to do service at McCormack House or donating to the food drive can be fun and make us feel good about ourselves. Although the corporal works are wonderful and admirable, I think it is important to remember that mercy is not always a feel-good experience.

How many of us could name the spiritual works of mercy? I know I couldn't. *Admonish the sinner, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, comfort the sorrowful, bear wrongs patiently, forgive all injuries, and pray for the living and the dead.* Admonishing the sinner? That's not fun. Forgiving all injuries and bearing wrongs patiently? That takes a strong-willed effort. Not everything in the spiritual life is going to feel quite right. Things get hard. Mercy is messy.

I see two main ideas in today's gospel: to love our God and to love our neighbors. The spiritual works of mercy are a way to love others and to love God by bringing others closer to him and his joy. When we are at our strongest in relationship with God, we can become enchanted by the Holy Spirit and we can fall *in* love with God. I think the spiritual works of mercy are a way to guide others back to that high point, to allow them to experience God's love once again in their lives. Additionally, if we are open to being admonished, prayed for, comforted, and instructed by others, then we can allow others to guide us to God's mercy.

Do I comfort my friends when they experience pain or sadness? Or do I ignore it and hope they will deal with it on their own?

Do I try to help others when I think they are making mistakes? Do I judge them instead of trying to help? Do I assume that they know what is best for them?

Am I open to being counseled? Am I open to being admonished or instructed? Or is pride, fear, or an “I know what's best for me” mentality preventing me from experiencing God's mercy?

*Do I pray for my friends? Do I ask them to pray for me? Do I pray **with** my friends? Do I invite them into my spiritual life, or am I too embarrassed, afraid of what they will think of me?*

*Dear Jesus,
Bring me back to your heart,
Pour out Your mercy into my life,
Teach me to be merciful like You.
Amen*

Joe Laughlin '17
Junior Pastoral Team

Saturday, March 5: Saturday of the Third Week of Lent

[First Reading: Hosea 6:1-6](#)

[Gospel: Luke 18:9-14](#)

Reading 1 is taken from the book of Hosea, which illustrates the spiritual adultery of Israel and God's boundless love for His sinful people. It shows Israel contemplating a return to the Lord, and God wanting to restore them, to make His people whole. He expresses His frustration over their piety, piety which is temporary "like the dew that early passes away," and God tells them it is mercy He desires, not sacrifice. Mercy equates love, which is better than sacrifice; particularly sacrifice for its sake and not out of a repentant heart filled with love for the Lord and others. Unlike Israel's (and at times our own) empty offerings, Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice, giving his life as an act of mercy for us.

Today's reading also reminds me of two of my favorite Scripture verses, "Mercy triumphs over judgment," James 2:13, and "Seek justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God," Micah 6:8 (paraphrased). Mercy is the story of my life. Really. I see His hand in every situation where I was wronged, and especially (gratefully) where I wronged someone else. Mercy rewrites the past. It heals the wounds of ugliness, indifference, isolation, and abuse. Mercy is a glorious gift, one of which I can feel so undeserving. I feel His mercy wash over me like sunrays of warmth and grace. Mercy imparts strength. Mercy heals.

Mercy is beautiful and gritty. Courageous. Triumphant. Loving mercy is loving one another boldly. On December 8, 2015, Pope Francis formally launched the Jubilee of Mercy, which lasts through November 20, 2016. The reason he gave for decreeing an Extraordinary Jubilee: "...this is the time for mercy. It is the favorable time to heal wounds, a time not to be weary of meeting all those who are waiting to see and to touch with their hands the signs of the closeness of God, a time to offer everyone, *everyone*, the way of forgiveness and reconciliation." Love mercy.

Mrs. Melissa Jones

Director of Advancement

Sunday, March 6: Fourth Sunday of Lent

[First Reading: Joshua 5:9A,10-12](#)

[Second Reading: 2 Corinthians 5:17-21](#)

[Gospel: Luke 15:1-3,11-32](#)

The Gospel today is the well-known story of the prodigal son. Though this parable is packed full with amazing opportunities for reflection, I would like to focus on a more subtle detail—that the prodigal son was hungry when he was away from the father. Jesus tells us the son was “dying from hunger” because no one would even give him pigs’ food. The son was longing for nourishment from anywhere he could get it. Finally, he realized the best place to receive that nourishment was directly from the father himself.

In Jesus’ time, the Jewish people would have recognized this story. However, the version they knew ended with the father making the son work for him the rest of his life. Jesus completely twists the plot of the original story in having the father show mercy towards the son. When the son begs for forgiveness, one of the first things the father does is “celebrate with a feast.” He recognized the need the son had to be nourished after being away for so long and he provided for him.

Of course, there have been times when we have also betrayed our Father in Heaven. Yet, when we turn back to Him, He provides for us. Just as in the first reading when He provided manna for the Israelites, He provides for us in giving us His only Son as true food. During this Lenten season, I would encourage you to go back to the Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion, perhaps not only on Sunday, but also during the week. Let us return to our Father through the reception of the graces He wishes to give to us.

Jacob Price ‘17
Junior Pastoral Team

Monday, March 7: Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Isaiah 65:17-21](#)

[Gospel: John 4:43-54](#)

The reading from Isaiah promises us that “no longer shall the sound of weeping be heard, nor the sound of crying.” The reading from the Psalms tells us that the Divine has “changed my mourning into dancing.” The Gospel antiphon asks us to seek good “that you may live, and the Divine will be with you.” And in the Gospel reading, we hear of an official whose son was brought from near death back to life after he sought out Jesus and believed.

Today, after reflecting on these Scripture readings, I want to urge us to continue seeking Christ, to continue following and believing, even in the midst of weeping and mourning, even when we feel our soul is tired and weak.

When you lose a match, your spirit falls. When you disappoint a loved one, your heart fills with regret. When you feel yourself filled with anger, and the desire to lash out only ends up poisoning you even more, your soul becomes sickened. And why is that? Because you have stopped seeking Christ. How can we tell that we have stopped seeking Christ? We can tell that the official was seeking Christ because of the compassion he had for his son. Are you living out Christ’s compassion and caring for others?

So seek Christ out, find Him in the faces of those you have wronged, and find His forgiveness in the faces of those who have wronged you. Do you want revenge? Have you forgotten that when Christ was crucified He said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!” Christ desired neither revenge or anger. Christ wanted healing and peace in our homes, in our actions, and in our souls. Seek out Christ, “that you may live, and the Divine will be with you.”

Mr. James Page SJ
Theology Department

Tuesday, March 8: Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Ezekiel 47:1-9,12](#)

[Gospel: John 5:1-16](#)

Water is a strong image that is found throughout Scripture. Today's first reading reminds us how God guides us, like a current of love running through our lives. In Ezekiel, the water flows higher and higher, rising and becoming as strong as a powerful river. The water symbolizes God's strength and how we are in His current of love. Let's try to swim with His current of love this Lent, trusting that it will take us some place beautiful.

The Gospel also contains the motif of water. There, water was present in the form of a pool. There are many ways to approach the symbol of water, with a range in meaning from life to death, but I want to think of the water as a form of rebirth. Let's imagine the ill man who has been lying on his mat for 38 years, just yearning for one dip in the water in the hopes that it would make him a new person. This sounds like a baptism to me. Just one dip and we're saved. Lent is a chance for our own rebirth, a chance to take a dip into God's water of new life, enacted through the sacrifices and promises that we all set out to make.

Alfie Arun '19 and Marty Jaskiewicz '19
Freshman Pastoral Team

Wednesday, March 9: Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Isaiah 49:8-15](#)

[Gospel: John 5:17-30](#)

As I'm writing this (in early February) Marla Maurer's time at SLUH is quickly coming to an end. In the next few days, there will be tears and hugs and more than once someone will utter the phrase "I'll never forget you!" These are powerful words among friends. In today's readings God, too, has promised that He will never forget us. No matter how far we wander from Him or how difficult our path may be He has promised "I will never forget you." His love and His mercy are with us always.

Back in my yearbook signing days – long ago and in a galaxy far, far away – we often signed off with TGTBF. That is God's message for us as well: "Too Good To Be Forgotten," especially by the One who made us.

Have you seen *The Force Awakens*? The movie has generated much speculation about the parentage of some of the new characters. Why the curiosity? Because family ties reveal a multitude of secrets. Admittedly, we come into today's Gospel with "privileged information." John has already keyed us in on who Jesus' dad is.

I remember many summers ago reading *The Empire Strikes Back*. When Darth Vader revealed, "I am your father," I dropped the book! That can't begin to compare with how shocked Jesus' crowd was when he called God his father! What?!!

Yet, to those who are willing to hear, Jesus is quite clear. He and his father are one. And the work they do – curing us mortals – continues not only on the Sabbath but unto this very day in 2016. And Jesus' heritage reveals something else. It reveals who we can be if we believe in him.

Heavenly Father, please help us to know You in and through Your Son Jesus Christ. May the true Force be with us. Always.

Ms. Mary Fischer
Business Office

Thursday, March 10: Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Exodus 32:7-14](#)

[Gospel: John 5:31-47](#)

Here is one of my worst nightmares, one that many of you may share. You are traveling through an unknown land (for me, the Appalachian foothills - that is, the middle of nowhere), depending entirely on your mobile device to get you from point A to point B, and then, boom, it hits. "SEARCHING FOR SIGNAL," your phone tells you. All of a sudden, the map doesn't load, and you know you are to turn somewhere in the near future, but you really have no idea. This actually happened on a recent business trip of mine, and I quickly got lost. In the morning, I figured that I had a pretty good idea of where to go, and when the folks at the hotel offered to give me directions, I turned them down pointing to my cell, saying, "I got this."

I imagine the Israelites having the same reaction I had at the hotel. "Hey, Moses, we got this!" But how quickly their "signal was lost," and there they were, making a molten calf and worshiping it, forgetting the God who had saved them. (PS 106:21)

It makes me think about all of the times in my life when I have had folks serve as a Moses figure to me, setting me straight onto the correct path. There have also been times when I attempt to be like Moses and work to help others turn back to God and his everlasting love. Doing so requires significant courage and a love of God and others, so that they, too, can embrace the saving grace and love of God.

May we all strive to be like Moses and believe the word of God, embracing his love, for "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in him might have eternal life." (*John 3:16*)

Will Hartzler '08

Friday, March 11: Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Wisdom 2:1a,12-22](#)

[Gospel: John 7:1-2,10,25-30](#)

Today, Wisdom offers us the following prophecy of Christ's time on Earth:

“Merely to see him is a hardship for us, because his life is not like that of others, and different are his ways.” (Wisdom 2:14-15)

Clearly, the way Jesus lives his life scandalized certain people in his time; perhaps it scandalizes us sometimes too. How difficult do you and I make it to see God? I am often too selfish, concerned with my own wants and needs, that I wonder if I would recognize Jesus next to me. Would you?

Not only does our own self-centeredness keep us from seeing Jesus, but as the reading from Wisdom reminds us, so does the fact that He is not concerned with the same things we often are. His life is not like ours; His ways are different than ours. Do we miss seeing Jesus because His ways do not make sense to us? Are we too concerned with the frivolous things of Earth – money, popularity, appearance, achievements...I could go on and on – and not on things that are truly important?

That question reminds me of the part in Matthew's Gospel where Jesus tells us what is truly important. The two most important things are that we love the Lord with all our being and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. THAT'S IT.

That is my prayer for us today – that we can lose focus on these earthly desires that keep us from recognizing God in our lives and instead focus solely on loving God and our neighbor.

Ms. Tracy Lyons
Math Department

Saturday, March 12: Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Jeremiah 11:18-20](#)

[Gospel: John 7:40-53](#)

One of the main themes throughout the first reading for today is that of vulnerability. In the first reading, Jeremiah explains that he did not know his enemies were planning to kill him, but his trust and dedication to God protected him. Jeremiah trusted completely in God's care. In a way, maybe you see Jeremiah's trust in God as a dangerous kind of vulnerability. Jeremiah trusts in what he has never physically seen. When the Lord told Jeremiah that others were plotting to kill him, he cries out in distress. He pleads to God for strength through his vulnerability. So why is this all important?

Jeremiah's faith is something we can often overlook in our own lives. We might purposely turn away from God, feeling that our own strength can carry us through our problems and pain. We have never seen God physically protecting us from harm, so why should we trust in that what we've never seen?

Jeremiah's enemies say, "Let's destroy the tree in its vigor," implying that Jeremiah is still in the prime of his life. No matter how old you or I might be, the vigor of life stands before us. May we have faith to be open and vulnerable before God. People may come and pick on us for what we believe, but like Jeremiah, may we see a greater purpose in taking such a stand.

Sean Anderson '18 and Allen Shorey '18
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Sunday, March 13: Fifth Sunday of Lent

[First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21](#)

[Second Reading: Philippians 3:8-14](#)

[Gospel: John 8:1-11](#)

I think that the main message of the Isaiah reading is to focus on the enjoyment and marvel of the wonder that is the world around us. These days, it is hard to not be part of the “something new” that happens every few minutes. It is very hard to slow down and appreciate the gifts and marvels in the world around us. So today, pick out one thing that you usually take for granted, like your coffee, your awesome parents, or even just a friendly face in the hallway, and remember realize that is a gift given by God to you in this moment, and go on with your day trying to be that gift for someone else.

The reading from Philippians was a hard one for me to apply. As I was reading it, I just tried to imagine all the great aspects of my life - my friends, my family, my triumphs - and then proceeded to try to compare them all to “rubbish.” Not only was this really hard for me to imagine, but I felt that it was almost completely against what I had been taught all throughout my life: to love and cherish everything, even the bad times, no matter what the circumstances. But as I reflected on this reading further, I realized that the main message might not be the need to forget and leave all that I love in the past, but rather to not allow myself to fall or stray from God due to the events of my life. I should strive to fight past failure and downfalls, knowing that God is with me on my journey and will be there waiting at the end, no matter how many times I have fallen, with open arms and a whole lot of forgiveness.

Finally, the Gospel. So often it seems that we can consume ourselves with an obsession of what others are doing. When we worry ourselves with the sins of others, we are not focused on our sins or our relationship with God. In the Gospel, Jesus reminds us that we all are sinners, calling us to hold back our stones of judgement.

'I am a sinner whom the Lord has looked upon' - Pope Francis

James Pollard '18 and Sam Pottinger '18
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Monday, March 14: Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Daniel 13:41c-62](#)

[Gospel: John 8:1-11](#)

Today's reading is a bit dark. Two Jewish elders confront Susanna while she relaxes in her husband's garden. They approach Susanna and deliver an ultimatum: "lie with us, or we will testify against you."

Susanna immediately starts to think of what will happen to her. If she yields, she'll be killed for adultery. If she refuses, the two men may overpower her and rape her anyway.

Susanna begins to scream, causing the men's plan to fall apart. The men then testify that she committed adultery with a young man whom she invited into the garden. The crowds believe them, as they are the elders of the village.

Susanna, facing certain death, places her faith in God, asking him to save her from execution. God sent the Holy Spirit down to Daniel, a boy in the crowd, to defend Susanna. Daniel speaks out against the elders. After a brief trial, the crowds convict the two judges of perjury and breaking several other laws, and the two are executed.

Susanna's story reminds us that we cannot judge others as there is often a second side to the story. However, it also tells us to fight for the proper justice of those wrongly accused or without a voice.

Jesus echoes this message in the Gospel. After proclaiming to his followers that he is the light in the darkness, the Pharisees comment that his testimony cannot be valid, as he spoke of himself. Jesus defends his testimony by saying that since he knows where he came from and where he's going, he can testify for himself.

It's a message we could all take with us. We can only comment on ourselves, because we know who we are. We cannot comment on others, as we don't fully know who they are. It's a hard thing to do. It's unnaturally easy to judge someone as soon as we lay eyes on them. It means we don't have to get to know them, because we've already made our opinion. We can confine ourselves to a falsified sense of knowledge about people when we really have no idea what the truth is. We fear speaking out for the oppressed because we could very easily become one.

It's hard and scary to do the right thing. But we have to do it, because it's the right thing. We need to be like Susanna, and call for God's help when in times of trouble. We need to be like Daniel, and defend those without a voice. And we need to be like Jesus, and judge ourselves and our lives before we judge others.

Gabe Lepak '19 and Ethan Schmidt '19
Freshman Pastoral Team

Tuesday, March 15: Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Nehemiah 21:4-9](#)

[Gospel: John 8:21-30](#)

In the first reading, the Jews complain to Moses about the poor supply of food and water coupled with the strain of the long journey. God punishes them by sending serpents to kill them. The people repent, and God gives the people through Moses a chance to live again. Moses put a serpent on a staff and all the bitten who looked at it lived.

When do we complain in our lives? For me it when I am stressed out because of a busy schedule, homework, and clubs. When we are stressed, we often lash out at others, but Jesus gave us a different route. Jesus showed us how to love others instead of lashing out, even if we are stressed. God also knows that we are human. If we try to be kind to others and are sorry for the mistakes we make, God will forgive us. That is what the season of Lent is all about. The season is a time to repent and celebrate God's forgiveness.

But Lent is also a time to understand who God is, or at least try to. In the gospel, Jesus speaks of going away where his followers can't find him. His followers panic and think he's considering death, but Jesus speaks to them with many contradictory statements saying they are something, but also not. In the end Jesus states "I AM." The Jews are confused, as they should be. What does he mean? "I AM?" I am what? The son of God? The Messiah? The people question him, and all Jesus says is the one who sent him, God the Father, is with him, and always has been. The crowds don't realize what he means, but their faith in Jesus grows nevertheless. We don't know exactly what Jesus is, but this Lent help us come to the understanding that maybe Jesus just is, and will always be. What is he? I like to think everything, from a forgiving God to the Messiah.

Max Kriegshauser '18 and Charlie McGroarty '18
Sophomore Pastoral Team

Wednesday, March 16: Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Daniel 3:14-20,91-92,95](#)

[Gospel: John 8:31-42](#)

Okay, I'll admit it. When I hear the names "Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego" – the subjects of today's first reading from the Book of Daniel – I first think of the Beastie Boys' song "Shadrach" from their album "Paul's Boutique." Other than comparing the three Jewish rappers from Brooklyn with their Old Testament ancestors, the song has little to do spiritually or thematically with today's reading, but I grew up listening to the Beastie Boys and it's a catchy tune, so now it's stuck in my head as I type this.

Both of today's readings deal with allegiance. King Nebuchadnezzar wants Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to worship the golden statue he has made, and the Jews speaking with Jesus in the Gospel of John allow their allegiance to Abraham to color their thinking which means that Jesus' message "has no room among" them. In the first reading the allegiance of the three to their true God saves them from the white hot furnace, whereas with the Jews in the Gospel – who believe the fact that they are descendants of Abraham is enough to set them free – are "slaves to sin." So in one case allegiance to God saves, and in another allegiance to someone other than God condemns.

What do we pledge our allegiance to? Our flag? Our school? The Redbirds? As with the Jews and their allegiance to Abraham, there is nothing wrong wanting to be loyal to a source of inspiration, but when these allegiances get in the way of where our primary allegiance belongs – with our Lord and Father – then it can be destructive. Conversely, when we choose to remain true to our God even when tempted by the "golden statues" in our lives, then we can find the strength to stand up to the greatest of trials.

Dear Lord, we long for the strength and loyalty exhibited by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and ask you to help us recognize our secondary allegiances – be they noble or "golden statues" – that keep us distant from You. Amen.

Dr. John Moran
Principal

Thursday, March 17: Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Genesis 17:3-9](#)

[Gospel: John 8:51-59](#)

In pondering these readings, I find myself asking, “What in the world was God thinking about when He entered into covenant with us? Has anything really changed since the days that Jesus walked this earth, or from the days of Abraham or even Adam?” To that end, words of an email I received recently from Robin and Steve, two ministers at a small church in The Ville neighborhood of north St. Louis, keep resurfacing inside me:

“We are in need of prayer. Our spirits are thriving but our bodies and our emotions are stretched quite thin. Last night, Bridge of Hope was robbed. Six laptop computers were stolen. Earlier in the week two were stolen. Our hearts are sick as it is most likely someone we know fairly well. We found out on Monday that a couple of dear breakfast friends were murdered on Saturday. We are heavy and seeking the Lord.”

Those words both restate the questions and offer an answer. What has changed is Christ the Light abiding in people like Robin and Steve, nourishing and inspiring them as they voluntarily displace themselves and surrender their lives to the battle between the sacred and profane. They are joyful people. Joy is not happiness. It is happiness and suffering enfolding into one. Robin and Steve are suffering, but they know the joy of Christ revealing Himself in the faces of the poor in and around their ministry.

“Before Abraham came to be, I AM.” What has changed since Adam is that the great “I AM”, continues His creation, both of man and through man. Creation is a *very* slow process. Science estimates that the Big Bang occurred 13.8 billion years ago. Modern man evolved a quarter million years ago. We started writing 5,000 years ago. We are just emerging.

In his seminal book “Orality and Literacy”, the renowned scholar and priest, Fr. Walter Ong, S.J., pioneered the study of how language shapes cultural thought processes. He describes the profound difference in the thinking of literate vs. illiterate cultures. The Incarnation occurred when it did not by chance. Christ took human form at the earliest possible moment, when man was bridging from illiteracy to literacy and potentially able to comprehend and spread the Good News that we are co-creators and not destroyers of His creation. “No one has ever seen God,” writes St. John; but through the Incarnate Jesus we see glimpses. Our still-forming brains try to process what we see, but we still wrestle so with our evolutionary past. The boundless, unconditional love of Christ brought Him to earth so that we know that He knows this, that we know that He is aware of just how difficult it is to be human at this point in evolution. A compassionate and loving Christ made this evolving world. He embraces us when we fall, asking only that we get back up and try again, being not afraid in this world that still teeters between the sacred and profane.

Stephen Hutchison ‘68

Friday, March 18: Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

[First Reading: Jeremiah 20:10-13](#)

[Gospel: John 10:31-42](#)

They picked up stones, but they did not throw them.

They wanted to protect God—this crowd more full of menace every day. They wanted, that is, to protect their ideas about God—to protect those ideas from this man, Jesus, who was saying he had come from God, that God was in him, working through him—this man who might even have been trying to say that he himself was God. They wanted to protect their God from Jesus and his God, to protect their God from God. They wanted to kill him.

But they did not kill him. They put down their stones as on that day (two chapters earlier in this same Gospel) when they brought their stones to kill a woman they looked down upon. The adulteress herself—and her too easily despicable sexual sin—are almost incidental to the story. It is him they were testing: would he join in the intoxication of self-righteous anger? Perhaps that is always the choice the mob brings to us: to stone or be struck with stones. Somehow, Jesus was always sidestepping that choice.

They picked up stones, but they did not throw them. There was something about Jesus that made people want to kill him. And there was something about him that disarmed them. Was everyone who met him conflicted in this same way—wanting to follow him, and wanting to drive him away? Are we any different? When we meet him—in the ordinary and extraordinary incarnations of each day—don't we feel both the alluring invitation to go the way he goes and, at the same time, a kind of revulsion that draws us back into the crowd, waiting for someone to cast the stone that makes it safe to cast our own?

There is no safe Jesus. We are never safe when we encounter him. Nor is he ever entirely safe from us. You know this already if you've been following the Gospel narratives that toward his passion and death. The inevitable conclusion looms. The menace of the crowd grows daily. The rocks and stones that they put down today, in two days time will sing hosannas with a crowd that raises palm fronds and spreads cloaks upon the road. Within the week, this Jesus himself will be raised up and then brought down. They'll roll a stone to seal his grave.

Mr. Terry Quinn
English Department

Saturday, March 19: Solemnity of St. Joseph, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary

[First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:4-5a,12-14a,16](#)

[Second Reading: Romans 4:13,16-18,22](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 1:16,18-21,24a](#) OR [Luke 2:41-51a](#)

In today's gospel, Joseph finds out that Mary is with child before they have lived together. While Joseph could have very easily made a scene out of it, and Mary would have been stoned for having relations with a man outside of marriage, he instead attempts to do the righteous thing by divorcing her quietly. However, God has different plans. After an angel comes to Joseph in a dream telling him that the child is the son of God, Joseph changes his mind and takes Mary for his wife. Even though he knows that he is going to face many hardships, Joseph accepts Mary into his house and raises the son of God.

On this solemnity of St. Joseph, the father of Jesus, let us take a moment to remember our fathers. When was the last time you sat down and prayed for your dad? What does your father do for you that you might not always notice? How can you exemplify the honorable characteristics of St. Joseph and of your father in your own person?

Though we most likely won't be asked to raise the son of God during our lifetime, God still presents us with challenges everyday. We pray that we can face these hardships like St. Joseph did and like our fathers do: with love, kindness, and righteousness.

Joseph Reznikov '17
Junior Pastoral Team

Sunday, March 20: Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

[Palm Procession: Luke 19:28-40](#)

[First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-7](#)

[Second Reading: Philippians 2:6-11](#)

[Gospel: Luke 22:14 - 23:56](#)

Today marks the beginning of an intense, and sometimes harrowing, spiritual journey. The Church will experience the Paschal Mystery, the very foundation of Christian faith, in an ancient and powerful tradition. In one week we will have witnessed the institution of the Eucharist, Christ's passion and death, and the Resurrection. Today's readings offer a preview of all that awaits in the coming days, but the virtue of kenosis is most prevalent.

In the first reading we find "...[the Lord] opens my ear that I may hear; and I have not rebelled, have not turned back." Like much of Isaiah's writings, this passage foretells the Messiah; Christ hears the cry of the poor and does not turn from their anguish but rather gives his back to those who beat him, his cheeks to those who plucked his beard. Similarly, in the second reading St. Paul articulates very clearly how to live a good and holy life: "he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave."

It may seem that Christ lies when he claims his yoke to be easy and his burden light. Certainly laying down one's life for another is difficult, and Christ directs us several times to be servants. Yet careful attention to today's passages reveals the result of leading such a life. We hear in Psalm 22 that even when it seems that God has abandoned us we have reason to exalt his name. St. Paul tells us that for his ultimate sacrifice, Christ is glorified above all others.

Go forth and proclaim this message with your lives, for "if [you] keep silent, the stones will cry out!"

Salvatore Vitellaro '17
Junior Pastoral Team

Monday, March 21: Monday of Holy Week

[First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-7](#)

[Gospel: John 12:1-11](#)

Imagine for a moment that you were there. Dinner is served, good friends are gathered and there is laughter and good conversation. Everyone is enjoying the meal Martha has prepared. There is even reminiscing and a palpable sense of gratitude among those gathered; after all, everyone knows that were it not for Jesus months earlier, Lazarus would not be with them.

Then Mary, Lazarus' sister, reaches for the rich, perfumed oil, and anoints the feet of Jesus, those feet which have trod long roads, carrying the joy and the challenge of the good news. The house is indeed filled with the fragrance of the oil – each person enveloped in its richness.

But then imagine this idyllic scene as it begins to unravel. Judas questions the gratuitousness of Mary's gesture and claims a terrible injustice has occurred. Jesus quietly rebukes Judas and suggests that this anointing is a foreshadowing of his imminent death and burial. The chief priests observe the crowds gathering to see Jesus and his resuscitated friend Lazarus, and they continue to craft plans for Jesus' death that have now expanded to include Lazarus as well.

Greed, tragedy and jealousy threaten to not only spoil the evening, but to plunge everything into deep darkness. It is here where we might turn our gaze to our world and begin to wonder aloud and in our hearts if hatred, indifference, arrogance and violence will have the last word....

Yet....

If we can find a quiet moment in the midst of the tumult, we will discern a faint sound, as the psalmist whispers to us: *the Lord is indeed our Light, and our salvation, whom should we fear?*

If we leave our spot at table and kneel down beside Mary, we will gaze upon Jesus, the anointed one, and we will begin to understand the deep meaning behind Isaiah's beautiful and familiar words in the first reading: "*Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased upon whom I have put my Spirit; he shall bring forth justice to the nations.*"

And we will look ahead to an uncertain future, clinging to the hope of the coming Sunday's sunrise.

Mr. Dan Finucane, '06
Campus Ministry and Theology Department

Tuesday, March 22: Tuesday of Holy Week

[First Reading: Isaiah 49:1-6](#)

[Gospel: John 13:21-33.36-38](#)

We read in John's Gospel today that Jesus was "deeply troubled" sitting at table with his closest friends in the world. Can we accept that Jesus, whom we call Lord and Savior, had an inner experience that really corresponds to those words? Or do we imagine instead that Jesus, while he was certainly worried for friends caught up in the concerns of small hearts and minds, or grieved by the plight of the poor and powerless so vulnerable to suffering and injustice, could not have actually been "troubled" about life the way we are?

We wake up some mornings and the world doesn't make sense. The anchors of our lives: our friends, our faith, a sense of purpose about our own lives, give way. We feel adrift. Disoriented. Alone.

One of Jesus' intimate, committed friends betrays him in this familiar story. He apparently saw it coming. Most of the time, we feel this kind of trouble coming before it arrives, too. But when it comes, we can't steel ourselves against the terrible pain. Do we imagine he could?

No. Jesus suffered in flesh, blood, mind and emotion just as we do. He is with us, our brother, in all of that. But clearly, this same very human being, had broken through to a new experience of life.

"You cannot follow me now, though you will follow me later."

"Will you lay down your life for me?"

How did he get there?

We're quite sure he read the passage we have from Isaiah today many times. He must have come to believe it.

"The Lord called me from my mother's womb."

"He made me a polished arrow."

"You are my servant, he said to me."

How are we to follow?

We are moving through the season of Lent. Let us practice embracing our suffering as Jesus did, with faith that the new life he promised waits for us, and the whole world.

"I will make you a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

Mr. Jim Linhares

Assistant Principal for Mission

Wednesday, March 23: Wednesday of Holy Week

[First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9A](#)

[Gospel: Matthew 26:14-25](#)

This Gospel about Judas' betrayal of Jesus is difficult for me. Each year I hear the story of Judas and I wonder how he could have done what he did. I want to keep my distance from him, thinking I would never do what Judas did. Usually, I can't imagine doing something as grave as what Judas did, selling Jesus over to the chief priests for 30 pieces of silver.

But as I reflect on this Gospel this Lent, I wonder if, in some way, my keeping my distance from Judas is my way of saying to Jesus, "Surely, it is not I". But then I hear Jesus respond to me, "You have said so." I think I need to remember that Judas represents a turning away from Christ, and that's something I have done. When I ask myself where have I betrayed Jesus, I'm asking, "where does my ego get in the way? When do I let greed take over? When am I overcome by anger that leads to vengeful thoughts and actions?"

In these ways, I do betray Jesus. However, I shouldn't be defensive, saying "surely, it is not I." Rather, I remind myself that God is merciful and forgiving, enabling me to examine my life, bring my sins and struggles to God, and work to do better.

Mr. Nick Ehlman '99
Campus Ministry and Math Department

Thursday, March 24: Mass of the Lord's Supper

[First Reading: Exodus 12:1-8,11-14](#)

[Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#)

[Gospel: John 13:1-15](#)

Several weeks ago, way back on Ash Wednesday, we were marked with ashes as a symbol of our mortality and a reminder that we are flawed human beings seeking (and needing) divine love. In a few days, we will celebrate the fulfillment of that love. With Jesus's death, he shows us the unbelievably astounding extent to which he loves us. But in order to set the context for his remarkable love, he must exemplify what it means to be one with us.

In today's Gospel reading, the Son of God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, got down on his knees to wash the feet of his friends, a deeply humbling gesture. I remember when I was young, the first time I saw our pastor model this action at my parish's Holy Thursday mass, I was baffled. My childish mind couldn't understand why we would do this during Mass and why the priest would ever voluntarily touch someone else's feet. Similarly, the disciples were probably asking why their master and teacher would do such a lowly act? It was ludicrous! But from Jesus' perspective, on the night before his death, he had one final message to teach them: through his humbling act, he acknowledges that his life was nothing more than an act of service to others. It was through this humility that he was able to truly and fully love all of us.

Throughout this season of Lent, we try to humble ourselves, whether that's through fasting, through taking on some service, or reflecting on our sinfulness and need for God's mercy. We become aware of who we are, our shortcomings, and our need for healing. Now it's time to recognize that humility is just the first step in giving of our lives to one another.

One of my favorite bands, Mumford & Sons, has a song titled "Awake My Soul." If you haven't heard it, I would suggest you give it a listen. Even if you have heard it, I suggest you give it another listen because it's beautiful! In my experience, this is a song that speaks on the ideas of human struggle, hurt, mistakes, and the ever-important concept of vulnerability. I am fascinated with this song for a multitude of reasons but lately, I have realized its applicability to Lent. My favorite line sings:

"In these bodies we will live, in these bodies we will die. And where you invest your love, you invest your life."

Our lives are limited and that's scary. But on this Holy Thursday evening, Jesus models for us where we find fulfillment: uniting ourselves in deep connection with each other. Vulnerability is a quality that I struggle to possess, along with a lot of people. Completely opening myself up to another person and giving all of myself to them is frightening. But through the washing of the feet and throughout his whole life example, Jesus showed us how that humility and vulnerability is quintessential. Only through recognizing our limitations, how we need each other, and how we must give of ourselves, can we truly begin to love. And where you invest your love, you invest your life.

Mr. Stephen Deves '11

Alumni Service Corps, Campus Ministry, Math Department

Friday, March 25: Good Friday of the Lord's Passion

[First Reading: Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12](#)

[Second Reading: Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9](#)

[Gospel: John 18:1 - 19:42](#)

What makes Good Friday so “good?” It is a day that seems so focused on Jesus’ suffering and death. We often hear that by dying on the cross, Jesus made the “ultimate sacrifice,” which is true, but perhaps we can look at his death as an expression of “ultimate love.” True love always involves some degree of dying. We see this in characters from some of literature’s greatest love stories: Romeo & Juliet, Cleopatra & Marc Antony, *Titanic*’s Jack & Rose. When a person gets married, they are called to surrender their own desires and selfishness for the love of their spouse. When a person has a child, they are called to give up parts of their own life for the life and love of their child. Those who care for others through long-term illness or addiction put their personal lives on hold for the love of another. Risking death, as Jesus did, is the greatest form of love. If we can see the hope and love in Jesus’ death, then perhaps we can better understand why Good Friday is actually “good.”

I have piercing memories of Friday, April 9, 1993. My family were parishioners of St. Joseph parish in Manchester. I was a couple months shy of finishing my freshman year at Nerinx. Since my younger siblings and I were off of school that day, my mom suggested that we go to the Good Friday “LifeTeen” service at 3:00pm. “LifeTeen” was a brand new concept at St. Joseph at that time. To my knowledge, there were just a couple of seventh and eighth graders gathering once a week after Mass.

St. Joseph church is quite large, and I remember that on this particular day there was a rather sparse congregation. We sat in our regular pew, silently waiting for the pastor to begin. However, rather than a piano or organ playing, recorded instrumental music began and eight young teens slowly processed down the center aisle in albs, carrying a long white cloth, no priest in sight. I was a skeptical 15 years old, but before I knew it, I was entranced by an incredible interpretation of the Passion, beginning with the Last Supper and ending with Jesus laid in a tomb. There were so many striking elements in this rendition that I remember holding my breath at points, so taken with how very real it felt.

First, there was no priest present. The entire passion was expressed through eight teenagers manipulating a giant white cloth. One of these young men was a former classmate and friend of mine, and I was blown away by his maturity in his portrayal of Jesus. Second, I remember feeling like I had never understood the story of Jesus’s death so clearly as I did that day. I also felt great admiration for the time, study, and commitment these teens must have dedicated to accomplish such a beautiful interpretation of the passion. They reenacted with such conviction.

For the first time ever, my siblings and I had a very animated conversation on the car ride home from church. Not just because we considered ourselves veteran theatre buffs but because we were so taken by the beauty and very genuineness of the portrayal.

Mrs. Simonie Anzalone
Campus Ministry and Fine Arts Department

Saturday, March 26: Holy Saturday At the Easter Vigil in the Holy Night of Easter

[Readings for the Holy Saturday Liturgy](#)

If you have not been to tonight's liturgy, you really should consider trying it out. It is an amazing liturgy, filled with symbolism.

Normally, you'd begin tonight's liturgy by the entrance of the church. There, a fire is made and the Paschal Candle, which represents Christ, is lit. The Paschal Candle is also used at Baptism and Confirmation to represent the light that Christ brings to our lives. There's something very powerful about entering a darkened church, and appreciating how fragile darkness is. All it takes is a single lit candle to illuminate a space. Everyone in the church is provided with a candle, and slowly the flame of Christ is passed around: first to the people around the Paschal Candle, then to those around them, and slowly but surely the entire church is filled with light. What a powerful image for our world.

Too often we hear about the darkness in the news, in political campaigns, and in history books. Everyone likes to point to the tree that has fallen, missing those that are still standing. The truth is that the light of God's love and hope is like those candles, wherever Christians and people of good will take a stand on the side of Love. A child playing with her father, friends sharing a laugh, someone building a house for a stranger on a service trip, a SLUH student volunteering his time to help children with learning disabilities in an understaffed school, another sitting down and talking with an old grandfather that has no one to talk to. These are the many candles that light up our world with the light of Christ. This is what we celebrate tonight.

Fr. Pepe Ruiz, S.J.
Campus Ministry, Theology Department

Sunday, March 27: The Resurrection of the Lord: The Mass of Easter Day

First Reading: [Acts 10:34a,37-43](#)

Second Reading: [Colossians 3:1-4](#) OR [1 Corinthians 5:6b-8](#)

Gospel: [John 20:1-9](#)

As remarkable as Christ's triumph over death truly is, do we consider that the Christian belief in the Resurrection is based primarily on things unseen?

John the Evangelist recounts to us that Mary of Magdala, our first responder in faith, arrives on the scene first. Seeing the stone rolled away, she leaves to alert Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple of her most unexpected discovery. At this point, I like to imagine Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple cartoonishly running to the tomb. Once they arrive, each comes to a screeching halt, temporarily paralyzed to peek into the innermost part of the tomb. As Scripture tells us, the Beloved Disciple summons the courage to look into the darkness. He is immediately awestruck by the reality of the void he encounters in the tomb. From the moment he and the empty tomb caught each other's gaze, faith and belief fell upon him like a bone-soaking rain.

This is not just the story of his faith; this is our own story. It is a faith based on the notion that Jesus was no longer there. There are no eyewitness accounts of Jesus leaving the tomb. Perhaps for the first time since the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus was left alone after he was dressed in the burial garment and laid to rest in the Arimeatanean tomb. Surely, all must have thought, there is no more to this man's story. Yet, from this stone-cold solitude emerges our very salvation. So on this great feast, as the universal church proclaims, "Jesus Christ is risen today," two other songs grip my imagination. The first, a liturgical classic:

"Eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him." (*1 Corinthians 2:9*)

The power of divine love is so immense that it transcends the realm of fathomable possibility. No one could have imagined an empty tomb at dawn. Likewise, there is more yet to come, far beyond our wildest dreams. Our story is not yet complete. The second, a modern Christian anthem:

"A battle in the grave, the war on death was waged... The ground began to shake, the stone was rolled away, His perfect love could not be overcome." ("Forever," written by Kari Jobe & Brian Johnson)

While the world slept, Jesus battled. His love is so great that not even death could hold it back. And so, today, I invite you to find a spot to take in the song linked below. Find a quiet place. Put in some headphones. Turn up the volume. It's long, but its power is a fitting (though, of course, trivial in comparison) analogy to the power of this feast. It gave me chills.

I pray that we may all feel the warmth of Christ's presence, hope, and love throughout the Easter season. He is alive.

Mr. Brian Gilmore '02
Campus Ministry and Theology Department