


40 Days of Renewal

A dramatic scene from inside a tomb, looking out through a large opening. The interior is dark and textured with rough stone walls. Outside, a bright, hazy light illuminates a landscape. In the distance, three crosses are visible on a hill, set against a backdrop of a cloudy sky. The overall mood is one of hope and renewal.

2022 Redemptorist
Lenten Reflections

Prayer to Our Mother of Perpetual Help



O Mother of Perpetual Help!

Grant that I may ever invoke thy most powerful name, which is the safeguard of the living and the salvation of the dying.

O purest Mary, O sweetest Mary,
let thy name henceforth be ever on my lips.

Delay not, O Blessed Lady, to help me whenever I call on thee,
for, in all my temptations, in all my needs,
I shall never cease to call on thee,
ever repeating thy sacred name, Mary, Mary.

O what consolation, what sweetness, what confidence,
what emotion fill my soul when I utter
thy sacred name or even only think of thee.

I thank God for having given thee, for my good,
so sweet, so powerful, so lovely a name.

But I will not be content with merely uttering thy name:
let my love for thee prompt me ever to hail thee,
Mother of Perpetual Help.

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2022 Redemptorist
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Who are the Redemptorists?

St. Alphonsus Liguori founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, “The Redemptorists,” in 1732. He dedicated himself completely to serving the poor and most abandoned.

Today we Redemptorists continue our ministry to the poor and most abandoned in inner cities, hospitals, and prisons. We preach parish missions, staff parishes, promote devotion to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, and participate in many evangelization activities through traditional and new media.

Following in the footsteps of St. Alphonsus Liguori and 18 other confreres who have been canonized or beatified, approximately 4,600 Redemptorists serve in over 80 countries throughout the world.

As Redemptorists, we have a special devotion to the crib of Bethlehem, the cross of Calvary, the Eucharist, and Mary, the Mother of God – the four pillars of Alphonsus’ Spirituality. As we enter into the Lenten season, let us approach the cross of Calvary with humility and have it remain at the center of our hearts, souls, and minds this liturgical season.

Will you help us serve God’s people with a gift today? Please visit redemptorists.net/giving/ to give via our secure online page or mail your gift to the following address:

Redemptorist Office of Mission Advancement
Holy Redeemer Provincial Residence
3112 Seventh St. NE
Washington, DC 20017-1411

May God bless you!



40 Days of Renewal

The purpose of Lent is not to make us feel disheartened or uncomfortable in the way we live out our faith, but it is a call to self-examination and for taking a fresh look at our attitude and behavior towards others. Often in life we can, little by little, become self-centered and lapse into indifference to others.

We are reminded that the season of Lent has been likened to a retreat or parish mission. It is a time of spiritual reflection as we follow the journey of Christ to Jerusalem where He will suffer and die. It invites us to an inner change of heart, a turning to God, and an opportunity to walk in a new direction – a direction that postures our heart towards Christ and towards others.

This 2022 Lenten Reflection journal speaks of the power of prayer and its essential place in our Lenten exercises. The daily reflections offered by the Redemptorists are intended to help you reflect on the significance of Christ's journey to the cross so that together we may each take up our cross and follow Him.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, as we embark on our Lenten journey, let us be cheerful and of good heart. Let us thank God for this time of grace and for the opportunity to grow spiritually ourselves, while being conscious of others who may need our help.

Our heavenly Father wants only what is best for us, and He has given us His only Son as proof of that. Let us keep our gaze fixed on Christ this Lent, both as a Church and as individual baptized Catholics, for in His own marvelous words . . . He is the way, the truth, and the life.

With an assurance of my prayers through this Lent and my blessing,

Fr. Paul Borowski, C.Ss.R.

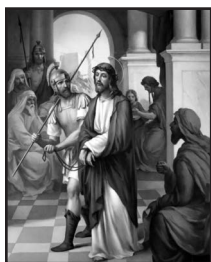
Very Rev. Paul Borowski, C.Ss.R.
Provincial Superior
Redemptorists of Baltimore



THE WAY OF THE CROSS

By St. Alphonsus Liguori

The Way of the Cross leads us on a spiritual pilgrimage through contemplation of the Passion of Christ. Consider His great love for us and the glory of the perfect offering He made in the work of our redemption. The Way of the Cross, as a devotion, has its origin in the faithful's retracing of Christ's steps in the City of Jerusalem. The following stations are taken from the writing of Saint Alphonsus Liguori.



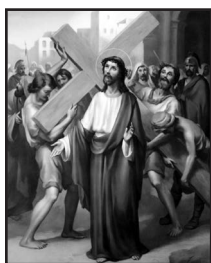
First Station:

Pilate Condemns Jesus to Die

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Consider how Jesus Christ, after being scourged and crowned with thorns, was unjustly condemned by Pilate to die on the cross.



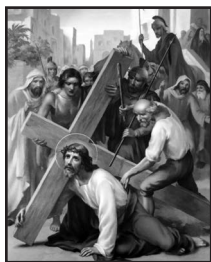
Second Station:

Jesus Accepts His Cross

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Consider Jesus as He walked this road with the cross on His shoulders, thinking of us, and offering to His Father in our behalf, the death He was about to suffer.



Third Station:

Jesus Falls the First Time

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Consider the first fall of Jesus. Loss of blood from the scourging and crowning with thorns had so weakened Him that He could hardly walk; and yet He had to carry that great load upon His shoulders. As the soldiers struck Him cruelly, He fell several times under the heavy cross.

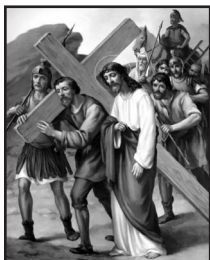


Fourth Station:
Jesus Meets His Mother

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Consider how the Son met his Mother on His way to Calvary. Jesus and Mary gazed at each other and their looks became as so many arrows to wound those hearts which loved each other so tenderly.



Fifth Station:
Simon Helps Jesus Carry the Cross

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Consider how weak and weary Jesus was. At each step He was at the point of expiring. Fearing that He would die on the way when they wished Him to die the infamous death of the cross, they forced Simon of Cyrene to help carry the cross after Our Lord.



Sixth Station:
Veronica Offers Her Veil to Jesus

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Consider the compassion of the holy woman, Veronica. Seeing Jesus in such distress, His face bathed in sweat and blood, she presented Him with her veil. Jesus wiped His face, and left upon the cloth the image of his sacred countenance.



Seventh Station:
Jesus Falls the Second Time

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

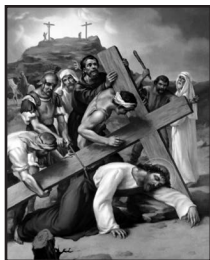
Consider how the second fall of Jesus under His cross renews the pain in all the wounds of the head and members of our afflicted Lord.



Eighth Station: ***Jesus Speaks to the Women***

*V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.*

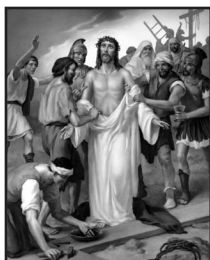
Consider how the women wept with compassion seeing Jesus so distressed and dripping with blood as He walked along. Jesus said to them, “Weep not so much for Me, but rather for your children.”



Ninth Station: ***Jesus Falls the Third Time***

*V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.*

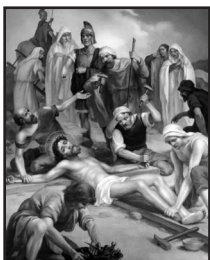
Consider how Jesus Christ fell for the third time. He was extremely weak and the cruelty of His executioners was excessive; they tried to hasten His steps though He hardly had strength to move.



Tenth Station: ***Jesus is Stripped of His Garments***

*V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.*

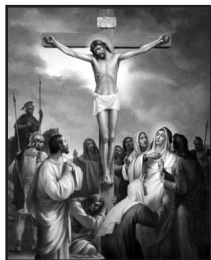
Consider how Jesus was violently stripped of His clothes by His executioners. The inner garments adhered to His lacerated flesh and the soldiers tore them off so roughly that the skin came with them. Have pity for your Savior so cruelly treated.



Eleventh Station: ***Jesus is Nailed to the Cross***

*V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.
R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.*

Consider Jesus, thrown down upon the cross. He stretched out His arms and offered to His eternal Father the sacrifice of His life for our salvation. They nailed His hands and feet, and then, raising the cross, left Him to die in anguish.



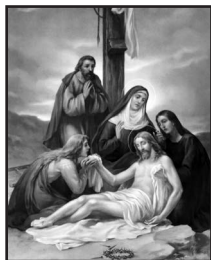
Twelfth Station:

Jesus Dies Upon the Cross

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Consider how your Jesus, after three hours of agony on the cross, is finally overwhelmed with suffering and, abandoning Himself to the weight of His body, bows His head and dies.



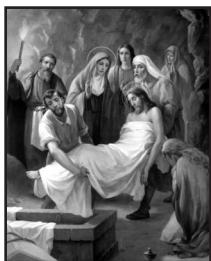
Thirteenth Station:

Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Consider how, after Our Lord had died, He was taken down from the cross by two of His disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, and placed in the arms of His afflicted Mother. She received Him with unutterable tenderness and pressed Him close to her bosom.



Fourteenth Station:

Jesus is Placed in the Sepulcher

V. We adore You, O Christ, and we praise You.

R. Because, by Your holy cross, You have redeemed the world.

Consider how the disciples carried the body of Jesus to its burial, while His holy Mother went with them and arranged it in the sepulcher with her own hands. They then closed the tomb and all departed.

March 2

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:12-13a; Psalm 51; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18

Paul Borowski, C.Ss.R.

Once again we start off the season of Lent by hearing these familiar words from the Book of Joel: “Even now, says the LORD, return to me with your whole heart, with fasting, and weeping, and mourning; Rend your hearts, not your garments, and return to the LORD, your God,” (Joel 2: 12-13a). How many times have we started our Lenten pilgrimage by saying, “Yes, this is the year I return to the Lord. Yes, this time I will have a good Lent that will have me in a better relationship with the Lord when Easter Sunday rolls around.” Yet, how often by the first Sunday of Lent are we picking ourselves up from broken promises?

Lent is a marathon race and not a sprint. If I want to learn how to play a musical instrument like the cello, I don’t become like Yo-Yo Ma after one day of practice. To become a master cellist, I need to practice each and every day, and on those days I make a few mistakes I don’t throw it all away. I come back the next day and pick up the cello and begin anew.

That’s the way we “master” becoming disciples of the Redeemer. Each and every day we practice a little more how to pray, how to fast, and how to freely give alms. It’s a slow, steady pace that wins the race. Today we begin our annual journey of Lent, a time to “return to the Lord.” We’ll make some progress this year and we’ll have some setbacks. On February 22, 2023 (Ash Wednesday next year) we will once again hear these same words from the Prophet Joel. This Lent don’t try to change overnight or give up when you stumble and fall but stand up, dust yourself off, and keep trying. I doubt that Yo-Yo Ma became the world-famous musician he is over night. Have a Blessed Lent this year!



March 3

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1; Luke 9:22-25

Robert Wojtek, C.Ss.R.

Year after year, around this time of year, we celebrate Ash Wednesday and the beginning of the Lenten season. Year after year, folks flock to receive their ashes and make their promises to God and their resolutions to themselves. We hear: “I am giving up desserts,” or “I will stop smoking,” or “I will not have any alcohol.” Sometimes folks are faithful; other times that’s not the case.

What our readings tell us today is that we should keep our focus on what is important. Whatever sacrifice we make must be linked in a very real way to the sacrifice of Jesus, Who was insulted, rejected, and killed as He made the supreme sacrifice of His life for our salvation.

There is clarity about today that invites us to look at whatever we consider important in this world and to see it in the light of eternity – even our own lives. Following Jesus really is a matter of life or death. Choose life, then, that you may live.

March 4

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:1-9a; Psalm 51; Matthew 9:14-15

Jim McCabe, C.Ss.R.

Catholics from age 18 up through their 59th birthday are required to fast, unless they have a serious reason for not doing so. According to Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Constitution Paenitemini, "The law of fasting allows only one full meal a day but does not prohibit taking some food in the morning and evening, observing as far as quantity and quality are concerned approved local custom," (Paenitemini, ch. III., III., 2). Catholics who have reached age 14 are required to abstain from flesh meat on Ash Wednesday and all Fridays during Lent.

As stated above in the regulations regarding fasting and abstinence during Lent, denying ourselves is important but if we don't love and follow the resurrected Christ, fasting and abstinence can be empty rituals.

When we observe these Lenten rituals, we are encouraged and reminded that Jesus died and rose from the dead for our salvation and redemption. Our Lenten rituals of fasting and abstinence hopefully lead us to imitate the resurrected Jesus more closely by bringing life to the world. Do we bring more mercy? Do we bring more hope? Do we bring more compassion? Do we bring more forgiveness?

March 5

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Isaiah 58:9b-14; Psalm 86; Luke 5:27-32

Mark Owen, C.Ss.R.

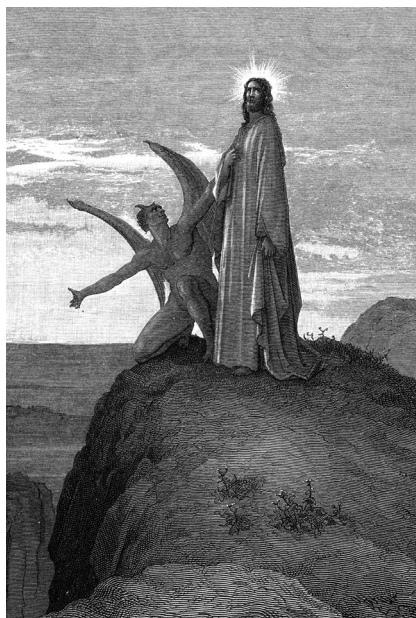
The Prophet Isaiah holds out the promise that our lives can be like a watered garden! I remember visiting the watered gardens in the Alhambra Palace, Granada, Spain. An awesome place. Long peaceful oases of green, surrounded by walls or buildings, with canals and fountains running down the center making a pleasant sound as they flow. Watered gardens were a feature of homes in the ancient Middle East, and Isaiah may well have visited several. I cannot think of a better metaphor for a peaceful and happy life! How do we achieve this? The prophet says only if we remove oppression and malice from our midst; if we give bread to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted. Here we must understand “you” in the plural. The transformation we are called to in the Lenten season must begin with us, but it must not stop there. In the Gospel Jesus says it is not the well but the sick that need a physician! We are called to heal ourselves and then to become physicians for the healing of the sicknesses of our society and our world. What am I doing to continue the healing work of Jesus the Physician?

March 6

First Sunday of Lent

Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Psalm 91; Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13

Dennis J. Billy, C.Ss.R.



In today's Gospel, the Spirit of God leads Jesus into the desert for forty days and forty nights. This happens immediately after his baptism by John in the Jordan, when the Spirit descends upon Him in the form of a dove. This same Spirit drives Him into the desert among the wild beasts for forty days and forty nights to be tempted by Satan and ministered to by angels. His time in the desert is meant to ready Him for his public ministry.

Jesus' message is simple and straightforward: "This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the Gospel." It is in the desert that this message crystalizes in His mind. Only after He overcomes every sort of temptation thrown at Him by Satan is He able to see with clarity the message His Father in heaven is asking Him to preach. The kingdom of God is at hand because Jesus, the beloved Son of God, is in our midst. During this season of Lent, the Church asks us to enter the desert of our souls to ready ourselves to celebrate together the great mysteries of the coming Easter Triduum.

March 7

Monday of the First Week of Lent

Leviticus 19:1-2, 11-18; Psalm 19; Matthew 25:31-46

Thomas Travers, C.Ss.R.

Today's readings tell us what we should not do as good people and what we should do. The first reading from Leviticus tells us what we should not do. *"You shall not steal, nor lie, nor speak falsely, nor swear using my name in vain, nor defraud or rob others, nor curse the deaf, nor judge unjustly, nor hate, nor take revenge, etc."*

The Gospel from Matthew is the scene of the Last Judgment, and it tells us what we should do as Jesus' followers. *"Feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; welcome the stranger; clothe the naked; care for sick; visit the incarcerated."*

It is interesting that nothing is said to the Jews about the number of prayers recited, nor the sacrifices that are offered in the temple, nor the pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Not that these external acts of piety did not matter. They did! But what was more important was how they treated their neighbor because Jesus says that how we treat our neighbor is how we treat our God. *"Whatsoever you do to the least of my creatures, you do unto me."* And we treat God with love always because we are grateful. *"What return can I make to the Lord for all the good he has done to me?"* (Psalm 116:12)

March 8

Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 34; Matthew 6:7-15

Gerard H. Chylko, C.Ss.R.

“Our Father who art in heaven...” (Matthew 6:9)

The Grand Canyon is an outstanding example of stratified—or layered—rock. By studying its layers, geologists have learned much about the canyon and its history. Each layer contains a wealth of information, including a few surprises. For example, did you know that the canyon was once covered by shallow seas, once lush with vegetation, and even once flowing with lava?

Here’s another surprise. The canyon can be a good image for thinking about the Lord’s Prayer. Think about this: As we pray through the Our Father, we are exploring “layers” of revelation about who God is and how He wants us to relate to Him. Each turn of phrase, each verse, can tell us something valuable—and there are a few surprises along the way, too.

The very first discovery we make is that God is our Father. We are His children, near to His heart. While this may not be news for us, to those who were hearing Jesus teach about prayer, “Our Father” was an unusual beginning. The Hebrew Scriptures did not often describe God as “Father.” They held Him in such awe, in fact, that they rarely spoke His name.

As we pray, “Your kingdom come,” we learn that God is a king. What’s more, we recognize that He is inviting us to work alongside Him in building His kingdom. So, rather than being an absolute monarch, He welcomes collaborators.

We also find that God is a generous provider. He gives us “our daily bread,” the Eucharist, and every other good thing in our lives. When we confess our sins, He lavishes mercy upon us. And He gives us the strength to withstand trials and temptations.

So, take a few moments today to explore the Our Father, layer by layer. Pray through it slowly. Take your time and pause if a word or phrase catches your attention. It may help to repeat that phrase a few times. Let the words sink into your heart. And take note if you sense peace or joy welling up within you. Just as water flows through the canyon, the Holy Spirit flows into us when we pray this prayer!

We can pray: *“Father, thank you for revealing yourself to me. Open my eyes to your wonders as I turn to you in prayer today.”*

March 9

Wednesday of the First Week in Lent

Jonah 3:1-10; Psalm 51; Luke 11:29-32

John Collins, C.Ss.R.

Today's Lenten readings invite us to consider the two essential components on our path to redemption: repentance from sin and entrusting ourselves and our lives to Jesus.

The prophet Jonah calls the people of Nineveh "to turn from their evil ways" and to call "loudly" to God lest they and the city be destroyed. They respond to Jonah's call by fasting, putting on sackcloth, and by turning away from evil and violence in their actions and in their attitudes. God does not spurn the humbled, contrite hearts of the Ninevites. Their repentance meets God's mercy, God's forgiveness, and the relenting of any further punishment or anguish.

Lent summons us to return to God with our whole hearts and to bring our personal and communal sin – 'our evil and violence' – to the mercy of Jesus. Greater than the wisdom of Solomon and more powerful than the preaching of Jonah is the saving love of Jesus Who is gracious and merciful. His life, death, and resurrection are the well-spring of our freedom from the destruction of sin and death and our way into the experience of eternal life and everlasting love – for time and eternity.

A week into the 40 days of Lent, today's invitation remains "repent and believe the good news!"

March 10

Thursday of the First Week of Lent

Esther C:12, 14-16, 23-25; Psalm 138; Matthew 7:7-12

Raymond Collins, C.Ss.R.

I once read a child's earnest prayer that goes this way: "Dear God, I need you to make my mom not allergic to cats. I really want a cat, and I really don't want to ask my mom to move out."

We can smile at the sincerity and intention of the young person's prayer, but we recognize that "ask and you shall receive" may not be the same guarantee we thought we had as children. So, is it that simple or not? Ask and you shall receive?

The scriptures that we read for this Lenten day provide some leads for us. In our first reading Esther prays and prays well. I say it that way because she not only prays for herself, but for all her people. She asks the Lord to give her the words to speak to the king, so that his hatred turns toward the enemy, and not toward her own people. She asked and did receive from the Lord.

Our brief Gospel for this day tells us to pray with 'attitude' that is, with an attitude of confidence and hope. We approach this God in prayer because we believe. We approach this God in prayer because we believe in the response that God gives, to be in our best interest.

C.S. Lewis once wrote: "If God had granted all the silly prayers I had made in my life, where should I be now?"



On this Lenten day, then, let us pray with attitude, and for one another!

March 11

Friday of the First Week of Lent

Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130; Matthew 5:20-26

Andrew Costello, C.Ss.R.

“Not fair! Not fair!”

That’s the title of my thoughts for today!

How many times have we said that in our life?

We go to our favorite restaurant. The line is long. We see a couple go past us – go right up to front of the line. We see them slip some green from their wallet and they slip right in.

“Not fair! Not fair!”

We walk through life with expectations that the game will be played fair.

We say that to God!

Cancer knocks on the door. We say, “Not fair, God!”

As we age, we get thoughts of death. We wonder what God will be like to us when we are on the line – moving forward to meet him – after we die.

Surprise! We slip right in. We find out Jesus meant what he said about forgiveness. We’re forgiven everything. We’re given a mansion. Our address is: 70 x 7.

Nobody says, “Not fair! Not fair!”

But we say it about ourselves. We realize we didn’t do our best in life. We broke every part of Matthew’s 25:31-46 list of “Do’s”. We didn’t feed the hungry or thirsty enough. We didn’t visit the sick or forgive the nasty. We have a long list of “did nots.”

There we are in one of our first moments after we die. We’re all alone. We look in the mirror and say: “Not fair! Not fair! I got away with so much.”

And then we hear a knock on our mansion door. It’s God, “Hey, heaven is not an all-alone experience. So, hurry up out of where you are and let’s start to enjoy the eternal banquet together.”

March 12

Saturday of the First Week of Lent

Deuteronomy 26:16-19; Psalm 119; Matthew 5:43-48

Blas Cáceres, C.Ss.R.

The Word of Jesus today challenges us tremendously: “We must love our enemies and be perfect, as is our Heavenly Father.” This Gospel passage tells us something very important about God: Who treats everyone in the same way, whether they are friends or enemies. God loves us all.

We are also called to love everyone. We cannot love only those who love us, but also love those we do not like or who do not like us. Jesus gave us the example: “I forgive those who are crucifying me.”

Lent is a propitious time to see if we are living love or not, meditating on the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus. If the example that Jesus left us becomes visible in our own life, we can't fall into a false conception of the Gospel. We can't affirm that we are people capable of making all sacrifices, fasts, and deprivations, and on the other hand carry a heart full of resentment. That would be a martyrdom without glory. St. Paul therefore said: “I can throw my body into the fire, but if I don't have love, it's no use to me.”

Sacred Scripture makes it very clear: The path of hatred leads to death. Love leads us to life and forgiveness makes us free. Let's live love. It is the path of perfection.

March 13

Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17—4:1; Luke 9:28b-36

Philip Dabney, C.Ss.R.

I had a wonderful English professor early in my religious formation who told me that I was a charter member of the *Silver-lining and Happy-ending Society*. I was a hopeless Romantic. I still am at times, but I'm not alone. I suspect there are people today who are searching for a “*feel-good*” religion or church. Peter had such an idea; build three tents there and let the rest of the world go by.



The Transfiguration as presented by Luke is not a “*feel-good*” experience. The call of God to listen to Jesus, the Beloved, is a call to collapse the tents of dreams, let the cloud of glory lift, allow Jesus to become un-dazzling, and head back down the hill heading for Jerusalem. Of course, we would love taking the Jerusalem bypass and enjoy the silver-lined happy ending. And certainly there are good feelings in following Jesus. There are those moments of intimate communion

perhaps. But the true joy comes when we walk with Him through our own Jerusalems and this is our fidelity, our act of being made “whole”.

The transfigured Lord is a graced reminder for us today that God's covenant is forever. There are a lot of false promises out there today, everything from eternal youth to the rite to die however and wherever we choose. Imaginary spectacles that don't last! And some of these, we will fall for. But let's remember to come down the mountain with the Lord as He takes up His cross and goes to Jerusalem. What better promise could we hope to have?

March 14

Monday of the Second Week in Lent

Daniel 9:4b-10; Psalm 79; Luke 6:36-38

Royce Thomas, C.Ss.R.

The initial response to these instructions of Jesus in Luke chapter 6 may be, “How can I do this? It seems impossible.” Yet Jesus is teaching some of the fundamental principles of Christianity, principles we are to follow and observe. The answer to the initial question is found in the text, “just as your Father is.” Genesis 1:27 tells us that we are created in the image and likeness of God. Therefore, we are not rendered helpless or acting outside of our created potential. On the contrary, following these principles, striving to adhere to the teaching of Jesus in this text is to live more authentically who we were made to be.

Suppose we were to take a deep plunge into the ramifications of following the teaching of Jesus, we will notice that we are transformed by these actions. In that case, we also observe that embracing each principle in our lives leads to a closer union with the Father.

Admittedly, following these principles sometimes takes time, energy, and patience. It will require levels of maturity, humanly and spiritually, but it is not impossible. We do have the capacity, and we do possess the necessary graces to act like the Father and radiate His love in this world. The contention we are left with lies in the choice we must make at each opportunity to reflect this inherent part of ourselves—to choose at each moment to be who we were created to be.

March 15

Feast Day of St. Clement Mary Hofbauer

1 Corinthians 3:6-11; Psalm 117; Luke 10:1-9

Peter Hill, C.Ss.R.

The Gospel today challenges us to, “practice what you preach.” Jesus says to the crowd, the disciples, and to us, that we should be men and women whose words and actions match up. Unlike the Scribes and Pharisees, we should not seek attention for our works. Like Jesus, we are to be humble people of service simply doing the Father’s will.



Our Saint today embodies Jesus’ teaching in today’s Gospel. St. Clement was fond of singing daily, “Everything for the glory of my God, to increase the praise and honor of God, at work and at rest.”

St. Clement was born in Tasswitz, Moravia (now the Czech Republic) on December 26, 1751. He first worked as an apprentice baker and later joined the Redemptorists in 1785.

St. Clement established numerous houses in Europe and is considered the second founder of the Congregation. He worked tirelessly building up the faith especially among the young and the poor. St. Clement died in Vienna on March 15, 1820.

St. Clement said, “The union of your will with the divine will is more pleasing to God than fasting and other mortifications of the flesh.” May this season of Lent find us seeking this union.

March 16

Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent

Jeremiah 18:18-20; Psalm 31; Matthew 20:17-28

Karl E. Esker, C.Ss.R.

Why so much intrigue? In our readings today the nobles of Judah are plotting to kill the prophet Jeremiah, the chief priests and the scribes are plotting to kill Jesus, and the disciples James and John are plotting to grab the highest positions in Jesus' kingdom for themselves. We plot when we want to keep something or acquire something for ourselves that really isn't ours.

Jesus wants to turn such self-centeredness around: "Can you drink the chalice that I am going to drink?" And "whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant." Jesus was confident that James, John, and the others would learn by His example.

While there are many who try to get their way by tyrannizing others, so many more give of their time and resources to help the less fortunate in our society and in our world. These are the saints of today and throughout history that we must look to, as we struggle to follow Jesus, who "did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Jesus, help me to drink your chalice so that I may also share your life in glory.

March 17

Feast of St. Patrick

Jeremiah 17:5-10, Psalm 1; Luke 16:19-31

John McGowan, C.Ss.R.

Today Lent takes a back seat to St. Patrick whose feast we celebrate today. St. Patrick is smothered with all kinds of legends and Irish paraphernalia.

Yet St. Patrick, the fourth century missionary bishop, can teach us many lessons applicable to our time and place.

1. Patrick was a **MISSIONARY** who brought Christ and the Gospel to pagan tribes. We are to be missionaries – bearers of Christ to our secular age.
2. **Christ** was Patrick's breastplate – his shield – his flak jacket. We need Christ as our armor and protector as well.
3. Patrick saw the presence of **God in all creation**. The world is good. We need to believe that Grace is everywhere.
4. Patrick preached **against slavery**. We need to release those we have chained and enslaved by our grudges, feuds, prejudices, and unforgiveness.
5. Patrick **welcomed** everyone. We too need to be a welcoming Church, welcoming immigrants, the poor, those different than ourselves.
6. Finally, Patrick is always pictured, statued and imaged in a stance of **blessing**. We need to be a people who bless – “benedicere” – to say well of and to others.

St. Patrick – the slave – the shepherd – the pray-er – the priest – the bishop – the missionary – the believer. A saint for our times. *St. Patrick, pray for us.*



March 18

Friday of the Second Week of Lent

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28a; Psalm 105; Matthew 21:33-46

Thomas Siconolfi, C.Ss.R.

Change the venue in today's readings from the desert, from the vineyard to a business office, parish hall, or kitchen. Or for that matter, change it to a prehistoric cave, a throne room, a saloon. You find humans, you find envy and greed.

These urges lurk in our psyche, as in Joseph's brothers, and the tenants eager to grab the land. Sure, we are not guilty of murder or selling slaves, but jealous of a coworker, or coveting a sister's things. We minimize these impulses eating our integrity.

Christ tells us that evil is cunning, a manipulating force whose grip holds tight, blinding us to its harshness.

Lent is fire to recognize deadly sins, to repent, admit, atone. A time to be more aware of His Grace enrapturing us, His sons and daughters.

In these somber days with broadcast fears and political confusion, its sicknesses and conflicts, the world is dark. But we know the marvels the Lord has done for us, and penetrated by the Light of Holy Spirit, profess our faith with all creation, groaning for transformation in Christ.

March 19

Solemnity of St. Joseph, Spouse of Blessed Virgin Mary

2 Samuel 7:4-5a, 12-14a, 16; Psalm 89; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22;

Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a

Joseph Tizio, C.Ss.R.

Back in 1952 there was a now famous John Wayne movie entitled “The Quiet Man,” that would be an excellent title to describe St. Joseph—he is the quiet man of Scripture. Remarkably, there is not a single word ever spoken by Joseph. All we really know is what Matthew tells us: Joseph was an “upright man,” a good man who tried to do the right thing. When I was a novice, I remember reading a pamphlet with the title “Silence, the Mother



Tongue of Sanctity.” Silence is the language of the saints, it was in silent prayer, discernment, and listening that the saints grew in intimacy with God and received the strength to fulfill God’s call in their lives. Joseph, the quiet man, was attentive to God’s voice because of his silence. It was in the silence of the night that Joseph heard God’s voice and without question courageously responded to God’s call.

In our prayer God does not expect many words from us, simply that we silently be attentive to His voice, so attentive that we can hear Him even in our dreams.

March 20

Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15; Psalm 103; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9

James Gilmour, C.Ss.R.

What do you call God when you pray? ... Think for a moment. ... Father. Jesus. Lord. Creator. Savior. Holy Spirit. Living God. Loving God.

What do you feel when you speak with God in prayer? ... Think, again ... Peaceful, awed, fearful, hopeful, loved, called, repentant.

Psalm 103 tells us what God is like so we can speak to God in prayer:

*Merciful and gracious is the Lord,
slow to anger, abounding in mercy.
As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he removed our sins from us.*

What does it feel like to know God is merciful, slow to anger, abounding in kindness?

Today's Word invites us to repentance as we journey through Lent. We journey together as God's People. But each of us has our own story. The call to repentance is for each one of us.

They tell the story of a first century rabbi who would tell his disciples: "Repent the day before you die." They asked him: "How can anyone know when he or she will die? It could be any day. It could be tomorrow, next week, next year!" The rabbi repeated: "Then, repent the day before you die."

We have only Lent 2022 to repent and be converted. Better not wait for Lent 2023.

March 21

Monday of the Third Week of Lent

2 Kings 5:1-15; Psalm 42, 43; Luke 4:24-30

John Harrison, C.Ss.R.

What in the world was the hullabaloo all about in today's Gospel? It certainly doesn't seem to warrant getting all excited according to our American sensibilities. But to the Israelite mentality, it certainly was. Jesus was stepping all over their heritage. They had the idea that they were better than anyone else in the world. After all, God had chosen them to be His people. Now, here was this young upstart, Jesus, claiming that Gentiles were equal or even better. These were fighting words. They had to defend their national pride.

They grabbed Him, hustled Him out of town to the cliff overlooking their town, fully intending to throw him over. He turns around, facing them, stares them down, and calmly walks straight through them. No one dared to put a hand on Him. How could He do this? Instead of their negativity, He oozed positivity. What He brought them was the Good News, the Gospel. What He said, rang true. Even though they disagreed with Him, they were fascinated with what He claimed. He was at least worth listening to. If He had that reaction with the people of Nazareth, maybe we, too, should listen to Him.

March 22

Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

Daniel 3:25, 34-43; Psalm 25; Matthew 18:21-35

Robert Harrison, C.Ss.R.

The 40 days of Lent offer a privileged occasion to open our hearts to the grace of conversion: *“Turn away from your sins and be faithful to the Gospel.”*

Perhaps the most important question we can ask ourselves in Lent is: “Whom have we not forgiven from our hearts?” Often, they are the ones closest to us, such as our parents—living or dead—our children, our friends.

Sometimes our lack of forgiveness is buried so deep that we need help from professionals to uncover and own it. Twice I sought help. Only when I was finally able to own my resentment and lack of forgiveness, did I begin to recover my peace. Grace moved me first to pray for the desire to forgive and finally to total forgiveness. I then understood the words of the psalmist, *“A clean heart create for me, O God; Restore in me the joy of your salvation”* (Psalm 51).



March 23

Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Psalm 147; Matthew 5:17-19

Charles Hergenroeder, C.Ss.R.

Both readings today refer to following God's law. In the first reading, Moses tells the people of Israel to observe the decrees of the Lord, that they may live. He says that when they obey God, they are a wise and intelligent people. They are also warned not to forget these times and they are encouraged to teach what they have seen and heard to all future generations. In the gospel, Jesus tells us that He has come to fulfill God's law, not to abolish it.

The law we hear about in these readings springs from the law of love. All through the history of salvation, God has shown His love to His people. The greatest example of God's love is the person of Jesus Who came to live among us and save God's people. Above all else, we are to love—love the Lord and love one another as God has loved us. When we share the burdens of others, we are living the love to which God calls us.

What about the love we must practice in our families? Misunderstandings and even estrangement happen; yet it is important to allow love to soften the hard edge of disagreement and transcend such difficulties. St. Paul reminds us, "Owe no one anything, except to love one another...therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:8).

March 24

Thursday of the Third Week of Lent

Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 95; Luke 11:14-23

Joseph Dionne, C.Ss.R.

The principal project of our pilgrimage through Lent is conversion of heart. If we are convinced that certain ways of our being and acting must be abandoned, altered, or transformed, then we will seek out the means to do so—sometimes with serious intent. But if we are not so convinced and only participate half-heartedly in this project, we cannot expect lasting results.

The first order of business, then, is to truly desire change for the good. But is that enough? Is it truly within our power, even if we become convinced that certain attitudes and practices are inimical to our Christian identity, to bring about what the Lord desires for us?

Repentance, asserts the now relatively famous Coptic monk, Matthew the Poor (*Matta El-Meskeen*), is a divine prerogative. We will not achieve the conversion we desire through sheer force of the will. “This is a device of the enemy. Who said that repentance is a gathering of will, an act of courage, or power and activity? Is not repentance only a fall into the hands of God and at His feet in a fainting of will, with a wounded heart, bleeding in regret, members being shattered by sin having no power to rise except by God’s mercy?”

It is only by “crying out” to the Lord with persistence (as did the blind man, Bartimaeus, in the Gospel of Mark) that we may be given the divine energy (“grace”) needed to make our desire reality.

“When a strong man fully armed (the Devil) guards his palace (the world), his possessions are safe. But when one stronger than he attacks and overcomes him (Christ the Lord), he takes away the armor on which he relied and distributes the spoils.”

March 25

Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

Isaiah 7:10-14; 8:10; Psalm 40; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

Ako Trevor Walker, C.Ss.R.

That God enters our lives with utter simplicity to do marvelous things is indeed an understatement. The story of the Annunciation takes place in the home of a young girl in an obscure town with a questionable reputation. “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:45). Mary may have been engaging in her simple daily routine when the Angel of the Lord appeared to her with such a life changing message: *“Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus”* (Luke 1:31).

It is Isaiah in the first reading of today’s Solemnity who foretells of the birth of Jesus. It is Luke who then captures its fulfillment. With utter joy the angel greets Mary, “Hail full of grace. The Lord is with you” and she in turn reciprocates with *“Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word.”*

What sheer humility! What divine and pure love! This was the beginning of the wedding of heaven and earth. God in His tremendous love for us condescends to offer us the gift of salvation. Mary’s yes brings this to fruition.

How does the Annunciation story become your story? Where do you see God in the simplicity of your life? Are you prepared to give birth to Jesus through your words and actions? Like Mary can you fully offer yourself to God joyfully surrendering everything, trusting that God’s will be accomplished in your life?



March 26

Saturday of the Third Week of Lent

Hosea 6:1-6; Psalm 51; Luke 18:9-14

John Kingsbury, C.Ss.R.

Whom are you praying to?

I know that this sounds like a strange question because everyone would certainly immediately answer— *“I am praying to God!”*

But today’s Gospel indicates that this may not always be the case when we pray. The Pharisee was looking like he was praying to God, and if you asked him to whom he was praying, he would quickly reply: *“I am praying to God!”* But as the Gospel indicates, he was actually praying to himself and telling himself what he wanted to hear.

Meanwhile, the tax collector was truly praying to God. He had entered into a genuine dialogue with Our Lord and was freely talking about areas of his life that he was embarrassed about and needed healing.

What today’s Gospel is inviting us to ponder is the question *“Whom are we praying to?”* Are we praying to ourselves and telling ourselves what we want to hear? Pretending that these are the actual words from God? Or have we entered into an authentic dialogue with God that begins by discussing exactly where we are in life?

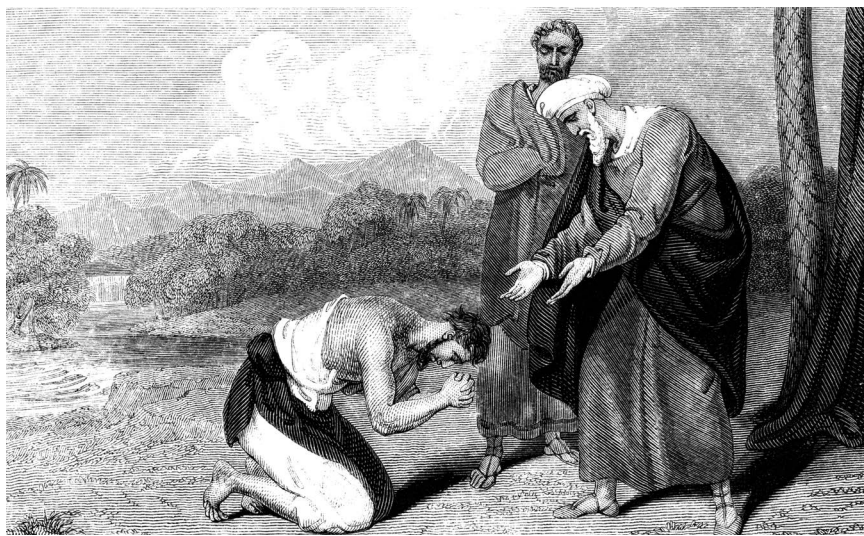
Today as we ponder our prayer life, we humbly ask the question: *“Whom are we really praying to?”*

March 27

Fourth Sunday of Lent

Joshua 5:9a, 10-12; Psalm 34; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Ed Faliskie, C.Ss.R.



Today we hear the familiar story in Luke's Gospel of the prodigal son. It is a magical story. Perhaps it is one of the most powerful stories ever told. Jesus is seated at table with tax collectors and sinners. They are listening, while the scribes and Pharisees are complaining that Jesus openly eats with sinners. So, Jesus tells this famous story.

It's the story of a young boy whose life was misdirected by the love of riches and pleasure. After his friends abandoned him and he loses all he has, he suffers hunger and poverty. Finally, he returns home a changed person. Fortunately, he has a loving and forgiving father who welcomes him back unconditionally.

The point of the story is that we are all sinners in need of forgiveness. The father personally repeats to the cold-hearted older son: *"We had to celebrate and rejoice! This brother of yours was dead and has come back to life. He was lost and is found!"* This implies that the elder brother is still dead and lost unless he forgives. We all must rejoice over any sinner who returns to God Who says: *"You are with me always, and everything I have is yours."*

March 28

Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Isaiah 65:17-21; Psalm 30; John 4:43-54

Francis Mulvaney, C.Ss.R.

The great Christian defender, G.K. Chesterton, said accurately, “When people stop believing in God, they don’t believe in nothing, they believe in anything.” Believing in Jesus becomes our entrance into the saving power of God and our protection against uselessly believing in those that cannot save. Believing is the human act that opens the door to life, light, and love.

Believing is not mere wishing, as if we could create with our wish the good things we desire. Significantly, the royal official believes in Jesus’ word, power, and goodness even though Jesus did not do exactly what the official wanted. Believing in Jesus’ power to heal not only prevented the official’s son from dying but brought that same saving and joyful faith to the whole family. We must convince ourselves that Jesus, in word and action, contains the sole source of our forgiveness of sins, health, and happiness in this life and eternal joy in the next.

Belief is closely related to trust. We must believe before we see results, and even when God’s response does not fit our wants. Believe in Him, and you will not be misled by everyone – or everything – that struts down the street.

March 29

Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Ezekiel 47:1-12; Psalm 46; John 5:1-16

Kevin MacDonald, C.Ss.R.

A physical or mental ailment may or may not be healed over the course of one's lifetime. Unattended sin, however, is more debilitating than any illness or paralysis. It puts even our eternal salvation at risk. The Gospel makes this clear when Jesus, after healing a man who had suffered 38 long years with paralysis, warned him in today's Gospel: "Do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may happen to you" (John 5:14b).

Secondly, Jesus reveals to us where our attention must be focused. Not everyone can minister on the streets like Jesus, but we all can be more attentive. The plight of refugees crossing deserts and seas, for example, can inspire us to a fuller life of penance and prayer on their behalf. A nightly petition to help scientists who are painstakingly searching for breakthrough cures might give them the strength to press on. Miracles still happen, although they are often disguised as ordinary events. We just need to have the eyes to see, the ears to hear – and the faith to act.

March 30

Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Isaiah 49:8-15; Psalm 145; John 5:17-30

John McKenna, C.Ss.R.

One of my favorite movies is *Losing Isaiah*. It stars two great actresses, Halle Berry and Jessica Lange. Halle Berry plays the part of a woman caught up in the world of drugs. She is pregnant but is so addicted that she does not remember that she gave birth to a baby in an alley and put him in a garbage dumpster. When the sanitation workers come, they discover this abandoned baby wailing. The baby is small, weak, and addicted to the crack that his mother was using.

The doctor treating him, played by Jessica Lange, falls in love with this abandoned child. She and her family adopt him. The child, Isaiah, is thriving in a loving, stable home.

The biological mother does go into treatment and in her path to health remembers that she had abandoned her own child. She begins a search and finds he has been adopted. The case becomes a painful court case of whether a child is better in a stable home or with the biological mother.

Today's first reading is from the Prophet Isaiah. He is preaching to a people who have lost hope. He sees clearly better days for God's people and assures them, that "even if a woman could forget the child of her womb, I will never forget you, my people."

As we journey towards the events of Holy Week, let us focus on the great expression of His love, the eternal embrace of Our Savior on the cross.

March 31

Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 106; John 5:31-47

Sean McGillicuddy, C.Ss.R.

How frustrated Jesus must have felt in this Gospel! He is proclaiming the truth, the truth about being the fulfillment of the Law and the prophets, the truth about being sent by the Father, and the truth about doing the Father's work. Yet this group of seemingly religious people refuses to believe in him.

Jesus then tells them the truth about themselves. He tells them that they do not have the love of God in them. If they did, they would have believed in Him. They would be allowing the Father to touch their minds and their hearts, so that they could receive the truth, the Good News of the Gospel.

What about us? Are we frustrating Jesus? Do we hold back our commitment to really and truly follow him? Do we listen more to our doubts and questions than to Truth Himself?

All our Lenten practices – our fasting, penances, and emphasis on charity, prayer, reflection, and regular celebration of the Eucharist and Reconciliation – are aimed at opening our minds and hearts to the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Are we taking steps in faith? Are we growing in hope? Are we more loving?

As we go through this day, let us ask Jesus to help us to be who He calls us to be—faith-filled, hopeful, and loving people.



April 1

Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22, Psalm 34, John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

John McLoughlin, C.Ss.R.

“The truth is I have not come of Myself. I was sent by One who has the right to send, and Him you do not know. I know Him because it is from Him I come: He sent Me” (John 7: 28b-29).

Mohandas Gandhi, the great Hindu prophet of nonviolence, taught his followers that before they could ever make a difference and bring about change in society, they first had to embrace change and transformation in their own life and spirit. Gandhi believed that before anyone could confront, challenge, and speak out against any unjust, immoral, and unethical political, economic, or social system, one first had to take a deep look into one’s own heart and soul and honestly examine and reflect upon his or her own lifestyle. In doing so, one would discover the necessary changes and transformation one had to undergo regarding his or her own attitudes, behavior, and actions. What Gandhi was teaching and asking his followers to do is what Christians call ongoing “personal conversion.”

In today’s Gospel passage Jesus taught those gathered in the temple area that He was sent by God to bring about change in people’s lives by transforming their hearts and souls. Much to those gathered’s consternation, Jesus did not mince or water-down His words since He was fully aware that the Father had sent Him on a mission to proclaim the truth regardless of the cost. The words that Jesus preached in the temple area that day were not pleasant, comforting, or comfortable.

Rather His words were challenging, confrontational, and demanding, warning against complacency and calling for a change of heart and ongoing personal conversion.

Today Jesus invites us to embrace those same words and He challenges us to allow those words to change our lives by transforming our hearts and souls. As long as we continue experiencing our own ongoing personal conversion, we will be given the grace to bring about change and transformation in our families, communities, and society. As we continue our Lenten journey, let us ask Jesus to come and renew our hearts and souls with His unconditional transforming love.

April 2

Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 7; John 7:40-53

Kevin Moley, C.Ss.R.

I love the Gospel of today. It can teach and challenge us about life.

Fr. Marciano Vidal, a Moral Theologian from Spain, said in a conference to religious leaders: “Never denounce anything, unless you are going to announce something.”

One of the most trying experiences of the Lord Jesus Christ was when He spoke in the synagogue in His own town. The people were amazed at His teaching, but they took offense at Him. They said this about Him: “Isn’t He from Nazareth? Don’t we know His parents, Mary and Joseph? Isn’t He just a carpenter’s son? Isn’t He just a commoner? Isn’t He really a nobody?” The Word of God says: “Jesus could do very little in His own town because of their lack of faith.” It was really because they “denounced” Him and didn’t want to believe in Him.

One of the easiest things in life is to denounce, be negative, knock down, ridicule, be judgmental, and condemn. We can do it to others and we can even do it to ourselves. We are called to “Announce Good News” and “Announce it loudly.” We are the sons and daughters of God. We are special. The Lord died on that Cross because he loves us and loves me.

May we constantly look at the Crucified Lord and know how important we are. May we treat others as important. May we be treated by others as important. May we treat ourselves as important. We are called to be “Announcers” and not “Denouncers.”

April 3

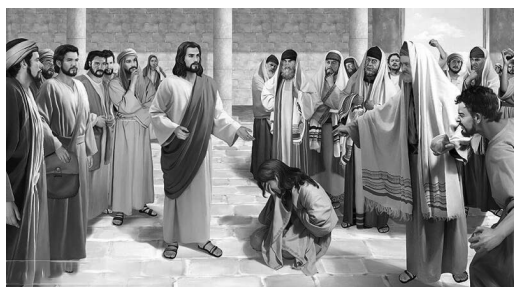
Fifth Sunday of Lent

Isaiah 43:16-21, Psalm 126, Philippians 3:8-14, John 8:1-11

John Olenick, C.Ss.R.

Growing up I remember playing “monkey in the middle” during recess at school. It was a keep-away sort of game with a large, red, rubber ball. One person would be in the middle of a circle of kids, and they would toss the ball across the circle while the one in the middle would attempt to steal the ball. I never liked being in the middle. It was a frustrating and uncomfortable experience as often taller kids laughed and poked fun at me and my inability to intercept the ball.

I can only imagine that the woman caught in adultery felt similarly. All of us know the feeling of being caught “red-handed” at something, whether it’s in the classroom, at work, or at home. The sense of guilt, the flushed face, the sense of shame and embarrassment are tough to swallow. It feels like all eyes are on you.



The Jewish leaders did not treat the adulteress with dignity. They dragged her to Jesus and put her in the middle of everyone as they attempted to trick Christ into condemning her. It is only Jesus who treats this poor woman

with any respect. After cleverly dispersing the crowd as they acknowledged their own faults and failings, the woman is no longer surrounded, no longer threatened. Jesus tells her that He does not condemn her either and dismisses her. As we come to the home stretch of this Lenten Season, perhaps we can try to be more conscious of and compassionate towards those in our society and in our lives who are stuck “in the middle.”

April 4

Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Daniel 13:1-62; Psalm 23; John 8:12-20

Brian Vaccaro, C.Ss.R.

A theme emphasized in today's readings is the idea of not making quick judgements about people. In the Gospel, Jesus criticizes the Pharisees, with whom He is speaking, because they judge by appearances. The first reading provides an excellent example of people judging quickly without gathering all the facts. Simply based on the lying testimony of the elders, Susanna is presumed to have committed adultery and the community is ready to kill her. Daniel, though, refuses to accept the quick judgement made against her. Like God, he judges the situation after considering all the facts and he ultimately proves her innocence.

Susanna's story should cause us to ask ourselves if we, too, are prone to make quick judgements about people without gathering all the facts:

- Perhaps we presume that the homeless person asking for money will use it for drugs or alcohol.
- Perhaps we question if a person is here legally in the U.S. simply because we hear him or her speaking another language.

If making quick judgements is a weakness in our lives, the good news is that we have a loving God that wants to help us to improve. Let us ask God to help us to become people like Daniel, people who do not make quick judgements about others when we do not have all the facts.

April 5

Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 102; John 8:21-30

John Murray, C.Ss.R.

Jesus often stressed His union with God the Father. Jesus is in relationship with the One who sent Him. Everything that He teaches is simply *“what the Father taught Him”* (John 8:28).

The heart of New Testament faith is also about our relationship with the Living God. Sadly, many Catholics become so absorbed in other matters that they think are more important to faith. Genuine holiness is impossible under such circumstances because nothing is more important than our relationship with God.

The Pharisees became the opponents of Jesus when they replaced their beautiful Jewish Covenant with the Ten Commandments.

Beware of Catholic Phariseeism. Beware of substituting anything for our beautiful relationship with the Lord. Catholic Phariseeism is an approach to religion that sees faith as sacraments to receive or commandments to obey or prayers to pray or even ministry to be done.

A deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ is not easy. Don't just cop out when you find it difficult. Don't let any substitute creep in. Don't reduce our spiritual lives to doing things that give us the illusion of holiness.

Next week we celebrate Holy Week. Let all that Jesus did for us remind us to keep that relationship with Jesus, the most important part of our faith.

April 6

Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Daniel 3:14-20, 91-95; Daniel 3:52-56; John 8:31-42

Don Roth, C.Ss.R.

Jesus told the Pharisees that He offers the truth that will set them free from the slavery that is sin. Evil is the opposite of love and sin as an act of evil against the love that Jesus taught; where sin rules there is no love. If love rules our hearts, there is no room for sin because evil cannot dominate.

Life is made up of small moments and small choices daily. That is the danger of not being wary of small occasions of sin. If we are not faithful to the ideal of love in small things, we will not be prepared to resist if a temptation to do something more evil comes our way. The more we love in small ways, the more resistant to sin we become.

In this way we become free. Because if we live love and avoid evil, we have no need to fear judgement or the punishment of hell. We are weak but have the Holy Spirit that guides us and the Eucharist as food for our souls. As we try our best to love, we can have trust in the mercy of the Father.



April 7

Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Genesis 17:3-9; Psalm 105; John 8:51-59

Mark Wise, C.Ss.R.

Get in touch with our roots.

These days people make efforts to get in touch with their heritage. It's all to get a sense of self and to realize that one is connected to others with a history and a culture.

Now Jesus in today's Gospel takes this to the limit and beyond: "If I glorify Myself, My glory is worth nothing; but it is My Father Who glorifies Me." He is the Son of the Father. Who the Father is flows through Jesus and then is reflected through Him to others. It's always been that way: "Before Abraham came to be, I AM." Now that's getting in touch with your roots.

In and through Jesus, that is who we really are. We are from God. That is our true self in the innermost depths of our being. We may forget or distort it; even deny it and want to live in another way that is not from nor of this God Who is good, beautiful, noble, just, true, giving, forgiving, generous, merciful, and compassionate.

Some did not want to see that in Jesus and picked up stones to throw at Him as a way of rejecting that glory reflected in Him and through Him to others. They refused to go back to their roots.

Sad to say we see a lot of that going on today – this picking up of stones – to kill, maim, injure, abuse, and oppress others. Only when we get back to our roots and see that glory reflected to us from God through Jesus, then maybe we will drop those stones and use our hands to embrace and welcome one another.

April 8

Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 18; John 10:31-42

Anthony Michalik, C.Ss.R

“Realize and understand that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father.”

It was difficult for many to believe that God could be so close to them; difficult to believe that in Jesus, they were beholding the face of God. They wanted to stone Him because: “You, a man, are making yourself God.” They could not fathom that it was God Who had, in fact, wondrously become Man. The great mystery of the Incarnation stood before them. God had become one with us, because, as the psalmist proclaims:

“In my distress I called upon the Lord and He heard my voice...you are my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.”

Our God is not a distant God. Our God is Emmanuel – God with us! This should make all the difference in our lives, especially when the challenges and difficulties of this life appear, at times, overwhelming. May we realize that our God is with us at every moment of our lives – in Christ Jesus. May we keep our eyes on Him alone for He is our light, our strength, and our hope. He is Emmanuel who embraces us with unconditional, redeeming love, and with abundant and infinite mercy.

April 9

Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Ezekiel 37:21-28; Jeremiah 31; John 11:45-56

Henry Sattler, C.Ss.R.

In today's Gospel we join the people who have witnessed the raising of Lazarus from the dead or have heard about it. The miracle is so astounding that some of them just have to talk about it to convince themselves it really happened.

The Chief Priest and the Pharisees hear of the miracle. They are the leaders of the people. Who is this upstart? The Chief Priest and Pharisees cannot raise people from the dead. Jesus is a threat to them and to their way of doing things.

Their excuse to keep things as they are is that the "Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation." Doubtful the Romans cared who was in charge.

Caiaphas was indeed prophetic when he said, "You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish."

Jesus was that one man who died in order that the whole people might have their sins forgiven.

The nation, all nations, all people were redeemed by the death and resurrection of the one man, Jesus Christ.

April 10

Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Luke 19:28-40, Isaiah 50:4-7, Psalm 22, Philippians 2:6-11, Luke 22:14—23:56

Denis J. Sweeney, C.Ss.R.

“Greater love than this no one has...”

So, the day did come and His last journey to the city of Jerusalem. How distant it must have seemed to that day long ago when as a week-old baby He was first brought to the temple in Jerusalem by His parents. As a young boy He must have made other trips to Jerusalem. Of course, the time He had stayed on without his parent’s knowledge. They would at last find Him in the Temple among the scribes and teachers of the Law. Then He had returned with them to Nazareth and grew in wisdom, age, and grace.

Now here He was, 33 years of age, and making his final entrance into the city of Jerusalem. This time however processing on a colt as servant-king. In just a few short days He would be the suffering servant king nailed to the wood of the cross.

“Greater love than this no one has...”

St. Alphonsus, so overwhelmed with this “Greater love,” fashioned our Redemptorist Spirituality on the 4 pillars of Crib, Cross, Eucharist, and Mother Mary. St. Alphonsus wondered in his writings and meditations how anyone reflecting on these truths could not fall in love with such a God.

During this Holy Week let us again be drawn to the Crib, to Emmanuel, God with us! Let us be drawn to the Cross, to the Eucharist, to our Blessed Mother. Let us be drawn to wonder and awe and thanksgiving. Let us be drawn! Let us fall in love!

“Greater love than this no one has...”

May it be so!



April 11

Monday of Holy Week

Isaiah 42:1-7; Psalm 27; John 12:1-11

Frank Skelly, C.Ss.R.

Everyone is at this meal in Bethany.

All the principal characters are gathered.

Martha's running around serving,

Mary being criticized again, the curious, the healed, the plotters.

Holy Week is a week that attracts all the different personalities to the church.

During Holy Week we have the Marthas running around preparing the church, we have those who want to be extravagant in their expressions of devotion, those worrying about wasting parish funds, those resurrected to new life, the curious, those plotting (to steal the collection?).

It is hard to keep focused on what is important in these days.

Everyone seems to come to church with his or her own agenda.

As we begin this holiest of weeks, where am I?

Am I looking to be a part of the celebration?

Am I looking to criticize the way my parish celebrates and harkening back to another time and place?

Am I celebrating a healing that has taken place in me since last Holy Week?

Am I coming out of habit, obligation, or devotion?

In John's Gospel we hear the hypocrisy of Judas.

Do I look for hypocrisy in others or do I count myself among the hypocrites?

At the table of the Lord there is room for everyone: the blind, the lame, prisoners, those in darkness.

It doesn't matter who I am, I am welcome.

Do I welcome everyone else?

April 12

Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71; John 13:21-38

Francis Gargani, C.Ss.R.

The readings of these final days in anticipation of our great celebration of the death and resurrection of the Christ plunge us into the immense sorrow Christ experienced in anticipation of His inevitable death. The handwriting on the wall, as the saying goes, was starkly clear to Him in His final days. He was just too much of a gadfly, too much of a risk, too much of a danger for the Jewish authorities in their always fraught relations with their Roman occupiers. He was too much of a threat to their own wobbly authority among their own people.

In this stirring Johannine account, we are invited to share in this most intimate moment of what is now commonly referred to as “The Last Supper,” a scene that artists throughout the centuries have tried to capture, perhaps none better than DaVinci. At the meal we will celebrate in a special way Thursday as the beginning of our three-day Easter Festival, a meal so treasured in the Jewish Tradition of such sacred remembering, of profound giving and receiving, the horror of betrayal is both acknowledged by the Christ and experienced like a dagger to His soul, as Judas leaves to cement with the Jewish authorities the plan to hand Jesus over for crucifixion. Jesus also foretells Peter’s denial of Him, so difficult to say it, let alone within hours to experience it.

If we have ever experienced betrayal, especially from someone very close to us, we know it is one of the worse sufferings possible, psychologically, spiritually and often affecting us physically. It is one of those wounds we struggle to forgive but can hardly forget. And though it might bring a measure of comfort to know Christ experienced betrayal and thus, suffers with us when we suffer it, what really sets us free from its lingering nightmare, is that Christ transformed such an evil into redeeming forgiveness. The redeeming love of Christ’s death and resurrection unleash upon us as a Church and as a disciple a power way beyond our human efforts. God’s forever Love that raised Jesus from the betrayal and scourging and ignominious death of a criminal raises us up. Reconciliation within and without is what we celebrate this and every Easter Season and what we must be about in our wounded, divided, and, hurting Church, nation and world; for this we pray with longing hearts. Amen.

April 13

Wednesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 69; Matthew 26:14-25

Kevin O'Neil, C.Ss.R.

Today's Gospel tells the story of Jesus' betrayal by Judas, which is why today is known as Spy Wednesday. These days of Holy Week are stories of love and betrayal, aren't they? And depending on whom we look at, we see whether love or ego-self prevailed, can't we?

We have two men known for betrayal: Judas and Peter. Both chose self-interest over love for their master and teacher, Jesus. Yet each one had a different response to his betrayal. Peter could see beyond his betrayal to the love that was still offered to him, and he repented. Our tradition says that Judas did not.

And now the story of love. What is the response of Jesus, the one betrayed? Jesus does not retaliate in either case. He continues to love. Many years ago, Pope John Paul II described God's love and mercy this way: "love that gives, love more powerful than betrayal, grace stronger than sin." (John Paul II, "Rich in Mercy," # 52). May we come to God with our betrayals, great and small, trusting in his powerful love, confident in grace stronger than sin.

April 14

Holy Thursday of the Lord's Supper

Exodus 12:1-14; Psalm 116; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; John 13:1-15

Patrick Woods, C.Ss.R.

How many sermons have you heard in your life? No doubt, there are some homilies that touched your life very much. I estimated that I have given close to 10,000 homilies and sermons, give or take a couple of hundred. When my Sister Gerry died suddenly in 1983, I was too overwhelmed to give her funeral homily. So, my dear friend, Father John McGowan, C.Ss.R., spoke of Gerry, the Irish step dancer, using the song of “The Lord of the Dance.” It brought great comfort to my family and me. The first homily at a Mass was given by Jesus at the Last Supper, the night our Lord gave us His Body and Blood in the Eucharist with the words *This is My Body which will be given up for you; this is My Blood of the new and everlasting covenant*. But our Lord chose not to use words to preach at this first Eucharist. He used a water, a basin, and a towel to wash the feet of the apostles.

His message was clear: *If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet*. The Eucharist always leads us to service.



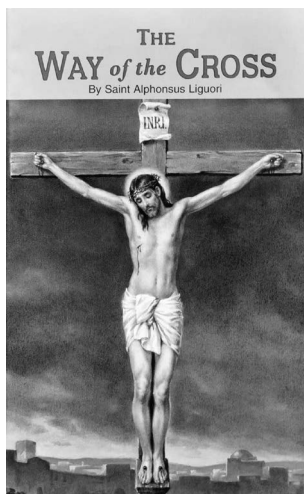
April 15

Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord

Isaiah 52:13-53:12; Psalm 31; Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9; John 18:1-19:42

Matt Allman, C.Ss.R.

On Good Friday the Church invites us to reflect on Christ's passion and to reverence the Cross. Our prayer calls us to Calvary, to see and to recognize the profundity of God's love for each of us and for the world in which we live. I am reminded today of an engraving that St. Alphonsus used to illustrate his published reflections on Christ's Passion. The engraving depicts a terribly wounded Jesus hanging on the cross. From each of the wounds in Jesus' hands, feet, and side, it shows showers of flaming arrows raining down up on the earth. St. Alphonsus framed the image with two quotes. Above it are the words of Ephesians 5:2, "He loved us and delivered himself up for us." Below it is a quote from St. Bonaventure, "The wounds of Jesus are arrows that wound the hardest of hearts, that inflame the coldest of souls."



We pray today that our hearts may be wounded, and our souls set on fire with God's love, so that we may recognize Christ more fully in all the wounded and suffering people of our world, and we may give ourselves to them in loving service in memory of Him.

April 16

Holy Saturday & The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night

Genesis 1:1-2:2; Genesis 22:1-18; Exodus 14:15-15:1; Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11; Baruch 3:9-15,32-4:4; Ezekiel 36:16-17a,18-28; Romans 6:3-11; Luke 24:1-12

James Wallace, C.Ss.R.

Listen, Believe, and Rejoice!

If all the readings are proclaimed this evening at the Easter vigil, you will hear a splendid chorus of Easter voices: storytellers reprising the tales of creation, Abraham's terrible testing, and Moses leading Israel across the sea with Pharaoh's army in pursuit; then, the prophets Isaiah (twice!), Baruch, and Ezekiel; then, preacher Paul, and, finally, Luke regaling us with the tale that has power to transform the world: Jesus' resurrection from the dead. If you don't hear them all at the vigil, read and pray with them during the week.

A word about Luke's Easter story: attend to the stone, the speech, the first responders. The stone has been rolled away, not to let Jesus out, but to let the women – and all of us – in, into dying and rising with him. Listen again to the angels' speech: "He's not here; he has been raised. Remember what he said back in Galilee..." And attend to the first responders: the women heard, believed, and passed it on; the men heard, didn't believe, and dismissed it as nonsense. Except for Peter!

The Easter message is both gift and challenge. May you enter into Easter joy and peace by receiving the message, believing, and handing it on to others.

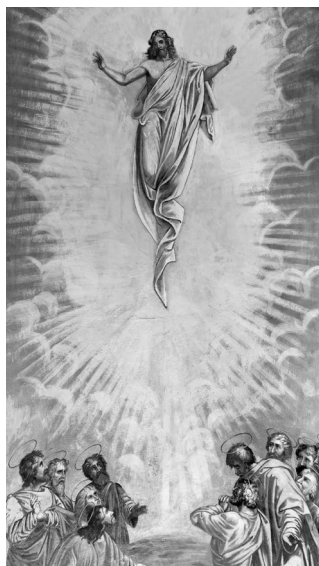
April 17

Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord

Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

Gerard Knapp, C.Ss.R.

“He is not here, for he has been raised!” This message from the angels to the women who came to the tomb on that first Easter morning is as profound as it is simple. How profound is the message that the crucified Jesus has been raised from the dead! How simple is the message that Jesus is alive! Through the Death and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ we have the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life. These truths, which we celebrate in a special way on this Easter Sunday, for the fifty days of the Easter season, and every time we gather for Eucharist, are at the essence of our Christian faith.



That Jesus has been raised and is alive is only part of the Easter proclamation. For the second message from the angels to Mary Magdalen and the other women is also important, “Go and tell His disciples.” They left the empty tomb and shared the Good News with the small circle of the apostles. After the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, this message that Jesus has been raised and is alive would be proclaimed to the wider community in Jerusalem and eventually through the years to the ends of the earth.

Because the angels sent her to announce the resurrection to Peter and the others, Mary Magdalene has been called “the apostle to the apostles.” Because of our baptism, we are similarly called to be apostles and to share with as many people as possible the Easter message that Jesus has been raised and is alive. We witness to the presence of the living Jesus by loving others in what we do, in what we say, and even in what we think. On this Easter Sunday let us resolve to live always as faithful witnesses to the very foundations of our Christian faith – “Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.” The message of Easter is as profound as it is simple – ***Jesus Christ has been raised! He is alive! Alleluia!***