

2015 REDEMPTORIST REFLECTIONS

DAILY
Lenten
Devotions



The Redemptorists

Entrusted With the Miraculous Icon of Our Lady of Perpetual Help by Pope Pius IX

Prayer to Our Lady 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.

Who Are the Redemptorists?

St. Alphonsus Liguori was born in Naples, Italy, in 1696. He left a promising legal career against the wishes of his family and became a priest. Alphonsus dedicated himself completely to the service of the poor and most abandoned, and in 1732 he founded the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer: The Redemptorists.

Alphonsus and his companions preached the Word of God in rural and isolated communities around Naples. By the early 19th century, Redemptorists were serving in central Italy, Poland, Germany, Belgium, and Holland.

In 1832 six Redemptorists traveled to the United States and began missionary work outside of Europe. They worked first among Native Americans and then with Irish, German, and Slavic immigrants. In 1850 the Redemptorists' American Province was established in Baltimore.

Today we Redemptorists continue our ministry to the poor and most spiritually abandoned, in inner cities, hospitals, and prisons and on military bases. 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 17 other confreres who have been canonized or beatified, approximately 5,500 Redemptorists serve in 78 countries throughout the world.

As Redemptorists, we have a special devotion to the crib of Bethlehem; the cross of Calvary; Mary, the Mother of God; and the Eucharist.

Will you help us serve God's people with a sacrificial gift today?

Please visit redemptorists.net/lent to give via our secure online page, or mail your gift to the following address. May God bless you!

The Redemptorists
Perpetual Help Center
107 Duke of Gloucester Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 18 Ash Wednesday

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

In the early Church, Lent was the process developed to welcome new members. As they prepared themselves, a season before Easter evolved of renewal for the already baptized and confirmed. This is what we now call Lent, from the Latin for *springtime*: new or renewed life.

Lent is about believing in the possibility of love, of God's dream of reconciliation, of restoration, of people living together with all creatures and creation, in love. And yes, Lent is about what we can and must do to allow the Spirit to pierce our hearts with the arrow of God's fiery, passionate love.

We don't mark one another with ashes to be morose about our sinfulness and mortality or to defy the Gospel warning against performing religious acts just to be noticed. Rather, a smudgy cross mark reminds us God's love is for real: we come from God and are destined for Him. The cross is a sign seared into our souls that can never be eradicated!

We pray, fast, and give generously to signal our conviction that we live together in the power of Christ's resurrection victory of love. That's the joy and the hope that infuse this entire season of Lent!

*Father Francis Gargani, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

February 19 Thursday After Ash Wednesday

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

Early Christians, like the Israelites, had a keen understanding that they were "people of the way," called to move and grow and love with God. That is why idolatry is so destructive. God's first commandment against false idols protects us from wandering down

the wrong path into mortal danger. “How quaint, those ancient peoples,” you snicker. “I don’t worship a wooden statue or a golden calf.” Yet is it a serious blow to your ego when you put on a few pounds or go gray? Have you made your body an idol?

Do you plan every Sunday afternoon around football, shopping, or sports? Do you attend and worship at America’s most popular “churches”—professional sports and the mall? Lent is a time of testing. Here is a test. Does it irritate you to wait in line two hours for the new smartphone? Do you seethe in secret when your co-worker gets a promotion? Do you fight tooth and nail because your spouse or children don’t see things your way?

These are signs of unhealthy attachments and false idols. Allow your Lenten sacrifice to make you aware of false idols so you can walk again the Lord’s path to freedom and salvation!

*Father Francis Mulvaney, C.Ss.R.
Bronx, N.Y.*

February 20 Friday After Ash Wednesday

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

Are you planning to fast this Lent? Fasting is a time-proven practice. But what kind of fasting will you do?

In the book of the Prophet Isaiah, the people ask, “Why do we fast, and you do not see it? Afflict ourselves, and you take no note of it?” (58:3). The Lord answers that, although the people may be abstaining from food and drink, “on your fast day, you carry out your own pursuits . . . your fast ends in quarreling and fighting” (58:3b, 4).

So again, what kind of fasting will you do?

Father John Powell, S.J., in his book *A Reason to Live, A Reason to Die* (Argus Communications, 1975), describes the kind of fast we can practice this Lent:

Somehow I feel sure that the most direct route to [a spiritual]

experience is to ask for the grace to give, to share, to console another, to bandage a hurting wound, to lift a fallen human spirit, to mend a quarrel, to search out a forgotten friend, to dismiss a suspicion and replace it with trust, to encourage someone who has lost faith, to keep a promise, to bury an old grudge, to reduce my demands on others, to fight for a principle, to express gratitude, to overcome a fear, to appreciate the beauty of nature, to tell someone I love them, and then to tell them again.

*Father Gerard Chylko, C.Ss.R.
Washington, D.C.*

February 21 Saturday After Ash Wednesday

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

Levi (Matthew) had one of the most despicable jobs in Israel: he was a tax collector, not for the local Jewish government but for the occupying Romans. He took money from family, friends, and countrymen and gave it to a hated foreign power. What he could skim off the top went into his own pocket.

What an unlikely person for Jesus to call to be a disciple. Yet that is precisely what He did. Upon his call, Matthew left everything and followed Jesus. He then threw a party, as he wanted to share his newly found blessedness with others.

Jesus has given all of us the same command that He gave Matthew: “Follow me!” It does not matter how unlikely or unworthy we—or others—may consider ourselves.

Lent is a special time of year to examine that call and our response. Are we willing to imitate Matthew and leave all—or at least put everything else secondary to our relationship with Jesus? And then are we willing to imitate Matthew and share our blessedness with others?

*Father Gerard J. Knapp, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

February 22 First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 9:8-15; Psalm 25; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Matthew 1:12-15

The story of Noah includes one of the saddest lines in the Bible: “When the Lord saw how great was man’s wickedness on earth and how no desire that his heart conceived was ever anything but evil, the Lord regretted that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was grieved” (Genesis 6:5-6).

In this story the author portrays God as one whose broken heart grieves over humankind—and Who then destroys all life, regrets this action, and gives humanity another chance through the covenant with Noah and every other living creature. The flood Noah survived prefigures the baptismal waters that wash away sin’s hold on our hearts and bring the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Through this Spirit we grow more fully as children of God and heirs with Jesus Christ. Jesus, our brother, showed what it means to be a child of God, enduring temptation and seeking always to do the Father’s will.

From the desert He went forth to proclaim the kingdom of God—God’s presence among humankind and His desire to rule our hearts. As Lent begins, what do we need to do to draw closer to God over the coming 40 days?

*Father James A. Wallace, C.Ss.R.
Long Branch, N.J.*

February 23 Monday of the First Week of Lent

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

Matthew’s Gospel was written for a Church whose members were primarily Jewish. They believed they were going to be judged by God according to how well they lived the Torah. For the sake of simplicity, the Torah can be defined as Jewish law and Scripture.

Matthew’s Jesus is the new Torah. In other words, Jesus is reinter-

preting Torah for all people. Today's Gospel reveals to the Gentiles how they will be judged since they were not circumcised and did not practice Torah.

This was an early Church problem: how would Jews and Gentiles be judged if both lived according to different traditions? The author of Matthew reveals to us that the Gentiles will be judged by the way they help one another.

Today's Gospel also talks about separating goats and sheep—a common practice for shepherds. During the day the shepherd would allow the sheep and goats to mix, but at night he would separate them. The goats needed a warm place to sleep, but the sheep were fine with the open air.

Since most of us are Gentiles, let us recommit ourselves to helping people in need.

*Father James McCabe, C.Ss.R.
Bethpage, N.Y.*

February 24 Tuesday of the First Week of Lent

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

For many people, to pray means asking for something: health, success, a relationship, etc. But for Jesus, to pray is to seek to be a son or daughter of God who remains always in His sight.

If we are looking for intimacy with God, words are unnecessary. The Father already knows all our needs.

I remember once hearing a baby cry from an outside room. The father called the mother to the kitchen, saying, "The baby is hungry." Babies cry because they are hungry, cold, in pain, or lonely. The father knew how to read that particular cry as one of hunger.

How? The dad's intimate love for his child revealed everything about the baby. And your Heavenly Father knows very well how to read the cries of His sons and daughters.

At a retreat I remember seeing an elderly sister who spent hours before the Blessed Sacrament. She didn't move her lips. She didn't need to. Being the daughter of the Father—a daughter who loved just looking at Him—was enough.

This is why Jesus appreciates the Our Father, which teaches us to look first to God (Your name, Your kingdom, Your will) and only then to ask for our daily bread.

Praying is seeking intimacy with the God who loves us. Having this means having everything.

*Father Ruskin Piedra, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

February 25 Wednesday of the First Week of Lent

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

“Nya nya nya nya nya! I'm greater than you are! Nya nya nya nya nya!” How many times did I hear that taunt—or one just like it—on the playgrounds of my youth?

Today's Gospel reminds me a lot of that phrase. The queen of the south—was she from Sheba?—is put forth as very wise, but still she seeks the superior wisdom of Solomon.

Or take the Ninevites: they repented at the preaching of Jonah, who didn't even want to convert them. He wanted the wrath of God to rain down on them.

Yet in both cases there *is* someone even greater, and that person, of course, is Jesus Himself. The whole point of Jesus' discourse is “Why go anywhere else? Come to me! I'll take care of your every need.”

This is not an idle boast: it is the truth. Jesus does indeed take care of our every whim, every desire, every hope.

*Father John Harrison, C.Ss.R.
Annapolis, Md.*

February 26 Thursday of the First Week of Lent

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

Today's Gospel about persistence in prayer—to ask, seek, and knock—is not so much about wearing God down and getting Him to come around to our way of seeing and doing things but to get us to come around to His way of seeing and doing things.

We've had the experience of praying about something and not getting it or heard others speak about it. So why keep asking? We're called to change our focus and make prayer not so much about us but about God: to make the Lord the center of all we are and do.

So when we go to pray, why don't we try this on for size? Let's pray not so much to get what we want but what God wants. That moves us beyond ourselves, beyond our concerns and cares, which are valid and have a time and place but are only a part of that grand, cosmic design that the Lord very much wants to bring to completion.

It all comes down to what we probably say every day: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." Let's hope that's what we want more than anything else. So we keep on asking, seeking, knocking, and praying for it.

*Father Mark Wise, C.Ss.R.
Philadelphia*

February 27 Friday of the First Week of Lent

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

In his rule for monks St. Benedict wrote that they should "prefer nothing to the love of Jesus." It is Jesus' love that makes a community blessed and holy. It is His love that brings peace, forgiveness, consolation, and reconciliation to all humankind. It is His love that saves us from sin and death. It is His love that liberates us so we can once again be connected to the Father and, we hope, enter

the kingdom of heaven.

We are called to imitate the love Jesus has shared with us. One of the best ways we can do that is by taking the first step in the reconciliation process. If someone has something against us, we should seek out the person and try to make peace. We should reach out to those who have offended us, putting aside our own hurts and needs and offering them forgiveness and consolation.

If we want to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must realize that the reign of God is present among us here and now. We must embrace Jesus' attitude of compassion, forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation.

May the love of Jesus give us the ability never to hesitate to forgive and seek forgiveness, never to let hatred, distrust, and disappointment bury us in the tombs of anger, self-pity, and self-righteousness.

May His love nourish, strengthen, and enable us to extend the hand of reconciliation and peace to one another.

*Father John McLoughlin, C.Ss.R.
Ephrata, Pa.*

February 28 Saturday of the First Week of Lent

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

Most people cringe when they hear Matthew 5:48: "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." How is this possible? Isn't perfection reserved for God alone?

The word *perfect* in the Bible can also mean "mature" or "complete." When the book of Hebrews says that "Jesus was made perfect through suffering," it is saying that, in His humanity, Jesus' love grew through the hardships He endured.

Secondly, Jesus has just finished speaking about loving our enemies. Perfection, in this sense, means that we seek to obtain the same expansiveness as Christ in defining our neighbor.

Finally, it's helpful to look at similar Scripture passages. 1 Peter 1:15 says, "As He who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct." And St. Paul states in Ephesians 5:1-2, "Be imitators of God and live in love, as Christ loved us."

These verses impress on us to have the same attitude as God. We are not directed to imitate God in perfection but in forgiving and in loving others as Christ has loved us.

*Father Kevin MacDonald, C.Ss.R.
St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands*

March / Second Sunday of Lent

*Genesis 22:1-2, 9, 10-13, 15-18; Psalm 116; Romans 8:31-34;
Mark 9:2-10*

When I was young, I often felt as though my parents, my teacher, my coach, and sometimes my closest friends didn't really understand me. Perhaps the biggest struggle for the human heart is the disappointment and frustration we experience when we are misunderstood.

This is what I believe Jesus was struggling with as He tried to make the Father known to the scribes and Pharisees, His disciples, and His closest friends. Christ loves us and wants us to enter into the deepest of life-giving relationships with Him, the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

Jesus leads Peter, James, and John to the top of the mountain, where He reveals three timeless truths: 1) we need prayer and meditation, 2) intimate encounters with Christ will lead us to greater clarity and understanding of Him and our faith, 3) and our mountaintop "peak experiences" must sustain us through the dark valleys of human weakness and tribulation. It's naive to think they will last forever this side of heaven.

During this Lenten season we make an extra effort to carve out "peak" times in our day to pray and mediate with our Redeemer. As a result, our mind and heart can be transformed. We can come

to better understand Jesus in our life—and He can understand us. Once our heart is truly one with His, we can echo the words of St. Peter: “O Lord, it is good for us to be here!”

*Father Richard Bennett, C.Ss.R.
Bronx, N.Y.*

March 2 Monday of the Second Week of Lent

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

One of the TV shows I enjoy watching is *Inside the Actors Studio*. James Lipton interviews TV and movie stars at the college where he teaches. During the show the topic of how you live your life always comes up.

It's interesting to hear how each guest answers the question. Some say they are good humanitarians. Others say they treat people the way they want to be treated. Still another said, “I respect people and their views and expect them to respect me and what I believe.”

In the Gospel for today Jesus gives us a way to live our lives. He tells us to be merciful to others. He tells us not to judge or condemn people. When we are hurt or wronged, we must not seek revenge or look for a way to get even. We forgive them as Jesus has forgiven us.

If we lived this way, can you imagine what kind of world this would be? If we lived this way, can you imagine what our families and our parish communities would be like? Our families, our communities, and our world would truly be a slice of heaven.

My brothers and sisters, let each of us make a promise to the Lord that this Lent we will live our lives according to the Word of God. Then if someone comes along and asks, “How do you live your life? What is your philosophy of life?” you can simply tell them: “I live my life according to the loving Word of God.”

*Father Michael Sergi, C.Ss.R.
Canandaigua, N.Y.*

March 3 Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent

Isaiah 1:10, 16-20; Psalm 50; Matthew 23:1-12

The scribes and Pharisees are the group in the Gospels everybody loves to hate. The word most often associated with them is *hypocrite*.

In today's Gospel passage the scribes and Pharisees are described as "fond of places of honor at banquets and the front seats in synagogues." They "bind up heavy loads . . . while they themselves will not lift a finger to budge them."

In our zeal to identify this group's disease, we often miss the fact that they are really not bad people. Jesus actually approves of their teachings. The indictment Jesus makes is this: "Their words are bold, but their deeds are few."

They say a lot of the right words; it's just that the words never penetrate deeply enough to affect their actions.

Recently I heard the religious landscape of the United States described as "about 3,000 miles wide and three inches deep." We don't lack variety but depth.

Lent is an opportunity to let the Lord take us into deep water—to let the Word not only inform but also transform us so that our actions are affected. Today's Lenten prayer might be, "Lord, make me a person of depth in You."

*Father Philip Dabney, C.Ss.R.
Boston*

March 4 Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent

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

Did you ever have something important or exciting to tell someone—that you're getting a new job, expecting a baby, or falling in love—and the person wasn't listening? It can be pretty discouraging.

In today's Gospel Jesus is proclaiming for the third time that He is about to undergo His passion and death, yet the disciples are concerned about their place in heaven.

In defense of the disciples, wouldn't we think the same way? If we were part of Jesus' inner circle and recognized that Jesus had some pull, would we not take the opportunity at least to ask?

What can you do for us, what can you guarantee us, since we have "left all to become your followers"?

The brothers quickly respond that they are prepared to follow Jesus. But in the world of Jesus, to be great is to put all our gifts and talents at the service of others. Why? Because everything we have was given us by God anyway.

If we want to be first in the kingdom of God, we must learn to be humble servants to one another.

*Father Raymond Collins, C.Ss.R.
Boston*

March 5 Thursday of the Second Week of Lent

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

Our Gospel today tells of a rich man who needed to have his eyes examined. This rich man went through life unable to recognize a brother in need who was right at his door.

How many times do we go through life so consumed by and preoccupied with ourselves and the tasks at hand that we fail to notice our brothers and sisters who need our help?

Lent calls us to slow down and notice others—especially the poor—in order to help them. Jesus was particularly great at this. He always took the time to recognize others, especially in their moments of pain and sorrow.

If we are going to make this world a better place, we cannot be indifferent to those in need. We must reach out and be the pres-

ence of Christ to them.

The good news is that we are “the brothers” being warned. Jesus has risen from the dead, and today He calls us to repent from our sins so that at the end of life we may find ourselves rejoicing in the bosom of Abraham.

*Father Peter Hill, C.Ss.R.
St. Lucia, West Indies*

March 6 Friday of the Second Week of Lent

Genesis 37:3-4, 12-13, 17-28; Psalm 105; Matthew 21:33-43, 45-46

The moving story of Joseph in the first reading today sets the stage for the person of Jesus in the Gospel. Joseph is perhaps the first one to prefigure the passion, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

This beloved son is rejected by his brothers, who want to kill him. After first leaving him to die in a cistern, they eventually sell him into slavery. In the end it is Joseph who will give life to his family, saving them from starvation.

In the Gospel it is Jesus who, after a long line of servants, is the Son sent to the vineyard. As we know, the Son is also rejected and killed. Jesus is the stone rejected by the builders that becomes the cornerstone of our salvation.

But God does not wash His hands of us. Joseph’s brothers do not die in their sins but are saved by their brother, whom God uses as an instrument of redemption.

Thank you, God, for your loving patience and compassion with me. I know I have rejected you at times and have chosen sin rather than Your grace. Help me to be grateful for the life You give me and the opportunities to accept Your loving patience and compassion and to share it with others.

*Father Robert Wojtek, C.Ss.R.
Baltimore*

March 7 Saturday of the Second Week of Lent

Micah 7:14-15, 18-20; Psalm 103; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

In today's Gospel the Pharisees and Scribes criticize Jesus not for being mean and harsh with sinners but rather for being too good. "Imagine," they say, "He eats with sinners! He forgives them and treats them as friends!"

The first reading today and the responsorial psalm are beautiful hymns to the mercy and love of the Father. The first reading states: "Who is there like You, the God who removes guilt and pardons sin?" And the responsorial psalm proclaims: "The Lord is kind and merciful."

This is exactly how Jesus experienced His Father—as Abba, a compassionate and understanding parent, and as a true shepherd of His flock.

It is no surprise then that when Jesus is accused for being too good to sinners, He uses this argument: "My Father is kind and merciful; that is why I am the same way. I am a true son of my Father. Let me tell you a story of how He would act. A man had two sons . . ."

*Father Thomas Travers, C.Ss.R.
Esopus, N.Y.*

March 8 Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus 17:3-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42

God is very patient and understanding about listening to our complaints. That's what happened with the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai, who missed the fleshpots of Egypt. But God was attentive to their cries. He commanded Moses to strike the rock, from which flowed living waters.

Surely the Samaritan woman at the well had reason to feel bitter. Her unhappiness with men had made her wary of them. When she arrived at noon to draw water and found Jesus sitting there, she had

another reason not to trust Him because He was Jewish.

When Jesus asked her for a drink, her answer was striking: “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?”

She had no idea that the Messiah in the person of Jesus was asking her a favor. Jesus went on to say, “If you knew the gift of God and who is saying to you ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.”

At first she thought living water meant saving frequent trips to the well. But she came to understand that the water Jesus spoke of symbolized the Holy Spirit. Jesus showed her that He understood the depth of her soul, and He gave her the opportunity to become a new person.

During this meeting we see her bitterness and hardness of heart start to dissolve. Jesus wants us to have the same opportunity.

*Father John Lavin, C.Ss.R.
Boston*

March 9 Monday of the Third Week of Lent

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

In the first reading at Mass today we are presented with Naaman, a Syrian general—a rich, powerful, and haughty foreigner—looking for a miracle from a people he probably despised. What he found was not exactly what he expected. He was looking for a major miracle with fireworks and trumpet blasts attached. What he got was a no-fanfare miracle that quietly healed both his body and his soul.

In the Gospel Jesus invokes the memory of Naaman in chiding the people of Nazareth for not accepting a prophet “in His own place,” an old proverb well known to all of them. And then He reminds them of the “widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon.”

Why? He did it to show that the love of God extends beyond any limits, any boundaries, we might try to impose on it. God’s mercy

goes to everyone, even the people we don't like. It was not a message the people of Nazareth wanted to hear, and frequently we don't either.

No one controls God.

His mercy is for everyone.

*Father J. Francis Jones, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

March 10 Tuesday of the Third Week of Lent

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

How many times must I forgive another? Peter's question is one that we all ask at one time or another.

In the Gospel today Peter wants to know how many times he should forgive a brother who has sinned against him. He is willing to go as high as seven times. Jesus' answer tells Peter to stop counting. Then He tells this story, which, as is often the case with Jesus' parables, is marked by an extravagance of numbers and details. The Gospel concludes, "Unless each of you forgives your brother and sister from your heart, the Father will not forgive you."

In our own lives I am sure there exist sufferings that have been imposed on us: childhood abuse, spousal abuse, deep rejection. When we bring these sufferings to Jesus, we must be honest and first of all acknowledge that we have been sinned against. Then we must quietly tell the Lord, "I forgive the person who has committed this injury."

We should not be afraid of our emotions. The important thing is to say these words, perhaps in prayer with another person. In this way the movement of our heart will share in the infinity of God's own mercy.

And finally we must repent of any anger that has been in our own heart. In this way we can come to experience the wonderful freedom of knowing how much we are forgiven so that we can lift this

burden also from another person (with thanks to Francis Martin's book *The Fire in the Cloud* [Charis Books, 2002]).

*Father Charles Hergenroeder, C.Ss.R.
Baltimore*

March // Wednesday of the Third Week of Lent
Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Psalm 147; Matthew 5:17-19

Lent is the time for a determined return to Jesus, to His commandments, to His paths. Every day He shows us His will through His word. Jesus makes it clear that He hasn't come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them. The law is an expression of God's will to His people. Sometimes it needs a clear explanation.

Jesus tells us that mere respect for the letter of the law is meaningless. One must also fulfill the spirit of the law, and that spirit is love.

Today I wonder: Do I comply with the law to avoid being punished? Or out of duty—or out of love?

We must keep in mind that love transforms everything. May our lives show that love even in the simplest details.

Jesus led by example: He gave His life for us. Let's imitate Him, starting with the simplest details. Let's show our love for Him and for our brothers and sisters.

*Father Blas Cáceres, C.Ss.R.
Annapolis, Md.*

March // Thursday of the Third Week of Lent
Jeremiah 7:23-28; Psalm 95; Luke 11:14-23

Someone commented to me that they thought it strange to see Polish people walking out of church backward. If the Blessed Sacra-

ment is exposed, some Polish people walk backward when leaving church. They continue facing the altar and do not turn their backs to the Lord as a sign of respect.

I've seen it myself, and I remembered it not long ago when speaking with a number of Catholics from Mexico who complained to me that their pastor would only install the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the back of the church. They told me, "We could never turn our backs to Our Lady."

Turning your back on someone is never a good thing. It shows a lack of respect. It's mean to ignore, reject, and try to forget. Putting something behind you means to leave it in the past, to move forward without it. The prophet Jeremiah refers to sin as turning one's back on God or others.

Living in grace and peace means being able to look God and others in the eye, face to face. Are there people whom you cannot look in the eye—whom you can no longer face? Why?

Turn around, turn toward them today, and face them. Turn to God with your whole heart, for God is gracious and merciful.

*Father Bruce Lewandowski, C.Ss.R.
Philadelphia*

March 13 Friday of the Third Week of Lent

Hosea 14:2-10; Psalm 81; Mark 12:28-34

The scribe in today's Gospel asked Jesus the deepest question: Which is the first of the commandments? The scribe was a man learned in the Scriptures, an expert in the law. Was it a trick, or did he really seek to reduce the thousands of laws into one simple one?

No matter, he got his response: "Love God, and love your neighbor as yourself."

And who is my neighbor? Remember the story of the Good Samaritan? Can there be such a thing? A non-Jew, someone outside the clan, outside the inner circle, an enemy. Could Jesus possibly

mean *them*? Is He asking us to love *them*?

Jesus took the old law and filled it with new meaning. It's easy to let rituals and laws take the place of love. The priest could pass by the wounded traveler on the road because he was on his way to the more important temple worship.

Jesus sums up all the commandments in one word: *love*.

You cannot really love God without loving others. You cannot really love others without loving yourself. You cannot really love yourself without loving God. It's a trinity of relationships—and your choice!

*Father Edmund Faliskie, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

March 14 Saturday of the Third Week of Lent

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

The two figures in the Gospel today, the Pharisee and the tax collector, offer us two well-marked contrasts in their spiritual journey.

The Pharisee appears to be closer to God because of his good works. Yet his prayer sets him apart from God and others: “O God, I thank You that I am not like the rest of humanity—greedy, dishonest, adulterous—or even like this tax collector.”

He believes he is self-sufficient, self-enclosed. He's forgotten something fundamental: that he is just like everyone else. He is a human being and therefore fragile, limited, and vulnerable.

He is unable to say, with the publican, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” But the tax collector recognizes that he is incomplete, that he needs conversion and transformation.

He knows he *is* like other people—not someone set apart but one with them in their struggles and conflicts.

He is more likely to be compassionate and merciful to others because he identifies with them in their common humanity.

No doubt the beginning of compassion and mercy toward others is to recognize that yes, we are like them in many ways and to take as our ongoing petition, “O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.”

*Father Mark Wise, C.Ss.R.
Philadelphia*

March 15 Fourth Sunday of Lent

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23; Psalm 137; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21

Not long ago on the radio I heard a sermon from a very nice televangelist brother. I could not find anything in it that was contrary to the Catholic faith, but I also didn't hear anything that would make me change my life.

But in today's Gospel, John 3:14-21, I do. John compares Jesus' death on the cross with the bronze snake that was elevated on a pole in the desert. Speaking to those who had sinned, Moses told them to look at the raised serpent and said that the gaze of faith would save them from the poisonous snakebites they had suffered.

Jesus died high on the cross and paid for the sins of all who look on Him with faith. The one who covers his eyes, who will not repent, will be deprived of the light of Christ and will remain in the darkness.

Those who come to the light and repent of their deeds done in the dark, whatever they were, will receive healing and forgiveness. Their sins are buried.

The commitment is clear: Jesus loves you, like every other human being, and He is waiting to greet you with open arms.

What could be better this Lent than making a sacramental confession? And how sad is the alternative: to remain in darkness and depart from the loving arms of Jesus.

*Father Ruskin Piedra, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

March 16 Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent

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

I love today's reading from the prophet Isaiah: "See, I am creating new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind. Instead, shout for joy and be glad forever in what I am creating."

Yet no matter how much the Word of God says "the former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind," our memory lets us down. Once we have confessed our sins and they have been forgiven in the sacrament of reconciliation, they no longer exist for God.

Our memory can cause us to feel the guilt of past sins, even though they are forgiven. When our memory afflicts us this way, that's when we need to pray, "Lord, I repent once again for the sins I have committed. I thank You because You have forgiven them and freed me from my guilt. I am joyful because You love me and show me Your merciful kindness. I am joyful because I am a new creation."

God does not want us to anguish over and over again about our past failings. Isaiah says it this way: "No longer shall the sound of weeping be heard there, or the sound of crying."

On this day of Lent, may we rejoice and be happy with the new life we receive every time we are forgiven in the sacrament of reconciliation. May our Lenten confession make us a new creation in the risen Jesus Christ this coming Easter.

*Father James Gilmour, C.Ss.R.
Piscataway, N.J.*

March 17 Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12; Psalm 46; John 5:1-16

Jesus is always in the middle of people's problems. Where someone needs to be freed, where someone is unhappy, there He is. The

Pharisees, on the other hand, thought only about whether or not it was the Sabbath. Their bad faith killed the spirit.

The paralytic had been struggling in the void for 38 years because he hadn't found Jesus. "Do you want to be healed?" Jesus asked.

Finally, the paralytic had found the Man who could cure him. Jesus told him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." The cure happened in an instant. For the old paralytic, worn down by years of discouragement, everything was now new.

That paralytic waiting by the water—doesn't he make you think of those who are equally powerless to do good? How do we plan on solving, all by ourselves, problems that are supernatural in scope? Don't you see every day, all around you, a constellation of paralytics who "move" a lot but are incapable of walking away from their lack of liberty?

It is sin that paralyzes, ages, and kills. We must set our eyes on Jesus. We must immerse ourselves in the waters of prayer, confession, and an open spirit.

You and I can remain everlasting paralytics—or we can be carriers of others and instruments of light. Let's seize this Lent to make the right decision.

*Father Fabio Marin, C.Ss.R.
Concord, N.C.*

March 18 Wednesday of the Fourth Week of Lent

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

In today's Gospel Jesus tells us that He and God the Father are one—that He is equal to the Father. So many wrestle with the question "What is God like?" So they list all the attributes and qualities of God.

God is all powerful, all wise, all perfect, all holy, infinite, all love. Very heady and intellectual qualities. But we can never define or comprehend God.

What we do not know of God comes to about 99 percent. God exceeds all our concepts. He is essentially mysterious.

That's why St. Alphonsus Liguori said, "The only God we know is the God made manifest in Jesus Christ." So if you want to know what God is like, look to Jesus.

Look to His words, His actions, His characteristics, His personal qualities. Go to the Gospels.

There we see that Jesus is a forgiver, a healer, and a lover of the underdog, the marginalized, the people on the fringe. He loved sinners. He had compassion for the multitude.

To discover what God is like, read the pages of the Gospels and meet and see Jesus in action.

That's what God is like. Jesus and God are one and the same.

*Father John McGowan, C.Ss.R.
Long Branch, N.J.*

March 19 St. Joseph

*2 Samuel 7:4-5, 12-14, 16; Psalm 89; Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22;
Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24*

Today we celebrate St. Joseph, the caring guardian of Jesus and a faithful husband to his virgin wife, Mary. He was respectful of Mary's virginity, even when he could not understand it.

Joseph listened obediently to the angel when he was asked to take the Virgin of Nazareth as his wife. He obeyed again in the flight into Egypt and in the return to Israel.

The Bible tells us little about Joseph. The Gospels of Mark and John and the Epistles never mention him. We hear about him in the first few chapters of Matthew and Luke. Then he fades out of sight.

Silent and faithful, Joseph served the eternal Word of God, also called the carpenter's son. Then, having done his duty, Joseph dis-

appears without any fanfare, a man of humble holiness and everyday routine.

My everyday routine, done in response to God's initiative, may seem to have nothing to do with my story of salvation until I realize that I also am called to respond to something holy, God's grace within me.

St. Joseph, Patron of the Church, pray for us.

*Father John Murray, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

March 20 Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent

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

It's funny how people don't change over the years. In today's reading from the Book of Wisdom, the people don't (or won't) recognize the just man or the presence of God in their own midst. We see the same thing in the Gospel when the people say, "When the Christ comes, no one will know where He is from."

There's an old story about a guy and a flood. Everyone in town was worried about the flood warnings. The man had a dream one night, and God told him, "Have no fear. I will save you!"

When the floodwaters came up, a big truck came by, and he said, "No. God said He would save me." The water got higher, and the police came by in a boat. He said, "No. God said He would save me."

The water rose still higher, and the man was sitting on his roof when a helicopter stopped and dropped a basket. "No," he said. "God said He would save me." And so he drowned.

Soon he was standing before God, complaining. God said, "Give me a break! I sent you a truck, a boat, and a helicopter. What more did you need?"

We fail like the people in the Scriptures when we don't see the

presence of God all around us in ordinary life.

When you see a mother or father hugging a child who has fallen down, that's the healing presence of God, if you look for it.

Reaching out with forgiveness to someone who has injured you: that's the forgiving presence of God. Encouraging a teenager or worried parents. Bringing a meal to a hungry family. All these things make God present to us and to others. They need that, and so do we.

*Father Michael Hopkins, C.Ss.R.
New York*

March 21 Saturday of the Fourth Week of Lent *Jeremiah 11:18-20; Psalm 7; John 7:40-53*

In today's Gospel the anger of the chief priests toward Jesus has reached the boiling point. Their vocation had been established by God to lead the worship of His people. This gave them prestige in Jewish society. Along with the Pharisees, they were expected to point the Chosen People toward God and His promises.

But now we see the chief priests and Pharisees beginning to feel jealous of Jesus, who had noted their interest in protecting their place in society.

Jesus seemed better accepted by the people. He spoke with authority. Even the temple guards said to the chief priests, "No one ever spoke like this man!"

And Jesus laughed at the errors of the chief priests. They had never bothered to check that Jesus had indeed been born in Bethlehem, as the prophet had predicted.

As we follow Jesus through Lent to the cross, today's Gospel serves as a mirror. Have ambition and jealousy blinded us to the truth about ourselves and others?

We still have a few weeks left this Lent to redirect ourselves to God. Our Lenten confession especially can demonstrate our good

resolution to put on “the mind of Christ” and will bring God’s forgiveness and support as we try to live our good resolutions.

*Father Joseph Krastel, C.Ss.R.
Annapolis, Md.*

March 22 Fifth Sunday of Lent

Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51; Hebrews 5:7-9; John 12:20-33

Jesus, You affirmed that “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.” But here I stand, unwilling to let go of my silly hurts, my foolish pride, and my favorite sins.

I look to You, Jesus, on the cross You embraced to draw me to Yourself. Help me to open my heart to the outpouring of Your love so You can transform me into the person God created me to be. I know it will not be easy, but that is what Lent is all about.

Today’s reading tells me that You learned obedience from what You suffered, and when You were made perfect, You became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey You. Teach me to suffer and to learn alongside You; write Your law of love upon my heart so I can truly see myself as a child of God, my Father.

Then I will be able to pray with You, “Father, glorify Your name,” and know that You are with me to help me do the Father’s will.

*Father Karl Esker, C.Ss.R.
Newark, N.J.*

March 23 Monday of the Fifth Week of Lent

Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62; Psalm 23; John 8:1-11

When we reflect on the story of the woman caught in adultery, usually we focus on the woman and the Lord Jesus. But for a mo-

ment, think about the crowd that had come to demand the stoning of an adulteress. How bad were these people?

At first the crowd was a mob, a monster with a hundred eyes and 10,000 teeth, but in the end they just walked away, much like the adulteress herself—“one by one, beginning with the elders.”

What was left behind on the sand was not a pile of bloody stones thrown in the name of the law but rather the ghost of human pride and self-righteousness, gone flat like a punctured balloon.

We should not be too quick to identify only with the woman. The truth is, we are more often than not a part of the crowd—proud of our goodness and ready to stone all who aren't.

Part of the lesson of this story can be summed up as a question: Should we not, like Christ, be a source of forgiveness and love to all we meet?

*Father J. Francis Jones, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

March 24 Tuesday of the Fifth Week of Lent

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

We must consider Jesus in His humanity to fully understand the power of this Gospel. Jesus knew that He was the Messiah. He took the name I AM for Himself, declaring His divinity and therefore sealing His death.

We have to remember that He did this as a human being who felt fear. What gave Him the power?

It was through His understanding of and capacity to enter into the mystery of love that He found the ability to assume His mission.

That doesn't mean it was easy. We have to remember the agony in the garden the night before His death. But He did find the power to love when it meant “to give your life for your friend”!

For us today, love can seem so demanding. Love demands that we

accept dying to our own will in order to live for others. We can look upon the cross of Jesus and see the price of true love.

And even more important, we can contemplate the Resurrection and see the victory that belongs to the one who loves and the true life that can be ours.

*Father Donald Roth, C.Ss.R.
Telêmaco Borba, Paraná, Brazil*

March 25 The Annunciation

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

Today the teenage Virgin Mary said *yes* to the Angel Gabriel: she would be the Mother of God. They say that all of heaven, even God Himself, hung upon her answer, like a young man proposing to his lady.

This was no game, no mere formality. For when God asked Mary for her whole life and future, He could have accepted *no* for an answer if He had had to.

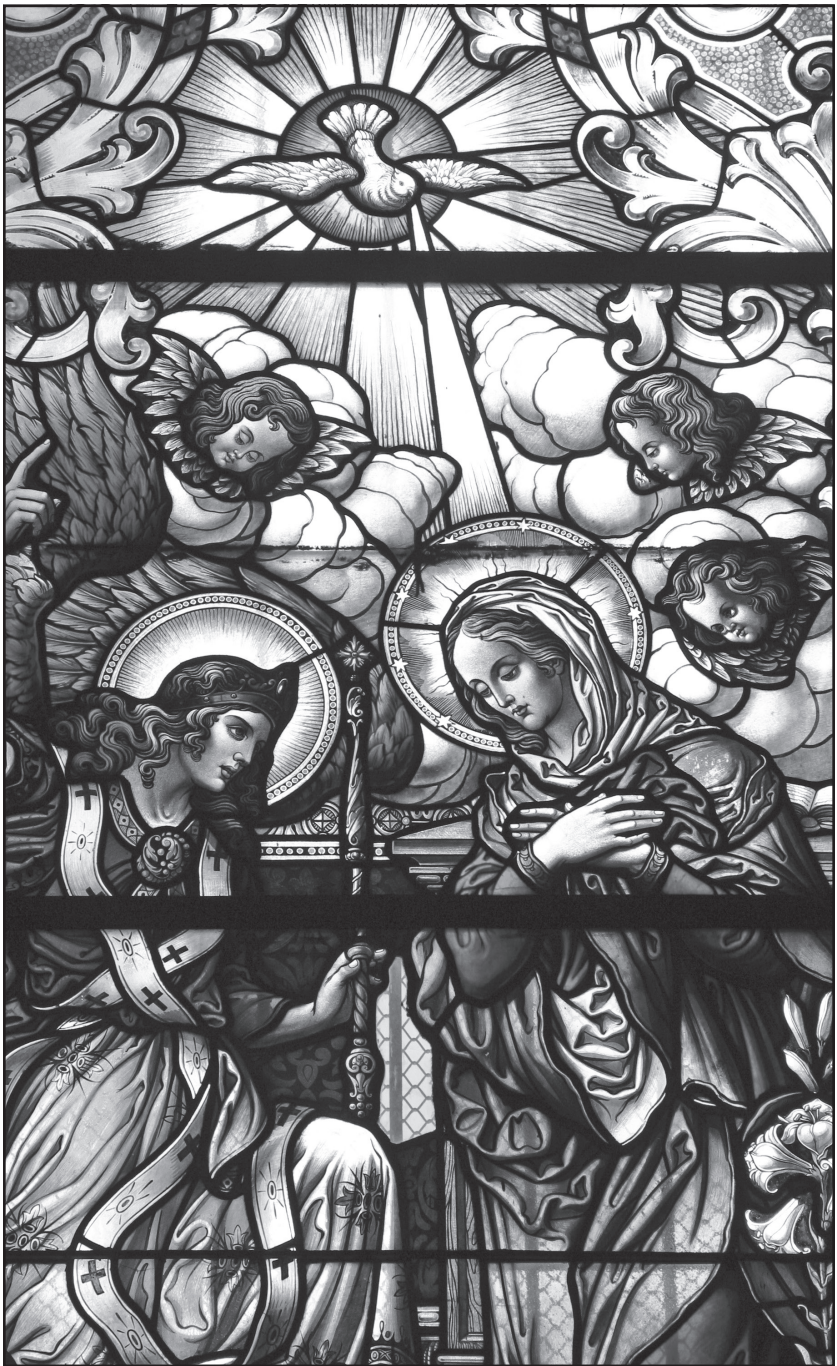
The only love that means anything to Him, or to us, is love freely given. It cannot be forced. So great was the dignity of that young Virgin Mary, and so great is ours.

She said *yes* to God's will for her, and so must we. This is the heart of holiness, to accept and accomplish God's will in our very different lives.

In every Our Father we pray it: "Thy will be done." So Mary replied to the angel, "May it be done to me according to your word."

We honor you, O Mary, in the Angel Gabriel's words: "Hail, Mary, full of grace . . ."

*Father John Hamrogue, C.Ss.R.
Philadelphia*



March 26 Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

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

As priests we witness the making of a covenant each time we celebrate a wedding. The bride and groom stand before God and give themselves to each other in a covenant. They love and trust each other so much that they freely bind themselves to each other by sacred vows, to love each other in an “everlasting pact.” The symbol of their covenant is the rings they give to each other “as a sign of my love and my fidelity to you.”

In today’s first reading God enters into a covenant with Abram and his descendents forever. He calls it an “everlasting pact.” It is an expression of God’s total and complete love for His people. “I will be your God, you will be My people.”

The Old Testament is full of stories of the infidelity of human beings to their part of the covenant. Yet God’s love is constant and faithful. The cross of Jesus Christ is like a wedding ring. It is the visible sign of God’s eternal, complete, and forgiving love for us, His people.

As we look on Jesus crucified, may we know that “the Lord remembers His covenant forever.”

*Father John McKenna, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

March 27 Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent

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

Today’s Gospel opens with a group of people picking up stones to throw at Jesus and ends with another group of people believing in Him. To which group do you belong? The one wanting to kill Him? Or the one that listens to Him and accepts His message?

In one way or another, both of these groups followed Jesus throughout His life. At His birth King Herod sought His death,

while the Magi bowed down and paid Him homage. During His public ministry the scribes and Pharisees plotted to have Him arrested and executed, while His disciples sat at His feet and listened to His life-giving words.

At the end of His earthly sojourn, Pilate ordered His scourging and crucifixion, while Mary and the beloved disciple wept in sorrow at the foot of His cross. Even after His death these two groups pursued Him in the members of His body, the Church. Some sought the death of His followers. Others went out to make disciples of all nations.

To which group do you belong? As Holy Week approaches, let us examine our hearts and ask ourselves whether our words say one thing but our thoughts and actions quite another.

*Father Dennis Billy, C.Ss.R.
Wynnewood, Pa.*

March 28 Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent

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

John's Gospel today helps us understand the miraculous sign of Lazarus' resurrection by Jesus. Of the seven signs in John's Gospel, this is the last and the most important.

It helps us understand more deeply Jesus' declaration: "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to Myself." Jesus dies to show that His mission is to give eternal life to all mankind, not just a few.

He dies for all the children of the loving Father: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him might not perish but might have eternal life."

That is how the Messiah tells us He is the one promised by the Father. He is the one who fulfills God's plan to send us His son through the Holy Spirit. This is why St. Luke says, "The angel Gabriel was sent by God . . . to a virgin betrothed to a man named

Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary.”

The angel greets the young woman with these words: “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you. . . . Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold, you will conceive . . . and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.”

Mary responds with her *fiat*: “May your word to me be fulfilled.”

*Father John Lavin, C.Ss.R.
Boston*

March 29 Passion (Palm) Sunday

Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47

“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

This line, spoken by Jesus on the cross, is an invitation for us to listen to the passion story we hear today through the prayer presented in Psalm 22. These words are the first line of that psalm.

As you read over Psalm 22, listen especially for three themes:

First, there is a statement of what is unfolding at the crucifixion: “all who see me mock me” (v. 8), “they have pierced my hands and my feet” (v. 17), and “for my clothing they cast lots” (v. 19).

Second, there is a statement of total trust in God the Father, even in the midst of misery: God “did not turn away from me but heard me when I cried out” (v. 25).

Third, there is a statement about why these events are unfolding, so that “All the ends of the earth will worship and turn to God” (v. 28) and “the generation to come will be told of the Lord, that they may proclaim to a people yet unborn the deliverance you have brought” (v. 32).

Today let the passion story unfold through the words of Psalm 22.

*Father John Kingsbury, C.Ss.R.
Washington, D.C.*

March 30 Monday of Holy Week

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

When Mary anointed Jesus' feet with costly perfume, Judas said the money would have been better used for the poor. Jesus told him, "The poor you always have with you. This is an anointing for my burial."

Years ago a young woman visited Mother Teresa in Calcutta. She wanted to figure out just what she should do with her life. In their back yard the sisters cared for the old and sick. There was a raised stone table where they would wash the bodies of the old and sick and weak people. It was a wonderful act of love.

Many of these same people, just like Jesus, would soon die. But what struck deep into the soul of this woman were the words chiseled on the side of that stone table: *This is my body.*

The stone table was an altar. The bodies of the old being washed upon it were the very same body of Christ. When we serve the poor in any way, we are anointing the body of Christ.

*Father Thomas Deely, C.Ss.R.
Esopus, N.Y.*

March 31 Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71; John 13:21-33, 36-38

I believe it is the prayer of each of us as Catholics that we die a holy and peaceful death. When that moment comes, we pray we will be blessed with the presence of a priest to receive our last sacraments. We pray for the comfort of family and loved ones to ease our passage. We pray the love of God will embrace us at the hour of our death. We pray God will not abandon us.

The Gospel today speaks of the anguish and troubled spirit that filled the heart and soul of Jesus as the hour of His death drew near. Such goodness He had shown all His life long. And what

about the comfort offered by His loved ones, the disciples? One of you will betray me! One of you will deny me! For Jesus there would be no going peacefully, softly, and quietly to His death.

Yet Isaiah and John proclaim the glory of God manifested in this suffering servant. Holy is His death that makes our death holy! All for love of you and me! Let us sing of our salvation in this most holy week: “Save us, Savior of the world, for by Your cross and resurrection, You have set us free.”

*Father Denis Sweeney, C.Ss.R.
Boston*

April / Wednesday of Holy Week

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

Today we sadly remember the betrayal of Jesus, as Judas Iscariot conspired to hand Him over for 30 pieces of silver. Jesus had trusted Judas as a friend and a brother. And now His trusted friend who had eaten with Him had risen up against Him (Psalm 41:10).

The betrayal of Jesus calls to mind the betrayals we have experienced. Some are minor, such as a friend’s breaking a promise or someone’s using us for their advantage. Others are major—such as the infidelity of a spouse or being rejected by family members.

Betrayal is a very painful emotional event. Our own experience of betrayal gives us a small glimpse of what Jesus must have felt when He was betrayed by Judas.

As we unite ourselves today with the betrayed Jesus, we pray for healing from the betrayals we have experienced and the divine grace to forgive our betrayers.

As the resurrection of Jesus brought victory over His betrayal and the cross, by that same grace, may healing, goodness, and strength arise from the pain of the betrayals that have befallen us.

*Father Peter Sousa, C.Ss.R.
Sumter, S.C.*

April 2 Holy Thursday

*Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14; Psalm 116; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26;
John 13:1-15*

As pastor of a parish, I find that it is my honor to be the celebrant of the Holy Thursday Mass in our parish. This feast is so very rich in meaning: the Eucharistic celebration invites us into the wonder and mystery of the Last Supper as Jesus gives us the most precious gift of His Body and Blood.

Flowing from the institution of the Eucharist is the establishment of the priesthood for the Church. At the end of the Mass, a procession of the Eucharist moves around the church, and there is a solemn period of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

This recalls the desire of Jesus to have His apostles “watch one hour with Me” as He prayed to His Father in the Garden of Gethsemane.

All of these wonders move the heart to prayer, but I find the act of Jesus’ washing the feet of His disciples—the first sermon given at a Mass, and one without words—to be the most moving moment of a night filled with grace.

Holy Thursday is a night to adore God and to see Him in our brothers and sisters.

*Father Patrick Woods, C.Ss.R.
Bethpage, N.Y.*

April 3 Good Friday

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

*What wondrous love is this that caused the Lord of bliss
To bear the dreadful curse for my soul?*

Many of us will be singing those words at a service today. The day seems to be one full of sorrow and evil.

Yet this is the day when we see the full extent of God's love for each and every one of us. Of all the days in the history of the world—the day of creation, the day of our birth—this day stands out as the day we see the full extent of God's love for us.

We may weep as we recall the tremendous agony Our Lord endured, but those tears of sorrow should turn to tears of joy as we reflect on this unheard-of act of charity:

“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends” (John 15:13).

What a great day to celebrate the love of the One who laid down His life for us, whom He calls friends!

*Provincial Superior Father Paul Borowski, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

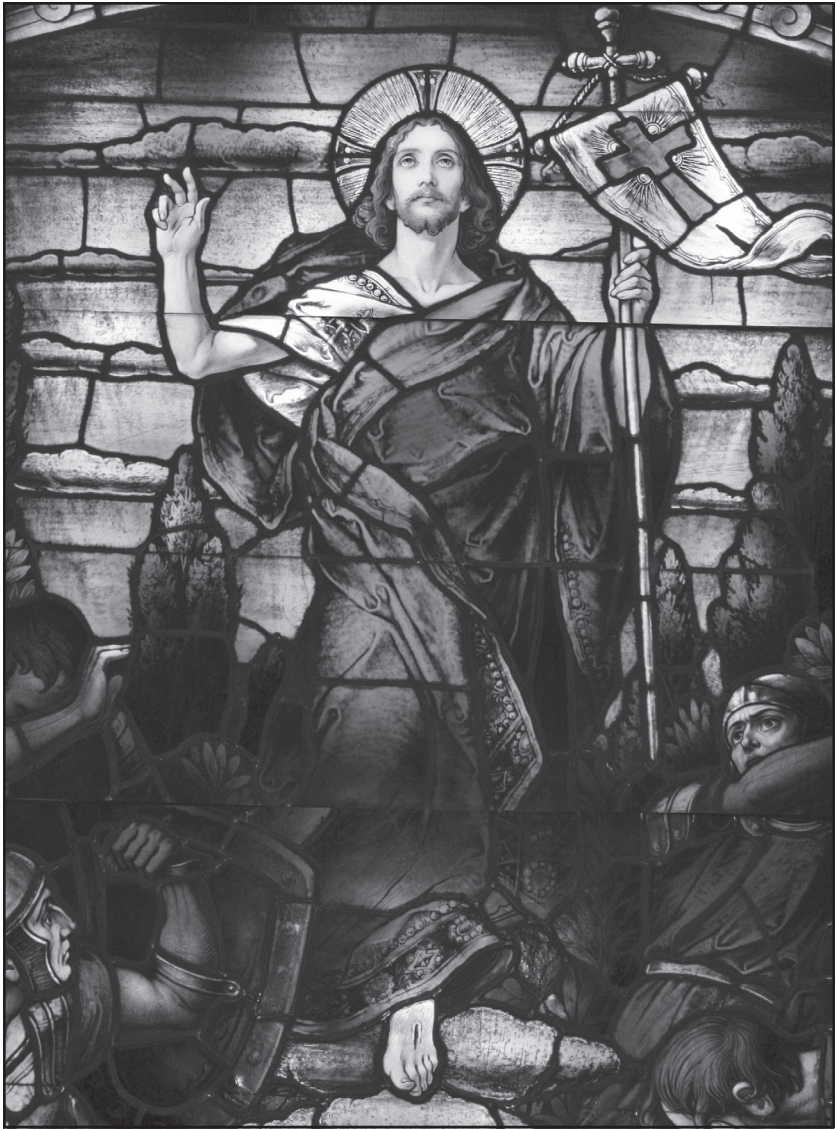
April 4 Holy Saturday

*Genesis 1:1–2:2; Psalm 104; Genesis 22:1–18; Psalm 16;
Exodus 14:15–15:1; Exodus 15:1–6, 17–18; Isaiah 54:5–14; Psalm 30;
Isaiah 55:1–11; Isaiah 12:2–6; Baruch 3:9–15, 32–38, 4:1–4; Psalm 19;
Ezekiel 36:16–28; Psalm 42; Romans 6:3–11; Psalm 118; Mark 16:1–7*

Holy Saturday is one of the most sacred days of the year for all Christians and Catholics. It is a day for us to reflect on the passion, crucifixion, and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. It is a day for us to give thanks to the Lord for His mercy, forgiveness, and love.

Holy Saturday is also a day of great anticipation, as we wait for the resurrection of the Lord. Tonight the Lord proclaims, by His resurrection, that sin, suffering, death, and Satan have no power over Him. We too can proclaim that sin, suffering, death, and Satan cannot conquer or destroy us if Jesus Christ lives in us.

Holy Saturday is a day and night of wondering—the perfect time to reflect on God's mercy, forgiveness, and love and to give thanks for God's power, strength, blessing, and life in us.



Holy Saturday is the Lord's Day. Holy Saturday is also our day. Let us be glad and rejoice in it!

A happy and blessed Easter to you!

*Father Kevin Moley, C.Ss.R.
Brooklyn, N.Y.*

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With Him is plentiful redemption. (Psalm 130:7)