

**PASTOR'S MEANDERINGS
FIFTH SUNDAY LENT**

20 – 21 MARCH 2021



SUNDAY REFLECTION

The Lenten season has been a time for us to reflect on the essential teachings of our faith, to confront our own failures and express our desires for renewal, to become ever more aware of our weakness and inability to truly be messengers of the Lord' teaching to the world. Today's readings get us ready for the most solemn week in the Church's liturgical year, namely Holy Week. The responsorial psalm is so appropriate as we pray. 'Have mercy on us, God, in Your kindness ... cleanse us from our sin ... put a steadfast spirit within us ... nor deprive us of Your Holy Spirit. Give us again the joy of Your help, and with a spirit of fervor sustain us.'

Jesus is aware that He has come into the world precisely to live through the events of Holy Week. He does not ask to be saved from their horror, on the contrary He has come for this

purpose. Like a grain of wheat buried in the ground gives rise to fruitful new growth, so too Jesus will give His life for others. On Holy Thursday we will read of the Passover lamb that was sacrificed as a petition to God for the fruitfulness of the flock. Jesus calls His followers to be servants as He too became the Servant of God whose profound sufferings will be described in Isaiah's fourth servant song on Good Friday. Jesus' passion in John excludes a trial before the Jewish authorities, focusing rather on the trial before Pilate, for John sees Jesus' death as a confrontation between two worlds, the world of darkness and hatred and the world of light and love. Today he can say, 'Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out' (Jn. 12:31).

So, while the gospel summarizes several themes from Holy Week, the letter to the Hebrews reminds us that Jesus represents us before God as our high priest mediating between God and humanity. Innocent Himself, He bears our sins and His prayer on our behalf is heard. The short reading also reminds us that through obedience to His teachings we now can find salvation in Jesus.

This salvation consists in a new way of life before God, a new covenant in which Jesus gives us His own Holy Spirit to live within our hearts as the source of values and a way of life. No longer slaves to laws, we are now challenged to live in union with the Spirit who abides within us. Today's readings offer the opportunity to touch on the major themes of Holy Week. It can be a great occasion to not only think about what lies ahead in the great rituals but also a time to ready our hearts to both receive the message and to commit ourselves to live it.

STEWARDSHIP:

Cycle B Readings Masses 5:00 p.m. 7:00 a.m. 8:30 a.m. (Jn. 12:26)

"If anyone would serve Me," says Jesus in today's Gospel, "let him follow Me; where I am, there will My servant be." In what way is Jesus inviting *me* to follow Him? What service is He asking of me?

Cycle A Readings Mas 11:30 a.m. (Jn. 11:4)

When Jesus heard about the illness of His friend, Lazarus, He responded, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Every aspect of our lives – our sufferings as well as our gifts – can, if surrendered to Christ, lead to blessing for ourselves and others.

READINGS FOR PALM SUNDAY

28 MAR '21

Mk. 11:1-10

Is. 50:4-7: Here in the words of a prophet we listen to the voice of a mysterious figure known as the Servant of the Lord. He tells us that from experience he has learned what suffering was, and through his experience was brought to understand the troubles of others. All this is particularly true of Christ.

Phil. 2:6-11: Jesus, Son of God, could have chosen a life of glory and happiness on earth. Instead of this He chose to become like us and to suffer for our sakes. After this humiliation came glory.

Mk. 14:1-15:47: Jesus undergoes humiliating suffering and death patiently. For Him it is part of the Father's saving plan. At Jesus' death, the pagan soldier on duty confesses that Jesus is Son of God.

THIRD SCRUTINY 11:30 A.M. MASS

Readings from Year A Ezek 37:12-14; Rm. 8:8-11; Jn. 11:1-45

A thought on John 11: The drama of the gospel draws our attention to the moment when Lazarus comes out of the tomb, but the heart of the gospel is the statement and question of Jesus to Martha (vv.25-27). "If anyone believes in Me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?" One could say that all of Lent is meant to help us to renew our individual answers to that question, and toward living the response in our daily actions, that God's path really does bring us to a new life.

This divine life with God is so much more than just a continuation of ordinary earthly existence. It is a genuine transformation in the power of divine love. The dying and rising of baptism are symbolized by Lazarus coming out of the tomb. Just as Jesus calls: 'Lazarus, come out!', so is He also calling us to renew our baptismal mission.

HAS LENT STALLED?

LOOKING FOR SOME WAY OF RE-ENERGIZING IT IN THIS LAST TWO WEEKS?

If we look back over the past four weeks since Ash Wednesday do we find that the best of intentions have faded a bit? Have those three qualities of Lenten exercise diminished in how they are recognized in our life resulting in a shrug and an 'oh-well-no-big-deal'? Perhaps followed by a bit of guilt and regret.

Regardless, there's still enough Lent remaining to shift into higher gear. Passiontide — the last two weeks of Lent — is all about diving deeper. For starters, it's good to reevaluate if we are covering the basics well—the three pillars of Lent: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. "Give alms...Pray to your Father...Fast without a gloomy face..." (Matthew 6:1-18). Lent is a focused time to participate in these three things to grow in love and charity seeking a new life in Christ. Below are ideas from Patti Maguire Armstrong's book *Holy Hacks: Everyday Ways to Live Your Faith & Get to Heaven.*

Prayer

1. Pray for others. One of the spiritual works of mercy is praying for the living and the dead.
2. Thank God for every inconvenience during Lent. "And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him," (Colossians 3:17).
3. Take your suffering and unite it with the passion and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. *In Divine Mercy in My Soul: The Diary of St. Faustina*, she wrote: "I make a voluntary offering of myself for the conversion of sinners, especially for those souls who have lost hope in

God's mercy," (309). "My sacrifice is nothing in itself, but when I join it to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, it becomes all powerful." (482).

4. Plan a time of prayer so Lent feels different from not Lent.
5. Make a post on Facebook offering to take people's prayers to adoration. Be warned, prayer requests will keep coming after you have returned from adoration. You could schedule another adoration time, bring the additional intentions with you the next time, or take down the post before you leave home. There are many people in need of prayers.
6. Pray for the souls in purgatory. "It is therefore a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins" (2 Maccabees 12:46).
7. Pray the Stations of the Cross at home or church. According to Brother Estanislao (1903-1927) Jesus made promises to those with a devotion to "The Way of the Cross," including, strong spiritual protection, filling them with graces, and being close to them in life, especially at the hour of death. There is also a plenary indulgence attached to praying the stations at church or at a site where you move from station to station.
8. Pray for anyone who irritates or troubles you as you go through your day.

Fasting

9. Skip a meal. Perhaps offer it up for those who don't have the option of eating.
11. Have only one meal a day.
12. Abstain from something at each meal. It could be mustard on your sandwich, the main course, french fries, salad dressing... just something that is a sacrifice. St. Francis de Sales advised people never to leave the table without having refused themselves something.
13. Pick a day or a meal where you just fast on bread and water. Andrew LaVallee, Founder of Live the Fast explains: "A bread and water fast also teaches us to distinguish between what we need versus what we want, and we enter into a poor spirit' as our food is simple yet fulfilling."
14. Eat only for health and survival. Keep meals plain such as a hard-boiled egg, dry toast and a banana. That used to be St. Teresa of Calcutta's daily breakfast.
15. Do not eat between meals.
15. Fast from vanity. Don't wear jewelry or makeup or go without one of those items such as earrings or mascara. Intentionally wear clothing you don't particularly like. Then, get on about your day forgetting about your appearance. Focusing more on others which will reflect your real beauty.

Almsgiving

16. Ask God to reveal the Lazarus' s in your life that need your giving. "Lazarus lay dying outside the rich man's house, ignored, except for the dogs that licked his wounds. When both men died, Lazarus went to heaven, but the rich man did not" (Luke 16:19-31).

17. If you abstain from something that costs money such as coffee or cigarettes, give that money to the poor.

18. Fundraise online by sharing appeals for worthy causes.

19. Make your giving hurt so it's not from your excess.

20. Go through your closets and house. Pick out something you love and give it to charity. Find an item a day or an item a week. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:16-21).

If you should grow weary during Lent, it's confirmation of real sacrifice. And Lent does not last forever. "And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up" (Galatians 6:9).

ANOTHER SUNDAY WITH A SPECIFIC NAME

PASSION SUNDAY & PASSIONTIDE

Christians use the word "passion" to describe the suffering endured by Jesus during the last few days of his life, especially the Crucifixion (*see also* Cross). This usage harks back to the origins of the word. Although we associate the English word passion with strong emotion, it in fact comes from the Latin *passio*, which means "suffering." In past times the fifth Sunday in Lent was known as Passion Sunday. This name came from one of the Bible readings assigned to that day in Roman Catholic churches, which compared the animal sacrifices made by ancient Jewish priests with Jesus' sacrifice of His own life (Heb. 9:12-15). This reading reminded the congregation of Jesus' sacrificial death, to be commemorated the following week on Good Friday. Indeed, Passion Sunday inaugurated a special season within Lent known as Passiontide. Traditionally the final two weeks of Lent in the Roman Rite are used as an immediate preparation for the sorrowful events of the Easter drama. It is a period of time to focus more and more on the Passion and death of Jesus and so accompany him on his way to Calvary. For several centuries the Fifth Sunday of Lent was known as "Passion Sunday" and marked the beginning of a special sub-season called Passiontide, which extended up until Holy Saturday. During this time the Church's liturgy became more somber and a sorrowful mood was reflected in the various practices that occurred in the liturgy.

The most obvious example of a more somber mood was the veiling of statues and images, which remains an optional practice in the current *Roman Missal*: "In the Dioceses of the United States, the practice of covering crosses and images throughout the church from the Fifth Sunday of Lent may be observed. Crosses remain covered until the end of the Celebration of the Lord's Passion on Good Friday, but images remain covered until the beginning of the Easter Vigil."

It was also on the Friday of this initial "Passion Week" that the feast of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary was celebrated (it is now fixed annually on September 15). The current *Roman Missal* still provides an alternative prayer for that day (Friday in the Fifth Week of Lent), remembering Mary's own bitter passion.

O God, who in this season give your Church the grace to imitate devoutly the Blessed Virgin Mary in contemplating the Passion of Christ, grant, we pray, through her intercession, that we may cling more firmly each day to your Only Begotten Son and come at last to the fullness of his grace.

Palm Sunday was seen as the "Second Sunday in Passiontide," and is currently listed in the liturgical calendar as "Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion." It is on this day that the Passion narrative is read, the longest Sunday Gospel reading of the entire year. The Church beckons us on Palm Sunday to look toward the cross and see Christ's immense love for us, sacrificing himself for our sins. It is a preview of what is to come on Good Friday.

After Palm Sunday, Passion Week gives way to Holy Week and the Church follows Jesus during his final days in Jerusalem. The Passion narrative was traditionally proclaimed during Mass on each day of Holy Week leading up to Holy Thursday.

Wednesday during this week is known as "Spy Wednesday" and signified the day on which Judas betrayed Jesus and informed the Sanhedrin of his plan.

Various other practices occurred during these final two weeks of Lent, such as Stations of the Cross and the Tenebrae services. In the end, Passiontide is meant to be a special penitential period where we focus on Jesus' bitter passion and foster within ourselves sorrow for our sins. The good news is that Passiontide does not have the last say, and this somber period of preparation ends quickly so that our hearts can rejoice in the beauty of Christ's resurrection.

ST. JOSEPH

Sacred Scripture is the principle foundation for devotion to St. Joseph under the various patronages the Church has accorded to him. The slowness of the development of his devotion throughout history is traceable to the predominance of the non-scriptural, false images of him presented by the apocryphal writings. Joseph serves today as a patron and model for all people in general, and for many individual groups in particular. This chapter ends by listing some of the lights in which he may be seen, as grounded directly in Scripture, or as extrapolated from the Scriptural data and suggested for contemporary society.

1) Model disciple, dedicating his whole life to the interests of Jesus. Joseph is an example of faith, righteousness, trust in God's providence, and prompt obedience to God's call.

2) Patron of the Church. This title results from a combination of various elements: a) Paul's theology of the Church as an extension of Christ, the mystical body; b) an extension of John's and Luke's type of theology by which Mary, the mother of Jesus, also in some sense becomes mother of the Church (*Jn. 19:26-27; Acts 1:14*); c) The Apostles' Creed doctrine of the "communion of the saints," understood to mean that the deceased and saved continue to pray for their fellow Christians on earth. As Joseph protected the physical body of the child Jesus on earth, so does he continue to protect, through his intercessory prayer from heaven, the

mystical body of Christ, the Church. As the mother of Christ is called mother of the Church, so also her husband, the guardian of Christ, is called the protector of the Church.

3) Patron of Husbands and of the Engaged. Joseph exhibits the deepest love for his fiancée and wife, and the highest respect for women. He in no way seeks to use Mary, but rather to give himself to her in accord with his God-given vocation. His call to live a virginal relationship with her does not deter him from immediately and whole-heartedly taking her as his wife. He is an example of true spousal love. For fiancés he is an example of sexual respect during engagement. For the married who for a good reason must postpone another pregnancy, he is a model of the loving abstinence they must exercise during the fertile times in order to practice natural family planning, rather than have recourse to artificial contraceptives, which may be easier, but which are not in harmony with their commitment in Christ. His virginal relationship to Mary, however, does not indicate a lack of openness to offspring: Joseph is a model of acceptance of children in marriage, in his quick response to do so when so told by the angel. Mary and Joseph have a unique vocation to virginal marriage because their love is already blessed with the greatest of offspring, the Son of God, with which no number of other children could ever compare.

4) Patron of Fathers. Joseph models total self-sacrificing concern to provide for, protect, raise, educate, and be an example to the child entrusted to him. He shows that authentic fatherhood consists in much more than physical generation. He constantly recognizes the subordination of his role to the primordial Fatherhood of God, always cooperating and never interfering with his designs.

5) Patron of Family Life. With Jesus and Mary, Joseph is a model of unity, love and shared faith, showing the priority of family life over one's individual interests, and also the necessity of family life as a basis for learning to form community as Church.

6) Protector of the Unborn and of Pregnant Mothers. After Mary, no one appreciates life in the womb more than St. Joseph. In faith he recognized the baby in Mary's womb as the Incarnate God, and was willing to make any sacrifice to care for that life, and for the mother called to bear it. In our age of rampant abortion, Joseph calls us as a society and as individuals to recognize the divine source of life and to always respect and defend it.

7) Model of Workers. Joseph the carpenter, who teaches his profession to Jesus, shows the dignity of work, which is measured not by earning power or prestige, but by the love and motivation with which it is done daily.

8) Patron of the Marginalized, Emigrants, Refugees, and Those Discriminated Against. The father of Jesus experienced all these hardships in the persecution by Herod and in the attitude of the ruling Judean authorities towards people from Galilee. He shows that one's dignity does not consist in social, political, or economic standing, but in one's inner integrity in being true to one's own calling. God favors and protects the lowly.

9) Model of Humility, the Hidden Life, and the Sanctification of the Ordinary. Joseph's great sanctity is accompanied by no great words or deeds. The details of his life remain lost to history. Jesus' first thirty years belong to the "hidden life" at Nazareth. Joseph teaches us that holiness need not catch the world's attention. It consists, rather, in being lovingly faithful to the ordinary: family, work, religious observance, the indications of circumstances, and God's revelation.

10) Model of Contemplative Union with Christ. Besides Joseph's total availability to God's will, his daily life is dedicated to union with Christ. He is known as the "saint of silence," because no word of his has been preserved (except the name "Jesus" which he gave the child). He is thus a model of the interior life and contemplative prayer.

11) Patron of Apostles. Joseph's role in large part is to prepare Jesus for his life and ministry. All involved in apostolic ministry may learn from him those attitudes and virtues needed to bring Christ to others.

12) Patron of a Happy Death. Total lack of mention of Joseph during Jesus' public ministry, even when Mary is present, leads to the assumption that he had already died. His acceptance of this death would be consistent with his quiet fulfillment of his role, followed by a gentle fading from the scene so as not to interfere with Jesus' proclamation of his divine Sonship. His death in the arms of Jesus and Mary is the envy of every true Christian believer. Joseph's role in the Scriptures will always be important for the life of the Church, because with him we celebrate our earliest origins as a Christian community. His union with Mary and Christ in the mystery of the Incarnation means that he can never be far from us, Christ's body.

St. Patrick's Breastplate

As a nod to the previous feast of St. Patrick, what is the meaning behind his prayer entitled "The Breastplate of St. Patrick"?

St. Patrick's Breastplate (also called the Lorica, from the Latin word for Roman armor) is a prayer to take up arms in spiritual battle. Summoning the forces of heaven to combat the armies of hell, this prayer attributed to the Apostle of Ireland contains a wealth of theological wisdom. On the feast of St. Patrick, take a moment to pray and reflect on these ancient, powerful words.

I arise today

Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,

Through belief in the Threeness,

***Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.***

St. Patrick's prayer starts with the central mystery of the Christian faith: the Holy Trinity. The Christian God is one in three, three in one. The eternal Father begets the Son, and together they breathe forth the Holy Spirit. **Eternal and infinite, the love of Father, Son, and Spirit pours forth upon the world.** The diffused goodness of God, a goodness so great that it cannot be contained, spills out upon all creation, making and forming the world in love.

I arise today

Through the strength of Christ's birth with His baptism,

Through the strength of His crucifixion with His burial,

Through the strength of His resurrection with His ascension,

Through the strength of His descent for the judgment of doom.

Against the threats of the fallen world, against the powers of darkness and sin, the mysteries of the life, suffering, and resurrection of Christ stand as the source of our hope. **Recalling these mighty works of God invites the graces of Christ's victory over death into the present moment.** No mere psychological affirmation, contemplating these mysteries binds us to Christ's triumph giving us strength in the here and now.

***I arise today
Through the strength of the love of cherubim,
In the obedience of angels,
In the service of archangels,
In the hope of resurrection to meet with reward,
In the prayers of patriarchs,
In the predictions of prophets,
In the preaching of apostles,
In the faith of confessors,
In the innocence of holy virgins,
In the deeds of righteous men.***

Isolation is a great cause of spiritual sadness. Patrick, who had been enslaved and tended sheep alone on a mountain for six years, knew how to call upon the hosts of heaven for inspiration and consolation. **No Christian is ever alone.** We have our guardian angels, the saints in heaven, and the support of God's holy people at our side. Naming the ranks and choirs of intercessors, recognizing those we have near to us always, helps us fight the feeling of being forsaken or abandoned.

***I arise today, through
The strength of heaven,
The light of the sun,
The radiance of the moon,
The splendor of fire,
The speed of lightning,
The swiftness of wind,
The depth of the sea,
The stability of the earth,
The firmness of rock.***

For so many the wonders of the natural world speak clearly of the awesome power of God. These lines may call to mind similar songs of creation, in Scripture or perhaps the prayer by St. Francis. **Here in this prayer we declare that nothing, not power of earth or hell, is as strong as the God who made all that is.** Creation speaks to us of God's total mastery of all that is.

***I arise today, through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,
God's host to save me
From snares of devils,***

***From temptation of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,
afar and near.***

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, given at Baptism and renewed at Confirmation, direct and animate our Christian lives. **We may be tempted to believe that we are left to our own devices to defend or announce our faith. But nothing could be further from the truth!** The Holy Spirit, who dwells in our hearts, will advise us, providing direction even in the quotidian.

I summon today

***All these powers between me and those evils,
Against every cruel and merciless power
that may oppose my body and soul,
Against incantations of false prophets,
Against black laws of pagandom,
Against false laws of heretics,
Against craft of idolatry,
Against spells of witches and smiths and wizards,
Against every knowledge that corrupts man's body and soul;
Christ to shield me today
Against poison, against burning,
Against drowning, against wounding,
So that there may come to me an abundance of reward.***

Forces of evil are at work in our world. **We should not hesitate to condemn, as the Breastplate does, those evils that allure and deceive.** Perhaps we simply put too much stock in a horoscope, play with tarot cards, or seek a psychic reading. Even these solicitations can open a soul to the wiles of darkness. As believers, we shouldn't hesitate to pray against these and other villainous incursions.

***Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.***

The work of Christian life is to be conformed to Christ. **The height of St. Patrick's prayer, then, expresses here in poetic terms, the union of soul and Savior.** In traditional Catholic spirituality,

a believer who lives in close harmony with Jesus can be called *an alter Christus*, that is, another Christ.

I arise today

Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,

Through belief in the Threeness,

Through confession of the Oneness

of the Creator of creation.

The final lines of the Breastplate repeat the opening lines. While notable and lovely simply in terms of its poetic expression, a deeper truth is here expressed. **Everything—all that is, was, and will be—comes forth from the love of God and returns back to him.** Philosophers call this structure the *exitus-reditus*. God, the origin of all things, calls all things back unto himself. Thus the journey of Christian life – conversion, mission, and redemption – unfolds in every life this dynamic plan of God, intended from the beginning.

DAILY SCRIPTURE REFLECTIONS FIFTH WEEK OF LENT 22 – 27 MARCH

MONDAY 22 MAR Lenten Weekday

Dn. 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62: Tis wisdom story plays out in an unusual way. The senior people ought to be figures whose wise and honest behavior would lead to truth and freedom. In contrast, it is the unexpected young person who analyses the circumstances sharply and brings matters to a just conclusion.

Jn. 8:1-11: The events of Chapter 8 take place after the great and last day of the feast, but still within the Temple precincts. Jesus shows Himself as the one who deals with sin. One of the major elements of the cluster of celebrations which surround the Feast of Tabernacles, is the Day of Atonement, when the Jewish high priest had to go through the ritual which cleansed Israel of sin. In this passage we see the contrasting attitudes of Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Jesus offers merciful understanding and forgiveness.

Today, we hear of two women – one who is falsely accused of adultery, and one caught in adultery. The first is saved by the courage of a young man who, moved by the Holy Spirit, speaks out. The second is saved, not because she is innocent but because neither is anyone else in the crowd. When called to look at themselves, no one could cast the first stone. It is easy to be self-righteous when we don't look in the mirror. The two women can be seen as representing aspects of the Kingdom: the innocent are saved, and the sinner is forgiven. In order for these things to happen, people must have the courage to speak out in favor of the innocent and to look deeply at their own lives before judging others.

TUESDAY 23 MAR Lenten Weekday St. Turibius of Mogrovejo

Nm. 21:4-9: The Israelites find healing by looking on a brazen image of the source of their affliction. This becomes a figure of the Christian looking in faith on the crucified Jesus. The awfulness of sin is seen. But there is healing also in the cross of Jesus as the creative

love of Jesus overcomes the waves of hatred hurled at Him in death.

Jn. 8:21-30: Jesus renews His conversation, this time with the Pharisees. Topics include His identity and His passion, presented as His going away where the audience cannot follow. He speaks of Himself in divine terms: 'I am He'. His nature will be revealed when He is lifted up – a Johannine way of speaking of His crucifixion. The cross reveals the absolute commitment of God to humanity in love and so reveals the true face of God. The response to this discourse of Jesus is that many come to faith in Him.

Just like the people of Israel in the desert who only had to look at the banner of the fiery serpent to be saved, so must we look upon the Son of Man raised up on the cross to be saved. There is a paradox here. In the First Reading the very thing that is causing all the suffering in the camp, i.e. , the fiery serpent, is the very thing that becomes an object of healing in the form of a banner. In the Gospel, the Son of Man will be recognized for who He is at the moment of what appears to be defeat, His crucifixion.

WEDNESDAY 24 MAR Lenten Weekday

Dn. 3:14-20, 91-92, 95: The three young men are presented as ideals of Jewish loyalty to their belief in God, despite the demands of a foreign tyrant. God's commitment saves them from the danger and their fidelity convinces the great king to worship the true God. There is irony in the liturgical sense of the readings: it is in the contrast between the success of their loyalty and the futility of the misguided loyalty of the Jews in the Gospel.

Jn. 8:31-42: This cycle is addressed to the Jews who believe in Jesus, which is almost a contradiction in John's terminology. Jesus summons the people of faith to live in His word. This brings the Christian to truth and freedom. Jesus' mission from the Father is the center of God's dealings with humanity, and all people are called to be at one with Him through the word of Jesus. This puts all other religious figures in a minor position, even Abraham. The Jews balk at this diminution of their great father figure. The irony is that Jesus' word offers to make them children of God at home in the house of God's word.

Jesus said to those Jews who believed in him, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Jn. 8:31-32)

These words have the potential to make a transforming difference in our lives. Note that Jesus spoke these words "to those Jews who believed in him." That is, those who had accepted His word and were, therefore, His true disciples. We who also believe in Jesus should consider these words carefully. The heart of this teaching is twofold: you must come to "know the truth" so that the truth you come to know "will set you free."

This teaching of Jesus is exceptionally helpful on both a psychological and spiritual level. First of all, on a purely psychological level, one of the greatest helps to good mental health is the truth. Most often when one struggles with various forms of depression, it's because they are seeing aspects of their life with confusion. "Why did this person do this to me?" Or "How will I ever get through this?" Or "My life is a mess and there is no way out." These and other similar thoughts will inevitably lead to depression for one simple reason: they are based on erroneous thinking. One of the best forms of psychological counselling is what could be called "truth therapy." Every despairing question that we have and every depressing conclusion that we have come to

in life must be reexamined in the light of the mind of God. What does God think? What is in the mind of God in this regard? Those truths that are waiting to be discovered are the truth that “will set you free.” Depression is more easily overcome when we look at our life in the way that God looks at our life. This produces hope, and hope brings freedom to the chains of depression and confusion.

On a spiritual level, these principles apply all the more. The truth about sin, forgiveness, salvation and Heaven must be known deeply and embraced fully. When we deny the truth of sin or forgiveness, then we live within a lie and we remain bound by that lie. True spiritual freedom that leads to salvation and eternity in Heaven is obtained only when we wholeheartedly embrace the holy and perfect spiritual truth given to us by God. We must clearly know our sin, repent of it, seek the forgiveness of God, amend our lives and live the new life of grace to which we are called.

Reflect, today, upon this powerfully transforming teaching of Jesus: “know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” What psychological and spiritual truths do you need to more deeply know? What confusion or blindness remains? Seek the remedy of the Truth as it is in the mind of God and know that freedom awaits.

God of all Truth, Your Word is liberating, transforming and fills us with hope. May I turn my mind to You and to Your holy Word so that I may know the Truth as You speak it and allow that transforming Truth to set me free. Jesus, I trust in You.

THURSDAY 25 MAR Solemnity of The Annunciation of the Lord

Is. 7:10-14, 8:10: The king is so concentrated on politics that he cannot see the blessing God is offering the people. The real source of their security is that the young queen will bear a child, and in that event even the king will see that God is with them.

Heb. 10:4-10: The purpose of the incarnation was for the Son of God to offer Himself and to be the true sacrifice that takes away sin.

Lk. 1:26-38: Unlike King Ahaz, Mary is willing to accept the blessing God is offering: through this decision, salvation comes to the whole human race.

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you.” (Lk. 1:26-28)

Imagine if the Angel Gabriel, the glorious Archangel who stands before the Most Holy Trinity, were to come to you and announce to you that you were “full of grace” and that “The Lord is with you.” What an indescribable and awe-inspiring experience that would be! And yet this is exactly what happened to this young teenager, the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We celebrate today this amazing event that took place, marking the moment when God took on human flesh within her blessed womb. Note that today is nine months before Christmas. The Church gives us this Solemnity today to invite us to walk with Mary over these coming nine months so as to join her in her rejoicing over the birth of her divine Son.

Much could be said about this glorious Solemnity. We could ponder Mother Mary and her Immaculate Conception. We could ponder the very words spoken by the Archangel. We could ponder the mystery surrounding her pregnancy and the way in which God chose to set this gift

into motion. And we could ponder so much more. Though all of these aspects are worth fully pondering and praying over, let's focus upon the reaction of this young woman to the angelic announcement.

First, we read that Mary was "greatly troubled" and "pondered" these words spoken by the Archangel. Being troubled reveals that Mary did not have full knowledge of what the Archangel was revealing. But the fact that she pondered the words also reveals her openness to a fuller understanding. She then seeks a deeper gift of knowledge by asking, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?" This response is first an assent of belief in faith followed by a request for a deeper understanding of this revelation. Faith is the ability to assent to that which we do not fully understand, but true faith always seeks a deeper understanding—and this is what Mary did.

After being given some further revelation by the Archangel, Mary fully accepts what was revealed and trusts that what she was told was all she needed to know at that time. And then she offers what has come to be known as her "fiat." She says, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." This *fiat* of Mary is her perfect prayer of surrender to the will of God, and it is also the perfect model for how we all must respond to the will of God. We must see ourselves as true servants of His will, and we must fully embrace whatsoever God asks of us, completely uniting our wills to His.

Reflect, today, upon these words of our Blessed Mother: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." How is God asking you to make this your prayer also? How is God calling you to serve His most holy will? Are you willing to fully assent to anything and everything God asks of you? As you prayerfully reflect upon this *fiat* of our Blessed Mother, seek to unite her response to yours so that you, too, will be a servant of the most high God.

Father in Heaven, You sent Your Son to become incarnate in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Your glorious Archangel Gabriel brought forth this Good News. May I always be attentive to the messages You send forth to me as You invite me to join in Your divine mission of bringing Your Son into the world. I say "Yes" this day, dear Lord, to serve Your most holy will. Jesus, I trust in You.

FRIDAY 26 MAR Lenten Weekday

Jer. 20:10-13: Jeremiah's prayer of complaint voices his suffering in the face of opposition. Jeremiah's pain flows from the depth of his passionate commitment to his people. He cannot but speak the word to them, and their hard-hearted stubbornness makes his hearers immune to change.

Jn. 10:31-42: Today's Gospel reading brings us to an event similar to yesterday's Jesus is to be stoned because of His claim to be one with God. It comes immediately after the discourse on the Good Shepherd, where Jesus speaks about the shepherd laying down his life for the sheep. To counter the objections of the Jews, Jesus appeals to the evidence of His activities, His works. The ultimate work of Jesus will be to give His life. The objectors have no issue with the works; their quarrel is with Jesus claiming to be equal to God. His reply is to quote the Scripture: His mission is in continuity with the Old Testament. The outcome is that Jesus withdraws over the Jordan, but many of the Jews believe in Him.

“If I do not perform my Father’s works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father.” (Jn. 10:37-39)

These words spoken by Jesus took place during the feast of the Dedication in Jerusalem. Jesus had been preaching clearly about His relationship with the Father in Heaven, and this was causing some to become outraged to the point of them trying to arrest Him right then and there. But He escaped and went back into the wilderness where He had been baptized by John. As Jesus remained there in the desert, many people came to Him to be with Him and to listen to His words. As they listened, they began to believe.

It’s interesting to note the contrast of reactions. In Jerusalem within the Temple area, among large crowds gathered for the feast of Dedication, Jesus was increasingly rejected and persecuted. But when He returned to the desert and people had to come to see Him, they listened and believed. This contrast presents us with one way in which we will more easily grow in our faith and help others grow in their faith. Specifically, we are invited to go into the “desert” to encounter our Lord, away from the busyness of life, and we must also invite others to join us in such a journey.

It’s true that, while in Jerusalem, there were people who happened to stumble upon Jesus as He was teaching and were moved by His word and came to believe. But it’s also clear that, when people had to commit to the effort of seeking Him out in a deserted place, His words were even more transformative.

In our own lives, within the ordinary activities of life, such as regular attendance at Mass, we will be given the opportunity to hear the Gospel and deepen our life of faith. But all of us need to take time to seek Jesus out “in the wilderness,” so to speak, so as to be even more disposed to hear Him and believe. These “desert experiences” come in many forms. Perhaps it’s an experience as simple as going into your room alone to pray and ponder the Word of God. Or perhaps it’s a participation in a Bible study, an online devotional program, or parish catechesis event. Or perhaps it’s the choice to go away for a weekend or longer for a guided retreat where all you do for some time is pray and listen to our Lord.

Throughout history, saint after saint has shown us the value of going off to pray to be with our Lord, in a place where the many other distractions of life and the many voices of the world are silenced, so that God can speak to the heart and so that we can more fully respond.

Reflect, today, upon the invitation Jesus is giving you to go out to meet Him in the wilderness. Where is that place? How can you accomplish this short journey while keeping up with the important duties of life? Do not hesitate to seek out the desert to which our Lord is calling you, so that you will be able to meet Him there, listen to His voice, and respond with complete generosity.

My Lord Jesus, You are calling me to enter deeper into a relationship of love with You, my divine Lord. Give me the grace I need to say “Yes” to You and to enter into the desert of silence and prayer I need so as to hear Your voice. Draw me to You, my Lord, and help me to more fully believe all that You wish to say. Jesus, I trust in You.

SATURDAY 27 MAR Lenten Weekday

Ez. 37:21-28: After the great prophecy of the dead bones raised to life through the word

and spirit, Ezekiel continues in Chapter 37 to announce a great future when the idyllic times of David will return and Israel will be united once again. The new shepherd will gather the scattered flock.

Jn. 11:45-56: Today's Gospel signals many changes. Jesus' signs are definitively rejected by the chief priests and Pharisees. But God's providence is still active, as Caiaphas proclaims that the murder they are plotting will have good effects for the people. Jesus withdraws to the edge of the desert. Mention of the time of the Passover feast is significant as Jesus will die at the hour of the slaughter of the Paschal Lamb.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, "What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs. If we leave him alone, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation." (Jn. 11:47-48)

Jesus' public ministry had two primary effects upon the people. For many, they were coming to believe in Him and were hanging on His every word. They sought Him out and began to understand that He was the promised Messiah. This was the response of faith. But the reaction of the chief priests and the Pharisees was far more worldly. In the passage above, we see a group of religious leaders who are completely consumed with worldly concerns to the point that these concerns drown out all matters of faith.

As the Sanhedrin convened and discussed what they should do, Caiaphas, the high priest that year, spoke up and gave advice that perfectly depicts this worldly vision. 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." Caiaphas and many other religious leaders at the time appeared to be far more concerned with their worldly status and power than they were with matters of true faith and eternal salvation. If they were men who deeply loved God and sought only His holy will, then they would have rejoiced that Jesus' ministry was so fruitful in the lives of the people. They would have offered thanks to God, day and night, for the privilege of seeing the prophecies of old about the Messiah come to fruition before their own eyes. They should have had joy and gratitude, and they should have allowed those spiritual blessings to grow within them and give them the courage they needed to go forth and die with our Lord if necessary. But instead, they chose their comfortable lives and worldly status above the truth, and they decided that Jesus needed to die.

One beautiful truth to reflect upon within this context is that God uses all things for His glory and for the salvation of those who believe. With this meeting of the Sanhedrin, these men began to plot the death of Jesus. Eventually they used deceit, manipulation, intimidation and fear to accomplish their goal. But even though from a worldly perspective these misguided religious leaders "won," from a divine perspective, God used their evil to bring about the greatest good the world had ever known. Through their malice, Jesus' passion and death gave way to the new life of the Resurrection.

Reflect, today, upon the fact that God is able to use all things for our good. Be it in the midst of corruption, persecution, discord, sin, illness or any other evil in life, when we turn to God in faith and surrender, He is able to transform all things and bring forth an abundance of good fruit through them if we only let Him and trust in faith. Prayerfully surrender over to God, today, any of the above concerns that have affected you, and allow yourself to believe the

simple truth that nothing can keep you from the glorious fulfillment of the will of God. All things can help toward the salvation of your soul and end in God's eternal glory.

My glorious Lord, You were loved by many but also hated by some. Those with power and authority could not see beyond their worldly ambitions, so they began to plot against You. Give me the grace, dear Lord, to see every act of evil inflicted upon me as an opportunity for You to bring forth good. You are glorious, dear Lord. May You be glorified in all things. Jesus, I trust in You.

PRAYER

The Wound in the Shoulder

It is related in the annals of Clairvaux that St. Bernard asked Our Lord which was His greatest unrecorded suffering and that Our Lord answered, 'I had on my shoulder while I bore My cross on the Way of Sorrows a grievous wound which was more painful than the others which is not recorded by men. Honor this wound with devotion, and I will grant thee whatsoever thou dost ask through its virtue and merit, and in return to all who venerate this wound I will remit to them all their venial sins and will no longer remember their mortal sins.

O most loving Jesus, meek lamb of God, I a miserable sinner, salute and worship the most sacred wound of Thy shoulder. Alone thou didst bear Thy heavy cross which so tore Thy flesh and laid bare Thy bones as to inflict on Thee an anguish greater than any other wound on Thy Blessed Body. I adore Thee, O Jesus, Most Sorrowful, I praise and glorify Thee and give Thee thanks for this most secret painful wound, beseeching Thee by the merit and pain of Thy heavy cross to be merciful to me a sinner and to forgive me my mortal and venial sins and to lead me on towards heaven along the Way of the Cross. Amen.

Prayer Before Work to St. Joseph the Worker

O Glorious Saint Joseph, model of all those who are devoted to labor, obtain for me the grace to work in a spirit of penance for the expiation of my many sins; to work conscientiously, putting the call of duty above my natural inclinations; to work with thankfulness and joy, considering it an honor to employ and develop by means of labor the gifts received from God; to work with order, peace, moderation, and patience, never shrinking from weariness and trials; to work above all with purity of intention and detachment from self, keeping unceasingly before my eyes death and the account that I must give of time lost, talents unused, good omitted, and vain complacency in success, so fatal to the work of God.

All for Jesus, all through Mary, all after thy example, O Patriarch, Saint Joseph. Such shall be my watch-word in life and in death. Amen. (Composed by Pope St. Pius X)

**SCHEDULE FOR THE FIFTH WEEK OF LENT
SATURDAY 20 - SUNDAY 29 MARCH**

Saturday 20 Mar Lenten Weekday

8:30 a.m. Mass (Lenten Preface II Eucharistic Prayer II

9:30 A.M. First Reconciliation Prayer Service

1:00 p.m.- 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Vigil Mass Fifth Sunday of Lent

Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer III B Readings

Sunday 21 Mar Fifth Sunday of Lent

7:00 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer II B Readings

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer III B Readings

11:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer III A Readings

Third Scrutiny

2:00 p.m. Mass Brig

5:00 p.m. Youth Confessions

Monday 22 Mar Lenten Weekday Day Off

6:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer II

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface III & Eucharistic Prayer II

6:00 p.m. Practice

6:00 p.m. Meeting

7:00 p.m. Parish Council

Tuesday 23 Mar Lenten Weekday St. Turibius of Mogrovejo

6:30 a.m. Mass Collect of the Saint Lenten Preface IV & Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Collect of the Saint Lenten Preface IV & Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 p.m. Confirmation Ceremony

Wednesday 24 Mar Lenten Weekday

6:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer for Reconciliation I

7:00 p.m. Confirmation Ceremony

Thursday 25 Mar Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord

6:30 a.m. Mass Glory Proper Collect Creed Preface of the Solemnity & Eucharistic Prayer III

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Glory Proper Collect Creed Preface of the Solemnity & Eucharistic Prayer III

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Confessions

6:30 p.m. Mass Glory, Proper Collect, Creed Preface of the Solemnity & Eucharistic Prayer III

Friday 26 Mar Lenten Weekday

6:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II, Eucharist Prayer for Reconciliation II

7:00 – 8:30 a.m. Confessions

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II, Eucharist Prayer for Reconciliation II

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Adoration & Confessions

7:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross

Saturday 27 Mar Lenten Weekday

8:30 a.m. Mass Lenten Preface II & Eucharistic Prayer II

10:00 a.m. Rehearsals RCIA & Altar Servers

1:00 - 4:30 p.m. Confessions

5:00 p.m. Mass Vigil Palm Sunday

Proper Preface Eucharistic Prayer III

Distribution of Palm

Sunday 28 Mar Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

7:00 a.m. Mass Proper Preface & Eucharistic Prayer II

Distribution of Palm

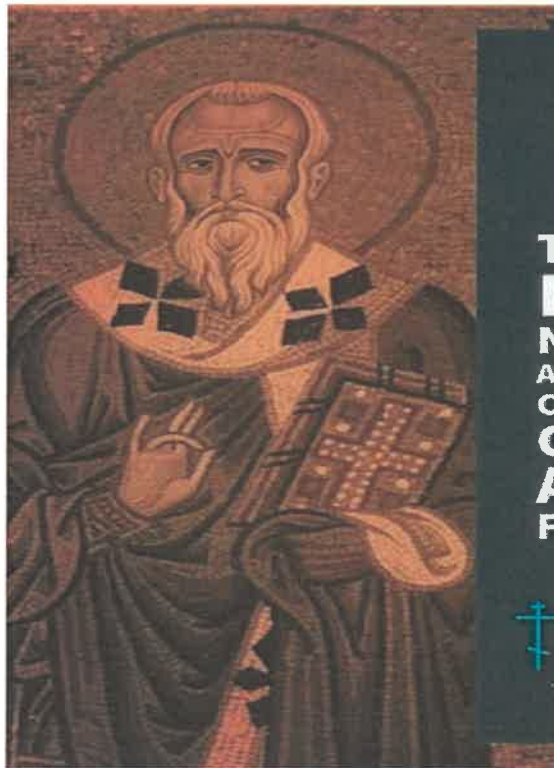
8:30 a.m. Mass Proper Preface & Eucharistic Prayer III

Solemn Entrance Distribution of Palm

11:30 a.m. Mass Proper Preface & Eucharistic Prayer III

Distribution of Palm

2:00 p.m. Brig Mass



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**THERE IS YOUR
BROTHER,
NAKED, CRYING,
AND YOU STAND THERE
CONFUSED OVER THE
CHOICE OF AN
ATTRACTIVE
FLOOR COVERING**



**AMBROSE OF MILAN
(AD 339-397)**