NOW IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME
AN INVITATION FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we begin the 2021 season of Lent, we are still in the throes of the global pandemic which has gripped our world nearly a year, in a time of unbelievable suffering, pain and death. At the same time, it has revealed the heroes that are in our midst—the doctors, nurses, all health care workers, counselors and caregivers, and all those essential workers who provide for us those things we need to survive and rely on, with a selfless attitude of caring for the “common good.” It is in these individuals where we have seen the beauty of humanity.

So as we approach this Lenten season, we continue on the journey of reflection and journey with Jesus, and look forward with hope to a vaccine and an increased shared humanity shared with our founders, the Sisters of Mercy. Their legacy resides in our Catholic mission and values and were derived from the life of Jesus. We carry these forward today and they distinguish us as a University and as a community.

The season of Lent provides us with a unique opportunity to reflect on this legacy and Jesus’ teachings, and deepen our relationship with Him in the time we are all collectively going through. We are asked to return to the Lord with our whole heart and to deepen our relationship with Jesus. We are asked to commit to a period of further change during theses 40 days with increased prayer and living our faith in a visible way.

This is a season that calls us to action. To embrace the world revealed during this crisis as it is and do something about it—this pandemic has shown us again the critical need to reach out to those in need, the forgotten, the ill, the lonely, the dying, the systems of oppression. We are clearly called to do this as a University founded by the Sisters of Mercy.

I hope your journey over these 40 days of Lent will further enhance your faith as we prepare for the joyous celebration of the Resurrection. Pope Francis said recently that “to come out of this crisis better, we have to recover the knowledge that as a people we have a shared destination . . . on this solid foundation [reciprocity] we can build a better, different, human future.”

May this Lenten book, with reflections from our Carlow colleagues, support you on your journey.

Suzanne K. Mellon
President, Carlow University
Over the last 15 years, Carlow University, Pittsburgh, and the world itself have seen more changes and struggles than most could imagine. Each year it seems, we are battling some plague—natural or man-made, unrest, incivility, or challenge. Our lives have taken unexpected turns, and life keeps moving forward.

In reading the daily scriptures and the reflections that have been shared, I have come to realize that facing challenges as a society, as individuals is nothing new. They may look a little different—locust, Covid-19, war, floods, injustice, disrespect, displacement…but throughout all of humanity challenges have been before us. What keeps us going?

In each reading, each reflection, we learn of the great love God has for us, Her children. Two-thousand years before the birth of Christ, and now, two thousand years after, we can rely on two things. First, God has never, and will never abandon us. Of course, we may forget to look for Her. Second, God longs for us to live forever in the radiance of that love that created us and all the wonders of the world around us. We just need to listen. I bet my life on it.

Please pray along with us as we share the 15th annual *Now is the Acceptable Time* season of Lent.

**Siobhan K. De Witt**  
Campus Ministry
Ash Wednesday may be one of the days of the year when I am most excited! It marks the beginning of a season where God’s love is more tangible than ever. At Easter, we are reminded that holiness is not something reserved for just a few people: the adventure of being united with God and with our neighbors is something offered to us all. Lent, kicked off by Ash Wednesday, serves as a period where we can focus on what is holding us back from a full life of unity.

I recently heard someone compare our lives to a hot air balloon: we are fired up and ready to take off at any minute, but the strings need to be untied first. That’s Lent for me- a moment to detach from anything that is tying me down and stopping me from taking on the adventure God offers me. This is traditionally done through self-denial—people often give up material goods or certain types of food. This year, more than ever, I feel called to focus this self-denial on love of neighbor. What is holding me back from loving more? What is preventing me from being completely present for others? How can I listen more deeply? What is stopping me from serving more fully?

I have a long way to go but the beauty of Lent is that we journey together.

Kate O’Brien
Center for Mercy Heritage and Service, Office of Mercy Service
Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Luke 9:22-25

February 18, 2021

THURSDAY AFTER ASH WEDNESDAY

We were never meant to worry. That is simply not something that we, followers of Christ, are supposed to do. We must strive to have a spirit of detachment and abandonment from the worldly concerns that surround us day by day. We need to surrender to Jesus. Often, we try to go through it—whatever it may be—alone. That was never the plan. Although we may think we know what is needed in our lives, the Lord knows best, and it is much easier to freely trust in Him rather than worry. Those who speak the words “Thy will be done” and truly believe it will be greatly blessed. In the words of Paul McCartney, “There will be an answer; let it be.”

Mary Grace Oliva
Social Work, 2024
As our pilgrimage of the heart is strengthened during Lent, so must our minds fall away from our worldly concepts of some transactional love from God. Fasting is not meant to be a tax upon the body to nourish the soul, but rather an adoration for Him and His already unconditional love. We do not fast to acquire superiority or high esteem over those who do not, but to focus our attention on He who provides everything, so that we may be in union with His will and care for those in need without a second thought or the desire for admiration in return. To act as Christ would IS to receive the love of God, and so our fasting, however we may express it, is our chance to honor that love.

Sean O’Malley
Psychology and Counseling, 2022
Have you ever noticed that after helping someone or doing something good you feel happier? That is our divine nature as children of our Almighty Father.

During this time of division and chaos, our Father’s words often fade into the background—however, it is in the most extraordinary times that we must hold the Scripture closest to us and guard its words, as weathering the tribulations of today requires a large dose of faith, kindness, and compassion. After the storm, it is also necessary to rebuild, and we face that opportunity now. Will we sow the seeds our future deserves? We can, and we must—for when we are generous, when we are actively combating the scourges of hate, oppression, and prejudice, and when we humble ourselves to the role of the planters of God’s will, our future shall inherit the great harvest God has in store for us.

Ada Lovo-Martinez
College of Arts and Sciences
Genesis 9:8-15; Psalm 25:4-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22, Mark 1:12-15

February 21, 2021

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

God asked Noah to build an ark and place all tame and wild animals in it. Why was God so angry with Noah and the present inhabitants of the earth? Apparently, the inhabitants at that time were not fulfilling God’s will. Do we always fulfill God’s will? Probably not. God looked at Noah in love and decided to forgive him and his people. Not only did God forgive, but wanted to let Noah know that forgiveness was evident. God chose a very familiar sign of nature, the rainbow, to show Noah that forgiveness is granted. God shows us His forgiveness also. Maybe not by a rainbow but feeling God’s love and forgiveness. At the present time, we really need to feel the love of God. Our world and the inhabitants are hurting. Let us ask God for love and peace.

Sr. Mary Joy Haywood, RSM
Professor Emerita
This scripture has been a source of comfort and significance for me as I’ve walked through this thing called life.

I love that the Lord is my shepherd because a shepherd is one who protects his sheep and there have been so many times in my life that God has protected me from seen and unseen danger. The beauty of the green pastures symbolizes His abundance and flourishing rest that He provides as I encounter life’s challenges. But even as I encounter those challenges, He guides me to places that give me peace and rest. How wonderful!

But I most love that He restores my soul. I don’t know about you, but there have been so many times in my life when I needed restored, and the Loving Shepherd was right there to provide restoration. Not only was He there to restore, but He walked with me in some of the darkest moments of my life and promised me that I did not need to be afraid because He works all things for me good.

No matter what I face in life, the Lord will provide for me and His provision is more than enough. Because I depend on the Shepherd, I have no doubt that His goodness and mercy will follow me throughout my life; hence, I am the benefactor of a protected, provided, caring and comforting relationship with the Lord.

Maleea Johnson, EdD
Office of Equity and Inclusion, Student Affairs
Just as from the heavens
the rain and snow come down
And do not return there
till they have watered the earth,
making it fertile and fruitful. (Is 55: 10-11)

For my reflection, this is the line that resonated with me the most. To me, this line is saying that rain and snow and negative things all come from the same place, God, and heaven, but they have a purpose for coming which is to help things grow and thrive more so. I feel like this is saying that in order to grow, you must go through things that are going to test you and push you, but ultimately will make you a better person. I feel like this is a really relevant reading especially with COVID and having to go through the pandemic.

Maddie Canal, 2020
Psychology
Oh sacrifice, sacrifice! God does not barter. He does not want sacrifices to purchase His grace. Turn the key seven times, check the oven three, protect myself, to trade with God. Each pain I give myself: a cut, a burn a sacrifice! Oh God see? For you I force myself to suffer. Reward me. My child is sick I have cut off my finger. I will suffer for You! My heart is broken; my fear consumes me. My body is broken, I am dying, I know I must sacrifice what I love most for You!! TO SAVE MYSELF. Oh please God accept my pain, I offer it to YOU; it is fantastic! Do not take what I love. I beg You GOD! What will you accept? An eye, a tooth, a life? What do I give YOU? What do I trade with You? What Jonah? What does God want to save me: sack cloth, ashes, sacrifices?

“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough…” (Is 1:11) But God Oh God my heart is breaking what can I do? I must do something. Accept my sacrifice I will burn myself entirely for You.

WE sacrifice by our nature, though God does not need a thing from us, but, by His compassion, He allowed us, commanded us, to sacrifice at the Temple according to His laws...and not our own. (The Rambam)

James Carmine, PhD
College of Arts and Sciences, Business Management, Accounting & Ethics; Philosophy
In the Gospel reading, the main theme I picked up on was that we should treat others how we would want them to treat us. Everyone is fighting their own battles and you never know what someone may be going through. Our society is very self-centered, and many people will only do something if it directly affects them. More now than ever, I feel like we should be trying to shift our ways of thinking and try our best to help others. Although finding ways to spread kindness and help others may be more difficult in the middle of a pandemic, we can still try by calling or getting in contact with others to let them know you’re thinking of them. Our world could definitely use more kindness, which begins with us and our actions.

Sarah Blackstone
Respiratory Care, 2023
We are a society that hates so easily. And like the hypocrites that Jesus so often condemns, we fail to see how our hate becomes violence. Hate crimes rise, black Americans are struck down in the streets, and so Jesus’ words ring ever more true. When we hate, we tarnish the image of God that each person is. And so, in a world of hate, we must be a people of love. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., “Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” And so, may our “thou shalt not kill” become “thou shall not hate,” and may our “thou shall not hate,” become “love one another.” Amen.

Justin Pearl

Academic Affairs, Atkins Center for Ethics
It strikes me how “love your neighbor” is assumed to be a given. Do I love my neighbor? The past year has challenged my understanding of this simple phrase.

The 2020 electoral season came with the realization that my neighbors and I have strongly held, diametrically opposed beliefs. The fact that I was blindsided by our core differences had me question these relationships. Do I love my neighbor?

Broader challenges came in the guise of COVID-19, the climate crisis and Pope Francis’ encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. Pope Francis, in addressing global issues, articulates how our inability to work together has made it more difficult to solve the problems that are affecting us all. He thus offers his encyclical “in the hope that in the face of present-day attempts to eliminate or ignore others, we may prove capable of responding with a new vision of fraternity and social friendship that will not remain at the level of words.”

It is my prayer that I will take up this call by Pope Francis and prove myself capable of responding to my neighbor with greater love expressed in word and action.

Linda C. Maydak
College of Arts and Sciences, Theology
My clearest messages from God come to me as I’m starting my days. Perhaps this is because my mind isn’t yet muddled with planning. I’ve learned that if I pay attention, God will give me His direction. But, while the direction may be clear, the intent often isn’t. I’ve learned that being a person of faith means taking steps when I have no idea where they are leading.

How often does God ask us to make sacrifices? We know what we’d like in our lives and the work we think we need to do to get there. However, if we learn to be still, we will understand what God is asking and wants for us. If we follow with faith and unwavering trust, every sacrifice we are asked to make will be paid forward tenfold. If we listen, as Abram did, without question, without hesitation, how blessed will we be!

Carol Polidora
Information Technology
Our readings make it clear that we followers have committed evils against God and His commandments. We realize that we fail to follow His laws and often fail in trying to uphold them. Yet, God’s forgiveness and compassion helps us try to achieve and live up to these commandments given to us. Despite all that we have done, every sin now and after, God is willing to give us still another chance.

Ryan Scott
Nursing, 2023
These are the words of Jesus, talking to his followers, and the simple message for today may be that we need to keep listening. As we enter the Lenten season, it is easy to turn inward, toward prayer and self-reflection. Jesus reminds us to put our faith into works of mercy. “Do not follow their example for they preach, but do not practice...they tie up the heavy burdens...but do not lift a finger to move them...” (Mt 23:3-4) When we witness people experiencing injustices, we are called to work for systemic change, not just address the symptoms. This requires us to be united as one people, guided by Christ. We can all be leaders when we choose to serve first, others will follow. Think about how you can take action this Lenten season to become a part of creating unity and justice on our campus and in our community.

Erin Phillips  
College of Health and Wellness, Occupational Therapy
The Psalm reminds me of how we are all created in the likeness and image of God. God is kindness and we portray kindness to others. It is easy to sway towards reward when doing nice gestures, however, it should just be in our spirit to act mercifully toward others. Jesus is our refuge as mentioned. The reward is eternal life. It is important to remember to act generously out of love for God and mankind, not to expect eternal life. We receive the Eucharist to remember what Jesus did for all of us. The very least we can do is respect all life He created and be merciful to all.

Sarah Lenkner
Nursing, 2023
Thus says the Lord: *Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord.* (Jer. 17:7)

Trust and Hope are two things we as Christians should have in our hearts and minds. We struggle sometimes with the trust issue especially with all the problems that are going on throughout our world. We look for answers but can’t find them. This is when we need to turn to and trust our God. He wants us to pray and call out for His help. He wants us to know that there is hope through the saving death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. During this Lenten season, please offer more prayers to God. Do not abandon Hope; but trust in the Truth and the Light. Amen.

*Kenneth J. Ference*
*Carlow University Police Dispatch*
The passage of Joseph and his brothers reminds us of basic family conflict, though in this case, taken to the extreme. That jealousy, greed and envy can lead to horrible acts, even within families, but that love, and kindness can change the course of history. Rueben spoke up and confronted evil, even though his original plan may have then been changed. This confirms in us that it is ultimately God’s plan, not ours, that will be carried out. Joseph was a dreamer, but those dreams became reality as he went on to do God’s work. God knew this. So what are your plans to help God? Let’s make peace a part of the plan, with love and kind gestures, as we carry on in this Lenten season and may God bless us all.

Kathleen Sullivan, MEd
College of Arts and Sciences, Education and Liberal Studies
The Lord is kind and merciful (Ps. 103)

What a wonderful mantra! Imagine repeating this throughout the day while walking around campus, while waiting for friends, while driving—in those quiet empty moments that can quickly fill up with worries and anxieties.

Mantras have a way of taking hold of our thoughts and actions. Lent encourages us to fast and to pray, but we are also challenged to do good for others. The truly merciful person is the one who does what is right and good, not out of duty, but because they LOVE to do it! The merciful person goes beyond her or himself to others because their delight is in the delight of the other.

“The Lord is kind and merciful.” This Lent let’s love to do good works for the delight of the other and hear our hearts echo “Hey Lord, I’m kind and merciful too!”

Maureen Crossen, PhD, 1979
Professor Emerita, Theology
The readings of today give us pause: “Jesus would not trust himself to them...Jesus understood [human nature] well.” Possibly we reply, “Yes, I’m with you there, Jesus. I have scars to prove the lack of trust-worthiness!” Yet, our Christian faith speaks to the opposite reality. The incarnate Son of God trusted enough to unite with our foibles and frailty; to indwell in human persons; to promise life in abundance.

While we often refuse to trust ourselves or others, the Scriptures speak to the potential of human nature in Christ. God’s mercy extends to the thousandth generation on those who love and keep God’s commandments—a longer extension than the third and fourth generation of a jealous God.

Perhaps, there is something about human nature that we do not know—about a community of persons “who love me and keep my commandments.” A community seeking the wisdom and power of God will find a foolishness wiser than human wisdom and a weakness stronger than human strength. We may not know as much about human nature as we thought!

Helen Marie Burns, RSM, PhD, 2001
Board of Trustees
While reflecting on the first reading for today, I was struck by how such simple acts could display immense trust and faith. Naaman sought grandiose displays of power and healing when all he had to do was take his step of faith by washing in the waters.

In our current national situation of unrest and fear for the health and safety of our loved ones, I can’t help but see similarities. A simple act of wearing a mask can speak worlds to those around us. The decision to step outside our comfort, intentionally building connections with our peers in this virtual environment speaks volumes. These small, seemingly inconsequential choices display the value we hold towards our neighbors. Setting aside our pride, as Naaman did, we can make a difference in the lives of others because, perhaps, that’s where change resides—in the individual choices of each of us.

Sarah Avery, MA, 2020
Student Affairs, Center for Academic Achievement, Promise Success
As I reflect on the readings, I cannot separate myself from the times that I am in and the challenges we faced—challenges that would have been unimaginable a year ago. If we had been told in advance what we would face I am sure many of us would have been immobilized out of fear and feelings of utter helplessness. Yet, every generation has faced unimaginable illness and conflict.

In the first reading Azariah is presented in the book of Daniel standing amid fire. Like the image of purifying metal that this evokes, we are being tested by fire and must stand in faith and prayer to be refined. This does not mean we are spared pain and when the psalmist pleads for God to “remember his mercies” it is not as though God needs to be reminded—but we do.

I pray that we are forever more grateful for what we have and are more compassionate toward each other after what we have been through together.

Karyn Kwiatkowski, MLIS
Library Services
I am just one person on one planet in one universe. How can I even fathom that relevance or purpose? How can I make a difference as a speck in the landscape of time? But wait, God is the creator of all, knows all, loves all, right. And He knows me and loves me. When I remember this and our relationship, I am reassured.

Jennifer O’Toole
Student Affairs, Career Services
Thus, says the Lord: This is what I commanded my people: Listen to my voice; then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper. But they obeyed not, nor did they pay heed. They walked in the hardness of their evil hearts and turned their backs, not their faces, to me. (Jer. 7:23-24)

We, as human beings, are often reluctant to obey.

There are so many times that we turn away when told to do something that is good for us. We see our own solutions as easier, better.

How many times have we refused to apologize to another person out of pride? How many times have we rested on our own understanding? How many times have we lacked empathy?

God asks us to take up a different mantle.

Do not walk in the hardness of your heart. Do not turn your face away. Listen and prosper.

Caitlin Way
Student Affairs
“Love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mk 12:31)

The words of today’s gospel are uniquely challenging during this unprecedented year. It is difficult enough to love our neighbors without the challenges of a global pandemic, a racial reckoning, or a controversial presidential election, but to love them in spite of these events? Some days that feels like too big a task.

But perhaps the most beautiful part of this sermon is not simply the message. Perhaps, too, it is the dialogue. A scribe and Savior having a conversation about morality. Listening, learning, and responding as Jesus notes “answering with understanding.”

In this world of controversy and divisiveness, how do we answer with understanding? We may work hard to love our neighbors, but do we work to understand them and their values? In today’s Gospel, the scribe shows us how much compassion and understanding are gained when we’re simply willing to ask a question.

Elizabeth MacNeal
Mercy Volunteer Corps, Marketing
Mercy Associate
This Gospel has always spoken to me because it really resonates with the human condition, particularly in the America of today. We struggle, as a nation, to be humble and to find the humility to admit our faults. We disguise them. We deny they exist. But we are less for that.

This reading is our permission to not be perfect. All that is asked of us in this reading is that we be open to being vulnerable, that we be willing to admit that, yes, we have fallen short of our best ideals and in our faith. It speaks to the idea that perfection is not required, but striving is expected. When we recognize our faults and when we become comfortable with the idea that a mistake or a defeat is but a reason to try again, we progress as humans, which should be our highest goal in life.

Nicholas De Witt
Enrollment Management
There are times when we as individuals turn away from our relationship with God by making bad choices. It is easy to justify our choices when what we are doing feels right for us, even though we know they are wrong. Sometimes the “we” is a collective led by others who encourage us to make bad decisions by amplifying the wrong message. When we turn from God, we risk losing our relationship. But God is a loving and forgiving God who sent his only son to save us. Through Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Search for His light; turn away from all of the noise and find your way back to grace of God!

Mary Onufer, MS
College of Arts and Sciences, Business, Technology, Fraud and Forensics
The readings illustrate God’s desire for relationship with us—in need, healing, refuge, and the promise of His peace. At age 11, at summer camp, I experienced this with new insight. At Chapel we heard that God is always with us. This gave me hope in a week of contests. I had flubbed my score in archery, my best pass in field hockey went awry, I pulled the “cat-boat‘ center board up too late causing the “hull to stick.” A counselor was annoyed with my scruffiness, a teammate jokingly called me a failure. I felt like one.

Separated from my group en route to Woodcraft, I was alone in the pines. “God is with us” came to mind. I prayed, “Lord help me find the right path.” Suddenly, I felt a calm, and saw a path lit brighter between the trees. The light seemed to say, “this is right.” I followed it, arriving at class on time avoiding more trouble. Failure or not, that week, I felt confident of God’s presence in a solid, grown-up way, as in the readings.

Nancy Gilles, 1969
In Ezekiel's vision, he sees a river flowing from the sanctuary, bringing life and healing to everything it touches. The passage emphasizes the source of the river: the sanctuary, where God's presence resides.

Today, God's Holy Spirit has come to dwell in his people, making us living sanctuaries on the earth. Just like the river in Ezekiel's vision, the Spirit of God is ready and willing to pour waters of healing life into our hearts. May the words of this hymn be our prayer today:

Spring up, O Well, within soul!
Spring up, O Well, and make me whole!
Spring up O Well, and give to me
That life, abundantly.
(Wickham, Phil, Spring Up Oh Well. Singalong 2, INO, May 2012)

Cori Murray
Master in Secondary Education, 2021
These verses (Isaiah) describe people in exile, out of their home country, being free to return home.

What would it feel like to come home, to their own country? Pure liberation. These verses are also metaphorical. What must it feel like to be liberated from sin? Roads are made straight. Mountains are flattened so we no longer need to struggle to climb, mountains we typically build ourselves in our own pathways. Being true to a simple life philosophy such as ‘love one another’ can straighten journeys and flatten obstacles.

Jesus asks us to do God’s work. Soon we will live in a post-COVID-19 world. We will be liberated from the burdens of a pandemic. It will be a journey to lives with more freedoms. Have you put obstacles in your way to living a better, sin-free life? How are you helping others to remove mountains and straighten pathways?

Jennifer Roth, PhD

College of Arts and Sciences, Psychology, Counseling, and Criminology
The Israelites grew impatient waiting for Moses to come down from the mountain and began to worship a golden calf.

Patience is a virtue, but we are increasingly becoming a society that is accustomed to instant gratification. By picking up our smartphones we can order food and have it delivered, shop and have our items arrive in 2 days, and have instant access to movies and seasons of television shows. It is difficult to patiently wait through all of life’s circumstances and daily situations. There are times in life when I’ve had to slow down and endure. In times of fear and worry, the fear was not strong enough to take me away from my relationship with God. Through daily prayer I reflect on my covenant with God. Prayer helps me to produce patience in times when I need to let go of worrying and draw on my faith and trust in God.

Laurie Laird
The Campus Laboratory School, Montessori Teacher
It is easy to get caught up with life. Work, school, and our social lives can begin to take precedence over other important things. I will admit that I had a period in my life where I did not make my faith a priority. I have always believed in the Bible and its message, but I cannot say that I have always actively practiced in my faith. This reading resonates with me because it highlights the importance of faith over anything else. “It was not through the law that the promise was made to Abraham and his descendants that he would inherit the world, but through the righteousness that comes from faith.” (Rom 4:13) God has granted us the opportunity to have life after death; all He asks of us is to simply believe in Him and live in our faith.

Michaela Pry
Nursing, 2022
Resident Assistant
This is the perfect example of how Jesus was not “lukewarm” or mediocre. In this passage He is a source of division: but isn’t it odd He came from their own town of Galilee?

When we have known someone for a long time, we develop an imprint of who they are and how they behave. The old neighbors of Galilee did not know how to accept Jesus as the Savior. Sometimes others can struggle to accept us in our new roles as we grow into who we are to become. How will it be when our own graduates become the nurses and nurse practitioners caring for us and our loved ones? How can we grow in awareness of the changes we have made in ourselves and open our hearts to the growth in others?

Ruth Madden Foreman, DNP, RN, APRN, FNP-BC
College of Health and Wellness, Graduate Nurse Practitioner Programs
From the very rich readings for today, one line from the gospel captured my attention. “...We would like to see Jesus.” These six words encapsulate the deepest longings of our hearts. We would, indeed, like to see Jesus and our faith promises that we will—an intriguing and comforting prospect. Reading this line, though, brought to mind part of a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins which holds a different promise. In “As Kingfishers Catch Fire” Hopkins writes:

Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men’s faces.

We need not wait for eternity, the poem promises, because the light of God’s life shines out from the eyes of everyone we meet, we see God through the features of men’s (and women’s) faces. This message is perfect for us as we celebrate our core value of diversity for it tells us that the amazing variety of people around us gives us insight into the fascinating and endless diversity of God. In our open, respectful, and welcoming interactions with one another we do, indeed, see Jesus. Just look around.

**Sr. Sheila Carney, RSM, 1969**
**Center for Mercy Heritage and Service**
We cannot judge those who have sinned as we ourselves have sinned. The Lord in His teachings has taught us to do unto one as we would do unto ourselves. With this we cannot punish others for their sins because we then must punish ourselves. The Lord has given His life for our sins and we must remember that we are all forgiven in His eyes. Though we have been forgiven, this does not mean we should sin. For the Lord is the only one that can accept us into heaven, so we must try and move forward without sin.

Christopher Woodley, 2019
Every year, God sends us on our journey through life. Our journeys may not always be happy and rewarding. We endure struggles and may want to give up at times. We need to have trust in God. It’s important to remember the Lord is with us always. When we feel like we cannot go on, He is with us. When we are angry with Him and feel as if He is against us, He is still with us. Even when we feel alone and abandoned, He is with us. We have to remember to trust in the Lord, as He will guide us towards glory and salvation.

Clair Duffus
Nursing, 2021
“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)

Seek the truth. It is sometimes easier said than done. Information flies at us from every outlet or social media platform. It’s even more important to seek out the truth during this staggering time—post-election, quarantine, social injustice.

During a time when it might feel like you don’t have control, you can take solace in your search for the truth. It means that you are doing the best that you can. Taking the steps to find truth will lead you to make the right decisions. And always keep the faith.

Nicole Ravas, MFA, 2020
Academic Affairs
These challenging and uncertain times in our world, work setting, and country’s future, weigh a heavy burden on our minds and well-being. Feelings of hopelessness and desperation prevail. No one of this earth has the power to free our souls from this torment, but God Himself. We must keep our faith as we know God has sent His precious Son to us to fill us with hope. Do we make God our priority each day when we are troubled? How often do we first turn to those of this world when we are filled with despair, rather than God our Father who promises to never leave us?

Angela Kelly, DNP, 2015
College of Health and Wellness, Nursing
In today’s Gospel, Jesus finds terror on every side as a rowdy mob prepares to stone him. Jesus, through action and word, reminds them of His good works and uses scripture to reinforce His mission. Still, “they tried again to arrest Him; but He escaped from their power.”

Such a vague phrase to resolve the climax of this tense scene. How does Jesus escape? Like a hero in an action movie? Gone without a trace in a puff of smoke?

During this Lenten season, let us reflect on how silently, unnoticed, or even willingly we allow Jesus to evade us. In our moments of anger, self-doubt, or anxiety. The times we stumble, the times we “let it slide” even though we know it isn’t right.

But Jesus is no escape artist. As easily as He escaped peril, just as easily He went back across the Jordan to be found by many. He remains for us as we seek Him.

Ezekiel 37:21-28; Jeremiah 31:10-13; John 11:45-56

March 27, 2021

FIFTH SATURDAY OF LENT

Cast away from you all the crimes you have committed, says the LORD, and make for yourselves a new heart and new Spirit (Ez 18:31)

At one point in my lifetime, I was a tornado. I left mass destruction everywhere I went, which meant that my crimes were not only about breaking man’s law, but also God’s law. I had made decisions that I struggled to forgive myself for and knew God would never forgive me, yet I still saw His repeated grace. Little by little, I watched Him change me, my heart and make me into the person He wanted me to be, which all began with surrendering… turning my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him.

Tey Martin, 2018
Psychology/Counseling
On Palm Sunday I always think how Jesus must have felt knowing what would happen during the following days. The pain, anxiety, apprehension, and fear are inconceivable. Last year at this time as the pandemic was just being realized, many of us felt some of the same emotions but on a different scale. Terrible things happened to so many people and all of us had to face challenges we never saw coming. Difficult and sad as this pandemic is, I try to focus on the good that developed as a result of COVID. We adapted to not seeing our loved ones by reaching out in unique ways. We, as humans, did unbelievable adapting to maintain our connection with the world and searched for new ways to continue our small acts of kindness in any way we could. Contrary to the Responsorial Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24, our God has not abandoned us; He never abandons us, and we should never abandon others.

Felicia L. Cianciarulo, PhD
College of Arts and Sciences, Department of Biological Sciences

March 29, 2021

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

This beautiful Gospel allows Christians to reflect upon our relationship with Christ. Can we see ourselves as Mary, Martha, or Lazarus...or even Judas? This reading, nested in Holy Week, tests our boundaries and where we are in our walk with Christ. I believe that Mary’s actions, as she anoints Christ’s feet, is an example for us and how we can love the Savior. We can fully pour out our love for Christ and receive God’s grace, forgive, peace and unconditional love in return. Whereas Christ pours himself out for us and it cost him his life.

Thus, are we like Mary who loves Christ without limits? Or are we more similar to Judas as he questions and calculates the cost of her actions by asking “why was this perfume not sold for 300 denarii and the money given to the poor?”

The answer: Because God’s love for us is priceless.

Eric Swogger
Facilities Services
How would Jesus tell the story of Judas’ betrayal?

Consider the relationship that came before this moment—Jesus’ call, “Come, follow me,” the conversations, meals, miracles, laughter, questions shared on the journey. A relationship grounded in love and friendship grew.

How meaningful those moments were—and how meaningful this moment of betrayal is. A friendship is broken, trust is shattered…do you love me?

In the Christian imagination, Judas’ betrayal of Jesus merits the most horrific punishment possible, condemned to the last circle of hell, as Dante describes in his Inferno.

But as Jesus might tell the story of Judas, would he not do so through the eyes of God’s love and mercy? Would Jesus not say that no one is beyond God’s mercy, no one is “outside the plan?” Even in his lonely death, Judas could not write himself out of God’s story…nor should we.

Moya K. Dittmeier, EdD
Executive Director, Conference for Mercy Higher Education
Lord, in your great love, answer me.
For your sake I bear insult,
and shame covers my face.
I have become an outcast to my kindred (Ps 69:14c, 8-9)

It is disheartening to be scoffed at for any reason, but especially painful when others attempt to invalidate your views without consideration, or mock your faith, or show scorn for you as a person. Biblical scriptures and academic study have amply established the deep pain and distress caused from rejection or exclusion from community.

I was prompted to reflect on how we at Carlow are guided by the heritage and values of the Sisters of Mercy to recognize and affirm the wholeness of each person. We are inspired to work with one another to demonstrate our appreciation of the varying beliefs and perspectives of our students, faculty, and staff. How might we work together to support a culture that is inclusive and open to the unique gifts of others? How might we create intentional spaces to demonstrate our respect for one another and support of individuals marginalized by society?

Edith Cook, PhD
Institutional Research and Effectiveness
What are we worth?

In John’s Gospel, Christ, knowing He was within hours of His death, performs the most menial of tasks in washing the feet of His disciples. Why does Jesus wash the feet of those who would abandon, deny, and betray Him? And yet, do we not recognize in the disciples our own imperfections when we allow our pride or personal needs to distract our focus from the needs of others? Through the humble act of washing his disciples’ feet, Jesus shows us that, despite our imperfections, we are all valued and worthy of His love. This act of deep and generous love also reminds us that there is no task that is beneath us. Can we, like Jesus, be that humble servant, even in instances when we have been hurt or betrayed? May our minds and hearts be opened to always recognize the value and dignity of each person, to serve with great humility and to love one another more completely.

Anna Bamonte Torrance, JD
Carlow University Board of Trustees
In years past, Good Friday arrived after a week of statues covered in purple, singing without the organ, bells silenced and replaced with a clacker that resounded like nails going into the cross. This year other images may have replaced those symbols, but today’s readings bring the same message of love and hope. The power of the images evoked by the first reading reminds us that love is always stronger than any other force and we need not fear. God’s love is at times beyond our comprehension: dying like that for me! I hope that we can take time today to bask in this immense act of gratuitous love that gives meaning to all our sufferings, knowing that in His cry of abandonment every one of us finds hope.

Nancy O’Donnell, PsyD, 1968
For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection. (Rom 6:5)

These forty days have brought us through an awareness of our sinfulness, and of God’s mercy: an understanding that the joys and sorrows of our lives have been lived out for centuries. Tonight, we hear our common heritage. All created by the Love of God; all fall to the weakness of our human condition; all shamed by our greed and selfishness—and lack of faith.

Tonight, bridging the seasons of Lent and Easter, we hear the story of God’s eternal love for us. “From the beginning…” God never left us. How many times did the Israelites hear the covenant: “You shall be my people and I will be your God”? Jesus came to us in the flesh, experienced human life—the good and the bad, and then showed His love for us by undergoing an excruciating death. He understands our pain, our sorrow.

And so tonight in glorious song, and dazzling light we celebrate the fulfillment of the promise that Love made to all people. Nothing, not even death, can outdo the love and mercy of our Heavenly Creator, God and King.

Siobhan K. De Witt, MA
Center for Mercy Heritage and Service, Campus Ministry
This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad. Our Lord has been made visible to us; the witnesses chosen by God. We must give praise to Him and celebrate His victory over death as we spread the love of Christ to all people. Instead of concerning ourselves with earthly troubles, we must look to God and recognize what He asks of us. We are called to love the Lord and one another with all our hearts, all our souls, and all our minds. This Easter Sunday, we celebrate insurmountable joy, thankful for the endless mercy and love of our Lord. His sacrifice has ensured that all who believe in Him will receive forgiveness of their sins and be granted eternal life in paradise.

Zachary Cynkar
Nursing, 2022

Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9

April 4, 2021

EASTER SUNDAY
I am grateful for each of the people listed below who contributed to the 15th annual Lenten Reflection Journal. They include faculty, staff, students, alumna, board members, and Sisters of Mercy. Each took the time to share their faith with you. A special “Thank You” to Sophomore Sarah Blackstone who did a great job sending readings, tracking writers, and keeping the process moving through the pipeline. Please remember each of them in your prayers as we take this journey together.

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Sarah Blackstone
Tey Brown
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Maddie Canal
James Carmine
Sr. Sheila Carney, RSM
Felicia Cianciarulo
Edith Cook
Maureen Crossen
Zachary Cynkar
Siobhan De Witt
Nicholas DeWitt
Moya Dittmeier
Clare Duffus
Kenneth Ference
Ruth Foreman
Nancy Gilles
Sr. Mary Joy Haywood, RSM
Maleea Johnson
Angela Kelly
Karyn Kwiatkowski
Laurie Laird
Jonathan Laychak
Sarah Lenkner
Ada Lovo-Martinez
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Linda Maydak
Cori Murray
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