NOW IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME
AN INVITATION FROM THE PRESIDENT

This year, we have been focused on the Mercy Value of the Sacredness of Creation, and Creation takes on a special resonance during the Lenten season.

Lent commemorates Christ’s time in the desert, but during this season we also see the coming of Spring and the rejuvenation of the natural world. As we travel from ashes to resurrection, the season culminates in a new birth witnessed in the blossoming of the natural world, and we are all given the chance of a new beginning through redemption.

My hope is that during this season, you’ll join me in reflecting on the miracle of the resurrection that we witness every year in God’s creation; that we ponder the solemnity of the crucifixion and rejoice in the promise of the everlasting, for “Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his great mercy has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

Dr. Kathy Humphrey
President, Carlow University
Welcome to the 2023 Lenten Reflection Journal. For twelve years I have had the privilege of recruiting writers from the Carlow Community. Each year I am humbled by the ways the scriptures speak to our writers. Whether they are eighth graders from the Campus Laboratory School, faculty, staff, student or alumni, each year the contributors are inspired by The Spirit to share new insights and perspectives. Each writer had the courage to share their prayers, their intimate thoughts so that we can travel this spiritual journey of Lent together as a community.

Thank you for sharing this Lenten practice with us. Turn your sacrifices and reflection time over to God. Allow yourself to be as vulnerable hearing the readings from scripture as our writers were. Through our Lenten sacrifices, let us see one another with the eyes of Jesus. Give us courage to act justly.

Blessed Lent.

Siobhan K. De Witt  
Campus Minister
Even now, says the LORD, 
return to me with your whole heart, 
with fasting, and weeping, and mourning. 
Rend your hearts, not your garments, 
and return to the LORD, your God. (Jl 2:12)

In the mountains of Southern Austria there is a former Carthusian monastery. For centuries, this religious community was committed to a life of prayer, penance, and solitude. Silence was observed all through the day, including mealtime. The idea was to “make room for God.”

Above the doorway to the refectory was an astonishing work of art depicting two skeletons greeting each other. “Memento, frater, vestrum mortem.” ~ translation: “Brother, remember your death.” This was the greeting monks used when passing by each other in the cloister. Keeping their thoughts on the “last four things” ~ death, heaven, hell, and purgatory, they tried to conform their attitudes and actions toward the ultimate goal of salvation.

Ashes on the forehead are a reminder to self and others that this life is temporary. One day you and I will be ashes and dust. Lent is the time to be serious about your spiritual life. As the Prophet Joel announced, “NOW” is the time to turn to God with your whole heart. NOW is the time to take time to find silence and pray. NOW is the time to reach out to the poor and suffering. NOW is the time to build up a culture of justice and life.

Rev. Steve Palsa, Chaplain
Thursday after Ash Wednesday…Today’s readings center on the idea of choice. Choosing God (Deuteronomy), choosing hope (Psalm 1), choosing to take up one’s cross and follow Jesus — these are choices that are not always easy. Often, the easier path is one in which you put yourself first, when you live without conscience. Sometimes that seems to lead to a better life, at least if the standard is an accumulation of worldly things.

But the last verse in the reading from Luke is one I’ve often reflected upon. What good is wealth and power, worldly success, if you lose yourself? Then you have no center, no core, no heart. You are hollow. You aren’t even a person.

Today’s readings connect to numerous others in both the Old and New Testaments that call upon us to choose a path that recognizes we are more than earthly beings. That our happiness, our very existence, is intertwined with the divine, and to choose that path is to choose life, to choose hope, to choose to be a person with a heart that is connected to the divine.

Karen McDowell, MAT
The Campus Laboratory School of Carlow University
Surprisingly, at times, our inaction or failure to respond can be our greatest teachers. A recent one comes to mind. As I was hurrying back to a presentation during a symposium in Rome, my colleagues and I passed by two individuals in wheelchairs positioned right outside of the walls of the Vatican. One of them was producing sounds of distress and pointing to the ground in front of him. Looking down at the dirty, white tennis shoes, I realized that his navy-blue laces were sprawled across the ground.

In the time it took me to process the gesture, sound, and situation, I was about 20 feet beyond the man. It occurred to me that I should turn around and tie his shoe, but I lacked the courage to disrupt our progress and let my colleagues know that I would catch up to them. I rationalized that I was in a strange city and didn’t know my way back to the venue. But in reality, my iPhone could have led the way. And I suspect that my colleagues would have waited for me. My inability to respond to someone in need weighs upon me but provides a strong lesson in the power of action. How often do we ignore a call for help because it may interfere with our plans? Our lives are busy leaving us little time to complete the tasks required of us let alone take time to help others in need. During this Lenten season I hope to create space in my daily schedule for the unexpected calls for help.

Susan O’Rourke, EdD
College of Arts and Sciences, Special Education
Center for Global Engagement
Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth. (Ps 26:1)

Choosing to be a member of a Mercy College community is choosing to be a doer of mercy in the world. How can one be a doer of Mercy as God wants? Following the example of King David, we can ask God, “Teach me your way, O Lord, that I may walk in your truth.”

God shows mercy to all people with no discrimination, racism, injustice, and God brings love, peace, and justice to all creatures. God invites us to live in the truth. To be a doer of mercy is to show compassion, love, care, mercy, hospitality, and service to all people whom we meet in our lives through actions and words.

Sr. Thuan Bai, FMV
Masters in Social Work, ’25
Genesis 2:7-9, 3:1-7; Psalm 51:3-6, 12-13, 17; Romans 5:12-19; Matthew 4:1-11

February 26, 2023

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

**A clean heart create for me, O God,**
and a steadfast spirit renew within me. (Ps 51:12)

**IT’S NOT ABOUT FRENCH FRIES**

We’ve arrived at the First Sunday of Lent. Reflect on the past few days. Sometimes, it can be challenging to get excited about Lent. Penance. Fasting. Embracing sinfulness and somberness, examining our imperfections.

But think back to Ash Wednesday. I love the symbolism of it. The priest reminds us that “you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Penance, yes, but also earth, and a return to simplicity, grace, and a renewed spirit.

We should spend time thinking about negative behaviors and attitudes that are distancing us spiritually. However, people sometimes focus too much on what they’re “giving up.” (It becomes a test of wills: can I live without fries for 40 days….?) Negativity spirit surrounding self-sacrifice becomes the focus (cheat days, anyone?), rather than the purpose. It can lead to greater spiritual distance.

However, more importantly, it’s time to focus on what you are embracing. How can you make time for quiet and reflection in your busy life? What can you do to raise your relationship with God and renew your spirit?

**Nicole Ravas, MFA, ’20**

*Academic Affairs*
Looking at this passage, Moses is called to speak to a group of people and tell them what the Lord wants them to act on. I believe there is a purpose in analogy to why there’s a transference of messages. The order is Lord to Moses to the people. In an analogical way, this is Philosophy, Embodiment, and Action.

We are called to not tell people what to do but act on it and show up in faith. During our phenomenological experience, we must process what the Lord wants us to do and his messages. The next step is to not tell people what to do but be a model for others. In this time, we must go inside and become the Lord’s philosopher to become the Lord’s philanthropist.

Saul Barrera, ’22
Master of Arts in Psychology, ’23
Student Affairs, Residence Life
While reading the scripture I felt loved. It makes me feel like somebody really knows me and is listening to me. When I read the passage, I thought about how our actions and the way we treat people matters. I felt a message about respecting God and others. This scripture makes me want to forgive people and pray more often. Each verse of the Bible teaches its own lesson. To me, this one seems to be teaching us how we are always connected to Jesus, and how you should always pray, love, and forgive others. The Our Father prayer in the middle of the scripture makes me happy. It makes me feel like someone is waiting for me with open arms on the day I will pass.

Alessandra De Carlo
Campus Laboratory School, ’25
Today’s gospel reading has Jesus talking to a crowd speaking of the sign of Jonah. This gospel is trying to teach us about signs and faith. Jesus said, “This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it, except the sign of Jonah” (Lk 11:29). The story of Jonah is a story that shows that no matter what, God loves you and forgives you.

Each day, we ask God for a sign and sometimes God doesn’t directly give it to us, because he already has, just not in a way we were expecting. Sometimes we choose not to see this sign. Furthermore, since we know God gives us signs in our everyday life, we must take those signs and have faith that that is what God wants because God is in control.

During this Lenten season, we must seek out the signs of God and have faith that those signs are what is best for us.

Andrew Pallus
Biology with a Human Specialization, ’24
I am a planner. I had my life planned out by the time I graduated high school. College, husband, career, kids, and white picket fence. It didn’t take long for me to realize my plan was not going to work. My perfect college wasn’t for me, my amazing boyfriend got a job 2,500 miles away, my dream career was amazing, but I soon felt called to enter academia and share my passion with others. I worked part time at my alma mater, sure I would get the next full-time position; nope, I didn’t get the next one either. I was devastated; I had a plan and did everything I was supposed to do, and it still didn’t work out. In Matthew 7:7 Jesus tells us “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” God had better plans for me. We can knock and the door will be opened — it just might be a different door. We can seek and we may not find what we want, but with patience we will find what God wants for us.

Laura Huth, EdD, MOT, OTR/L
College of Health and Wellness, Occupational Therapy
Ezekiel 18:21-28; Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-7a, 7bc-8; Matthew 5:20-26

March 3, 2023

FIRST FRIDAY OF LENT

At first reading, these messages seem grim. Sin is present in daily life; none of us escapes it. Each of these scriptures makes that clear. We can’t pull ourselves out. We are “in the depths.” Admission of guilt, repenting, reconciling with God and accepting His mercies are necessary. It’s not a matter of earning good marks to balance out the bad, hoping to pass muster. It’s admitting our need of God’s “plenteous redemption,” there for our asking. Though we wish to be good people all on our own, we cannot. The knowledge of “God with us” is freeing and powerful. “Help of the Helpless, Lord Abide in Me”¹ says a hymn.

I recall being unkind to my friend at age six, feeling guilt instantly. “You can do better; an adult had said in another instance. I remembered that God is with us, prayed, and felt God’s presence, and apologized.

Holy Trinity Stay with us. Amen.

Nancy Lee Gillies, ’69

“LOVING YOUR ENEMY”— AN ANTIDOTE TO TODAY’S POLARIZATION?

Despite my strong belief that a united world is possible, the Gospel call to “Love your enemies” has always challenged me. Yet the alternative — loving only those who love us — seems to be an all-too-familiar rule that governs everything from the algorithms of our social media feeds to the way we choose to spend our money. Though most of us are not satisfied with the ideological bubbles we are almost trapped in, I for one find it difficult (even scary) to step out of my comfort zone to truly embrace those who think differently than I. But reading today’s Gospel, I felt called to set a personal challenge: how many people can I engage with this week who think differently than I? Can I listen to them deeply without getting distracted with a counter argument, without any agenda at all? Can I find people in my workplace or neighborhood to whom I have not paid attention and reach out to them? Can I identify someone who bothers me and find a way to get to know them better?

Am I nervous about this? Yes. Am I already regretting committing this to writing? Totally. But is there a more effective and immediate way to fight the polarization that I unwillingly perpetuate? Probably not.

Kate O’Brien
Center for Mercy Heritage & Service, Mercy Service
In the Gospel story, I am struck by Peter’s response. “Lord, it is good that we are here! If you wish, I will make three tents” (Mt 17:4). Peter had a powerful experience of seeing Jesus transformed and didn’t want to let it go. But all our moments are not mountain-top experiences. How often in life do I stop and recognize that it is good to be here in this moment, no matter if it is ordinary or special, if it is joyful or sorrowful, or if it is easy or difficult? Even in the quiet everydayness of life, we can recognize the whisper of God saying, “This is my Beloved One. Listen.” Let us search for God not just in the big moments in our life but in all the little moments. Then, let us pay attention and “listen” to what these ordinary moments are revealing to us about God.

“Perfection does not consist in performing extraordinary actions, but rather in performing extraordinarily well the ordinary actions of every day.”

— Catherine McAuley

Sister Michele Schroock, RSM
Vocations Minister
In the Gospel reading, Jesus starts by saying, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” He tells them that whatever they put out is what they will receive. The theme that jumped out at me in this reading was focusing on treating others how you would want to be treated. Whether religious or not, everyone gets back the energy that they decide to put into the world. We should all try our best to treat those around us with grace and kindness, not only because that’s the right thing to do, but because in the long run it will return in your favor. It’s important to take the time to reflect on our actions and make sure we’re acting in the best interests of ourselves and others.

Sarah Blackstone
Respiratory Care, ’23
Cast away from you all the crimes you have committed, says the LORD, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. (Ez. 18:31)

The act of casting away is the action of taking off and declaring something new. Shedding what is old and reveling in what is new takes courage and self-discovery — not based on what we know but based on what we do not know. We are not able to see where we are truly going. But with understanding of the commitment that the Lord makes to his promises, we can take a courageous step in what we do not know and discover the possibilities of what it means to have a new heart and lead with a new spirit casting the older parts of the self.

Andrew Roberts
MAMS Student Affairs & Professional Counseling, ’23
Student Affairs, Residence Life
I feel that the important message in this passage is how together you stand stronger, and when many gather in the name of Jesus people are more powerful in community. This passage resonated with me because it showed that when Satan is divided against himself, he is weak. So together we can have an attitude and viewpoint of staying in community, to support one another. In addition, I have gathered that one’s faith in Jesus is a strong defense against all evil, wrongdoing, and destruction. I take away from this passage that “whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters,” so stand strong together with the Lord, and be steady and rooted in his presence.

Lotus Soletti, ’23
Campus Laboratory School
While reading over the scriptures, my heart led me to Jer 17:5-10. As I reflected, it made me question how often we put our trust (our everything) into man. We lean and depend on flesh and mankind when we should be putting our trust and obedience in the Lord. Your blessings may seem to take more time than you would expect, you may question or say, “God, do you hear my cries?”, “I need you Father”; you may think He doesn’t hear you, but He does. Your test may be to continue to be obedient and to stay steadfast in the Lord. Don’t put belief in man, don’t rely on man, continue to have unwavering faith, confidence, and belief in the Lord. He will never leave your side; He can do all.

Quinn Guy
College of Health & Wellness
Speech & Language Pathology
We are closing out the second week of Lent. The initial fervor for this season and its commitment to prayer, fasting, and almsgiving is beginning to wane. Now would be a good time to “remember the marvels our God has done” (Ps 105:5). Perhaps not immediately, after all it took a few decades for the treachery of Joseph’s brothers to produce a harvest of redemption. And the story of the tenants seems to have turned around only a few of the Pharisees. Still, the promise remains. God’s marvels will ultimately prevail for those people who strive to produce fruit for the Kingdom of God. Today let’s reflect on the manner in which God’s marvels have appeared in our lives — maybe not immediately, but eventually. That reflection may well lead to renewed fervor to be about the works of the Kingdom: prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Sister Helen Marie Burns, RSM, DTh
Board of Trustees
March 11, 2023
SECOND SATURDAY OF LENT

“Who is there like you who does not persist in anger forever but delights rather in clemency and will again have compassion on us.” Mi 17:18

This initially struck me, but as I read on, the gospel resonated even more.

To me, it’s clear that it is up to us as individuals to find the good in our hearts to forgive. It is easy to dwell on the past, but it takes true courage to accept our faults, right our wrongs and ask for help. In the gospel reading, the older son was so angry when he learned his brother returned and was forgiven. As I reflect, I feel the lesson is not always about perfection and walking “the right” path, but more so about the lessons one can learn along the way when you lose your footing. If you have compassion and forgiveness in your heart, that is what truly helps others.

Shayna Zayak
Advancement, Alumni Engagement
Exodus 17:3-7; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9; Romans 5:1-2, 5-8; John 4:5-42

March 12, 2023
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Gospel according to John 4:5-42

Jesus reveals himself as the Messiah to the most unlikely person, a Samaritan woman with five husbands. He does so metaphorically, then directly. I love the metaphor of water moving throughout, the image of faith as the living water welling up in the spirit. Jesus tells the Samaritan woman, “But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and truth” (Jn 4:23-24). Finally, the big reveal when the woman tells Jesus, “I know that the Messiah is coming, the one called the Christ; when he comes, he will tell us everything.” And Jesus replies: “I am he, the one speaking with you” (Jn 4:25-26). He has told her everything. The exchange is mysterious and underscores the humility of Jesus and the mystery of faith, always coupled with grace. The Samaritan woman captures the humanity so elemental to Christ’s message and to Christianity.

Tess Barry, MFA, ’13
College of Arts & Sciences
Art, Communication & English
2 Kings 5:1-15ab

When I read the passages, they remind me of how pride can be a nuisance and detrimental to us. No matter how important you think you are, it doesn’t matter. Illnesses, addictions, emotional and mental health issues are not biased. They affect all of us in some way. We must humble ourselves before God and turn our troubles over to Him. We must spend time studying the scriptures and praying faithfully.

Jesus Christ prayed to His Father in all matters. If Jesus, our Lord and Savior humbled Himself, we should also humble ourselves, and listen to the instructions from God’s Holy Word. We must be true believers and followers of Jesus. We should walk in His way. Lord Jesus, I ask you to keep us in Your Light and be our guide, salvation, and strength. Amen.

Kenneth J. Ference
Police Dispatch
Every Lenten season since I was taken into The Mother Church on Easter Vigil of 2007, I have treasured this time of reflection. From the Beginning, realizing, that for me, this giving up glaring character defects wasn’t something I was going to take back on Resurrection Sunday, I have attempted to lay them on this altar of sack cloth and ashes... one by one. They do attempt to sneak back, especially if I leave cracks in my armor, but at least I recognize them and have the option to “not come out and play” anymore.

This Holy Scripture speaks of God rebuilding Zion on Earth and “looking down.” The Celts coined a phrase, “A thin place,” meaning where heaven and earth meet. I was privileged to live in a thin place for several years during my early formation as a Christ One in the 1970s... a communal experience in a converted dairy barn on fertile farmland. The place became very hospitable to our Lord... He pitched His tent and dwelt among us. Emmanuel.

The world swallowed up that physical place, but the experience lives on in many minds and hearts... including mine. This Lent I pray to continue to give up that in me which delays His return.

Nancy L. Handford-McChesney
MA, Advanced Arts, ’24
Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-9; Psalm 147:12-13, 15-16, 19-20; Matthew 5:17-19

March 15, 2023

THIRD WEDNESDAY OF LENT

Dt 4:1, 5-9

My Lenten reflection finds Moses speaking to the people. He is assuring them that God is with them even in the toughest of times. This is very meaningful in today’s world when people endure suffering, violence, and unimaginable hardships that put our faith in the Lord to the test. People must believe that God’s unconditional love is all around and those of us who follow in God’s path will see many blessings. We must follow the commandments as a way to honor the path of God and by doing so we will enjoy a life of peace, justice, and mercy.

Jason Krall, MBA
Online & Academic Operations
This passage describes how Jesus talked to his disciples about leadership. He wanted them not to seek recognition, power, or glory, but instead to choose kindness, service, and sacrifice. Jesus describes a true leader as someone who first and foremost serves the people.

I find this especially useful to my own life this year because it is my first year on the CLS (Campus Laboratory School) Student Council. It also serves me well because I hope to be a leader in some capacity in the future. In fact, I chose to run for the CLS Student Council so that I can gain experience in leadership and have a greater positive impact in my school. This passage teaches me to focus on being a selfless leader who truly cares about the people I am leading and to do my best to lead with kindness and generosity.

Brandon K. Browning-Dias
Campus Laboratory School, ’25
Hosea 14:2-10, 8:10; Psalm 81:6c-8a, 8bc-9, 10-11ab, 14, 17; Mark 12:28-34

March 17, 2023

**THIRD FRIDAY OF LENT: THE FEAST OF ST. PATRICK**

Showing compassion and love to our neighbors and strangers can be an immensely difficult task, but those values are embedded in the foundation of our faith. We can be distracted, frustrated, or quick to resort to dismissive or harsh tendencies towards others, especially in times of stress. God calls upon us to act with intention and grace without the expectation of reciprocity. We must focus our words and actions around kindness and understanding. Love others freely. Forgive. Believe in the goodness of others. Though the teachings may seem simple, we know that we may struggle to follow them. Today, we can be patient in long lines, think from another perspective, or let go of a grudge. To build a more just and merciful world, we must first work on ourselves and learn to lead with love and compassion.

**Clarissa Moore, JD, ’19**
Hosea 6:1-6; Psalm 51:3-4, 18-19, 20-21ab; Luke 18:9-14

March 18, 2023
THIRD SATURDAY OF LENT

For it is love that I desire, not sacrifice, and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. (Hos 6:6)

The words “love” and “mercy” in today’s readings and scriptures emphasized in Hosea 6:6 resonate most with me. These words are powerful, especially in this current time of uncertainty and death from diseases, violence, and hate. God’s mercy remains the ultimate example for us today.

As I gain more knowledge of His love and mercy towards me, I am better equipped to show love and mercy to others. Our reading illuminates the reality that we should focus our hearts more on giving love to our family and showing mercy to our neighbors and friends.

“It is mercy I desire, and not sacrifice.” I delight in the Spirit showing me through this reading that Mercy is Love, and I’d rather have the love of Jesus more than silver or gold.

Bridgette N. Cofield, JD, SPHR
Office of the President
In this Gospel passage, we see how Jesus uses His human body to live out His Mission. When He heals people, He gets close to the person and often physically touches them to bring healing. Here, He uses His spit to create the clay. While some may think this is gross, it shows how intimately close to us Jesus desires to get, if only we allow Him in. He gave us His body to eat, and what is more intimate than that? We also see how Jesus breaks down barriers, as He performs this healing on the Sabbath, to the dismay of the Pharisees. We must remember He desires us always, and that the Sabbath was made for us, not us for the Sabbath; do not be overly concerned with following every single rule, but rather be firstly concerned with growing in loving union with Christ. The rest will come.

Mary Grace Oliva
Social Work, ’24
Today’s first reading contains the familiar admonition to not judge by appearances. God doesn’t see as we do, focusing on the exterior, the reading points out, but looks into the heart. Pope Francis offers the same advice in his letter entitled “Evangelii Gaudium” — “We need to look at our cities with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in our homes, in our streets and city squares.” A Christmas card I received last year offers the same insight — “Not in Bethlehem will we find Christ but among the people in the streets of our own cities and towns wherever we open our hearts in peace and love and make room.” When we take the time to really look at the people around us, to contemplate them as Pope Francis suggests, instead of making quick and unreflected judgments, then we find that the presence of God is all around us — in Frances Warde and Dougherty, in Frank’s and Tiernan, in Antonian and AJP. We don’t have to go far to find ourselves in the company of God — we need only look carefully and make room.

Sr. Sheila Carney, RSM
Center for Mercy Heritage & Service
Follow the Lord where he leads you. In the first reading Ezekiel is led to see the water flowing out of the temple and then to walk into the water until he could no longer wade in it. Sometimes it feels like we are being asked to do too many things, that we won’t be able to keep going because we are not capable of wading through it. When Ezekiel moves to the bank, he is told that everything will flourish because it is “watered by the flow from the sanctuary.”

While we may not be able to carry too many things, there is still hope for renewal if we trust in the Lord. Our paths may change, our loads may become heavier or lighten, or be replaced, but we should find some relief in knowing that if we look to Him, God will be our “refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Ps 46:1).

Marisa (Tracy) Watt, ’14, ’16
Campus Laboratory School
Two lines from today’s first reading resonated with me: “For the LORD comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted” and “…I will never forget you.” The fourth week of Lent often elicits homily comments such as “it’s not too late to revise your Lenten commitments.” Simply put, being faithful, and true to your commitments, is hard. Yet for our hard work, authenticity, and diligence, the return is God’s deepest mercy. No matter what or how seemingly unworthy we may feel or be. “I will never forget you.” On this day, breathe in the comfort of knowing that we are exactly as God had imagined, we are sacred beings, and we are deserving of God’s deepest mercy. Inhale slowly this moment, exhale slowly the next. Hear God’s voice, “I will never forget you.”

Timothy P. Phillips, PhD
Student Affairs
Through today’s readings, we are reminded of God’s promises and the sacrifices He made. At times, we might lose focus or allow doubt to creep in and shake our faith. The readings call upon us to remain strong and steadfast in our beliefs. We are called to never lose hope that God will provide for us.

Though we may not always know the plan God has for us or why certain events occur, we can look to the teachings as a reminder that God promises forgiveness for the contrite, unconditional love for the stranger, and eternal life with Him. Our journeys may all look different, some seemingly more difficult than others, but God will be there for guidance, as will our faith community.

Kelly Aussprung, MS, CCP, ’20
Wisdom 2:1a, 12-22; Psalm 34:17-21, 23; John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

March 24, 2023
FOURTH FRIDAY OF LENT

The readings explain that “the LORD relented in the punishment he had threatened to inflict on his people.” This resonates within me as the Gospel speaks about the Lord’s wrath when the Lord is so often seen as merciful. Within this season of Lent, it is so very important to remember that the Lord is merciful, and the Lenten season can be the season of hope. Hope can be seen throughout the Bible so many times and it is vital to remember. When the flowers have yet to bloom, and the sun goes down early it can be hard to find the light. God is that light within our lives. Even when we cannot see him, he is always there.

Meghan R. Alexander
Behavioral Neuroscience, ’23
I read The Gospel of Luke: 1:26-38, which described the story of Angel Gabriel’s visitation to Mary. The story tells us that sometimes, God will make decisions for us that are scary, but we shouldn’t be scared. God will help us through hard and scary times. Mary had to learn that she was going to have Jesus when she was still young, but she wasn’t afraid because she knew that God would help her. Mary had so much love for God that she trusted Him, and she believed Him. This shows how God will help us and will always love us.
When Martha’s brother, Lazarus, died, she was perplexed that Jesus had not done anything to prevent his death. Jesus consoled her by exclaiming that Lazarus will rise because Jesus is the resurrection and life and whoever believes in him, even if he dies, will live. Although Jesus was talking to Martha in the literal sense, he also suggested the promise of heaven. Synonymously with his own resurrection, Jesus shows us in Lazarus’s resurrection that by believing in Jesus, you will be raised up to a new life. We too will have our own resurrection after death; to be raised up and enjoy an eternity in heaven alongside Jesus.

Joshua Stephenson
Biology, ’24

March 27, 2023

FIFTH MONDAY OF LENT

My first time reading through this story made me angry. It was not until I got to the end that I understood what God had planned for Susanna. He already knew that she was innocent, but He used Daniel, this young boy, to help bring those horrible men to justice. As I thought upon why God made men act in these awful ways, it reminded me that sometimes God puts things in motion that we do not yet fully understand. We cannot see that light at the end of the tunnel, but He does see, and He does know. He is ALL knowing, and He puts us in these situations for a reason. God knows what we can and cannot handle, and sometimes we do not even realize the hand He has in how we live our lives.

Abigail Altieri
Nursing, ’25
March 28, 2023

FIFTH TUESDAY OF LENT

O Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come to you.
O LORD, hear my prayer, and let my cry come to you.
Hide not your face from me in the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me; in the day when I call, answer me speedily.

(PS 102:2-3)

During these occasions of uncertainties and inner turmoil, we cry out for guidance and peace within our hearts, souls, and minds. Let us turn to you O Lord with the unscathed trust of a child seeking the comfort of your embrace during the times we have lost hope. May we find solace in knowing you listen to our prayers and have the patience to await your answer. Allow your peace and tranquility to consume our being and give us the strength to find our purpose and walk in your path.

Angela Kelly, DNP, RN
College of Health & Wellness
Department of Nursing
Jesus told a group of Jewish leaders that if they remain true to his word, they will know the truth, and “the truth will set you free.” In turn, they argue that they are descendants of Abraham, implying that this gives them status as free people — not responsible to others. What these learned people did not understand was that they were slaves to their own sinfulness. Anyone can claim to be descendant of Abraham. But Jesus calls them to task for disregarding the law handed down from Abraham. They can use the name, but their actions and words betray their inheritance.

In contrast, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, refuse to bow under pressure from King Nebuchadnezzar to deny the teachings of their faith. They faced death for refusing to forsake the God of their ancestors. Their faith in the word of the one true God saved them.

Each day I face situations or people which challenge my faith. Am I comfortable being Christians by name only? I pray that God gives me the strength to meet each challenge.

Siobhan K. De Witt, MA
Center for Mercy Heritage & Service, Campus Ministry
In the reading from the Gospel of John the Jews ask Jesus, “Who do you make yourself out to be?” Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is worth nothing; but it is my Father who glorifies me.” This resonated with me because Jesus could have answered with anything, yet he reflects the question back to show the greatness of his father. This really speaks to me because it shows that you’re never alone. The Lord teaches us to love one another and to be willing to help each other. Those within our lives who glorify themselves are often missing when there is a need for a helping hand or a shoulder to lean on. This is not to say don’t be proud or have confidence in yourself, but to remember the people who help get you there. For all is possible through God and His love. There is always someone in your corner and, so often, we forget that throughout the storm.

Megan M. Cooper
Nursing, ’24
When reading this psalm, my mind instantly went venting. So much happens in our day-to-day lives that saddens, frustrates, and overwhelms us as well as any number of other emotions. He is always there to listen to us when we need to share the good, bad, and ugly of our days. Unfortunately, seeking Him out is often forgotten in the chaos of emotions and daily living.

The kindness of friends and family listening is wonderful, but they often try to help resolve or solve the problem or try to boost me up to keep me moving forward. Sometimes, all that’s needed is to share — with no reciprocal discussion, action, or response needed. I thank Him for the opportunity to share the heavy load of life as well as sharing in the celebrations that hopefully happen more frequently than the struggles.
Ezekiel 37:21-28

GOD is sovereign, an omnipotent GOD, and is often depicted as loving, kind, forgiving, and merciful. These same characteristics of GOD were revealed in the relationship with the Israelites. Idolatry worship and apostasy was common among the Israelites. Their hearts were far from GOD, and this hurt Him. Even though Israel was consumed in sin, and it angered GOD, He always forgave their sins. Isaiah 54:8 (NIV) states, “In a surge of anger, I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.”

Through repentance, GOD can and does extend the same mercy towards us today as He did for the Israelites, and He casts away our sins. Micah 7:19 (NIV) states, “You will again have compassion on us, you will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea.”

Dana Walker, RN, BSN, MSN
College of Health & Wellness, Clinical Nursing
Matthew 2:1-11; Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-20, 23-24; Philippians 2:6-11; Matthew 26:14-27, 66

April 2, 2023

PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday calls us to enter the story in a different way than some of the gospels. I listen in a different way to this gospel because I can see myself in the story. This is a story, after all, about me and about all of us. It calls us to ask, “what has Jesus done for me?” However, I am in the other parts of the story also. I must ask myself the hard questions. Am I in any way like Judas? Have I been like Pilate and judged and condemned others? Palm Sunday and Holy Week is an opportunity for us to slow down, to remember what Jesus had done for us and to remember where Jesus is in our lives now.

Sister Jenny Wilson, RSM, MEd ’12

April 3, 2023

MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK

In this Gospel, Jesus is at the home of Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Martha is serving Jesus; she took expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointed Jesus’s feet and wiped his feet with her hair. Judas, who was one of Jesus disciples, asked why she didn’t sell the expensive perfume and give it to the poor. Judas himself, though, is not perfect and he does not care about the poor, for he used to be a thief. Jesus said to Judas, “Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.” The message of the Gospel to me was to not judge others before you judge yourself and look at your selfishness before looking at others.

Tessa McMichael
Nursing ’26
Isaiah 49:1-6; Psalm 71:1-2, 3-4a, 5ab-6ab, 15, 17; John 13:21-33, 36-38

April 4, 2023

TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

We all have days that are troublesome, and we want to give up. Today’s readings remind us that God will never give up on us even if we have betrayed him or sinned against him! How lucky are we to have such a merciful God? Jesus has shared his light with us so that, through us, we can be the light for all the world to see. As we advance toward the Easter Vigil, think about what the light of our candles represents and how our light will not be extinguished as long as we have God’s mercy and love.

Julia Cavallo, EdD
Conference for Mercy Higher Education
Today is the day before the Easter Triduum. The solemnity and grandeur of distributing the holy chrism and oils throughout the diocese takes place tomorrow. The re-enactment of the Last Supper, washing of the feet, stripping of the altar happens all over the world, tomorrow. Friday, we remember Jesus’ journey to the cross. And then, sunset Saturday, we begin the holiest of holy days welcoming new members to the Church, celebrating life over death, Light triumphant over the evils of darkness.

Today Isaiah reminds us that though we may speak God’s truth, we may be called to suffer as Christ did. Our psalm reminds us that we need to stop, be patient, and listen for the Word of God. We are put to the test as believers. There are no quick solutions. In the Gospel, Judas betrays Jesus, because he is afraid of the cost of following Him. Before we embark on the Triduum, decide if you are willing to make the sacrifice. Like Isaiah and our psalmist, you will not be forsaken.

Penny Parker
Staff
One of the most beautiful acts of humility is the washing of feet, illustrated in today’s gospel readings. Mother Theresa called humility “the mother of all virtues” and patterned her ministry with the Little Sisters of the Poor in daily acts of humility. A beautiful exercise today may be to pray the Litany of Humility “Oh Jesus, Meek and Humble of Heart, Hear me. From the desire of being esteemed, Deliver me.” The prayer continues for 24 more lines and can be a beautiful exercise in exploring our own humility. For, as we are called to “love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12), we can find the pathway to loving others through true humility.

Ruth Madden Foreman, DNP, FNP-BC
College of Health & Wellness, Graduate Nurse Practitioner Program
I used to believe that I had a contract with God: that when I obeyed God, only good things would happen to me, never bad. And if I were ever falsely accused, I would argue and fight, telling everyone why I was right, and my accusers were wrong.

Then I read how Jesus responded when he was falsely arrested. He didn’t justify himself. He didn’t fight. He just obeyed God, without expectation. He simply Surrendered. “You are my God. In your hands is my destiny.”

And what were the results of Jesus’ obedience? He was reviled, mocked, tortured, crucified, and buried with evildoers, even though he was blameless.

Why didn’t God save his son who showed obedience to the point of death? What did Jesus ever get for all his obedience?

Kate McConnell
Student Affairs, Office of Career Development
No one sees the Resurrection. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary look on as Jesus takes his final breaths, but they have no parallel sight of Jesus’s first breaths of resurrected life. Instead, when the stone rolls away, the Marys get an empty tomb and the message that Jesus is already up and gone. They encounter Him only when they start their journey to tell the other disciples.

So it is with us. Often if we look for Jesus in miracles or proofs, all we find is an empty tomb. This is good as far as it goes: the empty tomb is indeed a type of evidence. But ultimately what we want is not proof that Jesus is alive; what we want is the alive Jesus. As Matthew tells it, that encounter comes when we start sharing our experiences of searching for Jesus, and the good news we’ve heard.

Stephen Calme, PhD
College of Arts & Sciences, Theology
EASTER SUNDAY

Easter Sunday is an important day for everyone. The resurrection of our Lord Jesus, three days after being led to the cross, and dying upon the cross for everyone’s sins, fulfilled the scriptures. Easter Sunday and the Easter Season remind us of how fortunate we are to have God’s love and the love of one another through family and friends. The love of God is so great that He sent his only son, conceived in every way but sin to save humanity from the perils of sin. Easter Sunday is now seen as the ultimate victory over sin. Unfortunately, there are those who doubt it. We are reminded what Jesus said to St. Thomas the Apostle, “Blessed are those who haven’t seen and have believed.”

Fred P. Vella
Data Analytics, ‘26
Campus Ministry
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