

2011 Lenten Meditations:

Ancient and Modern Voices



Special Thanks to Frs. Mark Kowalewski and Dan Ade for their enthusiastic support, the St. John's congregants who courageously contributed to this project, Anne Clarke for her tireless and countless hours of service, editors Walter Killmer and Myles Clarke, and graphic designer Jason Chang.

2011 Lenten Meditations is a collection of daily reflections gathered from ancient voices in Christian history and modern voices at St. John's Cathedral. As we continue exploring how to "let our light shine in the city" and to each other, we invite you to share this new community practice of prayerfully meditating on a reflection for each of the 40 days of Lent, plus the Sundays in Lent. These reflections are based on gospel readings given in *Holy Women, Holy Men: Celebrating the Saints* (beginning on Ash Wednesday, 9 March, through Holy Saturday, 23 April).

The gracious reflectors from St. John's share honestly from their own, unique experiences, giving voice to how God, through the words of the Gospel, continues to challenge and encourage their lives. The additional images shared each Sunday during Lent are from CB1 Gallery (www.cb1gallery.com), sales of which will benefit St. John's outreach ministries. We realize that every meditation may not resonate with every reader, but we pray that you will honor and learn from the diversity of ancient and modern voices.

We are called during Lent to walk with Christ, to be honest about our daily struggles as Christians in this city, and to welcome new ways of letting Christ's light shine in and through us. While Lent invites us into this self-examination, we need not do it alone. We are blessed to be part of a congregation with a tremendous richness of spiritual and lived experiences who journey with us. We pray that the vulnerable sharing in this collection, by the power of God, will help nurture deeper relationships and invite all of us to reflect on our own lives as we remember the way of Jesus during Lent.

Co-Coordinator,
The Rev. Sarah Lapenta-H
Dr. Robert Brown

Ash Wednesday

Matthew 6:1-6,16-21

Robert Brown

Here we go again. Another year has passed, and the season of Lent is upon us. It was not uncommon for me to be reminded of Ash Wednesday when I walked into work and was confronted by the ashen smudges on those who had gone to a 7 am service somewhere. The day then continued, with me scrambling for a way to get me some of that ashen action! The service was usually a bit drab and down (dust to dust, etc.), but it was a time for me to think about what I was going to do for the next 40 days. Somehow, I always felt like I had to “catch up.”

That began to change for me about seven years ago, when I first experienced Lent at my former parish in New York City. There, on the table at coffee hour, was a stack of small spiral-bound books. “What’s this?” I wondered. How odd! Was this some ploy to get me to read the Bible every day?? I was skeptical, to say the least. By the second week of Lent, I donated the suggested amount and dumped a book of Lenten Meditations in my book bag. I went through Lent—and several months following—with that book in my bag, but without ever opening it.

On a particularly difficult day that summer, my hands came across the book while searching for my checkbook or pen. I pulled it out of my bag. It was grungy, rough around the edges, dirty, and, well, not very pretty. But, I was compelled to open it up and read one of the reflections. It was the story of a nurse who had come to this country from Ireland during difficult times, and about her journey of recovery from alcoholism. I was thrown off a bit when I saw the name below, revealing a woman who was somewhat stand-offish and outspoken. Her simple, heartfelt, honest reflection opened my heart and reminded me that I wasn’t alone in my daily struggles in this life. Indeed, her

story and devotion to Jesus inspired me and filled my heart with love for her, as well as for the rest of the stories I read.

I discovered a treasure that day. I discovered the richness and love of a community that was both diverse and common—all given freely and without expectation. They did not share these lessons hoping for a reward. They were invitations to see God in a new light. Our relationship with God is not open to interpretation by others. Our relationship with the God in others, however, just may hold the nugget of treasure we've been looking for.

Thursday after Ash Wednesday

Luke 9:18-25

Anonymous

When I learned that I had lost my job, I instantly realized that I had lost my life as I knew it. I also knew that my marriage would go too, along with the meager friendships I had built at my place of work. I felt that I had worked so hard to get to this point and station in my life. I was shattered, with no emotional support. And while my life was swirling around me, I gradually understood that I did not like the person I had become.

A cradle Episcopalian, I had not been physically connected to a parish for quite some time. I had heard about a virtual parish—Anglicans Online—and joined it as a way of coping with the task of rebuilding my sense of self and dignity. The lively discussions about faith, the Church, and ordinary life situations helped guide me to a parish I had always loved as a child. I moved closer to this parish and back to my church family. In the process, my faith kept me believing that life would improve only if I really opened myself up to God and to God's people.

This painful process opened my eyes and my heart to see that I had, indeed, lost my life in order to save myself. This epiphany startled me to my core, and it still does whenever I encounter this passage. I have a different job now—not as stellar or high-ranking—but it's one where I better serve God by being a better person to all I serve. Should I change jobs, my servanthood will remain with me always.

Friday after Ash Wednesday

Matthew 9:10-17

Myles Clarke

The Intractable Agency of God in Lent

This is one of those maddening passages of rapid-fire aphorisms attributed to our Lord. On top of four micro-parables, he reaches into the minor prophets to quote Hosea, all in the space of these eight verses. Now, maybe Matthew was busy hosting the party, so we got the Cliff's Notes on longer, clearer stories, but I think that the overwhelming flood of metaphor the text gives us is, at least partially, Jesus' way of answering the Pharisees' (surprisingly honest) question: "*Why are you here?!*"

His answer is that he's *everywhere*. No matter what it is, God is up in that business. Sin and sinnerness? He's on top of it. Hurt and healing? Theology, marriage, sewing, winemaking? All the same. And for us, Episcopalians in Lent (hint: In this story, we're the analogues for the Pharisees and the Hebrew priests making sacrifices), we should remember that it's still true: There is no containing His agency to transform. Not through behavior, or preparation, or discipline. We are all used wineskins, old cloth; we cannot make ourselves ready to deal with Him.

So this Lent, do not seek a predictable experience of a known God to which you must return, some familiar, annualized cycle of repentance, coming right on schedule after the joy of Christmas. Perhaps instead, take Hosea's advice and explore the community virtues of "loyalty" and "compassion" in place of the defined rituals you already know. Try going outside of yourself. I assure you; God's there, wherever you might end up. See how He transforms you unexpectedly this year.

Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Luke 5:27-32

Brianna Meighan-Lawson

One day at school in my eighth period class, as my Geometry teacher had the class taking notes on the lesson for the day, the students began to talk amongst themselves. “John,” a likeable but unique student, said something from across the room. Now, I have to admit that I heard people around the school saying that “John” was homosexual. I did not hear exactly what he said, but another male student evidently did not like what John had to say. This other male student blurted out, “Whatever, you gay fool.” I responded immediately and said to the bully that it is not nice to call people names. Since then, I have not heard any more comments like that.

I don’t think I realized what I was doing at the time, but now I know that, if I believe in Jesus, I have to be more Jesus-like. The gospel reading Luke 5:27-32 reminded me of this incident. In the verse Jesus sits down and eats with sinners and tax collectors, who would have been the “loser” crowd during that time period. These verses show people that Jesus the Savior sees nobody “lower” than him, and that he is not here to save the people who are already saved—the righteous people; he came to save to sinners. This lets sinners know that they still have a chance at the righteous path, and that you can be righteous whether you’re poor or rich—it is achieved through your actions.

I think that we need to practice more forgiveness, tolerance, and patience with everybody that we come across every day—especially during Lent.

First Sunday in Lent

Matthew 4:1-11



Alexander Kroll
Untitled, 2010
Courtesy CB1 Gallery

Monday in the First Week of Lent

Matthew 25:31-46

Martha M. Watson

On a recent Wednesday evening, after leaving St. John's Cathedral, in Los Angeles, I took a different route home, traveling west on Martin Luther King Blvd. I passed a Jack in the Box and decided I wanted some onion rings. After circling the block, I entered the establishment, and I was greeted by a young Latino male who took my order. I was angered that the eatery had the heavy plastic barriers between the customers and the employees typical of fast food and banking establishments in South Central. A young African-American man also came in and placed an order. He was connected (hooked up) with his iPod, and he was totally engrossed in singing along with the music. I was annoyed by his singing and his rhythmic tapping on a table. Then a young Latino couple with a young child came in and placed an order. Seemingly, they did not have enough money, and the young woman went to the car to retrieve more money.

The young African-American man was observing the interactions; he proceeded to provide the Latino male with additional money, retrieved his order, and left the eatery. I did not observe any repayment of money. The brother left singing and enjoying his music—in fact, he never lost a beat—yet, he was very observant and attuned to the couple.

I was eating the onion rings and processing the interactions when an African-American woman came in, and I experienced her as being high on drugs, or perhaps she had not taken her psychotropic medication(s). It was obvious she had a relationship with the staff, and she wanted some water. They gave her the water; she thanked them and hurriedly left to catch a bus or to engage in some activity.

These interactions left me in a reflective mode. This particular area of Los Angeles is inhabited by a majority of low- and moderate-income individuals, and there are often tensions between the Latinos and African Americans over limited resources; yet, these individuals were being their brothers' and sisters' keepers.

In Matthew 25:31-46, Jesus elaborates on the separation of the goats and the sheep. He expands on why the sheep will enter the Kingdom of Heaven (experience oneness with God); whereas, the goats, the unrighteous, will experience separation from God. Living a life that exemplifies the essence of Jesus' teachings is basically our interactions with others. It means being tuned in to others and responding in ways that give meaning and hope to the world. Above all, my reflections on these interactions reminded me that the ways we engage daily, the small and large acts, represent our connections with the Lord.

Tuesday in the First Week of Lent

Matthew 6:7-15

Dan Doyle

In reading the lesson for today, I was drawn to the idea of the importance of forgiveness. I immediately thought of my work as a therapist, and of the difficulty many of my clients have with forgiving themselves. Self-forgiveness has been difficult for me, as well.

This is particularly true in regard to my relationship with my older brother, Tim, who passed away in 2003. Tim became a born-again Christian in 1997. From then on, our interactions consisted largely of him quoting the Bible to me. This dynamic continued for several years, and I grew frustrated at not being able to talk to him about our lives, feelings, hopes, struggles; frustrated at not being able to get past all the preaching. I tried to address this issue with him during a phone call in 2001. As my brother began quoting Bible verses to me, I told him that I wanted to talk to him, not just to hear preaching. He responded in anger, saying, "I don't want to hear about Hollywood, Dan!"

My resentment about Tim's evangelizing welled up, and I expressed how difficult it had become for me to relate to him since his conversion. He responded by questioning my commitment to our brotherhood. My anger turned to despair, and I broke down. Noticing how upset I was, Tim apologized and said he would not talk to me about the Bible anymore. He did not understand that I was asking him to be in relationship with me, not forbidding him to talk about the Bible.

I saw Tim once after that, and I spoke to him on the phone a few times. I wrote him a letter explaining my intentions about the phone call. He thanked me for the letter that last time I saw him, though we did not talk further

about the issue. I deeply regret that our relationship suffered so much, and also that I did not have more time to set things right prior to his passing away.

In today's lesson, Jesus encourages us to simplify our prayers, down to the basics of honoring God and asking for food, forgiveness for ourselves, the willingness to forgive others, and finally, protection from negative influences. The season of Lent reminds us to engage in these practices: Gratitude. Simplicity. Forgiveness. Aligning with what is good in the world and within ourselves.

I am working to forgive myself for failing to see beyond the beliefs to which I took offense, for failing to see that Tim was still there. I am ready to forgive Tim for the distance that was created between us by his religious fervor. I trust that Tim and I are still connected. I feel that the work of repairing our relationship goes on. I believe that his God and my God are the same God, and that God's love is a powerful uniting force. Although what happened between us was hard at times, it was also beautiful. It is certainly all forgivable, and it was a gift to us both.

Wednesday in the First Week of Lent

Luke 11:29-32

Walter Killmer

Just as we are getting settled into this holy season, working on our spiritual lives, trying to be more open to the Spirit, perhaps trying to give up or take on something for Lent—here are the queen of the South and the people of Nineveh, coming to condemn an entire generation. Fortunately for us, we might think, Ethiopia no longer has a queen and Nineveh is mostly an archaeological site, and besides, Jesus was talking about unbelievers, not us.

I am not sure that we can dispose of this passage so easily. First of all, the audience seems to be what we would call Biblically literate: Jesus could allude to the visit by the queen of Ethiopia to King Solomon, and to the story of Jonah and the whale and how the entire city of Nineveh repented after hearing his preaching, and assume (as did the writer of Luke's Gospel) that the hearers (or readers) knew the background. In other words, it may be that this passage is directed at what we might call "church people."

So, what do the queen and the Ninevites have to say to our generation? While each of us individually could probably stand to apply their words (I certainly could), I think that their message is directed to all of us corporately—the greater Church, Episcopalians, our cathedral parish. We have not only the wisdom of Solomon, but that of Jesus himself, of the New Testament writers, of the church fathers and mothers, and of the many voices of our own day. How deeply have we availed ourselves of that wisdom, and how has it changed us? How do we show in our life and work together what we believe in our hearts?

Nineveh was one of the great cities of ancient times, of a stature on the world stage not unlike that of Los Angeles today. As the center of an empire, it must have been a sophisticated, diverse place. Jonah's preaching surely

included his whale story, and it must have been quite compelling, considering that the entire city repented. It's a story that we often hear at the Easter Vigil as a symbol or sign of the Resurrection and our own baptism. Perhaps we are being chided for not heeding the sign of Jonah in our own day, or being admonished to be that sign in our own city, but I think that it may be both.

How can we, as a congregation, be a sign to Los Angeles? As a downtown cathedral parish, with folks from all over the metropolitan area and every walk of life, God has placed us in the middle of a great city with a wonderful story to tell. What can St. John's and each of us at St. John's do, particularly in this Lent, to help tell that story?

Thursday in the First Week of Lent

Matthew 7:7-12

Karen Uhler

The Matthew 7:7-12 scripture passage, “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find,” is a basic element in my faith and my relationship with my Lord. It states clearly that I am an important child of God, and that the Lord will provide for me—one of his children.

This passage points out that one must be an active participant in the relationship with God, not just play a passive standby role. As a child of God, I have a responsibility to participate in the process of meeting my needs. We do not always understand our needs, do not always ask for what we need, and do not necessarily receive what we ask for, but we do need to use and take time to understand what the Lord provides.

This passage has been particularly important during difficult times in my life—family deaths, unemployment, sickness, etc. I have been comforted through these events and guided on the way by prayerful interaction with my Lord, asking for strength, guidance, acceptance, understanding, support, and direction. This passage is also vital in the life of a very close friend who is my spiritual sister. As we walk through life together, she exemplifies this on a daily basis and always turns me back when I stray, reminding me again to ask that the Lord provide what I need and show me the way.

Friday in the First Week of Lent

Matthew 5:20-26

Chromatius (c. 400), *a Church Father*

How greatly the Lord esteems love between brothers and sisters, for he makes clear that a gift offered to God is not acceptable unless the giver of a gift to a brother or sister puts aside anger and is reconciled.

Furthermore, we learn that the gifts offered by Cain were rejected by God. He failed to observe charity toward his brother and harbored anger in his heart. Hence, not without good reason does our Lord in the Gospel indicate in many places the prime necessity of charity between brothers and sisters when he says, “a new commandment I give you that you love one another.”

Saturday in the First Week of Lent

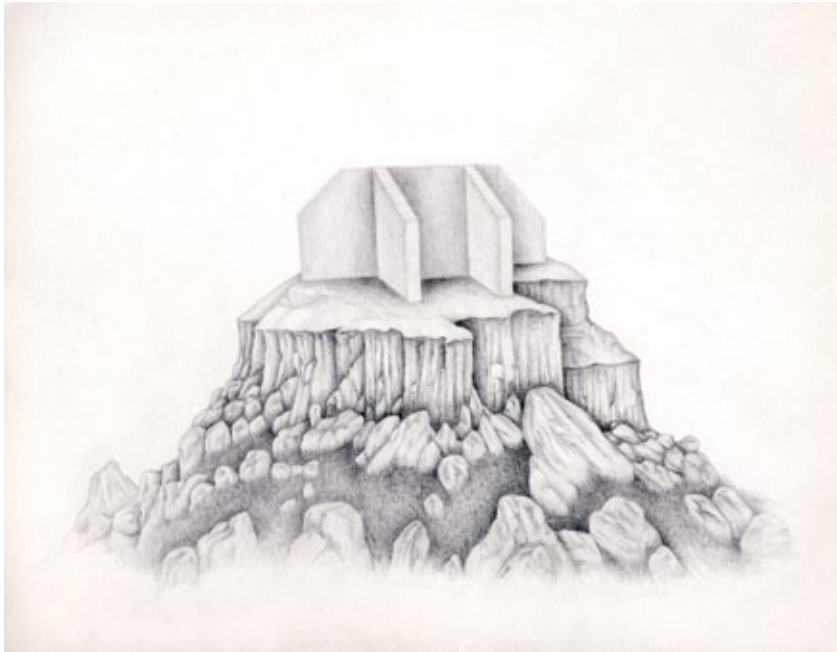
Matthew 5:43-48

Chromatius (c. 400), *a Church Father*

The Lord has shown that we cannot have the good work of perfect love if we only love those from whom, in turn, we know the return of mutual love will be paid in kind. For we know that love of this sort is common even to non-believers and sinners. Hence the Lord wishes us to overcome the common law of human love by the law of Gospel love, so that we may show the affection of our love not only toward those who love us but even toward our enemies... Thus we may imitate the example of true piety and our Father's goodness.

Second Sunday in Lent

Matthew 17:1-9



Oswaldo Trujillo
Sacred Site, 2010
Courtesy CB1 Gallery

Monday in the Second Week of Lent

Luke 6:27-38

Valaria Lincoln

If we, in our lives, follow carefully Jesus' words in this paragraph of the Gospel according to Luke, we would create a life pattern that would be beautiful, to please the eye, and more importantly, to please Our Father in Heaven.

We would be positive, nonjudgmental (God's work), loving, and forgiving. Our health would improve, as our hearts would improve, for giving without expectation of receiving any reward is glorious.

Jesus gave us the recipe for living: We can achieve the Peace that passes all understanding by following the New Covenant of love and giving.

My Maternal Grandmother Mrs. Mattee Lee Brockman taught, "It isn't the one you do goodness and kindness to—it's way over yonder, the one who will do goodness and kindness to you."

Reflect upon your life experiences. Have there not been times when you have helped someone just because they needed help and you could provide it? Yet you were not thanked, or your aid went unacknowledged or unappreciated? Then some other time you needed help, and you were helped by someone who you never would have expected to help you?

That is what Grandma was talking about.

Tuesday in the Second Week of Lent

Matthew 23:1-12

Bob Bowen

New School/Old School

Souls that yearn
And lessons that burn
Simplicity that teaches the ear to start
and with the passage of time
pierces the heart

Lesson 1:

That there are those who boldly teach
But fail to reach beyond
Their self-circling and ego-locked selves

Yet **The Word** they teach holds true
Yes **The Word** holds true

Lesson 2:

The heavy burdens they have drifted
The heavy burdens they have shifted
To those who can and will carry them
Seemingly this is sad yet not so bad
For the burden-bearers do what they can
It is with humility that they bear and
It is with gladness that share life's load

Lesson 3:

Deeds done to be seen

Deeds done that are often callous and those that are often mean

To mimic this is to surrender to sheer madness

A wiser choice is to switched to the gladness

That bubbles up and out from the true servant

The one who serves without deadlines

And not the one who serves for the headlines

Lesson 4:

The place of honor may well not be at the front

Where some swing for the homerun

When life calls for the bunt

Sure limelights are appealing

But like headlights they can be revealing of our smallness

At the table's head our hollowness and shallowness

Get lots of attention

Whereas caring and sharing

Offer a better dimension

Lesson 5:

And finally we learn: One Master, One Teacher

One Rabbi, One Preacher

A single source for our direction

A steadfast cover for our protection

Jesus...the Christ

News and film and **The Word** at eleven

With no commercial interruptions

Right straight outa heaven

Reminding us before our own life's break that

God's in charge of it all for goodness sake

Wednesday in the Second Week of Lent

Matthew 20:17-28

Charlotte Borst

There are two discussions highlighted in this gospel passage. First, Jesus tells the apostles of his impending crucifixion and resurrection—a gruesome death by any account, and a particularly gruesome way to die in their historical period. In the second, the mother of James and John asks Jesus if her sons could be placed on either side of Jesus in his kingdom. Jesus asks James and John if they are willing to do this, and they readily agree. The other apostles are upset with this discussion, and Jesus tells them, in one of the more quoted verses of the Bible, that they need to be servants before they can be rulers.

As I meditate on these verses, I react in several ways. As a woman and a mother, I can understand why the mother of James and John advocates for her sons. I am sure that various interpreters of this passage see the mother as a bothersome figure, but yet, she is also talking and asking favors openly of Jesus. It is a concrete and comforting sign to me that Jesus' ministry was open to all people, and that those who would silence women in the church are not following his message. But Jesus has even more to say to those who are seeking power.

This section is very profound to me as a historian focusing on issues of power. Jesus' followers appear to understand that he will die, and by implication, that their faith will be tested and perhaps they, too, "will drink of his cup."

Following Jesus will not be easy. I sense that they truly believe in His ministry, and yet this passage reveals a human trait of wanting some "reward"—some power—for their work that will recognize their roles as leaders.

How difficult it must have been (and still remains) to hear that a follower of Jesus must put ego completely aside. Many of us who try hard to be "good"—

to provide for our families, to provide for our communities, and even to produce scholarship—have a very difficult time putting aside our desire for recognition. How much time and energy is spent in any committee—be it a church ministry, something work-related, or even something community-based—dealing with issues of ego and sometimes not-too-subtle needs for recognition?

I deal with this issue constantly as a college administrator. And yet, as a follower of Jesus, I need to look inside myself, to ask how much of my own ego needs recognition. It is very hard to be a “servant leader,” and though my faith tells me I will share in the resurrection, there are many days when my more worldly self proclaims that I need “greatness” NOW.

Service is part of this exercise in humility. I try to find tasks that need doing, and to not expect thanks or praise. As the last sentence of this Gospel reading tells us, the Son of Man came not to be served, but to give his life as the ransom for many.

Thursday in the Second Week of Lent

Luke 16:19-31

Doran Farnum III

While we live and breathe on this earth, many of us are given riches, while others are left to live in poverty and despair. I often have felt that “the rich” have a feeling of entitlement, as though they were chosen to receive that which they have. But, if they are the chosen, wouldn’t it seem feasible that GOD is giving this to them so they can help those less fortunate?

On the contrary, I grew up feeling similarly about “the poor”—again, that they did something to be in the situation they were in. None of us truly knows, and if we are all GOD’s children, why wouldn’t we be there for our brothers, sisters, and neighbors? Shouldn’t we lend a hand when we can?

I am frequently torn when walking or driving past a person who is either begging or looks to be homeless, as I want to help. I have this deep desire to not only lend a helping hand, but to almost literally help them up off their feet to a better life. But the dilemma sets in: What can I, one person, do to help out another? I’m certainly not rich, or even close, but I see how important it is to the overall functioning of our society to help those that may not be able to help themselves. Often, I will give a homeless person on the sidewalk my change, or the person at the intersection a dollar or two. Is this really what it means to lend a helping hand? Or is there something more?

The passage of the Rich Man and Lazarus speaks to me more than I thought it would. Society tells us that we need to live in the best house, drive the nicest car, wear the most expensive clothes, but does that really fulfill us? Is that what gets us into heaven? No, I don’t believe it does. It may enrich our lives while on Earth, but it certainly doesn’t ensure a place in Heaven.

We all strive for such perfect lives here on earth, when the perfection we are all yearning for is really the infinite riches that heaven holds for each of us.

Our time on Earth is limited, yes, but it's that time that we are each allowed, and what we do with it, that truly matters.

Friday in the Second Week of Lent *and* The Annunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ

1. Matthew 21:33-43

Nick Quilter

On a literal level, Jesus' story of the wicked tenants appears to me to be an allegory of His Father's own people, who have chosen to worship false gods instead of following Him. He sends prophets to warn them that they should abandon idolatry and return to Him, yet they do not heed His warning. He ultimately sends His Son, The Messiah, yet they reject and ultimately crucify Him.

I think this text also implies that we must always be watchful; as Jesus said in other chapters of the four gospels, be as gentle as a dove, yet wise as a serpent. God sent prophets and ultimately His Only Son, so we must be careful and discerning, and carefully examine if we are choosing consciously or unconsciously to express hostility toward someone who may be sent by God to bring us important news of our future in His realm.

I believe that this text may also refer to the complexity of God's work, and that we are not fully aware of the dimensions of what God is planning in our lives, nor anyone else's. After all, as the text reads, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing." I believe that we may not understand what God is doing in our lives, and it is imperative to pray to Him and to ask for His guidance, and to ask Him to reveal unto us, what cornerstone has He chosen for us to do His will upon?

What I feel led to share here is that, when we look to God to be the cornerstone of our lives, He blesses us with the gifts of His Holy Spirit. Unlike the wicked tenants, who chose to abuse the gifts of God and

ultimately decided to kill His Son, I believe that, by accepting Him, we are filled with His mercy and He looks upon us with favor.

Recently, on January 8, 2011, I had the privilege of attending The Ordination of Priests at St. John's, as our own Sarah Lapenta-H and Mary Marjorie Bethea became consecrated into the priesthood. After the service, I met Michelle, Philip, and Jonathan, the other newly ordained priests who came from other Episcopal parishes in the diocese. I was given the opportunity to be blessed by all five newly consecrated priests, and in each individual blessing, as each new priest laid their hands on me and etched the sign of the cross onto my forehead, I felt the presence of Almighty God, The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit in them and in me, and I felt tears well up in my eyes as I felt His overwhelming love and peace.

I believe that, by choosing what God Himself has sent us, unlike the incorrigible tenants who reject the love and compassion that God offered them, He protects us and shows us His favor, and He shields us from the corrupt ways of those contemptible tenants.

2. The Annunciation of Our Lord Jesus Christ to the Blessed Virgin Mary

Luke 1:26-38



Daniel Aksten
Composite (BYR), 2010
Courtesy CB1 Gallery

Saturday in the Second Week of Lent

Luke 15:11-32

Ambrose of Milan (c. 333-397), *a Church Father*

Christ who hears you pondering in the secret places of the mind runs to you. When you are still far away, he sees you and runs to you. He sees in your heart. He runs, perhaps someone may hinder, and he embraces you. His foreknowledge is in the running, his mercy in the embrace and the disposition of fatherly love. He falls on your neck to raise the prostrate and burdened with sins, and to bring back one turned aside to the earthly toward heaven. Christ falls on your neck to free your neck from the yoke of slavery, and to hang his sweet yoke upon your shoulders.

Third Sunday in Lent

John 4:5-42



Lisa Adams
Gouache #0021, 2010
Courtesy CB1 Gallery

Monday in the Third Week of Lent

Luke 4:23-30d

G.J. Flowers

As I read these verses, it seems to me that Jesus is deliberately mocking his countrymen, the Nazarenes. He seems almost confrontational as he says, “I know that you are going to tell me ‘Physician, heal thy self.’” Really, is that what is in their thoughts? Then they asked him about miracles he had been performing in other places. Did they want proof that this young man who they knew as Joseph’s son was really doing all these miracles, or were they concerned (jealous) that he had put other towns before his own home? He challenged them and made them so angry that they wanted to kill him.

In recent years, a recurring challenge in my life is the question of ‘why.’ Why am I still struggling with my faith? Why am I still seeking proof that, yes, Jesus is the Son of God? Like the Nazarenes, sometimes I ask for miracles. Jesus answers me in this reading, “No prophet is accepted in his own country. Therefore, I will not perform for you.”

This bit of chastisement actually brings a smile to my face. Who do I think I am to question Jesus? I know who I am; I am but a sinner who needs the good news of the gospels, who needs to be healed and set free from sin.

As I say that, I realize that I have come to a personal revelation; I have always professed to being a Christian, saying with pride, “I am a cradle Anglican, born into a Christian family in a country where everyone accepted the Christian faith.” I no longer have that sense of pride. Now, I accept my faith with a sense of wonder.

I know that my struggles are not over; I will always have questions, but not always answers. Over the last two years or so, several of my friends have stopped attending their parish churches, a result of what someone described

as a spiritual famine. They were not getting the spiritual food needed to sustain their faith. We all need—or at least I know that, to sustain my faith, I need—to read and to study the scriptures, attend services regularly, and have a rule of prayer.

Tuesday in the Third Week of Lent

Matthew 18:21-35

Julian of Norwich (1342 – c. 1416), excerpt from *Revelations of Divine Love*

Mercy is a sweet gracious working in love, mingled with plenteous pity: for mercy worketh in keeping us, and mercy worketh turning to us all things to good. Mercy, by love, suffereth us to fail in measure and in as much as we fail, in so much we fall; and in as much as we fall, in so much we die: for it needs must be that we die in so much as we fail of the sight and feeling of God that is our life. Our failing is dreadful, our falling is shameful, and our dying is sorrowful: but in all this the sweet eye of pity and love is lifted never off us, nor the working of mercy ceaseth.

For I beheld the property of mercy, and I beheld the property of grace: which have two manners of working in one love. Mercy is a pitiful property which belongeth to the Motherhood in tender love; and grace is a worshipful property which belongeth to the royal Lordship in the same love. Mercy worketh: keeping, suffering, quickening, and healing; and all is tenderness of love. And grace worketh: raising, rewarding, endlessly overpassing that which our longing and our travail deserveth, spreading abroad and shewing the high plenteous largess of God's royal Lordship in His marvellous courtesy; and this is of the abundance of love.

Wednesday in the Third Week of Lent

Matthew 5:17-19

Hannah More (1745-1833), excerpt from *Christian Morals*

A low standard of religion flatters our vanity, is easily acted up to, does not wound our self-love, is practicable without sacrifices, and respectable without self-denial. It allows the implantation of virtues without eradicating vices, recommends right actions without expelling wrong principles, and grafts fair appearances upon unresisted corruptions.

Thursday in the Third Week of Lent

Luke 11:14-23

Vida Dutton Scudder (1861-1954), excerpt from *My Quest for Reality*

My attitude toward evil? I welcome it. I think it is waking us up.

Friday in the Third Week of Lent

Mark 12:28-34

An ancient Latin hymn

Where charity and love prevail
there God is ever found;
brought here together by Christ's love
by love are we thus bound.

With grateful joy and holy fear
his charity we learn;
let us with heart and mind and strength
now love him in return.

Forgive we now each other's faults
as we our faults confess;
and let us love each other well
in Christian holiness.

Let strife among us be unknown,
let all contention cease;
be his the glory that we seek,
be ours his holy peace.

Let us recall that in our midst
dwells God's begotten Son;
as members of his Body joined
we are in him made one.

Love can exclude no race or creed
if honored be God's Name;
our common life embraces all
whose Father is the same.

Saturday in the Third Week of Lent

Luke 18:9-14

Kim Speese-Zeno

How Do We Forgive?

As children, we are taught to say “I’m sorry” when we err in our actions toward a sibling, parent, another adult, or playmate. Those words serve as a moral compass and allow us to relieve our conscience when we have misjudged, falsely accused, or wronged another. The degree to which we forgive is dependent upon the severity of the error in question. When others have done ill to us, there is an expectation that an apology should be forthcoming almost immediately. Conversely, when we seek forgiveness of another, there is a lot more that goes on inside of us. If we are honest with ourselves, a shock wave rattles through our souls as we labor to extract what caused us to behave in such a manner.

In the scripture before us, Peter queries Jesus as to how many times we must seek the forgiveness of another. Jesus states, “seven times seventy.” As demonstrated in the parable, when we want to be forgiven, we rush in to make right with God so that we can restore our sense of wholeness and move on.

Yet, we aren’t always so quick to forgive others when they have wronged us. We tend to harbor a grudge and wash the other person’s face with their indiscretion. We have a tendency to remind them that they failed us. However, Christ calls us to forgive unconditionally and move on.

Recently, a young man, out of sorts with reality took it upon himself to purchase a gun, kill several people, and critically injure several others before he was brought down. How do we forgive him? People in his life noticed early warning signs but dismissed them as perhaps abnormal, but okay, behavior. Now, he awaits his fate at the hands of the judicial system. Do we

forgive him? Hands down, “Yes.” Do we forget what he did? “No.” Do we continue to love him as Christ would? “Unbelievably, yes.”

When someone hurts us or we need to forgive, in the deepest boundaries of our heart, we need to draw as close to Christ as we can and ask for his mercy and the ability to change ourselves—to forgive, love, accept, and move on.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

John 9:1-41



Mira Schor
Silence, 2006
Courtesy CB1 Gallery

Monday in the Fourth Week of Lent

John 4:43-54

Robert Johnson

There are many lessons about how we come to know about and respond to Jesus that can be taken from our gospel reading for today, John 4:43-54. This scripture speaks most clearly and powerfully to me through the actions of the royal official or nobleman from the city of Capernaum who, having heard of the signs and wonders performed by Jesus, came to believe that Jesus could heal his dying son.

His faith was fresh and imperfect. He did not fully understand the power of Jesus, but he believed that Jesus was the answer. He set out to find Jesus and implore him to come down to Capernaum and heal his son before he would die. After talking with the nobleman, Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your son lives.” So the nobleman believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way, confident that his son was saved.

However we come to know Jesus, our initial understanding of him—and consequently, our faith—is always imperfect. This gospel affirms my belief that we do not need to perfectly understand the power of Jesus. We need only to have heard enough about Jesus to believe that he loves us and will help us. We, too, should set out to find Jesus and take our heaviest burdens to him. We should ask Jesus to help us, despite any incorrect assumptions or expectations that we may have about how he will do it. And, like the nobleman from Capernaum, we must believe the word that Jesus speaks to us.

Tuesday in the Fourth Week of Lent

John 5:1-18

Verna J. Dozier (1917-2006), excerpt from *The Authority of the Laity*

God came into history to create a people who would change the world, who would make the world a place where every person knew that he or she was loved, was valued, had a contribution to make, and had just as much right to riches of the world as every other person. That is what the church is all about, to bring into being that vision, that ideal community of love in which we all are equally valuable, and in which we equally share.

Wednesday in the Fourth Week of Lent

John 5:19-29

Steve Price

Jesus is his Dad's son. They bear family resemblance, not in appearance, but in who they really are—in their very being. By the custom of the time, what the father was, the son was, as had been the grandfather and his father before him. Their trade (their identity in the place they lived) was the same: the baker's boy, the priest's kid, the carpenter's son. Hours spent together learning the trade, watching and imitating, acquiring the special, handed-down "family secret" knowledge and skills bound them together. To the outside world, he was "ben (son of) Joseph." John tells us that he did receive the knowledge and secrets of his father, but that his father is God.

In John's passage he repeats over and over how they are alike, yet also those differences they have, and then how they are one with each other. In this section, John develops a "Christology," a theology of the person and nature of Christ. He learns from the father; he does what God does. Like God, he is about life, even about bringing back to life those who have died. He will seek everywhere, every dark crevasse, every deep grave, to bring life again.

I know that this is true. I have been in those dark places, feeling that I was hidden from the light—dark places of depression, loss, and despair. I am here because it is true.

Sometimes, the words of the Bible don't work for me. I can get stuck, or even feel alienated and cut off. John uses that close and special bond to give us an emotional, personal entrance into the connection between Jesus and God, but I get stuck at the door—my own emotional place overwhelming the text. I didn't meet my father until I was in my 40s, and then only after much work. The father-son bond is not a good place for me.

For me, the connected closeness, the sameness of self that John speaks of in words is said in a visual way by an icon of the created and cosmic world, one that I return to again and again. At the center is Christ—the organizing principle, the Logos, the Word made flesh. Pointed emanations direct us to the Gospels passing through the ring of humanity shown as parts of faces—the eyes gazing back at you. The Gospels, both human and cosmic, are bearers of the nature of Christ. In the mystery of the vast night sky that encircles the human ring, Mary bridges God and human Christ. Around it all, seraphim flap great wings, singing “Holy, Holy, Holy” in a golden infinity.

The sameness of the gilded circles and figures of Father and Son show the text that John has written. They are alike, but they are not the same. They stand out from the other painted areas, different in face and features, blessing those who look on this picture. Blessing life.



Thursday in the Fourth Week of Lent

John 5:30-47

Chandra Miller

In John 5, Jesus called the Jews out. Although their heads were buried in scripture, Jesus pointed out that they had missed all the signs of Him being the One they had been waiting for. Instead of recognizing His works as those given by God, His Father, they accused him of breaking the Sabbath. They missed the point.

Jesus calls me out constantly. When I am frustrated because I cannot decide what to cook for dinner, He reminds me how fortunate I am to have a meal at all, let alone a choice. While I am driving my less-than-luxurious car and wishing I had a well-appointed status vehicle, He says, “Chandra, look over there at the bus stop. See all of those people standing in the rain? They are probably wishing that they were you right now.”

Jesus told the Jews that they had been happy to momentarily bask in John’s light, the light that revealed the One to come. On Sundays, we listen to the Word, exalt in the Lord, and remember Him in the breaking of the bread. But I must confess that, when I leave the light of the sanctuary, my mind almost immediately goes back to the mundane tasks of everyday life. Although Jesus has been sitting next to me, reminding me of the lightness of His yoke, I go outside and pick up my heavy one to lug around for another week.

I am so thankful for the gift of our Savior, and that, every now and then, He will grab me and shake me.

Then I put down that insignificant heavy yoke, sit down and listen, and get the point.

Friday in the Fourth Week of Lent

John 7:1-2, 10, 25-30

Andrew Jones

The seventh chapter of John opens with a fairly relatable family scene, as Jesus' brothers cajole him to attend the Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem. Though attendance of all Jewish men was required, the brothers make a compelling case that coming along would provide an excellent opportunity to perform more miracles and expand his ministry. Jesus declines.

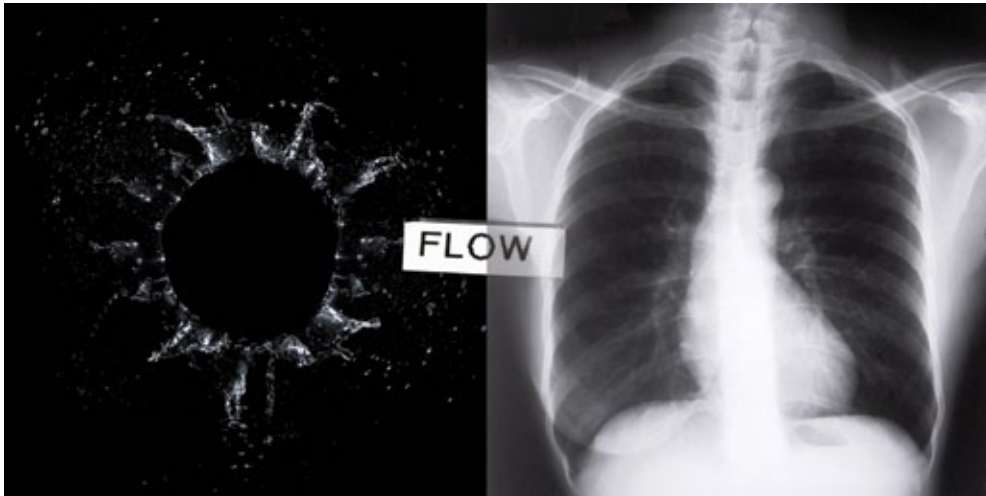
As is so often the case, getting out of bed to go to a church function can be inconvenient. When attending that church function involves placing yourself at risk of public execution—as Jesus' entry into Judea certainly did—staying at home makes quite a bit of sense. But Jesus doesn't stay home for long. Choosing to make a more subtle entry into the city than he would on the eve of his Passion, Jesus covertly arrives in the temple courts.

The main event in this chapter is Jesus explaining to an almost comically imperceptive congregation that his origin is of God, rather than of a known geographic locale. But for me, the interplay between human and divine intentions that propels Jesus to present himself at the feast is more interesting. Why did he make the trip after acknowledging that his time had not yet come? I imagine that the human Jesus didn't want to face the drama of being called out by the people of Jerusalem, but his divine nature had other plans. His teaching at the temple made enough of a splash to cause the Pharisees to alert the guards, and we know from the reading that “many in the crowd put their faith in him.”

In John 7, Jesus takes a big risk for what seems like small gains. But those who heard him that day were left with an indelible impression of divinity. Sometimes, we have to drag ourselves out of our comfort zones to be present in the lives of others, and while that presence may seem inconsequential, it can initiate a transformative experience.

Saturday in the Fourth Week of Lent

John 7:37-52



Paul Hebblethwaite

Fifth Sunday in Lent

John 11:1-45



Lorenzo Hurtado Segovia
Compline, 2011
Courtesy CB1 Gallery

Monday in the Fifth Week of Lent

John 8:1-11

Love by George Herbert

Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

“A guest,” I answered “worthy to be here”;
Love said “You shall be he.”
“I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on Thee.”
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply
“Who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord; but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve.”
“And know you not,” says Love “who bore the blame?”
“My dear, then I will serve.”
“You must sit down,” says Love “and taste my meat.”
So I did sit and eat.

Tuesday in the Fifth Week of Lent

John 8:21-30

Madeleine L'Engle (1918–2007), published in *A Circle of Quiet*

If we accept the mysterious as the “fairest thing in life,” we must also accept the fact that there are rules to it. A rule is not necessarily rigid and unbending; it can even have a question mark at the end of it. I wish that we worried more about asking the right questions instead of being so hung up on finding answers.... One of the reasons my generation has mucked up the world to such an extent is our loss of the sense of the mysterious.

Wednesday in the Fifth Week of Lent

John 8:31-42

Ned Tipton

“Praise Him, praise Him, all ye little children :
God is love, God is love!”

Those words from a children’s song (which many of us learned years ago) have remained, for me, the simple yet complete “crystallization” of what Christianity is all about. It is at the base of everything Jesus taught. We have all struggled, at times, with what seem to be the complexities of Christianity. If we could remember the words of that simple song, and act accordingly, what happiness we would experience!

In this passage Jesus speaks of being “slaves to sin.” In addition, Jesus’ interlocutors were claiming to be descendants of Abraham, which they were, of course, in the genealogical sense. But they were wrong in the spiritual sense, because of their refusal, or inability, to see Jesus as the true embodiment—the Incarnation—of the Word of God through Abraham.

Sin has been defined as the absence of Love. God is Love. Keep Love in your heart, and all will be well.

Thursday in the Fifth Week of Lent

John 8:51-59

Harriet McDonald

In preparation for this reflection, I first prayed to understand the underlying message from St. John; and second, I prayed that, through the gifts of the Spirit, I would continue to actively be a light to those who are searching for God.

In John 8:12, Jesus says, “I am the light of the world,” and if we follow Him, “...we will walk in light.” Jesus proclaims Himself as the Fulfillment of the Promise God made to Abraham. Jesus proclaims that He is the Savior, not just to the Jews, but to everyone.

During and after college, I chose to work with the chronically mentally ill, such as schizophrenics, alcohol- and drug-addicted adults and youth, and criminals (gang members, batterers, murderers, sexual predators), as well as adult and child victims of crimes (such as battery victims), and the homeless. In the 1980s, government money was just starting to dry up. Mental hospitals were closed, and many of those patients found themselves on the streets.

I worked in community centers which were crowded and under-staffed. It was heart-breaking to deny services, but even staff would do what they could to donate clothing, food, and other needed items to clients. Even worse was the fact that the news media did not cover the everyday realities of poverty. I witnessed an adult male walking down a busy street and, after an hour, that same person lying on that same street, murdered. While I remember crying for this stranger's life, there was no mention of it in the media.

I received an important promotion to work for a program designed to prevent child abuse. I worked in school districts during the day, providing

services and nutrition to clients, and at night, I provided counseling services in their homes. Within 6 months of working for that program, my mother developed lung cancer. I had to resign, and I cared for my mother for three years. I held her in my arms when she died.

After her death, I noticed the social issues within my own family, and I realized that I needed to “take care of home.” Before returning to work, I was able to care for and support many family members, including one that needed encouragement to seek drug and alcohol treatment. I’m blessed to say that he has been clean and sober now for 15 years, and that he has truly become a light to others. Finally, at the urging and support of my mother’s nurses, I now work as a pediatric and hospice nurse.

Where is your light shining? How are you a light to others? If you know your purpose, and you strive to fulfill it, that is great. If you do not, use this Lenten season to find your path. Fr. Dan and Fr. Mark are both great resources to me. We are also blessed to have other ministers who help us with our spiritual development and purpose. Support is here if you need pastoral help. Let Your Light Shine!

Friday in the Fifth Week of Lent

John 10:31-42

Evelyn Underhill (1875-1941), excerpt from *Worship*

This double orientation to the natural and the supernatural, testifying at once to the unspeakable otherness of God transcendent and the intimate nearness of God incarnate, is felt in all the various expressions of genuine Christian worship. The monk or nun rising to recite the night office that the church's praise of God many never cease, and the Quaker waiting in silent assurance on the Spirit given at Pentecost; the ritualist, ordering with care every detail of a complicated ceremony that God may be glorified thereby, and the old woman content to boil her potatoes in the same sacred intention; the Catholic burning a candle before the symbolic image of the Sacred Heart or confidently seeking the same divine presence in the tabernacle, and the Methodist or Lutheran pouring out his devotion in hymns in the name of Jesus; the Orthodox bowed down in speechless adoration at the culminating moment of the divine mysteries, and the Salvationist marching to drum and tambourine behind the banner of the cross—all these are here at once. Their worship is conditioned by concrete fact; the stooping down of the Absolute to disclose himself within the narrow human radius, the historical incarnation of the eternal Word within time. The primary declaration of Christianity is not "This do," but "This happened"—indeed, is happening still, since the path of incarnation remains open, and Christ lives and acts in his body, the church, and gives himself in its sacraments.

Saturday in the Fifth Week of Lent

John 11:45-53

Brian Batchelder

This scriptural passage prompted thoughts of both the political and the personal.

Today, even thousands of years after the events of Jesus' death, men, women, and children die for beliefs and actions—their own, and those of others. Faith, its absence, and its doctrines and interpretation seem to almost routinely devolve into assassinations of character, causes, and (tragically, in our world) of one another. The threats against human power and glory perceived by organizations and figureheads of assembled, huddled masses give way to an instinct to “survive” that which is different, uncertain, or unpopular, by the very elimination of that which can't be named, understood, or embraced.

Yet I know that such a fearful, visceral, even vindictive response is not isolated within the realm of the ideological or abstract. It lies within my own heart. When I encounter the presumably unfamiliar, uncertain, unsavory, and uncomfortable dimensions of life—be they in the words, deeds, or eyes of others around me—I, too, still recoil, reject, plot, and project against that of which I, too, am afraid.

By denouncement, disregard, or deception, I exhaust my own capacity to effect greater good by squandering life's blessings in naïve and vain attempts to defend against that which I cannot name.

So I pray and search for the strength to accept and to embrace, to ask and to receive, and then to give what is needed, in the face of the uncertain, the unnamed, the undisturbed, and the unlimited... wherever I may encounter it.

Palm Sunday

Matthew 21:1-11



Hilde Overbergh
Shading The Silence, 2010
Courtesy CB1 Gallery

Monday in Holy Week

John 12:1-11

Matt Leum

“You will always have the poor, but you will not always have me.” The two things in this passage of John that always stand out for me are Mary’s washing of Jesus’ feet in perfume, and this quote from Jesus, which was meant to prepare his friends for his death. I believe that, in all of history, the greatest act of humility is the washing of another’s feet. No act is baser, more real, or more humble than this.

Recently, I was paid a great compliment by one of my new friends at St. John’s, though she didn’t know it at the time. She said “the first time I saw you (at St. John’s) was Maundy Thursday of last year, and there you were, washing feet. I thought, ‘is this guy for real?’” If more people in this world were capable of washing another’s feet, the world would be a much better place.

Humility can help to eradicate bigotry, hatred, evil, anger, stress, and strife; with humility, you could become a mediator in the midst of a family that is torn apart. You might have a parent with whom you have never had a close relationship be diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, but you are able to be there for him when he needs you most and when your siblings are unable or unwilling to do so. You may have an estranged sibling show up on your doorstep, having hit “rock bottom,” but you are able to bring him into your home and shelter, clothe, and feed him, and get him the help he needs.

It is amazing what can be accomplished when you check your ego at the door, kneel down, and wash the feet of another.

You might not always be there to do this simple act, so why not do it now?

Tuesday in Holy Week

John 12:20-36

Let Evening Come by Jane Kenyon

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.

Let the cricket take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to air in the lung
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don't
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.

Wednesday in Holy Week

John 13:21-32

Reginald Bryant

As I reflected on this passage, verse 21 stuck out in my mind: “Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, Very truly I tell you, one of you is going to betray me.” Wow! The thought of Jesus being troubled in spirit at the thought of being betrayed brings Jesus’ humanness home to a place that I feel we all can relate. What better way to be reminded that Jesus really can understand us when we are at our lowest points in life.

I think it’s quite common to feel as if no one really understands what we feel, deep down inside, when things are not well. It’s easy to think that your best friend, spouse or partner, or anyone close to you should know exactly what to say, what to do, or how to act. In these times, it is critical to rely on faith to remind us that we are not alone, and that Jesus understands. A prime example in my life is my reflection on the year 2010, or what I call “my year of hospital visits.”

One of my major considerations regarding my relocation to Southern California from Madison, Wisconsin, was that all my family is either in Wisconsin or in Georgia. My recurring thought when I was informed that my job was transferring me here was, “What will happen if I become injured or ill?” I have always been the “go to” person for my family and friends in their various life events. Those close to me assured me that because of this, even with the distance, they would be here. Although I really didn’t believe that anyone would extend themselves for me, I had to go by faith.

Oddly enough, I had multiple medical challenges in 2010 that required me to reach out to others, the most serious being a knee replacement surgery. In most of these cases, the people in my life that promised to be here somehow could not seem to make it. My biggest mental obstacle was that I somehow,

inherently, knew this would happen. To think that Jesus was as troubled in spirit as I was during each of these episodes now gives me some comfort in knowing that my prayers were heard and understood. Thank God that my St. John's family was there, even when I didn't ask.

Considering the fact that my nature is to be a bit of a caregiver means that I will still always overextend myself to support my family and friends. For me, simply understanding that I am doing what I believe God has put in my spirit to do means that I will always be supported by someone, somehow. At the end of the day, this passage reassures me that I am never alone. If each of us remembers that Jesus, too, suffered from some of our same human frailties, we can be reminded that Jesus is, indeed, a rock to stand on.

Maundy Thursday

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

Dominique Piper

Sometimes, when we look for an example or advice on how to act in a particular situation, we might turn to a mentor or friend. I find that some of the greatest examples of how to deal with different challenges can be found right in God's Word. In John 13:1-17, we are brought to the last supper, where Jesus washes the feet of His disciples. At the time, his disciples, especially Peter, were wondering why the Son of God would do such a lowly thing, Jesus said, "Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

What Christ did that evening goes way beyond washing feet. What we have in front of us is an example of great humility. I'm sure there have been times in our lives that we may have been given a certain task that has caused us to think, "Why is this task given to me? I'm too important for this. This is beneath me."

It reminds me of "All Hands" working parties during my service in the U.S. Navy, where only the lower enlisted would show up, those who are E-6 and below. I would think to myself, "This isn't 'All Hands.' Where are the chiefs and officers?" But there were actually some times that a few officers and chiefs did show up, and it made me feel that we really were a team. Those senior personnel, in a way, washed our feet that day.

We are called many times in Holy Scripture to be humble and to not boast about status, wealth, etc. These things come from God, and we must not forget who the provider of all things is. Instead, we should give thanks for all that is given to us, and we should love one another as commanded by Christ in John 13:34-35. He said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Love seems to be in short supply in this era, even among fellow Christians. How can we bring people to Christ if we act as if we don't know Him ourselves? To some non-Christians, we appear to be like any John Doe. Our Christian faith must set us apart from others to have people wonder, "What is it that she has in her life that I don't?" They might be compelled to ask.

I know it isn't the easiest thing in the world to do, but it's imperative that we do so with the help of our Savior and our brothers and sisters. In order to spread the good news of God's Kingdom, we must live it in our own lives, at all times, with love, grace, and humility. Live in Christ so that others will see Him in you, so they can open their hearts to receive Him, too.

Good Friday

John 18:1-19:42

Dorothy L. Sayers (1893–1957), excerpt from *The Man Born to Be King*

Not Herod, not Caiaphas, not Pilate, not Judas ever contrived to fasten upon Jesus Christ the reproach of insipidity; that final indignity was left for pious hands to inflict. To make of his story something that could neither startle, nor shock, nor terrify, nor excite, nor inspire a living soul is to crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame.

Holy Saturday

Matthew 27:57-66

Adriana A. McNally

There are three images that I have identified as central to the reading: Fear, Trust, and Belief.

Fear is probably the most common of the images used in day-to-day interactions. We negotiate our place in society by getting around those instances which cause some discomfort. I say negotiate because there is a tendency to try to barter our way out of a situation instead of facing a harsh reality or maybe a simple disappointment. We compromise our beliefs just to be in control. There is a fear that, if we loosen our grip, we lose control.

This fear is seen in the actions of the centurions who inform Pilate of what they had heard said by the “deceiver” (Jesus), that he would rise from the dead after three days. Pilate operates out of fear when he tells the centurion to make certain that the grave is sealed, and that a guard should stand watch for the next few days. He is eager to please all sides, as he had done prior to Jesus’ crucifixion. Rather than face the truth, he compromises his beliefs by denying his true feelings for Jesus, whom he had reluctantly condemned to die.

The action taken by Pilate is not trustworthy. He gives Jesus’ body to Joseph to be buried, and at the same time, he gives the soldiers all the responsibility for making sure that the body is not removed from the grave. However, earlier, he had professed that, “Jesus is truly the son of God.” I call this a double message. We see such things daily, in the operations of the work place, or in day-to-day interaction among people. We are not as trusting of each other as we should be, because we want to hold on to both sides of the “coin.” We want to please all sides. No one wants to be seen as the “bad guy.” Hence, mistrust and fear become the vehicles by which we operate.

It is interesting that Joseph of Arimathea, a rich man, takes on the task of burying our Lord. He believes in Him, although he does not openly profess it. Once again with a double standard, he is performing a noteworthy service, yet he is not open to standing up for his beliefs, perhaps for fear that he might be persecuted.

In conclusion, all is not lost. For the most part, we humans do believe in a higher being. We (and I) believe that there is a source mightier than any earthly figure, as evidenced by the rolling away of the stone despite human efforts to safeguard the tomb. God has a plan, and we cannot guard against the power of God.

I would like to offer a few verses that touch on Fear, Trust, and Belief. Granted, there are many throughout the Bible, but these are among my favorites—Belief: John 3:16; Fear: 2 Timothy 1:7; and Trust: Proverbs 3:5-6.

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The Lorenzo Hurtado Segovia silkscreen print (Fifth Sunday in Lent) is a limited edition (edition of 25) created for a recent Compline held at the gallery, and is available for \$30. 50% of the proceeds go to St. John's supported charities.

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