



Artwork by Delphine K., SMPrep '26

ALL WE
THAT **YOU** MAY LIVE

LENT 2026
REFLECTION BOOK

Download the electronic version at
stmonica.net/reflection

Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18

[Joel 2:12–18](#); [2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2](#); [Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18](#)

As you walk about town on Ash Wednesday, you will no doubt see foreheads bearing the cross of ashes, people having participated in the solemn services that begin the Lenten season. One meddling woman used to advise her single granddaughters to pay attention on Ash Wednesday because on that day it was clear who all the Catholic men were.

It seems ironic that this ancient practice took root on a day when in services we hear Jesus in St. Matthew's Gospel say, "Take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father." Matthew 6:1.

But then, the ashes rubbed on our foreheads are not a boast, in fact the opposite. They announce that we are sinners in need of reconciliation and deeper conversion to God. "Turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel." They are also a recognition of our mortality, "Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return." We have limited time to develop the eternal gifts that last beyond our bodies- faith, hope and love.

Would that this Lent be for us a time of humble growth in our Catholic spiritual lives, leading to attitudes, words and actions reflective of the Kingdom of God. The more we strive to live our faith through what we choose, say, and do, the less we need an ashen cross to announce to the world our Catholic faith. It will be obvious.

David L. Guffey, C.S.C.

What is my plan for Lent? What will I do to participate in Lent in a meaningful way? How will I work toward humble growth in my spiritual life?

Thursday After Ash Wednesday

[Deuteronomy 30:15–20](#); [Luke 9:22–25](#)

Jesus tells His disciples that He must suffer, be rejected, be killed, and be raised. Then He says, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." At first, those words can sound heavy. Take up your cross. Lose your life. It sounds like loss. It sounds like cost.

But the difference for us is this: Jesus accepted His cross so that we do not have to carry ours alone. He carried it willingly, so that when we reached this moment, we wouldn't have to bear it alone.

Our crosses may not look like Calvary. They may look like a chronic illness. A broken relationship. Financial pressure. Anxiety that will not quiet. A vocation that feels unclear. A season of dryness in prayer. Being misunderstood. Feeling rejected. Wanting relief that does not come quickly.

Jesus does not stand at a distance and say, "carry it better." He steps under the weight with us. He strengthens us through His Spirit. He gives us the Church. He gives us the sacraments. He gives us Himself.

To deny ourselves is not to erase who we are. It is to let go of the false ways we try to save ourselves without Him. To lose our life for His sake is to stop gripping control and start trusting love.

We do not have to be strong enough. He already is. Take up your cross, yes. But take it up with Him.

*Mary Stringini
YMA Core Team*

What crosses do I feel you are carrying at this time? How have I been dealing with them? Are there ways I am being guided to take up this cross differently?

Friday After Ash Wednesday

[Isaiah 58:1-9a](#); [Matthew 9:14-15](#)

Today, we transition from Ash Wednesday to truly living out the season of Lent each day. What does it look like to live out Lent and the practice of fasting? Is it enough to just meet the mandatory fasting twice during Lent? Do we serve our own self-interests or choose to strive for more, for a different way?

Reflecting on the first reading from Isaiah, we get a window into their ancient practices of sacrifice, and their desire to have those sacrifices recognized by God. The prophet Isaiah echoes God's words to all who will hear. When we boast of behavior such as fasting while, at the same time, quarrel and fight with others, God sees that our behavior does not match our intentions. Through sinfulness, we often do what we want to do and neglect to do God's will. We miss the words of the Psalm that remind us to be humble and align our hearts to God's way.

God moves the goalposts and redefines true fasting. While focusing on fasting as only an external practice (what I give up) is one approach, a different way of fasting centers on living out a right relationship among God's people. The examples of true fasting are clear in Isaiah, and include sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and homeless, and clothing the naked when you see them.

Are we ready to live out this Lent in a different way, a way in which our actions demonstrate the true fasting that God desires?

Fran Zonfrillo

*Scripture Encounter, Health Ministry,
Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion,
St. Phoebe Ministry, Sacristan*

Does my behavior match my intention? How can I align my heart to what God is calling me to? What is the true fasting you feel God is calling me to?

Saturday After Ash Wednesday

[Isaiah 58:9b-14](#); [Luke 5:27-32](#)

It's striking that God talks about light, not about success, but about compassion. Hope in this reading doesn't appear by chance. It rises when we stop looking only at ourselves and notice the people around us.

Often, we become consumed by our own struggles. When life feels overwhelming, our vision can blind us to anything beyond what we ourselves carry. But Isaiah offers a way to open our eyes again. These actions can be simple, almost ordinary, but they are not small. To God, and to those who are suffering, they carry real power. A single step toward generosity or a small gesture can become the beginning of something greater. In Isaiah's words, it is enough to transform what once felt like darkness into light, and what once felt like gloom into midday.

What stands out to me is that this isn't about wanting to become a hero. Even when we feel we have little to give, simply showing up for someone in need can be the most meaningful kind of faith. "Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40) Perhaps this is how God guides us through our own time of conflict. Not by removing every burden from us, but by teaching us how to become the light for others.

*Julia Parra,
SMPrep Senior*

Campus Ministry leader, Confirmation candidate

How can I take notice of the needs of others today? Where is there darkness in my life that I could turn into light? What is something I can do to be light for another today?

First Sunday of Lent

[Genesis 2:7–9; 3:1–7; Romans 5:12–19; Matthew 4:1–11](#)

On this First Sunday of Lent, we hear from Psalm 51 as our Responsorial. This is such a powerful Psalm to begin our Lenten journey. Long before I was a principal, I was a 2nd grade teacher in South-Central Los Angeles at a financially impoverished, but rich in faith, Catholic school.

On Friday's, we prayed Psalm 51 as a class, and in an age appropriate way with 2nd graders, we focused on the words, "A clean heart create for me, O God" and "O Lord, open my lips and my mouth shall proclaim your praise." As you may imagine, the children embraced the opportunity to talk about and pray about these words. It was more than teaching the Bible, or our Catholic faith - it was an opportunity for young children to connect in a very real and personal way with our God.

Many years later, one of my students found me working at another school, and came by to see me. She asked me if I remember teaching the class Psalm 51, and I shouted with joy, "oh yes."

I then asked her what she remembered, and she shared: "By the time I was in 5th grade, I prayed every night for a clean heart. That image gave me so much joy. As I got older, I found myself uttering the words about proclaiming God's praise every time I opened the Bible with my mom."

I'm reminded, "We plant the seeds that one day will grow."

Neil Quinly
SMPprep Lower School Principal

How can I work to create a clean heart within myself? What can I do so that my words reflect my love for God? How can I connect in a real and personal way with God today?

Monday, First Week of Lent

[Leviticus 19:1–2, 11–18; Matthew 25:31–46](#)

The passage from Leviticus calls me to live with integrity, compassion, and fairness in every part of my life. God's command to "be holy" reminds me that holiness isn't distant or unreachable, it's expressed through everyday choices that reflect love and justice. I'm challenged to treat others with respect, to be honest in my words and actions, and to care for those who are vulnerable or mistreated. "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" calls me to move beyond selfishness and resentment, letting go of grudges and choosing mercy instead. This reading helps me see that holiness is not just about prayer but about how I live, how I speak, and how I honor God in my relationships.

Mathew's passage reminds me that faith is lived out through compassion and concrete action. Jesus identifies himself with the hungry, the sick, and the forgotten, showing that love for God is proven by love for others. It challenges me to see Christ's face in every person I encounter, especially those in need. The separation of the sheep and goats teaches that small acts of kindness have eternal significance. It's not enough to believe, I must respond to suffering with mercy and generosity. This reading makes me examine my daily choices, to ask whether I am truly living for others, and to remember that every act of care is an act of love offered to Christ himself.

Tony Succar
Teen Confirmation

What everyday choices can and do I make to reflect integrity, love and justice? How can I become more holy? How have I seen Christ's face in others? If I put myself in the passage, do I feel like a sheep or a goat?

Tuesday, First Week of Lent

[Isaiah 55:10–11](#); [Matthew 6:7–15](#)

How often do we begin our days with a weary heart, thinking of all the tasks that lie ahead of us, rather than with gratitude for another day to enjoy the lives God has gifted us? We feel it is up to us to “gut it out” and meet our responsibilities purely out of our own efforts. We forget that God always gives us what we need to make it through, and often with even better results than we thought possible.

This was the mindset I had recently on a Friday morning at the start of the Men’s Cornerstone Retreat here at St. Monica’s, which I was helping to execute. Work had been demanding and stressful that week. I hadn’t slept well in days. As I drank my coffee that morning and contemplated all the tasks ahead of me over the next day and a half, there seemed to be no possible way I would have the energy for it all.

But I forgot it wasn’t my energy I was relying on, it was that of the Holy Spirit. As soon as I arrived at church that day and greeted my Cornerstone brothers and began to prepare for the retreatants, I had a surge of energy ... even though that coffee had long since worn off. My spirit lifted with joy for the experiences ahead. It was another late night, but this time I didn’t miss the sleep. The spiritual bread God was providing was a better source of fuel.

Joe Darrow

Parish Council, YMA,

Men’s Cornerstone, Thanksgiving Feast and Boutique

What things in my life make me weary? Am I relying too heavily on my own efforts? What might God be wanting to provide for me?

Wednesday, First Week of Lent

[Jonah 3:1–10](#); [Luke 11:29–32](#)

“A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn.” Today’s psalm takes on a special meaning in family life.

The crumpled face of our son when he realizes he shouldn’t have downloaded that Minecraft mod without permission. The softening in my wife’s expression when she sees her words landed harder than intended. The “doh” moment when I figure out all I needed to offer was a hug and an open ear. These moments—common among those closest—reveal contrite hearts before any words come out. Not just regret, but a genuine turning toward what’s right and loving. Our response makes all the difference: do we meet contrition with harshness, or with mercy?

Family life—whether with children, your partner, aging parents, roommates, or close friends—gives us daily practice in both having and receiving contrite hearts. The small wounds we inflict become opportunities.

The Ninevites heard Jonah’s warning and turned from their ways, covering themselves in sackcloth. While we don’t wear burlap at our dinner table, we have our own version: the hard swallow before an apology, the softening of a defensive tone, the choice to sit in discomfort rather than flee to our phones or separate rooms. These small acts of humility are our sackcloth.

During Lent, our home becomes this place of transformation. The beloved sitting across the table, frustrated or hurting, offers the same invitation God extends: return to me with your whole heart. A contrite heart, met with mercy, draws us closer to one another...and to God.

*Jim Mignano, Alicia Mignano (OCIA Candidate),
and Jimmie Mignano (Elementary Catechumen)*

Have I been able to seek forgiveness from those I need it from? Am I able to offer mercy when I have been wronged? Have I met contrition with harshness or mercy? How can I let this Lent transform me?

Thursday, First Week of Lent

[Esther C:12, 14–16, 23–25; Matthew 7:7–12](#)

I've always wondered how I can go to bed one night feeling complete peace, then wake up feeling the opposite. Even when there's trust in God's truth for my life and Scripture in my mind, it's not enough to make me "whole."

There are a lot of words I could use to describe my days of seeking Jesus, but "easy," "seamless," or even "effortless" don't accurately represent the spiritual journey. More often than not, something feels lacking unless I'm in active pursuit of the Lord. Every hour of every day, I'm faced with that choice: to actively pursue.

It's a blessing to know who God is and to know people who bear the fruit of the Lord in their lives. But even more, it's a gift to know Him as my Heavenly Father. I know that I can call out during those days when it seems like nothing's going right. It's my quick way to be brought back to peace and into His arms. It allows me to go to Him for help, comfort, or guidance. Not because I've figured everything out, but because I belong to Him.

There is a balance between surrender and seeking; a dynamic that, at times, feels so profound it might truly be "great above all things."

Sofia Lauraya
Teen Confirmation, YMA

How do I seek Jesus? What things do I do in this search? How can I more actively pursue Jesus? What things do I need to surrender? How can I keep these in balance?

Friday, First Week of Lent

[Ezekiel 18:21–28; Matthew 5:20–26](#)

Although we have many differences, disagreements and hurtful times with others, Jesus our Lord teaches us to forgive as he forgives. He challenges us to examine the deeper condition of our hearts. Life isn't about following rules - it's about allowing God to transform our inner attitudes. Anger, contempt, and broken relationships are just as troublesome as outward actions. Reconciliation is not optional in the life of faith. Before offering anything to God, we are called to seek peace with those we've hurt or hold grudges against. Loving others is inseparable from loving God. Jesus shows us a life rooted in humility, mercy, and restored relationships - a way of living that reflects the heart of God. He demonstrates how to have great courage in our strength and direction and leads us through our faith.

Jesus, we know you have suffered for us and could have been upset and angry with so many people who hurt you during these days of Lent. You show us how to prioritize peace so we may be close to you. Without you, we would have no eternity. We need you everyday to be our strength.

He that handles a matter wisely shall find good: and who so trusteth in the Lord, Happy is he.
Proverbs 16:20

Tina Angel
Finance Office Assistant

Is there anyone in my life with whom I need to seek peace? What inner attitude needs to be transformed? How have I shown inner strength? When was the last time I handled a matter wisely, by God's words that had good results?

Saturday, First Week of Lent

[Deuteronomy 26:16–19](#); [Matthew 5:43–48](#)

“So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)

I was startled by this verse because, in my mind, Jesus seemed to be saying that it was not only possible but mandatory that we should and could be sinless.

I pondered this for a while and concluded that we humans are just not, under our own steam, the stuff of perfection.

So, I was missing something in Jesus’ words, which were, themselves, inspired and perfect.

As I thought about this, my mind took me back to some familiar Scripture penned by Paul. Turning in my Bible to see how Paul viewed this, I was especially drawn to 2 Corinthians 5:21: “God made him who had no sin, to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

In other words, perfection! Now, I was making progress!

I began to remember the concept of our righteousness — that it was on the Cross that Jesus won righteousness for us.

Once I heard a sermon where this was put so well. After a few minutes of jogging my 80 year old mind, it came back to me: He had preached, “Jesus paid a debt he did not owe, because we owed a debt we could not pay.”

Perfect, yes! On our own, not a chance! Jesus, our perfect Savior, we owe you all.

I thought about the heaven he won for us on the Cross. My mind and soul reflected; my heart became ever more his.

Jill Roberts

Have I worried about not being perfect? How has this been an obstacle? How can my heart belong even more to God?

Second Sunday of Lent

[Genesis 12:1–4a](#); [2 Timothy 1:8b–10](#); [Matthew 17:1–9](#)

When the disciples witnessed Jesus radiant with divine light, of course they wanted to stay and relish in that high. But then just as quickly was the realization of the voice from heaven telling them not to cling to the experience, but that they needed to continue the journey by going back down the mountain.

I experienced my own kind of mountaintop moment after my Dad had passed away and my mom moved here from the East Coast. She was my best friend, and I felt pure joy knowing that we would have daily opportunities for simple things like a cup of tea together, silly moments of like-minded ridiculousness, and in-depth conversations about life and spirituality, I wanted to hold onto that happiness, preserving just as it was.

Yet, intertwined with my joy was the fear of knowing our time together was not infinite. She moved here because there were things she could no longer manage alone. Medical issues needed overseeing. Independence was slowly slipping away. And as much as I wanted to protect her, my journey would have to continue without her.

The Transfiguration reminds me that God is present not only in radiant moments but also in the descent from the mountain. I knew I couldn’t freeze time or control the future. Instead of clinging in fear, I was called to be present and trust that God’s light remains as I follow his plan for me.

Mugs Cahill

What are some of the radiant moments of my life? How have I sought to preserve them? How can I be more present in each moment? How can I move through the things of my life without clinging too tightly to what has been?

Monday, Second Week of Lent

[Daniel 9:4b–10](#); [Luke 6:36–38](#)

Jesus' directive to stop judging others in today's Gospel resonates powerfully with me. Too often I condemn people whose views are opposite mine. How can they even think and act like that?? They should not even be in those positions.

Yet we are surrounded by examples of the transformative power of mercy and compassion over judgment. The Master himself to the woman caught in adultery said, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on sin no more." He changed that woman's life and more...

St. Pope John Paul II, following the assassination attempt on his life, chose to visit his attacker in prison and publicly forgave him. He changed that man's life and more...

Nelson Mandela, after years of unfair imprisonment chose to forgive his captors and worked tirelessly for reconciliation. He changed his country and more...

I know when I figuratively point a finger at someone, three very accusing fingers point right back at me. As St. Paul so aptly wrote in his letter to the Romans, "For I do not do the good I want, but I do the evil I do not want."

Mother Teresa was very concise. If you judge people, you have no time to love them.

Teresa Cordeiro
Scripture Encounter, Small Groups,
Thanksgiving Feast

Who have I judged harshly or condemned without understanding? When have I seen the transformative power of mercy? Where in my life am I being called to forgiveness? How can I work to see the good in others, especially those with whom I disagree?

Tuesday, Second Week of Lent

[Isaiah 1:10, 16–20](#); [Matthew 23:1–12](#)

Whether it's verbal praise, a fancy job title, or the number of likes on an Instagram post, external validation just feels so good. For years, I chased it relentlessly. I worked hard to look impressive to others, but that happiness and fulfillment always faded.

At my Uncle Paul's funeral in January, I experienced a different kind of fulfillment. My aunt had asked me to give a eulogy, but my mind was completely blank. I hadn't seen my uncle in years, and we hadn't spent much time together growing up. My mind raced to find something clever and impressive to say, but then I realized my self-centeredness. This wasn't supposed to be about me. I prayed for God's help, not to be impressive to others, but to simply be an instrument for His love and grace in this moment.

With that shift in focus, inspiration flowed. Standing at the podium with zero preparation, the words and ideas came out effortlessly. People called my speech beautiful and touching. They even complimented me on being well-spoken. This was a miracle made possible only through God's grace.

Today's Gospel reminds us how powerful it is to shift the focus from exalting ourselves to serving God. Doing so has given me greater joy and deeper fulfillment than any self-centered successes ever could. Through various experiences like Uncle Paul's eulogy, I've realized that no amount of external validation could feel as good as being an instrument for God's love to others.

Tanya Alconcel
YMA, SEEL

How important has the validation of others been to me? How can I shift focus from seeking praise for myself to offering praise to God? How can I be an instrument for God's love and grace?

Wednesday, Second Week of Lent

[Jeremiah 18:18–20](#); [Matthew 20:17–28](#)

At the end of today's Gospel reading Jesus states, "... the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve..." In that simple statement, Jesus tells each of us exactly what we are called to do – to be of service. This reading reminded me of numerous stories I heard of service when I helped administer grants for the Palisades fire victims. One gentleman and his two sons had lost their three homes. The father said he would rebuild his sons' home first then if he had money left rebuild his own. Another gentleman who lost his home and business came over to assist me as I struggled with a couple who only spoke Spanish. He translated for us. This man had lost everything and yet he was being of service to this couple and myself. Overall there was an unparalleled sense of community and service that I witnessed being shared among the fire victims. May we all be encouraged to use the unique gifts God has blessed us with and be servants to those in need.

Joe Stockemer
OCIA, Thanksgiving Feast,
other ministries

How has other's service enriched my life? What gifts can I use in service to others? How am I being called to serve?

Thursday, Second Week of Lent

[Jeremiah 17:5–10](#); [Luke 16:19–31](#)

The rich man in the Gospel did not have a name. Names designate relationship, the beginning of intimacy. When I know your name, we can begin to have a relationship. We can grow in intimacy.

I think Jesus kept the rich nameless to emphasize the isolating danger of riches. Riches can be a condition but not ipso facto the cause of isolation. We can find many rich people who are models of selflessness and many poor as well who are selfish and isolated. If we are not careful, riches can isolate us from the rest. This must be the reason why the rich man in another of Jesus' parable (Luke 12:13-2) was simply called a "fool". "Fool" in Greek is idiotes which literally means one who is isolated and alone.

Selfishness can lead us to isolation. The fear of sharing can drive us to hoard things for ourselves, by ourselves. Generosity builds bridges, selfishness erects walls of isolation. It is lonely to be isolated.

The Gospel speaks of a greater kind of isolation and loneliness – an isolation that removes us not only from others (the rich man totally ignored Lazarus daily) but ultimately from the Kingdom (the rich man ended up in hell).

Jesus calls us to the joy of being in a community – a community built by sharing and communion. We do not have to be rich in order to give. We only have to give from the heart. When we give from the heart, we are embraced by the heart of God.

Anecdote: A very wealthy man who was known to be selfish and stingy died. After the priest celebrated Mass for the family, curious bystanders asked him, "How much did that man leave behind?" The priest plainly said, "EVERYTHING."

We are given credit NOT for what we leave (behind), but for what we give away.

Fr. Eusebio Llonoso

What relationships could I nurture? What are things in my life that I am afraid of sharing? In what ways am I isolated from others? How can I give more generously from the heart?

Friday, Second Week of Lent

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

Both readings today, from Genesis and the Gospel, speak of violence and I find that jarring. First to Joseph by his brothers, then to the servants and even the son of the vineyard owner by his tenants. The Jewish authorities did not respect who Jesus, the Son of God, was either. After telling the parable, Jesus asks the priests and Pharisees if they had never read in the scriptures:

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; by the Lord has this been done, and it is wonderful in our eyes.”

I find hope in these lines. A cornerstone is the foundational stone in a building. Here it is a symbol for Jesus Christ who is the bedrock upon which our faith and the Church are built. Though he was rejected by many, especially by the Jewish leaders, Jesus was chosen by His father, our God, for our salvation. His mission is still ongoing today. And this gives me hope in our own time.

Some days it can be difficult to look beyond the turmoil in our world and find balance or stability. If I listen only to the noise from the world around me, I can get discouraged, but when I listen quietly inside or gather with good friends and my faith community, I know God's presence. That is my bedrock, my cornerstone, my sustenance. And it is wonderful in my eyes.

God, help each of us to find your quiet presence within our hearts.

*Gina Leger
Hospitality, Scripture Encounter,
Cornerstone*

How has violence affected me? Where do I find comfort and/or stability? What is the cornerstone of my faith? What ways might I be able to find the quiet presence of God?

Saturday, Second Week of Lent

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

The prodigal son, a story of salvation, an analogy to humanity's relationship with God. So many times we forget God's clemency, mercy, and endless love, that we choose a path filled with sin rather than a path walking alongside God. The first reading (Micah 7:14-15, 18-20) praises God's ability to forgive despite the sins we wrong him with. I, as an up and coming freshman in college, am filled with a life of duties: getting straight A's, playing sports, leading the National Honors Society, doing chores, filling out college applications, a list that is continually growing. However, I have come to realize there are moments where I am placing all of these priorities above God, a sin in and of itself. The prodigal son made his return to his father, a reunion resembling how we as humans can be showered with God's love despite our sinful nature. God is so merciful that he is always happy to see us return to him, and that is something we have to remember. The scripture says, "He ran to his son," as soon as he saw him. Have you run up to someone you love lately? I wonder how many times God has run towards me, towards us, and we had no idea he would be overcome with so much joy. His love is in action, shows affection, and reminds us to receive His embrace. The prodigal son teaches us to not be ashamed of ourselves, but to turn towards God.

*Jayden Hagevoort
SMPrep Senior, Hospitality,
Teen Confirmation, Thanksgiving Feast*

What priorities might I be placing above God? How can I recognize God's love around me so that I can embrace it more fully? When was the last time I ran up to someone I love? How might God be seeking to embrace me now?

Third Sunday of Lent

[Exodus 17:3-7](#); [Romans 5:1-2, 5-8](#); [John 4:5-42](#)

It was “about noon” when the Samaritan woman went to the well, the hottest and quietest part of the day. Most people would have gone earlier. I imagine she chose that hour hoping not to be noticed. Instead, she is addressed, not by just anyone, but by a Jewish man. Jews and Samaritans did not associate with one another. There was history there, division, and assumptions about who belonged and who did not. Yet Jesus speaks to her first. He speaks honestly about her life, naming what she might have preferred to keep hidden, not to shame her but to show her that he already knows. And still, he stays.

The woman left her water jar and went into the town and said to the people, “Come see a man who told me everything I have done. Could he possibly be the Messiah?”

The detail of her leaving the jar has stayed with me. She arrived focused on filling it, completing the task, and moving on with her day. But in the middle of that routine, the jar is no longer the most important thing. We all have jars we are focused on filling each day. Mine often look like moving from classroom to classroom, connecting with teachers, and collaborating to support our students. At times, I can become so focused on finishing the next task and moving to the next thing that I miss the opportunity for an encounter, the chance to recognize Christ in the person right in front of me. The woman went to the well in the middle of an ordinary day to draw water. She left having encountered Jesus. Perhaps that is the quiet invitation of Lent: not to fill more jars, but to notice where Jesus is already meeting us in the middle of an ordinary day.

*Colleen Crowley
SMPrep Director of Teaching, Learning,
and Student Support (TK-5)
YMA*

What are the jars in my life that I am focused on filling? What else might I need to place some focus on? Where might Jesus be trying to meet me and how can I better recognize Him?

Monday, Third Week of Lent

[2 Kings 5:1-15ab](#); [Luke 4:24-30](#)

The little girl said “If only my master would present himself to the prophet... he would cure him of his leprosy.”

“If only.” I can certainly understand that. I have wondered that in my life more times than I can count. “If only I had done blah dee blah when I had the chance” or “If only I had just NOT done blah dee blah.” I can really chew on those things when they come up. Looking back, I can almost always find some reasoning or understanding of the situation at the time to explain those choices away, but in this story it’s “if only” you go ask, God will provide. Provide a cure for leprosy!! Man, that’s a huge ask and Naaman only had to go and speak his request. How could that be difficult? He didn’t even want to do the simple request of the prophet until his servants called him out about it! Why do we make things harder for ourselves and how do we not go to the source of all that is good and just ask aloud more often?

As a parent and spouse I tend to try to just handle things, but I’m really wondering why I usually only specifically actually ask God for things when the big stuff is happening? Why don’t I ask more often for the little things? It’s not like God is too busy or has more important things to do. He is there for everything in my life and He wants me to come to Him always, so why don’t I lean in and say it out loud to the Lord more often?

*Scott Clingingsmith,
Early Childhood Education, VBS,
Scripture Encounter*

When and for what have I wondered “if only”? Are there big asks I want to make of God? What prevents me from asking for the big or small things from God? How much do I trust God to answer?

Tuesday, Third Week of Lent

[Daniel 3:25, 34–43; Matthew 18:21–35](#)

“Lord, if my brother sins against me,
how often must I forgive him?
As many as seven times?”

Jesus answered, ‘I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.’”

After a loved one who is very dear to me betrayed by trust, my heart was broken. I felt empty, angry, disappointed, and ashamed. I didn't know if I had enough resilience in me to forgive such a grave injustice that caused me so much pain. Some time had passed before we finally decided to meet face to face to discuss the matter. When I entered the house to greet him, we shook hands, and I saw in his eyes something different: they had softened and conveyed a message of humility, saying “Please be here for me.” My eyes welled up and I could only utter, “You'll always have a home in my heart.” At that moment, I felt the Holy Spirit was there to guide us on the journey of reconciliation. Later, after he had made concessions and I had let go of the weight I had carried, I asked God for his mercy and provision. I sought absolution from the resentment and grudge I held. The scripture for today teaches us to forgive exponentially and let God carry those burdens. I trust in His miracle-working power to heal and strengthen what seems irreparable.

Lamont L. DuBose
Lector, Cornerstone, Africa Ministry,
St. Francis Pet Ministry

Who in your life do you need to forgive? How has God helped you overcome bitterness and repair broken relationships? How have you used the Scripture to help you resolve the impossible? In what ways could you help others learn the lesson of forgiveness?

Wednesday, Third Week of Lent

[Deuteronomy 4:1, 5–9; Matthew 5:17–19](#)

It can be incredibly frustrating trying to decipher what God is telling us. Our human brains can hardly comprehend God, let alone what He's telling us. That's especially hard when we are faced with difficult decisions.

A friend of mine recently had to make a difficult decision that affected her whole office. She kept telling God, “No I don't want to be the one to do this, give it to someone else.” But eventually, God kept giving her signs that she was the one He had chosen to take the lead.

How are we supposed to decipher God's word and will in our hearts and in our lives?

“Your words, Lord, are Spirit and life.” (John 6:63)

Sometimes God is calling us to what seems obvious and sometimes God is calling us to something we are overlooking or forgetting. “Take care and be earnestly on your guard not to forget the things which your own eyes have seen,” (Deut. 4:9)

Listening in the quiet moments to God, looking for those moments of Spirit and life, that's where we find God. That's where we find His message and will. When we align ourselves to God's will, things start falling into place. They may not initially be what we wanted or what we thought we wanted but a flow begins. We can either let go when we recognize we've found ourselves in God's current, or we can splash around blindly searching for what's right next to us.

Sarah Grace Villarreal
Green Team, GLO

What difficult decisions am I facing? Are there areas I might be overlooking, forgetting, or fearing so much I keep them out of mind? How might I better align myself with God's will? What might I need to entrust and surrender to God at this time?

Thursday, Third Week of Lent

[Jeremiah 7:23–28](#); [Luke 11:14–23](#)

I never understood when I was a kid why my aunt, the nun, was always smiling -couldn't she see all the problems around us? Sometimes she'd even be humming. I wonder today in such fear-based times could even she be unscathed?

The readings today give insight. The first message, profound yet so hard in "real" life: LISTEN TO MY VOICE. Instead, I find myself over doing, over talking, over thinking. In that lost space from God lies needless suffering. When we quiet, God is always right there, showing the path.

Too bad I'm sometimes the child who refuses to go in the car seat though-I want to get there my own way. The beauty of the Psalms gives a gentle reminder-the pure power of FAITH. God always knows better than us. How humbling and relieving.

The last point of light is from today's gospel- interesting because it's kind of intense. But what leaps out for me is BE NOT AFRAID. Listening quietly to what is so much greater than our messy world and our own internal demons, it's right there. When I'm truly present to God, living with and for God, it all shifts-and I feel so protected and clear. The human armor we've created, often to the detriment or exclusion of others, slides away and instead we're left nestled in the faith and light of God's very real love and eternal presence.

So that's why I'm smiling today. And you might just hear a little off pitch hum coming next...

*Laura van Vuuren
Thanksgiving Feast*

How could I better hear and listen to the voice of God? Are there things in my life that have me resisting God's help? What "human armor" am I wearing? How can I be more open to God's love?

Friday, Third Week of Lent

[Hosea 14:2–10](#); [Mark 12:28–34](#)

On the surface there is agreement between the scribe (one who meticulously copied and taught the bible) and Jesus. That uniting spirit is "Love of God and Love of neighbor." The scribe was mindful of Love, by his studying of the word.

Was he aware that he was in the presence of the Living Word? Face to face with Love itself? "Greater love has no one than this." (John 15:13)

"You are not far from the Kingdom of God." Within feet perhaps.

Does he return to his study of the scrolls, or follow Jesus?
The scripture doesn't say.

Where do I stand when hearing or reading scripture? How do I respond in the presence of the Eucharist? How often do I approach God with shabby bible and worn out prayers?

Every Lenten season, we are invited to share in the Passion of the Cross. Not to know or be aware of it, but to participate. Will I remain awake in the Garden listening for the Father's will?

Will I shy away from the mortification the scourging brings?

Will I lack courage at the crowning of thorns?

Will Simon be sent to help with my cross when I fall?

Will I remain at the foot of the cross, sorrowful for my sins?

Turning away from the passion is no longer an option. For: "Lord to whom shall we go?" (John 6:68)

Then it's no longer a question of being present to the resurrection, but how I show up.

*Gary Gallati
St. Monica Receptionist*

How am I mindful of Love? How do I respond?
How will I show up?

Saturday, Third Week of Lent

[Hosea 6:1–6; Luke 18:9–14](#)

Mercy. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy (MT 5:7)
Seems pretty simple. In this broken world acts of mercy are easy to extend. I am a good person and in giving I will get God's forgiveness and mercy. But that reduces our relationship with God to a transaction. No Caroline, I say to myself, that is not how it works. Our relationship with God is reciprocal, not transactional, and asking for, and receiving, mercy requires effort.

Asking God's mercy is hard because we must give totally of ourselves. What does it mean to ask and receive God's mercy? I grapple with the question because to seek God's mercy is to seek his forgiveness and in seeking his forgiveness we must acknowledge our sins and our faults. Not only must we be honest with God, we must be honest with ourselves,

Today's Psalm and Gospel provide examples of what God asks of us. In Psalm 51, David is seeking God's mercy for his treatment of Bathsheba, "The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." (PS 51:17).

In the Gospel the tax collector prayed "O God, be merciful to me a sinner." (LK 18:13).

To receive God's mercy we must surrender ourselves to his will. God knows our hearts and loves us anyways. His mercy is freely given, but we must ask.

Caroline Sisneros

Hospitality, Lector, Scripture Encounter

How easy or difficult is it for me to extend mercy to others? How easy or difficult is it for me to ask God for mercy? How honest am I with God and with myself?

Fourth Sunday of Lent

[1 Samuel 16:1b, 6–7, 10–13a; Ephesians 5:8–14; John 9:1–41](#)

In this reading I find myself thinking about the idea of blindness. Jesus performs an outward miracle giving sight to the blind man. It is so clearly a miracle and a great act of love from God, yet the Jews and Pharisees of the time do not approach this act with awe and gratitude but rather with a sense of skepticism and anger. How often do I find myself like the Pharisees blinded to these acts of love.

God showers my everyday life with acts of love. Whether it be a loving community of friends and family, a job that provides purpose and meaning, and even a body that is free from ailment. Yet despite all these and numerous other blessings throughout my life I do not embrace these small miracles. I ask God for things I am "missing" in my life. I am blinded to God's ever-abiding love for me each and every day. Yet despite my blindness, there are always moments of grace where God's love shines through and forces me to recognize the graces provided to me. It can be small moments such as the kindness from strangers and laughter with loved ones that remind me to embrace God's love. I continue to pray that when God showers my life with love in my everyday life, I open my eyes and embrace this love with gratitude and joy.

Nicholas Nguyen
YMA, Holiday Outreach

What things do I say I am missing in my life? In what ways am I blind to the miracles happening around me? How can I focus more on what I have been given? What everyday acts of love am I most grateful for today?

Monday, Fourth Week of Lent

[Isaiah 65:17-21](#); [John 4:43-54](#)

The readings for today offer hope. They draw my heart toward one powerful thread: God's desire to bring joy where there has been fear, and life where there has been loss. The reading from Isaiah speaks deeply to me, as the passage from Isaiah 65 sets a powerful tone: "There shall always be rejoicing and happiness in what I create." That promise feels personal. It reminds me that God is not only the Creator of the universe, but the Creator of renewal in my own life. Regrets, failures, and disappointments are not the final word. God's intention is joy. This isn't just a promise of a better future; it is an invitation to view God as an active, joyful Creator who delights in our well-being.

This promise connects powerfully with the Gospel, where Jesus heals the royal official's son in Cana. What strikes me most is the father's faith. Jesus simply says, "Your son will live." No spectacle, no dramatic gesture—just the authority of Jesus speaking life into a situation that seemed beyond saving. Before he sees proof, before he sees his son restored, the man simply believes and trusts the word of Jesus spoken to him.

Together, these readings remind me that God is always creating something new, even when I cannot yet see it. Jesus' saving power in Cana shows that God's creative joy is active, personal, and present. And in my own life, it reminds me to trust that God is still speaking life into the places where I need healing, renewal, and hope.

James Pena
Parish Council, Men's Cornerstone

Where do I find joy? What is most life giving to me? How trusting am I in God's promises to me? Where might God be creating something new in my life?

Tuesday, Fourth Week of Lent

[Ezekiel 47:1-9, 12](#); [John 5:1-16](#)

A man has been ill for 38 years, and has been unable to be healed by the waters of the pool of Bethesda, translated from Hebrew or Aramaic as "House of Mercy" or "Grace." Jesus heals him. It is the Sabbath.

The man picks up his mat. The crowd around him in Jerusalem see not a man who was healed, but a man carrying something on Sabbath, which he is not supposed to do. They do not realize, or they do not remember him, or they just never saw him, as one who was ill for a very long time. His suffering and struggle went unnoticed. But carrying a mat on Sabbath?

How often do I not see people, hurting and in need? Why do I miss their pain and struggle, and then focus on what they are doing "wrong?" Some time ago, I heard someone speak of the suffering happening in another country, and why people do not respond to it. This man said "The heart cannot feel what the eyes do not see."

I think of that often. I think I see a lot, but I've come to realize that I sometimes see without being aware, without really grasping or understanding – or feeling - what I see. Let my eyes be open, so that my heart may be open.

Jesus saw this man, and decided to do something for him – offer him grace and mercy, and heal him – because he saw him.

Tom O'Connor
Teen Confirmation

Am I more focused on what I perceive people are doing wrong than on what they are doing right? As I look around today, is there someone I can take special notice of? How could I reach out to someone who might feel unseen? How can I be more open to feel what I see?

Wednesday, Fourth Week of Lent

[Isaiah 49:8–15](#); [John 5:17–30](#)

Today's readings weave together a theme of God's steadfast love and compassion.

In the first reading, when Zion feels that the Lord has forgotten him, the reply is "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb?" As a mother, this resonates deeply, helping me to know in my depths that I am known and cared for. My two amazing adult children and my two miscarried babies are never away from my heart. Should my mind get busied by things of this world, my heart has a deep love that doesn't ever take a break. The reading tells us that God loves us even more than this. What a beautiful gift we receive in God's compassionate love. But what am I to do with this? How could I ever return this love?

The gospel sheds light in reminding us that we cannot. We must surrender to the truth that God is love. We cannot repay God because as the gospel reminds us, even Jesus, "the Son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing." Even the Son, in perfect union with the Father cannot do anything apart from the Father. Therefore, we need not despair, but rather recognize our dependence on God. In recognizing that we cannot do it on our own, we must surrender our control to rather become co-creators, collaborators, with the beautiful will of our loving God.

Anonymous

When have I felt forgotten or left behind? How can this image of God's love encourage me? Am I trying to do things in my life on my own? How can I invite God to be a collaborator?

Thursday, Fourth Week of Lent

[2 Samuel 7:4–5a, 12–14a, 16](#); [Romans 4:13, 16–18, 22](#); [Matthew 1:16, 18–21, 24a](#)

Today marks a special day to celebrate our Joseph, father of Jesus, husband of Mary, carpenter, dreamer and risk taker! Right in the middle of Lent our church asks us to stop and celebrate this ordinary man from Nazareth - the one chosen to complete the Holy Family by his YES to an angel in a dream!

But let's rewind the scripture clock. Can we assume Joseph was hearing the prophet Samuel as we are today, urging all to pay attention to David's lineage? "Your house and your kingdom shall endure forever." Really? Forever? And look at what Joseph was called to as a believer in this prophecy. "I shall be a father to him and he shall be a son to me." This relational prophecy announces a covenant between God and humans... one that stands firm, but only as firm as one's faith. Did Joseph see himself as one in the lineage of Abraham - the father of us all? All we know is that Joseph listened well to his ancestors and listened deeply to the promises God made to Abraham – through his faith! Yes, strong, consistent relational faith – the kind of faith that is GIFT. Joseph is our model of faithfulness. He believed the angel in his dream: "Do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home." He faithfully obeyed the challenging angel.

Thank you, Joseph, for being our model of hope when we question our futures. Please help deepen our faith and hope!

*Sister Judy Molosky, CSJ
(Sister of St. Joseph of
Carondelet-60 Year Jubilarian),
Cornerstone*

What are the questions I have about my future? How can I respond affirmatively, with a yes? How can I deepen my faith and become more relational with God?

Friday, Fourth Week of Lent

[Wisdom 2:1a, 12–22; John 7:1–2, 10, 25–30](#)

When I read this Wisdom I can hear what my mom always told me, “there will be people who will be jealous of you.” I never understood why people would be

jealous. I am not perfect or better than anyone else and I make mistakes like everybody, but Jesus is perfect, so why would anyone want the worst for Jesus? He was more than good, he taught with wisdom, healed the sick, and raised the dead.

On the other hand, I see why they may have acted that way. They were acting wrongly and Jesus denounced their actions. They did not like it. It reminds me that, in the end, selfish behavior is not rewarded. In the short run it may feel good, but it is not rewarded. Good actions and divine wisdom are. Even persecuted Jesus was still under our Lord’s protection and so are we.

Ariane Velluire

Are there people of whom I am jealous? How has jealousy colored the way I see people or situations? How might I depend more on God in these times?

Saturday, Fourth Week of Lent

[Jeremiah 11:18–20; John 7:40–53](#)

“Blessed are they who have kept the word with a generous heart and yield a harvest through perseverance.” — Luke 8:15

I want quick results, visible progress, and measurable outcomes... asap. I want to work out for a month (tops!) and reach my goal weight. I want to speak to someone clearly, with kindness, and have them immediately understand me. I want to take piano lessons for a few weeks and play like a professional. And yes, I want to make my Lenten sacrifice and have perfect inner peace by Easter! It’s so hard not to bring this seemingly efficient attitude into my spirituality. Can you relate?

But God works slowly.

We can force behavioral change, but can we force alignment with God? Our Spirit grows gradually, organically, what feels like invisibly at first, through seasons of planting and waiting.

I no longer feel disappointed by my slow growth....most of the time. Becoming divinely human is the work of a lifetime, not a season.

Perseverance is the art of returning. Perseverance isn’t needing immediate proof; it’s the willingness (and self-forgiveness) to begin again and trust in God. I trust that God is working beneath the surface in better ways than I could ever imagine, in the rich soil of my heart and soul.

I am getting so much more skilled at releasing the outcome. My job is to plant and tend. God nurtures the growth. I look for the subtle signs now: my willingness to embrace failure, my choice to listen to the quiet voice beneath the loud inner critic, the moment I catch myself starting to judge, and instead turn toward curiosity.

Trust the timing of God. Keep your heart generous. Persevere in faithfulness.

The harvest is coming at the perfect time and in the perfect way. Some of it is already here, tender and green, pushing toward the surface.

Shanti Piper

OCIA, Scripture Encounter, Hospitality

What things are you anxious about? For what do you want immediate results? How can I become more patient with slow growth? What in my life needs more tending so that I can embrace God’s work in me?

Fifth Sunday of Lent

[Ezekiel 37:12-14](#); [Romans 8:8-11](#); [John 11:1-45](#)

Recently, one of my students had her classmates journaling a response to “Where will you be in 7 years?” As students eagerly wrote about the adventures and achievements that await them, I pondered my own 7 year plan. In 7 years, I’ll be 70!

While death is always a possibility, as we near 70, it becomes more of an imminent probability. I confess, I am afraid. I am afraid of my own death and the deaths of those I love. I grieve for the ones I’ve lost.

I’ve thought that such fear and sorrow are the opposite of faith. If I believe in the Resurrection, if I truly have faith, what is there to fear?

In the story of Lazarus, though, we learn that “Jesus wept.” Jesus KNEW he could restore Lazarus, and yet “Jesus wept.” He wept in sorrow at the passing of his friend; he wept in compassion for Martha and Mary. Jesus, both fully human and fully divine, wept and then ushered Lazarus from the tomb.

With his tears, Jesus gives me permission to shed my own. A Jesus who weeps is one who understands my pain and sorrow. A Jesus who weeps is a loving, compassionate God to whom I can turn in my human frailty. The Jesus who raises Lazarus is one in whom I can have faith and trust that I, too, may share in the Resurrection.

*Nancy Deshler
Upper School, English Teacher
Dean of Humanities*

What are the things for which I weep? How can I turn to Jesus about this? How well do I think Jesus will understand?

Monday, Fifth Week of Lent

[Daniel 13:1-9, 15-17, 19-30, 33-62](#); [John 8:1-11](#)

This scripture speaks to my heart so much because it’s a reminder of hope, God’s mercy and renewal in this Lenten season. God saves us. Even in our darkest hour, He’s there. Even when it feels like the world is against us, God is with and for us. Even when we’re so scared if we’re facing a health issue, a marital struggle or the feeling that life isn’t what we had hoped. He saves us. His love is merciful, graceful and constant. Even when we feel we’ve done something that feels unforgivable, He is there, showing us the way through our hearts and his. He listens, he sees and will NOT let anything disrupt what he has in store for us. In the first reading God saved Susanna, a God-fearing woman. He saw to it that she was not punished unjustly. Why? He saw her heart, devotion and it says she “trusted in the Lord wholeheartedly”. “He saves those who hope in him”.

Reflect back on countless situations God has saved you from though his mercy, grace and love for you. If he can turn around her death at the last hour, he can turn around anything. In the Gospel he changed the hearts of the condemners and said “Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” One by one they left. He is right and truly just.

Believe in the Lord with all your might. Talk to him daily, praise him and seek hope through him only.

*Christine Lusita
SMPrep Parent, Hospitality*

What hardship have I experienced that I felt God’s guide me out of? Do I trust in the Lord wholeheartedly? Is there an area of my life that I need turned around?

Tuesday, Fifth Week of Lent

[Numbers 21:4–9](#); [John 8:21–30](#)

“I belong to what is above; you belong to this world.” (John 8:23)

In his dialogue with the Pharisees, Jesus reveals something essential about himself: he is the Son of the Father, and his belonging is not rooted in this world but in the One who sent him. His identity flows from that relationship. He belongs to the Father—and the Father has not left him alone.

We yearn to belong. We want to belong to a family, a circle of friends, a workplace, a community. Yet all of these forms of belonging are fragile and temporary. Parents, spouses, and siblings die. Social groups shift and evolve until we no longer recognize our place within them. We graduate, move away, change jobs. Neighborhoods transform. Work roles end through retirement or reorganization. What once grounded us sometimes slips away.

That longing to belong does not disappear. Sometimes it even leads us to cling to people or groups that do not bring out our best selves—or that tempt us away from who we are called to be. Perhaps it is first necessary to belong to ourselves. To look within and examine our souls.

Belonging in this world is, by its nature, transitory. Jesus offers something more enduring. “The one who sent me is with me,” he says. “He has not left me alone.” Christ invites us into that same relationship—one rooted in eternal love.

Ultimately, to belong to him is to belong to what is above, to a love that does not abandon us, even when everything else changes.

Stephanie Malbasa
Hospitality, Eucharistic Minister

How well do I handle change? Where have I been yearning to belong? Do my places where I feel belonging bring me closer to or pull me away from God? How can my sense of belonging be more firmly rooted in the love of God?

Wednesday, Fifth Week of Lent

[Isaiah 7:10–14](#); [8:10](#); [Hebrews 10:4–10](#); [Luke 1:26–38](#)

What is it in your life that feels impossible right now? Are you hopeless? Depressed? Overwhelmed? Sick? Lost?

Three years ago, my life “burnt down.” Illness made me unable to work, and I lost my home, my office, and my ability to function. On top of that came a deep, debilitating depression. I lost my joy, all positive emotions, even my personality. It was utterly crushing.

I prayed, but it seemed as if my prayers were lost at sea. Then I remembered Angel Gabriel’s words to Mary during the Annunciation: “For nothing will be impossible for God” (Luke 1:37).

Finally, God gave me a glimmer of hope. New thoughts and questions came to mind: had anyone overcome something like this before? I began reading my Bible more, praying more, and listening to stories of people who had faced severe challenges. These stories reminded me of God’s power to heal.

I was led to the right places at the right time. I had to put forth great effort and say yes to things I wanted to refuse. What had seemed impossible became real. God met me and completely healed me.

At the Annunciation, Mary’s familiar life ended. She stepped into uncertain territory where her honor and safety were at risk—but despite her fear, she said yes to God. If the life you once knew has slipped away, know that our Lord and Savior has a plan for you.

May the loving and protective wings of God’s love shelter you.

Cindy Fulsom
Hospitality, Cornerstone, Scripture Encounter

When have I felt unsure or like things were hopeless or impossible? How did I gain hope? How did I say yes despite fear surety? How can I do this again?

Thursday, Fifth Week of Lent

[Genesis 17:3–9; John 8:51–59](#)

For the greater part of my life, I perceived God as being outside of myself - felt, seen, and heard in the elements of nature. When at Mass, I always closed my eyes to avoid distraction (or hide), perceiving again, God as being 'out there' in the church. In 2021 God finally stopped me in my tracks and got my full attention through a human being... Father David Ayotte. As our church was preparing to reopen after Covid, he expressed, via livestream, the need for Hospitality Ministers. My response was a simple and terrified, YES. This seemingly simple choice has opened my world to the experience of God within.

What stands out to me in today's readings are Christ's repeated references to the senses. He does not say, for example: "Think or talk your way into eternal life (or non death)."

Psalm 95:8

"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

John 8:51-59

"Amen, amen, I say to you, whoever keeps my word will never see death."

'Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.'

Lent is an ideal time to step back, at least temporarily, from the omnipresent speed of information, into the interior realm of seeing and hearing God... into the realm of sensing the Presence of God.

Suzanne Watson

*Hospitality, Scripture Encounter,
Linen Sister (washing, ironing altar linens)*

Is there something to which I am being called to say yes? How can I respond? How do I experience God as external and/or internal? How can I experience God through my senses?

Friday, Fifth Week of Lent

[Ezekiel 37:21–28; John 11:45–56](#)

Being a high school student and a cantor at Mass gives me a pretty unique perspective on the liturgy, especially during these last weeks of Lent. The readings for this Friday really hit home for me. In both Jeremiah and the Gospel of John, we see a world where speaking the truth is met with "terror on every side." For those of us who step up to lead the congregation in prayer and song, these scriptures are more than just old stories, they're a blueprint for leading with heart instead of just trying to be popular.

Jeremiah talks about the "weight of scrutiny," and honestly, that's exactly what high school feels like sometimes. Whether I'm walking through the halls or standing in the spotlight at the sanctuary, it feels like people are just waiting for me to trip up or hit a wrong note. That kind of pressure makes you want to dim your light or just stay quiet so you don't get judged. But Jeremiah calls the Lord his "mighty champion." That reminds me that my confidence as a singer and a leader has to come from my faith in God and myself, not from how many people "approve" of me or the voice in my head telling me I'm not good enough. In the Gospel, Jesus is dealing with the ultimate critics. I love that his response is a "masterclass in action." Instead of getting into a huge argument, He just points to the good things He's done. As a cantor, I've realized my leadership isn't about being the "star", it's about my music being a bridge for other people to find God. My service, my humility, and my hard work end up speaking way louder than any gossip or self-doubt ever could. Finally, when things got too intense, Jesus retreated to the Jordan. It's a good reminder for me that when the "academic storm" or social drama gets too loud, I need to go back to my own "Jordan", that quiet place of prayer, to find the clarity I need to keep leading.

Scarlett Shelton

SM Prep Senior, Choir

How do the judgements of others affect me? Where in my life am I being called to speak the truth? How do my actions reflect the ways I rest in the truth? What do they look like when I am not rooted in the truth?

Saturday, Fifth Week of Lent

[Ezekiel 37:21–28](#); [John 11:45–56](#)

I don't know why I did it. I had information, and opinions to go along with it. I knew that sharing it would create hard feelings and division. Yet the power that came with knowledge, or the control that came with speaking about it was too tempting.

Sometimes we like to dial up the drama. Despite knowing the truth, deep down, we question, we ask others opinions or share information out of turn and in so doing create conflict and division. We see this happening in today's gospel as Jesus clearly works signs, but people gossip and interject in order to cast suspicion. Motivated by possessions, wealth, power, and control they create a drama that inevitably leads to division.

Today's readings are clearly a call for unity. They reveal our God who seeks to gather, to unify, and to heal, even if it must come to be through the death of his son. In this time where we may feel our own sense of division in our lives, and in our world, we are called to look to God's unwavering love and desire that we be one. If we can trust God's desire for unity, then we too can look for commonalities and work for unification in our own areas of influence.

Diane Gasper
Director, Faith Formation

How prone am I to gossip? How have I created divisions? Have I let my desire for power, control, or possessions interfere with doing what's right? How can I work towards further unification?

Palm Sunday

[Isaiah 50:4–7](#); [Philippians 2:6–11](#); [Matthew 26:14—27:66](#)

As I reflect on the Palm Sunday readings. Which are very reverent, glorious and a painful journey toward the resurrection.

It begins with Jesus humbly riding a donkey through Bethany. A crowd chanting glorious praises for their excellent King.

But we soon find out reading the other scripture of the day. It turns from a jubilant event singing "Hosanna" to elevated shouts of "Crucify Him". The people eventually despising, spitting, condemning and turning their backs on Jesus.

Jesus was aware that his ultimate end would come soon. He knew he would carry a heavy burden to his death. He did it with humility and supreme love for us. So we would be saved.

He voluntarily sacrificed to atone for humanity's sins. Giving us healing and grace from bondage of sin.

Offering redemption, forgiveness, and freedom from sin's power.

Helena Buscema
Cantor, Music Ministry

How can I support others not just when it is easy, but also through the hard times, loss or suffering? How can I be a good steward of care and love when others need me the most?

Monday, Holy Week

[Isaiah 42:1-7](#); [John 12:1-11](#)

“I believe that I shall see the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord. The Lord is my light and my salvation.” (Psalm 27)

This time four years ago I was a lukewarm Catholic. My prayer life was minimal, and I inconsistently attended Sunday mass. I didn't even know what Eucharistic Adoration was. Several months later, heartbroken, I found myself crying in a pew at St. Francis of Assisi Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan. That heartbreak sparked the start of my reversion to being on fire for the Lord. In the years since, life grew harder with mystery health issues my doctors couldn't solve.

Over-the-counter pain medication did nothing for the pain, and I refused anything that altered my consciousness, so night after night for weeks I sat alone in the dark, praying for strength to endure. I'd struggle to pray the Rosary aloud, battling crippling anxiety that I'd end up on a feeding tube and wither away at 31. By God's grace, I secured an appointment with a very busy Physical Therapist who dramatically eased the pain and related issues. These health trials aren't over, but looking back, I see God calling me to wait on Him, to trust Him.

Now, when these symptoms arise, I turn to God: He is my light and my salvation.

In today's chaotic, busy world, it's easy to get lost in things beyond our control and neglect prayer, Adoration, or Sunday mass. Often, only a breaking experience prompts us to stop and listen - if our hearts are open. God yearns for us to know Him, trust Him, and rely on His perfect timing in everything.

Andi Bustamante

What experiences of my life have brought me closer to God? How has my relationship with God grown? What concrete steps can I take to deepen my friendship with and reliance on God?

Tuesday, Holy Week

[Isaiah 49:1-6](#); [John 13:21-33, 36-38](#)

Psalm 71 says God will be “my rock of refuge” and Isaiah writes “I will make you a light to the nations”. I can recall trials in my life where God was the rock and fortress that I held onto to maneuver betrayals of a spouse, and the loss of my home and livelihood. It was very difficult for me to be a “light” in so much darkness and chaos. But I experienced the light of Christ by the example of people I met who prayed with me and for me. Slowly my path became less dark, and I stumbled less, with more light from the lanterns of Christ's disciples.

In John's Gospel, Jesus says “Where I go you cannot come.” Peter's answer is “...why can I not follow you now?” Often, I have asked myself why I cannot follow Christ into the wilderness to do something foreign, uncomfortable, or difficult for fear of failure or ridicule. Jesus also asked, “Will you lay down your life for me”? Am I able to pick up my cross and follow Him on the road to Calvary and not desert or betray Him? The pace of life can have challenges to family life and pull me away from spending time with the Master in prayer. When difficulties arise, I have often elected to spend countless hours in mindless activity scrolling on my phone or on the television. In the end, I will be asked why I was so busy and was I a light for others.

Lynn Kurata

*Hospitality, Health Ministry, Thanksgiving Feast,
Scripture Encounter, Women's Cornerstone*

Whose light has been a guide for my path? How might I be a light for others? What is something specific I can do for someone today? What things keep me most busy? How can I pick up my cross?

Wednesday, Holy Week

[Isaiah 50:4–9a](#); [Matthew 26:14–25](#)

The season of Lent draws us back to the quiet, piercing moments of the Gospel—those scenes where human weakness meets divine fidelity. Among them, Judas Iscariot's choice stands out with a starkness that is difficult to ignore. His betrayal was not an abstract theological idea; it was a wound inflicted within an intimate circle of trust, born of fear, confusion, and misplaced desire. Yet it did not derail Jesus' mission, interrupt God's plan, or diminish the love Jesus carried to the Cross.

Jesus absorbed Judas' betrayal without retaliation, without spectacle, without abandoning His purpose. He entered a voluntary and redemptive suffering—not as a victim of circumstance, but as a willing participant in God's design for the salvation of humanity. God's fidelity was not contingent on the fidelity of others. There is something profoundly consoling in that truth.

Betrayal touches our own lives in ways that can feel disorienting and deeply personal. It often comes through people we trusted, people we believed were walking with us, people who expressed loyalty even as their actions caused harm. The pain is real. The confusion is real. The temptation to despair or retaliate is real.

But Lent invites us to see these moments through the lens of Christ.

When we experience betrayal, we are given an opportunity to participate in the redemptive pattern Christ lived, by choosing to remain faithful to the mission God entrusted to us. Just as Judas' actions could not interrupt the arc of salvation, the faltering of others cannot interrupt the arc of God's call in our lives.

Sometimes remaining faithful means carrying a burden quietly, trusting that God sees what others do not. Sometimes it means choosing not to retaliate or escalate, but instead to protect the mission entrusted to us. This is not passivity; it is spiritual strength. It is leadership shaped by the Cross. This Lent let us allow God to transform our wounds into witness.

Josefina Fernandez McEvoy
Lector Ministry

What wounds or betrayals have I endured? Have they derailed me from my path or purpose? If so, how can I get back on track? How can I use the experience to heal and witness?

Holy Thursday

[Exodus 12:1–8, 11–14](#); [1 Corinthians 11:23–26](#); [John 13:1–15](#)

Holy Thursday marks the beginning of the three-part story at the heart of our faith. The “Triduum,” (or three) moments in the central story are retold in scripture but also in our Christian liturgy. Tonight the people will gather and witness the pinnacle of Jesus' life and self-giving death, leading to the glorious climax of Resurrection. The Triduum's culmination is Sunday, but it all starts on Thursday.

One curious feature of tonight's gospel is Jesus at the Last Supper. On the very night when we remember the first Eucharist, the church gives us the one gospel (St. John's) that tells it differently. Instead of focusing on bread and wine blest and broken at the Supper, we hear of Jesus washing feet. One particular phrase invites us to understand Holy Thursday as the moment when Jesus recaps his life through his own personal action: St. John's gospel tells us “He wrapped a towel around his waist.” In wrapping that towel, a sign of humility and servitude, Jesus wraps together the central mystery of the Eucharist with the core gospel summons to serve others. The invitation to join him is enfolded in the simple gesture of wrapping that towel.

If you can get to the Holy Thursday service, please do! It is beautiful from start to finish. But even if you cannot, please let us pray for each other that we make the connection between the gift of Eucharist and our vocation to serve others in a fractured world.

Michael Horan
Diaspora

What speaks to me about this Last Supper story? What does it tell me about Eucharist and about service? What does it call me to?

Good Friday

[Isaiah 52:13—53:12](#); [Hebrews 4:14–16](#); [5:7–9](#); [John 18:1—19:42](#)

Good Friday always lands in a tender place within me, especially now that both my parents have passed on. I am left with cherished holy moments and their legacy etched in my heart. Isaiah's suffering servant reminds me of the strength and resourcefulness of so many men and women, particularly that of my mother who could turn a handful of pinto beans and feed her husband and nine children a lavish meal filled with love and hope. In the eyes of a materialistic world, we did not have many riches, but we had the love and faith that carried us through many sacrifices. There is dignity in suffering when it is united to our Christ Jesus.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus learned obedience through suffering, that intimacy matters. God does not watch suffering from afar; God feels it in the body. As an immigrant, obedience has meant trusting God in uncertainty--- learning a new language, navigating systems that were not made for us, enduring moments of invisibility. Knowing that God intimately understands rejection is a healing balm for many of us.

In John's passion, Jesus carries his own cross, no one forces him. He walks forth with love. God's love carries me through many struggles, many that I am not even aware of. And those that I am aware of, I try to emulate the resilience and courage of the women who were present, steadfast, unafraid to love in the face of violence. Good Friday teaches me that suffering is not the end; it is the soil where hope takes root.

Ilda Jimenez
Women's Cornerstone

How can I unite my current sufferings to Christ Jesus? How might I experience God near in my sufferings? How can I find courage and resilience, especially as I recall the passion and death of our Lord?

Holy Saturday

[Genesis 1:1—2:2 \(or 1:1, 26–31a\)](#); [Exodus 14:15—15:1](#); [Romans 6:3–11](#); [Matthew 28:1–10](#)

... I am numb and traumatized by the unjust treatment and execution of Jesus followed by the long dark day of grieving yesterday... Yet, despite all my uncertainty and grieving I know I must go to the tomb. I am fragile, my life is uncertain, but deep inside I know I must go. As I mourn tombside and the ground starts to move I think, please, I can't take anymore. Then an angel appeared and said, "Do not be afraid!"... "Jesus is not here, for he has been raised just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay."

My feelings are changing from despair and grieving to deep joy! The darkness is lifting and the light of dawn is appearing in the sky. Yes, it is sinking in, Jesus has triumphed death—I must spread the word. Still fearful, yet overjoyed, I must move forward. Then filled with amazement, I saw him on the way. He embraced and greeted me saying, "Do not be afraid."

Let the joy of the Resurrection fill your heart as we celebrate the cornerstone of our faith. Do not be afraid. Go out and spread the message.

Alleluia! He Has Risen

Alleluia! Alleluia! a

Patricia Conaty
Women's Cornerstone

How am I experiencing the transitions of my life? Are there things for which I wait? As I await the resurrection, what can I learn about patience, fear, and love?

Easter Sunday

[Acts 10:34a, 37–43; Colossians 3:1–4 or 1 Corinthians 5:6b–8; John 20:1–9](#)

We began this Lenten season with a simple invitation: That you may live. Not merely exist. Not just get through another week. But live. I asked our community to remember that we are, at our best, a people of yes. A community that says yes to God, yes to one another, yes to the quiet promptings of the Spirit. And so I suggested something very practical. One yes each day. Just one. A yes we might not otherwise choose. A phone call returned. A forgiveness offered. A moment of patience instead of irritation. A prayer whispered before reacting. Lent was not meant to be dramatic. It was meant to be lived.

Now we stand together on Easter Sunday here at St. Monica. We have walked through desert days and quiet sacrifices. We have watched 74 members of our OCIA and faith formation say their own courageous yes to becoming one with us in faith. And somewhere along the way, our small daily yeses have begun to change us. That is what resurrection looks like in real time. Not fireworks, but faithfulness. Not perfection, but persistence. We have practiced yes, and now we sing Alleluia.

Easter is not the end of the invitation. It is the beginning of a new rhythm. The tomb is empty. Fear does not have the final word. Regret does not get to define us. The risen Lord meets us in ordinary rooms and ordinary mornings and still asks for our yes. Let that frame the days ahead. One yes at a time. He is risen. Alleluia. Yes. I love you.

Msgr. Lloyd Torgerson
Pastor

Where in my ordinary, everyday life is the risen Lord inviting me to say one simple yes, and what might change if I actually do?