

ASH WEDNESDAY



Even Now

O God,
you show yourself throughout the ages
as gracious, merciful, slow to anger,
abounding in steadfast love.
You give us not what we deserve but turn
your face toward us
and rain down your blessings upon us.
Even now you call us to return to you.

Help us to answer you.
Give us the strength that we need
to look at a broken world and respond,
that in loving one another we can love
as you love,
boundlessly and with compassion.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday, February 17, 2021 Called Together for a Broken World

Today's readings: Joel 2:12–18; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 12–13, 14 and 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2; Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18. As the Church begins a period marked by prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we hear Jesus teach us how we are to fast. Jesus tells us that our observance should be hidden, and that it will be seen by our Father, who sees what is hidden. And yet we wear our penitence marked upon our foreheads for all to see.

Jesus mentions that the “hypocrites” look gloomy and neglect their appearance because they seek social affirmation of their holiness. It is easy to judge these people of long ago and even easier to judge people we know. Is what they do so foreign to us? All of us desire to belong, to be embraced, to be part of a community.

The prophet Joel calls us to the kind of community we seek; rather than running after superficial approval, he calls all to a communal work, the great fast. When we look at the world around us, just like Joel, we see that everything is not as it should be. We recognize that the world is in dire need of God’s mercy, love, and forgiveness. Joel calls us to rend our hearts. Let us blow the horn and gather the people to ask for God’s mercy and forgiveness on behalf of a broken world. Marked with the sign of ashes, together we go into the world to be a sign of its impending redemption.

How is God calling you to respond to the world’s brokenness this Lent?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, February 15

Prayer

We know that relationships cannot thrive without the gifts of time and attention. When we pray, we give this same time and attention to our most important relationship. Prayer is talking, but also listening. Determine a space in your day to carve out additional time and attention for prayer this Lent. *Today's readings: Genesis 4:1–15, 25; Psalm 50:1 and 8, 16bc–17, 20–21; Mark 8:11–13.*

Tuesday, February 16

Almsgiving

What does the world need? It can be a pretty overwhelming list. We know that we live in a world where many things are not as they should be. When you look at the world around you, what breaks your heart? What makes you outraged? These feelings can be a way that God calls you to live out the call you received at your baptism. Pay attention to what you feel passionately about, and then respond by being God's love in the world. *Today's readings: Genesis 6:5–8; 7:1–5, 10; Psalm 29:1a and 2, 3ac–4, 3b and 9c–10; Mark 8:14–21.*

Wednesday, February 17

Fasting

When discussing the found sheep with a group of children, the topic of the ninety-nine left in the wilderness came up. One child said, "They have to fast from the Shepherd's presence in order for the flock to be whole again." Another child chimed in, "But they don't mind! They are glad to do it! That's how much they want everyone to be together." When the Church fasts together, we do so because we live in an in-between time: Jesus has ascended to the Father, he has not yet come again. We fast in anticipation of Jesus' arrival, when there will be no more sorrow, tears, and pain. We fast willingly because we want our broken world to be whole. *Today's readings: Joel 2:12–18; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 12–13, 14 and 17; 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:2; Matthew 6:1–6, 16–18.*

Thursday, February 18

In Surrender, Freedom

When we surrender our will to the will of God, we find freedom. It is a paradox that denying ourselves makes us free. Yet very often, we want what is not good for us. In our striving, we can gain the whole world and lose ourselves. Copy these words: take up your cross and follow me. As you look at the statement, ask yourself what crosses you face. How would your life change if you embraced your crosses rather than avoided them? *Today's readings: Deuteronomy 30:15–20; Psalm 1:1–2, 3, 4 and 6; Luke 9:22–25.*

Friday, February 19

Act with Justice

The words of Isaiah direct our fast to the service of justice. We hear that the fast pleasing to the Lord is one that sets the oppressed free, feeds the hungry, brings homeless people into our homes, and clothes the naked. Think about one issue of justice that particularly touches your heart and get involved. You could serve at a soup kitchen, work at a homeless shelter, or host a baby shower for a local pregnant woman in need. This fast prepares us for the heavenly feast, where God shall wipe every tear from our eyes and his kingdom will have no end. *Today's readings: Isaiah 58:1–9a; Psalm 51:3–4, 5–6ab, 18–19; Matthew 9:14–15.*

Saturday, February 20

Follow Me

When Jesus told Levi "Follow me," Levi's response was clear: "leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him." Levi was probably no stranger to the judgments of the holy people of his day since tax collectors were reviled for collaborating with the Romans. Judgment never called Levi to a new way of living. What did? An encounter with a person who offered relationship and love. What joy Levi must have felt to offer a banquet at his home for Jesus, to be forgiven. Spend time in prayer thinking about what you must leave behind in order to respond to the call to follow Jesus. *Isaiah 58:9b–14; Psalm 86:1–2, 3–4, 5–6; Luke 5:27–32.*



FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT



Guide us, Lord

Lord,
you brought salvation to Noah through
the waters
and carried him through his time of trial
to a covenant of love.
All times and all seasons belong to you.
As we now begin this time, this season,

our time of trial,
stay close to us.
Carry us through our temptations.
Remove all that keeps us apart from you.
Lead us by the right paths
so that we may live in the light of your love.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, February 21, 2021
Forty Days

Today's readings: Genesis 9:8–15; Psalm 25:4–5, 6–7, 8–9; 1 Peter 3:18–22; Mark 1:12–15. After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, the Spirit drove him out into the desert, where he experienced temptation. Sometimes we fail to consider that, in the incarnation, Jesus took on every bit of the human experience, except sin. He knew what it was to be tempted, to face trials.

In the Bible, the number *forty* symbolizes a time of trial or testing. In today's readings, Jesus' forty days in the desert are placed alongside the experience of Noah and his family, the forty days of the flood. Neither reading leaves us in a time of trial. In the reading from Genesis, we see the rainbow, the sign of God's covenant with Noah. In Mark, we

hear Jesus proclaim that the kingdom of God is at hand, the time for which they have been awaiting has come. At the very beginning of our season of preparation, we hear proclaimed the fruits that await us at its conclusion.

In this season of Lent, we have forty days to confront our temptations. We hear Jesus calling us to repent and believe in the Gospel. How might we use these forty days to ready ourselves to hear the proclamation at its end? What must I repent of so that I may better believe? This week, think about obstacles that hold you back from God's love. Consider your temptations. How can you use this season to make yourself ready for what is to come?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, February 22

Feast of the Chair of St. Peter

The people who surrounded Jesus often wondered about his identity. He healed the sick, forgave sins, preached the coming of the kingdom of God. Walking alongside him, seeing all that he did, Peter must have wondered about this question too. When Jesus asks, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answers readily: Jesus is the Messiah, the one for whom all Israel has been waiting. Jesus founds the Church on Peter’s proclamation. What is your response to the query “Who do you say that Jesus is?” *Today’s readings: 1 Peter 5:1–4; Psalm 23:1–3a, 4, 5, 6; Matthew 16:13–19.*

Tuesday, February 23

The Lord’s Prayer

When we step back to consider the prayer that Jesus taught and we memorized long ago, the challenge of the Lord’s Prayer is seen in a new way. In saying “thy kingdom come,” we long for God’s kingdom of justice and righteousness. But are we anxious to do God’s will, so that it is done on earth as it is in heaven? Do we forgive, even as we long to be forgiven? Take some time to meditate over each line of the prayer, perhaps writing each line and journaling with it. What might God be calling you to, as you reflect on the prayer that Jesus taught? *Today’s readings: Isaiah 55:10–11; Psalm 34:4–5, 6–7, 16–17, 18–19; Matthew 6:7–15.*

Wednesday, February 24

Turn Away from Sin

After his sojourn in the belly of the fish, Jonah traveled to Nineveh as God commanded. Upon hearing Jonah call them to repentance, the Ninevites changed their lives. It is tempting to seek big signs, but the call to conversion is daily. How can you reorient your life toward God today? How can you turn away from those things that are holding you back from his love? *Today’s readings: Jonah 3:1–10; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 18–19; Luke 11:29–32.*

Thursday, February 25

Ask, Seek, Knock

In today’s Gospel we are told to ask, to seek, to knock. Does this mean that God will give us our every desire? From both reason and experience, we know that sometimes we want things that are not good for us. Yet we are called to bring our needs and desires before God, who desires every good thing for us. What need can you entrust to God? How might giving it over to God transform its role in your life? *Today’s readings: Esther C:12, 14–16, 23–25; Psalm 138:1–2ab, 2cde–3, 7c–8; Matthew 7:7–12.*

Friday, February 26

Go First and Be Reconciled

Jesus’ words about anger are challenging. Anger can come upon us easily, and sometimes we allow that emotion to govern our actions. But Jesus teaches another way. He says that before we bring our gift to the altar, we must go and be reconciled with the one we have wronged. How hard it is to admit we have made a mistake! Apologize to someone you have hurt and seek out the sacrament of reconciliation this week. *Today’s readings: Ezra 18:21–28; Psalm 130:1–2, 3–4, 5–7a, 7bc–8; Matthew 5:20–26.*

Saturday, February 27

Love Your Enemies

Jesus’ instructions to love our enemies and pray for persecutors are familiar, yet somehow these instructions never fail to cause discomfort. Love our enemies? Pray for those who persecute us? Our natural inclination is to hurt those who have hurt us, to return actions in kind. Jesus holds us to a standard that seems impossible. This week, consider a person who has hurt you. Say one Hail Mary for that person and then another. As Mother Teresa said, prayer changes me and I change things. See what happens when you entrust that person to God. *Today’s readings: Deuteronomy 26:16–19; Psalm 119:1–2, 4–5, 7–8; Matthew 5:43–48.*



SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT



Help Us to Love

Loving Father,
you sent us the gift of your Son,
One like us in all ways but sin,
to show us what it means to love as you love.
Listen to him, you tell us.
Provide us with the grace to hear
and respond to his voice,
to look at the world's brokenness and
not feel despair,

but see your promise that all the world
shall be transfigured by your love.
Allow us to be transfigured to do what
you will,
that we might use the life we have been
given to glorify you.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, February 28, 2021

Glimpses of Glory



Today's readings: Genesis 22:1–2, 9a, 10–13, 15–18; Psalm 116:10, 15, 16–17, 18–19; Romans 8:31b–34; Mark 9:2–10.
After Jesus first predicts that he will suffer, he takes Peter, James, and John apart from everyone else. These apostles see Jesus in his glory, in gleaming clothing with Moses and Elijah, whose presence communicates that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law and the prophets. Then the apostles hear a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son. Listen to him.” As quickly as the vision appears, it ceases.

As conflicts arose between Jesus and the leaders of the day, the apostles may have taken comfort in knowing that Jesus is God’s “beloved Son.” Walking through the passion with Jesus, they could cling to the glimpse of Jesus’ glory.

The words *beloved Son* also may have called to mind for them the sacrifice of Isaac. Abraham had been obedient to God and had not withheld his beloved son. Abraham knew God and, therefore, knew that God is a keeper of promises. Somehow, even when it seemed impossible, God’s promise would be fulfilled. Abraham would be the father of many through Isaac. He believed in God’s promise, even when it seemed that the promise could not be kept. In this moment we see another prefiguration of what is to come, the impossible hope that endures through Good Friday and is vindicated on Easter morning.

Where have you glimpsed resurrection? How can you hold to these moments in your times of trial?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 1

Mercy

Jesus instructs his followers to do the seemingly impossible: be merciful just as God is merciful. God's mercy is endless. How can we ever manage to love as he does? Living in a world that overflows with brokenness, we have endless opportunities to bring mercy to another. In our families, we have so many chances to forgive. How can you extend mercy to someone today? *Today's readings: Deuteronomy 9:4b–10; Psalm 79:8, 9, 11, 13; Luke 6:36–38.*

Tuesday, March 2

The Greatest among You

From birth, human beings prefer to look at other human faces more than anything else. We come into the world ready for relationships of love. Yet as we seek out that love, we miss the mark. Rather than authentic love, which both affirms us and challenges us, we seek out approval, acclaim, and status. We look for relationships that reflect us back to ourselves in a positive light. Humility is opting out of this unwinnable game. It is knowing that we have an identity that cannot be taken away from us: beloved child of God. Once we accept that this is the love we are looking for, the love that grounds our being, we no longer worry about where we fit. We can instead imitate the one who humbled himself, who came in our likeness, who lived in love. *Today's readings: Isaiah 1:10, 16–20; Psalm 50:8–9, 16bc–17, 21 and 23; Matthew 23:1–12.*

Wednesday, March 3

St. Katharine Drexel

St. Katharine Drexel was an heiress in Philadelphia who felt incredibly moved by the plight of Native Americans and African Americans in the United States in the late nineteenth century. She recognized this pull on her heart as a call from God, and she gave up her fortune and founded a religious

order, establishing missions and schools that served these groups. She listened for God's voice and responded. How can you do the same? *Today's readings: Jeremiah 18:18–20; Psalm 31:5–6, 14, 15–16; Matthew 20:17–28.*

Thursday, March 4

St. Casimir

St. Casimir was a Polish prince with legendary generosity to the poor. Is there a sacrifice you could make today in order to give generously to the poor in his honor? Consider what Abraham said at the end of today's Gospel reading. How has Christ's rising from the dead persuaded you to be merciful? *Today's readings: Jeremiah 17:5–10; Psalm 1:1–2, 3, 4 and 6; Luke 16:19–31.*

Friday, March 5

Act with Justice

Over and over, the prophets and Jesus call us to give up our sinful ways and act with justice. We fail to recognize that the goods of creation are intended for all people and cling tightly to what we have when many do not have enough. Today choose to eat a simple lunch or dinner, and donate the cost savings to a charity that serves those who are food insecure. *Today's readings: Genesis 37:3–4, 12–13a, 17b–28a; Psalm 105:16–17, 18–19, 20–21; Matthew 21:33–43, 45–46.*

Saturday, March 6

Merciful Love

Spend some time reflecting on the words of Jesus in the parable of the prodigal son, and allow yourself to hear it with new ears. The son behaved as though his father were dead, yet the father watched for the son, ran to him, embraced him, and threw a feast to celebrate his return. What does that tell you about the vastness of God's merciful love for you? Is there anything you could do for which God could not forgive? *Today's readings: Micah 7:14–15, 18–20; Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 9–10, 11–12; Luke 15:1–3, 11–32.*



THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT



The Gift of the Law

Loving God,
you gave the gift of the law to Moses
that the people might walk in the light
of your love.

In every age you call us back—
heart, mind, soul, and strength
turned to you,

our neighbor loved as ourselves.
Though we fall time and again,
give us the strength to do your will,
to act justly, be merciful, and walk humbly
with you.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 7, 2021
Keep My Commandments

Today's readings: Exodus 20:1–17; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11; 1 Corinthians 1:22–25; John 2:13–25. The Ten Commandments are often considered to be a list of rules. Even when followed with great care, a person may miss out on the broader vision they embody. What if every person chose to live in accord with God's law? What if each person strove toward this ideal?

The Ten Commandments set out the framework for a just and peaceful society. If the Commandments are approached as a vision, we can see how they help us live in right relationship with those around us. In the reading from Exodus, God proclaims a blessing that proceeds to "the thousandth generation . . . of those who love me and keep

my commandments." How many receive blessing from the righteousness of the just one!

The ripple effect of sin is evident. Family patterns that are damaging are hard to break, and the actions of those around us affect the way we live in the world.

Jesus often came into conflict with the religious leaders of his day because they differed in their interpretation of what it meant to keep God's law. There was not anything wrong with their desire to obey God's Commandments. Perhaps, though, the intensity of their focus caused them to lose a sense that the law was a vision for a just and peaceful society. Pray with the Commandments. How can they help you work toward a just world?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 8

St. John of God

St. John of God turned away from God in his youth, but returned with his whole heart and lived his life in gratitude for the great mercy he had received. He spent his life in extraordinary works of charity and love on behalf of those who were in greatest need, always with tremendous respect for those he served. God's mercy and forgiveness is always waiting for us. When have you felt God's forgiveness most fully? How can you respond with a grateful heart? *Today's readings: 2 Kings 5:1–15b; Psalm 42:2–3, 43:3–4; Luke 4:24–30.*

Tuesday, March 9

Not Seven but Seventy-Seven Times

Why is it so difficult to forgive? Even though we know that holding onto our anger hurts, we brood over every small wrong. In today's parable of the unforgiving servant, the difference between the value of the two debts is enormous. This contrast shows us the tremendousness of God's love and forgiveness and startles us with our own stinginess. What would it mean for you to forgive seventy-seven times? To forgive as you have been forgiven? *Today's readings: Deuteronomy 3:25, 34–43; Psalm 25:4–5ab, 6, 7bc, 8, 9; Matthew 18:21–35.*

Wednesday, March 10

Whoever Obeys and Teaches

Some people focus on following their own way, no matter the cost. We know, though, that our will often leads us astray, seeking after things that are not good for us, and that we engage in self-deception about what we really need. The Ten Commandments provide objective standards for behavior, even as complete freedom is within them. *Today's readings: Deuteronomy 4:1, 5–9; Psalm 147:12–13, 15–16, 19–20; Matthew 5:17–19.*

Thursday, March 11

Miraculous Growth

Today we hear that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Jesus casts out a demon, revealing a glimpse of the coming kingdom and making space for its miraculous growth. By giving up our sins and selfishness, we too make space for miraculous growth of God's love within us. Pray the Rosary today in the hope that the spirit it cultivates will cast out all that is not of God and help bring about this miraculous growth. *Today's readings: Jeremiah 7:23–28; Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7, 8–9; Luke 11:14–23.*

Friday, March 12

The Summary of the Law

Today the Gospel tells us that love of God and love of neighbor are the primary principles that ought to govern our lives. What would it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength? How would our lives be different if we loved our neighbor as ourselves? Does this necessarily mean putting ourselves last? It says love your neighbor as yourself. How can we respect our needs so that we are able to love others more fully? *Today's readings: Hosea 14:2–10; Psalm 81:6c–8a, 8bc–9, 10–11ab, 14 and 17; Mark 12:28–34.*

Saturday, March 13

O God, Be Merciful

When we look at our lives, we see how much we are in need of God's mercy and forgiveness. It is always there for us, requiring only that we seek it. People have used the words of the tax collector in today's reading from Luke, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," in their prayers expressing contrition. Try incorporating this prayer into your daily prayer as a means of letting God's mercy act on you. *Today's readings: Hosea 6:1–6; Psalm 51:3–4, 18–19, 20–21ab; Luke 18:9–14.*



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT



Live in the Light

Loving Father,
in love you created the world,
and in love you sent its redeemer.
Early and often you called
to our ancestors.
Early and often you call to us too.
Be merciful to us.
We were made in your image
and likeness.
You saw that we were very good.
We had all that we needed, yet you
wanted to give us more.
This gift, which we cannot merit,
is the gift of your Son's life.
Help us to live in your light.
Guide us away from the darkness,
that we, new creations, might do the
good works to which we are called.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Sunday, March 14, 2021
Called to the Light



Today's readings: 2 Chronicles 36:14–16, 19–23; Psalm 137:1–2, 3, 4–5, 6; Ephesians 2:4–10; John 3:14–21. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” This Scripture’s beauty, simplicity, and truth inspire people to answer the call of Jesus to spread the Good News.

Though we know that God made the world and everything in it and saw that it was good, we also see that the world is filled with darkness and difficulty. How can this be? Each of us can think of world events that break our hearts. We do not want to think about how our actions contribute to what breaks the hearts of others. In Chronicles, we hear that

God sent messengers early and often to call the people away from their destructive decisions. In the Gospel, we hear that the people preferred darkness to light.

A bright light can dazzle our eyes. It can reveal things that were not visible in the dark. We might prefer to sit in the dark. But because of God’s great love, Ephesians states, we have been given a gift we do not deserve. Brought to life in Christ Jesus, we might live. We must turn away from our discomfort, our feelings of exposure and vulnerability, and go forth to do the work that we have been called to through our baptism. Is there something in your life that makes you prefer the darkness? How can you take away its power by exposing it to the light?



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 15

Life-Giving Word

Jesus' second sign in Galilee, the healing of the official's child, occurs from a distance. Jesus' word provides healing and life to the boy, who is near death. We even hear that the fever left him at the time Jesus spoke. Jesus' word gives new life. We hear in Isaiah the prophecy of the new heavens and the new earth. "No longer shall the sound of weeping be heard there." How is this healing word of Jesus a sign of what is to come? What do you think the coming kingdom will be like? *Today's readings: Isaiah 65:17–21; Psalm 30:2 and 4, 5–6, 11–12a and 13b; John 4:43–54.*

Tuesday, March 16

Take Up Your Mat

Once again, Jesus' word brings healing and life. After encountering the healing word of Jesus, a man who has been ill for many years is able to pick up his mat and walk, with all the possibilities this new life suggests. Jesus' word gives life. It has power. Choose a phrase that Jesus states in Scripture and copy it three times. How is Jesus' word inviting you to new life today? *Today's readings: Ezekiel 47:1–9, 12; Psalm 46:2–3, 5–6, 8–9; John 5:1–16.*

Wednesday, March 17

St. Patrick

St. Patrick was a bishop in Ireland in the fifth century. He was responsible for the peaceful conversion of Ireland to Christianity. Kidnapped and sold into slavery in Ireland, he returned as a missionary to use his knowledge of Irish language and culture to evangelize. Celebrate St. Patrick, patron of Ireland, by living as a loving witness to Jesus, so that others might be brought to Christ through your love. *Today's readings: Isaiah 49:8–15; Psalm 145:8–9, 13cd–14, 17–18; John 5:17–30.*

Thursday, March 18

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

St. Cyril of Jerusalem was a bishop and a Doctor of the Church who lived in the fourth century. He wrote for those who were in the process of becoming Christians and also against heresies that were causing divisions within the Church. St. Cyril was a great catechist. Is there an opportunity for you to teach others about the faith? *Today's readings: Exodus 32:7–14; Psalm 106:19–20, 21–22, 23; John 5:31–47.*

Friday, March 19

St. Joseph

St. Joseph's vocation was one of the most important in history. God speaks to St. Joseph in dreams, but Joseph has no trouble distinguishing God's voice from other voices. He acts in accordance with the words he receives. And in so doing, he protects Mary and Jesus from the forces that wish to harm them. We can surmise that his awareness of God's voice might originate in a lifetime of attentiveness to God's presence and action in his life. In our time, just as in St. Joseph's, other voices vie for our attention and response. Ask St. Joseph to intercede for you, to ask God to help you to listen as he does. Then spend some time listening for God's voice in silent prayer, with Scripture, or in the voice of a trusted friend. *Today's readings: 2 Samuel 7:4–5a, 12–14a, 16; Psalm 89:2–3, 4–5, 27 and 29; Romans 4:13, 16–18, 22; Matthew 1:16, 18–21, 24a or Luke 2:41–51a.*

Saturday, March 20

Who Are You, Jesus?

As Jesus taught about the kingdom of God and did many signs, people who listened were divided about his identity. If Jesus is the messiah, raised from the dead, there is a reason for our hope. The ground of all reality is a love stronger than death. Yet often hope and trust are put in other things, and decisions are based on fear rather than love. How can you reorient your life so that your choices are guided by love, not fear? *Today's readings: Jeremiah 11:18–20; Psalm 7:2–3, 9bc–10, 11–12; John 7:40–53.*



FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT



Transform Us

Loving God,
through all the ages you create new life
and see that it is good.

Having given us all good gifts,
you gave more: you gave yourself,
doing something completely new
from the moment of Mary's yes.

You transform even death, pain,
and suffering.
You transform endings into beginnings,
buried seeds to fruitful plants.
Transform us, help us to follow where
you lead,
that we might live with you forever.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 21, 2021
The Grain of Wheat

Today's readings: Jeremiah 31:31–34; Psalm 51:3–4, 12–13, 14–15; Hebrews 5:7–9; John 12:20–33. After triumphantly entering Jerusalem, Jesus knows that his passion is imminent. He also knows that no one around him expects what is about to occur. Jesus uses the image of a seed to help his friends to understand.

"Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit." Like the seed, Jesus will die. Like the seed, Jesus will bear much fruit, eternal life given to each one of us. His death, when he is "lifted up from the earth" on the cross, "will draw everyone" to him.

When a seed is planted, the seed coat breaks apart as the plant within it begins to grow and develop. The seed itself ceases to exist in a meaningful way. From the beginning, though, the prospect of new life, the germ, was within the seed. Jesus recognized that his life had to be laid down for the potentiality of eternal life to come to fulfillment.

Through Jesus, the germ of eternal life exists in us as well. He tells us that discipleship entails imitating him. We have to let the seed of our current life break apart for the new plant to grow.

Journal about the experience of letting go of your old life in order to nurture the new.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 22

Neither Do I Condemn You

The woman caught in adultery expected to die. Instead, she hears, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin any more.” What must she have felt in that moment, to be forgiven? This same forgiveness is available to us every time we ask for it. God’s mercy is always there, sometimes we just need to celebrate it. Examine your conscience. No one is perfect. Receive the sacrament of reconciliation and you will feel the full force of God’s merciful love. *Today’s readings: Daniel 13:1–9, 15–17, 19–30, 33–62 or 13:41c–62; Psalm 23:1–3a, 3b–4, 5, 6; John 8:1–11.*

Tuesday, March 23

God’s Voice

As Holy Week nears, spend five to ten minutes in silence reflecting on God’s presence and action in your life. When did you hear God’s voice today? When did you feel calm and peaceful? When did you feel that you did not live up to what God was calling you to do? How can you adjust your life to be more open to God’s will? *Today’s readings: Numbers 21:4–9; Psalm 102:2–3, 16–18, 19–21; John 8:21–30.*

Wednesday, March 24

Uncomfortable Truth

God spoke to Abraham and Abraham believed. The trust Abraham had in God, the keeper of promises, sets him apart. Jesus contrasts Abraham’s trust, his belief in the truth, with the reaction Jesus faces as he teaches and preaches. Truth can be uncomfortable. Maybe you have been with a small child who, unburdened with lessons about politeness, describes a situation with embarrassing accuracy. Those situations pass in a moment. The truth to which Jesus testified had the power to discomfort more deeply, but he tells us “the truth will set you free.” What can that mean in your life? *Today’s readings: Daniel 3:14–20, 91–92, 95; Daniel 3:52, 53, 54, 55, 56; John 8:31–42.*

Thursday, March 25

Annunciation of the Lord

A young woman will bear a son and name him Emmanuel, meaning “God is with us.” The words of Isaiah carry us to the house of Mary in Nazareth, where a young girl is addressed as “favored one.” She is troubled, and the angel tells her not to be afraid. The young girl is not afraid. Her words will change history: “May it be done to me according to your word.” From the moment of Mary’s yes, God began to do something completely new in the world. Mary’s vocation is unique, yet her response, her yes, is something we are able to imitate. Pray the Rosary today, and ask for Mary’s intercession that you might be more like her to answer with a brave yes to God’s call. *Today’s Readings: Isaiah 7:10–14, 8:10; Psalm 40:7–8a, 8b–9, 10, 11; Hebrews 10:4–10; Luke 1:26–38.*

Friday, March 26

A New Way

Jesus finds himself in trouble with the authorities again and again because the kingdom of God, which he came to inaugurate, did not adhere to the expectations of the people. Jesus stood with those who lacked power, authority, and status, and in the Beatitudes, he tells us that standing alongside them is standing with him. How can you embrace those on the margins? *Today’s readings: Jeremiah 20:10–13; Psalm 18:2–3a, 3bc–4, 5–6, 7; John 10:31–42.*

Saturday, March 27

God Transforms

Approaching Holy Week, the readings show the plot against Jesus growing stronger. The plot against Jesus was about self-preservation, yet Caiaphas’ words unwittingly testify to what God was doing: “He prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God.” *Today’s Readings: Ezra 37:21–28; Jeremiah 31:10, 11–12abcd, 13; John 11:45–56.*



PALM SUNDAY OF THE LORD'S PASSION



Make Us a Gift

Father,
through the gift of your Son,
you have continued the work begun
at creation,

drawing all you have made to yourself,
redeeming the world,
bringing all into the light of your love
through your own self gift.

Help us to enter into the mysteries of these
holy days.

Give us the strength to follow where
the Shepherd leads,
embracing our cross,
relinquishing all that is not love,
offering all we have received back to you,
that we might participate in the world's
re-creation.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, March 28, 2021
Seeing Ourselves in the Story

Today's readings: Procession: Mark 11:1–10 or John 12:12–16; Mass: Isaiah 50:4–7; Psalm 22:8–9, 17–18, 19–20, 23–24; Philemon 2:6–11; Mark 14:1–15:47. As Holy Week begins, we herald Jesus as he triumphantly enters Jerusalem. We cry, “Hosanna!” The excitement of his coming reaches us across time and space. Jesus is the one for whom Israel has been waiting. He will bring about the longed-for kingdom of justice and peace.

From jubilant welcome, the mood shifts quickly, and before long the crowd shouts again, this time not “Hosanna,” but “Crucify him!”

One way that we can reflect upon the events of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection is to imagine ourselves in the

story. If you were part of the crowd, what might have made you excited about Jesus as he entered? What might you have felt as public opinion changed, and people became fearful of him? Are you one of the disciples? How do you feel in the garden as Jesus prays? What is it like when he is arrested? Another perspective you might take is that of the women. They had come with Jesus to Jerusalem and were witnesses to all that had happened. What would it be like to see the passion through their eyes?

Entering into Holy Week, make space for silence, prayer, and reflection. Prepare yourself to celebrate the greatest of all mysteries, the moment that redeemed all of history: the resurrection.



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, March 29

Perfumed Oil

Jesus uses Mary's actions, anointing his feet, to again discuss his burial; like the grain of wheat, his death will bring about much fruit. Everything in Jesus' life at this time is pointing toward the laying down of his life. Look online for paintings of Mary anointing Jesus' feet and use them to enrich your reflection today. *Today's readings: Isaiah 42:1–7; Psalm 27:1, 2, 3, 13–14; John 12:1–11.*

Tuesday, March 30

Light to the Nations

In Isaiah we hear about the servant whose role is to restore Israel and be a light to the nations. This was the great hope of the people. Even those closest to the one we recognize as that servant reject him. Judas begins the work of his betrayal, and Jesus predicts Peter's denial. Because he was fully human, Jesus knew the sting of rejection. He models the kingdom of peace and justice that he inaugurates. *Today's readings: Isaiah 49:1–6; Psalm 71:1–2, 3–4a, 5ab–6ab, 15 and 17; John 13:21–33, 36–38.*

Wednesday, March 31

Betrayed

Jesus knew Judas would betray him but did not seek to protect himself. Isaiah's servant gives his back to those who beat him and his cheeks to those who pluck his beard, trusting that God will vindicate him. Throughout the passion, Jesus accepts what is coming because of this same trust. The evil and injustice in the world are disturbing. Jesus recognizes the brokenness and does not struggle against those who hurt him. But the entirety of his life is bringing about the kingdom of justice and peace, doing the work that will heal the world of its brokenness. How can we follow in this path? *Today's readings: Isaiah 50:4–9a; Psalm 69:8–10, 21–22, 31 and 33–34; Matthew 26:14–25.*

Thursday, April 1

I Have Given You a Model to Follow

Time and again, Jesus upended the expectations of the people around him. "You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am," he says. Those words convey power and authority. What does the master and teacher do? He empties himself of all that the world values. At the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the priest washes feet. If you do not usually attend this Mass, try to do so. The beauty of this moment strikes even young children. *Today's readings: Exodus 12:1–8, 11–14; Psalm 116:12–13, 15–16bc, 17–18; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; John 13:1–15.*

Friday, April 2

By His Wounds We Were Healed

Because Jesus was fully human, he knew all aspects of the human experience, including rejection, suffering, and death. If we jump from this moment to the resurrection, we fail to appreciate that Jesus is with us in our darkest times, waiting with us while we hope in God's ability to transform even those moments. Take time in quiet prayer, reflecting on the cross and Jesus' merciful love. *Today's readings: Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Psalm 31:2, 6, 12–13, 15–16, 17, 25; Hebrews 4:14–16, 5:7–9; John 18:1–19:42.*

Saturday, April 3

At the Easter Vigil, the readings take us through salvation history, from creation to the discovery of the empty tomb. We see how God prepared the world for its redemption. *Today's readings: Genesis 1:1–2:2; Psalm 104:1–2, 5–6, 10, 12, 13–14, 24, 35 or Psalm 33:4–5, 6–7, 12–13, 20–22; Genesis 22:1–18; Psalm 16:5, 8, 9–10, 11; Exodus 14:15–15:1; Exodus 15:1–2, 3–4, 5–6, 17–18; Isaiah 54:5–14; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5–6, 11–12, 13; Isaiah 55:1–11; Isaiah 12:2–3, 4, 5–6; Baruch 3:9–15, 32–4:4; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 11; Ezra 36:16–17a, 18–28; Psalm 42:3, 5; 43:3, 4 or Isaiah 12:2–3, 4bcd, 5–6 or Psalm 51:12–13, 14–15, 18–19; Romans 6:3–11; Psalm 118:1–2, 16–17, 22–23; Mark 16:1–7.*

