

LENTEN
REFLECTIONS
2012

Celebrate LENT

with the Catholic Student Center



Ash Wednesday- February 22

12:10- 12:45 p.m. Ecumenical Ashes Services, CSC Chapel
12:05 p.m. Mass, Medical Campus, College of Pharmacy Student Center
5:30 p.m. Mass, CSC Chapel

Weekly Events

SUNDAY

Mass, 11:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., CSC

MONDAY

Mass, 12:10 p.m., Medical School Campus
Men's Undergrad/Grad Bible Study, 7:30 p.m.

TUESDAY

Mass, 5:15 p.m., CSC and free soup dinner (except 3/13)

WEDNESDAY

Bears Den Dinners, 6:00 p.m. in Bear's Den
Adoration/Holy Hour, 8:00-9:00p.m. at the CSC (except 3/14)

FRIDAY

Mass, 12:05 p.m., CSC and free soup lunch (except 3/16)
Fish Fry Tour (Cod Squad). Different fish fry every Friday. See weekly email for locations
(Confession - 15 minutes before weekday Masses or by appointment)

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday, April 1: 11:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. Mass beginning outside on CSC Patio
Holy Thursday, April 5: Mass 7:00 p.m., CSC Chapel
Good Friday, April 6: Service 7:00 p.m., CSC Chapel
Easter Vigil, April 7: Mass 7:30 p.m., CSC Chapel
Easter Sunday, April 8: Mass 9:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m., Graham Chapel

*Check the CSC website www.washucsc.org, weekly email and bulletin for updated information on events and locations.

Special Events

Feb. 24-26: Deepening Retreat for Grad Students and Young Adults

March 21: 2:00 p.m.-12:00 a.m.: Confession Marathon, CSC

*Confessions also available 15 minutes before weekday Masses and by appointment

March 28: 7pm Yoga Stations of the Cross, CSC

March 30: 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m. CSU Fish Fry, CSC Basement

March 18-24: Week of Guided Prayer, anyone is welcome to attend

April 5: 10 a.m., Holy Thursday Chrism Mass, Cathedral Basilica

CLC's (Christian Life Communities) will be starting at the beginning of Lent. It is a five-week program focused on the ideals of community, spirituality and service. Each participant will be in a group of 5-7 other participants and meet once a week for an hour to discuss a topic of faith related to Lent. For more information, contact Mark Levand (levand@washucsc.org) or Troy Woytek (woytek@washucsc.org)

During Lent we are encouraged to fast, pray, and give alms. In solidarity with the poor our community participates in Operation Rice Bowl as a way of praying for the poor, fasting in solidarity with the poor, and giving of our abundance to the poor. We encourage you to take a Rice Bowl from the CSC this Lent and journey with the poor. We ask that you kindly return it to the CSC at the end of Lent so that your contributions will be given to those who need it most through the assistance of Catholic Relief Services.

Online Resources

Readings Online:

www.usccb.org/nab/index.htm

St. Louis University Center for Liturgy:

www.liturgy.slu.edu

Creighton University Spirituality Resources:

www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/online

Archdiocese of St. Louis Prayer Resources:

www.archstl.org/links

Good Ground Press:

www.goodgroundpress.com

Bread on the Waters - Meditations & Stations of the Cross:

www.cptryon.org/prayer/season/index.html

Sacred Space - Daily Prayer Online - in a number of languages:

<http://sacredspace.ie/>

A Note From Father Gary

What do university students think about God and life and love and work? When they read God's Word, where do they hear it connect with their lives? How do they challenge themselves and us in this early 21st century?

These unedited reflections are entirely theirs. We offer them to you in the hopes that their reflections on these ancient texts will bring them alive for you and help you discover how 'forever young' these old words are. And show you that the young church has so much to teach to all the generations if we let ourselves listen.

God bless you all for taking Lent seriously this year.



A Note From The Catholic Student Union

Dear Reader,

Lent is seen as a season of sacrifices. Jesus died for our transgressions and we give up something important to us in the attempt to better ourselves. But what if this Lenten season we looked at these forty days as the greatest gift we have ever received. A time where we can focus everyday on the family and friends we are surrounded with and the blessings that inundate our life.

We invite you to share in the blessings of our community in the form of this Lenten Reflection Book. This book contains the readings for Lent accompanied by daily reflections written by, mostly undergraduate, members of the Catholic Student Center. The gift the authors' have given us is truly priceless. They have chosen to share their personal wisdom, struggles and love.

Thank you to the staff at the Catholic Student Center and the Wash U Student Union. Your contributions have made this book possible.

We hope the reflections in the book with help guide you through this Lenten season. And bring you closer to God's undeniable love that can be seen on every face of this community and world.

Peace and Prayers,
Catholic Student Union

Wednesday, February 22 ASH WEDNESDAY

Joel 2: 12-18
Psalm 51: 3-6a, 12-14, 17
2 Corinthians 5: 20-6: 2
Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-18

Starting medical school this year, my perspective on Ash Wednesday has shifted focus toward the gift of those who decided to donate their bodies for us to dissect in anatomy lab. These cadavers are nameless when we receive them. Their faces are covered, their heads shaved, and all we know are their dates of birth/death and the cause of death. These anonymous gifts, literally of one's entire body, are lying covered and preserved for us to learn from. By removing the cadavers' identities, the gift becomes even more Christ-like, even more an example of the types of service and sacrifice the Lenten season calls us to embrace.

Once we are finished dissecting the cadavers, once we have seen, identified, and touched every last organ, the cadavers are cremated and their ashes are spread over a wooded area in the countryside owned by WashU. These nameless gifts are returned to ashes, their cycle is complete. Look into the mirror at the cross of ashes on your forehead. This is a symbol of Jesus's suffering and sacrifice, as well as a symbol of our own mortality. The palms that are now ashes on your forehead mark the passage of Jesus into Jerusalem, the closing of His journey. The cadavers that are now ashes in the Missouri countryside mark my entry into the medical community, the beginning of my professional journey.

Let this Lenten season be one of humble sacrifice, nameless almsgiving, and human integration. May the ashes we bear represent the closing of past sins and the beginning of new hopes.

Austin Wesevich
WU Class of 2011

Thursday, February 23

Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

Psalm 1: 1-4, 6

Luke 9: 22-25

It's not every day we come to a crossroads in our lives, like the Israelites do in today's first reading. They're at the end of their long journey, about to cross the River Jordan. Here at the edge of the Promised Land, Moses asks the Israelites to make the ultimate choice: Good or Evil? How will they live in the land they've traveled so far to enter? Will they follow the Lord's commandments or do whatever they want? Moses phrases this question in more immediate terms, telling the Israelites to choose between life and death. Following the Lord will lead them to blessing, but turning away will leave them cursed. It's pretty clear what Moses recommends.

Jesus asks us to make a similar choice in the gospel. "If anyone wishes to follow me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." On paper like this, it's easy to tell which is the right decision. Between life and death, the obvious choice is life, good. But it's rarely so simple to make that choice every day. (How many times have you not chosen life today?) Jesus picks up on this complexity in the gospel. In trying to save your own life, you lose it, but if you lose your life for His sake, you save your own life. Living is tricky business, and what looks like life in one way might actually be death in another way, and vice versa. Even when we do know the right thing to do, it's often the hardest course of action to follow.

So what does it really mean to take up your cross? What does that look like in your life today? Maybe it's choosing to forgive, to let go of some anger and resentment. Maybe it's trying to stop envying others and love yourself as you are. Maybe it's reaching out to a lonely or needy person. Whatever the specific options are for you, everyday is full of little decisions between life and death. Maybe we encounter more crossroads than we think. Every moment can be a chance to take a step towards the Promised Land to live as God's own. This is the best part: no matter how many times we have not chosen life, God always loves us and gives us more chances to follow Jesus, crosses in tow.

Ellie Kincaid
WU Class of 2014

Friday, February 24

Isaiah 58: 1-9a

Psalms 51: 3-6a, 18-19

Matthew 9: 14-15

"A heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn."

Just as we fast, we audaciously feast on the gratifying morsels of selfishness and pride. Our allowances, attempting (in vain) to reconcile our self-denial, negate our sacrifice. We amplify our quivers and furrowed brows to a deafening murmur, echoing our martyrdom. No saints are we, though you would recognize us as such from the hair-shirts and ashes we flaunt. I do not aim to admonish, but to engender reflective introspection. Though perhaps more biting, I promise it is the less cruel of the two.

Despite our many failings, we are ultimately called to humility in our sacrifice. We should choose to resemble the one kneeling in the silent chapel, smiling at your entrance for the sake of your soul, but remaining concealed in the darkness for the sake of his own. Not that a humble spirit is equivalent to covert piety, but the wise are wary of pride's slippery persistence. In this spirit, remember always that we are redeemed, not in happiness, but in His death. We attempt impossible justice through our own love and Brotherhood through our self-denial. The purpose of sacrifice is not reward, but the purging of selfishness in our hearts.

However, isolated devotion alone is insufficient. We must embody the Works of Mercy, earnestly aiding our brothers and sisters in need, both physically and spiritually. We should seek justice in this world, remembering that our blessed circumstances are bestowed upon us for His glory.

This Lent, I ask that you be ambitious. Deprivation from sweets and Facebook are no crown of thorns, despite how hard they may be to give up on a daily basis. Experience the healing of reconciliation. Erase the atrocities scrawled on your soul, and fill in those deeply etched. Consider your fear and embarrassment a sacrifice, allowing participation in Christ's gift. It is perhaps the most honest Lenten resolution. May we grieve the imminent departure of the bridegroom, bearing in mind the purpose of his Passion.

Anonymous

Day of Abstinence

Saturday, February 25

Isaiah 58: 9b-14

Psalm 86: 1-6

Luke 5: 27-32

Jesus calls us to follow Him. The Bible makes this much very clear. Going to Mass on Sundays, saying our prayers, and believing in Jesus as the Messiah are not enough to be good Catholics. While these things provide a good start and can draw us closer to God, Jesus ultimately calls us to love one another. Loving your friends and family is one thing, but it is an entirely different thing to “bestow bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted,” as Isaiah 58:10 attests.

When we do good deeds for others, I truly hope that we do these deeds out of the kindness of our hearts and not solely because we think that’s what pleases God. From my experience at the CSC, this community understands that. I have experienced more genuine love through my interactions with the staff, students, and community members of the CSC than practically anywhere else in my life. I do, however, challenge each of you, myself included, to go out of your way this Lent to do something for someone in need, whether that means volunteering at a soup kitchen, shoveling the driveway of an elderly neighbor (if winter ever arrives), or donating your time and talents at the CSC.

Isaiah 58 states that the Lord will reward those who do His will. Now, I don’t think He means that you will be rewarded with wealth and possessions, or even with good grades or a promotion. I believe He means you will be rewarded with love and a life filled with joy. Obviously, life still will have its disappointments and we each have our shortfalls, but those who put others’ needs before their own are often happier than those who focus on just themselves.

And if life’s disappointments and our own flaws ever seem too great to reconcile, remember that you are loved. You do not have to earn this love. God loves you unconditionally, and you are already more than enough. If ever you still have doubts about this and don’t feel worthy of God’s love, try to recall Luke 5. Jesus came into this world not to call the righteous to follow Him, but to call sinners like you and me.

Matt Kruger
WU Class of 2010

Sunday, February 26 FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Genesis 9: 8-15

Psalm 25: 4-9

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1: 12-15

In Mark's gospel, the author tells us that Jesus "was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan." We accept this of part of Jesus' journey simply because we've grown accustomed to hearing it. When we hear the story of Jesus' temptation, we tend to focus on the end result: the fact that Jesus did not sin. But what is the context of temptation? What happens before we are tested? What happens after?

Just before Jesus is sent into the desert John baptizes him. You remember the scene. During that baptism, "heaven was torn open and the Spirit descended on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well-pleased." Then verse 12 thunders in: "At once, the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness."

Wait, the Spirit? The same Spirit that just bathed him in holy light and expressed God's approval? Are we to understand that temptation *follows* reassurance? This goes against our deeply ingrained desire to self-justify. Don't we get the spotlight moment *after* we've conquered temptation? Does God not voice his approval *after* we have done something of note? Apparently not.

And what of life after temptation? What happens after we have trudged: thirsty, fatigued, through an unending desert?

In Mark's gospel, it's this: "Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near."

Isn't it clear? Vocation follows temptation. Something happened in the desert: something purifying, something transforming. The desert solidified the reality of the Spirit's blessing. With his identity fused and hardened, Christ begins the work he was given to do.

Blessing. Temptation. Vocation. It's an unusual but compelling order. Perhaps what is waiting for us at the end of this desert is a renewed sense of self and purpose.

Meghan Clark

Monday, February 27

Leviticus 19: 1-2, 11-18

Psalm 19: 8-10, 15

Matthew 25: 31-46

Anyone who knows me knows that if you ask me how my day was, you better be prepared to listen. I'll usually start in the morning, maybe with what time I woke up, what I had for breakfast, whether it was easy or hard to roll out of bed. Then I'll proceed with a play-by-play of what I did, or what I was thinking about, or who I met. I say all this because I believe that everything is interconnected, that you can never really understand something without considering its context, examining what led up to that event, what your frame of mind was when it happened. It's a habit that can be exasperating for my friends and myself since I can quickly tell when I am boring someone.

That type of reflection, though, can bring a lot of clarity and intentionality to our lives. There are so many things that I do on a daily basis that I don't realize until I stop and think about it, which probably happens less often than it should. So when I read the gospel today, I was faced with a few questions: Did I give the hungry food? Did I *deny* the hungry food? I don't even know... Did I even see anybody today that was thirsty? Who do I know that's sick? Where is there a prison in my city?

In the gospel, it is possible that both the righteous and unrighteous are surprised because they didn't even think about what they were doing. What did you do today? Honestly, how did you spend your time? Who did you share a meal with, or choose not to share a meal with? Who did you send a friendly text message to? Whose eyes did you avoid on the sidewalk? Did you share today? Did you receive today?

These are reflections I neglect because I am constantly busy or distracted. My challenge, therefore, is a reflection similar to the examen that St. Ignatius teaches: Tomorrow morning, prepare the offering of the day, just as the priests did in Leviticus, by taking 5 or 10 minutes in the morning in quiet meditation. Just listen and breathe. Then at lunch, consider what you did and who you met that morning. Don't try to actively change anything. Rather, simply be acutely aware of what is going on around you, the people that pass by, those that need help, those that are clearly self-sufficient. See how you fit in, how you are altering and being altered by the day. And again before you go to bed, consider the day. The goal is awareness, not immediate change.

I pray that as we move through the day, we learn to see Jesus' face and hear Jesus' call. I pray that we are aware. I pray that the hungry, the thirsty, the sick, and the imprisoned are revealed to us today.

Gregg Kennedy
WU Class of 2009

Tuesday, February 28

Isaiah 55: 10-11

Psalms 34: 4-7, 16-19

Matthew 6: 7-15

One of my favorite words in the Our Father is “trespasses.” Not for its semantic meaning, but for the sound the “s” makes when the entire congregation says it in unison. That syllable hanging in the air embodies the connection of a people united in prayer and belief.

I’m not dismissing the importance of the content; I’m just proposing that the Our Father’s importance doesn’t end with its content.

Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

I really like that line. It frees me from having to un-jumble the emotions in my brain, or somehow put words to that pit in the bottom of my stomach. I can just pray the Our Father and let the sound wash over me. In the rhythm of the well-worn prayer, I find connection to the countless number of people who have recited those words before me, who are reciting those words with me now, and the God who is listening to the prayer I don’t even have to speak.

Reilly Ellis
WU Class of 2013

Wednesday, February 29

Jonah 3: 1-10

Psalm 51: 3-4, 12-13, 18-19

Luke 11: 29-32

Today's readings focus on the story of Jonah. God called Jonah to go and visit the Gentiles and to preach the message of repentance. In these forty days of Lent, we too are called to reflection and repentance.

"For I know my transgression, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge".

We all make mistakes. Every day we break our promises to God, our promises to live a full life, following the Commandments. As Catholics, we are called to live according to God's word. When we sin, we hurt not only ourselves and others, but we ultimately hurt God by turning away from the life He calls us to lead. This is the life in which we will find the greatest joy, the life that will be the most life-giving and call us closer to God's kingdom. In what ways are you living the life God calls us to? In what ways might you need to change your habits in order to live closer to God's call?

"Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant to me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you".

Do you ever feel stagnant in your faith, as though you are just going through the motions? Do you feel that your life has drifted too far from the one God calls you to lead? God wants you to be closer to Him and to experience His full and complete life. If you ask, God will restore your joy, in whatever form that may be missing. And then your joy will touch others and become a catalyst for God's love. Don't be afraid to share your story with others.

"In your good pleasure make Zion prosper; build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then there will be righteous sacrifices, whole burnt offerings to delight you; then bulls will be offered on your altar".

God is there waiting for you, whenever you are ready to turn to Him. And once you make the turn, there will be a relationship built upon mutual giving. Don't forget to thank God for His presence in your life. Your faith is a gift.

Julie Kennedy
WU Class of 2012

Thursday, March 1

Esther C: 12, 14-16, 23-25

Psalm 138: 1-3, 7c-8

Matthew 7: 7-12

To me, the room held an exciting array of inflatables: slides, obstacle courses, moon bounces. To the dozen kids with me, it was a breathtaking, unbelievable bounty. Tanya¹ shouted, "It's a miracle!" I smiled at her unbounded joy, and felt pretty enthusiastic myself as I kicked off my shoes and joined the kids in the business of jumping. I was running a camp for homeless kids as part of a yearlong volunteer program, and a free bounce session had been generously donated to us. Kids raced down the slides; and rested among the inflated tubes in the middle of an obstacle course. Alec found the microphone and used it to belt out song lyrics. I joined Miguel, who was jumping in a moon bounce with basketball hoops, and we played 1-on-1. Pausing, he breathlessly announced, "Ms. Jenny, *this* is my dream." I'm not exactly sure what he was referencing (it was his dream to play basketball with me in a moon bounce?), but I understood the essence of his sentiment perfectly. Miguel later ran over to the microphone, and announced at full volume, "I have the best life".

I was surrounded by roomful of kids who were among the 1 in 50 children in America to experience homelessness. Many of these children came from households that abused substances, some had witnessed domestic violence, all currently lacked the stability of a permanent address. And yet, for an afternoon, kids were kids. Joy abounded. Love was tangibly present.

In the face of poverty, of social injustice, of violence, of famine, (and the list goes on...), God's words in Matthew challenge me. "Ask and it will be given to you"? "How much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him"? How can injustice coexist with a loving, and generous God? For me, there are no easy answers, no platitude that softens the bite of this question. But in the book, *Take this Bread*, Sara Miles suggests that "Christianity doesn't promise to solve or erase suffering but to transform it, pledging that by loving one another, even through pain, we will find more life." We don't look for the Kingdom of God by looking for the absence of suffering – we see the coming of the Kingdom of God evidenced in the transformation of suffering, in the love that exists in spite of and even because of suffering. It's the fulfillment of the Esther's petition, "Turn our mourning into gladness and our sorrows into wholeness" – not erasing but transforming. It's a harder reality to accept than God waving a magic wand over the world, but it's also a more grace-filled one.

"It's a miracle!" Tanya shouted when we entered. And it was.

Jenny Heil

¹ Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of all the children in this story.

Friday, March 2

Ezekiel 18: 21-28

Psalm 130: 1-8

Matthew 5: 20-26

"Go first and be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift."

Truth: I don't handle conflict well. I actually tend to avoid it at all costs. As a result, my default response to almost any argument is simply to find a quick fix, jump right to the apology/forgiveness portion of the argument if you will, and assume that the underlying issues will somehow work themselves out with time. I don't think this is necessarily always a bad thing. There are plenty of times that opting for a quick "I'm sorry" instead of saying what I was really thinking have prevented me from saying things I know I would have instantly regretted. But I also don't think that this is the kind of reconciliation that today's gospel is talking about.

It has been said that the best gift you can give is that of yourself. I'm working on becoming fully reconciled with all those around me because it is only then that I am truly able to give my best and most loving self to others.

During this Lenten season, there are many ways that you can work on becoming your best and most loving self - what's yours?

Kaitlin Fink
WU Class of 2012
Day of Abstinence

Saturday, March 3

St. Katherine Drexel

Deuteronomy 26:16-19

Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 7-8

Matthew 5:43-48

I sometimes feel overwhelmed trying to remember all the “statutes and decrees” the Bible lists for us to follow, especially those in the Old Testament. We’re taught over and over again, “*Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!*” But it can be hard when you can’t keep them all straight. Jesus’ message in the Gospel helps those of us with poor memories by simply telling us to not only love your neighbors, but to also love your enemies.

We’ve heard this message so many times, I feel like it plays in the back of our heads whenever we encounter someone we particularly dislike, or someone who is rather mean and disrespectful. So perhaps we don’t need to be reminded again to “love your enemy.” Instead, maybe we should consider loving people in those times they *act* (intentionally or not) like our enemy. Instead of focusing on an enemy, focus on times of enmity.

Blessed are they who observe his decrees, who seek him with all their heart.

And truly blessed are you who holds back the biting retort to your mother who nagged you one time too many. Blessed are you who refrain from yelling at drivers who cut you off, or go 10 miles below the speed limit, making you late. And blessed are you who respect your professors, even if they may put you to sleep, insult your political or religious views, or are just simply subpar teachers.

While the gallant acts of loving your enemies that get news coverage are truly wonderful, I would say the little deeds of loving those who act like your enemy can count just as much, especially in the eyes of the Lord. As we’re reminded: *Provided you keep all his commandments, he will then raise you high in praise and renown and glory above all.*

Isn’t that worth it?

Alex Haserodt
WU Class of 2013

Sunday, March 4
2ND SUNDAY OF LENT

Genesis 22: 1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Psalm 116: 10, 15-19

Romans 8: 31b-34

Mark 9: 2-10

The readings today discuss the idea of having trust in God and why. Sometimes it is hard to have faith in God's plan for us, and the readings today give us the strength to continue on God's path.

In the Genesis reading, God asks Abraham to put God before anything else by asking him to kill his only son as a sacrifice for God. When Abraham agrees to God's requests and readies himself to sacrifice his son, God sees Abraham's faithfulness and spares him the agony of killing his son. God then rewards Abraham and all his descendants. This reading shows us that while God may ask tough things of us, things we may feel are impossible to accomplish, He has our best interest at heart and if we follow God's lead, we will be rewarded. The Psalm has a similar message. In the Psalm, a line that stands out is: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" We have to trust that God is for us, that He would do anything for us and will always lead us in the right direction.

The Gospel shows us what we can achieve if we follow God's path for us. In the Gospel, Jesus is transfigured on the mountain while Peter, James, and John watch in awe. Then when Elijah and Moses appear too, the three disciples don't know what to do. In this passage, God is showing us what kinds of people we can become if we follow His ways. While we may not know where we are going, God has a plan in store for us much greater than our wildest imagination. All we have to do is follow Him and His word, and despite how hard that may seem, the reward is something much greater.

Questions to Think About:

What is something God is asking you to do that seems too hard to do?

How would it feel to not do something for God because it seemed too hard?

When have you done something you felt was too much, and how did it feel after you accomplished your task?

How can you rely on God to help you follow God's plan? Remember, He is there to support you, not abandon you.

Kathleen Szabo

WU Class of 2015

Monday, March 5

Daniel 9: 4b-10
Psalm 79: 8-9, 11, 13
Luke 6: 36-38

These words in the first two readings call to mind the great love that our Father has for each of us, and how much we displease Him despite all the blessings and graces bestowed upon us. Because we are so blessed by the Lord, we forget the abundance of gifts we have received and take many things for granted, things we don't even think about, and sometimes even sin against Him. The ability to walk, to see, and to hear are probably gifts that don't cross our mind often. I can close my door to a room that I can call my own for the night, and arise in the morning to another blessed day. Daniel speaks truly when he says that we have behaved shamefully, especially for the times we have complained, the times we have misused our gifts, the times we are doubtful of the Lord's care for us. It seems we are never convinced of the true depth of God's love, and yet we are also never abandoned. We are forgiven and blessed not because we deserve to remain the children of God, but because He wishes us to be so in order to enjoy true happiness. Therefore, we should strive to keep gratitude a key part of our relationship with the Lord, for although we cannot fully appreciate His generous bestowments upon us, He is looking out for us more than we can imagine.

The message in Luke appears straightforward and simple to understand, but underneath the words are some sparks to intriguing thought about mercy, judgment, and compassion. Be merciful, do not judge others, and expect only what you give. Yes, simple enough. But why, and to what end? Well, if I witness a theft, does that grant me the authority to proclaim the thief as an evil person? Of course not, I have not been assigned the responsibility to judge others, and as matter of fact have no right to do so. I too have sinned; I too could well be the subject of my own judging. I am an equal human being, created by God and thus reliant on His immaculate judgment. Only He can allot the proper judgments for only He has seen all the parts of each of our personal stories. How can I expect mercy when I have given none? Would that be just? But, we still receive far more than we have merited. God wishes for us to forgive instead, to have compassion for others, even if it means ignoring past wrongs done to you, accepting humiliation, and sacrificing worldliness. It can be an arduous path to trod and a steep slope to climb. But at the end of a very difficult path, you can be sure there is also a very large reward.

George Rizk
WU Class of 2015

Tuesday, March 6

Isaiah 1: 10, 16-20

Psalm 50: 8-9, 16bc-17, 21, 23

Matthew 23: 1-12

"The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted"

We often hear these paradoxical phrases in many Gospel readings. Due to their prevalence in Gospel stories, it's easy for us to brush on over them as just another biblical proverb. How often have you actually stopped to think on seemingly simple lines such as these? Furthermore, how many times have you thought seriously about *why* God is saying these things to us? In these readings today God is clearly calling us to be responsible and accountable for our actions but why?

As Catholics, we're all about God's unconditional love for us and His unbounded powers of forgiveness. In fact, this is one of the easiest images of God for people to get caught up in, and one, I'd argue, that adolescents of today are particularly fond of. Who wouldn't want to believe in a chill God? So why all this talk about accountability; God will forgive us for the times we mess up, so why stress about getting things right all the time?

Booker T. Washington is quoted as saying "Few things help an individual more than to place responsibility upon him, and to let him know that you trust him." Mr. Washington's words cut right to the thick of these readings; it is because of God's great love for us that He calls us to be responsible for our actions and ourselves. I like to look at the Bible as God's Guide to Living a Practical and Wholly Happy Life. Lesson #52: Very few things in life that are of true and lasting value are easy to obtain or come by, so don't be afraid to do a little extra hard work. Realistically, we only have a limited number of days here on earth, so why not spend those days dedicating our energies toward cultivating ourselves and the characteristics that will stick with us, benefit us, and benefit others all in one fell swoop! God has given us so much in that He has made us a people with an unlimited store of built in character-wealth. He's entrusted us with this, and set before us life as an opportunity to take responsibility for this gift, and in turn, to reap the boundless rewards of its cultivation. So what I feel that God is telling us today is, "Go, be human." But not human in the sense that it's all alright to make mistakes, to be imperfect, to have fault be a defining feature of our imperfect humanity, to settle for mediocrity. But to be human in the sense of our stronger defining quality built into the core of our beings: Our ability, and our responsibility, to make our human mistakes, fall down, and then do the hard work that it takes to be that reflection of Christ and *get back up*.

Kayla Piorowski

WU Class of 2015

Wednesday, March 7

Sts. Perpetua & Felicity

Jeremiah 18: 18-20

Psalm 31: 5-6, 14-16

Matthew 20: 17-28

“And so, let us destroy him by his own tongue; let us carefully note his every word.”

My first thought when I read this passage from the book of Jeremiah was, “Whoa; these are some bad dudes he’s dealing with.” I mean, these guys are really brilliant – really evil, too, but brilliantly so. They know that in the end, the truth wins out, so a lie – while it can do damage and cause a great deal of hurt – it can also be defeated. You can’t, however, fight the truth – it’s just the trump card in the game of life.

It really boils down to the saying, “You are your own worst enemy.” Don’t be your own enemy. Catch hurtful or offensive thoughts before they become words. So your enemies are forced to blow smoke to hurt you, rather than just lighting a match on the fire you built.

Things to think about: When was the last time I said something that others could use to destroy me? Is there something I can do, either with actions and/or words, to demonstrate my remorse? Are there any particular situations or groups that cause me to act or react in a negative or self-destructive way? If so, how can I do a better job of avoiding such situations or groups?

Prayer: Lord, help me to guard my heart, mind and lips from sinful, hurtful and offensive thoughts that empower my enemies to hurt me. Grant me the strength and wisdom to avoid situations or groups that inspire such thoughts and words, and the grace to ask forgiveness from You and from others when I falter. Amen.

Theresa Schmidt
2012 CSC Intern-in-Service

Thursday, March 8

St. John of God

Jeremiah 17: 5-10

Psalm 1: 1-4, 6

Luke 16: 19-31

It is easy in times of need to turn to the Lord for help. It is easy when we are the most desperate to turn to the Lord. It is easy when our whole world has been turned upside down, and we no longer have all the same comforts, to turn to the Lord for help. It is easy to beg and plead for help and to "have faith" in the Lord when we are at the most desperate times in our life. But what is not easy is to have faith when times are good. It is not easy to have faith when times are rough and it seems there is no bright future ahead.

Why is it so hard to keep faith when times are good, when we are so comfortable that we have to face no hardships and do not see any wrongdoing in our own life? Is it that we forget? Do we have no use for the Lord during these times?

It is not easy to remember that happiness comes in different forms. One is cheap, flashy, and fickle, while the other form of happiness is not as obvious to others. The other form of happiness has origins that may seem mysterious to some, but this is the most reliable happiness with rewards that last an eternity. This comes through faith in the Lord and practicing the way of Christ.

The future, although bleak at times, will always be brighter if we trust in the Lord. Would you be willing to help someone who only appears when they need help but ignores you completely when times are good for them?

Have faith.

Enjoy a deeper happiness.

Anonymous

Friday, March 9

St. Frances of Rome

Genesis 37: 3-4, 12-13a, 17b-28

Psalms 105: 16-21

Matthew 21: 33-43, 45-46

Growing up, my only understanding of Lent was “that time of year when they send home Operation Rice Bowl from CCD, and some grown-ups give up chocolate.” It wasn’t until Mrs. O’Brien’s religion class in 8th grade that I began to learn about the true meaning of Lent. Mrs. O’Brien challenged us not only to give up something bad for Lent, but also to do something good every day that would bring us closer to God. Today’s readings remind me of that call.

At the end of the Parable of the Tenants, Jesus tells the Pharisees, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that will produce its fruit.” The first time I read this verse, it felt almost like a threat: don’t be like the Pharisees! However, as I spent some time thinking about the verse, it began to feel less like a threat and more like an invitation. We are all invited to be the ones who inherit the Kingdom of God and produce its fruit. Even Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his own brothers, eventually became “lord over his household, ruler over all his possessions.” So, instead of thinking about how *not* to be like the Pharisees, what if we consider how we *can* be like Joseph, the one who received the kingdom?

There are so many little things we can do every day during Lent that bring us closer to God. It could be setting a few minutes aside for quiet prayer, giving someone a genuine compliment, or spending time outside appreciating nature. What positive action can you add to your daily life this Lent? Whether you started this action on Ash Wednesday or you’re just starting it now, think about how it is strengthening your relationship with God and preparing you for Easter.

Lizzie White
WU Class of 2013

Day of Abstinence

Saturday, March 10

Micah 7: 14-15, 18-20

Psalm 103: 1-4, 9-12

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

The passages for today carry a message of forgiveness. More importantly God's forgiveness for us. He doesn't care what we do, as long as we truly show contrition, He will forgive us. It's really easy to forget this and refuse to forgive ourselves, even when God will forgive us. And in our struggle to be more like God in our own lives, forgiving others who are truly sorry is sometimes the most difficult task presented to us. But even as we learn to forgive others, we must also learn not to be jealous of others who are forgiven. In the parable in the Gospel, all three characters have a lesson to give. The son who squandered his wealth comes back to his father, and professes his apology, teaching us that in order to be forgiven, we must both be truly sorry for our actions and also be willing to articulate such to the person we have sinned against. The father teaches us to accept an apology thus presented, and welcome the person as if there were no sin committed. The elder son teaches us an important lesson as well. God forgives those who sin and are sorry. But those who do not sin feel God's love that much more as they live their lives according to His will. He forgives those who sin, but not sinning in the first place leads to a happier life in general. All in all, it's ok to mess up. It's part of life, and God will forgive us, just as we should strive to forgive others mistakes that hurt us. But that isn't an excuse to mess up, because even though everyone can be happy after forgiveness is given, the process can be painful.

Tom Arnold
WU Class of 2013



Sunday, March 11
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

Exodus 20: 1-17 or 20: 1-3, 7-8, 12-17

Psalms: 19: 8-11

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

John 2: 13-15

These passages are all very short but incredibly impactful. They start with the Ten Commandments, laying down the laws for faith. Most Catholics grow up knowing these commandments, having had them said over and over in grade school or religion classes. When I read them again I was still deeply impacted. Knowing these are the words of God made me feel small. The readings this week have an overarching theme of the wisdom of God. He is powerful, He is all-knowing and "For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom". Reading these passages is almost like being a small child again. The Letter to the Corinthians is probably my favorite of the day. To know that there is no power higher than God is scary yet beautiful. We are told to put all of our faith into one being, one being that is a sum of all other beings. God is compared to many tangible things in Psalm 19. He is greater than all, more radiant, sweeter than honey, but He inspires fear. To think that there is something bigger than all of us, and something that has the ultimate say again makes me feel so small. I think what I got most out of these readings is a feeling of being so small compared to something so grand. God has the ultimate authority; the ultimate power and we as a Catholic community are supposed to put 100 percent trust and faith into Him. Ultimately, however, it shows me how much He can care for something so small. In this time of Lent, when I am supposed to give up something as Jesus prepares to give his life for me, I especially seek the consolation of God. I can feel His presence and He is commanding but He also loves me. It is a love I can feel and see in the small things every day. I want to share that feeling of love, especially during this Lenten season.

Hannah Chase
WU Class of 2015

Monday, March 12

2 Kings 5: 1-15b

Psalm 42: 2-3; 43: 3-4

Luke 4: 24-30

"If the prophet had told you to do something extraordinary, would you not have done it? All the more now, since he said to you 'Wash and be clean,' you should do as he said."

This quote is from the first reading of Kings where a leper, named Naaman, is sent to Israel to be cured. When he arrives the king scoffs at his request to be cured of leprosy, but Elisha hears his request. Elisha tells Naaman to wash himself in the River Jordan seven times and he will be healed of his ailment. This seemingly mundane request disappoints Naaman. He wanted a show of the Lord's power, a clap of thunder from the sky, to be touched and healed instantly. But all he gets is a simple command. Naaman's sons convince him that this plain request is still the word of God and he will be healed no matter if the action is humble or grandiose. His sons are right, Naaman bathes himself in the river and he is no longer sick. How many times has God given us a small request or small blessing and we ignore it because we're waiting for some magnificent act to come along? God sent Her grandest expression of love through Jesus, who was sacrificed for the sins of the past, present and future. But everyday, She sends down love and help in multiple forms, many of them small, and if we're expecting an extraordinary show, we are likely to be disappointed and miss where God already is in our lives.

"Send forth your light and your fidelity; they shall lead me on And bring me to your holy mountain, to your dwelling-place."

It is obvious in this selection from Psalm 43 that the light is Jesus, for he was sent to earth to show us how to live our lives. The ultimate goal of Catholics is to live a good, moral life and go to heaven. To do this, God gave us two unique tools: the Bible and Jesus. How I imagine it is the Bible is like the course textbook, it is dense, not always that clear, but ultimately you wouldn't survive the course without it. And Jesus is like the teacher, he puts things in terms you can actually understand and apply, and gives you tools to model the concepts after. God did not create human life with the intention of people not getting into heaven. To make sure we had the proper tools to lead an honest, moral life, God gave us the Bible and Jesus so all of Her children could make it into Her "dwelling place". It is up to us if we chose to live by the laws of word of God and model our lives after Christ.

Tracy Burns-Yocum
WU Class of 2014

Tuesday, March 13

Daniel 3: 25, 34-43

Psalm 25: 4bc-5ab, 6-7bc, 8-9

Matthew 18: 21-35

"Remember no more the sins of my youth; remember me only in light of your love."

As a child, I always viewed Lent as that time of the year when I had to give up something, usually chocolate. Of course, there were days that I was exempt like Valentine's Day which was a holiday named after a Saint after all, and St. Patrick's Day which, since I am Irish, is an obvious exception to every rule, and it would just be rude not to eat some of my mom's chocolate birthday cake as part of the celebration, and every Sunday was clearly a day off despite the fact that I never got a good reason as to why. Sure, sometimes I felt guilty about "cheating", but I knew God would forgive me. That was lesson number one, the lesson repeated constantly in religion class throughout grade school, the lesson we must never forget: God forgives.

But do we forgive? Do we forgive others for what they have done to us? Do we even forgive ourselves for the mistakes we have made? Today's readings teach us that if we are to receive full forgiveness from God, we too must forgive. Indeed, this is exactly what we ask when we utter the all too familiar lines of The Lord's Prayer: and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Those all-important words, "as we forgive those", often get lost as we earnestly ask for God's forgiveness for ourselves. We must learn to forgive the wrongs done to us before we can be forgiven for the wrongs we have committed ourselves. After all, how can we expect to be cleansed of our wrong doings if we are still consumed by bitterness and anger towards someone else? How can we expect to feel forgiven if we still blame ourselves for mistakes we have felt in the past?

Half way through Lent many of us are likely struggling with our Lenten promises. We can start on the path of forgiveness by forgiving ourselves for our mess-ups and resolving to do better in the remaining few weeks. We can also resolve to forgive others and begin to let go of any long held bitterness. By beginning to forgive now we can prepare ourselves to be cleansed of our sins, and thus on Easter we can celebrate the resurrection of our savior with a pure heart.

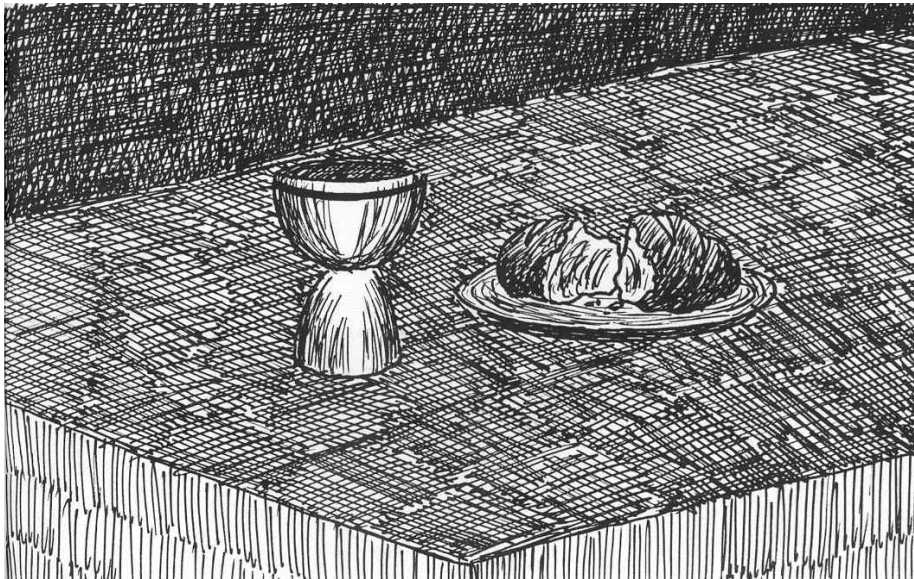
Maeve Woeltje
WU Class of 2015

Wednesday, March 14

Deuteronomy 4: 1, 5-9
Psalm 147: 12-13, 15-16, 19-20
Matthew 5: 17-19

Today's Gospel is a part of The Sermon on the Mount, and is a passage in which Jesus talks about the fulfillment of the law. The law of God is truth and when we live according to that truth, we become closer to Him through peace and joy. Jesus taught us to admire God's law, and therefore admiration for God himself. And reverence for the Lord's Day, respect for parents and elders, life itself, property, and even neighbors. Respect for God's commandments teaches us the way of love -- love of God and love of neighbor. What is impossible to us is possible to God and those who have faith. God gives us the grace to love as he loves; to forgive as he forgives; to think as he thinks; and to act as he acts. As his followers, we must love his commandments, the law, and object to all sin. How do you fulfill the commands of the Lord in your daily life?

Scott Pettit
2012 CSC Intern-in-Service
WU Class of 2011



Thursday, March 15

Jeremiah 7: 23-28

Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-9

Luke 11: 14-23

It seems so simple in today's first reading: "*Obey the voice of the Lord.*"

Why is it so hard to listen sometimes?

Why are we so determined that we are always right? That our way is the best one?

Today's readings remind us to open ourselves to the Lord's voice in the voices around us: to our friends that tell it to us straight, to our parents' advice, and to the whispers of our own conscience.

But some days, it is all we can do to arm ourselves and guard our own palaces like the man in Luke's gospel. After all, aren't strength, persistence, determination, and self-esteem positive qualities? We must protect and believe in something, or we will be swayed by every passing comment, mirroring whatever or whomever is around us. And we must be stubborn sometimes, or any setback will defeat us. This shielding armor, though, will ultimately cause us more hurt than protection. It is meant to be worn only every once in awhile, because it hides our deepest selves from those who love us. It causes us to shut down, to see only in tunnel vision, and to ignore the world around us.

We cannot live healthy, fulfilled lives isolated and alone. The armor must come off, leaving us exposed and vulnerable.

Only then can we be open to God's voice.

Lisa Niemiec
WU Class of 2012

Friday March 16

Exodus 32: 7-14

Psalm 106: 19-23

John 5: 31-47

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

Unfortunately, we have heard this phrase so often that it has been sapped of its meaning. Love others. That's been drilled into my head for so long that, until recently, I never really stopped to consider what it means. Ok, sure. I can love others, no problem. But then I realized that loving people is just the beginning. You have to show them that you love them.

That scares me. My very best friends have put up with me long enough that I know they won't suddenly decide they don't love me anymore. But when I'm just getting to know someone I don't have that security. At any moment I could do or say something that could make them decide that they don't actually want to be my friend. The easiest and safest thing to do is to put up a wall and not show how much I care about our friendship. That way they won't think I'm weird for caring too much. That way I won't feel stupid if they reject me. I can convince myself and everyone else that I didn't really care anyway. If I'm being honest with myself, though, I know that I want other people to show how much they care about me. I know that if I show people that I love them, they will most likely appreciate it. It's basically a no-fail way of getting people to like you. After 21 years of being a Catholic, I finally realized what Jesus meant when he said, "love your neighbor." Loving your neighbor is loving someone despite the fact that they may not love you back.

So this Lent, love others. Say hi when you pass someone walking through campus, even if you think they might not remember you. Make a lunch date with someone you want to get to know better. You might feel stupid, and you might get hurt. On the other hand, you might find a true friend and feel your love reciprocated.

Maria Burke
WU Class of 2013

Day of Abstinence

Saturday, March 17

St. Patrick

Hosea 6: 1-6

Psalm 51: 3-4, 18-21b

Luke 18: 9-14

Today's Gospel tells the parable of the tax collector in the temple – one that many people have heard quite a few times. Two men, a Pharisee and a tax collector, go to the temple to pray. The first is full of pride and proclaims that he is not only better than the rest of humanity but is also full of goodness because he sacrifices through weekly fasting and tithing. The tax collector, on the other hand, stands in the back of the temple with his eyes down and asks for mercy. Jesus then declares,

*'For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled,
and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.'*

Today's readings carry a common theme of humility. God calls us to be like the tax collector: to humble ourselves before him and to put our lives in his hands so that he may grant us mercy and grace. Humility is a concept that seems to be misunderstood often. When God asks that we humble ourselves, he is not asking us to take our gifts and talents for granted. Instead, we are humble when we understand and act within our own imperfections and graces. We are called to be humble throughout our lives, especially during this Lenten Season.

The conflict between seeking God's mercy through humility rather than sacrifice is something that I struggle with during the Lenten Season. When I was younger, I would pick something pretty basic to sacrifice during Lent such as candy or soda – things that were large parts of my life but hadn't been too difficult to give up (most days!). But these readings teach us that Lent is not about giving up things for the sake of making sacrifices. God doesn't hold much stock in simple sacrifices but instead values the humility that comes with recognizing our sins and giving up the things lead us to sin. This Lenten Season, we are given the opportunity to be the tax collector and to humbly give ourselves to God so that we may receive the forgiveness and love that he has ready for us at all times.

Alyssa Mendoza
WU Class of 2014

Sunday, March 18
FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

2 Corinthians 3: 14-16, 19-23

Psalms 137: 1-6

Ephesians 2: 4-10

At first glance, today's readings seem to impart a sense of dread. After scorning God's warnings and polluting God's temple with infidelities and abominations, the Lord's people were punished most severely. "Then he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men in their own sanctuary building, sparing neither young man nor maiden, neither the aged nor the decrepit; he delivered all of them over into his grip." When taken outside of context, it can be easy to question God's intentions. How could a supposedly compassionate God let this happen? Like many others, I'm sure, I sometimes find myself asking this question. Life is filled with struggles and injustices, and at times they can overwhelm us and cloud our faith. However, it is important to remember that God truly loves us unconditionally.

"Father knows best." When I was younger, I remember being in a constant state of frustration at my overbearing parents as I was bombarded with vague assertions: "You'll thank me when you're older," and "You're too young to understand." No matter how hard I tried to make sense of it at the time, I could not understand why I had to do this or why I couldn't do that. Life was unfair. Now that I'm older, I realize that everything my parents did was for my best interest, even if I couldn't see it at the time. (And I probably could have avoided a great deal of turmoil if I had believed them to begin with...) Similarly, all we can do now is trust (both in good times and bad) that God loves the world and has a unique plan for each and every one of us. We are not expected to explain every iniquity or justify God's actions, and we should not be discouraged if we cannot seem to do so. Instead, I take solace in the notion that certain truths are now beyond my comprehension and have faith that God might someday give me the wisdom to understand them.

In the last reading, God's final plan for his people is made clear. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love he had for us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, brought us to life with Christ." Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God imparted unto us the greatest gift of all: something that makes it all worthwhile, the opportunity for forgiveness and eternal life.

Calvin Murdock
WU Class of 2013

Monday, March 19

St. Joseph

2 Samuel 7: 4-5a, 12-14a, 16

Psalms 89: 2-5, 27, 29

Romans 4:13, 16-18, 22

Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a **or** Luke 2: 41-51 a

He believed, hoping against hope that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "Thus shall your descendants be."

I'm obstinately optimistic. I write down a long to-do list in my planner, hoping to get it all accomplished over the weekend. I talk to that cute boy, hoping he'll ask me out on a date. I run my computer program again, hoping it won't fail this time.

I'm not deluded. I know that I'll probably not be able to finish all those tasks and sleep in two day's time. I know that the cute boy probably thinks we're just friends. I know that my program probably has a bug that I'm going to have to spend hours finding. It's just that seeing the glass as half full means that there is a chance it actually is.

Hoping against hope is hope in the face of no, real logical reason to hope, but you're going to hope anyway. A rational human will tell you that goals like ending poverty, creating world peace, and saving the environment are stacked against insurmountable odds. However, I choose to believe that these things can be achieved anyway. I may be wrong. But, if I choose to believe they are impossible to achieve, I *will* be right.

If you let yourself hope in the brighter possibility of things, then the darker inevitability isn't so inevitable anymore. Today, I challenge you to go out and hope. Hope for love, hope for peace, hope in God.

Reilly Ellis
WU Class of 2013

Tuesday March 20

Ezekiel 47: 1-9, 12

Psalm 46: 2-3, 5-6, 8-9

John 5: 1-16

“Rise, take up your mat, and walk.”

These are the words of Jesus in today’s gospel reading. These stick out to me whenever I hear them because of their simplicity and power. Jesus speaks them with such authority that there is no doubt in our minds that what he says is possible.

The setting is a large pool, where many of the sick would gather in hopes of being healed. The waters of this pool were periodically disturbed, and it was believed that the first one to enter the pool while the water was stirring would be healed. Jesus approaches a man who has been sick for 38 years, and asks him if he wants to be healed. The man, seeing Jesus’ question as an offer to help, says how no one will help him into the pool. It is here that Jesus responds, “Rise, take up your mat, and walk.” The man gets up without hesitation or weakness.

This narration recalls the healing power of Reconciliation, and Jesus’ healing and forgiving nature. We start in a state of helplessness, like the sick man. We don’t know what to do or where to turn, since it feels like there is no one to support us. In our weakness, Jesus comes to us. Jesus is always offering us a way out of our sadness, our anxiety, our frustration, and our faults. All we have to do is ask for help. We ask for help through prayer and the Sacraments. Our request may be small and temporary, just like the sick man. He only wanted someone to help him down into the pool so that he may have a chance at healing. He had no idea that the help that Jesus was offering was so much more powerful, immediate, and permanent. Jesus cured him of his ailment completely. In the same way, when we extend our prayer to Jesus, he responds with permanent and life-changing healing.

At the end of the gospel, Jesus is persecuted because he commanded someone to do work on the Sabbath by carrying his mat. This isn’t the only instance where Jesus seems to go against traditional Jewish law. Jesus’ message is that He is creating a new law, a new covenant, for us to follow. He replaces the old way of things with his new teachings, just as he replaced the old method of healing with something much more effective.

This reading lets us know that God is loving, caring, and healing. He is aware of our hardship and wants to help us. We must extend our lives to Him and ask for help, just like in Reconciliation and prayer. Whatever we may humbly anticipate from God, He has the power to do so much more.

Wednesday, March 21

Isaiah 49: 8-15
Psalm 145: 8-9, 13c-14, 17-18
John 5: 17-30

"For the Lord comforts his people and shows mercy to his afflicted."

God has promised to lead the people of Israel back to Zion and that all of the prisoners and all those in darkness should show themselves! God has assured them that He is always with them. And He will provide food and shelter and a safe path as they travel. Even when His people doubt him, saying "The Lord has forsaken me; my Lord has forgotten me," God responds that a mother could never forget the child of her womb, and even if she should forget, He will never forget His people. Throughout the Old Testament, God reassures His people that He will watch over them. We must always remember that even if we feel forsaken, our Father will always love us and that we can trust in Him to provide a safe path out of the darkness.

"The Lord is gracious and merciful." The beautiful language here conveys great love and trust for the Lord. This psalm relates well with the first reading, reminding us that God is kind and loves us all. Those who trust in Him and give thanks will be near to the Lord. Take time to reflect on the beauty of God's creation and be thankful for all that has been given to you.

"...I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me." Jesus asserts that he is the Son of Man. His work on Earth is not his own but the work of his father, our Lord. He has made a public statement that he lives in God, he will give life to whomever he wishes, he will exercise judgment, and he will raise the dead; just as he has seen his Father do before. There can be no doubt that Jesus is the Son of God after such passionate speech. We must trust in God with all our hearts. He had the compassion to send us His own son for our salvation. Jesus promises us that all who hear his word and believe in God will have eternal life and will not be condemned, but will pass from death to life.

Today's message is one of undying love from our Lord. Be thankful for all He has given us and pray for His guidance in times of need.

Thursday March 22

Exodus 32: 7-14

Psalms 106: 19-23

John 5: 31-47

In the first reading today, God threatens to destroy the Israelites for worshipping a golden calf. Moses pleads with God to spare the people, and God listens to him, and decides to spare the people.

How often do we feel like God doesn't hear us? Sometimes when I'm having a particularly bad day, and one thing after another keeps going wrong, I find myself wondering, *God seriously? Why are you letting this happen to me?* The reading from Exodus today proves that God does hear and answer us. The key is that we need to ask. Usually, on those days when everything is going wrong, the only time that I have taken to talk to God is an angry or frustrated thought. So sure, God won't always answer our prayers in the way we want (I'm sure the Israelites didn't want to spend forty years in the desert), but if we take the time to ask for something from God, He promises to hear us.

As we spend these forty days in Lent, let us remember the forty years the Israelites spent in the desert. What is our golden calf that is keeping us from God? Take some time today to talk to God about whatever problems you may be having, and ask for His help. He will hear you.

Maria Burke
WU Class of 2013

Friday, March 23

St. Turibius of Mogrovejo

Wisdom 2: 1a, 12-22

Psalm 34: 17-21, 23

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

Today's readings remind me, how hard it is to be our true selves; to be the people that we are intended to be at our very best. It is a difficult and ever present struggle. We face the harsh reality that we may not be liked for doing what is right. This path will not win us popularity contests. Loving others in a true sense of the word, giving of ourselves, will have us broken more times than we care to count or remember. Yet as today's responsorial psalm proclaims, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted."

However in this struggle, it is easy to find temptation as well, to give in to our jealousy and pride, to deny whom we are and what we are meant to do to see the other side. We question the cost of being good and loving because it seems so much easier to be comfortable and accepted. We are envious of others who live a true life, living at their best, at full potential, making the right decisions and truly loving; it makes us feel uncomfortable. For myself, I know I feel guilty when someone else takes that extra step to do the right thing and I stand there and do nothing. I know what I should do or should have done, and it is difficult to overcome my weakness and pride in those moments. It is far easier question the worth of such actions, the seeming futility therein, or to look the other way at the hard choices. This choice is the struggle that we face now and for all of our lives.

As Lent continues on it becomes harder and harder to make the choice to be that self at our best. Time, stress, and other issues have piled up and it is at these times having the courage to say again who we are, and what we were sent for, is harder to muster. This is where the truth is in the passion: the suffering for that which is loved, the challenge to love more today than yesterday, and more tomorrow than today. We will say we do not have the strength to carry this burden but this is where the Lord carries us and our burden. For here our Lord puts the strength in our weakness, wholeness in the broken spaces, courage in the face of adversity, and healing in the places of hurt.

Jon Day
STLCOP Student

Day of Abstinence

Saturday, March 24

Jeremiah 11: 18-20

Psalm 7: 2-3, 9b-12

John 7: 40-53

It has been scientifically documented that many people who are blind have higher attuned hearing than people who can see. This is due to the fact that because they are not using their sight, their other senses compensate so they can still function as normally as possible. In addition, they rely on their hearing so much more that it naturally improves because they have more practice taking in information with this sense. Throughout scripture, blindness is a common theme with both positive and negative connotations. The passages today show examples of the fruits of both types. In the passage from John, some people have faith in Christ, others are unsure, and still others (in particular the Pharisees) ridicule Him and call Him a liar. They claim that the crowd who believes in Him "does not know the law" and therefore is blind *to* the law and truth. However, the reality is that the Pharisees are the ones who are blinded *by* the law and cannot see who Christ really is.

In both the Psalm and the Jeremiah reading, the opposite type of blindness, blindness to the world, is shown. Jeremiah writes of a time when he was "like a trusting lamb, led to slaughter." But he continues to discuss his complete trust in the Lord. He trusted that the Lord would protect him for his faith, and that He would do justice to those who harm him. This point is further emphasized in the Psalm. God is likened to a "shield" and a "just judge." According to these readings, the Lord will always protect us. All we have to do is trust, blindly, that He is present in our lives, and give Him complete control. When we do that, we will be shielded and cared for. God is a powerful, loving, and giving God who wants to love us and have our trust and love in return. But He does not operate by the world's standards. He has a magnificent plan for each and every one of us, and He wants to reveal this plan to us.

But we will only be able to hear His call if we become blind to the will of the world. Only then will we be able to attune our hearing to what God's perfect plan is for us, rather than all of the fleeting satisfactions we see in this world. However, it is not always easy to do this, since we are humans immersed in an imperfect world. We are going to stumble, make mistakes, and have doubts. But despite these failings, God still loves us more than we can imagine, and He wants us to start again. He wants us daily to renew our faith in Him so that He may continue to shower us with blessings and everlasting love. He wants to love us, and He wants us to trust in Him enough to accept that love. Take the opportunity today to close your eyes to the world, open your ears to Christ, and put your faith in the plan that He is revealing to you.

Jackie Kading

WU Class of 2013

Sunday, March 25
FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT

Jeremiah 31: 31-34

Psalms 51: 3-4, 12-15

Hebrews 5: 7-9

John 12: 20-33

The gospel for this Sunday comes from a memorable and difficult passage from John, Chapter 12. John's Gospel has always struck me, maybe because he has such a poetic and yet powerful way of preaching God's word. In his message for us in this fifth Sunday of Lent, John relays one of the more difficult of Jesus' messages for us to grapple with. As Jesus draws closer to the time of his death, he lends insight into the importance of sacrificial living. In today's gospel, Jesus challenges us: "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be" (John 12: 24-26). I find this passage to be both encouraging and daunting. Daunting in the challenge of trying to come to terms with the fact that each of us, one day, will pass on from this life. Encouraging in the knowledge that, if we follow God and trust in Him, attempting to live in His example of sacrificing everything - even His own Son - we will each have the power to give of ourselves in making this world a more beautiful place. We are never alone. In this Gospel, Jesus teaches us that a truly influential life and lasting legacy comes from one who is willing to give everything of him or herself. This is a wonderful message to bear in mind during Lent. Instead of focusing on ourselves and our own sacrifice, we should challenge ourselves to follow Jesus' example in placing the focus of our efforts on both God and the people around us. Only then will our efforts become truly life-giving.

Anna Constantino
WU Class of 2012

Monday, March 26
Annunciation of the Lord

Isaiah 7:10-14, 8: 10
Psalms 40: 7-11
Hebrews 10: 4-10
Luke 1: 26-38

I always gave up sweets for Lent. I'm pretty sure that from the time I learned about Lenten reflection in the second or third grade, I equated it with giving something up. And that something was usually sweets. There wasn't really another option for me. My mom never let me drink soda. I didn't watch enough TV during the school week for it to make much of a difference. I wasn't allowed to chew gum. The only sacrifice that seemed worth making was giving up sweets, which was a pretty big sacrifice because a disproportionate number of the birthdays in my family fall during Lent.

Throughout my life, I've equated Lent with a time of sacrifice and suffering, a time that necessitated a ten-year-old kid not having a slice of birthday cake on her brother's birthday. I've found that my non-Catholic friends have that impression too, always asking what I am going to give up that year when I mention Ash Wednesday. The driving force behind Lent sometimes appears to be learning how to do without, in preparation for the three days when the world had to seemingly do without God himself.

It came as a surprise when I read today's readings in preparation for this reflection. All of them deal with God's promise throughout the Bible to send the Messiah to the world, with the gospel reading telling the Nativity. These readings, instead of emphasizing the idea of doing without, insist on God's presence in our lives and concern for the world. Particularly, the idea in the passage from Isaiah reminds us that even when we don't ask for Him, "*With us is God!*" The readings call attention to God's fulfillment of a promise, even during the somber time of Lent.

My challenge is to approach the Lenten season with a desire to gain understanding through God's continuing presence in our lives. Instead of focusing on giving up, think about gifts you receive.

Erin Wrightson
WU Class of 2013

Tuesday, March 27

Numbers 21: 4-9

Psalm 102: 2-3, 16-21

John 8: 21-30

*“Do not hide your face from me
when I am in distress.
Turn your ear to me;
When I call, answer me quickly.
He will respond to the prayer of the destitute;
He will not despise their plea”*

The truth in these readings is that we should never feel like we can't turn to God in the midst of our deepest troubles and problems. I know I often forget that he already knows what I'm going through, but sometimes that by articulating it to him I can not only find some clarity on my own, but also feel like I'm no longer going through it alone.

It's never easy, though. I try to keep a journal, but I often find it hardest to journal when things are not going well. When I'm having a great day, I don't mind rattling off all of the wonderful things in my life. When I'm struggling, facing up to those facts can seem unappealing. I sometimes feel like it is easier to talk to a friend, almost as if I'm too embarrassed to tell God what is on my mind.

In the first reading, God asserts his power and shows the Israelites what he is capable of. Though my friends can give me temporary comfort, God is so much more than that. Jesus tells us in John that, "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world." When we feel most chained by our worldly problems, it is truly only God who has the power to lift us up again. When we question that, he not only has the ability to show us that power like in the Numbers reading, but we, or I at least, tend to feel the most alone. By confiding in God and trusting in him fully I feel connected to something beyond the everyday.

Of course, fully entrusting ourselves to God is easier said than done. Through prayer, however, I feel like I can at least try to bridge the gap between my own feelings of being lost and confused and His clear path.

Sarah Gallo
WU Class of 2014

Wednesday, March 28

Daniel 3: 14-20, 91-92, 95

Daniel 3: 52-56

John 8: 31-42

An overarching theme for today is perseverance.

What is perseverance?

Perseverance of God over sin; perseverance of monotheism over polytheism; and perseverance in faith and worship.

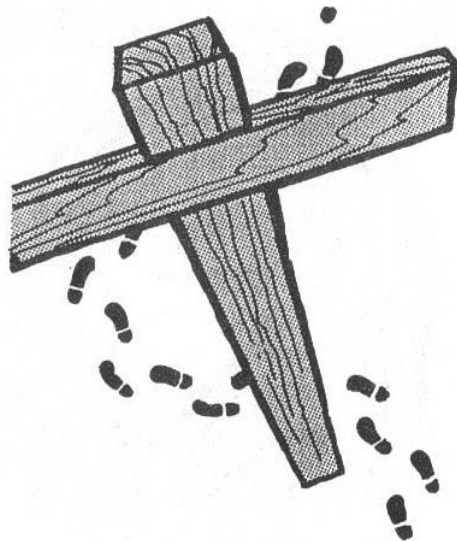
In the first reading today, three men are challenged to worship false deities. One says, "We will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up." This surprises the ruler who orders them to worship the deities. He orders them to be thrown into the fire. The three men survive the fire to the ruler's astonishment. *Are you ever astonished by the things you can overcome?* In life I believe we are 'thrown into the fire' a lot—whether it be by our own choices or those of others. What matters in those times is our **perseverance**.

The Gospel of John today makes us wonder: *What enslaves us?*

In this passage Jesus says any sinner is a slave to sin. Yet, he offers us freedom through his sacrifice. We are given perseverance through Jesus.

Persevere today.

Steven Grigsby, Sean Dula, Kayla Piorowski, George Rizk, Courtney Kim
2011 Freshman Five Group



Thursday, March 29

Genesis 17: 3-9

Psalm 105: 4-9

John 8: 51-59

The readings for today have us reminded of the covenant God made with Abraham and all that has been done just for us. How often do we overlook what an awesome thing God has done for his people? His love never falters and as you read through the scripture all of his promises are backed up and fulfilled. In the first reading, God makes the promise to look out of Abraham and all of his descendants. He makes a promise to all of us to always be there with his everlasting love. The second reading says, "He remembers forever his covenant" continuing to solidify the promise that we will never be without our God. The third reading tells us that Jesus is the fulfillment of the covenant, who has come to bring us to salvation. As I read this, I find it hard to comprehend the fullness of that has been sacrificed through Jesus just for me. As I think about my own life, I can hardly maintain the small commitments I make weekly, whether that is staying on track with my schoolwork, fulfilling all the responsibilities of various groups I am apart of, or simply being there for my friends and family. So as I read this, it amazes me of how much love is given to us through that constant promise. I feel like consistency is something that becomes less valued as we all get wrapped up in our busy lives. We all are eager to move on to the next thing and just keep moving forward. But how often do we sit and allow the things that are truly important have the time devoted to them as they deserve.

As you continue during this Lenten season, remind yourself of this covenant and take strength in God's constant love. How can you use it to reinforce your commitment in your everyday actions? How can you work to be as devoted to your relationship with God as he is to you?

Paul Roth
WU Class of 2013

Friday, March 30

Jeremiah 20: 10-13

Psalm 18: 2-7

John 10: 31-42

God is always there. Sometimes that can be hard to believe. I often hear people say, "What God would let <insert tragedy here> happen?" One thing I always seem to realize is that God is with each and every one of us through all of our tragedies and all of our joys. He loves us and is waiting for us to accept him. Today's readings remind me that the Lord is a support that is always there even when unrecognized. They remind me that the Lord is a "rock" that is always supporting us even if we only cry out to Him in times of distress or joy. They are a reminder to appreciate God's continued support. There are so many reasons people can and do give for not liking Catholics. It is not uncommon that expressions of faith can be looked down upon or "reproach[ed]". But, when people wanted to stone Jesus, he did not ignore them or hurt them or hide. He told them to see his works and from there to decide what they believed. It is in this way that God's presence becomes known. Today's readings remind me of all of the answered prayers. There tends to be a focus on the negative and not on the positive, so the answered prayers can be lost among those seemingly unanswered. There was a time my family really needed some money to get through the month and a check showed up in the mail. There are many times I have prayed for guidance only to meet someone who says just what I needed to hear. Most recently, my mother's yoga instructor who has been going through cancer treatments was diagnosed with more cancer in another section of her body. Many of us formed prayer circles for her health and well-being. The next week the doctor said the cancer had miraculously disappeared.

Tragedies happen and life can hurt so much, but God is always supporting us and loving us. Have you been focusing on the positive lately? Can you think of a time when your faith protected you in some way? If not, that is perfectly fine. Try to notice the good that surrounds you and thank God for it. He is our champion, our rock.

Anonymous

Day of Abstinence

Saturday, March 31

Ezekiel 37: 21-28

Jeremiah 31: 10-13

John 11: 45-57

As we approach the celebration of the greatest mystery of the Catholic Church, the death and resurrection of Jesus, we are reminded of this mystery's purpose. John tells us that, "Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God" (John 11: 51-52). For Christians, it is common knowledge that Jesus died for us, to save us from sin. However, the readings for this Saturday before the Triduum tell us that God sacrificed His only son for another reason, too. Jesus' death was meant to bring all His people together. This message also resonates in the Old Testament readings. Ezekiel tells us of God's promise to the Israelites; a "covenant of peace" by their God and a unified nation for all their people. Similarly, the reading from Jeremiah tells us of the great happiness of God's people because of this gathering of dispersed peoples. The Lord says, "I will turn their mourning into joy, I will console and gladden them after their sorrows" (Jeremiah 31:13). God made his people a promise: that we would be gathered from all parts of the world and united in one land. Still, the Pharisees worry about the Romans taking away their country. They seem to have forgotten the promises of God. For this reason, Jesus dies for us; to free us from our sin and to remind us of God's promise to bring all His people back together as one.

These readings emphasize the fact that God will never abandon us, His people. No matter where we go, He will always provide for us and bring us back to him. In the words of Jeremiah, "He who scattered Israel, now gathers them together. He guards them as a shepherd his flock" (Jeremiah 31: 10). These readings remind us of the promises that God has made to us: to care for us and protect us always. But, just as the Pharisees in John's Gospel, we sometimes forget the promises of God. Full understanding of these promises requires faith and trust on our part. We must trust completely that God is going to follow through on all his promises. And while it is easy to say, "I trust and have faith in God," it is not so easy to act upon that statement. Complete trust requires vulnerability and a willingness to sacrifice. We must place ourselves in the hands of God. What do the promises to the Israelites mean for us? We do not live in biblical times, when God appeared to his prophets and Jesus walked on the earth. However, this does not mean the promise doesn't hold true. God has promised us eternal life in heaven, where all His people will be brought together. In this earthly life, we must trust that God will provide for us. But faith is an uphill battle. It is something we must work on every day. In this last week before Easter, how can you show your faith in God? What does this celebration of the Paschal mystery prove to you about God's promises? How can you personally strengthen your faith and trust in God and place yourself in God's hands?

Kelly Muething

WU Class of 2014

Sunday, April 1 Palm Sunday

Isaiah 50: 4-7

Psalm 22: 8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24

Philippians 2: 6-11

Mark 14: 1 - 15: 47 or 15: 1-39

“He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name.”

What has always struck me the most about Palm Sunday is the joyful crowds welcoming Jesus into Jerusalem. They glorify him as the King of Israel, yet five days later, these same crowds of people angrily shout for his death. We've all been in that crowd at some time in our lives. We go along with popular opinions, even if they are wrong. We are often motivated by our desire to be liked and accepted by other people. This stark contrast between the crowd's praises and jeers is paralleled in Peter's three denials of Jesus. Both instances point out shameful tendencies of humanity: one of fear, of conformity, and of inconstancy. But this is the world that Jesus came to save, and he knowingly goes to the cross to save the same people who tried to kill him- that is, us. That selflessness itself is amazing to me. We don't deserve him - who are we, ordinary and imperfect humans, to be worthy of the Son of God?

This brings me to one of the less popular lines in the new Mass translation: “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” I found this line awkward at first; but lately I have begun to mentally substitute “under my roof” for “into my life,” which makes that prayer suddenly more meaningful.

Palm Sunday, with its 20-minute Gospel reading, celebrates Jesus' selflessness and sacrifice. Along with the cheering crowds, we welcome Jesus as a king and as a savior (though from our sins and not from Roman rule), we praise him for what he is about to do, and we thank him for his steadfast determination to save us.

Anonymous

Monday, April 2
Monday of Holy Week

Isaiah 42: 1-7
Psalm 27: 1-3, 13-14
John 12: 1-11

"...you do not always have me."

To be quite frank, this passage surprised me. Aren't we always taught that Jesus is always there? Yet here he clearly states that he is not.

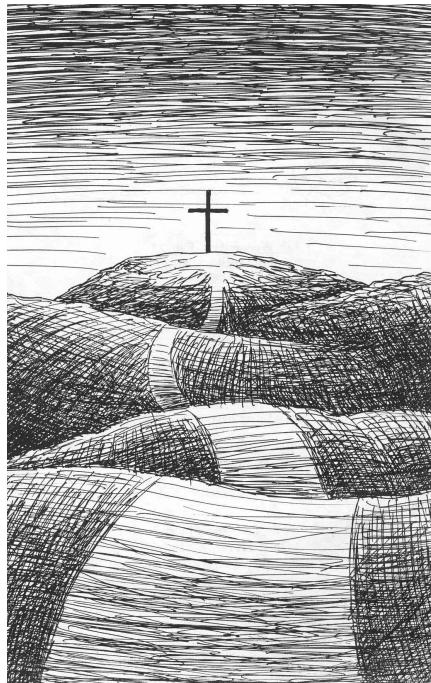
Of course, I believe this to mean something more than the idea of him being absent. (Perhaps he is absent from evil and ultra-materialistic things) Rather, I see this statement as a provoking idea, a call to action for his followers then, and *especially* now.

Do we truly always have Jesus in us?

Do we always follow his guide?

Are we prepared to accept the cross alongside him?

Steven Grigsby, Sean Dula, Kayla Piorkowski, George Rizk, Courtney Kim
2011 Freshman Five Group



Tuesday, April 3

Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49: 1-6

Psalm 71: 1-4a, 5-6ab, 15, 17

John 13: 21-33, 36-38

"Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times."

As a kid, I never really listened in church. For some reason, however, this gospel reading always grabbed my attention. What always struck me as odd was the last part. Peter tells Jesus, "I will lay down my life for you." When I imagine this scene, I see a cozy room with the disciples companionably close at a table, a fire illuminating the room with a flickering light. Jesus gives a small smile, touched by Peter's devotion. The smile gives way to a haunted look, and Jesus says, "Will you lay down your life for me? Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times." There the chapter ends.

Something about this proclamation really stuck with me. I could just imagine Jesus sitting there, trying to savor those last precious moments before His inevitable trial and death. He knew that every person at that table would be forced to scatter from his side. No doubt He wanted to believe Peter's words more than anything at that moment. But He could not. His life was never for Himself. Instead of Peter giving his life for God, Jesus would have to give His life for Peter.

We are privileged to live in a time and place where we do not have to give our lives for our faith. It is easy for us to say, as Peter did, that we would give up everything for God should the need arise. It is easy to think, oh, I may not be the best Catholic, the best Christian, but I do okay. We are Peter. When it becomes inconvenient, we have no problem bending our beliefs or justifying our actions. All I ask is that the next time you hear the cock crow, the next time you hear that song on the radio, the next time you savor your morning coffee, remember that you are just a fair-weather fan of a man who knew your flaws but died for you anyway.

Erin Gauger
WU Class of 2014

Wednesday, April 4

Wednesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 50: 4-9a

Psalm 69: 8-10, 21-22, 31, 33-34

Matthew 26: 14-25

Holy Wednesday is sometimes called "Spy Wednesday", for it is the day that Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. The story of Easter is a story of love, life, resurrection, and faith, but all was set in motion by a story of betrayal. The passage from Matthew presents the story of the Last Supper at the moment when Jesus recognizes Judas and what is to come. One can almost imagine it, as if it were a scene from a movie. Jesus says that one of the apostles will betray him, chaos breaks out, and quietly, he says, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me", and then, the camera zooms in on his hands as it slowly descends upon a dish, and from the other side comes another hand. They touch, and the camera pans out slowly, deliberately, until there are two stock-still figures in the frame, staring at each other, with background figures blurred and the sound of voices meshes into a muted noise. One man is panicked, the other is calm and collected. Judas asks, "Is it I?" The screen is filled by Judas' face, and then by Jesus's sad eyes. End scene.

Did the other disciples notice the exchange? Were they too confused to see it? Too busy defending themselves, denying accusations, scared to the core that Jesus suspected them of ever being able to betray their beloved teacher? Matthew doesn't give us the answer to that question, but he does say that Judas returns the thirty pieces of silver and then kills himself; becoming the first apostle to die. But it's an interesting question. If they had noticed, why did they not do or say anything? Did Judas run away after that moment? Or did he share in the breaking of the bread and the presentation of the cup that followed? I like to think that he received the Eucharist. I like to think that Jesus knew, and still gave himself, even for Judas, because that's who Jesus is, and that's what Easter is about. The death of Jesus for the remission of our sins, even those sins so grave and detestable that we ourselves find it hard to forgive ourselves for committing them. Or for the small ones, like missing an important moment happening right before your eyes because of the distraction from everything else.

Isaiah writes that the Lord gave us things to say, things to hear, things to see, things to believe in, and that we stand with God beside us, and overcome adversity with his guidance and the strength of faith. Psalm 69 also gives us hope, for it is the words of a believer who has also become a sufferer for his belief, but has also become stronger in his faith, for the Lord "hears the needy, and does not despise his own that are in bonds". We may find it hard to bear our crosses sometimes, and may feel that it is an overly heavy burden God gave us. Sometimes we will fall. Judas fell, and he fell very far. But Jesus

completed his journey with his own cross and was a Savior for *sinner*s, for those who have fallen and look to stand up again. He bore it for *us*. And no matter what we do, he will be there, be it in the words of a fellow believer who speaks with the words God gave us. Or in the actions of one who hears God's voice and follows his word. Or in the presence of a loved one who stands up for us and stands with us.

Amanda Man
WU Class of 2015

Tomorrow's Chrism Mass Explanation

This Mass is celebrated once a year on the morning of Holy Thursday at the Cathedral in each diocese. During the Mass, the local bishop will bless the oil of catechumens, the oil of the sick, and the oil of chrism (only the bishop may do this blessing). We use the first for adult catechumens and infants, the second for anointing the sick, and the sacred oil of chrism for baptism, confirmation, the ordination of priests, and the consecration of altars. In recent years, this Mass has also acknowledged the ministry of priests. It invites them to renew their commitment of service and to receive the prayers and support of the people. The Chrism Mass will be celebrated at 10am at the Cathedral Basilica on Holy Thursday here in St. Louis and all are welcome to attend this ancient tradition.



**Thursday, April 5:
HOLY THURSDAY**

Chrism Mass

Isaiah 61: 1-3, 6, 8-9

Psalm 89: 21-22, 25, 27

Revelation 1: 5-8

Luke 4: 16-21

Mass of the Lord's Supper

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

Psalm 116: 12-13, 15-16bc, 17-18

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13: 1-15

Holy Thursday marks the beginning of the end of our Lenten journey. Today we think back on the story of what I consider Christ's most human moment. Today, if you will, take the journey with me to the top of the hill, to the garden where Jesus prayed and prepared for the world's greatest sacrifice.

First, let us go to the garden with Jesus. It is here he decides to pray, to prepare himself for the hell that is about to come upon him. Here, Jesus, despite knowing the hour of his impending capture, tells his disciples to keep watch. Despite their friend and teacher asking them to stay awake and keep watch they fall asleep, not realizing the gravity of the hour. Much like us as we travel towards the end of this Lenten process. We are tired, worn out and sick of making sacrifices. Can't we just rest a little? This day, Jesus reminds us we don't have time to rest, to close our eyes and ignore what is happening around us. We must be the most diligent in the coming days, lest we miss what it is our friend is asking us to watch for. Just like the disciples, we will struggle to stay awake when we are so tired, but we must so that we don't miss the amazing events that are about to unfold.

While the disciples are struggling to stay awake, Jesus has taken some time to be physically alone and spiritually in tune with God. It is here, alone in the garden, Jesus asks for strength to endure what it is he has come to do, but not before he asks for something else. Here Jesus asks, if it is at all in the cards, that the burden be passed from him. If there is one moment in the New Testament that proves Jesus was wholly human, it is this one. While he is totally committed to God's will, he also knows the suffering that is coming, and human nature forces him to ask if there is any way around it. This moment gives me tremendous awe for the person Christ was. Knowing the pain he was about to suffer, knowing that he could walk away, asking for a way out, he stays committed to the ultimate sacrifice. It gives me faith that I can work through the crosses I have been asked to bear, that we can all have the strength to carry our crosses, for if our wholly human Christ could die for us certainly we can fight our struggles too. Jesus

gives us one final lesson here from God. Alone, we can accomplish little; with God we can accomplish anything.

There are so many lessons that can be gleaned from the story of Holy Thursday I will not attempt to breach them all, but I do want to reinforce the lessons I have already breached and how they complement each other so beautifully. We have gone through so much already, and yet the time we must be most diligent is now. Luckily, we have forewarning. We, unlike the disciples, know the events about to come, but like the disciples we will still struggle to keep awake. The beauty is that if we stay awake, this time we might see something, or feel something that we never have before. If we keep our eyes open this time, something totally unexpected might happen. Perhaps this time we hear God's whisper, that whisper that lets us know it is ok to ask for help. We see our wholly human Jesus asking for help, knowing the struggles he is about to face, asking for help. We don't have to and shouldn't take on our troubles alone. Christ didn't try to take this on his own, he prayed for strength. Stay awake this time and see something you have never seen this Easter season. Stay awake this time and know you don't have to struggle alone. Christ chose to die for our sakes, gave us the ability to get up from our mistakes, pick up our crosses and go forward. The ultimate role model, he shows us how to fight and then gives us the ability to do so.

Honor Christ this season. Help your friend, and stay awake. Stay awake and see what God is trying to say to you today and all of your tomorrows. I pray your Lenten journey has been fruitful and the next four days show you the light of Christ in your life. May God always be with you, in your highs and lows and may you always keep your eyes open, you never know what you might see next.

Marc Remmert
WU Class of 2013

Friday, April 6
GOOD FRIDAY

Isaiah 52: 13 - 53: 12
Psalm 31: 2, 6, 12-13, 15-17, 25
Hebrews 4: 14-16; 5: 7-9
John 18: 1-19: 42

How often have you heard the Passion of Christ?

How often have you seen the image of the Cross?

Has the immense sacrifice resonated within you yet?

I often find that no matter how I try to prepare for this holy day; year after year, I never seem quite ready for it. It seems to just spring up amidst so many other things during the spring season. *Have I failed as a Catholic? Have I failed as a Christian?*

I argue: no. There is value in the act of whole-heartedly preparing yourself for this day and ultimately failing in total preparation. *What makes us strive to prepare for anything?* For me, being prepared means being comfortable or complacent with my future actions or duties. *Do we really seek to be complacent in our relationship with Jesus Christ, the Father Almighty, and the mystery of the Holy Spirit?*

If I have learned anything over Lent, it is that my relationship with the Trinity is not static; but rather highly dynamic, as it should be. Thus, I believe we should all rejoice on this sorrowful day for our failure, and accept that Jesus has saved us, once again:

*"For we do not have a high priest
who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses,
but one who has similarly been tested in every way,
yet without sin.
So let us confidently approach the throne of grace
to receive mercy and to find grace for timely help."*

Steven Grigsby, Sean Dula, Kayla Piorkowski, George Rizk, Courtney Kim
2011 Freshman Five Group

Day of Abstinence & Fasting

Saturday April 7: HOLY SATURDAY

1st Reading: Gn 1: 1- 2: 2 **or** 1: 1, 26-31a

Responsorial: Ps. 104: 1-2, 5-6, 10, 12-14, 24, 35,
or Ps. 33:4-7, 12-13, 20-22

2nd Reading: Gn. 22:1-18 **or** 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18

Responsorial: Ps. 16:5, 8, 9-10, 11

3rd Reading: Ex. 14:15 - 15:1

Responsorial: Ex. 15:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 17-18

4th Reading: Is. 54:5-14

Responsorial: Ps. 30:2, 4-6, 11-12, 13b

5th Reading: Is. 55:1-11

Responsorial: Is. 12:2-6

6th Reading: Baruch 3:9-15, 32 - 4:4

Responsorial Psalm: Ps. 19:8-11

7th Reading: Ez. 36:16-17a, 18-28

Responsorial: Ps. 42:3, 5; 43:3,4**or** Is. 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6 **or** Ps. 51:12-13, 14-15, 18-19

Epistle: Rom. 6:3-11

Responsorial: Ps. 118:1-2, 16ab-17, 22-23

Gospel: Mark 16: 1-7

Holy Saturday: The Ultimate Despair

Saturday. For many of us, this is a time of preparation for Easter Sunday. But to jump right into the reflection, the theology of Holy Saturday is deeper than many of us acknowledge. For many of us cradle Catholics, we have our traditions for Holy Week whether it involves going to a series of Masses and liturgies or just getting the house ready for the Easter celebration. Our Christian tradition, however, has almost always had that coming hope of the resurrection on Sunday which, rightfully so, is the focus of our faith tradition.

The anticipation that many of us feel on Holy Saturday has not always been shared by the community we now know as "the faithful." The time between Good Friday and Easter Sunday is the only time in the entire liturgical year that Jesus is remembered as "dead." We are all accustomed to saying that Jesus has died (indefinitely followed by the proclamation, "and is risen"). Rarely, we sit with the reality that Jesus was dead and what that meant for his followers. The numbness, hopelessness, and despair most likely felt by those disciples of Christ is one that we often fall out of touch with in our celebration of Holy Saturday. This is a feeling to which many of us can relate; that numbness or shock that we feel when someone close to our heart has died; that crushed feeling we get when our significant other tells us that they no longer want to be with us; that feeling of despair when everything has been going wrong and we feel, quite literally, that all hope is lost. Most of us know this feeling but seldom relate it to our celebration

of Holy Saturday. We miss out on this feeling because we KNOW that tomorrow is Easter; we KNOW that tomorrow Jesus will rise; we KNOW that this is only a temporary despair. The very first followers of Jesus, however, did not share this certainty.

We know the story of the travelers on the road to Emmaus; walking back home after learning that this Jesus character has died. The feeling that follows the shattering of our hopes and trust in another. That utter feeling of defeat or, in the words of Jeremiah, being duped or deceived (Jer. 20:7). On this day, we are in touch with that feeling of our ancestors of despair and confusion; what do we do now? Where do we go? How are we supposed to continue living? Questions that many of us have asked ourselves before. We are in touch with the feelings of distress and confusion of the first followers of Christ and reflect on the times in our lives when we have felt (or are currently feeling) that very same feeling; what DO we do now? How ARE we supposed to continue on?

In reality, nothing has changed at all. It is in the darkness of this reality of death and loss that the hope and joy of the resurrection has the greatest impact. We still need that same hope in the relief after this despairing time. We are still looking for a moment that restores our sense of security after our sense of loss and pain. In theology, the term *thaumaturgy* (often translated as “wonderworking”) refers to those moments of awe and relief like the calm after a storm or the birth of a child from pain and anguish—the reality of wonder after a particular event; a reality of which Jesus was quite the master. The resurrection is one such wonder. It is in the experience of the resurrection that we feel awe and wonder after our despair. We know that there IS a sense of joy to come; there IS an end to this feeling. Just like there had been nearly 2,000 years ago, we live with the reality that there *will be* that hope just around the corner for each of us in our lives. It is truly a matter of hope, trust, and patience for what will be. As our faith tradition reminds us, best expressed by Julian of Norwich, “all will be well.”

Mark Levand
2012 CSC Intern-in-Service

Sunday, April 8
EASTER SUNDAY

Acts 10: 34a, 37-43

Psalm 118: 1-2, 16ab-17, 22-23

Colossians 3: 1-4, **or** 1 Corinthians 5: 6b-8

John 20: 1-9 **or** Mark 16: 1-7

Lord of all Creation
Bring us into Your presence
Surround us with Your grace
Call us to live in Your glory
Let us praise Your name forever
Give us hearts of
Compassion
Strength
Conviction

Faith.

May we always yearn to know You more deeply
Feel Your fire burn in our hearts
Ignite the spark in others
Fill our spirits
Devoted to Your word
Let us rejoice
Amen.

Anonymous

