

# **Journey of Faith**

Lenten Devotionals and Meditations

St. Aidan's Episcopal Church

2010

## Hymn 149

*Eternal Lord of love, behold your Church walking once more the pilgrim way of Lent,*

*Led by your cloud by day, by night your fire, moved by your love and toward your  
presence bent:*

*Far off yet here - the goal of all desire.*

*So daily dying to the way of self, so daily living to your way of love,*

*We walk the road, Lord Jesus, that you trod, knowing ourselves baptized into your  
death:*

*So we are dead and live with you in God.*

*If dead in you, so in you we arise, you the firstborn of all the faithful dead;*

*And as through stony ground the green shoots break, glorious in springtime dress of  
leaf and flower,*

*So in the Father's glory shall we wake.*

Thomas H. Cain  
The Hymnal 1982

†††

It is hoped that this booklet will provide a personalized reflection of the scripture readings found in the Daily Office Lectionary and will enrich your spiritual journey during this holy season. By using this devotional booklet, we parishioners are united with each other and with the entire body of the Anglican Communion as we all read, study, pray and meditate on the same Bible passages each day.

This booklet would not be possible without the support of our rector, Father Rob, nor without the help of Donna Jones, Harmony Kiser and Tom McDonnell, who either carried paper and booklets, ran copies or stapled pages together. Thanks also go to Betty Hood for converting the format of the final booklet for printing and making the daily devotionals available on the website. The heart of this undertaking, however, will always be with those who committed to write the meditations. A complete list of those participating is found at the back of the booklet.

Welcome to the season of Lent!

## Ash Wednesday, February 17

**Amos 5:6-15**

**Hebrews 12:1-14**

**Luke 18:9-14**

Lent begins again—this forty-day season of the church year that reminds us of Jesus' forty days in the desert tempted by the devil and of Israel's forty years wandering in the desert before they found their home in the land of milk and honey. Lent: the season that focuses us most acutely on *our* temptations and *our* wandering ways on the journey with God in hopes that we can and will put sin behind us, get right with God, and as Amos says, 'seek good and not evil.' If we do that, says Amos, "it *may be* that the Lord will be gracious."

*It may be?* I confess to smirk thankfully at Amos's forecast because the Lord has indeed been gracious in Christ Jesus, the 'pioneer and perfecter of our faith,' who brought graciousness to forgive our sins and set things right between God and us like no commandment, fasting or tithing can do. As we read in Hebrews, Christ himself allows us 'to lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely.'

How we do long to lay the burden of sin is aside. On Ash Wednesday and during Lent in particular the weight of our sin and betrayal feels closer than most days...much like it was for the tax collector and the Pharisee in the parable from Luke. They both felt the burden. Yet, the Pharisee's self-righteousness, his sense that he was his own 'perfecter' of the faith, rendered his prayers sterile. In the tax collector—who humbled himself, beat his breast and asked for mercy—Jesus sees a person who exemplifies the Lenten pilgrim, the humble, penitent follower of God who has faith that goes beyond the *may be* of Amos' words to the *will be* of forgiveness and restoration in Christ Jesus.

Lent, you see, is not the final season of the Church year. We wander through it for forty days to that place where God leads, the covenant of the unburdened, the forgiven, those justified by grace and by the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ.

**Thursday, February 18**

**Habakkuk 3:1-10 (11-15) 16-18**

**Philippians 3:12-21**

**John 17:1-8**

*Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that the Son may glorify thee. John 17:1*

John is acutely interested in the theme of glory. As he writes of Jesus' prayer to his father in the first eight verses of chapter 17, he uses "glory" in several forms: glorify, glorified, glory. How does John understand Jesus? We might begin by asking ourselves what we mean when we speak of glory. It's instructive to observe how colleges use the term. Here are a few examples:

“for the glory of Notre Dame”

“tell the story of glory of Pennsylvania”

“stands our noble alma mater glorious to view”.

We could go on. But let's ask what these lyrics are driving at. They are saying that my college is a place of light, power, honor, admirability, success, and victory. Perhaps it's worthy of worship. You and I use the term "glory" pretty much the way the colleges do. If someone or something is covered in glory, we are drawn to admiration. To be glorious is to be compellingly magnetic. John's use of the term is exactly opposite. The most glorious image he can think of is a blood-bespattered, rejected, suffering man forced by appropriate authority to be high and lifted up. John wants us to know that Jesus' words and actions reveal the heart of God. God shines through him most gloriously when he willingly goes up to die. Worldly glory is often personal or institutional self-preoccupation. Godly glory, as John understands it, is generosity, love, self-forgetfulness.

*Shed upon your church, O Lord, the brightness of your light, that we being illumined by the teaching of your apostle and evangelist John, may so walk in the light of your truth that at length we may attain to the fullness of eternal life. (BCP, page 238, St. John, December 27)*

**Friday, February 19**

**Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32**

**Philippians 4:1-9**

**John 17:9-19**

*The peace of God which passes understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*  
Phil. 4:7

When I was confirmed many years ago, Bishop Gailor gave us each a beautiful little book. It was The Practice of the Presence of God by a Brother Lawrence.

Later, in the Great Depression, which was much worse than the present one, I came across this little book, and then proceeded to live with it each day, for many years. It became a great help in difficult times and situations.

St. Paul tells us today - no doubt from his own experiences, *“to rejoice in the Lord always and the peace of God which passes understanding will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”* And *“what you have learned and seen in me, do. And the God of Peace will be with you.”*

**Saturday, February 20**

**Ezekiel 39:21-29**

**Philippians 4:10-20**

**John 17:20-26**

There was a time when I was always overwhelmed and stressed out, when even the good times were only 'so good.' I'd heard about a program that was supposed to help and decided it was worth a try.

The first step was to get in touch with my broker. I already knew him when I signed up for the program, but we definitely weren't as close as we are now. I didn't talk about it much in the beginning. I was afraid that at anytime, the bottom was going to drop out and things would go back to the way they were. My close friends knew, as did my family, but I didn't make it very public.

As time went on, I realized this wasn't just some quick fix; it really does work! What changed? One day I just decided to stop taking his classes every once in awhile and take the leap into the whole program. It's totally worth everything I put into it and more - he is AWESOME! Now I think it works so well I want to share it with you.

Anytime I have a problem with the program, I'm able to get in touch with him right away and he helps me work it out. He's **always** available. Sometimes I feel like I'm his only customer, because I can get in touch with him so easily! I never have to worry about being put on hold for a long time, I don't have to go through an automated service and he runs the business himself so I don't even have to talk to a receptionist!

Sometimes it takes him a little while to get it all worked out, but I've yet to have a problem he couldn't solve. I've had some doozies, too, so that's really saying a lot; there have been times when it's almost like he's worked miracles.

You may have already figured this one out, but my broker is Jesus. He already paid for all of us to take His full program. He only asks for a down payment of faith in Him. He may not solve all of my problems the way I think He should, but He can be pretty persuasive in helping me understand His reasoning. Perhaps Paul said it best when he wrote his letter to the Philippians, saying "*In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through HIM who strengthens me.*"

*Heavenly Father, grant me courage today, remembering that  
I Can dO all throUgh ChRist becAuse He strenGthens mE.*

## Monday, February 22

**Genesis 37:1-11**

**1 Corinthians 1:1-19**

**Mark 1:1-13**

Have you been to the grocery store lately to buy something simple? For most of my 57 years I have used Colgate toothpaste. I have nothing against all of the other brands, that is just how I was raised. I want plain old Colgate, but there's Clean Mint, Whitening, Max Fresh, Whitening Oxygen Bubbles, Luminous and Sensitive Enamel Colgate, but good luck finding plain old Colgate.

How about Triscuits? You can't beat a nice hunk of cheddar cheese on an Original Triscuit, but try to finding them on the shelf! There are Parmesan Garlic, Roasted Tomato, Hint of Salt, Cracked Pepper, Roasted Garlic, and Rosemary with Olive Oil Triscuits... all I want is a simple box of Original Triscuits!

Have our lives become overly complicated with way too many choices? Maybe Lent is a good time to simplify. In 1 Corinthians Paul wrote "...the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched in Him, in speech and knowledge of every kind... so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift"---- simple and powerful, the saving grace of Christ Jesus. Then in Mark's gospel the camel-hair clothed John the Baptist proclaimed the simple but challenging message of "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" with the promise of "one who is more powerful than I is coming... he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

We have a lot of choices before us in life but by far the most important one is to choose to accept the grace of God. We did not earn it, we do not deserve it, but God keeps it simple and offers it to each and every one of us. Simple and Powerful.

## Tuesday, February 23

**Genesis 37: 12-24**

**1 Corinthians 1:20-31**

**Mark 1:14-28**

*Now his brothers went to pasture their father's flock near Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock at Shechem? Come, I will send you to them." And he said to him, "Here I am." So he said to him, "Go now, see if it is well with your brothers and with the flock, and bring me word." So he sent him from the Valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem. And a man found him wandering in the fields. And the man asked him, "What are you seeking?" "I am seeking my brothers," he said. "Tell me, please, where they are pasturing the flock." And the man said, "They have gone away, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dothan.'" So Joseph went after his brothers and found them at Dothan. Gen. 37:12-17*

This meditation has a very personal focus. It's a meditation on Dothan. Specifically, Dothan, Alabama, home of my Daddy's family. Dothan, Alabama, a city where the city's flagship newspaper quotes a fragment of Genesis 37:17 in a banner across the top: "Let us go down to Dothan..."

It occurs to me that at the very least this is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of Dothan in the Biblical story. It was apparently not a very nice place. Joseph's brothers, who had "gone down to Dothan," saw him coming and they said to one another, "*Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits. Then we will say that a fierce animal has devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.*" (Gen. 37: 19-20). Obviously this place is itself a pit. Moreover, it is the kind of pit that eats dreams. It leaves people a shell of themselves.

As it turns out, Dothan represents the bottoming out of the entire Joseph story. At Dothan Joseph's brothers take his beautiful robe. At Dothan the brothers lose track of Joseph, giving Midianite traders opportunity to sell him to a passing caravan of Ishmaelites. The long, dark trip to Egypt begins. The coverup begins, with the brothers soaking the gorgeous robe in animal blood to fool Jacob. And so begins Jacob's painful grief.

Dothan is a mean, swoll-up, angry, vicious, hard-bit, cheating, back-stabbing, son of a...

OK. So given this, I have a question. What were the people thinkin' who named Dothan, Alabama, "Dothan?" A little history: Dothan was submitted to replace the original post office name of Poplar Head when it turned out there was already another Poplar Head, Alabama. Why replace such a prosaic name as Poplar Head with something so dire as Dothan? I suppose one possibility would be that the Dothan of land-grant days was a mean-as-hell town with enough Bible-thumping citizens to know a fitting name when they saw it.

I suppose another possibility would be that the people who named the town Dothan had some experience, like Joseph, getting to the very end of their rope, tying a knot, and hanging on. Sometimes all you can do is take stock of just how bad things really are, settle in, and let the caravan carry you for a while as events unfold. I once had a psychology professor at Florida State tell me this in different words, way back in my undergraduate days: "If you want change, you have to start from where you are." I find that it holds true whether you are hanging on to the end of your rope or have "gone down to Dothan."

*God, you are creator of everything, even of our most overwhelming challenges. Give us grace to rest in you when we feel tempted to vain and empty striving, and teach us that your strength is made perfect in weakness. Through Jesus Christ our Lord who for our sakes became weak. Amen*

**Wednesday, February 24**

**Genesis 37:25-36**

**1 Corinthians 2:1-13**

**Mark 1:29-45**

*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.* 1 Corinthians 2:9 (Quoting Isaiah 64:4)

All of the readings today reflect this beautiful statement of Isaiah, which is quoted by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. The Old Testament reading in Genesis concerns the well-known and beloved story of "Joseph and His Many-Colored Coat"; Paul's letter to the Corinthians tells them that Paul does not want their faith to rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power; and in the reading of the Gospel of Mark people are given hope because of healings that Jesus does - to Simon Peter's mother-in-law, to "many who had various diseases" and to a man with leprosy.

Would Joseph's brothers, who sold him into slavery, ever have dreamed that he would become a favorite of the Pharaoh and have the ability to save their families from starvation during the famine in Egypt? In the beautiful climax to this story, in Genesis 50:20, Joseph declares to his brothers, *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."* What an amazing story of redemption and forgiveness! Would we forgive our brothers for such an evil act, and would we have had the vision to know that it was God acting?

Who would ever have imagined Paul's miraculous conversion? He was the leader of the group stoning Stephen, having his goal to "destroy the church," "still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord's disciples," going on a trip to Damascus "so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem," - then converted to becoming accepted by the apostles, becoming one of their leaders, to writing to the young church in Corinthians about the wisdom of God's spirit, and quoting this beautiful phrase from Isaiah. If we were one of the apostles, could we believe that such a man could have such a change of heart and accept him into our group? Could we imagine that someone so learned and arrogant as Saul could become one who described himself as a "servant of Christ"?

But perhaps the defining message in this phrase is "for those who love Him." For it is only by loving God that we can discover God's "secret wisdom", a wisdom "that God destined for our glory before time began."

There is no truer statement in the Bible than: *"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him."*

**Thursday, February 25**

**Genesis: 39:1-23**

**1 Corinthians. 2:14-3:15**

**Mark 2:1-12**

**Advent 2006** - I remember wanting to adopt a family for Christmas; business was good and we were receiving many blessings that we wanted to share. We spoke to several organizations about how to accomplish this, but none seemed to reach the recipients on the personal level that we wanted. At the same time we financially helped a friend host a Russian orphan during the Christmas holiday. We were then included on a prayer list for all the orphans visiting the United States through this hosting program.

**The Phone Call** – Renee said, “Vince I have spoken to the children and we have made a decision... There are twin girls in Florida and the host family cannot adopt them. We would like to meet them and consider adopting these 13 year old girls into our family.” We then met, fell in love and made this commitment: we will do everything in our power to adopt these girls, regardless of the cost and the uncertainty of the outcome, we will never quit on them.

**No - No - No** – We contacted the agency back and confirmed that our desire was to pursue adopting these two particular girls. We were told, “No. The host family has now decided to pursue their adoption and they are seeking an exception.” Once the host family did not receive the exception, we again were told “No. Now the host family’s parents are going to adopt them, you cannot adopt them.” Then when that family was unsuccessful, once again we were told, “No. The girls are not adoptable.”

**Authorities in Russia** – Orphanage director, “You cannot adopt these girls.” Inspector in charge of Children Affairs, “You cannot adopt these girls.” Judge from Family Court in Russia, “You should not try to adopt these girls.”

**Family and Friends** – Don’t you think that God is closing these doors? Maybe this is God’s way of bringing it to an end. You have four children, one in a wheelchair; you are crazy to try to adopt these children. Just let it go. This was a very consistent message we were receiving.

**Clergy** – “Vince, I am worried about you; your family is under stress, your business is failing, I am worried for your health. I am not sure I can continue supporting these adoption efforts.”

**1 Corinthians 3:5-15 Watering -Working - Warning** – We felt alone, how can doing the right thing be so difficult? The words spoken by family and friends hurt; all meant well, but all told us to stop the process. Emotionally we were drained, financially we were tapped out. The family unit was cracking; new and unforeseen challenges just seemed to be coming from every direction, not just from the adoption, but from life in general. Maybe everyone was right. Perhaps this challenge would be the one that would break the proverbial camel’s back. Then we received notification that we would have our day in Russian court. Stressed and scared, we let go and gave it to God. We needed to be in Russia for a month and did not have the money for this final trip or the remaining adoption fees. Additionally, success in court seemed doubtful, but we continued His work. We had received over two years of “no’s,” but we were a family being led. God told us to continue our journey, and as a family we believed together. God challenged our faith, God showed us grace; somehow through all the warnings and setbacks, we believed, we prayed and God rewarded us. We received the approval from the orphanage director, from the local inspectors and the judge said, “Yes!” We were able to pay for the trip, pay the adoption fees, and I don’t believe any of us could ever imagine life without Ksusha and Nastia; it seems like they have always been with us. The details are amazing and truly our family received a miracle from God.

**Friday, February 26**

**Genesis 40:1-23**

**1 Corinthians 3:16-23**

**Mark 2:13-22**

*... After they have been in custody for some time each of the two men-the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were being held in prison - had a dream the same night, and each dream had a meaning of its own. When Joseph came to them the next morning, he saw that they were dejected. So he asked Pharaoh's officials who were in custody with him in his master's house, "Why are your faces so sad today?" "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them." Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams"...* Genesis 40:5-8

In this scripture Joseph interprets the cupbearer's and the baker's dreams. The cupbearer dreamed of a vine with three branches. Those branches budded, and blossoms became clusters of ripened grapes. Those ripened grapes were squeezed by the cupbearer into Pharaoh's cup and the cup was given to the Pharaoh. Joseph interpreted the three branches as three days. In three days Pharaoh will lift the cupbearer's head and restore him back to his position.

After Joseph had interpreted the dream for the cupbearer he asked the cupbearer to please intercede for him in front of the Pharaoh. Joseph believed he had done nothing wrong to deserve to be in jail.

Witnessing such a favorable interpretation, the baker also wanted his dream to be interpreted by Joseph. In his dream the baker had three baskets of bread on his head. On the top basket there were all kinds of goods for the Pharaoh, but the birds were eating them out of the basket on his head. Joseph interpreted the three baskets as three days. In three days the Pharaoh will lift the baker's head and hang him from a tree. The birds will then eat his flesh.

Three days went by and it is now the day of Pharaoh's birthday. He gave a feast for all his officials. He lifted the heads of his cupbearer and baker. The cupbearer went back to his old position. The baker perished after being hung.

The cupbearer never interceded for Joseph.

This reading teaches us how the power of God was expressed through Joseph. Joseph was able to read into the future by interpreting people's dreams. The cupbearer benefited from Joseph's wisdom but he still did not help Joseph get out of jail.

Men will succeed and many times forget those who helped them succeed.

**Saturday, February 27**

**Genesis 41:1-13**

**1 Corinthians 4:10-7**

**Mark 2:23-3:6**

*“Another time he went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.” Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent. He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.” Mark 3:1-6*

All three readings today involve people who stood by their relationships with God in the face of threats. In the passage from Mark, Jesus confronted the Jewish leaders over their interpretation of the laws governing the Sabbath.

Jesus asks the Pharisees, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” He believed the Jewish leaders were too strict in their interpretation of God’s rules concerning the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a time for rest and community, not a time to debate the legal minutia of our actions. Jesus pointed out the hypocrisy of the Pharisees by performing an act of mercy. The Jewish leaders spent time on the Sabbath plotting his murder, while Jesus healed a man who had suffered his whole life with a shriveled hand.

The Jewish leaders were too extreme in their observance of the Sabbath. They put their religious rules ahead of their love of God and their fellow man. We are quick to criticize their obvious sins but we err to the other extreme. We have all but lost our respect for the Sabbath.

I lived under blue laws when I was a kid in Savannah. Not only could you not buy beer at the package store, you couldn’t even buy a shirt at Belk because it was against the law for most businesses to be open on Sundays. So how did we spend our Sunday afternoons? I can remember Sunday lunches visiting family friends and drives in the country. Sundays often felt like holidays (or should I say holy days). The blue laws were repealed in the ’70s and the forced collective observance of the Sabbath was washed away with time. Sundays are now just another day to run errands.

Last Sunday, after working on my church breakfast team and attending church, I did nothing. I read, took a nap, kept a fire in the fireplace all day, watched the NFL Divisional playoffs and had dinner with my family. I felt rested and relaxed. I also had a recurring sense of guilt. What a lazy bum! I didn’t accomplish anything that day. I didn’t work out at the Y; I didn’t fix the slow drain in the upstairs sink; and I didn’t go shopping with my wife and daughter (okay, I didn’t feel guilty about that).

God wants us to set aside the Sabbath to rest, spend time with loved ones and to reflect on our relationship with Him. This Sunday, indulge in a guilty pleasure. Be lazy. Have a lengthy lunch with friends and family. Take a long walk around the lake. Walk away from your daily distractions and be mindful of your place in time while in the presence of God.

**Monday, March 1**

**Genesis 41:46-57**

**1 Corinthians 4:8-20(21)**

**Mark 3:7-19a**

*The seven years of plenty that prevailed in the land of Egypt came to an end; and the seven years of famine began to come, just as Joseph had said. Genesis 41: 53-54*

Pharaoh had a dream. The dream had serious consequences for Pharaoh's people, but it made no sense to him. It worried him. He sought out someone to interpret it but no one in his inner circle could do so to Pharaoh's satisfaction. Joseph, though in prison, was already known as one who interprets dreams accurately. Lucky for him, he came through with an interesting and useful interpretation. And, he didn't take credit for it. Joseph saw the hand of God in his interpretive power.

Pharaoh embraced the meaning described by Joseph. He empowered Joseph to act on this interpretation. And, as we know, Joseph was successful. He oversaw the organization and careful storage of excess grain during the seven bountiful years. And, then perhaps more importantly, he oversaw its fair distribution during the seven years of famine. The Egyptians were literally saved, not only by Pharaoh's dream, but Joseph's ability to organize a nation-wide plan to prepare for the lean years.

Since this is a story that has been told and re-told long before recording it, we don't know if this is the actual sequence of events. We don't even know if it is factual in the sense of a news account. Rather it is a story with significance for the chosen people, the Jews. And so it is also a story with meaning for modern Christians and Jews.

The people of the tiny country of Haiti have been plunged into a famine of Biblical proportions. And it didn't follow seven years of bounty. They were living on the edge and the edge has given way under their weight. Where was their Pharaoh to dream the future? Where was their Joseph, guided by God's hand to foresee the coming famine? And where is their Joseph, able to organize and then deliver a successful crisis response.

Like others, I feel useless to aid these desperate people. On Sunday, January 17, Father Rob challenged the people of St. Aidan's to donate \$100 per family to Haitian relief, either through organizations such as the Red Cross or through the Episcopal Relief and Development. It feels like so little in the face of so much suffering. But it is something. I can do that much. And I can pray the DOK motto:

*I am but one, but I am one.*

*I cannot do everything, but I can do something.*

*What I can do, I ought to do.*

*What I ought to do, by the grace of God I will do.*

*Lord, what will you have me do?*

**Tuesday, March 2**

**Genesis 42:1-17**

**1 Corinthians 5:1-8**

**Mark 3:19b-35**

*And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke harshly to them. Genesis 42:6-7*

Jack was just a kid when he started leading a life of drugs and crime. He had joined a gang and often found himself taking advantage of other kids, beating them up or stealing from them. But Jack came from a rough neighborhood. He felt like he had to do these things in order to survive. One night, while jumping a train to steal a ride across town with some of his gang, he accidentally fell. His arm was badly injured and had to be cut off. But, when Jack lost his arm he gained a different perspective. He began to think about all the mean things he had done and realized he needed to change. To make up for all the evil he did he now goes to schools to talk to kids about his experience and to tell them that making bad choices will come back to harm you; that what goes around comes around. But this is also a message of hope. God loves us even after we do bad things, and he may speak sternly to us, but, like Joseph forgave his brothers, God will forgive us.

*Lord Jesus, for our sake you were condemned as a criminal: Visit our jails and prisons with your pity and judgment. Remember all prisoners, and bring the guilty to repentance and amendment of life according to your will, and give them hope for their future. When any are held unjustly, bring them release; forgive us, and teach us to improve our justice. Remember those who work in these institutions; keep them humane and compassionate; and save them from becoming brutal or callous. And since what we do for those in prison, O Lord, we do for you, constrain us to improve their lot. All this we ask for your mercy's sake. Amen.*  
(Book of Common Prayer pg. 826)

**Wednesday, March 3**

**Genesis 42:18-28**

**1 Corinthians 5:9-6:8**

**Mark 4:1-20**

*Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? The farmer sows the word. Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown." Mark 4:13-20*

I find that it is a good time for reflection. We can reflect on what kind of fruit we are. I aim to be the seed sown on good soil as I'm sure we all strive to be. I often fall short though. I too often "let the worries of this life choke the word making it unfruitful." We all are sowers of seed in small and large ways everyday with our actions and words. Which one are you?

*God, heavenly Father, look upon me and hear my prayer during this holy Season of Lent. Help me be a seed that bears the fruit of the spirit. Amen.*

**Thursday, March 4**

**Genesis 42:29-38**

**1 Corinthians 6:12-20**

**Mark 4:21-34**

*Again he said, "What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade." Mark 4:30-32*

I wear a necklace with a mustard seed enclosed in glass around my neck. This is to remind me that small acts can achieve large things. I often feel overwhelmed by my problems, my family's problems, and even the world's problems. But if I do something – some small thing – I can make something larger happen. I just have to plant the seed. A small seed of love can become a family; a small seed of friendship can become a community; a small seed of selflessness can become a mission, a small seed of hope can become a triumph; and a small seed of compassion can become peace.

Plant a seed today in the fertile soil of faith, nurture it just a little, and watch with awe and wonder at what that seed becomes.

**Friday, March 5**

**Genesis 43:1-15**

**1 Corinthians 7:1-9**

**Mark 4:35-41**

*Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quit! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"* Mark 4:39-41

Two years ago I weathered an unfathomable storm. I could not have imagined myself as ever being able to survive such conditions. Many times I wanted to turn around and run out of the wind and rain and back to safety, but I knew that I had no choice. I must walk through these conditions to get to the other side. So I prayed. I prayed for God to carry me when I could not walk. I prayed for God to protect me when I was in danger. I prayed for God to be with me when I felt alone and abandoned. I prayed for God's will to be done. He answered my prayers each and every time.

Eventually, I was no longer afraid of the storm. Through my struggles my faith had grown stronger each day. The rain cleansed my spirit and renewed my life. The answers did not always appear in ways that I expected or even wanted. But I would come to learn that God was giving me exactly what I needed.

Today I believe that God will carry me through every storm, no matter how big or small. I know that he will hold me gently in his arms and place me on the other side exactly where I need to be.

*Heavenly Father, whose love for us surpasses our understanding. May you grant us the strength to do your will. Lead us, full of faith, on our journey in life. Help us to share our faith with others who need to know of your strength and your love.*

**Saturday, March 6**

**Genesis 43:16-34**

**1 Corinthians 7:10-24**

**Mark 5:1-20**

*“Let each of you remain in the condition in which you were called... For whoever was called in the Lord as a slave is a freed person belonging to the Lord, just as whoever was free when called is a slave of Christ.” 1 Cor. 7:20, 22*

I have come to believe that stark contradictions rise out of polarized thinking like insisting that things are absolutely black or white, right or wrong, true or false. I suspect that Paul knows he is introducing this contradiction for us, perhaps because he knows that we tend to get hung up on polarizations that are meaningless, but perhaps also because he recognizes that there is an inherent contradiction in our notion of the constancy of who we are. We may be free, but when we are called we automatically become slaves to Christ, and somehow, inside of that tension, nothing about us can ever be or stay the same. But, as we struggle with that tension, we must not get caught up in the meaningless things like external appearances. God’s grace has transformed our very essence. Sometimes that will be immediately apparent, as it was with the Gerasene demoniac, but it can be completely invisible and inside of us and be just as dramatic.

*Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor, and further us with your continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy Name, and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (BCP pg. 832)*

## Monday, March 8

**Genesis 44:18-34**

**1 Corinthians 7: 25-31**

**Mark 5:21-43**

When I first read the passages I had been given as part of the Daily Meditation for Lent I was quite confused and not sure what to write. Maybe I was exhausted from caring for a 2 year old who had gotten croup, then an ear infection, and finally pneumonia in the span of 2 weeks. After the holidays and my daughter's illnesses had cleared up and were behind my family I went back to revisit the passages I had been given. At first I was still a little lost until I realized that there was an overwhelming theme of family and the relationships between parents and their children.

Through out my daughter's time of being sick I had often asked God why she was being put through this, and then praying that she would feel better. Each day of her illness had had its ups and downs when I thought she would get better and then I would realize that she was getting sicker. My moods rose and fell with her moods and how she was feeling. In the passage from Genesis a man is describing his father's love for another son and what sadness and grief it would cause the father to lose his beloved son. While I was never in fear of losing my daughter I could identify with the father that felt that his life was so tied to his son that he would suffer greatly without him. The passage from Mark was the story of Jesus who is asked by a grief stricken father begging Jesus to come heal his young daughter who everyone believes is dead. On His journey to see the young girl a woman who is very sick touches Him believing that just touching Jesus will heal her, her faith in His power makes it possible for her heal. Once Jesus reaches the young girl he is able to raise her from the dead.

Rereading these passages made me think about the all consuming love God has given us all for mankind and for our family and especially our children. What a gift, at times it seems a bittersweet gift, that we have that much power to love. To think that God loves all us that way is such a comfort, miracle and blessing to us all. Finally, I am reminded that faith and belief in God and His son will carry us through even the toughest and trying of times in our life.

Each day I try to take time out to meditate and pray to God. Often my prayer is as simple as *"I am so thankful to You for my many blessing and I ask for Your guidance and strength in this day and all that follow. Amen"*

**Tuesday, March 9**

**Genesis 45:1-15**

**1 Corinthians 7:32-40**

**Mark 6:1-13**

*“God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.” Gen. 45:7*

*And Jesus said to his them, “A prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown and among his relatives and in his household.” Mark 6:4*

Familial acceptance and understanding is an encompassment of the Lord’s love to all of us. Every family struggles with strife in one form or another. Even for families that do not get along, there are still moments of connection. If we cannot accept the actions of others, know that the Lord has other plans.

Everything that tests our faith will only make us stronger for knowing God. Believing in Jesus’ teachings, are like reflections of God’s teachings down the ages. As Jesus walked, moved and healed amongst us, he was also trying to preserve that remnant on earth that still believed in God’s teachings. He tried to enable others to understand God’s love and steer them from being misled by others. It is no fault of his that close relatives did not believe his accomplishments and wisdom. They still saw a young boy in Jesus. But children do grow, they learn, and they partake in society. This is part of our cycle of life. Understanding Jesus Christ from his teachings, true to heart and soul, will guide children into the Lord’s love.

*Lord, please accept or forgive our actions towards our brethren. We do not wish any harm, but we know that there are times that we do. We seek your love and guidance as we also seek our path to you, our God, thru Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

**Wednesday, March 10**

**Genesis 45:16-28**

**I Corinthians 8:1-13**

**Mark 6:13-29**

*"... Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; but anyone who loves God is known by him."* I Corinthians 8:1-3

Written only two decades after the resurrection of Jesus, Paul's letter addresses a church already torn by controversy. The situation is so dire that Paul sits down to write his letter with a laundry list of problems he must address. In his letter, Paul addresses each one by one, "Now concerning . . ."

In today's reading Paul addresses the subject of eating meat which has been offered in sacrifice to idols. Some converts from pagan beliefs found it troubling that Christ's believers might purchase and consume meat, purposely or accidentally, which had been previously sacrificed in honor of a Roman god.

"Wise" believers of the church viewed such questions as silly. Meat was meat, regardless of its origins. Didn't Christ's teachings supersede religious laws and other worries about meat origins, whether Jewish, pagan, or otherwise?

Being right in our wisdom, Paul says, not only misses the point, but endangers our souls. Placing too much faith in our knowledge makes us spiritual fools, and actually can separate us and others we influence from God's love.

On the whole, we Episcopalians are a well-educated group of believers. According to a recent Pew survey, almost 60% of us possess either a college or postgraduate degree. No other Christian denomination or tradition in the United States is even close.

We are well read and full of facts to back our position. Our churches have libraries and book clubs. Our church meetings, Bible studies, and covenant groups are participatory affairs where few are intimidated by the thought of expressing their opinion. In the narthex of our own church right now we offer a tract entitled "The Episcopal Church: A Faith for Thinking People". My friends, Paul warns us that our knowledge and study places an especially heavy obligation on us. Our highly developed ability to learn and reason can cause us to forget that the sole source of our faith is the love of Christ. The ultimate "foolish" act, God made flesh and sacrificing himself for us, is the first and final resting point for our faith and our salvation.

**Thursday, March 11**

**Genesis 46:1-7, 28-34**

**1 Corinthians 9:1-15**

**Mark 6:30-46**

*By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. "This is a remote place," they said, "and it's already very late. Send the people away so they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat." But he answered, "You give them something to eat." They said to him, "That would take eight months of a man's wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?" "How many loaves do you have?" he asked. "Go and see." Mark 6:35-38*

The story of Jesus feeding the multitudes is one of the first of many Bible stories read to me as a child. My parents and Sunday School teachers were very wise to use this story to show me how Jesus used simple concepts to teach and then performed miracles to meet the most basic of needs.

This story has been recounted many times throughout my life. Whether it is in sermons, studies or teachings, it never seems to lose its miraculous impact on how I see and understand Jesus. The wonder and awe I felt as a child hearing this story has not lessened over time and it is still as fresh and new as it was the first time I heard it.

As I meditated on the scripture this time I saw something new. This time I saw thousands of people very hungry and thirsty for the words and teachings of Jesus. They followed Jesus and his disciples everywhere they went. The crowds sought them so urgently and diligently that the disciples barely had time to rest, eat or, otherwise, replenish themselves.

When it became late in the day the disciples were spent. They asked Jesus to send the people away to feed themselves. I have no idea which teachings Jesus was sharing that day, but my impression is that the crowd did not want to leave – they wanted to continue to listening to Jesus... and Jesus had more to share with them.

Jesus told the disciples "You give them something to eat". This surely puzzled the disciples. The disciples were thinking with their brains and seeing with their eyes and feeling with their bellies. The miracle of feeding the multitudes was a great feat, but is there a deeper story or double miracle here? Which was greater, feeding thousands with a few loaves and fishes? Or was the real miracle that day found in showing the disciples how to see through the eyes of their faith?

When Jesus said "How many loaves do you have?" I think he was showing the disciples how to take account for what they had – whether it be loaves, fishes, skills or talents - have faith and use them! When Jesus said "Go and see", he was telling the disciples to make an account of what they had; take an inventory; be aware and know the resources you possess; take responsibility. Through faith and communion with God it will be enough to meet the needs. And in this case, there were even leftovers.

*Lord, help us to see with our spiritual eyes and to believe with our whole hearts that all the needs will be met to your glory. Show us how to take inventory of the many skills, talents and gifts you have given us. Make us fearless to use them so the needs are met and you are glorified. Amen.*

**Friday, March 12**

**Genesis 47:1-26**

**1 Corinthians 9:16-27**

**Mark 6:47-56**

*“So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air, but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified.” 1 Cor. 9:26-27*

“In it to win it.” That’s the phrase that came to mind as I was reading about Paul’s approach to spreading the Gospel. I never really thought about evangelism as a race, or an athletic challenge, but he makes an interesting point. Why do we as Christians live a life of faith? Why do we reach out to others and share that faith? Certainly it’s not an aimless pursuit, but an obligation to share the blessings of God’s grace with others.

I’ve always been taught that I can’t “be all things to all people,” but this is exactly what Paul says he has become. He speaks of meeting people where they are, on their turf. Two thousand years later, this is a missional approach modern churches are embracing. They are reaching out to the people who need Christ the most, searching out their needs and finding ways to help. Touching lives and spreading the Word outside of the sanctuary of the church.

We can’t wait for people to come to us. We can’t “box as though beating the air.” We need to be “in it to win it.” To me, that’s a challenge to get out of my comfort zone and transform myself just as Paul did. He talks of becoming “a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.” To me, this is a powerful call to serve those who are in need, whether they are abroad in Honduras or Haiti or some other country, or in our hometown at the Drake House or North Fulton Charities or Emmaus House.

I find it so easy to surround myself with the comforts of modern life, and protect myself from things that seem bad or scary. With a cozy home in a nice neighborhood and electronic advantages like internet and TIVO, it doesn’t take much to avoid all the things that are unpleasant around me – crime, poverty and hopelessness – but Paul won’t let me hide. He tells me that, “I am entrusted with a commission,” and I can’t turn away.

Like Paul, I share in the blessings of the Gospel. I cannot keep them to myself. If I hope for salvation, I must go out and become like those who need to hear God’s word, so that I can share it on their terms. If I’m “in it to win it,” and live a Christian life as an example of God’s grace, *“...after proclaiming to others, I myself should not be disqualified.”*

## Saturday, March 13

**Genesis 47:27-48:7**

**1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

**Mark 7:1-23**

*“You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition”* Mark 7:8

For as many years as I can remember, I have given up a food or drink for Lent, processed sugar, diet coke, ice cream... the usual. And I have often intended to “take on” something as well, although I must admit this is never as successful. Simply put, I run out of hours in the day. We live such hectic lives that it is easier to delete from our schedules than to cram in even one more tiny “to do”. Our lesson for today from Mark speaks loudly to me. It reminds me of the true meaning of Lent, which accompanies with it a rude awakening for my comfortable Lenten routine. It reminds me of a key element that I have been allowing to elude me because I have been too busy! Lent is about God, not about me.

Our human tradition of “giving up” is a way for us to experience self denial much as Jesus did as he was tempted in the desert. And while Lent is about sacrifice, and for some giving up chocolate may even meet that requirement, it’s more about finding time for God. Human traditions, just as the Jewish traditions that Mark writes about, often are created with good intentions. Certainly washing your hands is a good idea! But the problem arises when human customs outweigh God’s call. The Pharisees were so focused on the dirt on the disciples’ hands that they were blind to the dirt in their own hearts, in their own minds, in their own actions, and in their own inactions. If we use Lent as a time to focus on cutting out sweets and not as a time to enrich our lives by focusing on God, the Lenten season is wasted.

This Lent, I challenge you for the remaining few weeks to “take on” God. Even if it’s prayer as you sit in gridlocked traffic on GA400. Pray in the shower, as you drift asleep, or even as you fold laundry. Spend 5 minutes a day reading from your dusty bible. Sit quietly and listen for God. However it is that you can build your relationship with God, I challenge you to add more of it into your day. I can assure you that it will be well worth your time.

*Almighty Father, be our companion, rekindle our hearts, and awaken our spirits, that we may know you as you are revealed in the scripture, prayer, and in the breaking of the bread. Grant this for the sake of your love. Amen. (modified from the BCP)*

**Monday, March 15**

**Genesis 49:1-28**

**1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1**

**Mark 7:24-37**

*“So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it for the glory of God.”* 1 Cor. 10:31  
*“Looking up to heaven, he sighed and said, “Ephphatha,” which means, “Be opened!”* Mark 7:34

Ten years ago our 18 year old son, a freshman in college, was killed in a car accident. There was no drinking or drugs involved, he wasn't even driving. It was a choice that he made to get into the car to go with a friend who was running an errand and wanted some help. Jon, was a great kid, full of faith, full of life, had done most things right in his life. So, why my child, why us, why me? Rather than having a pity party and being mad at God and turning my back on Jesus, I reflected on our son and how he had lived his short life, the gift that we had been given of this child and how I could go on in celebration of his life.

During the months of grief that followed I prayed continually for God's Grace. One afternoon I realized that I needed to be open to hear God and feel the presence of Grace. It became my comfort to know that when the pain of loss was so horrible, I would open my heart to Jesus and I could feel my body being surrounded by protection, like pillows, that would reflect the pain and sorrow I couldn't handle. Slowly, I realized that as time went on the pain wasn't as severe and the comfort of being open to God was helping me to heal. Be open, to God's Grace and Glory and it will protect you.

Becoming very used to being open to God's comfort and support, being surrounded by pillows of Grace, I decided that we needed to do something for God's "outrageous" love for us, which would be for his glory. Our son was very involved in a Christian youth organization that sponsored camps each summer. Jon knew Jesus and had built a relationship with our Lord through Christian Ed and this camp. We wanted others to know Jesus as he did. Our goal was to raise enough money to send kids to camp that wouldn't otherwise be able to go. We started an annual yard sale to raise funds. This was accomplished and the fund goes on today, sending kids to camp to meet Jesus and be open to his love and Grace and in turn, share it with others! What can you do to be open to God's "outrageous" love and share it with others? Is it through music, writing, teaching or healing? Each of us has a story to tell, a witness to Christ. As we prepare to walk our talk, let's continue to ask... Is this action glorifying God?

*Dear Heavenly Father; You care so deeply for each of us even when we least expect it. Your Grace is ever present and your love is outrageous. Help us to open our hearts to hear your message and then share it with others forever glorifying your name. Amen*

**Tuesday, March 16**

**Genesis 49:29---50:14**

**1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

**Mark 8:1-10**

*"Thus his sons did for him as he had instructed them." Gen. 50:12*

I feel like we all should do more along the lines of what God has instructed us to do, no matter what it is. "I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat." I feel I have been instructed to have compassion towards everyone. I feel compassion for the people of the world, especially Haiti after the past few weeks. Compassion is always a way for us to help others and ourselves at the same time. Compassion leads us to do things for others, but we can be surprised by how much it helps us too.

I was once told, in the midst of being scolded, I would rather help others than myself. I have never let that go. I would rather help anyone than myself. That must be why, as soon as I heard the news of the tragedy in Haiti, I felt the need to drop everything and go down there. That did not happen but I still feel I should be helping because He has instructed me to do something. I still do not fully understand what I am supposed to do but I am ready for more instructions.

None of us know the plan He has for us but we know He has instructed us to do *something*. We should not judge what we are instructed to do; sometimes we are pushed in new directions. He knows very well what He is doing and planning. This is your chance to do what you have always felt you should do, but maybe weren't sure. God says to follow His instructions, maybe that nagging inside of you is really Him.

Trust in the Lord. He knows you better than you do. Follow the instructions, your dreams, for they are His dreams too.

Please pray for Haiti, Honduras, and all those in need. Follow that nagging, you never know where His plans will take you.

**Wednesday, March 17**

**Genesis 50: 15-26**

**1 Corinthians 12: 1-11**

**Mark 8: 11-26**

*“You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, ...” Gen. 50:20*

Bad things happen. We know this is true because we’ve all seen the bumper sticker. But more importantly, we know it’s true because we’ve experienced bad things and been there for our brothers and sisters who are going through tough times. We’ve all written checks for disaster relief or made a casserole to take to a family who’s suffered a loss. We’ve been a shoulder to cry on or a comfort to someone who is suffering.

I cannot tell you the number of times I’ve said “When God closes a door he opens a window.” Or the number of times I’ve heard “There’s a silver lining to every cloud.” These are all things I believe to the core of my being, and yet, tell that to the people in Haiti who experienced another earthquake this morning. Where is their silver lining? Did God really close all those doors? Does He really intend this action for good?

God does not make the bad things happen, but our love for Him makes us want to help. So is our salvation tied to the unhappiness of others? The answer to this is of course not - salvation comes from God’s grace. Though there’s nothing we can do to earn grace, we must be God’s agents for good when we see misfortune. We can’t just walk away and let someone else handle the bad stuff while we wait for the silver lining so we can show up again. Maybe a casserole or a check isn’t much, but sometimes it’s all we can do, and therefore, it’s something we **MUST** do.

Our actions are the way that God brings good from a situation that is harmful or stressful or hurtful. As Christians we are called to do the right thing, to accomplish something that heals a broken heart or begins to fix a broken life. I think there’s a bumper sticker for that, too, the one about the random acts of kindness. Practice them, and accomplish the good God intends.

*Lord, make us instruments of your peace.*

**Thursday, March 18**

**Exodus 2:6-22**

**1 Corinthians 12:12-26**

**Mark 8:27-9:1**

*“For is anything worth more than his soul?”* Mark 8:37

Jesus asked his apostles: “Who do you say that I am?” Peter responded that Jesus was the Messiah. This name expresses for Jesus His two-fold destiny of suffering and glory. Laying down His life is what Jesus did. He trusted His life to the Father’s will, to Divine Providence. That path led through the cross to death, burial, resurrection and glory where He sits at the Father’s right hand in Heaven.

As His follower, you are asked to lay down your life, pick up your cross and follow Him. Follow Him where? To suffering and glory? To lay down your life means to surrender your independence, to give up your wishes and desires, to seek only the Father’s will in your life; to insure that His will is done on earth through you.

As Job, the reluctant hero of the Old Testament discovered, prayer and suffering are the lot of man. God never answered Job’s complaints, never explained His actions nor did Christ answer the questions of His critics.

In the words of Fr. Richard Rohr: “The entire journey of Job can be seen as the painful path of the soul: the “pruning” of the branch of its pretense of autonomy, of self validation and self-criticism. Freedom is when you know that neither of them matters. Our significance comes from who-I-am-in-God, who-I-am-as-part-of-a-much-larger-whole. I am a representative of God and He is carrying me.”

Is this the only way? Are we expected to remain indifferent to good fortune or adversity by accepting it all from the hand of God, not to ask for things to be done as we’d like, but to make the intention of all our prayers that God’s will should be perfectly accomplished in ourselves? As saints throughout the ages have found, it is the only path to find the secret of happiness and content in this life and in the next.

Our eternal soul is the most precious gift of our Creator. To deliver it whole and pure to Him in Heaven is our life’s goal and if we trust The Trinity to lead us day by day and moment by moment though life by Divine Providence we will become who we were born to be.

For is anything worth more than your soul? Nothing on earth or in Heaven, save God Himself!

**Friday, March 19**

**Exodus 2:1-22**

**1 Corinthians 12:27 – 13:3**

**Mark 9:2-13**

*“If I speak in tongues of mortals and angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging symbol. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and have all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.” 1 Cor. 13:1-3*

Growing up mainly in the southern US, I have found myself among many who profess themselves to be Christians. I remember when I first moved here from England at the tender age of ten, one of the things that my new friends asked me if I was saved, and if I was a Christian. I have to profess that at that time I had no earthly idea what they were saying. Not to seem ignorant, I, of course, said yes. Things got a little more interesting in the summer when I was invited to a Vacation Bible School at a Baptist church. First, being raised Anglican in England, much of this new “Christian” speak was almost as foreign to me as “American” was. I don’t believe I had ever been to VBS. I certainly had never had to memorize Bible verses and seen all the hoopla that came to those who could quote so many verses.

As I grew into my teenage years I began occasionally attending church with non-Episcopalian friends. I saw so many folks who “walked the walk, and talked the talk;” especially kids I went to school with. There they were on Sundays, all decked out in their finest, spouting their Bible verses and singing their gospel songs, acting like the very epitome of Christians; then Monday morning these same kids were spouting curse words and saying absolutely horrible things about others. It was as if they had forgotten all they heard on Sunday. They certainly were not showing the love toward each other that a Christian should show.

In the past decade or two I have been learning so much more about the love side of our faith. Without God’s love, I would be nothing. I have found that His love has helped me personally through so many difficulties in my life. I am lucky that I have a family who also recognizes that God’s love enables us to do so much, not only for one another, but also for others in need. We support one another through prayer from one side of the world to the other. We help others whenever possible. All for the Glory of God through His love for us.

May we all continue to abide in his love and do all that is possible for others in this world who do not know His love. May we help others to learn of God’s love for us and to know that through Him, all things are possible.

**Saturday, March 20**

**Exodus 2:23-3:15**

**1Corinthians 13:1-13**

**Mark 9:14-29**

*"So these three things continue forever: faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love." 1 Cor. 13:13*

First Corinthians 13, "The love chapter" - You are very likely to have heard this passage read at weddings. It paints a picture of love that is patient, and kind, love that is not jealous, does not brag and is not proud. *Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not get upset with others. Love does not count up wrongs that have been done.* (Verse 5) Brides and grooms choose this chapter, almost as a mission statement for marriage. Although, many of us might think of these words as a description of romantic love, or even the love between friends, rather Paul is describing, the deepest of all loves, the love of God called agape. Agape is the unselfish, deliberate choice to show love rather than a reaction to a recipient's worthiness. Agape is unconditional love. Agape is the purest love. If asked to select one word to describe God, you would probably choose the word "love". We look to 1st John 4:8 which says "God is love." If we really think about what God asks us to do in this world, it is that same word "love".

Many years ago, Lennon/McCartney wrote the Beatles song, *"All you need is love, love is all you need."*

*"Love, love, love, love, love, love, love, love, love. There's nothing you can do that can't be done.  
Nothing you can sing that can't be sung. Nothing you can say but you can learn how to play the game. It's easy.  
There's nothing you can make that can't be made. No one you can save that can't be saved.  
Nothing you can do but you can learn how to be you in time. It's easy!  
All you need is love, all you need is love. All you need is love, love, love is all you need."*

Substitute the word God, God, God, God... There's nothing you can do that can't be done... with God... All you need is God, God, God, God and God's love, that's all you need."

We live in a world where people are desperate for real love, the love of God, and there are vast numbers of people born today who will never know this message because political sensitivity about religion and culture requires that Christians do not proclaim their message to others. The secular world has placed a cultural ban on the natural human quest for the truth about God. The cross of Christ stands over the world now as never before, waiting to be known, and God's people must be ready to fight the barriers to tell others that they are loved, that God's love is there for all. (Paul H. Ashby)

God has given us the most amazing gift and it is ours to share with all. Go out in this world and give it, not judging others, not waiting for what we might get back, "not counting up wrongs that have been done" ... just sharing the love. God's love is infinite. We share it and it grows, and grows and grows.

I am blessed to teach 1st graders on Thursdays and Fridays. Often I say to my colleagues, if we only could continue to look at the world and go through life like a 6 year old. Arms around each other, blind to appearances that hang adults up, and when asked who can help a particular child, every single hand goes up. That is love. That is God. At random times, the kids come over to me, throw their arms around my waist, look up at me with the purest of eyes and say, "I love you!" "I love you back" I say. God throws his arms around our waist, looks down at us with agape, and says, "I love you." Let us go out into the world and share the amazing gift that is there for all of us... let us go out in the world and love.

*Dear God, we thank you for your love. We thank you for loving us always, unconditionally. Help us to share your love. Guide us in how to throw our arms around others. Let us be the light of your love in this world. We love you, God. Amen*

**Monday, March 22**

**Exodus 4:10-20 (21-26) 27-31**

**1 Corinthians 14:1-19**

**Mark 9:30-41**

*Now go, I will help you speak and will teach you what to say. Exod. 4:12*

If God asks us to do something, He will provide the ways to get the task accomplished.

*But in the church, I would rather speak five intelligent words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. 1 Cor. 14:19*

This verse speaks volumes to me, that simple words that many can understand are far better than a deluge of garble that miss the peoples completely.

*Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be last, and the servant to all." Mark 9:35*

Jesus is telling the disciples that each of them must serve the people of the lowest stations in Life - that by serving them, they are serving God.

I feel these passages are calling us to serve God by trusting Him to show us the way to present His words to others even if I feel incapable. Am I capable of sharing His wonderful present??? He will show me the way to do his will. I must be quiet to hear His words. For His Sake.

**Tuesday/March 23**

**Exodus 5:1-6:1**

**1 Corinthians 14:20-33a, 39-40**

**Mark 9:42-50**

*“Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country.” Exodus 6:1*

*“For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.” 1 Cor. 14:33*

*“Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with each other.” Mark 9:50*

“His law is love, and His gospel is peace.” These magnificent words are from the lyrics of the most treasured Christmas carol, “O Holy Night”. We should be reminded of God’s covenant with us each and every day. It is very simple; He loves us and wants us to love and trust in Him and have an intimate personal relationship with Him. He also wants us to love one another as He loves us. In order to coexist with our brothers and sisters on this earth, God has given us the gifts of love and peace. These bountiful gifts are right here waiting for us and ready for our use. However, the key is we must choose to use them. If we let them sit on a shelf stale and unused, then we and the others around us will not share in their delights. Rather, our souls will rot and be subject to evil and corruption. Jesus explains in Mark 9: 39-40 the acceptance of the Holy Spirit into one’s heart as having salt. The salt cleanses, arrests corruption which impends over the dead masses, sweetens and purifies, and so preserves from decay and destruction. In salt, we allow the Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, cleanse our souls, and make us clean. It is then that we may love with the love of Christ and find His peace within ourselves and others.

### **Prayer of Peace St. Francis of Assisi**

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

**Wednesday, March 24**

**Exodus 7: 8 – 24**

**2 Corinthians 2: 14 - 4: 6**

**Mark 10: 1 - 16**

*Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. Mark 10:14-15*

Jesus was quite unhappy when his disciples scolded people who brought little children to see him and to be touched by him. Jesus wanted the little children to know him and to become part of the kingdom of God. He took them in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed each one.

Is there a sweeter blessing here on earth than the loving trust of our little children? God blesses us and trusts that we will raise our children with a love of God that will help to guide them throughout their lives. We have an awesome responsibility to fulfill.

*Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of our children. Help us to be ever vigilant about every action we take and how it affects the little eyes and ears that are learning by example. Let your love flow from us always that the little children in our lives will know and understand your wondrous love. God bless all the little children of the world. Amen.*

**Thursday, March 25**

**Exodus 7:25-8:19**

**2 Corinthians 3:7-18**

**Mark 10:17-31**

*Exodus*

When we pray to God, is it for him to show us His will, His way? Or is it self-serving, albeit with good intentions? And if it is, how do we respond to Him? Once we get what we want, do we continue in our self-serving ways, ignoring God's will?

I have found that when I give myself to God's will, asking Him to show me the way, I am more at peace with myself as He will provide me what He feels is best for me and what I can handle. If I am stubborn and selfish and ask for what I want, my anxiety does not wane and any reprieve is but a temporary one.

*2 Corinthians*

I presume from references from this passage: the "... old system of law", the "... old covenant", and Moses, that our good friend Paul is referring to the Ten Commandments. Given that, it seems to me that Paul is saying that while the Ten Commandments was necessary and good, belief and adherence to them alone are not enough. We need, too, the belief in Christ, to forgive us of our sins, as it is spoken in the Nicene Creed and Confession.

*Mark*

I love this passage! As I interpret it, Jesus tells us that money and material wealth are not important when we are viewed by God. From a pure earthly financial view, how financially successful or unsuccessful we are makes no difference as to how God sees us. All that matters is our belief in God and His will for us.

From a personal perspective, I do not begrudge anyone who is financially successful. In the majority of cases, I believe it is due to a mastery of a given skill, hard work and commitment. But I do not look at their financial success and think, "They are a better person than most others!" What reason or facts do I have to make that assumption? Likewise, how can I look at someone who does not earn much money and say, "They are inferior to most others!" Again, what does financial wealth, or lack of it, have to do with one's character, one's spirit? God is the only one who can fully determine this, not the dollar sign.

**Friday, March 26**

**Exodus 9:13-35**

**2 Corinthians 4:1-12**

**Mark 10:32-45**

*Whoever wants to be a leader among you, must be your servant and whoever wants to be first, must be slave of all. Mark 10:43-44*

In the OT reading from Exodus, Moses shows his faithfulness, loyalty, perseverance, and obedience to God, and his people, by warning Pharaoh, for the seventh time, of a coming plague. It must have been extremely discouraging for Moses by now, with Pharaoh still not persuaded to let the Israelites go. He could have very easily just said, "You know Lord, this Pharaoh is a stubborn guy, I don't think anything is going to persuade him to grant us freedom. I give up, find someone else." But Moses has God on his side. God has entrusted him to lead his people out of bondage. Moses puts his faith in God, that He will not abandon them, even though the situation seems hopeless. Moses remains an obedient servant.

In the NT reading of 2 Corinthians, we hear from Paul that preaching the Good News is a dangerous thing to do in Corinth, and sadly, it still is today, in some places of the world. He writes, "We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going." There must have been times when Paul felt highly discouraged, when leading people to God seemed pointless, or even hopeless. He could have so easily said, "Well sorry everyone, being a follower of Christ, being your spiritual leader, has just become too hard, my very life is endangered. You'll have to find someone else." But, Paul remains a loving servant

It's not easy to be in a leadership role. Whether it be as a parent, a boss, a teacher, a pastor, a politician, president of the PTA, etc... There are others counting on you, and relying on you. And sometimes it becomes easier to use this position to control others, rather than to love them. I think this is why we see in the Gospel reading, Jesus explaining to the disciples that leaders are those who act like servants; for to serve people is to love people. To serve people is to recognize their needs, and through compassion, act to address them. Jesus did this all the time. He was an example of what a true leader and king should be. For as powerful as Jesus was, he never used his power to control anyone. He used his power compassionately, for healing and for glorifying God. Jesus, the king of kings said, "For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served, but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many."

*Father, Thank you for always being with me. Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, who was a living example of a true leader. Please strengthen me, when in my service to others, I feel beaten down, drained, or inadequate. Give me courage to live out your will for me. Amen.*

**Saturday, March 27**

**Exodus 10:21—11:8**

**2 Corinthians 4:13-18**

**Mark 10:46-52**

Bartimaeus, a blind man in Jericho couldn't conceive being able to have sight in his lifetime until he heard the word of Jesus Christ. His faith began to grow stronger when he heard of the miracles being performed by Jesus.

As Jesus walked by and began to speak he felt faith and hope and he knew he had to get Jesus attention and began to shout. The crowd was angry on Bartimaeus outburst and saw him helpless. His faith grew stronger and stronger and would not accept anything but the healing power from God. His blind faith became his sight and Jesus saw unrelenting faith and healed the blind man.

*"Lord, may I never fail to recognize my need for your grace. Help me to take advantage of the opportunities you give me to seek your presence daily and to listen attentively to your word."*

**Monday, March 29**

**Lamentations 1:1-2, 6-12**

**2 Corinthians 1:1-7**

**Mark 11:12-25**

*For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. 2 Cor. 1:5*

You often think that you are the only one who feels alone, or overwhelmed, or scared, but it isn't true. There are a lot of people around you struggling with the same things. Even God feels our pain, and, the same way that you can hurt when someone you care for is hurting, God hurts for us. It is important to keep in mind that, as you are going through those difficult times, God knows what you are going through, and remembers the things you have struggled with in the past as well. Jesus came to experience the ultimate suffering for us, so he won't forget the pain you have been through, and he won't abandon you no matter how big or overwhelming it might seem now. But we must also remember that we are the body of Christ, and we need to be ready to act. It is often the little things that we do which can make such a difference in the lives of other people. Just saying hello and asking how someone is and taking the time to listen can make a huge difference in the life of someone who is struggling or in pain.

*Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen. A Prayer attributed to St. Francis. BCP pg. 833*

**Tuesday, March 30**

**Lamentations 1:17-22**

**2 Corinthians 1:8-22**

**Mark 11:27-33**

*“By what authority are you doing these things?”* Mark 11:28

“You’re not the boss of me!” That’s what a 4-year-old member of St. Aidan’s indignantly told me. She’d asked me to help her climb on a chair to reach something forbidden, and as I had just observed her mom deny the request, I echoed the denial. Thus her admonishment.

I see this attitude reflected in today’s Gospel, in which the authority of Jesus is questioned by the chief priests, elders, and teachers. These leaders are trying to side-track Jesus’ work with an age-old tactic, the credentials check, asking “Who gives YOU the right?” Jesus counters with asking what they truly believe and thus declare where their beliefs (and allegiance) lie. Because they cannot choose a safe politically correct answer, they have no answer, and so Jesus doesn’t answer to them. They are not the boss of him!

In the Old Testament reading, the speaker explains that “the LORD is righteous but I rebelled against his command” and now “I am in torment within and in my heart I am disturbed.” Here’s a lesson to be learned: You can question authority, but if authority answers, will you listen? Or will you hold on to your desire for rebellion, even though it hurts you?

In the NT reading, Paul reminds us that early leaders like him taught and instructed with a “holiness and sincerity that are from God.” They do not engage in worldly trickery or tactics, but instead seek to always be understood clearly as they spread the good news of Christ. Paul goes on to explain that he will not confuse us by saying one thing and its opposite at the same time, because this is not how God speaks to us through Christ. Paul knows that God is the boss of us because God “anointed us, set his seal of ownership upon us, and put his Spirit in our hearts.” If we faithfully accept and believe this, what more can we ask for? Credentials? Letters of Reference? Identification papers? (And by what authority could we ask for more?)

It is hard, as my young friend found, to listen to a higher authority; we want to be the boss of ourselves! But if we go forward on faith as obedient daughters and sons of God, then “God guarantees what is to come.”

Here’s a contemplation that helps quiet worldly voices as you listen for God in your heart:

Be still and know that God is near.

Be still and know that God is.

Be still and know God.

Be still.

Be.

## Wednesday, March 31

**Lamentations 2:1-9**

**2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11**

**Mark 12:1-11**

All three of these stories are about sadness, disappointment, failures, and grief. *The Lord...has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.* (Lam. 2:5).

Here we are, almost to Good Friday, it is no wonder that we are reading such stories. It is easy now to think about the Easter promise that is only a few days away. We can wait patiently for the alleluias to return, because we know that they are coming.

What do we do, though, when we are reading these stories, or living the stories in our own lives, and we don't have Easter waiting for us in just a few days? What do we make of these stories then? Why do we continue to have passages like this from Lamentations as part of our lectionary? According to the commentary in the version of *The Bible* that I was reading, this book was written as a series of psalms lamenting the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. This was an event that happened so long ago, and that to me seems to be not so very important to my life. Yet, we still mark its importance by readings from *Lamentations*.

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is a difficult book in some ways. It was written as part of an ongoing dialogue Paul was having with the church in Corinth, but we have lost some of the letters that go before this one. It is often hard to tell exactly what Paul is talking about. What we do get, though, is the sense of great regret he has over what he did in the past to cause his fellow Christians pain. *For I wrote you out of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.* (2 Cor. 2:4).

Finally we have the parable from Mark about the owner of the vineyard whose son is killed by the owner's workers. This passage is more familiar than the others and it is clearly a story about Jesus being sent to us and his death at our hands. *The vineyard owner said "they will respect my son." But the tenants of the vineyard took him out and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.* (Mark 12:6, 8). We know that they tenants of the vineyard are then removed and their inheritance is given to others.

Three passages about misery of one kind or another. They can be helpful to us, especially as we are experiencing sadness, disappointment, failure or other grief in our own lives, and especially if Easter is not just around the corner. We can see that the people of Israel suffered greatly, and went on to survive their grief. We can see that Paul, the first gentile apostle, who did so much good at the beginning of Christianity, caused some serious problems among his people and had to try to repair those problems. We can see that Jesus was aware of the misery that was going to befall him, yet he continued to preach and help and love.

I think these stories of pain show us that the people of God are not immune to suffering. We can't expect to live pain-free lives, just because of our beliefs. However, we can take all of these stories and remember that those who have gone before us have suffered. But even as we suffer, we can still wait patiently for the Easter that is just around the corner, all through the year.

## Maundy Thursday, April 1

**Lamentations 2:10-18**

**1 Corinthians 10:14-17; 11:27-32**

**Mark 14:12-25**

*“Therefore, my friends, flee from the worship of idols.”* 1 Corinthians 10:14

Soon after the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah writes in Lamentations 2:11 *“My eyes are spent with weeping, my stomach churns...”* as he sees what has happened to his people. As the disciples prepare for the Passover, Jesus makes it known that one of them will betray him. Paul directs the church in Corinth to flee from the worship of idols and cautions them to examine themselves before partaking of communion.

My intrinsic reaction each time I read these passages is one of indignation and I wonder how anyone could be so blind as to listen to false prophets, to deny their Lord in the presence of others and worship false idols. Then that voice of reason, however faint, makes itself known and I humble myself before God and ask his forgiveness. How many times have I let others gain undue influence in my life from listening and hearing only what I wanted to hear and how many people have I failed to approach to share of Christ’s love out of fear of what they or others might think? At least once I have made the mistake of placing another so high on a pedestal that I left little room for God in my life. How often have I had so much on my mind that I have taken communion not thinking of just how truly blessed I am that God loved me enough to send his only Son so that I would have a choice. Still, He loves me. So what choice will I make? I don’t make the mistakes as much as I did before by choosing to take a look at myself and see how I can better align myself with God’s will. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 11:31, *“But if we judge ourselves, we would not be judged.”* I believe that is the key to staying humble and open to God. When I take a true, all encompassing look at myself, I realize just how good I have it. I love the saying, *“If God had a refrigerator, my picture would be on it.”* There is nothing I can do to make him love me more or less, but he wants what is best for me. I should give him that much.

*O God of mercy and unconditional love, may I proclaim with joy and thanksgiving, that you alone are my God.*

## **Good Friday, April 2**

**Lamentations 3:1-9, 19-33**

**1 Peter 1:10-2**

**John 13:36-38**

Renowned theologian Carl Barth, was once asked, "What is the most profound truth you have learned in your studies?" Without hesitation he replied, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so." Good Friday shows us this truth quite clearly - that Jesus loved us by laying down his life for us. He was obedient until the end, not betraying God or us.

I do wonder what Barth would say about the next line of that song: "Little ones to him belong. They are weak but he is strong." As a children's tune, this song certainly comforts little people who can be safe with their strong Jesus. But what of adults who see Jesus stripped, bleeding, dying on the cross. How do we call that strong?

No doubt there was physical strength in what Jesus had to endure. But physical strength is not the message. Instead, his strength is in his faithfulness to God's call... a strength never before seen in a human being. His strength is in obedience. His strength is in love for God - with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. The strength is in his love for humanity - saving the very people who reject, torment, ridicule, and laugh him to scorn... people who think they are so strong.

This is his strength: that he was strong enough to save us. Yes, we are weak. Like Peter was weak - saying that he would not betray Jesus. Then, in less than a day, his weak heart, his weak faith showed themselves in spades as he betrayed Jesus.

Of course, Peter's weakness is our weakness. Human beings have never been strong enough, spiritually or otherwise, to do God's will to the end. We are weak in obedience and weak in faith. We deny and betray Christ in our own ways. On Good Friday, with Jesus on the cross and in the tomb, that sin is ever before us.

We are the weak; he is the strong. To him we belong. Why? Yes, because Jesus loves you, on the cross he showed you so.

## Holy Saturday, April 3

**Lamentations 3: 37-58**

**Hebrews 4: 1-16**

**Romans 8: 1-11**

Holy Saturday is the last of the Sacred Triduum (The Great and Holy Three Days). It is indeed the Sabbath of our Lord for the very Lord of all has given up His life and is buried in the tomb. On Maundy Thursday we are reminded of how our Lord wants us to love one another through the Washing of Feet. We are also reminded of how He loves us in the free gift of His Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist. On Good Friday we have participated in Our Lord's crucifixion and death, which leaves us as it left the apostles; spent, defeated and doubting. It is on Holy Saturday that we attempt to figure out how what seems to be a cruel and unnecessary death according to the human point of view is ordained by God and necessary for us. The daily readings for Holy Saturday help us in our grief and understanding.

Jeremiah in Lamentations 3 gets right to the point. He writes in verse 37 and following, *"Who can command and have it done, if the Lord has not ordained it?" Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that good and bad come? Why should any who draw breath complain about the punishment of their sins?"* From this passage we learn that God ordains everything. It is our sin that requires repentance and punishment. The writer calls us to repentance and expects God to see the destruction that our sin has caused and to hear and have mercy. For it is indeed God and only God who can take care of our sin and the destruction that it causes. Jeremiah reminds us of God's past saving action and because God who is always faithful will save us again. Jeremiah writes in verses 55-58: *"I called on your name, O Lord, from the depths of the pit; you heard my plea, "Do not close your ear to my cry for help, but give me relief!" You came near when I called on you; you said, "Do not fear!" You have taken up my cause, O Lord, you have redeemed my life."*

The writer of Hebrews tells us that the "rest" of God is still open for us. The "rest" of God is available for all who hear the Word of God and believe. Jesus is the Word of God. It is His shed blood that calls us into the Sabbath rest of God. It is only His sacrifice on the cross that makes us worthy to enter that rest. Verse 10 of Hebrews states, *"for those who enter God's rest also cease from their labors as God did from his."* Indeed, we do rest from our labor of worry, guilt and shame as we enter the "rest" of God. The Sabbath rest of God is filled with God's joy and presence. We are free in this "rest" to worship, glorify and enjoy God forever. It is then, through worship that we participate in the "rest" of God. We are energized through the singing of hymns and anthems, the hearing of the Word of God and the celebration of the sacraments. God who is our "rest" is present in our worship. He inhabits our praises. St. Paul then exhorts us in Hebrews 4: 11, *"Let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall through such disobedience as theirs"* One can see this statement as a command to attend worship and not neglect the gathering of the faithful as did our forbears in the wilderness when they turned to the false gods. It is through worship that we come to know Jesus as our Great High Priest who has passed through the heavens. It is He who became sin who knew no sin. It is through His intercession that we can come boldly before the throne of grace and find grace to help in time of need.

In Romans 8: 1-11 we learn that for those who are in Christ Jesus the Law is fulfilled and there is no condemnation. God, in Christ, has taken all of the sins made clear by the Law and heaped them into one place. It is in this manner that Christ became sin who knew no sin. The sacrifice of Christ on the cross fulfilled the requirements of the Law, condemned sin in the flesh and opened life in the Spirit to those who believe in Christ Jesus. We know that because we are in Christ that we are also dead to sin and alive to God. It is through the death and resurrection of Jesus that we have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is this same Holy Spirit that gives life to our spirits and will give life to our mortal bodies also. Christ's sacrifice on the cross saves the whole person. Thanks be to God.

*O God, Creator of heaven and earth: Grant that, as the crucified body of thy dear Son was laid in the tomb and rested on this holy Sabbath, so we may await with him the coming of the third day, and rise with him to newness of life; who now liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

## Contributors

February 17.....	Father Rob Wood
February 18 .....	Father Joe Herring
February 19 .....	Elizabeth Rines
February 20.....	Sam Zavitz
February 22.....	Tom McDonnell
February 23.....	Gregory Smith
February 24.....	Harmony Kiser
February 25.....	Vince Catanzaro
February 26.....	Doris T. Evans
February 27 .....	Jim Linthicum
March 1.....	Martha Myers
March 2.....	Sunday night EYC
March 3.....	Carlotta Ford
March 4 .....	Brenda Carroll
March 5.....	Val Pettit
March 6 .....	Jonathan Edman
March 8 .....	Virginia Cline
March 9 .....	Anna McCarthy
March 10.....	John Ray
March 11 .....	Jim Bass
March 12.....	Joey Sargent
March 13.....	Carrie Kozel
March 15.....	Debra Stecher
March 16.....	Alyssa Sargent
March 17.....	Polly Linthicum
March 18.....	Joe Rich
March 19.....	Derin Thompson
March 20 .....	Debi Carnaroli
March 22 .....	Corrine Hofstetter
March 23 .....	Ann West
March 24 .....	Shirley Taylor
March 25 .....	Rich Robertson
March 26 .....	Susan Griffis
March 27.....	JoAnne Sanderson
March 29 .....	Wednesday night EYC
March 30 .....	Judy Reardon
March 31.....	Susan Kirkpatrick Smith
April 1 .....	Donna Jones
April 2 .....	Father Rob Wood
April 3 .....	John Sabine